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Planning for Equality? Decentralisation in Cultural Policy

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Preface

This is the product of the first research project since the research partnership between the West Midlands Arts and the Centre for the Study of Cultural Policy, the University of Warwick, has been launched. The partnership is intended to advance our knowledge in cultural policy with a regional emphasis, by exploring various policy issues which have been under-researched. However, the views of the paper and any inaccuracy found in it are solely the responsibility of the author.

To most people in English-speaking countries, 'cultural policy' may be an unfamiliar term. This is in line with the usage of the term in Europe, to which we aim to extend our scope of research and teaching. In fact, this also reflects a newly developed idea in practice in the UK, as elsewhere, to broaden the conventional focus of policy on the so-called 'arts', so as to embrace a variety of other relevant areas of activities which bring intellectual challenge, stimulus, inspiration, entertainment, and joy to our cultural life in constructive as well as deconstructive ways. At the Centre we are committed to including in our enquiry popular, commercial culture, cultural industries, which are largely unsubsidised areas, and also media, craft, museums, built heritage and libraries, which are traditionally funded by bodies other than the Arts Council of Great Britain (now the Arts Councils of England, Scotland and Wales) in the United Kingdom.

However, in this paper, I use the terms 'culture' and 'culture and the arts' interchangeably. This does not mean the former excludes the arts. It is simply for the sake of brevity. It does not mean, either, that the latter distinguishes the two. It is mainly to follow the convention in the documents which I consult.

I am indebted to numerous people in realising this research project. West Midlands Arts and School of Theatre Studies, University of Warwick, where the Centre is located, are the main supporters to whom my first thanks go. Earlier ideas of the paper were developed through teaching postgraduate students in European Cultural Policy and Administration at the University, to whom I owe a great opportunity for elaborating my arguments.

I would like to express my special thanks to those people who generously gave time to talk and who provided written information as I requested. Christopher Gordon, who has been at the forefront of regional development, has been extremely helpful in allowing me access to publication not easily obtainable, and in providing me with his fascinating account of the cultural blossoming he has seen over the years in English regions. Oliver Bennett has always

been a supportive and considerate colleague, who encouraged my work and gave thoughtful comments to the draft of the paper. I am grateful to Michael Elliott and Felicity Harvest for their suggestion that 'delegation' of clients from the Arts Council to the Regional Arts Boards is only one component of decentralisation. Without their remarks, this paper could have been much narrower in scope and missed out other aspects of decentralisation which are of importance to the arts in the region.

Nobuko Kawashima

June 1996

In publishing in this new format, I have made some grammatical corrections to the original version. The content of the paper however remains the same.

Nobuko Kawashima

June 2004

Note

In the UK, ‘decentralisation’ and ‘devolution’ in general terms sometimes but not exclusively refer to the relationships between the UK government and Scotland and Wales. This paper only deals with England, even though the term ‘Britain’ appears from time to time, for the government relationship with Scotland and Wales is a highly political matter, beyond the realm of cultural policy *per se*.

Executive Summary

This paper examines the theoretical and practical issues related to ‘decentralisation’ in cultural policy, with a particular focus on the British experience. It consists of three major parts, in which each of the following is developed:

- a conceptual framework for the discussion of ‘decentralisation’ in the context of cultural policy (Part 1);
- the examination of decentralisation in British cultural policy (Part 2);
- the analysis of the problems which decentralisation in British cultural policy has experienced (Part 3);

This report aims to provide different readerships with:

- concepts and theories on decentralisation which are applicable to cultural policy of many nations as well as of Britain, to be used for discussion by officers in cultural policy making and decision-makers in cultural institutions, and also by researchers and students of cultural policy (Part 1 & 3);
- a comprehensive documentation of the practical problems and institutional issues in decentralisation policy implementation which British cultural policy has been experiencing, which may be of particular relevance to practitioners in Britain (Part 2);
- some of the problems in cultural policy with wider implications for public policy and administration in Britain, which may be of interest for researchers in politics and public administration (Part 3);

The key findings of the report are summarised as follows (see Conclusion for a longer version of summary) :

PART 1: THEORIES ON DECENTRALISATION

Part 1 identifies different meanings of the term (Table 1.1 in Appendix B), values attached to decentralisation, and a variety of strategies for spatial diffusion of cultural activities (Table 2.1 and 2.2 in Appendix B).

- ◆ Decentralisation has at least three aspects; cultural, fiscal, and political (Table 1.1 in Appendix B).
 - ❖ Cultural decentralisation is a policy objective, concerned with inequality in cultural opportunities among people, which derives from geographical, socio-economic, and cultural divisions of the population.

- ❖ Fiscal decentralisation is about disparity of public expenditure. Disparity can be found among;
 1. different geographical localities public expenditure is made for (eg per capita spending in the capital vs in the regions),
 2. different public authorities in charge of funding (eg spending by central government vs local government), and
 3. different groups of cultural producers subsidy is provided for (eg subsidy for European- vs non-European-origin arts).
- ❖ Political decentralisation is about the diffusion of political and administrative power for decision-making and implementation in cultural policy.
- ◆ The scope of this paper is limited to cultural decentralisation in relation to geographical diffusion of cultural provision, and political decentralisation.
- ◆ There is a need to theorise the issue of fair distribution of publicly-financed cultural goods and services.

PART 2: DECENTRALISATION IN BRITISH CULTURAL POLICY

Part 2 describes the historical development of cultural and political decentralisation in Britain. Focus is given to RAA/RABs and local authorities, and building-based, producing, repertory theatres in the West Midlands. The case study on the theatres is to show the impact of the changes in the arts funding system and in central-local government politics on the arts.

- ◆ There have been two major attempts (the Glory of the Garden strategy and the Wilding Review reform) to transfer power from the Arts Council to the RAA/RABs (Table 5.1 in Appendix B). Neither, however, has been successful in achieving the initial objective of cultural decentralisation.
- ◆ Local authorities have become major contributors to the arts over the decades, particularly in recent years through urban regeneration, to which it has been recognised that culture can make a contribution.
- ◆ It is difficult to assess the extent to which arts provision has suffered from the changing relationship between central and local government since 1979, for arts provision is a marginal area in government. But in general arts budgets have been squeezed.
- ◆ The theatre sector was against delegation for various reasons, but the theatres examined acknowledge some advantages of being regionally-funded, including the RABs' ability to negotiate with local authorities.
- ◆ The financial difficulty of the local authorities has hit the theatres in general, and smaller ones in particular.

PART 3: DISCUSSION

Part 3 discusses some of the key issues in political and cultural decentralisation in British cultural policy.

- ◆ As to political decentralisation, the issues of accountability and division of labour are highlighted;
 - ❖ As RAAs required a fair share of power and responsibility in cultural policy, diversity and flexibility of the regional bodies had to be traded-off. The concept of accountability is the key to understanding such a process.
 - ❖ RABs' relationship with local authorities is being challenged, as their accountability to the locally elected bodies involves few tangible obligations and requirements. If the RABs are to remain accountable to the Arts Council and local authorities equally, there is a potential for conflict.
 - ❖ Making RABs accountable to the general public is another issue in and beyond cultural policy *per se*.
 - ❖ Another source of problem for political decentralisation is the lack of clarity in the division of labour among the Arts Council, RAA/RABs, and local authorities. The division has been conceived in two ways;- 1) in functional terms, and 2) in terms of the kinds of arts supported. Neither of these has been practically useful.
 - ❖ As a result, the divisions of the roles in cultural policy between different authorities have not been well-defined.
- ◆ As to cultural decentralisation, the key to its success is to define the concept of equality.
 - ❖ Equality can be formulated in terms of full equality attainment, and a guarantee of minimum standards. Each would require a different objective and direction for policy planning.
 - ❖ If 'full equality' is chosen, it is necessary to elaborate its meaning further. The interpretation of the term includes equality of access (or cost), equality of use, and equality of outcome.
- ◆ Other issues discussed include the changing significance of geography and demography for cultural institutions.
- ◆ The relationship between political and cultural decentralisation is found to be contradictory or difficult to accommodate in one policy, to dispute a prevalent view that the two types of decentralisation go hand in hand.

The report concludes that decentralisation in cultural policy, despite its apparent significance on policy agendas, has lacked clear meanings and concepts for measurement, on which policy planning must be based. There is a need to clarify and prioritise conflicting values and

objectives relating to decentralisation. This study contributes to offering alternative formulations of the concepts and the values that support policy for decentralisation.

Introduction

Decentralisation has assumed the status of norm in cultural policy in many nations. For any government of today, it is extremely difficult to ignore the ideal of 'culture for all', which is stated, albeit in ambiguous terms, in charters and principles on which cultural policy is based. In Britain, too, for example, the ideal has been enshrined in the objectives of arts funding bodies across the board. Lord Keynes, in the announcement of the inauguration of the Arts Council, spoke of the importance of decentralisation ahead of his concern with 'London first':

"We of the Arts Council are greatly concerned to decentralise and disperse the dramatic and musical and artistic life of the country,...But it is also our business to make London a great artistic metropolis, a place to visit and to wonder at" (Keynes 1945).

However, it has often been argued that decentralisation of the arts was given only secondary concern on the policy agenda of the Arts Council of Great Britain (ACGB undated a; Hutchison 1982a, chapter 4). The 1980s and 1990s have seen twists and turns of the policy objectives due partly to the changing cultural map of Britain and to the new institutional arrangements in policy-making in Britain not only for culture but across public services.

Frequently, policy change in the arts and culture since 1979 is associated with the lowered level of public funding and the introduction of enterprise culture. It may well be that the financial constraint imposed on the arts, coupled with the upgrade in management techniques and arts organisations, have been widely observed. However, for the arts in the region, the political and economical environment in which they operate has become more complex and has posed more problems than for so-called national institutions, because of the changes mentioned above. This paper is an attempt to identify the changing nature of the environment for the arts in the region, and thereby to provide a closer examination of policy alterations for the arts since 1979, which have largely remained impressionistic and journalistic.

It is also my hope that this paper will be a start in forging links between cultural policy research and wider public policy writings, where the former has had a very marginal place, indeed if any in the latter. This will be done particularly by exploring changes in cultural policy in local authorities in relation to Conservative Governments' programmes that have affected them in many public policy areas in a way and to a degree unmatched by any previous attempt to change policy in the Post-war era.

For these purposes, the paper will start with examining various concepts and theories related to decentralisation from various angles in Part 1. Some British readers may find that some of the concepts introduced are awkwardly or even wrongly located in the discussion, as I will use the terms in a widest sense as possible at that stage. Some might also feel the term 'access' or 'accessibility' in place of decentralisation should be employed. My intention in undertaking the exercise in theoretical dimension in Part 1 is to provide us with a panoramic view to the whole discourse on decentralisation, both at home and abroad, under which the British experiences in cultural policy will be placed. My other objectives of this paper include, as was mentioned, to try to understand cultural policy in the context of a wider sphere of public policy. Since the term decentralisation is found most helpful in facilitating this, I deliberately choose to use it in preference to the more familiar terms throughout the paper.

Part 2 will describe a wide range of developments in decentralisation in British cultural policy. Here my interest will be in geography, or the spatial diffusion of cultural activities and of policy-making, giving them especial spotlight at the expense of the other definitions that will have been covered in Part 1. This will be done at a macro-level by placing regional arts associations and local authorities in relation to their central counterparts, followed by a micro-level analysis of arts organisations in the region. This Part will show the haphazard nature of decentralisation, and it will raise issues to be examined in the following Part.

Part 3 will return to theoretical approach to discuss the issues central to the understanding of the problems which we uncover in Part 2, including the issue of accountability, the roles of regional bodies in public service delivery, the complexity of the concept of equality, and the significance of geography in cultural policy planning.

Obviously each of these issues deserves a paper of substantive length, and this paper will inevitably leave us with more questions to ask than can be answered. My best ambition is to hope that this paper will provide a forum for policy-makers and practitioners at national, regional and local levels and invite more research effort by informing researchers in policy studies that this is an intriguing area to investigate.

Research Methodology

A major problem for research work of this kind, or perhaps on many topics in cultural policy, is the shortage of literature, particularly the writings which provide conceptual frameworks for analysis. Therefore, this paper draws on a number of works from various fields of academic disciplines, encompassing applied economics, public finance, politics, public policy and administration, and organisational theories, when needed or appropriate.

To obtain primary sources of information for Part 2, policy documents including those which are not in the public domain were collected. Personal interviews were equally significant to obtain unwritten, firsthand information, and were conducted by the author between November 1995 and February 1996. The individuals interviewed include executive directors (or in some cases artistic directors in title but who oversee management) of five theatres, arts officers of the local authorities that fund them, drama officers of the Arts Council and the West Midlands Arts (WMA), Chief Executive of the WMA and the English Regional Arts Board (ERAB), and Regional Director of the Arts Council. The theatres surveyed are building-based, producing companies in the West Midlands. Interviews, totaling in 17 in number, ran to 1-1.5 hours each. The details of the interviews are set out in Appendix A.

PART 1 : THEORIES ON DECENTRALISATION

The purpose of Part 1 is to explore theoretical aspects of decentralisation and to establish an analytical framework before developing discussions of the practice in British cultural policy. Chapter 1 will attempt to clarify the multiplicity of the concept of decentralisation. It will sort out various definitions and usages of the term which so far have remained confused. Chapter 2 will question why decentralisation is regarded as an issue at all. Chapter 3 will pave the way to Part 2 by discussing the possible strategies of decentralisation in cultural policy.

Chapter 1. Concepts

Decentralisation has been a somewhat fashionable concept in public policy debates in the last few decades throughout most of advanced nations (Bennett (ed) 1990). It is widely used to refer to the government relationship between the centre and the local, but it can also refer to the relationships between government and non-government, or put simply, privatisation.

In cultural policy, too, it has been 'in vogue', being allegedly one of the main policy objectives in many countries (Cummings and Katz 1987, p367). A major research project to evaluate national cultural policies which has been carried out by the Council for Cultural Co-operation at the Council of Europe employs 'decentralisation' as one of the criteria along with 'creativity' and 'participation' (Council of Europe 1990a, p63; Council of Europe 1994b, p8). Despite its apparent importance which is internationally acknowledged, decentralisation is also well-known for being an ill-defined and elusive, nonetheless over-used, concept (Schuster 1985; O'Hagen and Duffy 1989; Towse 1994, p149): What is meant by the term has varied in different contexts for different purposes (Bassand 1993, p55).

First of all, it is important to distinguish what is to be decentralised, since it can refer to cultural activities, but also to the political structure to administer them. The emphasis of discussion differs from one policy to another policy. In Sweden, the focus is on the diffusion of cultural activities (Council of Europe 1990b), whereas in the Netherlands administration is the core of the discussions (Council of Europe 1994a). The two aspects of decentralisation are in symbiosis in much discussion, seeing decentralised decision-making as a prerequisite for diffusing cultural activities. For example, Swedish cultural policy declares, "cultural policy shall promote decentralisation of activities and decision functions in the field of culture" (Council of Europe 1990a, p21). In Britain, the House of Commons (1982) observed:

“In order to see the arts flourish as widely as possible there is a need to devolve decision making from the centre, to increase arts provision across the entire country and to encourage wider access among all sections of the community” (para 2.2). But the conceptual distinction between the two is important to bear in mind.

Another problem which bedevils discussion on decentralisation is related to the measurement of the degree of centralisation/decentralisation : Assessment is often made with reference to per capita subsidy on the arts and culture (eg Hutchison 1982b). But, questions will immediately be raised: Can we tell people living in a region with a high level of financial investment have ‘more and better’ opportunities in culture than those in a region with less expenditure? It may well be that the former is not yet well enough endowed with a cultural infrastructure and incurring the necessary investment for capital projects, or that the latter is rich in the provision of activities that are not expensive to run and yet are of high quality.

What is clear by now is that the term is complex and multi-faceted. Faced with such a definitional problem related to decentralisation, my aim in the following is to suggest a conceptual map where various meanings attached to it are distinguished rather than to offer a single definition of the concept.

Decentralisation in cultural policy can be roughly categorised into three areas: cultural, fiscal and political. Each category is distinct from the others in two respects: one in terms of its location within the framework of cultural policy process which I have suggested elsewhere (Kawashima 1995), and another in relation to ‘actors’ in policy¹ within which inequality is found. Cultural decentralisation is first and foremost a policy objective and should be assessed in light of the policy outcome. It is to combat inequality in cultural opportunities among people. Fiscal decentralisation, in contrast, should be about policy measure, or input, which is concerned with uneven distribution of public expenditure among cultural producers. It sometimes addresses disparity of spending levels made by different authorities. Political decentralisation, meanwhile, is about policy measure or policy administration. Hence it concerns the power balance between different decision-makers or funding authorities. Each of these has further different components, which will be elaborated in the following. Table 1.1 in Appendix B organises the discussion.

Cultural decentralisation aims to promote ‘fair’ distribution of the arts to a wider population. Barriers to access in culture and the arts can be geographical, socio-economic, physical and cultural. Such policy is concerned with providing equal opportunities for the consumption of

¹ They embrace those who have authority in policy-making and implementation, and those who are affected by policy.

culture and the arts for every citizen, regardless of his/her residence, physical ability or disability, income, social class and cultural attributes such as race and gender. Among these three types of cultural decentralisation, perhaps the one concerned with geography represents the most common usage of the term 'decentralisation' in policy documents and literature. In Britain, the term 'accessibility' is often used in discussing decentralisation² with the problem of cultural barriers to the entry into the 'received' cultural sector as producer or consumer being loosely termed as the issue of 'cultural diversity' (ACGB 1993, p72).

As such, this is concerned with policy goals and their outcomes. The policy is often discussed in terms of spatial diffusion of arts-related facilities and organisations, but the purpose of this is, in principle, to benefit audience and population at large.

Fiscal decentralisation, conceptually distinct from the above, refers to the diffusion of public expenditure in the arts and culture, and is sub-divided into three according to the units of analysis. What is distinctive with this type of decentralisation is that it does not directly take consumers into consideration, but it is focused upon either funders or producers of cultural and artistic activities.

The first is a concern to equalise public expenditure regionally for the arts and culture. A typical accusation is that the centre is spending too much in the capital city (eg Council of Europe 1990b, p65; Council of Europe 1991, p109; Council of Europe 1994b, pp92-94; Cultural Trends 1993, pp11-13). A Policy Studies Institute report of 1982 'A Hard Fact to Swallow' (Hutchison 1982b) is an example par excellence, embodying this sub-concept with some sophistication. The report examines the division of Arts Council expenditure between London and the English regions, and concludes that the gap is too wide to be tolerated. This was to found the basis for the development of strategic policy for the region by the Arts Council in the mid-1980s. It seems the Arts Council still prefers this methodology and uses it to stress their commitment to regionalism (Arts Council of England 1995a, p13).

The second sub-division of fiscal decentralisation concerns the ratio between central and sub-central authorities in the national picture of public expenditure in culture (eg Council of Europe 1994a, p57; Council of Europe 1994b, p35, p37; Council of Europe 1991, p54; Council of Europe 1990a, pp97-99). Very often, the efforts in cultural decentralisation are mistakenly claimed with the aid of this concept, by the illustration of the increase in local government's share in total public expenditure (eg Council of Europe 1994a, pp199-200;

² Booth (1991) argues, however, 'access' and 'accessibility' have not been well-specified.

Council of Europe 1994b, p37). It may well be, however, that the apparently increased contribution by local government is simply due to the withdrawal of the centre. Such a misleading argument is often made, because perhaps it is the most accessible figure, and it is thus easily picked up as an indicator of cultural centralisation/decentralisation. Fiscal decentralisation, as policy input, does not automatically guarantee output level, and can indicate the degree of cultural decentralisation only partially and with reservations.

The third is about de-concentration of public subsidies among different groups of cultural producers. Concentration of subsidy is often correlated to the location of organisations. 'Unfair' distribution of subsidy may also occur among different arts disciplines, among organisations of different sizes, or according to the degree to which organisations or art forms are established, and it can also occur between 'mainstream' culture and non-mainstream (eg non-European) cultures.

Political decentralisation is about diffusion of political and administrative power for making and implementing cultural policy. It is concerned with disparity of power between different spending authorities or decision-makers. In most cases, it refers to the relationship between central, regional and local bodies. It may, however, refer to horizontal diffusion of responsibilities among different bodies within a single tier of government, for example, between the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education (DiMaggio 1991, p220).

An extreme version of political decentralisation refers to the transfer of power from government to the non-government sector, ie the market, the voluntary sector and private individuals. In public policy writings, examples can be found where the term decentralisation refers to shifting responsibilities from the public sector to the private, commercial sector, and to the voluntary sector (Bennett 1990, p1; Burns et al 1994; Gaster 1994; Stoker 1987). It must be remembered, however, that the state has never been the monopolistic patron or provider in cultural policy. Rather, industries and private individuals have played by far a larger role in the production and distribution of cultural goods and services as well as in the financing.

The practice of devolving to community groups of interest by the Greater London Council from 1981 to 1986 was a somewhat unusual, but interesting, example of this model (Bianchini 1991, p39). The ultimate form of political decentralisation of decision-making power would be the one to private individuals. The referendum in Switzerland, taken to decide whether to purchase particular art works from the public purse or not (Frey and Pommerehne 1995), is an example of directly involving citizens' choice in cultural policy. The American model of indirect art support is another example for this form of

decentralisation (Schuster 1985). In this model, the federal government provides tax relief for individual donors to cultural organisations, whereby the individuals are effectively making decisions on what ought to be supported by the public sector. Subsidising the arts through a voucher scheme for consumers, which has been suggested by Peacock (1969, 1994) for some time, would also fall into this category.

Political decentralisation is often confused with, but has to be conceptually distinguished from, cultural and fiscal decentralisation as discussed above. Decentralisation of policy is usually regarded as being one of the most effective means to achieving the goal of *cultural decentralisation* with geographical concerns. It is often argued that in order to ensure the spatial diffusion of arts activities, decision-making should be at the level closest to the people who would benefit from the policy. Hence political decentralisation supplements cultural decentralisation, or the two are complementary. As the concern with cultural decentralisation has increased, political decentralisation has accordingly received serious attention in cultural policy discussions.³ While it is possible and legitimate to regard political decentralisation as a policy goal in its own right in the discourse of democracy and politics, the basic stance of this paper is confined to my model for cultural policy analysis (Kawashima 1995) that policy administration is a means for achieving policy objectives.

The degree of fiscal decentralisation between spending authorities is employed to indicate that of political decentralisation. It is important, however, to note that money does not tell the whole story in the relationships between governmental units. In examining the function and the role of 'sub-central government' in British politics, Rhodes (1992) identifies resources central to exchange within sub-national government. They deserve to be introduced at some length, as they will help in our understanding of political decentralisation in cultural policy. He lists them as follows (Rhodes 1992, pp90-91):

1. authority - the mandatory and discretionary rights to carry out functions or services commonly vested in and between public sector organisations by statute or other constitutional means,
2. money - the funds raised by a public sector / political organisation from taxes (or precept), service charges or fees, borrowing, or some combination thereof,
3. legitimacy - access to public decision-making structures and the right to build public support conferred either by the legitimacy deriving from election or by other accepted means,
4. information - the possession of data and to control over either its collection or its dissemination or both, and

³ The British case will be described in 4.3 in Chapter 4, and in Chapter 5.

5. organisation - the possession of people, skills, land, building materials and equipment and hence the ability to act directly rather than through intermediaries.

The range of the items listed suggests that money transfer from centre to local would not necessarily involve the discretionary power to spend it, not to mention overall autonomy in decision-making. Furthermore, in practice, the different mix of these resources, in conjunction with the 'rules of the game' and the strategies of actors (Rhodes 1992, pp91-94) would determine the degree of political decentralisation in cultural policy. The mix of all these elements would be complex; A plethora of political decentralisation to different degrees would emerge on a continuum of 'central-local relationship spectrum'.

Despite the existence of conceptual demarcations elaborated in the above discussion, those variously sub-divided concepts of decentralisation are used, in practice, in a non-mutually exclusive way and that is for good reason. For example, subsidy disparity between producers—national organisations based in the capital, and those in the regions—is inextricably presented in conjunction with the examination of spending between the regions. Also, the different types of decentralisation serve each other. For example, cultural decentralisation cannot be achieved, arguably, without political decentralisation. Fiscal decentralisation is part of political as well as cultural decentralisation. Concepts are distinct, but practical discussions do not always allow them to be neatly pigeonholed.

This being the case, mapping out the various meanings of decentralisation in some detail has provided a better understanding of the differences that exist both in policy programmes, and in the changes of administrative structure, which have been loosely bundled under the name of 'decentralisation' in cultural policy. It has also been made clear that despite its definitional problems, this is a concept which has been leading debates on, and practice in, cultural policy in many nations. In particular, it is hoped that cultural decentralisation in geography and political decentralisation between different levels of public bodies in cultural policy, which is my focus in this paper as has been noted in the Introduction, are now solidly situated in the whole picture and in relation to other relevant concepts. It would be an interesting challenge to deal with different aspects of cultural decentralisation together with a macro perspective and examine the issue of 'fairness' in subsidy distribution. The scope of the paper is, however, limited to geography in cultural provision and to the politics relevant to it. For the purposes of the paper, therefore, 'cultural decentralisation' will simply refer to the geographical version of cultural diffusion unless otherwise specified, and 'political decentralisation' will mean the relations between public bodies involved in cultural policy.

Chapter 2 Values

Decentralisation needs more theoretical examination before we begin to observe practice in this area of British cultural policy in Part 2: It is a question of why we need to, if at all, care about decentralisation.

In fact, the value of decentralisation itself—whether cultural, fiscal or political—is rarely questioned, and it is frequently taken a priori to have an intrinsic merit as policy. Presumably the geographical dispersal of the arts is important *because* it enhances some values that the democratic society of today thinks highly of. Also, it is presumed that decentralisation in organisational structure in cultural policy making and administration matters *because* decentralised structures are more effective in bringing about cultural decentralisation than a centralised structure, and they therefore serve societal values in ‘better’ and more ‘desirable’ ways.

It seems that not only definitions but also the values of decentralisation have remained under-theorised. As a result, decentralisation policy becomes normative, with few convincing arguments to back it up. A lack of theoretical dimension in decentralisation policy also allows simplistic assumptions. It is a *prima facie* doctrine that political decentralisation is one of the priorities of cultural policy because of the direct link assumed between political and cultural decentralisation.

As will be shown, a definitive explanation for the values of decentralisation is not possible. It is not accordingly the prime intention of this chapter. Rather, I will aim to review existing theories on decentralisation to build another layer of theoretical foundation in addition to the one relating to definitions, on which the findings and discussion in the following chapters will be based. It is hoped that the summary of theories on decentralisation will at least help to identify the overarching values of society such as ‘equality’ which decentralisation in cultural policy is to address.

2.1 Cultural Decentralisation

To begin with, the value of cultural decentralisation may look beyond question. To put it simply, one of the basic values of modern, liberal democratic societies is, in principle, to achieve equality (Le Grand et al 1992), though it might look this has been abused or eroded in practice in recent years. Cultural decentralisation can be deemed necessary for this purpose and accordingly the value should guide public policy formulation, although there are

more basic values to be achieved, which should underlie policy goals, such as ‘efficiency’ (in economics terms) and individual choice and freedom (Le Grand et al 1992). The relationship between the values and public policy is, however, much more complicated than it may have sounded in the above: The values provide rationales for the State’s activism and they become the objectives of policy. Policy in turn functions to achieve the values and it influences them. In other words, to achieve equality in culture—the definition of which will be discussed in Chapter 9—requires government intervention in the market which would otherwise behave to create, retain or exacerbate inequality. Thus optimising equality must be one of the main objectives and principles of cultural policy. This is the mechanism by which cultural decentralisation is legitimatised as a policy objective. But equally the forms of policy impinge upon the value of equality: One of the classic arguments against public funding for the arts is that it tends to subsidise the activities of the better-off who are dominant audience, and that it thus perpetuates (or promotes) inequality among different socio-economic groups of population.

Literature in economics has not so far shed light on the above value, or on the question of how the provision in the arts and culture should be distributed. Cultural economics has argued rationale for public expenditure in cultural policy primarily on ‘efficiency’ grounds. For economists, efficiency is defined as “making the best use of limited resources given people’s taste” (Barr 1993, p72), or conceptualised as the question of how much service and benefits should be produced with limited resources (Le Grand et al 1992). The State’s intervention is necessary because arts and culture are ‘semi-public goods’ which the market will produce inefficiently, if at all. They are public in that they produce national prestige and identity, have externalities such as the spill-over effect from direct consumers (audience) to wider society and provide option demand (even though one does not go to a theatre, its existence promises an opportunity). Goods with such attributes cannot be efficiently (that is, to a desirable extent with given resources) provided in the market, hence they are in need of state subvention (Towse 1994).

Cultural economics literature has largely stopped here and barely touched upon the issue of equity, except for a few, brief statements (eg Lingle 1992, pp22-23). When it comes to the question of the ways in which the produced goods should be distributed, economic arguments become scarce and thin. This is not very surprising, given the similar state of welfare economics which cultural economics has looked to as a model (Khakee 1988, p1). Neo-classical economists have traditionally shied away from this issue which involves the ethical value judgement of fairness and justice. They claim it to be outside of their professional remit (Le Grand et al 1992, pp15-16) despite the fact that the distributional aspect of public finance is often a major point of controversy in public policy (Musgrave and Musgrave 1974,

p11). As such no reasonable consensus has been reached as to the measurement of the concept. As Duffy (1992, p46) points out, however, many of the collective benefits stressed on the grounds of efficiency are not actually realised when participation is low in practice. It follows, as O'Hagan and Duffy (1989) argue, equity case should be tackled in conjunction with, and not in isolation from, efficiency grounds.

Alternatively, political philosophers could perhaps help by providing grand theories of the State and its relationship to citizens. In cultural policy, unfortunately, literature of this kind has not yet been made available.

Third, as such, equity as a policy goal inevitably becomes ambiguous. The foregoing chapter has already illustrated this problem, exploring various aspects of cultural decentralisation as well as financial and political decentralisation. Even the concept of cultural decentralisation in geography, which may look straightforward, is ill-defined (Towse 1994, p149). As was suggested, policy-makers seem to have done without developing the definition and measurement of the concept of cultural decentralisation and have instead relied upon easily obtainable indicators of financial decentralisation.

As we shall see in Part 2 and 3, this has been at the root of the problems in British cultural policy. As such, close examination of equity in cultural policy would be of great importance, and will be undertaken in Part 3.

2.2 Political Decentralisation

So far attention has been given to the value of equity underlying cultural decentralisation, which had been by and large intuitively understood by us, but not much discussed in depth. Equally, the oft-employed argument that cultural decentralisation is achieved through political decentralisation may be convincing at first glance, but makes us wonder what values exist behind the debates between centralisation and decentralisation in cultural administration. As we shall see in the following, the values of political decentralisation, again, have many aspects which are interlinked with each other in a complicated way.

Political decentralisation has largely received, if only in rhetoric, unqualified support in cultural policy. There should be, we would guess, some societal values that are better served by the decentralised structure of cultural administration. Smith (1985) and Wolman (1990), in an attempt to discover these values, have engaged in literature reviews of economics and political science and have drawn up similar lists of the values. Although for territorial

politics in general, their points of argument are helpful for reference in the discussion of the link between cultural and political decentralisation. What follows is the summary of the two works.

Efficiency Value

There is an argument that decentralised government is 'efficient' (that is, the best in maximising collective welfare in a society using scarce resources), originating from so-called 'public choice' theory.¹ The theory is based on the premise of consumer sovereignty, which assumes that individual consumers are the best judges of the goods to be provided, and that the societal goal is to maximise the welfare of the whole population. Since individuals have different preferences, divergence occurs between demand and what is available through the government provision of 'public' goods and services. When the governing unit is small, the argument goes, the preferences would be easily expressed by the communities of relatively like-minded individuals who would demand similar public goods and who would be perceived by those who make decisions. Therefore, collective welfare would be efficiently achieved.

In cultural policy terms, this line of thought would argue that regions and localities vary in terms of resources they possess for policy implementation, such as financial basis and quality of personnel, and also in terms of needs such as the number of venues and artists and demographic features of population. Therefore, sub-central units of cultural policy can tailor services by efficiently matching the resources to the needs which they presumably know better than the centre would do.

The problem here is, as Wolman (1990, pp31-32) points out, decentralisation does not allow the merit of economies of scale on the one hand and ignores the problem of external effects on the other. For example, air pollution originating from a particular jurisdiction which has less severe regulation would inevitably affect the neighbouring communities. Another example is traffic congestion that affects numerous people across various jurisdictions. In these examples, the efficiency of a society as a whole is reduced, and upper tier government's interference or coerced co-ordination would be required.

Wolman (1990, pp31-32) also suggests the possibility of overriding 'national interests', which are altogether ruled out in this theory on efficiency. Equal opportunity concern would be one of the examples of national issues. The potential conflict between the existence of

¹ For a good summary of the works around the theory, see chapter 3 of Dunleavy and O'Leary (1987).

national interests and local governance is an interesting point for exploration and will be taken up in Chapter 10.

Governance Values

There are values achieved through decentralisation other than efficiency or economy. Smith (1985) and Wolman (1990) turn their attention to theories of political science. According to theories on democracy, the decentralised structure of government serves such functions as political education, training in political leadership and stimulating community spirit, all of which contribute to the enhancement of the democratic State and political stability. It is possible to apply this thinking to cultural policy and to argue that decentralisation is good for democracy and necessary so as to involve local people with artistic creation and participation and to promote a participatory style of policy-making.²

Systems and institutional arrangements in politics can also benefit from decentralisation, because they will facilitate responsiveness and accountability. People's demands will be best judged by those at local level who are knowledgeable, and who are attuned to the needs of the local community, and who are held directly and easily answerable to local communities. Decentralisation has an added value for policy itself. Since local needs vary, diversity of policy between areas will emerge which will offer wider options for residence for people to choose from. Diversity will lead to policy innovation.

In terms of cultural policy, this line of thought argues that political decentralisation serves better to encourage grass-roots arts activities, and it ensures that artists can choose to live and produce creative works outside of the cultural capitals, all of which will benefit local residents. Decentralised structure of cultural policy is desirable also because it is less monopolistic and bureaucratic, more flexible and more responsive to the needs in the regions (Girard 1983, pp172-173).

Appealing to most people's common sense as they might be, the above arguments are not, however, without problems. Smith (1985) introduces the critical comments that local governance is too often romanticised and portrayed with pastoral images in a value-laden way. Empirically, local politics are as susceptible to oligarchy as any organisation, and they are subject to the possibility of ineffectuality and low accountability. The arguments in favour of local governance presumes that local politicians and administrators to be as capable

² Curiously, Mulgan and Worpole (1986, pp125-126) recommends the creation of directly elected bodies in the region which is responsible for the arts and cultural industry, while proposing the creation of an integrated Ministry of Arts and Communications.

as their counterparts at the centre in general terms and are better equipped with local knowledge. This is also open to empirical investigation.

What has been presented above is meant to introduce another theoretical dimension to the debate on decentralisation in cultural policy. Caution is advised in that the theories are open to empirical testing and reveal more questions to ask. Smith (1985, pp44-45) also notes that they derive from different intellectual traditions, and may not have initially been formulated for the purpose of explaining decentralisation *per se*, but may have been used for the purposes of debate. He also denies the possibility of their synthesis into a monolithic theory on decentralisation. Nonetheless, there is much to be gained from the review. We now have a better understanding of different dimensions that underlie decentralisation in cultural policy. Based on these, we shall be able to make informed judgement on the practice of decentralisation in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 3 Strategies

Implementation of cultural decentralisation can take on a wide variety of forms. This chapter will attempt to identify the ways in which cultural decentralisation can be implemented, and it will conclude Part 1 where theoretical arguments on decentralisation are made. It is important to note that cultural decentralisation can be done either with or without political decentralisation. Both will also be further divided to produce a more complicated picture. Table 2.1 in Appendix B is provided to help trace the following discussion.

3.1 Cultural Decentralisation without Political Decentralisation

We will take up cultural decentralisation without political decentralisation. This is cultural decentralisation in geography, carried out without either exchange of resources between different tiers of government, or the changing of the political/administrative structure of government. Such form of decentralisation can be executed, either by the centre or the local, by their taking initiative, planning, financing and implementation responsibilities.

The centre has three strategies for cultural decentralisation without political decentralisation. First, the centre can set up within its structure a unit which promotes regional development of cultural policy (deconcentration). Regional offices of the unit will be located around the country and will work regionally. But it is first and foremost the centre which posts its personnel to the regions, decides the objectives and aims of regional cultural policy and sets standards and norms which regional offices should comply with. France provides a good example of this. The French Ministry of Culture had regional directors of cultural affairs in the 1960s, who were formally transformed to the Regional Directorates (DRAC) in 1974. This, set up in each of France's twenty-two regions, serves as an intermediary system between local authorities and the Ministry's various departments. It is expected to represent 'a more flexible form of central government presence' (Council of Europe 1991, p86).

Second, the centre can build cultural facilities and arts organisations across the country. This was one of the most common strategies employed in the early post-war decades by governments in Europe. The creation of the *Maisons de la culture* in the 1960s, which were supposed to be spread into every town in France, is a classic example. Helping establish cultural organisations regionally is to follow this strategy, and it was commonly observed in Europe in the 1960s and 1970s. In most cases this involves local financing with the centre challenging the local, but the principal actor is the centre.

The third strategy, which is equally prevalent, is to arrange the touring of art exhibitions and performances nation-wide. Sweden, for example, has been keen on this policy and has set up agencies for touring and oblige 'national' arts organisations to perform across the country.

In sharp contrast to such top-down planning, another form of cultural decentralisation without any central-local contact is through voluntary, spontaneous and unplanned grassroots movements. This has certainly been the case in many countries. The spread of regional arts associations in Britain is a good example. Locally-elected public bodies can contribute within their competence laid out by law and other prescriptions given by central government. In countries where control is less rigid such as France (Council of Europe 1991, p294), it has generally done well to enrich local dimensions of culture.

3.2 Cultural Decentralisation with Political Decentralisation

Having seen the variety of cultural decentralisation without political decentralisation, initiated by the centre and the local, we will now focus on cultural decentralisation with political decentralisation. This can be divided into two: It can be formulated through the transfer of power between the centre and the local. The alternative formulation is to enhance the power of the local without reducing the power of the central. Thus, while the first strategy involves a zero-sum game, the second is a 'win-win situation'.

As was explained in Chapter 1, the transfer of power can take on a whole range of forms, and can work to different degrees. By deploying tangible resources such as money and law, and also intangible ones such as information, administrative guidance and prescriptions on organisational structures of local government (Rhodes 1992, pp90-91; Mangset 1995). The constellation of all of these different resources to varying magnitudes would produce different forms of political decentralisation, which would be placed on a centralisation/decentralisation continuum. This, as a whole, is often seen as one of the most important means for achieving cultural decentralisation.

Lastly, political decentralisation for the purpose of cultural decentralisation is possible by increasing resources of the local with no reduction in the possessed resources at the centre. This looks similar to the case mentioned earlier where structure develops voluntarily for cultural policy of the local, but this is significantly different in involving statutory means. A British example of this is the empowerment of local authorities in arts provision, which has been one of the most significant steps for cultural decentralisation, as will be further

elaborated in the following chapters. A French version of this had been done for some time in the 1970s by the Ministry of Culture through collaboratively drawing up 'cultural charters' which set out the framework for local actions (Council of Europe 1991, p92).

PART 2 : DECENTRALISATION IN BRITISH CULTURAL POLICY

In Part I, we have looked at the ideas and theoretical rationale of decentralisation, and the possible strategies for cultural decentralisation. Having them as a framework for analysis, we now move on to the description of the British case. Chapter 4 will overview background to cultural decentralisation in Britain up until the early 1980s. This will demonstrate that two sets of organisations, regional arts associations and local authorities, have emerged as key actors for this policy goal. The following chapters will examine their performance in cultural decentralisation. Chapter 5 will consider the relationship of Regional Arts Associations (RAAs, later Regional Arts Boards) with the Arts Council. Chapter 6 will look at local authorities in order to explore their contribution to cultural decentralisation in the national picture which has been curtailed through the Conservative Government's efforts to contain the capabilities of local government in general over the last fifteen years. Effects of these changing central-local relationships on arts organisations will be more closely examined in Chapter 7, by taking as an example a group of building-based, repertory, producing theatres in the West Midlands. Throughout Part 2, the basic approach to the topic of the paper is empirical. Particular focus will be on the practical problems and the institutional issues of policy implementation.

Chapter 4: Background

4.1 Tradition of Centralism

Generally speaking, central government in Britain enjoys tremendous power in politics, compared to other European unitary (not federal) states (Batley and Stoker (eds) 1991). Parliament holds legal power to create or abolish local authorities, a fact which was clearly demonstrated in 1986 by the abolition of the Greater London Council and six major metropolitan councils. Local authorities are also subject to *ultra vires*, in sharp contrast to their European counterparts which are constitutionally granted general competence (Ashford 1989; King 1993, p217). It is also Parliament that confers statutory approval on local authorities without which the latter is not authorised for any function (Byrne 1994, pp74-79). Financially, too, local government has no right to spend on capital projects without central government consent, a tradition dating back to the nineteenth century. On top of these constitutional and administrative constraints, recent years have seen an unprecedented limitations imposed on local government through a number of devices by the central

government, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6. At this stage of argument, it will suffice to note that regionalism is not deeply-rooted in British politics: Local participation may be encouraged, but it is not, constitutionally speaking, meant to counteract the centre on an equal footing, nor historically, imagined as an integral part of government (Ashford 1989, p79).

Not only politics but also the arts and culture, particularly performing arts and entertainment, have been traditionally concentrated in London. Remarks that reflect cultural metropolitanism abound. During the 1860s and 1870s, at the occasions which led to the establishment of Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Stratford upon Avon, the Royal Shakespeare Company's predecessor, the press of the time vehemently attacked the attempts to stage Shakespeare's works outside of London which alone could properly accommodate performance, with sufficiently large and responsive audience (Beauman 1982, p6, pp13-14, p18). The contention

of the Times "not one in ten thousand would go out of his way to see them acted in Stratford" (the Times, October 1864, quoted in Beauman 1982, p6) was one of the many. A Times critic of today similarly criticises the company's announcement of its shift from the London base to nation-wide touring, arguing that it would have an adverse effect on quality:

"A few (in the regions) may even be willing to trade excellence for availability....But this is Britain, not America. All roads lead to London, and none take too long getting there" (Nightingale, 1995)

In such a country with a deep-rooted belief in metropolis, both politically and culturally, it would not be difficult to visualise a number of hurdles to making policy-makers based in London understand the thrust and nature of regional development which are indispensable for informed decision-making at the centre.

4.2 Tradition of Liberalism

The strong tradition of *laissez-faire* is another feature of British politics. The principle of *laissez-faire*, according to Barr (1993, pp46-48), derives from two strands of thinking. One strand stresses the value of free markets and private property, that were advocated by eighteenth and nineteenth century thinkers such as Hume, Adam Smith, Bentham and John Stuart Mill. Another is to defend "private property on moral grounds, as of a natural right" (Barr 1993, p46), preached by Spencer, which has penetrated other areas of public policy and has been one of the dominant principles for the politics and economics of the country. Even as to the Welfare State, which may have looked to represent the State's departure from the *laissez-faire* principle, researchers of comparative social policy have broadly agreed that the

British model is residual in principle and reflective of the liberalism tradition (Esping-Andersen 1990; Ginsburg 1992).

In cultural policy, this liberalism tradition is even more strikingly prominent. Most institutions which today are called 'national' and financed by government, eg the British Museum, were initiated by private individuals and later taken on by government only reluctantly and after prolonged, public discussions (Harris 1970; Minihan 1977). The Arts Council was set up with relative ease only due to the success of its predecessor, the Council for the Encouragement of Music and Arts (CEMA), which was in fact started as a voluntary initiative (ACGB undated a, pp3-12).

At local level, likewise, the *laissez-faire* principle was prevalent, as Lord Redcliffe-Maud (1976) observed, "there was a traditional view that the local council was not there to engage in 'frills and luxuries'" (p102). Marshall (1974) explains that local government in England has been historically developed at the time of industrial revolution, by being allocated responsibilities for health, education and social security matters. Therefore, until recent decades "they have made little of their potential as multi-purpose authorities" (Marshall 1974, p17) to maximise citizens' welfare and improve their quality of life. In the arts and culture, local authority museums were often created by the donation of private collections, and local performing arts organisations such as orchestras and theatre companies were initially supported by industrialists.

Thus arts and entertainment have been marginal on the public policy agenda at national and local level, and it has taken decades for local authorities of all tiers to be granted spending on the arts at their discretion, which was finally completed by the Local Government Act 1972. However, it has been noted that local authorities commitment and approach to cultural policy varies greatly, is inadequate as a whole, and is particularly lacking with respect to the performing arts (Cmnd 2601 1965, para75; Ruck 1965; Marshall 1974; Lord Redcliffe-Maud 1976; House of Commons 1982, para 10.1). Some local authorities were even hostile to them. One would imagine the local authority of Stratford upon Avon giving generous support to the Royal Shakespeare Company in return for the company's contribution in attracting tourists to this small town at the centre of English tourism. On the contrary, however, the town had always been reluctant to support the organisation, or even nervous about the existence of the theatre (Beauman 1982, p180; House of Commons 1982, para 10.3), which had annoyed the Arts Council (ACGB 1984, p23).

Thus, the tradition of liberalism, or resistance to state activism, has led to no systematic efforts to oblige or involve local authorities in supporting the arts on the part of central government or the Arts Council.

4.3 The Emergence of the Issue

As was explained in Chapter 2, equity concern is one of the very reasons for governmental intervention, and is hence enshrined in the objectives of the Arts Council in the Charter on which the Council is founded. Arguably, in its early years, the Council made some efforts for decentralisation, inheriting the practice of CEMA, a war-time operation for bringing the arts to the nation to uplift civic morale. It had directly run theatres in a few towns and managed the touring of performance and art exhibitions until the mid-1950s, co-ordinated by its regional offices which then existed around the country. Also, it had operated the 'Housing the Arts' programme since 1965 until 1987/88, which subsidised capital expenditure for building cultural facilities nation-wide. For theatre, it tried to promote artistic improvement of regional companies by providing funds and non-monetary support such as guidance and encouragement, albeit by promoting a paternalistic view, in the Council's words, by "placing local theatres in touch with metropolitan sources and standards" (Arts Council 1965, p 78).

Nonetheless, a much stronger feature in its early years up to the 1970s is the Council's quick retreat from its commitment to the policy of diffusion in favour of that of raising standards. In review of the first ten years since its inception, the Council explicitly stated this bias (ACGB undated a, p22). It stressed the need to concentrate its limited resources on the maintenance and enhancement of standards at the expense of 'spread' policy, referring to the problem of expense, lack of interests in some places, broadcasting as a better means of delivery, and the growing efforts made by local authorities (ACGB undated a, pp22-25). King and Blaug (1973, p13) find the Arts Council was expecting the people outside of the cities to be satisfied with the arts through broadcasting and amateur works.

The Council's decision to close its remaining English regional offices in 1955 was most symbolic of a trend towards centralism from a regional viewpoint, set against its injection of funds into 'exemplary' organisations such as the Royal Opera House for artistic standards. The local people were not convinced of the Council's assertion that the closure was because the arts would be better promoted by grass-roots enthusiasm than by top-down delivery of metropolitan products. For this was not unique to the arts policy, but was shared in other policy areas such as education and housing, which clearly signified the end of 'deconcentration' of government structure (Rhodes 1992, p153).

It was such apparent centralism that mobilised local spirit for the creation of Regional Arts Associations, involving local authorities, arts societies and clubs, in some cases businesses, labour unions and universities of the areas. They had become a ‘movement’ in the country, helped financially by the Arts Council and the Gulbenkian Foundation.

Recognition of the associations’ role and contribution to cultural decentralisation was explicitly made by the Labour government’s White Paper in 1965, as early as in the middle of the associations’ movement, when only three out of twelve were formally established. Jenny Lee, the first Minister for the Arts, mentioned in it:

“(The RAAs) can stimulate the co-operation of other authorities, and by calling on each for a fairly small levy provide funds with which to finance a variety of projects—concerts, exhibitions, film shows and lectures—which few authorities by themselves could afford....A network of this kind should be developed to cover the whole country. Once an association has been formed it can act with and for the Arts Council in a mutually beneficial relationship” (Cmnd 2601, 1965, para43)

The growing concern for regionalism and recognition of the RAAs and local authorities were noted subsequently in the first systematic survey of arts support by Lord Redcliffe-Maud (1976), and was still being expressed in the early 1980s at a Select Committee at the House of Commons (House of Commons 1982).

The local authorities’ role was also increased in the support for the arts and culture in the same period, particularly since the 1970s by the Local Government Act 1972, that conferred comprehensive power in arts provision upon all local authorities, and was further stimulated by the 1974 structural reorganisation of local government. They have become one of the major patrons of the arts, by getting involved with the establishment and promotion of RAAs, supporting libraries and museums, investing in theatres and other cultural facilities, directly promoting concerts and making grant-in-aid available to local arts organisations and amateur groups.

4.4 Strategies for Cultural Decentralisation

The above historical account suggests that cultural decentralisation in the British context has been made possible via three ways: by central measures taken by the Arts Council to help the

arts in the region flourish and make them geographically more available, by the empowerment of Regional Arts Associations and by the empowerment and encouragement of local authorities. All the options, however, involved with some practical problems, which shall be examined below.

4.4.1 Measures taken by the Arts Council

As has been mentioned, the Arts Council's policy emphasis on diffusion was explicitly made secondary in the 1950s and the 1960s, but the funding of major regional companies continued. The Arts Council's own planning for cultural structure in the region was, however, criticised by the RAAs, as lacking in strategy which would cater for regional needs and take into full account the regional resources (eg House of Commons 1982, Q. 532-3).

In the 1970s and the 1980s, the question of cultural decentralisation (not only in geography but also in socio-economic classes etc, see Chapter 1) broadened its scope, reflecting the social issue of integrating the disadvantaged and marginalised groups of population. Thus, the issue of cultural decentralisation became more concerned with stimulating participation of lower strata socio-economic groups, and in improving physical access to the disabled, and in extending the support to the cultures of non-European origin. Meanwhile, a political goal of improving geographical accessibility has no longer occupied a dominant place in public discourse on decentralisation.

4.4.2 RAAs

The development of RAAs has already been repeatedly mentioned as instrumental to decentralisation. Various forms of empowering RAAs in theory were converged into the devolution of revenue clients and projects in practical discussions. However, transfer of resources from the Arts Council to RAAs were not easily achieved for two reasons, both of which were related to the voluntary nature of the RAAs. First, although the RAAs are *de facto* public, or semi-Quango in terms of funding, and semi-Quango (quasi-local government) in terms of representation and function, and work for public interests, they are *de jure* private. The organisations were set up by private initiatives and have remained autonomous. Therefore, the machinery for political decentralisation was basically a co-operative arrangement, rather than any formal measure such as legislation. Given the wider implication of funding responsibilities, however, the Arts Council was not willing to devolve its clients in any systematic way, despite the recommendations for decentralisation occasionally made by the third party (eg House of Commons 1968, para 90; Lord Redcliffe-Maud 1976; House of Commons 1982, para 6.11, 6.22-26) and the Council's reaffirmation of its commitment to it (ACGB 1979, p13; ACGB 1980, p10; ACGB 1981, p6; ACGB 1983, p6).

Second, transfer of power from the Arts Council to the RAAs would cause problems with relation to the issue of accountability. RAAs offer perhaps one of the most fascinating case studies for the students of public policy and administration, as they are the meeting point for vertical, financial accountability, and horizontal, democratic accountability. The former is to the Arts Council, its principal funder, whereas the latter is to local authorities, which have been engaged in the set-up, development and governance of the associations, hence they are partners in regional cultural policy. As the funding to the RAAs increased and their role strengthened, it became an issue as to whom the associations need to be made accountable (House of Commons 1982, Q529, Working Group 1980).

Their accountability to the Arts Council was comparatively straightforward. However, with regard to local democracy and accountability in a less managerial sense, or responsibility for regional interests, this was only to be met with local authorities' representation in associations in the absence of any regional structure of government in Britain. As the RAAs requested more transfer of power from the Arts Council, conflicts became predictable between managerial accountability and the sense of local democracy. The latter was not easily reconciled, as it represented the associations' roots and identity. This indeed was background to, and one of the main issues in, the review of the funding system in the late 1980s, as will be explained in Chapter 5.

4.4.3 Local Authorities

To engage local authorities with arts provision is another way of achieving distribution of local arts activities. In the current structure, the 'arm's length' principle serves to inhibit any manipulation by central government in setting norms for local authorities. Thus, arts provision has remained discretionary as opposed to mandatory for local authorities. An early idea of Arts Council's financing local authorities was ruled out by the Treasury (Harris 1970, p117). One of the disadvantages of making arts provision as obligatory would be that by setting standards for involvement, relatively high spenders in the arts might reduce themselves to a prescribed level. At the same time, it would allow scope for central government's intervention in the level of spending and the ways of service delivery. There is resistance towards quantifying arts provision, a concern that it would devalue qualitative aspects of arts activities.

Therefore, it is not easy to centrally plan equal distribution of the arts with the involvement of local authorities. Persuasion and non-statutory means of encouragement have been left as realistic approaches which could only be realised in an ad hoc fashion.

Chapter 5: RAA/RABs and the Arts Council

Chapter 4 has provided a historical account of the emergence of the RAAs and their much acclaimed success in cultural policy in the regions. This chapter is to describe the development of the relationship between the Arts Council and the RAAs since the late 1970s up to present. Table 5.1 in Appendix B is provided to help trace the complicated development by listing in chronological order relevant publications and events.

5.1 Devolution - The Glory of the Garden

By 1973, all English regions were covered by the RAAs, and the Council of Regional Arts Associations (CoRAA), their representative body, was already in existence. Endorsed by the White Paper of 1965 and furthered by Lord Redcliffe-Maud's report of 1976, the RAAs rapidly increased their power and presence in the national framework of cultural policy. Seeing the expansion of the responsibility of the Arts Council, alongside the growth of the RAAs, Parliament had recommended devolution (House of Commons 1968, para 90; House of Commons 1982, para 6.11) of clients. In accordance with these developments, the RAAs were claiming strongly for enhanced status and competence.

Such apparent success of the RAAs and critical discourse about the Arts Council led to a call for the thorough review of the relationship between the two tiers of funding organisations. The Arts Council set up the Regional Development Department in 1974 to liaise with the RAAs, and began to state that:

“It is our intention to continue our policy of devolving to Regional Arts Associations further responsibilities for the support of the work in the regions....15 years ago, the Secretary-General's report could confidently plump for raising standards and invoke the maxim ‘Few but roses’ as a justification...but in the present climate it would be impossible to maintain it and we would not wish to. All citizens support the arts through their taxes, and all have a right to benefit from public policies for the arts” (ACGB 1976, p9).

Without rigorous efforts to explore the alterations for the ‘responsibility’ to be decentralised, devolution of grant-in-aid to some organisations was taken up, though it is said that the Arts Council was, as a matter of fact, suspicious about the RAAs throughout the 1970s (Hutchison 1982a, p124), and subsequent arguments were focused on its extent and the means of operationalising it. A joint working group was set up and it produced a document entitled ‘Towards Decentralisation’ in 1977, which was added to by another report called ‘Towards a

New Relationship' in 1980. There is much to suggest strains in the relationship between the RAAs and the Arts Council of this period. For example, Sims, then Hon. Treasurer of CoRAA and Director of West Midlands Arts stated in evidence to the House of Commons, "the central body tends to look at it [devolution] in terms of having something taken away from it" (House of Commons 1982, Q529).

The result of 'the first and largest of its kind' (ACGB 1984) review of arts policy of the Council since its birth in 1946 was, however, a rather disappointing document called 'The Glory of the Garden' in 1984: It set out the Arts Council's decision to devolve its clients and to withdraw from revenue funding for some organisations altogether. It is suspected by one of the interviewed theatre directors, who incidentally was the director of a devolved theatre at that time in the North West, that it was made in order to accommodate the grant cut in real terms to the Arts Council from government in 1981, while demonstrating that the Council was thinking strategically.

5.2 Delegation - The Wilding Review

However, devolution turned out to be a one-off event, and was not much followed up until the late 1980s. The Arts Council's failure to show its commitment to cultural decentralisation in subsequent years has been criticised and ridiculed (eg Harrop 1987, Pick 1991). In the meantime, frustration on the part of the RAAs was increasing, and the relationship deteriorating, not only due to the power struggle between them, but also due to the change of the Arts Council's culture brought about by the Conservative government's pressure on it. As a former CoRAA director recalls:

"There was mounting distrust between the RAAs and the Arts Council. We [the RAAs] felt that the Arts Council was no longer acting for the arts, and was instead the agent of the government."

By this time, the Conservative Government which came into power in 1979 pushed forward a whole new set of values and ideologies into public sector management. For the arts, there was much evidence to suggest the government was trying to minimise its role in the support for the arts. Business sponsorship was already endorsed by the launch of the Business Sponsorship Incentive Scheme in late 1984. The ideology that the public sector was wasteful and inferior to the market model was already influencing the corporate culture and orientations of the Arts Council, manifested, among other things, by the publication of 'The Great British Success Story' (ACGB 1985), which advocated support for the arts explicitly on economic

grounds. Richard Luce, then the Minister for the Arts, made a still oft-quoted speech at the annual conference of the CoRAA held in Newcastle in 1987:

“...there are still too many in the arts world who have yet to be weaned away from the welfare state mentality - the attitude that the taxpayer owes them a living. Many have not yet accepted the challenge of developing plural sources of funding. They give the impression of thinking that all other sources of fund are either tainted or too difficult to get. They appear not to have grasped that the collectivist mentality of the sixties and seventies is out of date.”

“...beyond the arts world is the mass of the British public. The majority tend to be highly sceptical about the use of taxpayers’ money for the arts”(Luce 1987).

This was felt to be the final, fatal sign of the government in threatening the arts sector.

The latter part of Chapter 4 pointed out the RAAs’ position at a crossroads of two different lines of accountabilities, which was to lead to a structural problem. As was predicted, the very success of the RAAs gave rise to a concern with accountability. Luce saw the need to ameliorate the relationship between the Arts Council and the RAAs and to strengthen accountability (Luce 1988). He commissioned Richard Wilding, retiring Secretary to the Office of Arts and Libraries, to investigate optional systems of policy delivery in the arts for the nation, which were effective, economical and accountable. The arts funding bodies believed that the Minister was following a broad ideology of the Conservative Government, and he treated sub-national government, namely, the Arts Council, the RAAs and local government as a whole, with great suspicion. Arts organisations similarly felt that the themes of the enquiry were to ‘dress up’ the hidden agenda of shaking the arts sector up to bring forward the ‘reality’ of the 1990s.

Wilding did extensive research on the topic and undertook wide consultation with relevant parties. His report, finally published in 1989 (Wilding 1989), contained eighty recommendations on the restructuring of the funding system and the working relationship between the organisations. Some of the most controversial points he made included the recommendation for the massive reduction of local authorities’ presence in the RAAs (Wilding 1989, para 7.2, 7.8) and his distinction of ‘social’ art and arts of excellence (Wilding 1989, para 7.21, 7.24) which implied the former’s inferiority and the association with local level. Regional arts advocates did not believe that Wilding had understood the dynamics of regional and local arts scenes (CoRAA undated; WMA undated), and saw him as typical of civil servants with a centralistic view.

Although Luce did not endorse Wilding's recommendation for the reduced representation of local authorities, as he saw them to be crucial and substantial actors for the arts support in Britain already (Luce 1990a), he left office before implementing his decisions. This was the beginning of a very unstable period for the arts. Subsequent Ministers inspected the reform from different angles, tried to sophisticate the outstanding proposal and set up task forces. Examinations were endlessly made around the issues of the number and composition of board members for the new regional bodies in particular (see Table 5.2 in Appendix B for a summary of different views and decisions which were made on the board structure by the Ministers and their task forces). Other issues scrutinised included working procedures in and between the two tiers, staffing arrangements and cost-effectiveness of a whole new system. Consultative documents were produced, seminars held and appeals made time and again. In parallel to these developments, the National Audit Office was conducting the review of the central government's arts spending (NAO 1990), and the National Media and Arts Strategy was being co-ordinated at the Arts Council (resulting in ACGB 1993). The Arts Council and the RAAs were in tough negotiation over the appropriate roles of themselves in arts support. In short, political football was being played among the Conservative government, the Arts Council and the RAAs.

Even more difficult was the implementation of the delegation of clients and projects for funding responsibilities to newly-created RABs. It met with an unusual degree of opposition from the arts sector (Everitt 1991). Debates were held between officers of specific art forms, because the selection of the clients to be delegated was left to departmental negotiation. Generally, Arts Council officers did not wish to lose their clients who symbolised their power, control and posts. Thus, decentralisation was subject to such factors as the will on the part of the Arts Council, that is, whether particular departments preferred to retain or lose their clients, the nature of the art forms and the strength of arguments made by both sides. The result turned out to be a fragmented distribution of funding responsibilities. For example, it is difficult to extract any coherent logic that explains why regional orchestras are still funded by the Arts Council whereas regional theatres are now in the hands of the RABs.

To sum up, final decisions were made in line with the Minister's decision (see Renton 1991) and a report produced at around the same time, which recommended new planning and accountability systems. Based on these, a new structure for arts funding got a new shape. The new 'integrated funding system' is to ensure the arts funding bodies nationally and regionally have coherent policy and clear accountability from RABs' clients through the RABs to the ACE (plus the Crafts Council and the British Film Institute). In order to achieve this objective, further specifications are made for the RABs as regards Board Members, conditions of funding, staffing structures, planning, budgeting and reporting. In each area,

specific formats requirements and procedures are set out. Communication at Board and executive levels is formally enhanced. The Regional Arts Boards are fully incorporated as companies limited by guarantee, each much smaller in size and with less representatives from local authorities than RAAs.

5.3 Post-Reform

Through these lasting battles for more regional powers and decentralisation in general, however, whether the Regional Arts Boards are winners or losers is not easy to judge. On one hand, having more clients has given the Boards more authority, legitimacy, presence and budgets. These in turn contribute to a broadened scope and wider experiences for staff, and it has also enabled regional policy planning to be more effective. On the other hand, however, the new director of ERAB (English Regional Arts Boards, successor to CoRAA) and the Regional Director of the Arts Council regrettably admit that the regional bodies have less independence than they used to enjoy, although the latter preferred to call the process ‘harmonisation’ rather than centralisation. Policy and business plans have to be submitted for approval by the Arts Council.¹ What was described in 1982 by CoRAA as a bunch of organisations that varied “in their composition, functions and procedures as well as in the scales of their operations” (House of Commons 1982, p192) was no longer the case.

Assessing the extent to which the Council acts as interventionist would require closer examination and inside information, but it is apparent that the relationship now is formal and bureaucratic, spelt out and illustrated in a number of documents and memorandum, and the procedures for conducting business are standardised (see ACE 1995b; ACE 1994; ACGB 1992). Some of the arts organisations are convinced that more centralisation is now happening. So are the local authorities (eg Sargent 1996, p316).

Another change that deserves attention is the introduction of a new culture for the Boards. The new governing bodies are much smaller, and the local authorities representation is limited to one third of the total number, while business involvement is now a must. For senior officers of the regional funding bodies who were concerned with the change, this seems to be working well. Arguments made at the meetings are generally constructive, and decisions are made quickly.

¹ Arts Council of Great Britain, in the meantime, was divided into the Arts Council of England (ACE), the Scottish Arts Council and the Arts Council of Wales on 1 April 1994.

Chapter 6: Local Authorities

6.1 Local Authorities and the Arts

Enhancing local authorities' role in supporting the arts is one of the other major means for cultural decentralisation. Doing it through the transfer of power has been impossible due to the lack of a direct line of authority between central and local government in the field of cultural policy. Thus, encouraging and empowering them without transfer of power has been undertaken.

Partnership with RAA/RABs has been one of the most contributing factors to increase in local authorities' commitment. West Midlands Arts (WMA), the Regional Arts Board in the West Midlands, has developed relationship with local authorities, encouraged their arts investment, engaged a range of partners in local government and supported local arts initiatives (WMA undated, p3).

It is estimated that the total net revenue expenditure on the 'arts' (excluding museums and libraries) by local authorities was £147.3 million in 1993/94, nearly matching that of the Arts Council (Marsh and White 1995). Spending on venues is the single largest area of spending, accounting for 63 % of total spending, but individual grants to artists and organisations are the most common form of support (Marsh and White 1995). Considering that leisure services as a whole, of which arts provision is only a minor part, are non-statutory and non-mandatory (with an exception of the library), an evaluation that arts provision has fared well will not be unduly unfair.

6.2 Changing Climate of the 1980s

Despite encouraging signs such as the growth rate of local councils' expenditure for the arts and culture and increasing number of local authority arts officers, the 1980s was not an easy time. It must be noted that the growth rate may have been phenomenal, but it started from scratch in many cases and the achieved level is still relatively low. Even worse, the growth has stopped for some years, due to the economic recession since the late 1980s and also to central government's determination for the containment of local public expenditure (Glennerster 1992, chapter 5; Travers 1995).

The Conservative government's limitation on the power and capabilities of local government is well-documented (eg, *inter alia*, Travers 1989, Stewart and Stoker (eds) 1995). The abolition of the Greater London Council and six major metropolitan councils in 1986 reminded us of the principle that local government in Britain is a creature of Parliament. For the arts, this was one of the hardest blows, as the GLC in particular was leading an imaginative approach to cultural policy (Bianchini 1991) as well as providing subsidies to a large number of organisations in London.

In addition to this, four interrelating trends can be singled out. First, central government has limited autonomy of local government through changes in finance: It has less power to raise revenue than before and is more dependent on central government's grants. Through grant-making, central government can specify on what and in what way money is to be spent.

Second, by emphasising consumers' choice, central government has effectively undermined local government's capacity for planning. For example, in sectors such as education, funds by-pass local authorities and go directly to end-users or their agents. Third, local government has been made to change its role from direct provider of services to enabler to allow individuals to make their choice from a plurality of providers. Fourth, the principles and practices of the business sector have been injected into public sector management (Stewart and Walsh 1992). In order to ensure efficiency, effectiveness and economy, measures such as charging for services, contracting and the creation of 'internal market' have been introduced (Walsh 1995). These changes in turn have been enhanced by the requirement for articulated objectives, criteria for measurement and constant assessment. The public sector, particularly local government, has thus been experiencing a revolution (Flynn 1993; Walsh 1995).

While traditionally 'mainstream' service areas of local government such as education and the social services were increasingly curtailed and put under severe scrutiny, local government has developed a new area in the 1980s, that is, urban economic development (Harding 1989, pp24-15).¹ Funding was available from Europe for tackling inner-city problems and also from central government grants earmarked for urban regeneration. There was a growing belief on the part of city planners in the values arts and culture could bring to the cities as well as of the employment cultural industries could generate (Griffiths 1993). Reports were produced to make the case, creating figures which was to demonstrate the economic contribution of the arts and culture (eg Myerscough 1988), and to present the success of

¹ Harding and Garside (1995) and Harding (1989) argue, however, local government was gradually overshadowed in its role in local development by the Conservative Government's centralism and its emphasis on the market superiority.

image-building through the arts and culture in the cities such as Glasgow and Birmingham (eg ACGB undated b). Bianchini (1991, p32) even argues that the erosion of local authority power in other areas has perhaps contributed to raising the awareness of the authorities that cultural policy can be an instrument with which to visibly reassert their presence in politics.

It should be noted, however, that it was chiefly to large, metropolitan cities that the newly-developed scope for the arts within city planning was made available. In the 1980s opportunities for funding also became more available from the health and social services. This was particularly due to the development of community care policy since the 1980s, whereby personalised care in non-institutional settings and quality of service were emphasised, to which arts were seen to make a significant contribution. Officers in local authorities are rightly called Arts Development Officers, who have to be opportunistic about the possibilities for the involvement of the arts in basically non-arts plans and projects. Far less of their time is spent on the allocation of their small budgets and more on co-ordinating arts-related projects with other departments and agencies of the councils.

6.3 Consequences

It is not easy to take all these different strands together and to pinpoint the extent to which arts provision has suffered from the changing central-local relationships of government. On one hand, because the arts are a relatively new, marginal area compared to 'mainstream', mandatory services and also thanks to the 'arm's length' principle, they have managed to escape from the central government's attention. Although arts managers and bureaucrats are not over-optimistic about potential attacks, no significant policy change has been imposed upon them yet.

On the other hand, it is clear that when budgets are tight, discretionary services are the most vulnerable. It was estimated that total net revenue expenditure on the arts fell from 1992/93 to 1994/95 by 5.2 per cent after allowing for inflation (Marsh and White 1995). New pots of money that looked available for the arts are also shrinking, and arts-related projects are amongst the first to go. The arts development budget in particular is being slashed in some councils because it is not tied to fixed costs such as building maintenance. Significantly, policy changes in education has had unintended, but profoundly adverse, effects on the arts organisations, particularly in drama, as follows.

First, the introduction of Local Management of Schools has made the existence of Theatre in Education companies difficult, whose service used to be purchased in block by Local

Education Authorities and is now up to marketing to individual schools. Second, the newly-established National Curriculum tends to diminish the appreciation of a wide range of both classical and contemporary works and the understanding of the craft in theatre, while enhancing the reading of selected materials. Third, under-funding of education along with the demand for better quality service at schools has put teachers under pressure. They have decreasingly little time to organise school visits to theatres or workshops at schools inviting professional artists (WMA 1995, p6; ACE 1995c, p24).

The requirement to put basic services provision to competitive tendering made by Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 and Local Government Act 1988 has not fully extended to the operation of arts facilities due to the difficulty in specifying service standards and monitoring performance in the arts in quantitative terms needed for tendering. However, the criticism made in the Audit Commission's report (1991) on local authority involvement in the arts, its proposal to include local authority performance indicators on the arts, a report commissioned on the same topic by the Department of National Heritage (Positive Solutions 1993) and the government's proposal to introduce Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) for all local authority services have given warning that complexity in the arts has a limited scope for exemption.

The introduction of CCT might, as have been suggested by the government, have the positive effects of helping clarify objectives of local authorities' cultural policy and evaluating effectiveness of current practice as well as raising public awareness for local authorities' role in culture (Challans 1991). Whether the introduction of CCT would be feasible or not is certainly debatable. But on the whole the relevant bodies are being made suspicious about all the admirable rationales of CCT and cautious about the degree to which the government's determined approach to local authorities will be applied to the arts.

Chapter 7: Theatre

This chapter will try to assess the impact of the changes described in chapter 4 on the arts by highlighting building-based, producing, repertory theatres located in the West Midlands region. They are the Swan Theatre in Worcester, New Victoria Theatre, Birmingham Repertory Theatre, Belgrade Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company.

7.1 Rationale for the Case Study

Such theatres deserve close examination because they provide a rich and diverse context for the exploration of the impact of decentralisation on the arts in general. The reasons are three-fold: First, theatre has been said to be in the forefront in arguing against delegation of funding from the Arts Council to the Regional Arts Boards. The reasons for the opposition will be provided in later discussion. Second, all the companies in this category in the end have been delegated, except for the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford-upon-Avon. The Swan Theatre in Worcester, in contrast, was delegated well ahead of the other three in the 'Glory' strategy. As such, the sector can be expected to provide diversity and to show different impact brought about on them. Third, theatre of this kind is particularly controversial in local authorities' support for the arts. It is one of the most expensive forms of the arts, requiring stable, substantial grants in aid every year. It nevertheless tends to fail to engage local politicians with enthusiasm, who may be more concerned with supporting amateur activities for their constituencies.

Table 7.1 in Appendix B summarises the features of the theatres under examination in size, catchment areas, finance and output.

7.2 Relationship with RAA/RABs

The theatre sector's opposition to delegation derived chiefly from the fear that delegation would be used as an excuse to reduce funding to it and that what it saw as disparity between the national companies (Royal National Theatre and Royal Shakespeare Company) and the rest would be perpetuated, to which collective lobbying would effectively be blocked. The sector also knew that its new main funding body would have to rely on Arts Council funding anyway. It was also uneasy about the quality of RAA/RABs. Last but not least, there arose an almost emotional antagonism so that the proposal was felt to be insulting. Opposition was shared by other arts disciplines, but theatre felt itself as vulnerable in this reform. Dance was

still a relatively underdeveloped area, and orchestras and contemporary art galleries were nationally smaller in number than theatres, both of which could make the case for cross-regional assessment.

Theatres deployed counter-arguments in relation to their claim of national importance, their need to be assessed in comparison to their peers across the country, but not to the theatres of different nature in the same regions, or in light of non-artistic agenda which sometimes appeared in regional policy and the unfamiliarity of the RAA/RABs with the operation of large-scale theatres. There was also a claim that the theatre in England was a 'cottage industry' which had no geographic boundary and needed to work closely with each other around the country.

Having gone through numerous negotiations, rows and revised lists of clients for delegation, the transfer of the clients and projects was made into effect in 1993/4. What has happened in practice is a mixture of advantages and disadvantages for the theatres. First, in the first year of operation of the new system, there was a wide variety of practice for funding among the regions, although it has been gradually sorted out. The same anecdotes related to the confusion of the first year were repeated by the interviewees:

"Last year he [a theatre director in other region] was phoned up by his RAB and told 'We've won additional money of £30,000 for you to do international work in our bidding to the Arts Council'. They did not want to do international work..., but was told to be grateful. They did not know about the bidding at all."

Some see another layer of bureaucracy having unnecessarily come into being, as the RABs have to rely on the Arts Council for money after all:

"One of the key issues of my life is when the grant is to be paid....RAB then will have to ask the Arts Council."

"There is more bureaucracy attached now. I think accountability is important for any organisation in receipt of public money, but sometimes you spend more time on paperwork than on actual business. It is counter-productive."

A fundamental problem, as they see it, is that the RABs need to bid to the Arts Council each year for its funding by producing corporate plans. This is one of the areas that provokes a strong feeling for the directors:

"Bidding is made on the basis of their corporate plan but not artistic quality. Why should we get penalised if they fail?"

The RABs' relationship with local authorities is a source of worry to a theatre director, referring to the practice of matching funds to the theatre between the two:

“They [the city council] haven’t got the money, and we’re certainly caught in the middle....They [WMA] don’t recognise their relationship to theatre ought to be different to the relationship that local authorities have with theatre-makers”.

A theatre director, though acknowledging his RAB as “one of the most considerate, helpful, effective and efficient”, says he would be happy if the RABs were scrapped completely. He unreservedly says:

“We don’t like RABs. They don’t like us!...They are scared of us...(because) we are bigger than them in turnover.”

There is agreement regrettably expressed by the relevant parties, including the theatres, the Arts Council, the RABs and also the local authorities that delegation and restructuring of the arts funding system was not to nurture regionalism, particularly in light of the fact that not all art forms have gone through the process:

“Any claim that delegation was a desire on the part of anybody to create a regional arts policy is nonsense....Approach to arts policy is now fragmented. I may be too cynical, but perhaps this was what government wanted to achieve” . (Theatre Director)

“I’d like delegation true and thorough....It [current situation] gives an impression that the (delegated theatre) is rubbish”. (Local Authority Arts Officer)

Despite these critical views about the current arts funding system, which is structural and beyond their control, the directors have come to terms with the given situation. They find relevant officers as showing interest, concern and knowledge in their works with a sound basis for assessment, thus cancelling out the former worry as to the quality of decision-making at regional level. Their presence nearby certainly creates some uneasiness, but the theatres are prepared to see the greater involvement of the funder as healthy. RABs’ resources of local knowledge, for example, the demographic profile of population, are also found helpful. They are expected to be good at negotiating with local authorities in relation to funding.

Lastly, a theatre director notices an interesting relationship being developed among the theatres in the region:

“RAB has brought us together....There was no habit of thinking regionally, (because) most regions are artificial....But now there is more coherent approach to common issues”.

7.3 Relationship with Local Authorities

The regional theatre companies occupy space somewhere in the middle in local authorities' cultural policy in terms of the history of commitment and relative size of the grants. Support for the theatres has a shorter history than for museums, galleries and libraries,¹ but has been given for some decades in selective areas. Supporting small-scale, community-based activities, or involving arts in primarily non-arts activities, investing in cultural industries are, in contrast, a newly-developed type of support at local government. It follows that the grants to the theatres tend to be substantial as a single 'arts budget', if not for the theatres, determined at a senior level of the councils. But they are smaller than those dedicated to museums and libraries.

The local authorities that fund the theatres have been suffering from financial stringency, particularly in recent years. So far the theatres have managed to get grants to stand still, but are likely to have them reduced in the years to come. Decisions have already been made at the Belgrade that the theatre is abandoning its 'theatre in education' department, and the General Manager predicts a smaller number of new productions and more days for performances made elsewhere. The Swan Theatre in Worcester is even at the edge of ceasing to be a producing theatre or even at closure. Even the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, which has been a flagship within the city marketing projects of Birmingham, is expected to suffer funding cuts from the council. On the whole, the implication is that the theatres are increasingly under pressure to show 'value for taxpayers' money' in numerical terms as precisely as possible so that the councils can justify their support.

'New money' made available for the arts have benefited those in large cities. In this study, the Birmingham Repertory Theatre is the case par excellence. In an attempt to attract high-tech related investment and intellectually-advanced industry on an European scale, the city needed an arts and cultural ingredient in its image-building and marketing (Bianchini 1991, 1993). The quarter in which the Theatre is located is one of the main physical focus of the city's ambitious cultural policy, being adjacent to the new Symphony Hall and the new International Convention Centre. Smaller cities such as Worcester in the region are not eligible for the same range of urban-regeneration funding, and the theatres in the cities have not managed to find any new sources of funding.

The National Lottery funding, however, is a new opportunity for all the theatres here, and could benefit all of them. The Belgrade and Coventry City Council co-decided that the Theatre Trust should have more distance from the council so that the theatre can more freely

¹ Ironically, it was the theatre sector that successfully lobbied against the inclusion of theatres in the provisions of Public Health Act 1925, which granted local authorities power to provide service in performing arts. The Society

apply for capital project funding to the Lottery fund, otherwise it would be deemed as part of local authority capital expenditure regulated severely by Central Government.

As was mentioned, the impact of the central pressure on local government in relation to the arts and culture is not easy to correspondingly identify. Funding cuts for theatre can only broadly be understood in a general trend of financial difficulties of local government, which is due to the erosion of the capabilities and autonomy of local government. Side-effects of Education Reform are, however, more directly harming the theatre sector.

What seems to be clear from the above is to confirm conventional wisdom: Producing theatres which are high-fliers thanks to their history and physical presence will manage to survive (Challans 1991, p11). But the current financial difficulty will disproportionately disadvantage smaller ones within the same category, and the ones without sympathetic, committed funders. Not only cut-backs in public grants but also box office shortfalls would follow, and those organisations in urban settings with large potential audiences would have better chances. They may be, however, forced to make cuts in new productions, educational activities and unpredictable experiments of minority interests, which would in turn undermine their long-term standing. How these trends would fit in with the issue of decentralisation is a point to be considered in Part 3.

of West End Theatre was afraid of 'unfair' competition with a subsidised sector being created (Harris 1970, p115; House of Commons 1982, para 3.12).

PART 3 : DISCUSSION

So far we have examined theoretical aspects of decentralisation in Part 1 and decentralisation in practice in British cultural policy in Part 2. In the latter particular focus has been given to the RAA/RABs and local authorities in relation to their politics with the centre and administrative restructuring. Theatres were highlighted as case studies to show the impact of political decentralisation on arts organisations in the region. Part 3 will discuss key issues which have emerged across the foregoing chapters in two parts. Chapter 8 will consider the issues of accountability and the division of labour between the Arts Council and the RAA/RABs which were the main sources of problems in political decentralisation. Chapter 9 will shift back to cultural decentralisation. It will attempt to tackle the concept of equality and a geographical concern in the context of cultural decentralisation planning. Finally, Chapter 10 will consolidate political and cultural decentralisation.

Chapter 8. Political Decentralisation: Problems in Implementation

8.1 Problem of Accountability

8.1.1 RAA/RABs and the Arts Council

Chapter 4 has described the changes of the relationship between the Arts Council and the RAA/RABs since the early 1980s up to the present. In sum, the growth of RAAs in the 1970s had led to a call for political decentralisation from the Arts Council to the regional bodies. This was done, however, in a half-hearted way in the mid 1980s through partial devolution of clients in the 'Glory' strategy. The continuous growth of RAAs and the need for political decentralisation had resulted in the Wilding reform. 'Delegation' of the Wilding reform is different from 'devolution' of the 'Glory' in that delegation is not one-off transfer of clients but the co-ordination and integration of the two tiers of arts funding bodies in objectives and their implementation. The integrated structure of arts funding in turn called for the formalisation of organisational structure and management of the RAAs (see 5.3 in Chapter 5 and Table 5.1 in Appendix B). The results of the reform include patchy delegation of clients and projects on one hand and the formalisation of the RAA/RABs in terms of both their external relationship and internal management on the other.

It may seem ironic, but as RAAs increased their prominence and accordingly required an appropriate share of power and responsibility, then the diversity of their practice and flexibility had to be traded-off. Also by diminishing local authorities representation, they had to run the risk of losing the key partner for regional and local policy development.

At the heart of such an irony of growth is an issue of accountability. Leat (1988) and Day and Klein (1987) in reference to the voluntary and to the public sector respectively, similarly argue that delegation of power and resources causes an issue of accountability. That is, a hierarchy emerges where one is accountable and the other has the right to call in the other for the explanation and justification of specific action. Accordingly clearly-stated objectives and common language to assess performance of the delegated party needs to be established. In essence, accountability is a social and political process about perceptions and power (Day and Klein 1987, p2). The argument made for the two sectors can equally be applied to

RAA/RABs, since they can be seen as a hybrid of voluntary and public organisations (see 4.2.2 in Chapter 4).

Thus, the very nature of accountability as explained above suggests that the specification of objectives and practical procedure to be complied by all the RABs was an integral part of the delegation of power. While strengthened accountability, which in turn means centrally set-out objectives, standards and performance indicators, may not have been a desired by-product of delegation on the part of the RAA/RABs, such a trend towards formalisation/standardisation/bureaucratisation was largely inevitable. The RAAs were, whether conscious or not, in a dilemma to choose between being small, flexible, but marginal in the national picture and being large, bureaucratic, but having presence both regionally and nationally. As Day and Klein (1987) argue in relation to National Health Service (NHS), delegation of responsibilities downward is necessarily accompanied by accountability upward.

However, to what extent the requirement of accountability impinges upon the autonomy of the party held accountable depends upon various factors. First, the nature of service such as heterogeneity, complexity and uncertainty (Day and Klein 1987) would in practice complicate and possibly make a chain of accountability dysfunction. Second, difficulty in developing techniques of measurement could leave some room for discretion at local level, because measurement of output and objectives are complex and multidimensional, particularly in public support of the arts. Third, it will also depend upon the relative presence of the delegated for the delegating party. As long as the former is marginal, accountability is not a real issue, which had been the case in the relationship between the Arts Council and the RAAs before the 'Glory'. Thus, it is a simplistic proposition that accountability immediately and directly damages autonomy. The working relationship between the two is by far more complex.

Nonetheless, the possibility of the trade-off between enlarged power and a decrease in local autonomy may be a principle worth bearing in mind. For a further problem can be foreseen that the Arts Council would become more directive by setting more rules and standards in the name of ensured accountability, since the Council itself is increasingly under political scrutiny as well as in financial uncertainty.

8.1.2 RAA/RABs and Local Authorities

The RAA/RABs have had another major party to account to, that is, local authorities. Accountability to local authorities has always been, however, the one that is less formal, official and structural than the one to the Arts Council in a sense that the RAA/RABs were not part of local government, and funding from local authorities constitute a minor income, thus creating no line of 'political' 'managerial' or 'legal' accountability. This accountability involves no legal obligation of explanation such as audit or any tangible and immediate sanctions such as grant withdrawal.

Nevertheless, accountability to local authorities has always been emphasised in RAA/RABs management, which was well exhibited in RAAs' opposition to the recommendation of Wilding that local authorities' representation be reduced. There are at least two reasons why this horizontal accountability carries weight. First, local authorities are the body that represent RAA/RABs' origin and roots. Transforming old forms in times of growth, although not a 'bad' thing in itself, would often cause strains and destabilise internal management. Examples are abundant in voluntary and public sector organisations (Billis 1993).

Second, partnership with local authorities has become even more important in recent years as arts funding from government through the Arts Council becomes ever-tighter, which forces RAA/RABs to play a role more of 'development agency' than of 'funding body'. As was described in Chapter 5, opportunities for regional/local arts, which RAAs are concerned with, lie in non-arts funding sources in local authorities' different departments and agencies. RAA/RABs need to work with various bodies of different jurisdictions. As such, their relationship with local authorities is vital for successful policy development for the regions. While it is possible, in theory, for RAA/RABs to work with local authorities with their limited representation on management committees, a sense of fear that reduced representation would lead to less sense of ownership and commitment was well-grounded.

If the RABs were to retain the sense of accountability to local authorities to a substantial degree, despite the little managerial requirement involved in the relationship, then it could become a burden on top of its newly-strengthened accountability to the Arts Council. As Smith (1981, p1173) succinctly points out, divided responsibility for decentralised organisations is not always matched by divided accountability. Also it must be noted that there is potential for conflicts between horizontal and vertical accountability. Although having the two lines has always been a matter of course for RAAs, the vertical one was relatively weak. But now both are equally powerful. This is in fact a problem typical of public organisations functioning locally (Smith and Stanyer 1976). The problem is even compounded for regional intermediate organisations due to the lack of structural framework

for the general status of such bodies in the absence of regional government in England (Hogwood 1982, p8). It seems that the RABs have managed to establish new relationships with the relevant bodies. However, it is not without the alarming signs that indicate local authorities' uneasy feelings about the new situation, and whether they will always be successfully sorted out will remain to be seen.

8.1.3 Accountability to the Public

So far in this chapter, I have argued over RAA/RABs' accountability in relation to their direct stakeholders namely the Arts Council and local authorities. RAA/RABs exist, however, to serve arts organisations and artists in principle and ultimately the general public. Compared to the public bodies' presence on RAA/RABs management, however, both are their users, so to speak, and the general public in particular is less visible. Hence accountability to both tends to become normative ideal rather than an immediate and realistic concern. Accommodating the three accountabilities to different constituencies that delineate from different sources and carry out different significance to the organisations' success is not an easy task for the RABs.

Making Quangos, or appointed (as opposed to elected) boards, accountable to the public is an acute issue not only in the arts but in broader public policy in Britain (Burton and Duncan 1996, p5). In recent years as the Conservative government has attempted to replace local authorities with appointed bodies, locally operating organisations to deliver public services with appointed members on the board have enlarged their influence on the local scene. Urban Development Corporations (UDCs) and Training and Enterprise councils (TECs) are two of the largest executive bodies of this kind, playing major roles in urban regeneration and labour market policy respectively. Stewart (1995) argues they are problematic for democracy, because unlike local authorities, they have few statutory obligations and mechanisms for accountability such as elections or a wide range of external scrutiny.

So far there has been little criticism of this kind targeting the RABs, partly due to the peripheral position of culture in public policy discussions. It may also be because the RABs have made efforts to be as accountable to the general public as possible. There are devices for public accountability, as being practised at WMA, such as opening the Meetings of the Company to members of the general public and ensuring public access to information, which reflect the principles of public life set out in the 1995 Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life (Cm 2850-I). However, since this is a fundamentally structural problem rather

than a matter of code of practice and goodwill of individual bodies, it will need to be addressed in a thoroughgoing way.

Having examined the situation of RABs in relation to the problem of accountability, it has become clear that the traditional form of 'political accountability', namely the notion that organisations with public duty should finally be answerable to Parliament through ministers, is after all an outdated myth in today's highly complex service-delivery state, as some commentators have pointed out (eg Hirst 1995; Weir and Hall (eds) 1994; Day and Klein 1987; Smith 1981; see also articles in *Policy and Politics*, 24,1,1996; and Ridley and Wilson (eds) 1995).

There is a growing need for rebuilding accountability, to which a number of interesting suggestions have been made, ranging from creation of regional government structure to which regional and local organisations should account to (Hirst 1995), separation of local matters from ministerial reporting to Parliament and creation of an institution for local accountability (Weir and Hall (eds) 1994), strengthening of local government as an alternative line of accountability (Stewart 1992), involving user control and increasing opportunities for individual choice (Hirst 1995, Stewart 1992) to eliciting informed views of ordinary citizens (Stewart 1996). Obviously this is an issue common to many areas of public policy and public administration in British politics, where cultural policy occupies one small part. What this implies to us, however, is that cultural policy would be subject to the general change in the mechanism of public accountability, and we need to acknowledge that what has been done in the *Glory* strategy and the *Wilding* reform is rather changes in 'managerialism' within the given, traditional notion of public accountability without challenging this framework.

Finally, it must also be noted that managerial reorganisation dominated the core of the political decentralisation and that the discussion on the values and objectives of cultural decentralisation, which political decentralisation was supposed to serve, was gradually left out. This is an issue to be developed in the next chapter.

8.2 Division of Labour

Lack of clarity in the division of labour between the three actors has also been a source of problems for planning in cultural decentralisation. The need to clarify the relationship has long been recognised, since as early as the mid-1960s:

“Who is to provide the subsidy?...where is the ‘mutual benefit’?...but we have direct obligations to our client, of which we cannot divest ourselves. This is a fine field for the elaboration of case-law” (ACGB 1965, p17).

However, until the RAAs became prominent during the 1970s, their role was largely confined to the funding of small-scale organisations and projects, particularly those to promote ‘access’ in the regions, which supplemented the range of the activities the Arts Council was responsible for both nationally and locally. As they grew, however, the boundary blurred, and the need to define it was acknowledged for the purpose of meaningful devolution (Working Party 1977, para 2.5). This was, indeed, a cornerstone for the discussion of political decentralisation during the 1980s as declared in 1980 “the Group’s¹ approach would establish a clear division of responsibilities between the regions and the centre” (Working Group 1980, p23).

The division of labour has been generally conceptualised in two ways: one in functional terms and the other in terms of the kinds of the arts for support. The argument in the first respect defines the centre as responsible for creation of cultural activities, the regional for distribution, and the local for consumption (ie maintenance of venues and promoting participation) so that the three complement each other and square the circle. Such a flowchart has been envisaged on the Continent, explicitly in the Netherlands (Council of Europe 1994a, section 6) and implicitly in Sweden and France (Council of Europe 1990a; Council of Europe 1991) where cultural decentralisation was planned with relatively great involvement of the state. In practice, however, all levels of government inevitably are engaged with every function, and the scheme does not work.

In Britain, the lack of direct political lines between the three players makes it almost impossible to enforce the dividing of responsibilities. To overcome such difficulty, practical discussions should have tackled with specification of the roles to be played by each party to the best possible extent. As to local authorities, there used to be a general understanding that their contribution was primarily through venue buildings and maintenance for theatres or service to the community rather than to artistic professionals, in contrast to supporting the creativity of professional arts by the Arts Council and the RAAs (Working Group 1980, p13). During the 1980s, however, an increasing number of local authorities started to take a more active approach to the creation of the arts in a variety of ways, which sometimes were more diverse and dynamic than the arts funding bodies could possibly employ, through the deployment of various functions and resources of local authorities. However, local

¹ This denotes the Working Group jointly set up for the purpose of reviewing the relationship between the Arts Council and the RABs.

authorities' roles in comparison to the Arts Council and the RAA/RABs have been little conceptualised, taking such development into consideration.

The demarcation of the roles between the Arts Council and the RAA/RABs is of course more problematic, since the principal objectives of all the parties involved have increasingly become identical as the latter grew (CoRAA 1983). Surprisingly, an exercise to identify similarities and differences in a precise fashion has not been realised, despite the recognition that "a further limitation (of the present system) seemed to the Group to be the lack of any clear statement of general policies to which the RAAs and ACGB can equally relate" (Working Group 1980, p8).

Often broad language was employed to stress the need for decentralisation. In some cases simple tautology at best was found: "The Arts Council should decentralise..., concentrating itself directly on national issues and organisations" (House of Commons 1968, para 90), "The Arts Council should...devolve on RAAs on *all* decisions *except* those which can be shown, now and as time goes on, to require decision by a national body" (italics original, Lord Redcliffe-Maud 1976, pp37-38), "(RAAs') main emphasis has been an identifying gaps in regional provision" (Working Group 1980, p9), "handover of routine responsibility for its clients, other than the national companies, to the regional arts associations and the local authorities" (House of Commons 1982, para 6.11). What is exactly meant by 'regional' or 'national', crucial to determining the division, remains unclear.

Alternatively, functional difference can be attributed to the centre and the region in terms of funding vs non-financial support such as information service and help in increasing income from different sources (ie local authorities, commercial sponsors and the market). The 1980 report saw the Arts Council's major approach had been that of reactive paymaster, whilst the RAAs' was proactive and developmental (Working Group 1980, p9). This may have been arguably the case at that time, however, the point is that again overlapping has occurred since then. The Arts Council of the 1980s set up the Marketing Department in 1986 and administered the Incentive Funding Scheme to encourage efficient management of arts organisations from 1988 to 1991. It also started to take an initiative in regional projects through Arts 2000, whereby a particular city is designed each year to be the capital of some art form.

Conversely, financial growth of the RAAs, even without taking the 'Glory' effect into account, has enabled them to administer more awards and grants than before, and at the same time the prospect of financial stringency of recent years has made them develop the catalyst role of collaborating with various bodies in the region. CoRAA even saw it necessary that

advice and grant-making go hand in hand for the dynamic development of culture in a wider societal context (CoRAA undated, p4). If we take this view, then, it would be almost impossible to divide the line between the two, except by dividing the kinds of the arts to be supported by each, which leads us to the second reference point for the division of labour.

Another way of dividing responsibilities between the parties is that in terms of criteria for subsidy. The conventional dichotomy between the centre and the sub-central in this respect was the former holding the principle of excellence and innovation, whereas the latter being oriented towards the benefits of a larger community, which was by implication of secondary importance by artistic standards (eg Wilding 1989). Accordingly the size of the organisation to be supported tended to be, if not always, larger at the centre.

Fortunately, discussions were more rigorously made in this respect than the case relating to function to dispute the above view as simplistic. To cite the decentralisation document of 1980 again (Working Group 1980, p24):

“it may well be that, say, a large drama company demonstrating consistently high artistic standards can best be assessed regionally, whereas a much smaller and less consistent company may require national assessment.”

In response to the Wilding Report, where an old dichotomy still reappeared, though in this case between the regional and the local, CoRAA strongly argued (CoRAA 1990?, p10):

“...excellence exists at all levels and scales of operation throughout the system, requiring expert support and encouragement, both nationally and regionally.”

The above citations indeed made interesting points, called attention to the need for reworking the meaning of ‘excellence’ and highlighted the importance of less conventional, quality arts of various nature, ie non-building-based, non-European, participatory, developmental and experimental. They deny any one art form or any one type of activity intrinsic merit and superiority to the others. This relativistic approach would imply activities of all kinds in various contexts must be understood on a broad, single scale of excellence or merit at one end and mediocrity at the other. Theatre workshop at prison can be artistically more excellent than a full-staged opera production at the Covent Garden.

The drawback of inventing a single scale of evaluation without a highly sophisticated concept of ‘excellence’, however, is that it would lead to no logical division of labour between the relevant parities. Or in a worse case it would allocate the centre responsible for the top end irrespective of geographic location of the activities concerned and the sub-central for the rest, and thus returning to the old stereotyped division.

Avoidance of such a danger may be one of the reasons why arguments on power transfer have gradually shifted to administrative minutiae to achieve coherence in the arts funding system, and this has resulted in an opaque, hence convenient but still problematic, conclusion that “all ‘regionally-based’ arts organisations should be decentralised which had at least one of the following aspects:

- 1) A strong geographical base in one region,
- 2) Significant local authority funding within a single region,
- 3) A performance/exhibition/ or production base in one region,

while truly ‘national’ organisations and issues should remain at the centre” (Luce 1990c; ACE 1990, p1). Hence back to the repeated tautology.

The diffusion made through the Wilding reform is self-definitive and unclear. According to ACE’s view of drama expressed in the Consultative Document for Drama Review (ACE 1995c), even after delegation of regional, producing theatres, it appears that the Arts Council feels it should fund all kinds of activities in drama, of all scales, of different nature, serving different functions and constituencies. The Arts Council contends that the health of the theatre sector, which is diverse, is dependent upon the cross-fertilisation among different components: National companies draw on ideas and talents developed in small-scale, independent groups. Presenting theatres in the regions receive touring companies from all over the country. Regional producing theatres are increasingly required to do collaborative production not only for cash saving but also, more importantly, for the exchange and sparkling of ideas and skills (ACE 1995c). To maintain and promote such a ‘network’ (Drama Officer, ACE) or ‘drama ecology’ (ACE 1995c) is of national importance.

By the same token, the RABs could equally claim for most of the clients to be delegated. Even the RSC, which had been exempted from delegation possibilities from the beginning as a national company, could have been delegated to WMA as a company based in Stratford, or to the London Arts Board, because its base in London receives ‘significant’ input from the Corporation of City.

As we have seen, however, the shady principle easily lent itself to the politics among the Arts Council, the RABs and client organisations, the corollary of which was a patchy picture of funding responsibilities.

Chapter 9: Cultural Decentralisation : Problems in Planning

It seems that cultural decentralisation in Britain has not been seriously planned and has remained fragmented in the cases of both local authorities and also with the regional bodies. The issues of attaining equality in cultural provision were substituted by the managerial reform within the arts funding system. Chapter 8 has outlined the problems in political decentralisation. This chapter will attempt to address some of the issues in cultural decentralisation, including the concept of equality and the implication of geography. It will lastly make a brief mention of the new resources for the arts relevant to cultural decentralisation planning.

9.1 Equality as a Goal

As was pointed out in the earlier discussion (see 2.1 in Chapter 2), equality is the underlying value for, and should be the guiding principle of, decentralisation. Although at first sight the notion looks quite simple, 'equality' (or improving 'access' as has been used in Britain) has rarely been made specified (ACGB 1993, p64). What is exactly meant by "to increase the accessibility of the arts to the public" (Royal charter, ACE, in ACE 1995a, p1), and "people outside (of London) should get a fair share of the opportunities" (Channon, then Arts Minister, in House of Commons (1982), Q 127)? It will be helpful to refer to Le Grand et al (1992) who interpret equality, or equity to be more precise in this context, in terms of full equality and minimum standards in social policy issues such as education and health. To apply the two interpretations to cultural policy, firstly the attainment of full equality would mean everyone should receive equal provision of culture for equal needs. Secondly, setting minimum standards would mean that nobody should fall below the minimum level, for example having at least one museum, one concert hall and a theatre within an hour travel, but there are other individuals who can reach more than the set of three facilities within twenty minutes.

In cultural decentralisation, such distinction is crucial for policy development. If we employ the first interpretation, planning in cultural decentralisation should be concerned with the comparison of the number of arts organisations, facilities and performances per head across the regions. The second interpretation would start by defining a basic 'basket' of cultural provision per head and examine if the minimum is satisfied in the localities. Thus, the starting point and the direction of policy planning would be different. As was suggested,

cultural policy seems to have evolved without developing the definition and measurement of the concept of equality.

Furthermore, the attainment of 'full equality' is also complex in itself, and again there seems to be little agreement upon its definition and measurement. Full equality can be interpreted as equality of access, equality of use and equality of outcome.¹ Policy to attain each will take different forms, either by decreasing the resources for the advantaged, or increasing them for the disadvantaged.²

When applied to our concern with cultural policy, equality of access can be reduced to a matter of cost. For if people in one region have to travel relatively further than their counterparts in other region to reach arts events, it is more expensive in terms of actual travel expenses and the cost in time. Then, *ceteris paribus*, equality of cost is not attained. The diffusion policy of CEMA and the Arts Council in its early years is located here, whereby the provision of cultural facilities and the promotion of touring performance in many towns was the main measure. Later on, the Arts Council changed the measure achieving this goal to a less expensive form of subsidised coach travel to bring people to venues.

Equality of use relates to attendance rate. Empirically, it is well known that attendance rate is largely determined by socio-economic class and educational qualifications (Bourdieu et al 1969). Therefore, if relevant people inhabiting different regions show different attendance rates, *ceteris paribus*, it is plausible to conclude cultural opportunities are not equally provided for equal needs. Measures have to be taken to see participation by groups reasonably reflect the population.

Equality of outcome has more qualitative aspects and it is difficult to measure, as it is related to the quality of cultural provision and the quality of one's life regardless of regional location. To attain this, policy should aim at providing a wide variety of cultural opportunities: different arts disciplines, both traditional and avant-garde, small-scale and large-scale, participatory as well as passive, European and non-European, and so on. It also has to aim for equal enrichment of people's lives through cultural provision, be it as leisure

¹ These alternative interpretations are developed based on Le Grand (1982, pp72-72), where he lists equality of public expenditure, equality of cost (rather than access), equality of use, and equality of outcome. For my analysis, the first one was omitted, for it is a policy input and different from the others in nature (see Chapter 1). In order to adapt his account on social areas such as education and health to culture, I substitute 'cost' with 'access'.

² Rae (1981, pp110-112) points out four criteria of relative equality, which can be translated into four strategies to improve equality. These are, to improve the position of the less advantaged, to increase the ratio between the lesser entitlement and the greater, to decrease the absolute difference between the greater entitlement and the lesser, and to diminish the entitlement of the more advantaged.

time, intellectual challenge or self-enlightenment. Equality of outcome seems to be one of the most important principles in Swedish cultural policy albeit with some ambiguity and is manifested in its commitment to decentralisation (Council of Europe 1990a, p72). In the British context, however, this would be felt too costly in general and patronising to breach the principle of *laissez-faire*.

In Britain, equality or accessibility relating to cultural decentralisation has only vaguely been argued with the little conceptualisation outlined above. No wonder that the different meanings of decentralisation are confused and mistakenly used in interchangeable ways, as was pointed out in Chapter 1. In order to plan effective policy for decentralisation, therefore, it seems imperative to try to specify the concepts regarding equality as discussed above as clearly as possible and to undertake research that is relevant.

9.2 Geography for Cultural Decentralisation

9.2.1 Producing Theatres and Audience

On top of the problems of principle regarding cultural decentralisation as were examined above, cultural decentralisation faces practical difficulties as well. To begin with, one could question whether planning of cultural decentralisation is possible at all. Arts organisations and activities have grown spontaneously from inside, and the current structure is largely historical. Even when government intervention for the purpose of dispersal of arts activities could be legitimatised, it is questionable if that would help to flourish the arts. This poses a problem, particularly in England, where cultural policy has been operationalised mainly in the form of enabling as opposed to direct provision.

Some of the regional theatres we have today have been deliberately located in relatively large cities with the aid of the Arts Council or local authorities' co-operation. The Birmingham Repertory and the Belgrade are the prime examples. The Swan grew out of an amateur society in Worcester. The New Victoria was initially a touring company and took opportunities in the mid 1960s that enabled the company to settle in its current place as a producing, building-based theatre.

Since then, however, demography and geography issues have changed for the theatres in the regions, as people have become mobile and do not mind motoring twenty miles to choose particular productions, rather than staying loyal to specific theatres, which brings

heterogeneity to theatres while regular audience group if any is ageing and shrinking (WMA 1995, p2, p4; ACE 1995c, p10).

Under these circumstances, ACE and WMA similarly see it necessary for producing theatres to redefine themselves, suggesting that they become more specialised and build up specific audiences, possibly by reducing the number of their own productions, while enhancing diversity of programming presented at their own venues by inviting productions made elsewhere on different strengths (ACE 1995c, WMA 1995).

Such a vision is applied to the case of the Swan in Worcester as the problem of smaller-scale regional, producing theatres pointed out by the ACE (1995c):

“(The diversity of art for the audience) is unlikely to be met...by a succession of inadequately resourced home productions; their directors should positively embrace the range of work available from touring companies and through collaborations with other companies” (p16).

In other words, policy-makers at both levels seem to agree that the dispersal of the theatres of similar kinds within reasonable reach is not always necessary nor desirable (ACE 1995c, WMA 1995). Therefore, as far as theatre is concerned, it may well be that ‘accessibility’ has taken on a contemporary element, but we are not yet told of the change in explicit terms.

9.2.2 Is Concentration Necessary?

Another issue is a question of whether concentration is a necessity for the arts. In many countries, whenever government tries to relocate arts organisations and artists from the capital to other cities across the country, it has met with strong opposition on the part of the arts in most cases, even with a promise of improved finance (eg Council of Europe 1990b, p95, see also Appendix 2 of BBC/Arts Council (1994), which outlines a history of the failure of the Arts Council to diffuse orchestral provision in Britain).

The main reason for anti-decentralisation is that the artists feel it necessary to have critical, responsive audiences, which is more likely to appear from the heterogeneous mass in large cities. In Britain, critical review in quality newspapers are mostly nationally produced in London, and critics live in London. Therefore it is important for the arts to get exposed in London for career and prestige development. Most importantly, actual proximity to artistic activities of competitors and a pool of talent are more easily available in the centre. Although it may be competitive, more sponsorship opportunities seem to exist in London (ABSA

1995). All of these factors cumulate to a further concentration of the arts in large cities and the capital in particular.

The regional theatres surveyed were those which prefer regions and maintain that network, but their opposition to delegation derived from the fear of losing contact with the competition that was going on at the centre. In fact, most directors said that they regularly go to London to do auditions and for the exchange of information.

Likewise, in the region of West Midlands, Birmingham is the centre, and organisations in the city tend to benefit from resources which are not available in smaller cities and rural areas in the region, causing a feeling of unfairness for the latter. However, not much is known as to the difference in the actual needs by areas. If simply asked whether they want arts provision nearby, most would be positive, but that should not always indicate their ‘needs’—sometimes potential and latent—as opposed to ‘wants’. This is an issue that will involve philosophical arguments.

9.3 New Sources of Money

Planning of cultural decentralisation is becoming difficult particularly in recent years, because of the National Lottery fund flowing into culture and the arts. There is not much research to investigate their impact on cultural decentralisation yet. Anecdotes and impressionistic observations made so far tell that the RABs are increasing their presence in the regions as they possess specialist knowledge and expertise needed by cultural planning with the new sources of money. On the other hand, the new possibility of opening a cultural facility just across the road to the existing one would change the whole cultural map and could bother the planning on the part of one authority.

Chapter 10: The Relationship between Political and Cultural Decentralisation

Having seen the problems associated with political as well as cultural decentralisation, this chapter will be concerned with the relationship between the two. As was repeated, the argument is prevalent that cultural decentralisation must go hand in hand with political decentralisation. This may seem convincing, when we view small governance at sub-national level favourably as a responsive, flexible institution. However, once we start to analyse the concept of equity in culture even more specifically than has been done in Chapter 8, a different picture emerges.

Heald (1983) distinguishes territorial equity (lumping residents in particular jurisdictions together) from interpersonal one (seeing individual citizens as distinct from each other), and argues that the three values of territorial equity, interpersonal equity and local autonomy are not compatible with each other. Applied to cultural policy case, his argument would go like this: When the actual outcome of territorial equality is to be ensured, interpersonal equity is also guaranteed. That is, when standards of cultural provision are exactly the same across the regions, equity between relevant individuals is also guaranteed. An extremely centralist structure of policy administration is the most effective way of achieving it, where “the desired level of service is specified centrally and pursued uniformly” (Heald 1983, p241). In other words, equality, which is the ultimate value of cultural decentralisation, is not compatible with local autonomy, which is likewise the ultimate value of political decentralisation: We are faced with a big paradox.

Heald continues: If we employ less stringent version of territorial equity, that is, potential outcome of territorial equity, then each jurisdiction will receive equitable resources (eg 5p per head of the population plus special grants for areas with low resources and high needs) and thereby have the same opportunity set but can choose to achieve different outcomes, reflecting local preference. Area X may prefer to support arts in primary schools at the expense of grant-making to experimental projects, or area Y may concentrate on theatre and ignore music altogether in response to consumers’ or producers’ needs in the area. In this case, therefore, territorial equity is guaranteed although areas X and Y choose to have different outcomes, and local autonomy is respected. Also, interpersonal equity within each area can be achieved, because choice within areas is collective. However, interpersonal equity between residents in areas X and Y is inevitably sacrificed. In other words, if political decentralisation is enhanced, and local autonomy is increasingly respected, then, it must be

tolerated that a person in area X and his/her counterpart in area Y do not have equal opportunities.

This is not a new problem nor a new discovery of an old problem, as indeed Gournay, a French political scientist, briefly mentioned in describing decentralisation in French cultural policy (Council of Europe 1991, p294). It is simply that “few individuals seem to have fully defined preferences over the three values” (Heald 1983, p243). It appears that potential conflicts and the possibility of trade-off between the three have been largely ignored in policy discourse of cultural and political decentralisation.

It would be fair to say cultural decentralisation has been an ideal in policy, but never conceived as a specific and achievable policy goal. Similarly, political decentralisation has rarely been understood as a realistic means for the objective of cultural decentralisation which has remained unspecified. Rather it has been picked up in an ad hoc fashion for other objectives. Whether the structural dilemma of decentralisation explained above can still be ignored or not depends upon several factors. They include the availability of resources, which has a bleak future, the capabilities of the RABs to be exhibited by themselves, and the changing environments in which the arts operate, determined by the needs and the taste of the audience present, potential and unmet.

Conclusion : Summary and Future Issues

This paper has attempted to investigate the theoretical and practical issues and problems of decentralisation in cultural policy through examining the British experience in particular. This chapter will summarise the major findings of the foregoing parts and conclude the report by discussing some of the limitations this study has had and suggesting two areas for further study: inter-organisational relationships among organisations in the cultural field in the region and principles in cultural policy.

The key findings of the three parts are summarised as follows.

PART 1: THEORIES ON DECENTRALISATION

Part 1 has sketched out the theoretical complexities of the concept of decentralisation to provide an analytical framework for the following discussions. It has identified different meanings of the term (Table 1.1 in Appendix B), values attached to decentralisation and a variety of strategies for spatial diffusion of cultural activities (Table 2.1 and 2.2 in Appendix B).

- ◆ I have argued that although decentralisation has been regarded as one of the main goals for cultural policy in many countries, the conceptual multiplicity of the term and the values of decentralisation have remained under-theorised.
 - Decentralisation has at least three aspects; cultural, fiscal and political (Table 1.1 in Appendix B).
 - Cultural decentralisation is a policy objective, concerned with inequality in cultural opportunities among people, which can be due to geographical, socio-economic and cultural divisions of the population.
 - Fiscal decentralisation is about disparity of public expenditure. Disparity can be found among:
 1. different geographical localities public expenditure is made for (eg per capita spending in the capital vs in the regions),
 2. different public authorities in charge of funding (eg spending by central government vs local government), and
 3. different groups of cultural producers subsidy is provided for (eg subsidy for European- vs non-European-origin arts).
 - Political decentralisation is about the diffusion of political and administrative power for decision-making and implementation in cultural policy. This is conceptualised as

a means for achieving cultural decentralisation, but can be a policy objective in its own right.

- ◆ In practice, these distinct meanings are often confused. A major problem is that fiscal decentralisation, which is a concern with 'input', has colonised the discussion on cultural decentralisation which is a policy objective. In order to focus on policy objectives rather than inputs, the scope of this paper has been limited to cultural decentralisation in relation to geographical diffusion of cultural provision and to political decentralisation, ie the power relationships between public bodies involved in cultural policy.
- ◆ The values of decentralisation have remained ambiguous, too. There is a need to theorise the issue of fair distribution of publicly-financed cultural goods and services.

PART 2: DECENTRALISATION IN BRITISH CULTURAL POLICY

Part 2 has described the historical development of cultural and political decentralisation in Britain. RAA/RABs and local authorities have served as focal points for the examination, since the empowerment of RAA/RABs and the encouragement of local authorities have been identified as possible strategies for implementing decentralisation. Both sets of organisations have gone through significant changes in their relationships with their central counterparts. Five building-based, producing, repertory theatres in the West Midlands have been focused upon. The case study has been to assess the impact of the changes in the arts funding system and in central-local government politics on the arts.

- ◆ In Britain, centralism has historically been strong both culturally and politically. Nonetheless, regional arts associations (later boards) and local authorities have become increasingly important players in cultural policy. Decentralisation can be implemented through the empowerment and encouragement of these organisations.
 - There have been two major attempts to transfer power from the Arts Council to the RAA/RABs (Table 5.1 in Appendix B). Neither, however, has been successful in achieving the initial objective of cultural decentralisation.
 1. The first one in the mid-1980s (the Glory of the Garden strategy) was a one-off devolution of clients, but not much thought was given to the division of responsibilities between the centre and the regions.
 2. The second one in the early 1990s (the Wilding Review reform) has led to a centralised structure of the arts funding system. The reform has ended up with various changes in administrative practice, and the 'contracting-out' of clients and projects from the Arts Council to the RABs. But it is obvious that the reform has not functioned to nurture regionalism.

- Local authorities are neither directly located in the arts funding system which is the ‘Quango’ sector in Britain, nor held legally obliged to the provision of cultural services. Nevertheless, they have become major contributors to the arts over the decades.
- Since 1979, local government has been transformed through various measures and legislation in British politics. While their role in mainstream services has been increasingly undermined, local authorities have developed scope in the area of urban regeneration, to which it has been recognised that culture can make a contribution.
- It is difficult to assess the extent to which arts provision has suffered from the changing relationship between central and local government for arts provision is a marginal area in government, but in general arts budgets have been squeezed.
- The theatre sector was against delegation, but four of the surveyed were handed over to the RABs. The theatres in principle are critical about the current pattern of arts funding, where regionalism has not taken root and bureaucracy has increased. But they acknowledge some advantages of being regionally-funded, such as the RAB’s ability to negotiate with local authorities on funding matters.
- The financial difficulty of the local authorities has generally hit the theatres. Under such circumstances, it seems that an economy of scale is in operation: Larger theatres, particularly those located in the cities keen on their image-building and marketing for economic regeneration, would stand relatively better chances. Small-scale producing theatres need funders’ special commitment.

PART 3: DISCUSSION

Part 3 has singled out the issues that have emerged from the empirical findings in Part 2, and tried to explain why political as well as cultural decentralisation has failed to be realised in British cultural policy.

- ◆ As to political decentralisation, two major issues have been focused upon, ie accountability and division of labour.
 - As RAAs increased their prominence and required a fair share of power and responsibility in cultural policy, diversity and flexibility which had been the main feature of the regional bodies had to be traded-off. The concept of accountability has been the key to understanding such a process. Delegation of tasks by definition requires specification of policy and practice between the two parties. Formalisation of the party the task is delegated to is also an integral part of the process.
 - RABs’ relationship with local authorities is being challenged, as their accountability to the locally elected bodies involves few tangible obligations and requirements but

depends upon communal identity and a sense of partnership. If the RABs wish to remain accountable to the Arts Council and local authorities equally, there is a potential for conflict.

- Making RABs accountable to the general public is another issue in and beyond cultural policy per se.
- Another source of problem for political decentralisation has been the lack of clarity in the division of labour among the Arts Council, RAA/RABs and local authorities. I have argued that the division has been conceived in two ways, neither of which has been practically useful. They are:
 1. division in functional terms (ie support for production, distribution and consumption, or alternatively funding vs non-funding services). There has been, however, overlapping between the Arts Council and the RAA/RABs, hence this does not work.
 2. division in terms of the kinds of arts supported (ie arts of 'excellence' and the rest). The possibility of multiple interpretations of 'excellence' has made this dysfunctional.
- As a result, the divisions of the roles in cultural policy between different authorities have not been well-defined. Delegation was based on a self-definitive distinction (ie 'regionally-based' organisations to be funded by RABs).
- ◆ As to cultural decentralisation, the key to its success is to define the concept of equality.
 - Equality can be formulated in terms of full equality attainment and a guarantee of minimum standards. Each would require a different objective and direction for policy planning.
 - If 'full equality' is chosen, it is necessary to elaborate its meaning further. The interpretation of the term includes equality of access (or cost), equality of use and equality of outcome. Ambiguity of the term or the lack of understanding of such distinctions has been one of the main reasons for the failure of cultural decentralisation.
- ◆ Other issues highlighted include the changing significance of geography and demography for cultural institutions, which require each theatre to have distinctive features from others.
- ◆ The relationship between political and cultural decentralisation has been found to be contradictory to dispute a prevalent view that the two types of decentralisation go hand in hand. The concepts of territorial equity (equity between different areas, in which residents are conceptualised as 'groups' of people) and interpersonal equity (equity between individuals-as distinct citizens from each other) illuminates the existence of a paradox:

- When standards of cultural provision are to be exactly the same across jurisdictions, which ensures territorial and interpersonal equities, the most effective way of achieving this is an extremely centralist structure at the expense of local autonomy and regional diversity.
- In contrast, when political decentralisation progresses and local autonomy is respected, interpersonal inequality across territorial borders will increase: People in area A and B will have different opportunities in culture.

I have argued that such a problem has largely been ignored.

To sum up, the paper has shown that decentralisation in cultural policy, despite its apparent significance on policy agendas, has not benefited from theorisation in terms of its meaning and measurement and in relation to the concept of equality. It seems policy-makers have ignored, or been unaware of, the potential conflicts in the values of accountability vs diversity, interpersonal equality vs local autonomy. These are important to note because each value and principle would need different strategies for its achievement. I have concluded the last chapter by putting forward my view that cultural decentralisation itself has been an ideal in policy but never received serious attention with which to clarify and prioritise conflicting values and objectives. As such, effective planning for equality in culture has not been possible.

As is often the case with research, however, the issues tackled in the paper have raised more questions to ask than provided answers. The remaining part of this paper will discuss them in relation to the limitations of this study and suggest some of the themes which deserve further research and on-going debate. They will be divided into two broad areas for the purpose of discussion: firstly, the regional picture of culture and the arts in Britain and secondly the lack of clearly understood principles in cultural policy in Britain and perhaps beyond. Both will be detailed in the following.

Arts Organisations in the Region

The case study has been only a small-scale one on a particular set of arts organisations in the West Midlands at a specific point in time. Possibly different cultural sectors have different experiences, and it would be interesting to investigate further the impacts of the changes in RABs and local authorities outlined in this paper on the arts of different kinds in the region more widely. For example, research on arts centres which are only partially delegated might tell a different story. Beck (1989), in examining the Wilding Review, suggested the likely

consequences of Wilding's recommendations. He predicted, on the basis of the Review, that the winners in the new system would be building-based performing arts companies—national and regional—and the losers less established companies, projects with non-arts elements and finally the members of the community who had not been acculturated into the current audience of the established arts. We know that many more alterations have been added to the original review in the implementation process for the reform of the arts funding system (Table 5.1). It may be worth re-visiting Beck's view to identify the winners and losers across the regions and sectors. This would require larger-scale case studies of different sectors in the cultural field.

Even with the examined theatres, there are more questions to ask. I have briefly noted a theatre director's comment on a developing way of 'regional' thinking at the arts organisations surveyed and another remark that resented the loss of the 'national voice' of the theatre sector. These comments suggest an interesting area to explore from a sociological viewpoint.

Prior to delegation, the whole drama sector used to have sub-sectors which were composed of similar companies in terms of size and artistic function (producing, presenting, touring, experimental, etc) across regions. Delegation shuffled them, and all regional theatres, regardless of the 'leagues' they were identified with, have been effectively re-grouped by their geographical location into ten. As far as funding arrangements are concerned, therefore, there no longer exists a sector of regional theatres as such across the country. Instead we roughly have groups of theatres associated with their RABs on one hand, and 'national' companies and many non-building-based drama companies of all scales on the other hand.

It is possible to speculate that as a result a theatre is generally enhancing communication with relevant organisations (ie theatre companies, funders, suppliers of artistic and administrative skills, etc) based in the same region, while its previous contact with its 'constituencies' and colleagues around the country may be becoming less frequent. Such a change can lead to a new regional network, structure and identity. This may seem to be a relatively minor point and have little immediate influence on artistic outputs, but it can imply a significant symptom of a latent, slow change under the surface, as will be explained below.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983), sociologists on organisational theory with an institutional approach, discuss the phenomenon of 'institutional isomorphism'. According to them, the increase in the level of interaction between organisations—through resource dependency and information exchange—promotes similarities among themselves in terms of formal structure, internal culture and output. This happens in the development of an "organizational field", or

a group of “those organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life” (p148). Through sharing environmental constraints and opportunities, resources and the competitive market, which all organisations must respond to, they gradually become homogeneous in many respects. Such a process towards ‘institutional isomorphism’ is concurrent with an emergence of domination and coalition patterns within the field.

This study has not explored such an institutional aspect of arts organisations in the region. Certainly more research is needed to probe my speculation that the regional arts scene may be defining itself more distinctively than before, where arts and arts-related service organisations may be changing in relation to their structure, culture and output. It may still be a little too early to conduct empirical research to test the theory provided by DiMaggio and Powell in our particular setting. Also it must be noted that the aforementioned theory is exemplified in much larger contexts such as the development of the Federal Government’s support for the arts in the United States through the 1960s and 1970s. An English region may be too small a field to test the theory. Nevertheless, DiMaggio’s (1983) key contention that public policy implementation inadvertently affects inter-organisational relationships within the field—and this is even more significant for relevant individual organisations than the direct influence of policy implementation on them—seems to have a convincing power. As Hall and Quinn (1983) assert, more research needs to be generated which combines public policy analysis with organisational theory.

Principles in Cultural Policy

The second strand of issues is related to principles in cultural policy. This paper has argued that cultural policy, not only in Britain but also in other European nations, has lacked a clearly identified meaning of the term ‘decentralisation’. It has also been pointed out that cultural policy-makers have long evaded thoroughgoing discussion of geographical equality in culture as a guiding principle for decentralisation. A debate on this subject would be of relevance in a larger context of public finance, where increasing fiscal problems, their spatial variety and the political fragmentation of western society pose challenges to the geographical concern of public finance (Bennett 1980).

The above suggestion would entail, however, more fundamental discussions. For we would need to re-visit the question of the rationale for public financing of culture and scrutinise the current distribution pattern of public funding. The classic, perennial question should be reiterated: Should cultural policy be concerned with the general public, or should it be more oriented to the promotion of artistic excellence and innovation? If the latter is the stronger

case, concentration of the arts in the capital and the fact subsidies derive from tax do not, after all, matter very much. If, to follow this case, public funding is legitimatised for its contribution to national prestige at present and in the future, which is one of the many economic theories on the subject, there is no need to be concerned that the tax burden is not always evenly shared by those who are benefiting.

Besides, the lack of fiscal coincidence in the tax burden and public expenditure and the issue of unfair distribution do exist in many areas of our public life. Social security is a good example of the separation of cost and benefit, although they are, in principle, implicitly based on a consensus that everybody must be socially insured against contingencies, and on an assumption of inter-generational solidarity in the case of pensions. Higher education may be more controversial than social security, since university graduates are likely to earn more in the labour market than those without degree. An idea of 'graduation tax' which in short is to make degree-holders subject to a higher rate of tax is arguably considered to be a means for redressing the balance.

What is particularly problematic with cultural policy, however, is simply that debate on this subject has been either more or less ill-informed one or explicit advocacy. It is not yet crystal clear whether cultural policy should go beyond the scope of the current audience to benefit the wider society which reflects the interests of taxpayers. It is not explicit either whether cultural policy should be targeted more to the members of the society than to cultural producers. One might even suspect the obscurity has been to help protect vested interests of the cultural institutions established in the current arts funding system. We will need to, therefore, keep addressing these long-lasting questions.

This study has analysed issues in cultural decentralisation through focusing on the value of equality. However, it must be noted here that the values for distributional policy are not limited to equity (ie equal distribution) but are more wide-ranging, which call for philosophical arguments on justice. We are not yet sure on what grounds cultural opportunities should be provided with public money. It has not been clear whether 'culture for all' is a mere slogan or an expression of, albeit patronising, a concrete obligation of the state to its citizens. If it is assumed to be an obligation, it is necessary to refine the notion so as to distinguish it from general civil rights, by asking on what conditions a citizen should be entitled to cultural provision. It would be helpful to refer to Miller (1976) who identifies three criteria for applying the idea of justice to the evaluation of social benefits distribution: rights, deserts and needs.

These ideas regrettably have to remain as food for thought for the moment, for expanding these concepts in cultural policy would certainly require another paper. Each will be difficult to specify, so will be the question of which one should permeate individual policies. What should be registered here is the need to find criteria for evaluating the state of affairs which policy tries to address. This would involve a great deal of political choice. In many areas of public policy, political arguments ultimately call for voting in today's democracy (Weale 1983). For good or bad, cultural policy has never been a major issue on political agendas at least in the UK, a tendency enhanced by the 'arm's length' principle. For this very reason, however, we cannot even envisage the way in which hard decisions could be made.

On the whole, this paper may have been deconstructionist and presented fundamental questions for cultural policy rather than constructive, immediate recommendations. For the cultural sector in the UK, a most pressing issue may be lack of financial resources among other things. However, at a macro level, the limited availability of resources all the more demands an articulate principle for the distributive aspect of policy and the definition of equality which is at its core. I would argue, furthermore, that it is critical to give our thought to and encourage research into the even broader issues raised in these concluding pages for effective policy-making in the longer term.

Appendix A : Schedule of Interviews

1. Theatre Directors

Individuals Interviewed:

General Manager, the Belgrade Theatre

Executive Producer, the Birmingham Repertory Theatre

Theatre Director, the New Victoria Theatre

Artistic Director, the Worcester Swan Theatre

General Manager, the Royal Shakespeare Company

Questions Asked:

- How would you describe your relationship with the local authorities, which fund your organisation, in the last 10-15 years?
- Did the change of funding authority (from the Arts Council to the West Midlands Arts) affect your management (though it might be too early to evaluate it)?
- What are challenges and opportunities for your organisation, in relation to changing climate of public funding?

2. Local Authorities

Individuals Interviewed:

Arts Development Officer, Coventry City Council

Head of Arts and Entertainment, Birmingham City Council

County Arts Officer, Staffordshire County Council

Cultural Development Officer, Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Arts Development Officer, Worcester City Council

Museum, Arts and Heritage Officer, Worcester City Council

Arts Development Officer, Warwickshire County Council

Questions Asked:

- How would you describe your Council's investment in relation to the general climate of economy and politics in the last 10-15 years? Have you had any difficulty in getting culture as a priority area for the city (or county)?
- It is often argued that central government in the last 10-15 years has tried to limit local government. In what way has this trend affected your work?
- In what way do you work with the West Midlands Arts?
- How would you evaluate the devolution of funding responsibility for some regional arts organisations from the Arts Council to the West Midlands Arts?
- What are challenges and opportunities for the arts in the region, in your view, in relation to public funding?

3. Other Relevant Officers from Arts Funding Bodies

Executive Officer, English Regional Arts Boards

Questions Asked:

- How would you describe the relationship between the Arts Council and the RAA/RABs?
- It is often argued that central government in the last 10-15 years has tried to limit local government. In what way has this trend affected your work?
- How would you evaluate the devolution of funding responsibility for some arts organisations from the Arts Council to the Regional Arts Boards?
- What are challenges and opportunities for the arts in the region, in your view, in relation to public funding?

Regional Director, Arts Council of England

Questions Asked:

- How do you work with regional and local partners?
- How would you describe the relationship between the Arts Council and Regional Arts Boards? In what way has it been changed over recent years since the Wilding Review?
- To what extent has the change of funding authority (from the Arts Council to the West Midlands Arts) affected recipient organisations (though it might be too early to evaluate it)?

Chief Executive, West Midlands Arts

Questions Asked:

- What are the consequences of the delegation of the funding responsibilities for the theatres (the Birmingham Repertory, the Belgrade, the Swan, and the New Victoria) from the Arts Council?
- Were you for or against the delegation?
- What experiences have you had since the Wilding Review in relation to your clients and to the local authorities in the West Midlands region?
- What kind of relationships are you trying to build up with the Arts Council and the local authorities which fund the theatres in the region?

Drama Officer, Arts Council of England

Questions Asked:

- How would you describe delegation of regional theatres from the Arts Council to the Regional Arts Boards?
- Would you think that the change of funding authority (from the Arts Council to the West Midlands Arts) affect their management (though it might be too early to evaluate it)?
- Why is it that regional theatres are delegated while orchestras are not? Does the difference originate from departmental or corporate strategy?

What relationship do you have with your regional partners in Theatre policy?

Drama Officer, West Midlands Arts

Questions Asked:

- What are the consequences of the delegation on your work of funding responsibilities for the theatres (the Birmingham Repertory, the Belgrade, the Swan, and the New Victoria) from the Arts Council?
- Were you for or against the delegation?
- What experiences have you had since the Wilding Review in relation to your clients and to local authorities?
- What kind of relationships do you have with the Arts Council and the local authorities in the region which fund the theatres under examination?

Appendix B

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Table 1.1 : Concepts of Decentralisation

Type of Decentralisation	Cultural	Fiscal	Political
Position within Policy Process	Policy Objective =Outcome	Policy Measure =Input	Policy Measure, Administration =Input
Sub-Concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • geographical • socio-economic • physical • cultural 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • per capita expenditure by region • central vs local ratio in national spending • disparity in subsidy on arts organisations by location • spending on one culture vs other cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • power transfer between tiers • power distribution among departments within a tier • power shift from government to non-government
Actors concerned/ focused	consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • funders (for the top two in the above) • subsidy constituencies (for the rest) 	decision-makers/funding bodies
Disparity in what?	opportunities and/or actual outcome	resource allocation	power

Table 2.1: Cultural Decentralisation without Political Decentralisation

	Centre	Local
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deconcentration • Establishment of Cultural Facilities and Organisations Nation-wide • Touring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntary Development • Persuasion
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Offices • Maison de la culture (France) • Touring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RAAs • Funding from Non-mainstream Sources

Table 2. 2 : Cultural Decentralisation with Political Decentralisation

	With transfer of power = zero-sum game	Without transfer of power = no loser
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer of Resources (authority, money, legitimacy, information and organisation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Measures to Empower and Encouragement the local in cultural policy
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devolution-The Glory Strategy • Delegation-The Wilding Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling Legislation

Table 5.1: Alternative Ideas on the Restructuring of the Arts Funding System

	Recommendation, Wilding (Oct,1989)	Decision, Luce (13 March,1990)	Suggestion, Mellor (24 Sept,1990)	Recommendation, Review Team (Nov, 1990)	Decision, Renton (19 Dec,1990)
No. of RABs	6-9, 7 preferred	10			
No. of Members	Maximum 24	Maximum 24	12	an optimum size of 15, should not be larger than 18	12-18, (24 with especial application to the minister)
Local Authorities on the Board	1/3 of the member	should not be the majority	1/3	maximum 1/3	maximum 1/3 reserved, a regional consultative forum open to all LAs ⁱ
Appointment, Member	1/3 LAs co-option 1/3 by ACGB 1/3 local co-option		all members appointed by ACGB ⁱⁱ , in consultation with BFI ⁱⁱⁱ , Crafts Council and the MInister	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAs directly appoint their representative • regional selection committee to recommend for approval by ACGB • committee includes RAB Chair, Vice-Chair, CE, Secretary General of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAs directly appoint their representative • regional selection committee to recommend for approval by ACGB • committee includes RAB Chair, Vice-Chair, CE, Secretary General of ACGB • OAL, BFI, Crafts consulted and can veto

				<p>ACGB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OAL^{iv}, BFI, Crafts consulted and can veto 	
<p>Appointment, Chair</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • elected by Board members • comment by the Minister before the election • LA Cllr ineligible 		<p>appointed by the Minister</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regional selection committee considers candidates in consultation with the board • a name presented for approval to ACGB • ACGB consult BFI, Crafts Council • consent of the Minister • selection committee by a nominee/RAB, a nominee/ACGB, CE/RAB, Secretary General/ACGB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regional selection committee considers candidates in consultation with the board • a name presented for approval to ACGB • ACGB consult BFI, Crafts Council • consent of the Minister • selection committee by 2 nominees/RAB, a nominee/ACGB, Secretary General/ACGB
Source	Wilding 1989	Luce 1990b	Mellor 1990	Review Team 1990	Renton 1990

Table 5.2 : Chronology of Devolution-Delegation

Year	Publication (in italics)/Event	Detail
1956/6	South West Arts established	The first RAA
1961	North West Arts established	First RAA with LA representatives
1968	Estimates Committee, House of Commons	Need for decentralisation mentioned
1965	<i>A Policy for the Arts: the first steps</i>	Jennie Lee, White Paper
1973	South East Arts established	All regions covered by RAA
1976	<i>Support for the Arts in England and Wales</i>	By Lord Redcliffe-Maud
1977	<i>Towards Decentralisation: a working party report on relations between the AC and RAAs</i>	Consultation document, as part of a greater commitment to devolution.
1979	AC&RAAs Joint Working Group set up to review their relationship	
1980	<i>Towards a New Relationship</i>	Informal ACGB/RAA Working Group
1982	<i>Public and Private Funding of the Arts</i>	Eighth Report from the Education Science and Arts Committee, Session 1981-82.
1982	<i>A Hard Fact to Swallow: the division of Arts Council expenditure between London and the English regions</i>	Report by PSI
1984	<i>Public and Private Funding for the Arts, Observations by the Government</i>	On the Eighth Report from the Education Science and Arts Committee, Session 1981-82. HMSO
1984	<i>The Glory of the Garden</i>	ACGB, devolution
1986	Abolition of Metropolitan Authorities	
1987	ACGB starts to produce 3 year Corporate Plan to OAL	
1987	Luce makes speech to CoRAA conference in Newcastle	Attack on the 'welfare state mentality' 8 July 1987
1988	Luce commissions review to Wilding	Letter to Rees-Mogg, Chairman, ACGB 8 Dec 1988
1989	NAO provisional report to OAL	Accountability questions, to be reviewed in light of the Wilding Report
1989	<i>Support for the Arts</i> (Wilding Report) published by OAL	18 Oct 1989
1989	Responses to be received on the Wilding Report, Consultation Period	31 Dec 1989
1990	Luce announces changes	House of Commons, Letter to Palumbo, Chairman of ACGB, 13 Mar 1990
1990	Steering Group set up	For implementation of Luce's decision

1990	<i>Office of Arts and Libraries: Review of the Arts Council of Great Britain</i>	National Audit Office
1990	Speech by Luce at CoRAA conference	On the Wilding Repor, 17 Jul 1990
1990	Mellor appointed as the Minister	24 July 1990
1990	Working Group formed to set up a new systems for planning and accountability	OAL, NABs, RAB, examining operational procedure
1990	Mellor asks the AC to set up a Review Team	Letter from Mellor to Palumbo, 24 Sept 1990 attempting to modify Luce's decisions, report by Dec 1990
1990	<i>Review Team Report</i>	Examines the options for implementing structural reform of arts funding, unpublished
1990	Renton decides on the restructuring of the arts funding system	Statement at House of Commons, Letter to Palumbo, 19 Dec 1990
1991	<i>Report of the Planning and Accountability Working Group</i>	On operational procedure in the new arts funding system, March 1991
1991	Incorporation of RABs	For all RAAs by April 1991
1992	An initial group of clients delegated to RABs	1 April 1992
1992	<i>Conditions of Financial Support : Regional Arts Board</i>	A note setting out the conditions under which the ACGB offers grant aid to RABs, May 1992
1992	Brooke announces 42 clients for delegation	Price Waterhouse review mentioned, 11 Dec 1992
1993	Brooke publishes <i>Price Waterhouse Review of ACGB structure</i>	3 main options for structural change of ACGB. List of clients to be delegated and retained, 4 June 1993
1994	Lord Gowrie appointed as Chairman of ACE	Letter from the Minister emphasising harmonisation between ACE and RABs, 22 Mar 1994
1994	ACGB devolved to ACE, Scotland and Wales	1 April 1994
1994	Second stage delegation	1 April 1994
1995?	<i>The relationship between ACE and RABs</i>	Note to describe the relationship, signed on the date by Lord Gowrie and Robert Southgate, 18 May 1995

Table 7.1 : Features of the Theatres Surveyed

	RSC	Birmingham Rep	Belgrade	New Victoria	The Swan
Year Established	1879 ¹	1913	1958	1956	1965
Remit	National/International	Regional/National	Local/Regional	Local/Regional	Local/Regional
Location	Small town and London	Urban	Mid-scale city	Small city	Small city
Income (1994/95)	<u>28 M²</u> Earned ³ : 62% ACE: 32% LAs: 5%	<u>4.1 M</u> Earned: 26% WMA: 19% LAs: 22%	<u>2.2M</u> Earned: 37% WMA: 21% LAs: 42%	<u>1.1M</u> Earned: 39% WMA: 36% LAs: 25%	<u>0.5 M</u> Earned: 61% WMA: 26% LAs: 13%
Major LAs	Corporation of London	Birmingham MBC	Coventry City Council	Staffordshire County Stoke-on-Trent City Newcastle City	Worcester City
Seats ⁴	1508 ⁵	890	862	605	353
No. of (new) Productions	(17)	14 (4)	82 (7)	46 (2)	20 (1)
No. of attendance	1,221,444	158,000	131,000	93,500	49,000

¹ Reopened in 1932 after a fire

² For the two bases including London

³ Including sponsorship

⁴ Approximate figures. Some have a flexible seating plan.

⁵ For the main theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon

Other Features	'National' company The only company fully committed to classical plays	'Big 10', traditionally important in British Theatre	Historical relation with the City Council The first company with TIE		Devolved through the Glory strategy
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Source: Appendix to WMA (1995?), Annual Reports of the companies

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- ⁱ local authorities
 - ⁱⁱ Arts Council of Great Britain
 - ⁱⁱⁱ British Film Institute
 - ^{iv} Office of Arts and Libraries

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