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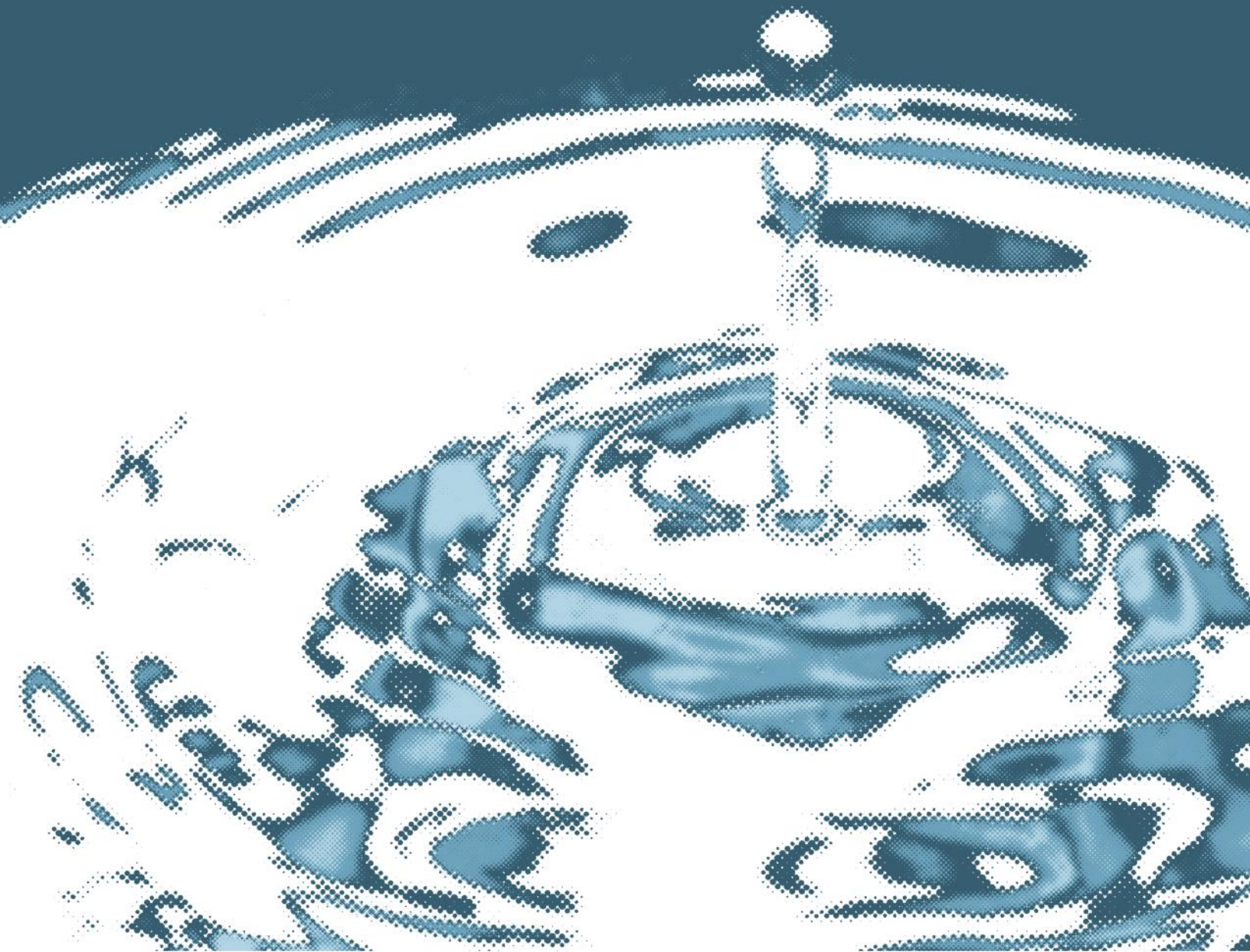## CULTURE/POLITICS/TECHNOLOGY

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On the Production and Maintenance of
Discursive Power:
Cultural Policy beyond the Nation-state

Tim MacNeill

In June of 2006, a panel of five of Canada's leading instructors of cultural policy was convened as part of the Canadian Communication Association's annual conference to discuss the concept of cultural policy and the challenges of teaching it (Savage, 2007).[1] Two important broad issues were raised in these discussions. First, panellists were compelled to question the relevance of cultural policy in a postmodern, neoliberal environment in which policy in general is perceived to be "inherently in decline" (Savage, p. 121). Second, participants voiced concerns about the always ambiguous definition of cultural policy and pedagogical difficulties that ensue from this obfuscation. My goal here is to contribute to this discussion by addressing the first of the above concerns via a rigorous discussion of the second. Cultural policy, I will argue, is not in decline, but may simply have changed form. Furthermore, the ubiquity of cultural policies has been obscured from our vision exactly because we have neglected to produce a theoretically based definition within which to locate it. I offer a definition here, and suggest that once such an optic is mobilized communication and/or cultural policy reappears as an essential, vital, ever-present, contentious, and powerful social phenomenon – one that is worthy of increased interest from researchers, instructors, and students alike.

This paper represents an exploratory excursion into the implications of explicitly theorizing cultural policy. The intent is more to propose a direction in which to begin and to invite discussion and re-evaluation than to cement a theory in place. A host of perhaps controversial issues have emerged out of this exploration which I hope to address, or that others may address, in the future. Since this attempt required a great deal of theoretical ground to be covered, there is little room for detailed empirical examples and extensive definition of each concept utilized in the argument – although I have tried to present as much of this as possible. The discussion will proceed as follows: after addressing definitional issues regarding culture and communication, I will present an argument for the need for a (re)definition of cultural policy. The bulk of the paper will then be dedicated to a synthesis of cultural theory and complexity theory toward the end of producing an evaluative framework that might move well between disciplines. This framework then assists me in generating a new definition of cultural policy. In the final two sections I discuss the implications of the theoretical synthesis and resultant (re)definition.

Culture and Communication

As there is little room here to discuss the vast history of thinking in both communication and cultural theory, I will instead present a positive explanation of definitions that will be employed. Most fundamentally, I am following Carey (1989) in claiming that meanings of communication and culture tend to collapse together on close examination. Even within transmission views on communication, the idea involves "a process whereby messages are transmitted and distributed in space for the control of distance and people" (Carey, 1989, p. 15). If we take culture to mean the complex "webs of significance" (Geertz, 1973, p. 5) upon which human activity is enacted and understood, or simply as a "particular way of life" (Williams, 2002, p. 41), the transmission view already implies a close relation between communication and culture, since the term "control of people" carries with it a subtle (albeit slightly frightening) cultural air. When we add to this, Dewey's assertion that "Men live in a community in virtue of the things which they have in common; and communication is the way in which they come to possess things in common" (1916, pp. 5–6), the relationship between communication and culture becomes tighter. This is evident since, "community" here implies a shared order of things and since this order is constructed through communication, this group of shared things must include the intangible – the ideational. Finally, we may follow Carey in utilizing a ritual view of communication which, "sees the original or highest manifestation of communication not in the transmission of intelligent information but in the construction and maintenance of an ordered, meaningful cultural world that can serve as a control and container for human action" (1989, p. 19). Communication, in this depiction, becomes collapsed into culture as implied by both Geertz and Williams. Communication, then, comes to mean "the expression of culture" which, in turn, comes to suggest a linguistic ordering of the social world that serves to make it intelligible and navigable by human agents. Culture, for the purposes of this paper, will correspondingly be used to imply expression through the arts, language, sports, or physical movement. It will also, however, be used to refer to the both precipitating and resultant ways in which the social universe is ordered and made apprehensible to human agents via cultural expression.

The Need for (re)Definition of Cultural Policy

In most literature, cultural policy has been consistently defined only tacitly and empirically – essentially as *whatever governments do to intervene in markets for cultural goods and services* (Throsby, 2001). Critical cultural policy scholars have expanded the definition of culture to include all "customs and routines of everyday life" and recognized that the market too is an institution of cultural regulation (McGuigan, 2004, p. 12), but this has

served only to expand the always tacit definition of cultural policy to *whatever governments or markets do to anything* – an unhelpful tautology in which what counts as policy is discerned simply by observing the actions of governments and markets. Salter provides a helpful definition of policy – as "decisions that are made about an issue" (as cited in Savage, 2007, p. 7). Here, studying policy becomes much more interesting – an exploration of issues and their resolution – but unless culture or communication are defined very strictly as the realm of cultural goods and communication industries, we are left with an even more hopeless definition of cultural policy: *whatever anything does to anything*.

In the place of these usually tacit, empirically-based definitions, I will construct a theoretically-substantiated definition of cultural policy. In the following pages, I will argue that cultural policy would best be conceived as *an intentional move by an actor or group of actors to produce and/or maintain discursive power.* This definition, as I will argue, allows us to delineate both an inside and an outside to cultural policy. This allows theorists to differentiate the type of cultural policy outlined here from what might be better termed a "cultural-industrial policy." The latter implies a form of intervention with the intent of addressing market failures in cultural industries. This type of policy generally assumes instrumentally rational agents who interact through markets to procure cultural goods which satisfy their (presumed) stable utilitarian desires. There exist a plethora of evaluative techniques in the field of economics with which to address such issues (Throsby, 2001; Dayton-Johnson, 2000). Other theorists, however, may utilize the cultural policy definition I propose in order to enact interpretive methodologies to the end of evaluating instances in which cultural expression is performed with the presumption of a changing and malleable field of cultural understandings. Such analysis may include evaluations of all the forms of power that are mobilized in such cases. An example of such analysis may be one which seeks to problematize cultural-industrial policies in general as discursive moves by powerful economic and political interests to articulate culture toward a general instrumental rationality – one centred on economic action in market economies. This is precisely the sort of investigation undertaken by Habermas (1984) in his description of the colonization of the culturally fluid, creative and deliberative realm of the "lifeworld" by the strictly ordered regime of the "systemworld" of market and government.

This exploration will require engagement with a very broad literature. Communication theory, cultural studies, critical theory, and political economy will all be utilized in this undertaking via a complex theoretical *bricolage*. In order to maintain coherence in lieu of simply creating a

theoretical hodgepodge, I will synthesize these borrowings under the rubric of complexity theory – an "emergent" theoretical form that has been claimed to represent a new "turn" in social theories to rival the Marxian and postmodern turns before it (Urry, 2005). Complexity theory, as we will see, is generally harmonious with much communication and cultural theory and is particularly well suited to depict life in a globalized cultural/informational postmodern/late-capitalist economy/society (Appaduarai, 2000; Castells, 2000; Lyotard, 2000; Jameson, 1984). It is the amelioration of agency/structure problems and the extreme transdisciplinary nature of complexity theory that makes it a particularly suitable forum in which to synthesize diverse schools of thought in a historically contextualized manner to the end of illuminating the current nature of cultural policy. My use of complexity theory here is also forward-looking. Since the rubric has been used increasingly within disciplines as disparate as natural sciences (Gleick, 1988), sociology (Urry, 2003), and economics (Arthur, 1994), it provides a framework in which the issues surrounding cultural policy may be addressed across disciplines in the future.[2]

A Theory of Complexity and Cultural Policy

If there is a micro-foundation to cultural theory, it lies in communication. The work of many theorists has either implicitly or explicitly acknowledged this assertion. Habermas's *Theory of Communicative Action* (1984), the work of Giddens (1984), Carey's "ritual view" of communication (1989), Lacanian pyschoanalytics (1977), Lévi-Strauss's (1963) extension of Saussurian linguistics to analyses of human action, indeed the entire "interpretive turn" in the social sciences (Taylor, 1971; Geertz, 1973) rest on the postulate that whatever else human beings are, at their base they are actors that communicate in order to codify, categorize, and create the symbolic world in which they live. This "communicative action" (Habermas, 1984), in other words, is undertaken in the pursuit of what Giddens has called "ontological security" (Smith, 2001, p. 144), with the purpose of negotiating a normative and symbolic structure in which human social life is made possible.

Although it emerged out of the natural sciences, complexity-theory correlates noticeably with the above mentioned cultural and communication theory. Two key foundational principles that emerged out of the post-linear theorization and empirics of the natural world by complexity theorists are (1) that interaction creates the attributes of particles and (2) that particles are attracted to orderly patterns (Urry, 2005, p. 4). Thus, order tends to emerge out of chaos as sub-atomic particles, like human cultural actors, seek their own ontological security and come to embody their surroundings (Oldridge, 2003, p. 303). The results of this tendency in the natural world were for a

long time mistakenly perceived by enlightenment scientists as "the natural laws of physics" (Urry, 2005; Oldridge, 2003). In the social world, orderly cultural patterns were perceived by modern theorists either as "human nature" (Taylor, 2001) or "ideological" forms that served to obscure a hidden "reality" (Marx & Engels, 1976, pp. 59–62; Gramsci, 1971, pp. 52–58; Althusser, 1971), depending on the writer's political persuasion.

If human "particles" are structured through interaction with their surroundings as they are driven by a need for ontological security, then a functionalist social equilibrium might be thought to ensue. Conflict, change, agency, and cultural policy for that matter, would all be rendered nonsensical by such a postulate. Complexity theorists such as Urry (2005) and Oldridge (2003) avoid this structuralist trap with their model of *complex adaptive systems*. Such systems are claimed to be complex by virtue that they contain multiple *basins of attraction*. These basins are nothing more than conglomerations of ordered behaviour which exert an attractive force simply by providing a locus of order in an otherwise chaotic world. That is, they attract because they provide ontological security. Furthermore, complexity theorists argue that all systems are *open systems* that, while they are *path dependent* (historically contingent), are never in equilibrium. Complex and multiscalar interactions between basins of attraction, and the openness of the system, ensure that continually *emergent* forms are only *metastable* (nearly stable) at best and therefore structural change is not only possible, but virtually assured (Urry, 2005, p. 8).

The dynamics of this process are fairly intuitive: the more clearly the trajectory of a particle comes to conform with a particular basin of attraction, the more the power of that basin is reinforced. This basin then impacts the shape of the entire system to a degree that corresponds with its power and positioning within the system. The reaction of each particle in the system to a change in a basin's power, in turn, inspires further reactions which, in turn, inspire further reactions – producing a state of perpetual change (Urry, 2005; Oldridge, 2003). This model has been used by complexity theorists to describe various worlds in which agents are determined by structures at the same time as possessing power to impact the nature of those very structures – whether these worlds are at the quantum or societal level (Gleick, 1988; Urry, 2005). Since multiple basins of attraction are presumed to exist in complex systems, a large – perhaps infinite – number of categories, identities, and power structures can be presumed to exist. Some exertions of power may, of course, be larger than others, and structures at different times and places may be more or less stable (Urry, 2005).

Much literary and cultural theory is instructive in comprehending the

dynamics of complex adaptive systems. According to Smith (1988), the "particle" that we are concerned with in human interaction is generally called the "individual," the "subject" or the "agent" (pp. *xxxiv–xxxv*). For Smith, the first two of these terms are misleading. The first is a term that is "ideologically designed to give the false impression that human beings are free and self-determining" (p. *xxxv*). The second is usually understood to be entirely "the object of determinant forces" (p. *xxxiv*). Smith uses two Althusserian assertions to formulate the "agent" – which is defined as "the series or the conglomeration of positions, subject positions … into which a person is called momentarily by the discourses and the world that he/she inhabits" (p. *xxxv*).

The first Althusserian premise is that there is no existence outside of ideology – that human consciousness is necessarily constituted of an imaginary relation to the "real conditions of existence" (Althusser, 1971, p. 153). The second is that subjects are "interpellated" or hailed into existing subject positions by ideological discourses generated by ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) (Althusser, p. 153). Smith drops the claims that the sources of interpellations are necessarily ISAs, and that there exists an objective reality, but maintains that agents are interpellated via *discourse*. He then augments Althusser's theory by asserting that the subject is continually hailed by *multiple* discourses into a plurality of subject positions. Smith completes his framework by insisting of agents that:

> both they and the discourses they inhabit have histories and memories [*path dependencies*] which alter in constitution over time [are metastable] … the interplay of differing subject positions [*influence of multiple basins of attraction*] will make some appear pleasurable and others less so; thus a tension is produced which compels a person to legislate among them [*exert agency*]. (p. *xxxiv*)

Human agents, then, have histories. It is these histories that inform agents in their interpretation of the basins of attraction with which they have contact. Agents, then, are historically compelled to react differently to the same forces. We call this phenomenon agency.

Smith's use of the notion of discourse is important here since, as Foucault has reminded us, it is within discourse "that power and knowledge are conjoined" (1998, p. 1476). The discourse of particular subjects, then, exerts a power over other subjects. This must not lead us to believe, however, that a particular discourse can be a totalizing force, as it can be worked creatively upon by those under its sphere of influence, and therefore

reproduced, recreated, and re-enacted even as resistance. Discourse can be "crystallized" in texts, which are but "instances of discursive production" (Hall, 2005, p. 95), and performances, which are themselves but an "enunciation of what might be called 'text acts'" (Mowitt, 1988, p. *xxii*). Since, to be consistent with Hall (1980), all such forms of communication must be subjectively interpreted, or "decoded," that decoding must, once expressed, be reincorporated into "frameworks of knowledge" (p. 168). Agency, it follows, implies a dialectical and interpretive relationship with discourse.

There is room for a normative claim here. Given the simultaneous enactment of performance and interpretation that give force to particular basins of attraction, all human social actions and interpretations are also "equally engagements or interventions in everyone else's history and have real effects there" (Smith, 1988, p. 158). It follows that differentials in the power of agents to impact the form of discursive fields implies inequalities of agency. It is precisely the amelioration of such discursive inequalities that informs the normative foundation of Habermas's notion of *Öffentlichkeit*, or public sphere. Calls for deliberative democracy within a public sphere are essentially calls for the creation of a forum in which agents can participate equally in the construction of lifeworlds (Durham-Peters, 1993; Habermas 1984; 1989).

We can see, then, that by adding the concept of multiple interpellations to the Derridian notion that there is no human thought outside of discourse, Smith has aided us in theorizing a space in which we produce our world as it produces us. This space correlates strongly with the notion of a complex adaptive system, which, I would argue, also correlates with Raymond Williams's (1977) notion of "structures of feeling" in which meanings and values as they are actively felt are continually produced within a "structure" that is "still in process" (p. 127). This continually changing structure, for Williams, exists in interplay between various dominant, residual, and emergent forms that all result from historically situated [path dependent] mutation based on interpretation and subsequent (inter)action (p. 134). Finally, a normative policy metric can be injected here, as social progress becomes defined in Habermasian terms as any move to equality of agency in impacting discursive forms. Note that this normativity does not imply that any particular way of being or state of the world is better than any other, provided that it has been negotiated by agents with relatively equal power to impact discursive structures. Furthermore, it does not need to imply an actually attainable state, rather an ideal toward which policy might be directed.

Despite the correlations, there is a subtle incongruence between complexity theory and cultural theory regarding the concept of *articulation*. As used most notably by Lawrence Grossberg and Stuart Hall, both following the work of Laclau, the term has come to mean "the form of connection that *can* make a unity of two different elements" (Hall, as cited in Grossberg, 1986, p. 53). Various discourses need not be congruent with one-another and, in fact, may be oppositional. Articulation establishes a felt connection – a congruence – between discursive spheres. When all, or nearly all, segments of human understanding become connected in such a way with a particular discourse, something close to the Gramscian (1971) concept of hegemony is established (Grossberg, 1986). Such is the case, according to Gunster (2004), when all human meaning-making is articulated by the discourse of the commodity form to the point that there is little thought possible outside of it. Complexity theory, however, holds that there are always connections between components of a complex adaptive system – some of these are simply less-direct and/or weaker than others (Urry, 2005; Oldridge, 2003). Correspondingly, I will retain the use of the term *articulation* here but attach to it the meaning of strengthening or weakening of connections and congruencies, as opposed to the creation or destruction of them.

Agency within structure in complexity theory is assured by the very complexity and openness of the system – since something is always changing, the particle is always compelled to "choose" amongst emergent options based on its historical constitution (Oldridge, 2003). Smith, as I have discussed, comes to the same conclusion regarding human social actors, as

> it is not that the "subject's" "me" ever escapes fixity in a certain sense, but that the nature of that fixity … is in constant change. That is, even if the "subject" establishes certain forms of consistency or repetition by way of its imaginary identifications … these are continually vulnerable to the registration of ever renewed and contradictory interpellations. (1988, p. 106)

If agents are thought to have interests in such a context, they must be in favouring a discursive form, or basin of attraction, that valorizes, maintains, or is at least in congruence with their historically imbedded felt subjectivities (Smith, 1988, pp. 157–8). As a discourse is favoured by an agent, however, it may relatively diminish the attractive power of another discourse, and that discourse might be more congruent with another agent or group that has been differently constructed historically. Discourses of feminism, for example, may be felt to diminish the relative value of being a historically constituted male for those who hold the cultural idea that gender exists in binary. The

notion of conflict seeps in here, as culture becomes an arena of contesting discourses in which social actors struggle for recognition, authority, and voice (Clifford, 1986).

Complexity theory reminds us that as any discursive field or articulated assemblage of fields becomes increasingly powerful due to increased participation in it, the entire system will be articulated to varying degrees via its influence. Agents, again to varying degrees, internalize the meaning of this discourse depending on their special/historical relation to it. This, to incorporate a Foucaultian notion, exerts a constituting force upon agents as subjectivities are compelled to submit to a particular form of governmentality via an assemblage of tactics and institutional configurations that are at their root articulated performances of the dominating discourse (Foucault, 1991). The extent to which such an articulation can be complete is arguable. Horkheimer and Adorno (1972), for example, have presented an argument that might be taken as an exposition of the nearly total articulation of the commodity form (Gunster, 2004). The centrality of the concepts of polysemy and active/creative production of culture within cultural studies, however, points to the impossibility of such a conclusion (Hall, 1980; Smith, 2001).

Agency can, however, exist amidst unequal power relations in complexity theory, as it is the layered, multipolar, emergent nature of complex systems that is thought to guarantee the incompleteness of a particular articulation and the dynamism of the structure (Urry, 2005). It follows, however, that those agents who are marginalized by an articulation because their historical composition situates them some distance from its centre of discursive power, experience a relative diminishment of what might be called status or dignity, due to an effective devaluation of what Bourdieu (1998) refers to as cultural capital. Their incongruence with a dominant basin of attraction leaves them relatively devoid of the cultural traits that signify status and belonging.

In the extreme, such agents represent at once the outside fringes of an articulation, and a source of the dynamism of the complex adaptive system. If their histories designate them as ineffectual participants in the current articulation their only recourse may be to attempt to energize a discursive field that could assist in mitigating their exclusion. If we are to subscribe to a notion that power is both generative and dispersed (Foucault, 1998), this scenario is both possible and hopeful. To be consistent with the argument presented above, however, such a move would only be imaginable when a discursive field, such as one valorizing "human equality," for example, exists in either emergent or residual form and can be re-interpreted to meet the historically constituted needs of the affected agents.

This, I suggest, is the type of dynamic evoked by Lewis and Miller (2003) when they describe a series of "decisions, determinations, and struggles that produce one set of outcomes over another" and are enacted in the interest of "formatting public collective subjectivity" (p. 2) when discussing some forms of cultural policy. Miller and Lewis, along with Cunningham (2003), McGuin (2003), and Yúdice and Miller (2002) insist at various times that cultural policy can be a process in which forms of governmentality are *discursively* enacted or opposed. As opposed to being just one form of cultural policy, I would argue this is the substantive action at the core of cultural policy: culture being acted upon using the resource of culture itself. Cultural policy, again, must be defined accordingly as *an intentional move by an actor or group of actors to produce and/or maintain discursive power.* By "discursive power" I am referring not to a totalizing propensity, but rather the degree of articulating power that any given basin of attraction may have over others.

Intent is an important component of this definition since it restricts cultural policy becoming simply "anything that anything does." Given the ontological presuppositions of complexity theory, a definition of cultural policy that includes the unintentional would necessarily encompass the totality of human and non-human activity. This is true since all action whether economic, social, or geothermal, for that matter, is thought to have some sort of at least minute impact on the entire system in complexity theory (Urry, 2005; Oldridge, 2003). That is to say that since in complex adaptive systems individuals are often thought to be no more than "'transitory hardenings' in the more basic flows of massive amounts of minerals, genes, diseases, energy, information and language" (Urry, 2005, p. 7), a snowstorm or the purchase of a stock share could be considered to be cultural policy if such policies may be unintentional.

What is Cultural Policy? What is Not?

The operationalization of this proposed definition of cultural policy produces some interesting conceptual results. Funding for the arts in order to reap economic benefits from a creative population is a practice that is often called cultural policy (Throsby, 2001; Yúdice & Miller, 2002), but is not so under this definition. The Canadian government, for example, funds music in the province of Nova Scotia via decision criteria that privilege potential marketability (MNS, 2008; FACTOR, 2008). This funding move does not directly seek to produce or maintain a particular field of discursive power – it simply aims to reap economic rents utilizing the logics of existing discourses without purposefully energizing them. The belief that human creativity must be justified by instrumental considerations is assumed to be true, and the

funding of diversity for diversity's sake is excluded by the model. Analysis of this model by its own criteria would invite economic considerations and economic modeling. These market-driven funding policies may, however, be manifestations of past cultural policies. Hermeneutic approaches might, therefore, be used by researchers who wish to map-out the ways in which emergent neoliberal justifications for market-driven cultural-industrial policies have been promoted by certain groups. The strength of the resultant basin of attraction that currently articulates this tendency toward market-based culture may be analyzed and judged according to the extent that the discursive power of alternate possible assertions has been overwhelmed. Corrective cultural policies may then be undertaken by individuals, groups, consortiums of groups, communities, or governments.

The same is true for the act of utilizing a distinct local culture for the purpose of tourism, as in the case with the Maya of Guatemala. The national government as well as international business interests mine the image of a Maya subject that is presented as "backward" and "quaint" yet "beautiful" to procure profits and enhance gross domestic product (Little, 2004). Existing characterizations of Maya are mixed here with existing neoliberal ideologies that posit culture as a resource for economic development (Yúdice, 2003). The success or failure and tendencies toward economic equality or inequality within such a system would be interesting work for an economist studying cultural-industrial policy. The interesting questions for a cultural policy theorist working with the definition I have forwarded would be different. In this case, the ways in which the depiction of Maya as primordial has been promoted by particular groups, and the ways in which culture has become characterized as a commodity might be more interesting for a cultural policy theorist. Perhaps more compelling would be the study of the cultural policy enacted by various Pan-Maya activists who explicitly seek to re-state the meaning of Maya as forward thinking, vibrant, and creative, while staking out territory away from the market in which the Maya cosmovision might flourish (Fischer & McKenna Brown, 1996).

In the above examples, I have named particular acts "cultural-industrial policies." Since discourses, and therefore subjectivities (or as economists would call them "preference sets" or "tastes") are presumed stable in these, the cultural-industrial policies in these examples would be more accurately characterized as economic, rather than cultural, policies. Economics is, after all, defined specifically as the social science of human choices that are made given the existence of stable "preference sets" (Becker, 1976). This is not to say that arguments cannot be entertained as to the extent to which these discourses and agents are actually stable, or whether or not such moves have unintended cultural consequences, or whether economics has the proper tools

to undertake such analyses. What I am claiming here is that cultural policy is a special kind of action that requires its own mode of analysis and inquiry and should therefore be distinguished from economic analysis.

These two separate types of action correspond precisely to Habermas's categories of *communicative* action and *strategic* action in human social relations. Furthermore, they are real, not just analytic distinctions. As Habermas suggests:

> I do not use the terms "strategic" and "communicative" only to designate two analytic aspects under which the same action could be described – on the one hand, as a reciprocal influencing of one another by opponents acting in a purposive-rational manner and, on the other hand, as a process of reaching understanding among members of a lifeworld. Rather, social relations can be distinguished according to whether the participants adopt either a success-oriented attitude or one oriented toward reaching understanding. (1984, p. 286)

One must not be misled by the tone of Habermas's writing to assume that the "process of reaching understanding" to which he refers here is conflict-free. Although Habermas insists that there is a possibility in achieving an institutional arrangement that facilitates such "rational" negotiation, such an institution has not yet been realized. The nature of lifeworlds, for Habermas, is up for serious contestation and is imbued with inequitable relations of power on multiple levels (Durham-Peters, 1993). Such is the nature of both communicative action and cultural policy. Indeed, these two concepts are inseparable – to engage in communicative action is to engage in cultural policy.

The Changed Nature of Cultural Policy
Since "a public is a social space created by the reflexive circulation of discourse" (Warner, 2002, p. 5), various publics and counterpublics are inevitably created by the discourses that constitute such practices. The spheres in which these publics communicate consequently become important sites of cultural production and they often come to delineate the boundaries of identity (Durham-Peters, 2003; Anderson, 1983). Within the dominant cultural form of modernity, the resultant claims of publics were to be made to a governing national state in the name of a rationally discernable truth (Habermas, 1989; Taylor, 2001). Cultural policies undertaken via subjectivities that were encapsulated by this modern articulation often took

the form of national identity-building projects (Dayton-Johnson, 2000), advertising to foster "self-interested" consumerism (Bauman, 1998; Herman & Chomsky, 1988), and oppositional movements that sought to expose the "real" nature of alienation in a capitalist system (Marx & Engels, 1976; Marx, 2002; Horkheimer & Adorno, 1972).

The designation of the historical era that has been called postmodernity (Lyotard, 2000) or late-capitalism (Jameson, 1984) marks a modification to such subjectivities and the multiple publics they evoke. This turn was typified by a decline of the nation-state along with intensification of commodification – specifically of informational and cultural resources (Castells, 2000; Baudrillard, 1994; Drucker 1993; Jameson, 1984). Concepts of "the real" and "human nature" were marginalized as discursive categories with the rise of the postmodern (Taylor, 1971; Lyotard, 2000). Consequently, the idea that "what *is* does not necessarily *have to be*" became a powerful interpellating discourse for human actors (Hall, 2004, p. 130). Culture, as a result, has increasingly become "the legitimizing ground" on which particular groups make claims for "resources and inclusion" (Yúdice & Miller, 2002, p. 15). Identity, (which has always been the locus of historically situated, constantly transformative, discursively productive, cultural-political practices), has become more expedient in this regard (Yúdice, 2003). The ascendance of the very idea of culture as a discursive category amidst postmodern political economy, then, may have increased the relevance and incidence of cultural policy just as the power of nation state seemed to be declining due to neoliberal reforms.

Cultural policies, in short, may have acquired more legitimacy and instrumental force with the decline of the nation-state and the associated trappings of modernity, not less. Where once, the nation-state was the articulating concept in which culture was to reside, transnational flows of material and immaterial culture, which are often commodified and transmitted by increasingly powerful media institutions (Appadurai, 2000), have congealed in multiple sites and across scales and borders. The resultant discourses have become temporarily hardened within, and performed by, complex subjectivities. It is in these sites and via these subjectivities that power/knowledge is produced, re-formed, and resisted in multifarious ways with the explicit intent of augmenting discursive structures and therefore the complex adaptive system in which life is animated and imagined. Analysts who look at policy atheoretically through an optic of the nation-state will miss all of this, and see only the declining of cultural policy.

Conclusion

I have presented a thorough reformulation of the concept of cultural policy via the fusion of communication, cultural, and complexity theory. The general argument was that cultural policy should not be defined empirically as whatever governments do to culture, rather it should be defined theoretically, as *an intentional move by an actor or group of actors to produce and/or maintain discursive power.* Once this is done, theorists can end their lamentation of the perceived ineffectuality of cultural policy as it becomes evident that cultural policy has not disappeared, rather it has been popularised. That is to say that, although it may seem to have been wrested away from nation states to a certain extent, such cultural policy is increasingly enacted in diverse and creative ways by numerous state and non-state actors. Furthermore, the study of such actions *as* enactments of cultural policies could provide an exciting and rewarding direction for future research.

As communication infrastructures and multinational capitalism span increasingly across the globe, advertisers still work to create consumers while states instigate policies to constitute their nations to be sure. So too do anti-globalization, environmental, and various indigenous movements work to articulate an expansive, global and cultural complex adaptive system to their benefit through the production of discursive power – often utilizing vast communication networks as means, and discourses of "democracy" and "freedom" as guiding principles (Hardt & Negri, 2004, pp. 81–91). These are concrete enactments of cultural policy beyond the nation-state. Their analysis, description, and critique could be a central focus of communication and cultural theorists – especially those concerned with forming, supporting, articulating and imagining alternative future discursive shapes for the complex adaptive system that we inhabit.

Notes

1. The panel was actually framed as a discussion of "communication policy." In the tradition of Carey (1989), I consider the terms "communication" and "culture" as functionally interchangeable, since they are mutually constitutive, as I will explain later. I therefore take this panel to have been addressing cultural policy and communication policy simultaneously.

2. This search for a common framework is exceptionally important for me since my work in culture and international development necessitates cross-disciplinary dialogue between practitioners and academics from a variety of disciplines. Much vital work must be done, for example,

regarding the interconnectivity of environmental, cultural, economic, and political issues in the study of international development. I expect that many others can relate to this need for a common dialogic optic in addressing other complex issues.

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