

# **Planning in Dutch cultural policy: An attempt at mixed scanning**

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## 1. Introduction

The belief that social planning is possible and the conviction that the social sciences can contribute to this process, have been subject to considerable wear in recent years. Some authors, however, are still optimistic about this matter. They attach especially great value to the so-called mixed-scanning planning model developed by Etzioni, which forms a middle ground between the (megalomaniac) synoptic and the (modest) incremental model. In this essay these three models will first be analysed. This will be done primarily within the framework of their relation to a pluralist political system. To substantiate the above, I shall then discuss at length a policy field which is seldom or never included in reviews of policy: the cultural sector. The present attempts by the Dutch central government at (mixed-scanning) planning in cultural policy will be investigated: how does the policy take shape, what are the advantages and disadvantages of the applied planning method, and how could it be improved? Special attention will be paid to the question whether or not a requisite for mixed scanning has been met: a public or political debate about the values and goals that underlie the policy concerned.

## 2. Incrementalism and polyarchy

For many years, Anglo-American political scientists in particular have contended that the incremental policy model is most appropriate to, and usually is employed in, democratic political systems. Authors such as Dahl, Lindblom and Wildavsky therefore considered this policy model, inspired by political philosophers such as Schumpeter, Berlin and Popper, as worthwhile to pursue (Dahl, 1956; Lindblom, 1959, 1965; Dahl & Lindblom, 1953; Wildavsky, 1964; Schumpeter, 1943; Berlin, 1950, 1953; Popper, 1945, 1957).

Incremental policy is characterized by an incessant flow of marginal policy measures or adjustments, supported by various social actors or 'partners'. It is not so much an effort to realize a well-defined long-term objective, as an attempt to contribute practically to the alleviation or solution of an urgent short-term problem. The policy comes about bit by bit, incrementally, in a continuous process of negotiation between social, political and bureaucratic interest groups. In this model decision making is seen as the product of continuous conflict about the instruments, values and aims of the policy to be pursued. This explains why processes like exchange, negotiation, adjustment and compromise hold a central position. On the other hand the synoptic model is characterised by a fundamental consensus among the various actors about the instruments, values and aims, and therefore by concord and harmony (cf. Van de Vall, 1980, p.97-9).

When one tries to explain the connection between incrementalism and democracy, it is usually pointed out that the existence of many influential organizations, independent of the State and of each other, is characteristic of open, democratic societies. In our Western political systems, it is not primarily the individual citizen who determines government policy through a direct form of democracy. This happens indirectly through the so-called social centrefield, composed of the whole of more or less autonomous organizations which act as intermediary and buffer between citizen and State. Dahl thus does not speak of a democracy, but of a polyarchy. As a result of the often antipodal interests and influences of these organizations, decisions are not made by one rational actor, from one central point, but in disjointed fashion. The final result is a more or less 'organic' growth of policy measures: an inevitably unstable compromise without basic reasoning, without a coherent and consistent plan for the realization of a comprehensive, well-defined goal.

To justify incrementalism, it is usually stressed that citizens and politicians show, almost inevitably, a lack of consensus on the values and aims of government policies, that society is too complex and that policy makers have insufficient knowledge to make consequential and comprehensive decisions in responsible fashion. It is therefore preferable to carry out marginal modifications based on the status quo and to 'muddle through' gradually. Minor adjustments leave less room for error and possible blunders are corrected more easily. Moreover, marginal changes are usually accepted more readily than radical ones. The social support which, certainly in a democracy, is indispensable to the success of government policies is thus more simply attained.

## 2.1. Doubts about pluralism

During the last few years, a perceptible about-turn has taken place in the evaluation of the incremental policy model and of the polyarchic system it is partly based upon. It is surprising that especially Lindblom and Dahl, who are rated among the founders of the 'pluralism' theory, are primarily the ones to be increasingly overcome by doubt. The role of interest groups in particular, central in the theory of pluralism, is appraised more critically. Thus Dahl points out that these organizations may in fact help to continue social inequality, undermine civic consciousness and an awareness of the common good, distort the public agenda, and alienate the individual citizen from controlling this agenda (Dahl, 1982; cf. Lindblom & Dahl, 1976; Dahl, 1983, 1985, 1989, 1991; Lindblom, 1977, 1982, 1986). Has pluralism not been reduced to an *interest-group liberalism* (Lowi, 1969) in which oligarchically organized interest groups together with government agencies in opaque negotiation processes make those decisions which in a true democracy would be reserved for the political domain?

Another problem was whether the mutual pervasion or intertwinement of State and society, inherent in incrementalism, does not lead to compartmentalization and incomprehensiveness, inflexibility, immobility and uncontrollability, and eventually to an undermining of the legitimacy of State and politics. An ensuing problem can be that the model incorrectly suggests that every policy comes about by small steps, that the consequences of such small steps are always limited and that the decision makers retain their flexibility. A final problem is whether the model leaves adequate room for value judgment or substantial rationality and whether its application does not lead to technocratic instrumentalism, lack of direction and conservatism (Habermas, 1975; Offe, 1983; Schmitter, 1984; Geelhoed, 1983; Van Doorn, 1984, 1988; Dror, 1964; Etzioni, 1968, 1991; Dahl, 1982; Manley, 1983; Goodin, 1982, 1988; Dryzek, 1990).

The most fundamental problem seems to be that the legitimacy of the welfare state is under pressure. Lehning argues that the theoreticians of each of the five most important present political streams (neo-conservatism, neo-liberalism, neo-marxism, neo-corporatism and neo-pluralism) have concluded that there is no (longer) concurrence on which is the right political order, what ought to be the role of the State in society and what are legitimate demands on the State. The result is that organized 'sub-sets of interests are pursued unlimitedly, thus endangering the 'common good''. (Lehning, 1986, p. 6) There is no longer a consensus about a normative criterion on the basis of which (sub-)interests can be differentiated or rejected, re-

sulting among other things in a permanent excessive demand on and overburdening of the central government.

## 2.2. Mixed scanning and citizenship as an alternative

An important, both descriptive and prescriptive, alternative to incrementalism is the mixed-scanning policy model developed by the American sociologist Amitai Etzioni. This model is a synthesis of the model described in § 2.1 and the synoptic or rational-comprehensive model. Among the basic assumptions of this last model are: the possibility of organizing or changing society to a certain degree, a high measure of consensus on the objectives and instruments of policy, and the availability of sufficient information. Synoptic policy comes about by an exhaustive, rational examination of the alternative instruments (and their consequences) in order to realize a rationally planned, long-term goal. The use of the term 'synoptic' (comprehensive) does not only indicate that the policy is rational, but also that this rationality covers the whole policy cycle (Van de Vall, 1980, ch.4). Although this policy mode plays an important part in theory, it can seldom or never be executed in practice (Lindblom, 1959, 1975, 1979; Wildavsky, 1964; Etzioni, 1968).

Etzioni has pointed out that the two models do (should) not exclude one another but, on the contrary, (should) complement each other. In his mixed-scanning model the synoptic paradigm is connected to the fundamental decision-making process about aims and means, and the incremental model to the daily ad hoc decisions about the implementation of these elementary decisions (Etzioni, 1967, 1968, 1986, 1991). An *active society* is necessary, according to Etzioni, for the mixed-scanning model to function. This society is characterised by an ongoing public debate about the values and goals which (should) form the foundation of society and government policies, and, thanks to this debate, by a strong sense of both citizenship and the common good. By means of this public normative debate policy can be given the legitimacy, direction and cohesion which incrementalism often lacks. Moreover, if the debate leads to practical conclusions, the countless and often conflicting claims of the interest groups can be weighed against one another and against the goals of society. The permanent overload of the central government as well as the compartmentalization, immobility and uncontrollability of its policies can thus be countered. Because policies are the object of public discussion, it is possible, finally, that the exercise of power by the interest groups takes place less covertly. This would be to the advantage of democratic control.

It is remarkable, for that matter, that many of Etzioni's ideas concerning policy-making and the importance of public political discourse and of citizenship are closely connected to the recommendations now made by numerous Dutch and foreign authors to counter the problems in and of the welfare state.

### 3. Dutch cultural policy

To substantiate the arguments concerning the defects of the polyarchic political system and the incremental policy model closely linked to it, and especially the detrimental role of the interest groups, examples from the fields of economics, agriculture, medicine or education are normally used. Yet the arts and cultural policy is no less interesting, at least in the Netherlands. I shall initially indicate in which fields the Dutch Ministry of Culture intervenes, how this interference has come about, and how this policy, within the framework of the above discussion on polyarchy and incrementalism, can be evaluated. Next, I shall examine the presently applied planning method, which was expressly introduced to counter a number of shortcomings of the earlier, strongly incremental policy (WVC, 1992a; Van Ijsselmuiden, 1992; Akkermans et al, 1992). This planning model, which can be characterised as an attempt at mixed scanning, was first applied in its entirety in 1991 and 1992 (after an experimental phase). In conclusion I shall address myself to the questions to what extent this attempt has succeeded and how the existing policy could be improved upon.

#### 3.1. Incremental cultural policy

The incremental character of government policy in the cultural field has been repeatedly pointed out. The policy regarding museums, monuments, archives, libraries, literature, fine arts, media, design and architecture, theatre and mime, music and dance, amateur artistry, and art education has come about bit by bit in a negotiation process between interested parties from the world of the arts, the government bureaucracy, advisory bodies and politicians. The initiative to subsidize certain facilities has been and still is as a rule taken by influential lobbies. Allocation primarily occurred on an ad hoc basis: the pros and cons between the various sectors (for instance: symphony versus chamber orchestras, and music versus film) and between established institutions and new initiatives have seldomly been taken into consideration. Public discussion about this subject, Zijdeveld argued in

1983, furthermore suffers from a lack of substantial or value rationality, with the result that 'cultural policy is not part of a clear politico-cultural framework and throws itself rather unsystematically into all sorts of cultural problems' (Zijderveld, 1983, p.165-9; cf. Blokland, 1991, ch.7). In 1992, this cultural policy of the central government involved a total of 2.1 billion Dutch guilders, i.e. 1% of the total government budget. If the public broadcasting network is left out, a sum of 862 million Dutch guilders remains for the arts, literature, libraries and cultural heritage (museums, archives, monuments) (WVC, 1992). Local government spends about 1.1 billion Dutch guilders in these fields.

Among the reasons for cultural policy to be especially susceptible to the failings of pluralism are the following: the policy primarily consists of the provision of grants, a process in which independent advisory bodies like the Arts Council are called in; the criteria on the basis of which policy is made ('quality', 'pluriformity') are difficult to be verified and supervised for outsiders, and the policy makers involved, much like medical specialists and other professionals, are for this reason eager to refer to their unique expertise; the policy is highly decentralised and deconcentrated; much of the decision-making process takes place in the (grey) fringe area of State bureaucracy and interest-group organizations; the interest groups involved are highly organized and, due to their easy access to the media and their professional ability to manipulate the public, have a great power potential at their disposal. As a result of all these factors, the risk of immobility, compartmentalization, uncontrollability and disorientation, short-sighted protection of particularistic interests and limited instrumental rationality has proved real.

### 3.2. An attempt at mixed scanning

For, among others, the reasons summed up above, the Minister of Culture has complied with the request of the Lower House to present a quadrennial Government Document on Culture since 1988. This Document sets out what general cultural and political considerations and objectives underlie the included and also quadrennial Arts Plan, which indicates what institutions, societies and artists receive what grant. In the Explanatory Memorandum of the applicable Act on cultural policy, the minister is explicitly invited to extend the cultural and political views explicated in the Government Document on Culture beyond the policy areas covered by his department. It is the wish of the Lower House to use the Culture Memorandum to stimulate a public debate about the cultural developments in Dutch society.

A relevant consideration in this context, which is fairly popular in the world of art, is the following. The arts can be considered as an intense reflection on and imagination of culture in sociological sense (WVC, 1992). They constitute an area in which society analyses itself and in which new ideas are developed and tried out. So, especially the participants in the politico-cultural debate might dispose of the vocabulary and the habitus to discuss the fundamental values of our society.

As was indicated in § 2.2, such a debate is desirable in order to come to a public vision of the common good, a social consensus about the instruments and objectives of the policy, and a sense of citizenship. Such a debate is also a requisite for a mixed-scanning policy. Hence the Government Document on Culture could be classified as an attempt at mixed scanning: within the framework formed by the outcome of the (synoptic) cultural and political debate, which is triggered by the general cultural and political considerations in the Document on Culture, the daily (incremental) policy is given shape. In particular this last policy has resulted in the Arts Plan.

What does the trajectory by which the Government Document on Culture comes about, look like in actual fact? One and a half years before the plan comes into force, the organizations and institutions that wish to be eligible for a government grant have to submit to the ministry a policy plan in which they indicate what aims they wish to realize in the next four years with what means. The ministry then turns to the Arts Council for advice. The Council is requested to take into account a number of general cultural and political principles and goals as formulated by the minister. Prior to this the Council, on its own initiative, presents a 'preliminary advisory' report in which its own views on these subjects are expressed. The minister can react to this in his request for advice, which is actually what happened in 1992. (For an analysis of the differences of opinion between the Council and the minister, see: Blokland, 1992a)

The Council then passes on the applications for grants of the different art producers to its specialized committees, manned by experts from the sectors involved. In their advice, these experts base themselves, in the first place, on the policy plans of the various institutions and on the interim reports made by the Council in the previous years on their artistic achievements. For the advice regarding the total Arts Plan, in which the various sectors (music versus film, etc) are weighed against one another, the Council bases itself on the policy framework indicated by the minister in his request for advice, and on its own perceptions, as rendered in its preliminary advisory report.

With the advice of the Council as a starting-point, the minister submits a more or less revised plan to parliament. Here, or at least this is the idea,

the plan is established in its final form within the framework of a broad politico-cultural discussion based on the general Government Document on Culture. In practice, space for manoeuvre in the decision-making process is minimal: there is hardly any deviation from the proposals of the Council. The motto of the nineteenth-century Dutch liberal statesman Thorbecke that 'the government is no judge of the arts and sciences' is still kept in mind.

In theory, the advantages of this planning methodology are manifold. One of the gains for the institutions is that they are now given financial security for a four-year or even a longer period. This creates the opportunity for developing a long-term policy in which more artistic risks can be taken. Secondly, the plan has made it possible to decide between the extant, long-standing supply and new material. The proverbial conservatism of established, institutionalized interests can thus be fought and historically grown imbalances adjusted. A third advantage is that one can now consider, and introduce, shifts between the various disciplines far better than before. Thanks to these last two advantages, immobility and compartmentalization, so often characteristic of incremental policy (cf. § 2.1), can now be opposed. Also, the decision-making process has in principle become more fundamental, perspicuous and public, and hence easier to control and influence politically. Government and parliament have more opportunities for concentrating on the main issues, the underlying concept. The requisite for the formation of a broad public discussion and consensus regarding the instruments and objectives of the policy can thus be more adequately met. The policy can be given more direction, context and legitimacy. Finally, the permanent excessive demand on and overburdening of the government can be countered as, thanks to the public debate on the goals of the policy, a weighing of interests can now take place (cf. § 2.1).

An attendant imperfection of the Arts Plan systematics is that the term of validity of the plans is not synchronous to the duration of the successive cabinets. In the Netherlands cabinets can fall prematurely. But a plan cannot be unilaterally revised by a new minister halfway through: it is a contract between the government and the institutions concerned. Consequently, a minister is often forced to execute the policy adopted by his predecessor. This does not particularly enhance the clarity of political responsibilities.

### 3.3. The 'Government Document on Cultural Policy 1993-1996' in practice

To what extent can the present cultural policy be typified as a successful at-



tempt at mixed scanning? We shall limit ourselves to several main points concerning the coming about of and the public and parliamentary discussion on the Government Document on Cultural Policy 1993-1996 in the spring of 1992 (see further: Blokland, 1992a and c).

In the Government Document on Culture the minister, as we have seen, sets out his cultural and political views on the basis of which the Arts Plan has been drawn up. In the Document in question, general observations have been devoted to, among other things, several fundamental cultural developments (globalization and hence uniformity of culture, rediscovery of cultural traditions as counter-movement, rising of audiovisual media, effects of this on reading and the performing arts, trends in active and receptive cultural participation); a review of the policy conducted; the essential concepts of the policy (quality and diversity); and the most important themes in or aims of the policy (the advancement of cultural participation and of a prime-quality, pluriform supply). In this Document there is little or no mention of possible linkages to other policy fields as originally asked for by the Lower House - in particular education and housing (architectural quality) - or of cultural-political views on the fundamental values and goals of our society. The minister seems to prefer to limit himself to the familiar policy fields within the compass of his department's direct responsibilities. The theoretical quality of the included observations will not be considered here, but we shall attempt to answer the question as to what extent these observations have played a role in the debate and in the determination of the policy.

### 3.4. Public debate

As of the moment in March 1992 that the Arts Council published its 1.040 page advice on the 316 grant applications, public discussion in the various media has been completely dominated by those institutions in danger of having their request wholly or partially denied. News coverage of cultural politics or policy in the Netherlands is almost completely limited to sensational reports about institutions standing to lose their grants.<sup>1</sup> Usually only the threatened parties get to say their piece. The average citizen hears next to nothing of the cultural and political deliberations which may underlie certain decisions.<sup>2</sup> It is, therefore, hardly surprising that the media have included no reports, and far less a discussion, on the general cultural and political considerations and goals as expressed in the Government Document on Culture (cf. Blokland, 1992c).

What topics did the politicians debate? We shall limit ourselves to the

parliamentary discussion on the Government Document on Cultural Policy. This took place on 15 June 1992 in the Standing Committee for Welfare and Culture of the Lower House. This meeting lasted about eight hours, covering the general cultural and political considerations of the Government Document and the included so-called 'arts-sector document' (performing arts, fine arts, architecture, design, film, amateur arts and artistic formation, with a budget total of 400 million Dutch guilders).

In this meeting, the general cultural and political developments and goals were barely discussed by either the members of the Lower House or by the minister, the social democrat Mrs. Hedy D'Ancona. In most cases, the Parliamentarians complimented the minister on her considerations on the subject, subscribed to her views and dutifully made some remarks on details of her presentation. They subsequently moved on to the order of the day: the concrete incremental policy measures.

According to some calculations of my own based on the Parliamentary Proceedings, it appears that the spokesman for the largest government party, the Christian Democrats (CDA), spent about 15% of the time allotted to him during the first session<sup>3</sup> on the general section of the Document, 20% on the proposed expenditure cuts in the provincial regions, 10% on the minister's attempts to have the institutions rely more on their own earnings and less on government support (see note 2 and 5), 30% on a vast number of other incremental measures, and 25% on the grants that had or had not been pledged to individual institutions. The percentages for the spokesman of the coalition party, the Social Democrats (PvdA), are about the same. Even more than his colleague, however, he entered into the, according to him, unjust rejection of grant applications by certain institutions and artists.<sup>4</sup>

In reaction, the spokesman of opposition party D'66 said that this advocate gave the impression of having scrutinized each of the 316 grant applications. As this is improbable, it appears, he suggested, as though the institutions which have the easiest access to a certain Parliamentarian and are the most skilful lobbyists, stand the best chance of being subsidized (Parliamentary Proceedings, p.7). It is indeed remarkable that some House Members seemed especially considerate for those art producers residing in the same province as they themselves.

The spokesmen from the various opposition parties did not waste much time in their first session on in-depth cultural and political considerations, either. Most of them limited themselves to a number of policy proposals and the chaotic last phase of the Arts Plan procedure. The minister, after having been forced to major additional expenditure by several successful lobbies from the arts world, attempted to balance her budget by means of

a rather ill-considered policy measure<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, in imitation of the Arts Council and the various interest groups from the arts world, nearly all the opposition parties pleaded for an increase of the art budget, even the market-oriented liberals (VVD) who, when in power, were the ones to advocate drastic cuts in this budget.

The first response of the minister was almost completely devoted to the concrete measures as mentioned in the Arts Plan. Because in this session she gives her reactions to the comments made this is predictable.

During the second session, the debate was even more focused on the individual institutions and specific incremental policy measures. Larger themes no longer came up for discussion at all.

One could say that little has come so far of a public or political discussion on general cultural developments in society and on the objectives of the cultural policy, a discussion which is a requisite for a mixed-scanning policy. This is one of the reasons why no workable consensus on far-reaching political instruments and objectives was attained. As a consequence, it was difficult to decide between the claims of the many interested parties and the failings of a traditionally strongly incremental policy manifested themselves once again: disorientation, a lack of public legitimacy, overburdening of government, compartmentalization of the various sectors, immobility, et cetera.

### 3.5. Possible explanation of and remedy for the shortcomings

Besides the growing inability of the citizens and politicians of Western democracies to hold a value-oriented, substantial-rational public discussion, a number of specific causes of the above-mentioned shortcomings can be pointed out.

The one-sided emphasis in the public discussion on the Arts Plan on the acceptance or rejection of individual grant applications may be caused by the fact that it is the artist's profession to play to the gallery. Certainly when their career opportunities are at stake, all stops are pulled out and unexpected talents are revealed. In making their voices heard, they are moreover generously aided by their often excellent relations with the press. The journalists concerned usually have an artistic background and strongly identify with (the interests of) the arts world. As a rule, they are also inadequately aware that the evaluation and criticism of an integral art policy requires a different competence and approach than the reviewing of individual artistic products, their normal occupation. The result is that the discontent of

certain art producers is vastly magnified and starts playing a disproportionate role in the discussion. If the outsider were to rely on the employed terminology and qualifications<sup>6</sup>, he would soon believe the existence of the entire Dutch culture to be at stake if certain policy plans concerning individual institutions were carried out. All in all, there is probably no pressure group in the Netherlands which so successfully gives the impression of being the defenceless victim of all-devouring political stratagems<sup>7</sup>, and at the same time can bring such pressure to bear.

Lobbying does not only take place through the press. Civil servants, members of parliament, the minister(s) and other policy makers and authorities are also kept informed directly - by personal meetings, telephone, letter, fax, petition, manifestation, demonstration - whether or not in organized form, of the 'disastrous' consequences of certain grant refusals. The politicians involved turn out to be highly susceptible to reports in the press and to these lobbying practices and consequently the discussion and the decision-making process are to a large extent determined by the demands and desires of the art producers. That is to say, by incidents: the main issues continually threaten to disappear from view. This tendency is reinforced by the fact that the arts world in the Netherlands is a small one in which everyone soon knows one another personally, positions and duties readily change and mutual dependencies are great (cf. Van den Bergh, 1987; Smithuijsen, 1989; Stokkink, 1989). The interweaving of State and society is exceptionally strong and as a result the political margin for the implementation of far-reaching policy changes is relatively slight.

This is demonstrated, for instance, by the impracticability of transferring grants from one arts sector to the other, something the integral considerations in the Arts Plan should have made possible. Thus it is a historical fact that the symphony orchestras in the Netherlands lay a disproportionate claim on the arts budget. In a near twenty-year effort to reorganize orchestra management, attempts have been made to curtail expenditure on these orchestras in favour of ascending art forms such as film, architecture and chamber music. These endeavours are especially applied to the provincial areas, the motive being that in comparison to celebrated companies such as the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and the Rotterdam Philharmonic, the regional orchestras are of a lesser quality. Furthermore, the view is held that urban areas are more likely to be hotbeds of art forms than villages and out-of-the-way places ('you have nature, we have culture') (Arts Council, 1992a). These attempts at reorganization and integrated weighing between different artistic disciplines always fail, however, due to the forceful lobbies generated by regional companies in unison with parliamentarians from the various provincial areas, local politicians and the press. And so the com-

partmentalization of the policy remains intact.

Obviously, there are no ready-made solutions for a non-existing debate on the values and objectives of the policy.<sup>8</sup> One should probably look in the following directions. First of all, the debate would be well served by more competent and detached journalists. The media have to become aware that art critics are not necessarily experts in cultural policy. After all, the writer of the gardening column is not the reviewer of the agricultural policy of the European Community. Moreover, a less ready identification with the arts world is desirable. Involvement is laudatory, but art and culture are not served when this consists of a one-sided focus on particularistic, short-term interests.

Secondly, more skilful politicians would benefit the debate. The process of recruitment and the quality of politicians are generally viewed as a problem in the Netherlands (cf. Tromp, 1991; Becker and Kalma, 1991, p.55-7), but an additional problem in the case of cultural politics is that this domain is often assigned to politicians who yet have to learn their trade, are about to end their careers or are generally not deemed capable of having 'serious' subjects like finance, education and foreign policy in their portfolio. While this subject seems eminently suitable for far-reaching ideological controversy, cultural politics is viewed as comparatively safe and unimportant. Perhaps this can be explained by the relatively small amount of money involved. In short, what also holds true for cultural politics is that 'it is not the exhaustion of ideologies which makes political controversy impossible in present-day democracies. It is far sooner the lack of quality of parties and politicians, who barely manage to make clear to the public the political character of important issues.' (Tromp, 1990, p.46-7; cf. note 8)

Thirdly, the most important and most readily available modification probably is the improvement of the institutional setting of the cultural and political discussion. The debate should be conducted in more effective fashion, so that interested parties from the arts sector do not have the opportunity of monopolising the discussion with their particularistic claims until after the general themes have passed the agenda. Once a workable consensus on the values and objectives of the policy has been reached, it is easier to weigh all the claims. As barely any attention is paid to the first point, the lobbies are in command. Conducting a debate is a highly important, often neglected, ability of politicians. And it is on this point precisely that we must conclude that the top-ranking civil servants and politicians of the Ministry of Culture have failed in their handling of the Government Document on Cultural Policy 1993-1996. This was not only caused by a wrong planning order, but also by an incorrect evaluation of the political attainability of diverse, newly proposed, ill-considered measures in the last phase of the

trajectory of the Government Document on Culture (see note 5 and 2). Due to this 'emergency' decision process, all control of the debate was lost and much of the conscientious labour of the earlier phases of the trajectory came to nothing.

The most important imperfection of the timing in the present planning methodology is that the completion and publication of the Arts Plan in fact take place at the same time as the publication of the general Government Document on Culture. This is odd to say the least: if one were actually to apply any form of planning, it is obvious that the House should first have been consulted with about the (long-term) objectives to be realized through the cultural policy. After some sort of agreement had been reached, one could investigate the necessary policy instruments and determine the Arts Plan. Because this order is not adhered to, the impression arises that the Government Document on Culture is no more than a justification after the fact of a policy that could equally well have been effected without this Document. Another aspect is that all sorts of interest groups, adversely affected by the Arts Plan, now have the opportunity of exerting disproportionate influence on the cultural and political discussion. Particularistic and short-term interests hereby oppress broader and, respectively, long-term interests. It is therefore a step in the right direction that the minister, during the debate with the Lower House, announced that he from now on wished to confer with the House first about the Arts Council's preliminary advisory report and about the request for advice by the minister (Parliamentary Proceedings, p.42; cf. the proposals in: Blokland, 1992a).

Another shortcoming of the present system is that the institutions cannot appeal to the Arts Council after their achievements and policy plans have been judged by this agency. The result is that the injured companies actually try to appeal to the Lower House, with all consequences mentioned above. The overburdening of the politicians concerned and their tendency to concentrate on the details of the policy will only prove greater if, as a Parliamentarian suggested (see note 4), the files the Council has kept on the achievements of the subsidized institutions are also taken into consideration. Politics should, on the contrary, distance itself as much as possible from decision making about specific institutions and about incremental measures and should concentrate on the establishment of frameworks within which this decision-making process should take place. Only in this fashion can a mixed-scanning policy be realized.

#### 4. Summary and conclusion

In this essay we have seen how doubts have arisen the last few years about the incremental policy model and the narrowly linked polyarchic democracy model. For tens of years both models were viewed as highly deserving of pursuit in the so-called pluralist theory. Among other things, the interweaving of state and society, the great power of interest groups, immobility, compartmentalization and the uncontrollability of government policies are subject to criticism today. An underlying problem of the above is the lack of consensus on the definition of the common good and of the responsibilities of the state. This leads to a permanent excessive demand on and overburdening of the central government and to the decline of its legitimacy. In order to solve these problems, a public, value-oriented and fundamental debate about the values and objectives of government policies is usually recommended. What is needed is an 'active society' with a deep sense of citizenship and the common good. This enables the application of a mixed-scanning policy, a policy that has the value rationality and legitimacy that incrementalism misses.

The second part of this article discussed the cultural policy of the Dutch central administration. The arts are a policy area that is rarely included in reviews on policy and democracy, but which for various reasons constitutes at least as interesting a case. Firstly, because the policy concerned is especially vulnerable to the failings of incrementalism. Secondly, because, in view of the above, efforts are now being made to realize a mode of mixed scanning. Finally, because the policy on art and culture seems exceptionally suitable for a fundamental public discussion on the goals and values of government policy, a discussion that can be viewed as a requisite for mixed scanning. It has been observed, however, that hardly any public fundamental debate takes place in practice. This debate could have been conducted, for instance, in response to the general section of the Government Document on Cultural Policy 1993-1996, a Document that should have formed the basis of the Arts Plan, in which the available funds are distributed over the applicants for subsidy. The discussion in press and Parliament primarily dealt with those institutions threatened by the loss of grants and with incremental policy measures and amendments. As a result, the policy, even though it did in fact improve, continued to show signs of the failings of incrementalism: compartmentalization, immobility, lack of legitimacy, disorientation, et cetera. To improve the existing policy cycle, it was especially advocated that the debate be directed more effectively, that certain parliamentary duties be delegated to the Arts Council and that better timing be applied to the publication and discussion of the Government Document

on Culture and the Arts Plan. All in all, one can ascertain that the incitement and realization of a fundamental public debate on values requires a protracted learning process. Even in a sector which not seldom professes to be the moral conscience of society.

\* Another version of this article was published in a collection of essays in honour of prof.dr. M. van de Vall (ITS, Nijmegen, 1993)

## Notes

1. The 'Knipselkrant Special' (Newspaper Clippings Special) of the Ministry of Welfare, Health and Cultural Affairs illustrates this point. It contains about 600 articles which appeared in the press between March and July 1992 on this subject (also see note 6).

2. A striking example is provided by the coverage on the cuts in the performing arts subsidies. By forcing the institutions to generate more income of their own (a minimum of 15% of their budget), the minister hoped to achieve that artists take more notice of the public's preferences. The existing gap between the professional arts world and the public could then be somewhat narrowed. One of the reasons for this gap is that the income of artists, as a result of the government-provided grants, is no longer dependent on the public's preferences (WVC, 1992a, p.36-8). Nearly all the media presented this measure as an expenditure-cut operation to which the minister of culture had been forced by the minister of finance. Another example is provided by the coverage on the cuts in the subsidies of the regional philharmonic orchestras and opera companies (see § 3.5).

3. During their first session all political parties successively present a general reaction to the proposals made by the minister, who in turn reacts to this in his first session. The ensuing sessions or rounds of debate tend to become increasingly specific.

4. In order to improve the Arts Plan procedure, he even suggested 'including in the dossier' the evaluations by the Arts Council on the products and performances of the subsidised companies, as well as the reactions of those concerned, so that possible erroneous appraisals could be corrected by the Lower House (Parliamentary Proceedings, p.13). This implies that the Members of the House would once again do the Arts Council's work and, even more than is the case now, would occupy themselves with what are in fact the details of the policy. Also, the basic assumption that politicians should not be the judges of specific artistic products would be dropped completely. This was actually already the case, *vide* the arguments in favour of grants for specific institutions.

5. The most important lobby in this respect was composed of the regional philharmonic orchestras. The minister tried to balance her budget by reducing the maximum subsidy of art producers from 85 to 80%. In this she made no difference between, for instance, chamber music, opera companies and experimental theatre, which are in fact incommensurables (also see note 2; Langenberg, 1992; and Blokland, 1992c).

6. Headline in the Volkskrant on the proposals in the Arts Plan draft concerning the financial management system of orchestras: 'Sloppy, abominable and especially stupid, stupid, stupid' (26.10.91). The NRC-Handelsblad on the same subject: 'crude and rigid attitudes on the part of WVC' (5.3.92). On the advisory Arts Plan by the Arts Council: 'Springdance thinks time is ripe to whet the knives', 'Shocking advice by Arts Council'



cil' (Utrechts Nieuwsblad, 4.3.92), 'fierce criticism of advice Arts Plan 'cultural pillage, outright insult, demolition'' (Parool, 4.3.92). On the Government Document on Culture: 'Few things in the world are so contradictory as the highfaluting words and disastrous measures of this minister of culture' (NRC, 8.5.92), 'Postpone decision Arts Plan, otherwise chaos is complete' (Trouw, 28.5.92), 'Arts Plan is a chutzpah' (Parool, 30.5.92), 'Subsidy cuts cause 'upheaval'' (Volkskrant, 2.6.92), 'Arts Plan causes great damage to entire sector' (Volkskrant, 2.6.92), 'Crisis arts world needs 12 million extra' (Het Binnenhof, 2.6.92), 'Director is furious' (Algemeen Dagblad, 16.5.92).

7. The pressure group Arts '92, which was founded in reaction to the Arts Plan and with which 140 institutions were affiliated, appealed to the Members of the Lower House in a nationwide advertisement: 'the minister has ignored nearly all our plans', 'unacceptable impoverishment of the cultural climate' (NRC, Volkskrant, 13.6.92). In the Lower House, the Minister stated that all the problems advanced by the various arts institutions 'can be reduced to a total of 13 million guilders and can therefore also be solved by this sum.... There are probably people in other sectors who have thought: if only your problems were mine!' (Parliamentary Proceedings, 1992, p. 36-7) Prior to this, the Arts Council wrote in its Arts Plan advice that 'in order to honour all the (submitted subsidy) requests which meet the quality and diversity norms, a raise of about 10% (40 million) of the arts budget would be necessary'. (1992a, p.3) Altogether there were 314 grant applications. 164 of the institutions that applied were already being subsidized. Out of these 164 cases the Art Council advised to renew the funding of 133. The Council recommended to honour 50 requests out of 152 new applications (1992a, p.93). In 22 cases minister and parliament did not follow these recommendations: 18 times the grant was given although the advice was negative, 4 times the grant was denied although the advice was positive (WVC, 1992a; Parliamentary Proceedings, 1992).

8. That, according to post-modern thinkers like Rorty and Lyotard, it is no longer possible to present a 'grand theory' and that the (cultural) political discussion therefore inevitably remains confined to a functional or an instrumental-rational debate on incremental policy measures (Cf. Fukuyama, 1989; Frissen, 1990) is a point of view we obviously do not subscribe to here (Blokland, 1991a and b).

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