Cultural Policy and the Digital Shift: the case of 'Creative Canada'

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How should national cultural policies be repositioned to mitigate the costs and amplify the benefits of ubiquitous digitization in the culture sector and creative industries? Deeming the 'cultural policy toolkit' inherited from the linear era a 'broken model' that was inadequate to address contemporary challenges and opportunities facing Canada's $48B media and cultural sector, Minister of Canadian Heritage Mélanie Joly in April 2016 announced a comprehensive review of policies for Canadian content (CanCon). Minister Joly let it be known that "everything is on the table": framework laws such as the Broadcasting Act, key public institutions such as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), regulations requiring distribution of Canadian programs on television and radio, and public funds supporting the book, periodical, music, and media industries. A nation-wide consultation took place in 2016 and 2017, culminating in the release of the Creative Canada Policy Framework in September, 2017. In this paper we analyze this policy framework, comparing the policy toolkit and policy objectives it incorporates with the broad range of proposed policy tools and objectives proposed in the preceding consultations and inherited by existing legislation, especially the Broadcasting Act. Using text mining and qualitative analysis, we critically assess and compare the policy preferences expressed by participants in the consultations - notably, 115 English-language and 26 French-language briefs submitted by domestic and transnational content distributors, professional and amateur content creators, consumers, trade unions, industry associations, not-for-profit civic associations, federal and provincial agencies, and Canadian subnational governments. Our analysis shows how the digital shift in the cultural sector, manifesting itself especially in disruption of legacy content distribution systems and associated business models, is causing a legacy policy regime to become “unstuck”.

Key words: digital shift, cultural policy, creative industries, Creative Canada
bibliography


