

Invisible Cultural Policy in America

To you, Spaghetti Western

Invisible Cultural Policy in America

How Public Administration Shapes Culture

Eleonora Redaelli

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Cheltenham, UK • Northampton, MA, USA

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About the author

Eleonora Redaelli is a Professor at the University of Oregon, focusing on American cultural policy. Her background includes work in cultural sector in Italy and a Ph.D. from The Ohio State University. She has taught and held visiting positions in China, South Africa, Canada, Denmark, and Italy. Her publications include *Arts Management and Cultural Policy Research* (2016), with Jonathan Paquette, *Connecting Arts and Place: Cultural Policy and American Cities* (2019), and the edited volume *Visiting the Art Museum: A Journey Toward Participation* (2023).

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Eleonora Redaelli
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Abbreviations and acronyms

ACLS	American Council of Learned Societies
ACHP	Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
Arts and Humanities Act	1965 National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act
AFTA	Americans for the Arts
IMLS	Institute of Museum and Library Services
National Register	National Register of Historic Places
National Trust	National Trust for Historic Preservation
NAGPRA	1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act
NASAA	National Assembly of State Arts Agencies
NEA	National Endowment for the Arts
NEH	National Endowment for the Humanities
NPS	National Park Service
PCAH	President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities
Preservation Act	1966 National Historic Preservation Act
State Preservation Offices	State Historic Preservation Offices
Tribal Preservation Offices	Tribal Historic Preservation Offices

Note on abbreviations: To enhance readability and facilitate understanding, I have limited abbreviations to the minimum necessary. In some cases, I have even chosen to forgo conventional acronyms to maintain the flow of the text. For instance, rather than abbreviating State Historic Preservation Offices as SHPOs, I use a simplified version of the full term, such as State Preservation Offices.

1. Why invisible cultural policy in America?

People around the world consume American culture through film, television, and music. In my native Italy, friends and family from all age groups spend their free time immersed in the American way of life as portrayed in countless movies, TV shows, and songs. I, too, grew up immersed in the consumption of and fascination with American culture. When I decided to come to the United States to learn more about this cultural system, I discovered a far more complex and varied landscape that involves commercial, nonprofit, and governmental actors. I became particularly fascinated by government intervention, which proved to be both rich and markedly different from that in my home country. The sophistication of American government involvement in cultural policy not only captivated me but also surprised me, as it is rarely discussed in the news or studied extensively in academia, both nationally and internationally, making it almost invisible to the public. This invisibility made me wonder: Why, in a country where cultural production is a primary export to the world, does the bureaucracy that supports culture do its work largely outside of public view?

Yet, this question is by no means straightforward, as American cultural policy is complex and, other than in moments of crisis or controversy, largely invisible. This invisibility is the result of a paradox. The original design of cultural policy aimed to support a diversity of expression and teach all Americans about culture, regardless of where they live or their background. The resulting cultural bureaucracy is decentralized, divided into various cultural domains, and comprises complex structures of public administration that support them. Consequently, while the system is highly pluralistic and serves all Americans, its full scope and intricacies often remain invisible to many. To reveal the nuances of this paradox, I aim to uncover what is invisible to create a better awareness of the role of government. Inspired by Ralph Ellison's acclaimed novel *Invisible Man* (1952), I chose the term "invisible" to illustrate how cultural policy, much like the African American protagonist in the novel, often remains overlooked and undervalued. More in particular, in this book, I ask: What is the role of the federal government? How does the federal government involve other actors? How does public administration frame the definitions

and values of culture? These questions have animated my approach and are modeled in the structure of this book. They take me into a deep analysis of the cultural bureaucracy, from law to programming, to uncover the mechanisms that make American cultural policy invisible.

In *Invisible Cultural Policy in America*, I aim to make American cultural policy more visible in its kaleidoscopic configuration of governance while examining what culture is and why it holds value for democracy. I examine the emergence of cultural federalism by analyzing two key laws—the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act of 1965 and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966—and the administrative structures they established, including the programs they implement. I offer a unique perspective that brings together cultural domains usually studied independently: the arts, humanities, and historic preservation. For instance, neither the leading literature on the humanities (Zainaldin, 2013) nor on historic preservation (Banks & Scott, 2016) has been included in American cultural policy debates, which are mainly focused on the arts. Moreover, I trace the connections between federal and state bureaucracies within these domains, which are often understudied to privilege either federal scrutiny or local examination. My investigation of these connections aims to understand their entanglement with the contextual intellectual debates, bringing to the forefront the controversies surrounding government involvement in each domain. In particular, the debates shape the interpretation of the definitions and public value of each domain, influencing both policy decisions and programming. In so doing, I hope this book will encourage theorists and philosophers to engage with tangible public administration choices and urge cultural policy scholars to contextualize their field in a broader inquiry about culture.

Targeting scholars in cultural policy, public administration, and cultural theory, this book explores the complexities of the cultural sector and its bureaucratic mechanisms. Beyond these primary disciplines, this book appeals to scholars in historic preservation and arts management (for the analysis of the institutions and activities operating in these fields) but also political science, political theory, and public policy (for the analysis of the emergence of institutions in connection with pluralistic values and policy mechanisms). Additionally, it serves as a resource for both students and senior researchers: students starting their investigation in each of these disciplines can find an organized body of literature to navigate the possible directions of their research; established researchers in each discipline can discover new interdisciplinary connections and find structured insights, linking cultural values and bureaucracy. This study is not focused on how culture is funded, its political dynamics, or an assessment of best practices. Instead, it maps out the institutions, the initiatives implemented, and the arguments that shaped action. Practitioners in the fields of the arts, humanities, and historic preservation will find it helpful

for positioning their work within a larger picture of American cultural policy and see overlaps and gaps, but also find the information necessary for planning future collaborations. Finally, this book is positioned as a valuable addition to research libraries building collections in these fields.

Although *Invisible Cultural Policy in America* does not focus on the political dynamics of culture, it is especially relevant during times of political transition, such as significant changes in national administration. Understanding the intricacies of the cultural system is particularly valuable when new political priorities reshape funding distributions, potentially influencing policies across the arts, humanities, and preservation sectors. Also, new priorities can impact the relationships among the federal, state, and local levels of government. An analysis of the cultural system that brings together different domains and explores the links among different levels of government is a crucial step toward strengthening the overall cultural sector. For each domain, I examine the law that established its value for Americans, framing the need for federal intervention, and facilitated the development of a federal bureaucracy. I continued by investigating the multilevel governance that emerged from the enactment of the law and the programs implemented by the organizations part of this governance. Such understanding can reveal pathways for fostering collaboration and coordination across these domains and levels of governance. This approach could amplify the sector's collective impact, enhance its advocacy for public support, and facilitate cohesive strategies for addressing societal challenges more effectively.

I use a public administration lens to illuminate what I term *invisible cultural policy*. This concept arises from the fact that cultural policy in the United States is shaped by multiple actors and bureaucracies, making it challenging to recognize as a cohesive system. Chapter 2 begins by elaborating on what I mean by invisible cultural policy and explaining the public administration approach used in this investigation. The chapter continues by presenting definitions of culture in theory and in action, which imply the actions of the government and the definition provided by cultural policy studies. I then explain how this book bridges the debates about culture in theory and in action by using a public administration lens and developing a multilevel governance analysis of three domains: the arts, humanities, and historic preservation. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 develop the analysis for each domain, unfolding in a parallel structure. The title of each chapter outlines the value of that domain as outlined by the law, and the structure of each chapter includes (1) an examination of the role of the federal government, (2) an analysis of the public value comparing and contrasting the law's description with government actions and the rhetoric of implementation, (3) an explanation of cultural federalism, which examines how the federal government developed a state and local network, and (4) a

spotlight on how that domain operates in Oregon, Minnesota, Maryland, and New Mexico.

Chapter 6 threads together the lines of inquiry from the previous chapters, claiming that public administration in America shapes culture as a pluralistic public culture. Through a place-based policy, the government has developed a cultural federalism that empowers each of the 50 states and its six jurisdictional territories. The result is a complex governance structure, including different levels of government and private organizations, a pluralistic definition of culture, and a focus on public value. These three aspects are intertwined in a reciprocal relationship, influencing and transforming one another in a non-linear way, all while being subject to interpretation in intellectual debates. The ultimate goal is to sustain a democratic country. Chapter 7, the conclusion, highlights the paradox that, by pursuing pluralism, cultural policy becomes invisible. By decentralizing intervention and getting closer to where people are, the government's efforts become dispersed and take on different forms, making them hard to identify on a broader scale. The paradox is that they reach people, but at the same time, they are invisible to people. Scholarship has an important responsibility to identify these numerous threads, bringing them to the forefront and exploring their connections to facilitate the navigation of the system and raise overall awareness about its existence.

As an Italian, my study of American policy is characterized by a continuous enchantment with this country's organizational systems and great diversity, fueling my desire to share these insights with my colleagues and friends across the globe—including Canada, South Korea, China, Australia, Europe and Africa. At the same time, I think that these insights would be beneficial even here in the United States. I have attended a variety of conferences and interacted with different kinds of intellectual and cultural communities—ranging from the arts and humanities to historic preservation—and have observed common interests and passions as well as a lack of reciprocal and shared knowledge. My narrative brings to the forefront an enthusiasm for unraveling the bigger picture, fueled by the discovery of so much richness, with the hope that people working in each field might also find inspiration by positioning their efforts within this larger endeavor. Of course, this perspective does not disregard the fact that every field is ever-changing in different ways and faces its own struggles and shortcomings. However, I hope that this investigation will spread my enthusiasm, deepen appreciation for America's commitment to culture, and revitalize the energy needed to overcome challenges where they still persist.

2. Invisible cultural policy and public administration

INTRODUCTION

This book examines American governmental actions in cultural matters, starting with the foundational laws and providing an analysis of the corresponding bureaucracy and programming. In recent years, scholars have increasingly highlighted the active role the American government has played in repressing the pluralistic history of the country. Without denying these claims, I, however, believe that a closer investigation into how the government supports pluralism is needed. Such research would provide a fuller and more precise picture and increase awareness of the government's role. The central question driving this investigation is: How is the government involved in matters of culture? This question implies wanting to understand how culture is defined and what values it holds. It led me to discover and explore a rich and complex government and private infrastructure that supports pluralistic expressions of culture. As I unveiled the different layers, I realized that this complexity remains hidden, suggesting that the government's support of culture could be described as an *invisible cultural policy*.

In this chapter, I define invisible cultural policy, contextualize my definition within cultural policy studies, and, in particular, differentiate it from implicit cultural policy. I also provide an overview of how culture has been conceptualized by theory, highlighting aesthetic and anthropological perspectives, and by cultural policy discourse, illustrating the debates about culture wars, creative industries, and inequalities. Next, I explain what it means to look at culture using a public administration lens and bridge the debates about culture in theory and in action, by introducing the three cultural domains chosen for my analysis—the arts, the humanities, and historic preservation—and by exploring how public value justifies government intervention in matters of culture. I then introduce multilevel governance as my framework for analysis and the sources used to develop this study. I conclude by highlighting how, through looking at bureaucracy, I developed two lines of inquiry: a longitudinal look at the process that connects the law, the bureaucracy, and programs;

and a hermeneutic exercise that unpacks how the intellectual debates shape this process.

INVISIBLE CULTURAL POLICY

I define cultural policy as the actions of government, such as the creation of bureaucracies and programs in the cultural field. Scholars in cultural policy studies have defined cultural policy in several ways. Some emphasize the impact of government intervention in matters of arts and culture (Gray, 2010; Mulcahy, 2006), and some emphasize the regulatory aspect (DiMaggio, 1983). Some scholars also highlight the inherent contradiction in the term (Gray, 2010; McGuigan, 2003). For instance, the term “cultural policy” can be seen as problematic because it implies the policing of culture as if it were something dangerous that must be controlled (McGuigan, 2003). Margaret Wyszomirski (2002) and Kevin Mulcahy (2007) underscore the complexity of cultural policy. As pioneering scholars of cultural policy in America, their definitions have been foundational for understanding the cultural sector. Wyszomirski’s (2002) definition brings together the idea of a dynamic process, where a variety of agents contribute to the scope of the cultural sector. Mulcahy (2007) further elaborates, mentioning the “ecological complexity” (p. 268) of the field, which involves several agencies. I build on both definitions and consider cultural policy to be the actions of government—specifically the laws, bureaucracies, and programs—implying the involvement of numerous institutions, including several from the private sector. Drawing from Mulcahy’s perspective, I chose a public administration approach for my investigation, focusing not as much on power dynamics but rather on organizational framing.

By focusing on the United States, I want to address the perception—both internationally and nationally—of the country’s lack of a cultural policy. International scholars often express skepticism at conferences about the coherence, if not the existence, of US cultural policy. A cursory search of the articles in the *International Journal for Cultural Policy Research* revealed that only about 20 articles discuss the United States. American scholars and practitioners similarly perceive the lack of cultural policy, often expressing a desire for a governmental organization dedicated to cultural affairs. The book *The Ministry of Culture: Connections Among Art, Money, and Politics* (Mooney, 1980)—an impressive inventory of the numerous US governmental programs in the cultural sector—advocates for better coordination while also critiquing the political manipulation of the arts. More recently, the creation of the US Department of Arts and Culture, a private organization that describes itself as a “people-led and people-centered arts and culture department” (USDAC, 2023), shows how some practitioners working in the arts are still longing for such an entity. Furthermore, major studies that discuss American cultural

policy have historically provided a narrow perspective, focusing primarily on the arts alone (Mark, 1969; UNESCO, 2022). However, recent scholarship is describing and uncovering the cultural policy system in its complexity (Ivey, 2008; Rosenstein, 2018).

In this book, I claim that cultural policy in America is invisible because it is pluralistic and diffuse. I aim to unravel this complexity, comprising so many fields and multiple actors, so that its richness can finally be visible and appreciated. Invisibility was not the goal but rather the consequence of two aspects of American cultural policy: First, culture is not a monolithic concept but rather a polyphony of elements, a bouquet of different flowers. Second, policy is not dictated by a single national government mandate but is instead a synergy of actions carried out through a varied and multilayered bureaucracy with different organizations dedicated to each cultural domain. My enthusiasm for the American cultural policy system somewhat mirrors that of Tyler Cowen, a scholar who specializes in the economics of culture and appreciates the American arts funding system. His book, *Good and Plenty: The Creative Successes of American Arts Funding* (Cowen, 2006), explains how the funding of the arts is not “thin and small,” as the majority of people think, but is “good and plenty.” Such enthusiasm is not intended to ignore the limitations and inequities of the system. Enthusiasm for a multifaceted system that deserves to be brought to light does not equate to praising the perfection of the system; it simply leverages its positive aspects and encourages making its variety visible while working to fix the structural limitations (Woronkiewicz & Noonan, 2024). A better understanding of what is at play could help illuminate what the strengths and limitations are.

Invisible cultural policy, distinct from the more recognized implicit cultural policies, represents an uncharted infrastructure that has yet to be thoroughly explored within cultural policy studies. Implicit cultural policies are policies that, while not explicitly labeled as cultural, are oriented toward nurturing cultural practices. Such policies have been studied in the field, uncovering their difference from nominal cultural policy and highlighting some of their economic implications (Ahearne, 2009; Throsby, 2009). My perspective is a bit different as it enhances the idea of “invisible” cultural policy, which refers to an infrastructure that is not recognized by the public and which has yet to be investigated in the cultural policy studies discourse. I chose the term “invisible,” inspired by the acclaimed 1952 novel *Invisible Man* (Ellison, 1952), to conceptualize a cultural policy infrastructure that, much like the novel’s African American protagonist, is integral to American cultural life, yet remains largely unrecognized in public and academic discourse. Others have used the term “invisible” to refer to regional arts organizations to show how they are little known in the art world (Cowan, 1988) and how the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities are small players

in the vast nebula of federal programs (Zainaldin, 2013). This book seeks to bring visibility to a few underexplored elements of cultural policy.

CULTURE IN THEORY AND IN ACTION

Debates about the definition of culture have been prominent across multiple fields and disciplines. In this book, I argue that in cultural policy, culture is defined through the lens of public administration, which filters numerous debates through the concept of public value as articulated by the law and enacted by bureaucratic activities. I emphasize the entanglement, meaning the relational dynamics, between public administration and the intellectual debates, more than cause and effect. To contextualize my analysis, in this section, I provide an overview of how the academic debates have framed the quest for a definition of culture. As I read the various accounts of the debates, I struggled to untangle the threads of the arguments: populism, multiculturalism, elitism, anti-intellectualism, consumerism, and liberal arts. These ideas seem to progress in binaries, overlapping at times but never fully laid out to reveal the affinities and interdependencies that extend beyond binary descriptions. I have attempted to clarify these debates to further my analysis of how government influences and is influenced by them. Although the focus is on the debates in the United States, I engage with themes in the international cultural policy literature to help contextualize American choices and better understand the specificity of this system. This exploration of American debates about culture, both in theory and in action, has been particularly interesting for me as I find myself in a unique position. On the one hand, I can view the conversation as someone who grew up, studied, and worked in a different country; on the other hand, I am currently fully immersed in these discussions as a professor within the American academy, where they form both the backdrop and, at times, the focus of my daily experience. Next, I will provide an overview of these two main sets of debates: culture in theory and culture in action.

CULTURE IN THEORY: ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND AESTHETIC PERSPECTIVES

As the multiple efforts to describe culture converge, they can be summarized in two categories: the anthropological meaning, which views culture as a way of life; and the aesthetic sense, encompassing artistic and intellectual activities. I believe that these two perspectives are the underlying current that animates the debates about the role of the government in American culture. “Cultura,” the Latin root of the term “culture,” implies cultivation and caring. The Enlightenment period framed culture as a process of human development progressing toward civilization (Bennett et al., 2005; Eagleton, 2000;

Williams, 1976). At the turn of the 19th century, the use of the term shifted away from the idea of moving toward progress and civilization to embrace the *anthropological* meaning, which describes the variety of human life and practices. Johann Gottfried von Herder, a German philosopher, introduced the idea of history as exploring the cultures of different nations and periods, including the distinct social and economic cultures within the same nation, pluralizing the concept of culture. From this perspective, culture has been seen as a Romantic anti-colonialist fascination with different societies around the world, contributing to a broader understanding of culture. In this light, “Herder proposes to pluralize the term ‘culture’, speaking as he does of the cultures of different nations and periods” (Eagleton, 2000, p. 13).

Gradually, in the second part of the 19th century, another Romantic conception of culture emerged, emphasizing its *aesthetic* perspective. Culture was categorized as an antidote to politics or, more neutrally, as a realm distinct from politics, focusing on the specialization of the arts and intellectual activities. Raymond Williams, in *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976), has provided a fundamental review of the different meanings used to understand the term “culture.” He refers to the aesthetic meaning of culture as the most common use in our society. To support his claim, he illustrates a widespread definition: “culture is music, literature, painting and sculpture, theatre and film. A Ministry of Culture refers to these specific activities, sometimes with the addition of philosophy, scholarship, history” (p. 90). This aesthetic sense of the word brought me back to the readings in my college classes in philosophy and the historical overview that showcases the birth and development of Western aesthetics through the writings of philosophers, poets, writers, painters, sculptors, and musicians (Zecchi & Franzini, 1995). Aesthetics is a philosophical reflection that brings to the surface multiple considerations linked to artistic practices. Aesthetics spans theoretical issues of the social impact on the relationships between the individual and the world. In Williams’ explanation, it refers to the use of culture as including a specific set of practices linked to the arts, philosophy, and scholarship.

From the aesthetics perspective, a further schism generated a dichotomy between popular culture, encompassing entertainment and everyday cultural phenomena and high culture. Scholars like the urban sociologist Herbert J. Gans and the historian Lawrence W. Levine have examined the contrast between the two. In his seminal work, *Popular Culture and High Culture: An Analysis and Evaluation of Taste*, Gans (1975) explores how societal preferences shape and reflect cultural hierarchies. He argues that the distinction between these two cultural forms is often blurred, influenced by factors such as class, education, and accessibility, and critiques the universality of artistic standards. Similarly, Levine’s *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (1990) delves into the historical development

of these cultural categories, tracing their roots to the 19th century when elite and popular forms of entertainment began to diverge. For instance, theater used to house a microcosm of America, but by the 20th century, it became fragmented into discrete spaces for different audiences. Finally, in *American Culture, American Tastes* (2000), the historian Michael Kammen provides an intellectual history of how American tastes have evolved, influenced by shifting social dynamics and the democratization of culture. Kammen's analysis highlights how the intersection of popular and high culture continues to shape the American cultural landscape. Together, these authors offer a rich tapestry of insights into how popular culture and high culture have been categorized, have impacted people's tastes, and continue to coexist, reflecting societal trends and changing cultural values.

CULTURE IN ACTION: CULTURE WARS, CREATIVE INDUSTRIES, AND INEQUALITIES

Cultural policy debates move from theoretical discussions about the nature of culture to practical considerations of how culture functions in public life. They focus on how the cultural sector intersects with government activities. The majority of the literature emphasizes how cultural policy is local (Durrer et al., 2023). It highlights how local governments define their cultural priorities by focusing on supporting organizations, individual artists, and public art throughout the city (Redaelli & Stevenson, 2022). However, I have identified three main cultural policy debates in America that address issues of cultural policy at a larger scale: the culture wars, presenting contrasting ideas of what the government should support; the creative industries, illustrating how the chain of production for culture works; and the growing research on inequality in the arts, denouncing the pitfalls of the art world. Understanding these debates is crucial for grasping the complexities of defining culture in cultural policy and for contextualizing my examination of how the American government is shaping culture through the lens of public administration. In this section, I briefly explore these key debates.

In the United States, the culture wars started in the late 1980s and peaked in their animosity in the 1990s (Hartman, 2015). These wars involved controversial debates that developed in different domains of culture: the arts and government funding, the humanities and college curricula, and the presentation of history in museums. They were fueled by an increased polarization between liberal, progressive, and secular Americans and their fellow conservative, traditional, and religious citizens. James Davison Hunter (1991), in his book *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*, offers a riveting account of how, in this battle, Christian fundamentalists, Orthodox Jews, and conservative Catholics allied in a fierce battle against the progressive forces, displaying

fundamental disagreements unseen since the Civil War. For instance, the rising controversy about artists judged indecent, blasphemous, and pornographic raised questions about whether it is appropriate to use federal funding to support artwork that challenges the status quo (Bolton, 1992). Similarly, debates over college curricula intensified, with some arguing that the inclusion of different voices was essential for modern education, while others defended the focus on traditional Western values (Bloom, 1987). In museums, controversial exhibits ignited debates about how history should be presented, whether they should focus on factual accuracy or the moral implications of historical events (Hartman, 2017). At the heart of these fierce debates was the struggle to reconcile opposing viewpoints, from innovative, subversive goals to the preservation of traditional beliefs. The persistence of these conflicting views today suggests that the concept of cultural value remains characterized by enduring, contentious, and polarizing culture wars.

The debate about the creative industries has garnered extensive scholarly attention, most notably in the UK and Australia compared with the United States (Redaelli, 2019a). In particular, the term “creative industries” emerged under the administration of UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, which emphasized the economic potential of creativity and intellectual property, framing the arts in terms of economic value (Flew, 2012). This policy’s use of the term was criticized, mainly for its focus on economics and for excessively expanding the definition to include innovation and technology, exaggerating their economic significance (Garnham, 2005). Another critique highlighted how, 25 years after this British policy launched what became a kind of global workshop, the resulting meager cultural production shows how this perspective stripped culture of its essence as a common good (O’Connor, 2024). Americans for the Arts, a national organization active in advocating for the arts with policymakers, has played a pivotal role, next to copyright law, in introducing the concept of the creative industries to the United States. Since 2004, the organization has analyzed these industries to provide data for congressional advocacy (AFTA, 2017). It defines the creative industries strictly as businesses involved in arts production or distribution. Copyright law also significantly impacts the development of creative industries, as highlighted by American economists (Siwek, 2016; Stoner & Dutra, 2022). These reports further refined the definition, calling them the “copyright industries,” and included industries involved in the creative process at varying levels, from core creative activities like publishing books and creating movies to supporting sectors like transportation and manufacturing.

A big shift in the international cultural policy discourse during the 2010s highlights the connection between cultural value and inequalities related to race, class, gender, disability, sexuality, and spatial inequality, calling for a reevaluation of cultural value for more equitable outcomes (O’Brien & Oakley,

2015). In the United Kingdom, this meant efforts toward cultural democracy, such as support for different aesthetic values and the tastes of different groups (Belfiore et al., 2023). In the United States, it meant enhancing efforts toward cultural equity as the distribution of resources that ensure the diversity of cultural representation. The cultural plans of American cities have been gradually, albeit slowly, increasing their equity focus, both in terms of content and process (Ashley et al., 2021). Notable examples include Dallas, Texas, which aims to support art forms and artists beyond the European canon, and New York, which seeks to redistribute funding resources to a variety of arts organizations (Redaelli, 2023). A recent evidence-based study denounced how larger institutions in the arts generate inequities and continue their work without casting judgment (Woronkiewicz & Noonan, 2024). The study, an edited volume, brings attention to several aspects of inequities, including the perpetuation of colonialism and how it silenced creative voices; the skewed classification of arts organizations, favoring larger ones in the collection of financial data; and the gender and ethnic diversity of artists involved in commercial galleries, major art prizes, and the Venice Art Biennale. One of the chapters, however, offers a cautionary word about thinking that public funding in the arts could be enough to achieve egalitarian goals.

CULTURE IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: THREE CULTURAL DOMAINS AND PUBLIC VALUE

This book provides an examination of American cultural policy, bridging the debates about culture in theory and in action using a public administration lens to explore how culture is defined, what public value it carries, and how ongoing debates challenge or praise its implementation in bureaucracy and programming. As mentioned earlier, I chose a public administration approach for my investigation, focusing not as much on power dynamics but rather on organizational framing. Currently, cultural policy studies include disciplines such as sociology, political science, economics, urban studies, and cultural studies. I contribute to these arrays of disciplines with a public administration approach, which focuses on the link between legislative actions and organizational actions (Friedman, 2006). A sociological perspective probes the key discourses, power relations, and everyday aspects of the production and consumption of culture to improve cultural policy practices as a social, rather than economic, endeavor (Mohr et al., 2020; Stevenson, 2023). The contributions of political science consist of the study of the policy cycle—which includes the four steps of named issue emergence, policy formulation, policy implementation, and policy evaluation—and comparative research (Paquette & Beauregard, 2018). Studies using an economics lens focus on production, distribution, and consumption and examine the economic goals of public policy

formulations and collect statistical data to evaluate the economic outcomes (Throsby, 2010). Since Richard Florida's successful *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* (2002), urban studies have increasingly analyzed cultural policy issues and their impact on places (Redaelli, 2019a). Cultural studies brings this critical lens to the analysis of policymaking, lately bringing attention to issues of inequalities (Brook et al., 2020; Lewis & Miller, 2003). My public administration approach unravels the connections between the role of the government, the definition of culture, and its public value, ultimately analyzing the organizational framing of culture.

My first observation is that public administration does not use the term "culture." The idea of cultural policy as a monolithic concept—as used in cultural policy studies—does not exist in the American public administration sector. Culture in the public administration sector is articulated in a variety of cultural domains. This multifaceted taxonomy emerged over time through the spontaneous development of both professional sectors and infrastructures for each cultural domain. Paul DiMaggio, a sociologist whose work has been foundational for cultural policy in America, describes the entrepreneurship involved in the development of an organizational base of high art, such as museums in 19th-century Boston (DiMaggio, 1982). Ann Upchurch, a cultural policy scholar, explores the role of women as arts advocates in their communities and the role of foundations and the private sector in creating an arts infrastructure at the beginning of the 20th century (Upchurch, 2016). The federal government only intervened at a later stage, beginning in the 1960s, amplifying the distinctive realms of each cultural domain. Federal involvement has been justified by articulating, through the laws that established federal intervention, the public values of each cultural domain by explaining their benefits for the American people. These benefits include vitality, wisdom, spirit, direction, diversity, and cultural richness. I aim to analyze how these values emerged from laws and how they have been implemented in the cultural programs following the various debates that accompany this trajectory.

In this book, I specifically focus on three cultural domains—arts, humanities, and historic preservation. Examining these three cultural domains simultaneously is an important contribution to cultural policy studies, considering that the debates in the United States have focused mainly on the arts alone (Binkiewicz, 2004; Mulcahy, 2007). The humanities have been connected to the arts through the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act of 1965, so an investigation that combines the two is grounded in that law's rationale. I added historic preservation to my examination for two reasons: First, heritage, alongside the arts, is a significant responsibility of ministries of culture in many countries around the world. For instance, the French Ministry of Culture emphasizes its role in safeguarding and enhancing cultural

heritage, as well as promoting artistic and intellectual creations (Ministère de la Culture, 2023). Second, heritage is the main topic in the international debate about cultural policy (Aceska & Mitroi, 2021; James & Winter, 2015; van der Hoeven, 2016). Therefore, in order to include American cultural policy in the international debate, I deemed it critical to incorporate historic preservation in the scope of my book. This addition offers an overview of American cultural policy comparable with other countries and could facilitate the inclusion of the United States in the international debate. Even though integrating studies about the humanities and historic preservation offers a unique perspective on American cultural policy studies, this outlook is still limited, and I acknowledge that the intricacies of the American system extend beyond this initial snapshot.

My second observation is that in public administration, in addition to defining what culture is, the discussion about its value gains prominence as a justification for government intervention. The literature categorizes policy issues as a set of unrealized needs, values, or opportunities that are phrased as actionable issues (Dunn, 2008; Guess & Farnham, 2011; Kingdon, 2011). Helen Small (2013), a British literature professor, observes that understanding how governments prioritize different needs and values is not an absolute matter but rather a process that requires a contextual understanding of data and a taxonomy of ideas for modes of valuation. For instance, the humanities are not a need, and they require arguments to support their public value in situations of practical deliberation for government action. In this book, I examine how the American government framed the value of the arts, the humanities, and historic preservation. In particular, the notion of *public* value becomes crucial because the value of culture should resonate with all Americans to justify why the government needs to intervene in culture. An important consideration is how government intervention shapes the debate, bringing the concept of the public to the forefront. Therefore, my initial question of how the government is involved in cultural matters evolves into an inquiry about its public value, which emphasizes how its value serves the American people.

Public value is a concept coined by Mark Moore, a Harvard public management scholar, in his 1995 book *Creating Public Value: Strategic Management in Government* (1995). In response to the limitations of target-driven management, Moore argues that public administration should focus on serving the people, ensuring the creation of public value. A democratic government should use public assets to produce public value for its citizens (Moore, 2014). The word “public” emphasizes the collective benefit for society. This concept was adopted in Britain by the Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit in 2002, in the UK cultural sector by the BBC, and later by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Arts Council England (Holden & Baltà, 2012). As a result, these organizations and others changed their practices and procedures to foster a deeper dialogue with

their publics. Critiques of how the BBC viewed the public argue that it considered them service users with aggregated needs rather than active participants. Other studies point out how the idea of public value is fundamentally American and ill-suited to the Westminster system (Rhodes & Wanna, 2009) and its failure to overturn the dominance of economic value in the British cultural sector (O'Brien, 2013).

In the United States, Moore worked with The Wallace Foundation and state arts agencies “to reach as many citizens as possible in as many places as possible and to affect them as positively and profoundly as possible” (Moore & Moore, 2005, p. 18). The primary aim of government intervention in the arts, the humanities, and historic preservation has been to ensure that everyone can be reached and involved. This goal has been implemented within a conception of public administration as serving the community, rather than steering its direction (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000). Therefore, American government intervention in matters of culture has been about articulating and creating public value that ultimately shapes programming in the arts, the humanities, and historic preservation. Specifically, the goal has been to *create* public value by focusing on what is both valued by the public and beneficial for the public, connecting public leadership with citizens through co-creation (Bryson et al., 2014; Virtanen & Jalonen, 2023). The vitality of the arts, the wisdom and vision of the humanities, and the spirit and direction of historic preservation have been supported by serving the public purpose and public interest and by getting closer and closer to people to strengthen democracy.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION APPROACH: MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE AND SOURCES

To examine the decentralized nature of American cultural policy, in this book, I use the multilevel governance approach, focusing on the interplay between different levels of government and civil society in shaping the arts, the humanities, and historic preservation. Previously, I used this approach to unpack policy mechanisms that connect federal and state institutions in the arts and humanities (Redaelli, 2020b). Additionally, I examined how federal, state, and local levels are linked within city programs (Redaelli, 2016). Now, I further develop this kind of analysis by using the multilevel governance approach to unpack how a different bureaucracy unfolds for each of the three cultural domains, providing an organic view of this decentralized system. The role of decentralization and connection among different levels of government has been a recent topic in American cultural policy studies. Since Paul DiMaggio (1983) established American cultural policy as a field of inquiry by pointing to the growing influence of the government in matters of the arts, a few pioneering studies have attempted to describe the system (Mulcahy, 1982;

Mulcahy & Wyszomirski, 1995). The research that followed underscored how the American cultural policy system is highly decentralized and dispersed (Kammen, 1996; Rosenstein, 2018) and pointed out how the state level is where the real action is (Schuster, 2002). However, the research did not focus on the implications of decentralization; it rather studied one specific level of government, the national level (Rushton, 2003; Woronkiewicz et al., 2017), the state level (Lowell, 2008b), or the local level (Skaggs, 2020; Strom, 2003).

Multilevel governance refers to the layering of the federal, state, and local levels, where the actors involved are both governmental and private organizations, and their relationships are contextual and negotiated (Vogel, 2007). The emergence of multilevel governance theory is linked to the rise of the European Union and the need to understand a higher level of sovereignty and its interactions with preexisting levels (Bache et al., 2011; Benz & Eberlein, 1999). In the context of a federal nation, the attention is on the relationship between the central government and subnational governments. Within this model, the relationship between tiers of government and key actors in the private sector is becoming increasingly negotiated and contextual instead of based on command and control (Peters & Pierre, 2001), and the federal government is not authoritarian or dirigiste (Howlett et al., 2009). In a legalistic relationship based on command and control, the federal government operates by mandate, which consists of an obligation for states and local governments to take action (Posner, 1998). On the contrary, in a multilevel governance context, instead of a centralized, hierarchical chain of agencies, a mosaic of organizations with different links and connections exists (Ostrom & Janssen, 2004). Recent studies have focused on the need to further explore issues of legitimacy and power in organizing a complex system of governance involving local, regional, national, and international actors (Benz, 2024).

Beyond the vertical layering of federal, state, and local levels, multilevel governance also emphasizes horizontal relationships, shedding light on the intricate dynamics between government agencies and civil society (Alcantara & Nelles, 2014). This analytical lens brings to the forefront both the web of governmental agencies and the involvement of the private sector, considering that the term governance “serves to bridge the public-private borders in the pursuit of the collective interests” (Peters & Pierre, 2004, p. 78). There are vertical and horizontal dimensions in the concept of multilevel governance: The multilevel piece refers to the *vertical* interactions between the national government and the local level, while the governance piece refers to the *horizontal* interactions between government and nongovernmental actors (Bache et al., 2022). The federal government’s role is to involve and coordinate other public and private actors, such as nonprofit organizations and foundations. A hallmark of characterizing the federal system through multilevel governance is the possibility to reflect heterogeneity as it manifests at different scales of

governance (Hooghe & Marks, 2003). Therefore, the lens of multilevel governance offers a powerful tool to navigate the complex system of American cultural policy.

In this book, I present a multilevel governance analysis that reveals the process by which the federal government, after intervening in the cultural sector, developed a form of cultural federalism. This system aims to disperse power to the states and foster links with private organizations—rather than create a large national organization—supporting regional variations and pluralism. Federal involvement in cultural matters is characterized by decentralization through an infrastructure at the state level, ensuring equal opportunities for all Americans across the nation. As of today, the federal government remains the most visible actor and is often under fire, even though it is only the tip of the iceberg in a complicated system. In my multilevel governance analysis, I start by examining the federal level by exploring how the law articulates the role of the federal government and the definition of each domain, and I describe the resulting organigram of the national setting for each domain. For the arts and humanities, I unpack how the organigrams of the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities reflect the definition of the arts and humanities provided by the law. For historic preservation, I map the organizations involved at the national level and examine how they implement the content of the law. For each domain, I continue the analysis by considering the process that leads to the creation of state institutions.

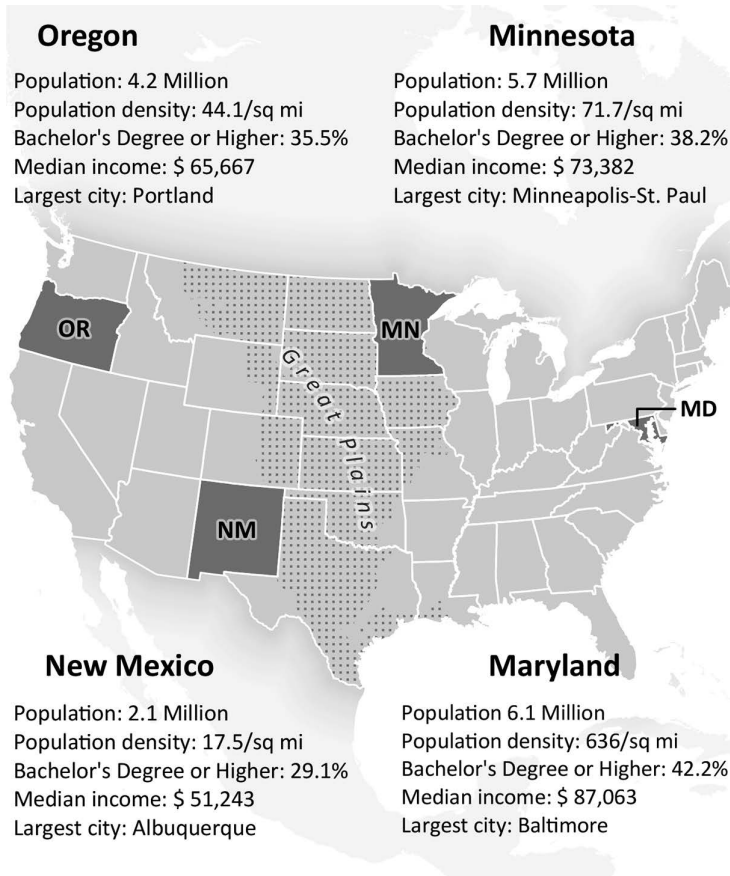
States promote pluralism by establishing infrastructures that enrich and preserve local variation and bring the community to the forefront. Studying the state level, which has been understudied compared with federal and local entities, offers insights into the diversity of American cultural policy. National intervention was meant to ensure that each state could nurture its distinctive regional expression within each cultural domain. Some states had already developed a solid infrastructure, but others needed support, direction, and resources to further develop their commitment (Mulcahy, 2002). The federal government operated as an equalizer, ensuring that all Americans have access to cultural programming, regardless of where they live, and that no state was left behind. Focusing on the state level, I build on previous literature in cultural policy studies that brought attention to this level (Gattinger & Saint-Pierre, 2011; Schuster, 2002; Schuster et al., 2003). In particular, the work by J. Marc Schuster, an American urban cultural policy scholar, has been groundbreaking in pointing to what he calls “sub-national” cultural policy as the level where the action is (Bonet, 2008; Schuster, 2002). Moreover, focusing on the state allows us to overcome the rural versus urban divide, providing a more comprehensive view of different regional dynamics.

For each domain, I wanted to analyze state actions that would also provide an overview of the bureaucratic and cultural variation across the country. The

challenge became the selection of states that could sufficiently illustrate the variation while being reader-friendly. First, I didn't want to spotlight New York and California, as their cities are already prominent in the literature, and my goal is to highlight cultural policy around the country beyond these popular nodes (Currid-Halkett, 2007; Scott, 2018). Second, I wanted to strike a balance between depth and breadth and pondered what would be a sufficient number of states to showcase the diversity across the nation. Prioritizing readability and engagement, I thought that focusing on four states could offer a representative sample that would capture the diversity of cultural policy across different regions while offering a clear analysis. Finally, I selected Oregon, Minnesota, Maryland, and New Mexico as states that meaningfully represent different regions and aspects of American cultural policy (see Figure 2.1).

This selection of states ensures a balanced geographical spread with representation from the West Coast, Midwest, East Coast, and Southwest. Geographical location is connected with cultural variation; therefore, the strategic selection of a few states that can exemplify these differences becomes paramount. West of the Great Plains, Oregon represents the West Coast, embodying its progressive policies, while New Mexico offers a unique cultural perspective shaped by Native American, Hispanic, and Anglo influences in the Southwest. East of the Great Plains, Minnesota represents the Midwest, with policies that balance urban and rural interests. Maryland, on the East Coast, is one of the country's smallest states, which stands out for its diverse geography and rich history. Indeed, this selection still leaves out many other regions and limits the cultural variety presented; however, it brings into focus the breadth of the differences that characterize this big and diverse country. Figure 2.1 provides information about population, population density, education, and median income to contextualize each state and its geographic location. I also included the largest city in each state, as cities are often more recognizable reference points than the states themselves. I recognize that in the discussions of the four states, my perspective is somewhat skewed toward Oregon. I will leave it up to the readers to ponder if that is because I live in Oregon or the other way around: I live in Oregon because of the great things the state has to offer.

My analysis focuses on two foundational laws—the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act of 1965 (hereafter Arts and Humanities Act) and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (hereafter Preservation Act)—along with complementary primary and secondary sources that provide critical context for understanding their implementation. I relied extensively on the websites of national and state organizations, their strategic plans, their various reports, and published research. For instance, I analyzed documents such as Multiple Property Documentation Forms (MPDs), which are critical to understanding the processes of the National Register of Historic Places and capturing the unique characteristics of each region. Moreover, I integrated



Source: US Census Quick Facts 2020. Copyright InfoGraphics Lab.

Figure 2.1 Selected states illustrating cultural policy variation across the US

these sources with the reports published by several service organizations, such as the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, Americans for the Arts, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes, to name just a few. The autobiographies written by several leaders of the National Endowment for the Arts were a great source for understanding how the implementation of the laws was impacted by ongoing debates. All these sources have been integrated with an extensive cursory review of the literature in the arts, humanities, and historic preservation. This

range of sources reflects what, in a previous book with Jonathan Paquette, I termed an “ethic of research”—an approach that integrates insights from both scholars and practitioners as a community of practice, offering a holistic analysis of cultural policy (Paquette & Redaelli, 2015).

The Arts and Humanities Act established the foundation for how the arts and humanities are framed as issues of public concern requiring governmental action. Although enacted in 1965, I am analyzing this law, including its several amendments, as a contemporary document. This law has been defined as “the most ambitious piece of cultural legislation in American history” (Zainaldin, 2013, p. 30). It provides a rationale for the public purpose of the arts and humanities, using persuasive language to justify the need for government intervention. In particular, scholars have highlighted the powerful way in which the Arts and Humanities Act portrays the role of the federal government (Mulcahy, 1985) as a leader and partner, with a central focus on national cultural needs (Netzer, 2006). Local and private organizations maintain leadership, while the role of the federal government is to support and promote a multifaceted and diverse cultural policy (Mark, 1969). Although the law defines the public value of the arts and humanities collectively, it nonetheless provides distinct definitions for each domain and establishes two separate bureaucratic structures: the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).

The Preservation Act, passed in 1966, transformed the field of historic preservation, establishing systems and standards for coordinating historic preservation efforts between the federal government and state, local, and Tribal governments. It remains the most expansive legislation about historic preservation in the United States. Scholarship has defined the Preservation Act as a “procedural law” (Alexander, 2012, p. 904) because it requires federal agencies to take specific steps before undertaking a new project to avoid causing harm to the existing landscape. In 2014, Congress enacted Title 54 of the US Code, which consolidated the laws surrounding the National Park Service and its programs, including the Preservation Act (NPS, 2018a). However, due to longstanding professional practice, many preservationists continue to refer to aspects of the law by the original Preservation Act section numbers, in particular Sections 106 and 110. Section 106 (54 USC Ch. 3061) requires federal agencies to evaluate the effects of their projects and programs on historic properties. Section 110 (54 USC § 306101) directs federal agencies to incorporate historic preservation into their programs by identifying and managing historic properties in their care and ensuring compliance with Section 106 (54 USC § 3061). The initial section, “Purpose of the Law,” was omitted, but not repealed, from the text of Title 54, so I cite it using the number of the amended statute, Pub. L. No. 96-515 (originally Pub. L. No. 89-665).

In my multilevel governance analysis of cultural policy, I use a public administration approach that intertwines two lines of inquiry to examine how organizational structure and programming together create public value. The first line of inquiry is a longitudinal analysis that teases out how policy efforts start with the definition and public value of each domain as presented by the law. These efforts continue through developing a bureaucracy and reaching the people by organizing programs that engage different groups of citizens. The emphasis of the analysis lies in the longitudinal examination of how value is framed within laws, bureaucracies, and activities. Few studies have connected cultural policy laws with the bureaucracy they have created (Potter, 2016; Redaelli, 2020b). Other studies have focused on specific institutions' programs (Chapman, 2000; Lowell, 2004). However, no longitudinal study has yet examined the relationship between laws, bureaucracy, and programs. This book seeks to fill that gap by unpacking the connections between all three. The aim is to advance our understanding of how specific programs—tangible experiences that are visible to everybody—are connected to larger policy efforts, which are often invisible, even though they are essential to exploring what justifies government intervention. This analysis brings attention to the complexity of the bureaucratic structure and programming while trying to understand how they create public value.

The second line of inquiry, running parallel to the first, is a hermeneutic exercise grounded in the humanities that explores how the interpretation and implementation of the law are intertwined with theoretical debates about culture. Of course, the implementation process in public administration requires different ingredients, such as money, staffing, and political clout, to name just a few. By choosing to examine how the implementation process is immersed in intertextuality, connecting the interpretation of the laws with the intellectual debates, I highlight the dynamic of a democratic process and its connection with intellectual debates. I unpack the debates that accompany each of the domains, examining how they are shaped by, and in turn shape, public administration. I do not tease out issues of power or funding streams; instead, I focus on programming by exploring how public administration implements the definitions and values of the three cultural domains. I aim to emphasize the entanglement, the relational dynamics, between the public administration and the debates, prioritizing their interaction over simple cause-and-effect relationships. This approach brings the debates about culture in theory into the realm of government actions and its partnerships. Most importantly, it explains how the values of culture are shaped when aiming to create public value. The study of cultural policy has emerged from cultural studies, and by carrying out a hermeneutic analysis, I position this investigation within the public administration literature, maintaining a humanistic method. As David Bell and Kate Oakley (2015) claim, "Cultural policy is not simply a question

of administration, deciding what gets funded or how to measure the size of the film industry, but something that engages with questions of values, beliefs and priorities in a very fundamental way” (p. 41).

A public administration approach brings attention to the bureaucracy, which is where people work, where policies are implemented and interpreted, and where collective ideas come alive. Bureaucracy is where the meaning of culture is discussed and its value is made relevant to everybody in their everyday lives. Bureaucracy is grounded in the law, interprets the law, and implements the law. The development of its organizational structure, mission, and programs is the action that reinterprets and negotiates the definitions of the three domains and their values through political and public dialogue. Examining the intertextuality, as the interplay between the law and the shifting contextual interpretations, illuminates how cultural value propositions have been constructed and reconstructed. In what might sound like an oxymoron, the beauty of bureaucracy lies in its intertwining of the ideals of the law, the infrastructure for action, and the service to the people. In these intricacies, bureaucracy is a form of beauty (Frederickson, 2000). Moreover, these three aspects come alive through ongoing discourse, debates, and differing interpretations surrounding the roles and initiatives of these agencies. The arts, the humanities, and historic preservation are the outcomes pursued by cultural policy, yet this complex process lies beneath their existence. Ultimately, the goal of all these efforts by the American government is to advance democracy.

CONCLUSION

Invisible Cultural Policy in America is an investigation of how the American government is involved in matters of culture. The system of American cultural policy is complex and multifaceted, remaining invisible to the general public. My goal is to unveil this complexity by shedding light on how the federal government facilitated the development of a form of cultural federalism and how public administration shapes definitions and values of culture. Using a multilevel governance lens, I will develop a longitudinal analysis, from the law to bureaucracy, intertwined with a hermeneutic analysis. I will analyze the laws, bureaucracies, and programs and the way they are linked and emphasize how this process is embedded in issues of interpretation and is entangled with intellectual debates. This exploration involves an immersion in American culture and how it has been shaped by the government to benefit the public, moving from culture in theory to culture in action through the tools of public administration.

3. The vitality of the arts

“It is vital to a democracy to honor and preserve its multicultural artistic heritage as well as support new ideas.”

—National Foundation for the Arts and Humanities
Act of 1965

INTRODUCTION

In 1987, Andres Serrano’s provocative *Piss Christ*, a photograph of a plastic crucifix submerged in the artist’s urine, won a prestigious grant from the NEA and toured across the United States, quickly generating a bitter controversy (Zeigler, 1994). When the exhibit reached the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, a letter to the editorial board of the local newspaper sparked nationwide outrage about the photograph, which reached Congress, questioning the use of taxpayer money to support such offensive artwork. Yet, this incident was just the beginning of a larger debate about government funding for controversial art. A year later, in 1988, a similar controversy erupted at the University of Pennsylvania’s Institute of Contemporary Art with Robert Mapplethorpe’s *The Perfect Moment*. This exhibition, featuring 150 sexually explicit photographs, ignited a firestorm of criticism and led to the indictment of Dennis Barrie, director of the Cincinnati Contemporary Art Center. Despite the cancellation of the exhibition’s tour and Barrie’s eventual acquittal of obscenity charges, the debate around the appropriate use of public funds for the arts did not end but grew larger. Why should the government support the arts? What is the public value of art? What kind of audience can be reached, and what is the point of art anyway?

In this book, I argue that the concept of public value of the arts has been at the center of governmental efforts in the United States. In contrast, Australian and British governments have focused mainly on economic value, with scholars criticizing them for losing sight of the arts as a common good (Gray, 2000; Mulholland, 2003; O’Connor, 2024). In the United States, debates over federal support of the arts began in the colonial era and continued long after the establishment of the first national agency dedicated to the arts in 1965, the National Endowment for the Arts (Levy, 1997). The themes of the debates

range from considering the government a reluctant patron (Larson, 1983) and a reluctant bureaucrat (Mark, 1991) to fearing that government support for the arts would lead to propaganda, such as in totalitarian regimes (Wyszomirski, 2004). Alongside these skeptical arguments, several supporters promote the importance of making the arts available to people from every walk of life (Taylor & Barresi, 1984). These debates have continued to this day, exploring what it means for the arts to serve the public value, addressing issues of multiculturalism and the rural and urban divide, as well as issues of fostering artistic freedom versus stopping obscenity. Beyond defining the public value of the arts, there is an ongoing disagreement about the role of the federal government in shaping their value and supporting their growth.

The debates about the public value of the arts—where “public” refers to justification for government intervention, as explained in Chapter 2—are part of a broader examination of the arts in society, encompassing social, economic, and moral dimensions. The social impact of the arts has been examined by the intellectual history written by Eleonora Belfiore and Oliver Bennett (2008). By reconnecting the ideas linked to the social impact of the arts to a longstanding intellectual tradition that starts with Plato, Belfiore and Bennett articulate the meaning of key concepts, such as corruption and distraction, catharsis, personal wellbeing, civilization, identity construction, and the autonomy of the arts. The economic impact of the arts has been highlighted by studies that have advocated for government support of the arts and have been examined using different methodologies over the years (Gibson & Kong, 2005; Seaman, 2020; Throsby, 2001; Towse, 2003). For instance, Americans for the Arts (AFTA), the national advocacy organization, has been conducting economic prosperity studies, showing local communities and federal political representatives how the arts can boost the economy (AFTA, 2002). The moral value of the arts has been debated extensively, examining their impact on both individual enrichment and societal advancement, particularly in bolstering democracy and civilization. Michael Rushton (2023), an economist specializing in cultural affairs, underscores in a recent monograph how moral philosophy can influence public funding objectives for the arts.

The US Congress has stated that the vitality of the arts—defined by the preservation of multicultural artistic heritage and the support of new ideas—is essential to democracy. In this chapter, I examine the debates about the value of the arts by unpacking the administrative structure that supports the arts in America, examining the rationale for government intervention and the link between values and bureaucracy. I start the chapter by analyzing how the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act of 1965 justifies the intervention of the federal government in this sector because this law provides the rationale and a definition of the arts for the establishment of the first federal agency, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). I then continue with

an illustration of how this foundational law defines the value of the arts and examine how this value has been interpreted and enacted over the years by the NEA, which shows the complex interplay between the law and the resulting bureaucracy. Next, I analyze the process of decentralization set in motion by the NEA with the creation of state arts agencies, which shows the great emphasis of American cultural policy at the state level, aiming to bring the arts to all the people. Finally, I shine a spotlight on specific programs in Oregon, Minnesota, Maryland, and New Mexico to exemplify how a decentralized system not only aims to reach everybody in the country but also supports local cultural variation.

NATIONAL SETTING FOR THE ARTS: FEDERAL ROLE AND DEFINITION

As I mentioned in Chapter 2, I define cultural policy as the actions of government, including the creation of bureaucracies and programs within the cultural field. In the United States, cultural policy has had a complex history, becoming an issue relevant for the federal agenda only in the early 1960s with the enactment of the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act of 1965 (hereafter Arts and Humanities Act). In the 18th and 19th centuries, American leaders prioritized establishing a functional democratic government over supporting the arts and humanities (Binkiewicz, 2004). The country's founders did not intend to delegate the responsibility for cultural development to Congress or the president (Mark, 1969). Consequently, there is no constitutional mandate for providing federal support for cultural activities. As John Adams, one of the seven founding fathers and the second US president, famously stated:

I must study politics and war, that my sons may have the liberty to study mathematics, philosophy, geography, natural history and naval architecture, navigation, commerce and agriculture in order to give their children the right to study painting, poetry, music, and architecture (Adams, 1780).

Before the Arts and Humanities Act, the federal government engaged in cultural activities first in the 1930s during the Roosevelt administration (Binkiewicz 2004). The Public Works of Art Project, under the auspices of the Department of the Treasury, was the first project to subsidize the arts at the national level (Mankin, 1995). As part of the New Deal's Works Progress Administration, five major arts and cultural programs were developed, employing artists and humanities scholars in major public work projects: Federal Theater Project, Federal Writers' Project, Federal Art Project, Federal Music Project, and Historical Records Survey (Peterson, 1986). However, these projects were

mainly justified in terms of creating jobs during the Great Depression, rather than for supporting the arts (Geary, 2015). Even after the success of the Works Progress Administration, the federal government remained reluctant to become a patron of the arts (Larson, 1983), and several more years of debates were necessary before a federal agency devoted to the arts was established (Charlton, 1972, Mark, 1991).

The 1965 Arts and Humanities Act created the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities, the purpose of which, as stated in the law's section "Declaration of findings and purposes," is to "develop and promote a broadly conceived national policy of support for the humanities and the arts in the U.S." (20 U.S.C. § 951). Today the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities comprises the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), and the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities (an interagency committee of federal officials). The IMLS was established later, through the Museums and Libraries Services Act of 1996. As stated in the law, the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities has no administrative or programmatic identity separate from its components. In this chapter, I focus on the NEA, starting with examining the definition of the arts, whereas in the next chapter, I examine the NEH.

The law emphasizes the need for a national policy for the arts and humanities, providing a series of arguments that articulate the role of the federal government (see Box 3.1). Primarily, the support of the arts and humanities is a matter of private and local initiative, but the federal government should complement, assist, and add to these efforts. The federal government can play a supportive role by creating a climate that favors free imagination and inquiry. Its support extends to ensuring that the necessary resources and conditions are available to foster creativity and encourage the preservation of American artistic and multicultural heritage. The law underscores that, as a global leader, the United States should not only prioritize power, wealth, and technology but also be recognized for its contribution to the arts and humanities, encouraging a creativity that is admired worldwide. In other words, the United States should be a global leader in ideas and spirit. Moreover, there is an emphasis on fostering education and access for everybody, aiming to reach people not only of every background but also regardless of their location. To understand how these principles have been implemented, I examine the national organizations and programs that the federal government has established, starting from the NEA and the definition of the arts provided by the law.

BOX 3.1 THE ROLE OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES

- Complement, assist, and add to private and local initiatives.
- Foster a form of education and access to the arts and humanities for people of *all* backgrounds, regardless of their location.
- Serve as a global leader in ideas and spirit.
- Make models of excellence widely available.
- Support multicultural artistic heritage and new ideas through financial assistance.
- Encourage a climate and material conditions that foster freedom of thought, imagination, and inquiry.

(Adapted from 20 U.S.C. § 951)

While the justification for government intervention is shared between the arts and humanities, their definitions fall into two distinct categories, as explained in the section of the law titled “Definitions.” Today the definition of the arts provided in the Arts and Humanities Act is the result of several amendments over the years and is quite inclusive, involving not only the classical art forms but also modern mediums, such as photography, graphic and craft arts, industrial design, costume and fashion design, motion pictures, television, radio, film, video, tape, and sound recording (see Box 3.2). This broad definition of the arts has blurred the lines with entertainment (Baumann, 2007). It has also intersected with folklore, which includes traditional arts practiced by diverse American cultural groups (Stefano, 2016). Additionally, it encompasses vernacular arts, traditionally not attributed to a single recognized artist (Price, 1989). However, despite this broadening of the definition, scholars have highlighted that certain elitist and discriminatory tastes persist, often privileging traditional forms of art while marginalizing newer or non-conventional practices. As the sociologist Jennifer C. Lena (2019) notes, this development includes ongoing power dynamics within the cultural sector, where the expansion of what constitutes “art” coexists with a continued reinforcement of established hierarchies of taste and value.

BOX 3.2 DEFINITION OF THE ARTS

“The term ‘the arts’ includes, but is not limited to, music (instrumental and vocal), dance, drama, folk art, creative writing, architecture and allied fields, painting, sculpture, photography, graphic and craft arts, industrial design, costume and fashion design, motion pictures, television, radio, film, video, tape and sound recording, the arts related to the presentation, performance,

execution, and exhibition of such major art forms, all those traditional arts practiced by the diverse peoples of this country.[sic] and the study and application of the arts to the human environment”

(20 U.S.C. § 952, a).

The evolution of the policy definition of the arts can be traced through reports prepared for US presidents from the 1950s to the late 1990s (Wyszomirski, 2004). For instance, the report *Creative America: A Report to the President* (1997), issued by the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, highlights the variety of expressions that shape American culture, ranging from Pueblo dancers to the New York City Ballet, from local historical societies to the history departments at prestigious universities, and from church choirs to professional orchestras. Expanding further, the law defines the arts as encompassing “the study and application of the arts to the human environment,” which includes the emergence of land-focused practices (Scott & Swenson, 2015) and the integration of artistic and cultural policy initiatives that link the arts with people’s experience of place (Redaelli, 2019a).

The NEA implements the Arts and Humanities Act’s vision for federal support of the arts and its definition through its government relationships, organizational structure, and specialized units. The NEA’s operations are led by a chair appointed by the president for four years, subject to Senate approval, and advised by the National Council on the Arts (NEA, 2023b; Pankratz & Hanzal, 1995). The council is composed of 26 citizens appointed by the president for six-year terms. It reviews grant applications, funding guidelines, and leadership initiatives and recommends individuals and organizations for the National Medal of Arts. The members are selected for their reputation and expertise in the arts; however, some members of the Senate and the House serve as ex-officio members of the council, highlighting the NEA’s connection to governmental oversight and support. The NEA’s program offices are organized by artistic field, reflecting the definition of the arts presented in the law, which includes

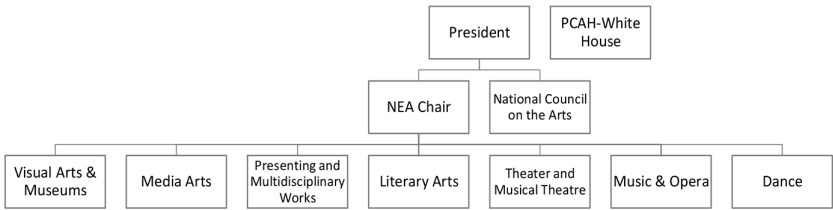


Figure 3.1 NEA organizational structure

visual arts and museums, media arts, presenting and multidisciplinary works, literary arts, theater and musical theater, music and opera, and literary arts (NEA, 2023a, 2024a, 2024b) (see Figure 3.1). As of 2024, there is no dedicated unit for folk and traditional arts, following Clifford Murphy's departure from the organization after a tenure of 17 years. Furthermore, the NEA has specific units dedicated to accessibility, education, partnership, research, and creative placemaking.

Since the chair of the NEA is appointed by the president, I think it is crucial to emphasize the most significant advisory body in this context: the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH). The committee serves as an advisory committee to the president on cultural matters, consisting of private citizens and government officials, and is based in the White House. Created in 1982 by President Ronald Reagan, it has played a pivotal role in bringing together resources from federal agencies, corporations, and foundations to develop cultural initiatives. For instance, it started the Turnaround Arts program, which aims to improve academic performance and increase student engagement through the arts by bringing artists to the country's lowest-achieving schools. Turnaround Arts is now independently run by the Kennedy Center (The Kennedy Center, 2024). A significant event in the committee's history occurred in 2017: All the private members of the committee resigned in protest of President Donald J. Trump's defense of white nationalists, who rallied against the removal of a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee in Charlottesville, Virginia (Gray, 2017; Pogrebin, 2017). In 2022, the committee was reinstated by President Joe Biden with a renewed focus on advising the president about how the arts and humanities sectors can positively impact community wellbeing, economic development, public health, education, civic engagement, and climate change across the United States (PCAH, 2022).

Analyzing the NEA's evolving role in promoting the arts, historian Lauren Erin Brown (2020) argues that the government has consistently wielded the arts as a tool of state power. She highlights the tenure of Chairman Dana Gioia, an accomplished poet and businessman appointed by President George W. Bush in 2003, as a pivotal period for the NEA during which it transitioned from being a mere promoter to a producer of cultural content, emphasizing American greatness (Brown, 2020). Under Gioia's leadership, the NEA launched the National Initiative, which involved artists in various programming intended to promote culture. Shakespeare in American Communities, Operation Homecoming, Great American Voices, American Masterpieces, and The Big Read were among the initiatives that underscored the shift. Remarkably, some of these programs received support from the Department of Defense, highlighting the government's strategic use of the arts for cultural diplomacy and national identity-building. Contrary to Brown's criticism, Gioia—who also established the program Poetry Out Loud—and his efforts

were lauded in a *New York Times* article for empowering American artists to break away from their European influences (Safire, 2004). Other scholars praised his expansion of programming to military bases and rural areas, which helped stabilize the agency, moving away from previous controversies, and contributed to significantly increasing its budget (Woronkiewicz et al., 2017).

As seen earlier, when defining the role of the federal government, the Arts and Humanities Act reiterates the idea that the support of the arts and the humanities is “primarily a matter for private and local initiatives” (20 U.S.C. § 951.2). Therefore, alongside a description of the bureaucracy developed by the government, in a multilevel governance analysis of the national settings for the arts, it is important to highlight the role of foundations, particularly the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations. Their activities predate the NEA, showcasing the pivotal role of private organizations in shaping the arts field. The Ford Foundation, especially, played a pivotal role in encouraging larger foundations to support the arts (Smith, 2010). Wilson McNeil Lowry, who initiated the Ford Foundation’s arts program in 1957, was pivotal in making the Ford Foundation a major arts supporter (Lowry, 1978; Lowry, 1983). The Ford Foundation’s approach, which included the innovative concept of matching grants, revolutionized institutional funding by leveraging funds from hundreds of foundations, corporations, and governmental agencies, shaping intervention in America’s arts system and setting a standard still recognized today (Ivey, 2005). However, since the 1990s, the effectiveness of the matching grant model has been questioned, and the leverage concept has declined, as evidenced by scholarly works critiquing its efficiency (Kreidler, 1996; Brooks, 1999; Andreoni and Payne, 2003). Similarly, the Rockefeller Foundation highlighted the importance of the performing arts, which had been overshadowed by institutions like libraries, museums, schools, and hospitals. Its 1965 report, *The Performing Arts: Problem and Perspectives* (Rockefeller Panel, 1965), on the state of the performing arts in the United States emphasized the importance of the performing arts, aligning this topic with its broader mission to promote humanity’s wellbeing worldwide through various research areas, including advancing health and transforming cities. Before the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, single-purpose foundations were established by devoted students of art and music, for instance, the Edgar M. Leventritt Foundation, created in 1939 to support music festivals and prestigious competitions.

PUBLIC VALUE: CONGRESS AND THE NEA

The Arts and Humanities Act outlines the need for establishing a federal agency focused on the arts, articulates their public value, and offers a definition that includes a list of what constitutes the arts. The NEA operationalizes the law’s vision for a federal role in the arts through its partnerships—which

reflect the complementary, nonexclusive nature of federal intervention—and its organizational structure with specialized units, which mirrors the disciplines listed in the definition of the arts. Now, I analyze how Congress explains the public value of the arts and the debates that surrounded its implementation in the NEA organizational structure, mission, programs, and activities.

PUBLIC VALUE AS STATED BY THE LAW

According to the law, the arts and humanities reflect American cultural heritage and the diverse values of its people and communities (see Box 3.3). They carry significant relevance for the nation and belong to all American people. Their value consists of fostering citizens who are critical thinkers, enacting a strong democracy, showing mutual respect for different values, and understanding the past to develop a vision for the future. An education in the arts and humanities allows all citizens to recognize the aesthetic dimensions of everyday life and the diversity that forms the fabric of American cultural heritage. The arts and humanities provide wisdom and vision, and in so doing, they serve the public purpose as defined by Congress: contributing to an advanced civilization along with science and technology.

BOX 3.3 PUBLIC VALUE OF THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES

- They belong to *all* the people.
- Support national progress.
- An advanced civilization includes scholarship in science, technology, and *other* great branches of scholarship.
- Wisdom and vision.
- Serve the *public purposes* defined by Congress.
- Rich cultural heritage: diverse beliefs and values.
- Practice of art and study of the humanities require freedom of thought: encouraging climate and material conditions.
- Appreciation of the *aesthetic* dimension of our lives and *diversity* of excellence.
- Multicultural artistic heritage and new ideas.

* *italics mine*

(Adapted from 20 U.S.C. § 951)

The vitality of the arts is essential to democracy, as the law emphasizes their role in honoring and preserving multicultural artistic heritage while also supporting new ideas. The academic discourse about multiculturalism developed

around issues of social justice (Fraser & Honneth, 2003). In the arts, the rise of multiculturalism in the 1970s situates them within broader social, political, and economic conditions, with minority groups arguing for the representation of their cultures (Pankratz, 1993; Rushton, 2023). Throughout the 1980s, advocacy efforts pushed for the NEA's endowment programs to be extended to culturally diverse communities. These policy arguments were immersed in an intellectual environment that highlighted new aspects of the arts. Arnold Hauser (1982), a social historian of art, contended that the value of a work of art depends on the social influence and power of its subject matter. However, he says, if the content is beyond the social, then the artistic value is in its formal properties. Richard A. Peterson (1990), a sociologist specialized in production of culture, argued that the arts audience has been changing. Analyzing the advent of rock music, he argues that the arts have been moving away from a supply-side aesthetic, which focuses on the artists and their traditions, to a demand-side aesthetic, which enhances how art can be received by a diverse audience. Interestingly, the law highlights the importance of "diversity of excellence," a concept that articulates multiculturalism in a unique way and warrants further exploration in the academic literature.

Supporting new ideas, which is the second facet of the vitality of the arts enhanced by the law, has been proven quite problematic due to unpredictable reactions by the public: Are they offensive? Are they immoral? Are they ugly? A fierce controversy exploded in the late 1980s that questioned the morality of new artwork, raising the question of what type of art should be publicly funded and if it should be different from art that is privately funded (Kammen, 1996; Zeigler, 1994). In 1987, Andres Serrano received a \$15,000 grant for his work *Piss Christ*, a photograph of a plastic crucifix submerged in urine. He was chosen, along with 10 other artists, by the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, to receive a visual arts award. The organization also arranged a tour of the works to Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, and Richmond, Virginia. When the piece arrived in Richmond, a letter to the local newspaper expressed outrage about Serrano's work, considering it disrespectful and blasphemous, a critique that eventually escalated to Congress. A second incident occurred in 1988 when the University of Pennsylvania's Institute of Contemporary Art organized *The Perfect Moment*, a 150-piece exhibition of photographs by Robert Mapplethorpe. A few of these photographs contained sexually explicit images of naked men and representations of intense gay sexual activities. While being exhibited around the country, the Institute of Contemporary Art canceled the tour when it reached the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, DC, for fear of losing NEA funding. However, that didn't quell the controversy; 105 House members sent a letter to the NEA contesting the funding of "morally reprehensible trash" and asking to put a stop to a "horrible abuse of tax dollars."

PUBLIC VALUE AND THE NEA

The role of the federal government in the arts, as stated by the law, is translated into the NEA's mission "to strengthen the creative capacity of our community by providing all Americans with diverse opportunities for arts participation" (NEA, 2023a, p. 5). To fulfill its mission, the NEA administers grants, organizes initiatives, supports research, and presents lifetime honors. The NEA offers three main project-based grant opportunities for organizations: Grants for Arts Projects, which support specific disciplines; Challenge America grants, which fund projects reaching underserved communities; and Our Town grants, which promote creative placemaking by integrating arts, culture, and design activities into community projects. The initiatives span from the Mayors' Institute on City Design to The Big Read. The NEA contributes significantly to research in the arts, offering funding opportunities for research projects through the Research Grants in the Arts program and the NEA Research Labs, and, in particular, by conducting an annual survey on arts participation (Bradshaw & Mosier, 1998; Novak-Leonard et al., 2015). Additionally, the NEA bestows several honors, including the Jazz Masters award, National Heritage Fellowships, and the National Medal of Arts (NEA, 2015).

Programs are organized around each specific artistic field. As mentioned earlier (see Figure 3.1), the NEA's different offices are organized by artistic field, which are listed in the definition, including visual arts and museums, media arts, presenting and multidisciplinary works, literary arts, theater and musical theater, and music and opera. Initially, NEA grants were awarded to ad hoc projects from these offices, reflecting a spontaneous approach that characterized the agency's early years (Taylor & Barresi, 1984). However, as the NEA matured and increased its visibility, it transitioned toward more formal programs. One noticeable element about its numerous programs is the inclusion of a touring component to achieve its mission to provide opportunities for all Americans to participate in the arts, regardless of where they live. One of the most impactful examples of this effort took place in the realm of dance. In 1965, the majority of professional dance performances were concentrated in New York. However, by 1975, thanks to a national touring program supported by the NEA, new dance organizations emerged across the country. This dance boom led to a significant increase in access to dance performances for millions of people (Sessmann, 1984). A similar, even though maybe not so dramatic, pattern of expansion could also be observed in other art forms, such as opera companies, symphony orchestras, and art exhibitions.

The NEA's early commitment to making excellent art forms accessible nationally evolved over the years, reflecting a shift from a focus on supporting

exceptional artists to promoting access and education in the arts. This change of focus was driven by debates among artists, politicians, arts organizations, audiences, news outlets, and scholars regarding the public value and definition of the arts as presented by Congress. The monograph *The Arts at the New Frontier: The National Endowment for the Arts* (Taylor & Barresi, 1984) argues that the commitment to making excellent art forms nationally accessible was a central goal of the NEA's first leaders. This goal also included supporting exceptional artists. The leadership of Nancy Hanks, the second chair of the NEA appointed in 1969 by President Richard M. Nixon, built upon the foundation laid by the NEA's first chair, Roger Stevens, in pioneering new frontiers for the arts. Hanks, trained as an art historian, emphasized the public service character of the arts and the need to make the arts available, develop cultural resources, and advance cultural heritage (Saunders, 2005; Wyszomirski, 1987). Gradually, the debate around excellence and access became quite polarized (McNeely & Shockley, 2006). During the 1990s, under the leadership of actress Jane Alexander and amid political pressure following controversies—such as those involving Serrano and Mapplethorpe, mentioned earlier—the NEA underwent a reorganization that shifted its focus from artists to the audience, enhancing issues of access and education (Kimbis, 1997).

Highlighting the ongoing debate between elitism and populism, the memoirs written by former NEA chairs—Livingston Biddle, John Frohnmayer, and Bill Ivey—offer valuable perspectives on the challenges and dynamics within the NEA. Biddle initially served as Senator Claiborne Pell's assistant during the legislative push for the Arts and Humanities Act from 1963 to 1965 and later became the third NEA chair, appointed by President Jimmy Carter. In his memoir, *Our Government and the Arts: A Perspective from the Inside* (Biddle, 1988), Biddle, a best-selling novelist, offers anecdotes and insights into his time in Washington, starting from his recruitment by Senator Claiborne (Mankin, 1984). His primary challenge was to navigate the conflict between elitism, which sought support for major organizations, and new populism, which advocated for greater access to high culture outside the major cities (Reid, 2009). Frohnmayer offers insights about his experience at the NEA during the Mapplethorpe controversy in *Leaving Town Alive: Confessions of an Art Warrior* (Frohnmayer, 1993). A lawyer from Oregon, he is often mentioned in my cultural policy classes, particularly because he was the brother of a beloved president of the University of Oregon. Appointed by President George W. Bush in 1989, he writes about the battles between supporters of free speech and fans of traditional ideas about art who fought against offensive art. Similarly, Ivey, a folklorist and musician appointed by President Bill Clinton, provides his insights in *Arts, Inc.: How Greed and Neglect Have Destroyed Our Cultural Rights* (Ivey, 2008). His arguments focus on the expanding footprint of copyright, an arts industry marketplace growing without controls, and

a government unwilling to engage with culture as a serious arena for public policy. His informed and poignant analysis concludes by suggesting the need for a central authority, such as a department of cultural affairs—a claim I attempt to discourage in this book.

The NEA shift toward access and education gradually integrated the arts into community development. This emphasis on the role of the arts in community development is underscored by the background of NEA chair Maria Rosario Jackson, an urban planner appointed in 2021 by President Joe Biden. Jackson's expertise has proven crucial to the NEA's evolving focus on the initial part of its mission: "to strengthen the creative capacity of our communities." This emphasis on the impact of the arts on communities was significantly developed during the tenure of NEA chair Rocco Landesman, a Broadway producer appointed by President Barack Obama. Landesman began by wanting to understand what communities were doing and commissioned a white paper for a national study. The paper reported the multifaceted ways the arts were engaging with communities and coined the term "creative placemaking" to describe this kind of work (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010). He then sought strategies to support and enhance these efforts. One of his key initiatives was the establishment of the Our Town grant, aimed at supporting community-based art projects. Landesman also played a pivotal role in ArtPlace America, a 10-year partnership with six federal agencies and two White House offices, 15 leading national and regional foundations, and six of America's largest banks (Redaelli, 2018). In 2020, ArtPlace concluded its mandate after a long and busy journey connecting artists and community planners in different sectors (ArtPlace, 2020).

The vitality of the arts summarizes the way Congress explained the public value of the arts, which is essential to democracy. The activities of the NEA, which embodied this value, created debates around excellence and access, elitism and populism, and their role in community development. With the enactment of the Arts and Humanities Act, Congress aimed to foster the arts for everybody, no matter where they lived. This approach reinforced the idea that a key role of the federal government would be to establish bureaucracies that could focus on the geographical distribution of resources and the country's diverse heritage. This vision was operationalized with the creation of state arts agencies, a topic that I will explore further in the following section.

CULTURAL FEDERALISM AND THE STATE ARTS AGENCIES

The concept of cultural federalism is pivotal when discussing culture and government in America. The NEA played a pivotal role in fostering cultural federalism by establishing state arts agencies, a system of state agencies devoted

to the arts that decentralized cultural funding (Mulcahy, 2002). The first state arts agency was established in Utah in 1899; however, it wasn't until 1960 that another one was authorized, this time in New York as the New York State Council for the Arts. By 1965, five additional states—California, Georgia, Minnesota, Missouri, and North Carolina—had created state arts agencies. The NEA's Federal-State Partnership program, established in 1967, became the biggest catalyst for the creation of state arts agencies. This NEA program provides block grants to each state to establish a state arts agency to complement NEA activities (DiMaggio, 1991). Eventually, by 1974, each of the 56 states and jurisdictional territories had an agency officially designated to serve as a state arts agency tasked with increasing public access to the arts, developing a statewide strategy to nurture the arts, and serving as a conduit for federal funds. Moreover, state arts agencies are organized into six regional arts organizations—Arts Midwest, Mid-America Arts Alliance, Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation, New England Foundation for the Arts, Southern Arts Federation, and the Western States Arts Federation—to facilitate multistate programming and amplify resources for the arts at the regional level (Cowan, 1988). The state arts agencies were a response to a wide variety of developments during the Nixon administration, such as the cultural boom, the incentive of block grants from the federal government (Love, 2008), and the expectation of the arts' economic impact on the urban economy (Svenson, 1982). Considered the “children of the NEA” (Lowell, 2004, p. 4), the state arts agencies were created to be the NEA's broad-reaching support hubs for the arts.

By congressional mandate, the NEA allocates 40% of its annual funds to state arts agencies and regional arts organizations (NASAA, 2024a), a contribution that has kept increasing over the years (Mankin et al., 2001). In 1991, during the NEA crisis, 25% of the budget went to state arts agencies (Love, 1991). This NEA support is intended to provide federal funds to communities around the country, ensuring that they are responsive to the unique needs of each state and region, decentralizing NEA's funding and authority (DiMaggio, 1991). The funds are distributed in the form of Partnership Agreement Grants. Initially, these grants were distributed as block grants, providing states and regions with greater flexibility in fund usage. However, the distribution model has since shifted to a formula-based approach, linking the amount of funding each state receives to its population size. States and regions are required to match the federal funds at least dollar for dollar, though they often contribute even more, highlighting a strong local commitment to supporting the arts and maximizing the federal investment. “For instance, state arts agencies received \$55.2 million in Partnership Agreement funds in fiscal year 2024 but combined that with more than \$740.9 million in state legislative funds to award grants and offer arts services” (NASAA, 2024, p. 2). The result of this partnership has been a broadening of the reach of federal funds and a widening of public

access to the arts in every state, including rural and underserved communities. Even though this system has been quite successful, it is still not thoroughly accepted. For instance, Governor Sam Brownback defunded the Kansas Arts Commission in 2011, making Kansas the first state to eliminate its arts funding, arguing that the arts should be only privately funded (Hudnall, 2011; Pogrebin, 2011). The decision prevented the NEA from allocating any money to Kansas because it requires matching funds from the state. The agency was later reestablished under a new legislative name and structure as the Kansas Creative Arts Industries Commission (Koranda, 2012).

State arts agencies are an integral component of state government structures. They are typically either independent agencies, reporting directly to the governor, or part of a multidivisional department (NASAA, 2014). The different ways state arts agencies are placed within state government structures can influence their decision-making and daily operations. However, rather than their placement on a state's organizational chart, the critical factors for their success appear to be their leadership environment, their state's economic conditions, their state's political culture, and the influence of arts advocates. The health of the state budget emerges as the most crucial determinant of funding. In particular, state overall income growth is a primary factor in determining appropriations, and federal funds tend to attract rather than displace state appropriations (Noonan, 2007). State arts agencies are led by executive directors according to rules that vary from state to state. They are overseen by a supervisory body known as a council, commission, or board that is either appointed by the governor or by a mixture of the governor and the legislature. These governing bodies provide citizen oversight of the state arts agencies' work and fulfill a variety of planning, leadership, and representation functions (NASAA, 2020). In the late 1970s, Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. reformed California's state art agency by replacing the Arts Commission with a nine-member Arts Council. He personally appointed working artists and obtained state senate approval (Svenson, 1982). However, his choice to prioritize working artists as council members raised some criticism and pushback (Addison, 1976; Savage, 1989). For instance, his appointment of actress Jane Fonda in 1979 sparked controversy due to her past contestation of the Vietnam War, leading to the rejection of her nomination by the California Senate. This episode highlights ongoing tensions between public perception, political values, and artistic representation in the governance of state arts agencies.

State arts agencies have been scrutinized not only for their relationship with the NEA but also for their constituencies and their connections with state governments. The relationship between the state arts agencies and the NEA has been characterized by some tension concerning the character of their connections. In 1968, seeking greater independence from the NEA, state arts agencies formed the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) to support

the needs of individual state arts agencies and to establish a more autonomous role separate from the NEA (Lowell, 2004). Some scholars have pointed out how the roles of the state arts agencies overlap with the activities of the NEA (DiMaggio, 1991). Conversely, others have highlighted the distinct role of the two agencies, noting the ability of the state arts agencies to support emerging organizations and guarantee geographical equity, while the NEA focuses on funding major national organizations (Love, 1991; Mankin et al., 2001; Svenson, 1982). In the 1990s, the state arts agencies were considered in crisis because they had not developed a large constituency and sociopolitical grounding (Urice, 1992). By the 2000s, they developed a more harmonious relationship with the NEA and broadened their constituency.

A set of publications by the RAND Foundation examines how state arts agencies have defined their role in serving specific interests and their relationship with their state government. The studies evaluated whether these relationships are characterized by a certain distance, known as “arm’s length,” or close collaboration, referred to as “arm in arm” (Lowell, 2004; Lowell & Ondaatje, 2006). The results showed that the state arts agencies are expanding their missions and cultivating closer ties to state officials. State arts agencies are serving people and communities more than bolstering arts providers, resulting in a proliferation of artistic activities, even though audiences are still white, well-educated, and affluent (Lowell, 2008a, 2008b). Over time, the state arts agencies have strengthened their relationship with the states, while the NEA was refocusing its activities on the audiences, rather than the artists. In particular, the relationship between state arts agencies and their states has come under scrutiny, with analyses of state budgets revealing their impact on arts funding. A study highlighted instances where states directly provided funds to large organizations, bypassing the state arts agencies, using line items in the budget, which led to some organizations double-dipping funding by the state. In some cases, these direct funds even exceeded the allocation for state arts agencies (Rosenstein et al., 2013). For example, in 2011, the total amount of funds North Carolina allocated to three major institutions exceeded the budget of its state arts agencies by \$1.5 million.

State arts agencies have been criticized for their focus on the supply side of artistic production as grantmakers, which has limited their visibility by deemphasizing audience and program development. Many residents and even artists have not been aware of the existence of state arts agencies (Lowell, 2004). In 2001, the Wallace Foundation launched the \$12.5 million State Arts Partnership for Cultural Participation initiative to help state arts agencies strengthen cultural participation. This partnership selected 13 agencies and enlisted Harvard public management professor Mark H. Moore to envision future directions. Moore suggested that state arts agencies should redefine their mission as public agencies that serve the broader public rather than just

the arts sector, and develop programs to promote cultural participation. During this partnership, I was pursuing my PhD in cultural policy at The Ohio State University, where I attended classes with Wayne Lawson, the esteemed executive director of the Ohio Arts Council—one of the 13 agencies in the program. Lawson was passionate about sharing the principles outlined in Moore's publication, *Creating Public Value through State Arts Agencies* (Moore & Moore, 2005). He also shared anecdotes about a common tension within state arts agencies, which often struggled to balance advocating for arts providers with serving the broader public. Additionally, the redefined public value of state arts agencies introduced several challenges, such as strengthening political relationships, measuring performance, reaching diverse audiences, and involving the public in decision-making processes.

The decentralization process from the NEA to the state arts agencies and then to local levels expanded arts support across multiple tiers (DiMaggio, 1991; Svenson, 1982). The establishment of state arts agencies and their grant activities has spurred the growth of new local arts agencies, which supplemented funding provided by local governments (Cohen, 2002). Among the tiers of cultural federalism, local arts agencies are more likely to discover local talent, understand local demand, and boost the arts in the community. They also ensure a more equitable distribution of resources by counterbalancing support that tends to concentrate in urban areas. Moreover, they amplify the matching grant system, leveraging further money for the arts. Maryland, Minnesota, North Carolina, and New York were the first states to institutionalize decentralized grant distribution in the early 1970s (Svenson, 1982). In Maryland, local arts agencies were required to match each dollar from the state with \$3 on their own. Americans for the Arts (AFTA), formerly known as the National Assembly of Local Arts Agencies, is a nonprofit organization that advocates for the arts and enhances the work of local arts agencies through research and advocacy. They highlight the interconnectedness among various levels of government in supporting the arts and emphasize their value for increased audiences (AFTA, 2020). However, there is no consensus on the success of decentralization in broadening their audience. An early study of government support for the arts argued that while there has been a democratization of arts funding, decentralization did not broaden the audience because better education and higher income have remained the core characteristics of participants (DiMaggio & Useem, 1978). Since decentralization fosters ties with politicians, it can be used as a tool to advance their careers, potentially leading to support being directed primarily to hobbyists rather than serious artists. Moreover, a recent study of the mission statements of 55 local arts agencies revealed that only 26 of them included attention to DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) issues, indicating a slow commitment to cultural equity

in the framing of their programming, which is crucial for broadening the audience and including different people in the community (Skaggs, 2020).

Overall, in both its strengths and limitations, the intervention of the federal government in the arts shows the increasing importance of the geographical dimension of the arts in supporting and empowering different states to nurture their specific artistic environments. The literature in the social sciences and humanities has described this focus on the geographical dimension as a spatial turn in the way knowledge is constructed (Warf & Arias, 2008). The emphasis is on the importance of context over the possibilities of generalization. A similar shift has been theorized in the arts by including place as a dynamic aspect of artistic production (Ardenne, 2002; Molina & Guinard, 2017). More specifically, the spatial turn in the arts argues that the art objects and place mutually emerge through the practice of art, reinforcing their interdependence (Volvey, 2007). As I illustrated in an analysis of the goals of cultural planning in American cities, the focus on the spatial dimension implies a co-production between the art and urban worlds, which connects art practices with broader social issues (Redaelli, 2023). Moreover, this spatial shift underscores a community turn in cultural planning that emphasizes a commitment to the general community more than the arts sector (Borrupt, 2019). These two aspects—the geographical dimension and community emphasis—encapsulate the way public administration has focused on the arts since the establishment of the NEA. In the next section, I will provide examples from Oregon, Minnesota, Maryland, and New Mexico to illustrate how public administration has prioritized location and community to enhance regional diversity and emphasize local traditions and values.

SPOTLIGHT: OREGON, MINNESOTA, MARYLAND, AND NEW MEXICO

Cultural policy in America is often invisible—even today, more than 20 years after the implementation of the State Arts Partnership for Cultural Participation program led by the Wallace Foundation to increase the visibility of state arts agencies through audience participation. The complex organizational structure makes it difficult to identify or acknowledge the public agencies dedicated to the arts. While some programs are well known nationally, many initiatives remain underrecognized in terms of their government origin and sponsorship. One prominent example of a recognized program is the Percent for Art program, which allocates a percentage of public building construction budgets to commission artwork for display in public spaces, typically created by a local artist selected by a specially appointed committee (NASAA, 2024b). This section will compare and contrast the organizational structures of state arts agencies in Oregon, Minnesota, Maryland, and New Mexico, highlighting

state-level initiatives that showcase each state's unique historical and cultural values. Following an overview of each state arts agency's organizational structure, I turn to key programs such as decentralized funding models, a state museum system, cultural districts, folklife programs, and innovative funding mechanisms. Each program reflects diverse approaches tailored to each state's cultural landscape. Collectively, these initiatives reveal how state governments and local communities collaborate to support local artists, enhance artistic and cultural heritage, and drive economic development through the arts.

In Oregon, Minnesota, Maryland, and New Mexico, the state arts agencies are placed differently within the structure of their state government (see Figure 3.2). Oregon and Maryland enhance the value of the arts as a catalyst for commerce. Since 1993, the Oregon Arts Commission has been a part of Business Oregon, the state's economic development agency, in recognition of the socioeconomic impact of the arts (Oregon Arts Commission, 2023). Moreover, under the umbrella of Business Oregon in 2001, as I will explain in more detail later, the Cultural Trust was established to create a sustainable funding engine for arts and culture throughout the state. The Maryland State Arts Council is part of the Division of Tourism, Film & the Arts under the authority of the Department of Commerce (Maryland State Arts Council, 2024). This structure underscores the arts as a driver of commerce, a mission supported also by the other two agencies within the division that focus on film and tourism. Minnesota was one of the first states to create a state agency by establishing the State Arts Society in 1903, which has evolved into the Minnesota State Arts Board, an independent state agency (Minnesota State Arts Board, 2024a). This history highlights Minnesota's early recognition and ongoing support for the intrinsic value of the arts. Meanwhile, New Mexico stands out for integrating New Mexico Arts into the larger cultural identity of the state and placing the arts and culture, with a specific focus on heritage, as a crucial state service (New Mexico Arts, 2024). Overall, the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs oversees 15 divisions, the state library, and state museums, including the New Mexico Arts agency, which encompasses the New Mexico Music Commission.

Decentralizing arts funding from the NEA to the state arts agencies facilitated the creation of local arts agencies, as mentioned in the previous section, with Minnesota emerging as a prime example of this transformation (DiMaggio, 1991; Svenson, 1982). In the early 1970s, small but politically influential local arts councils complained that the activities of the Minnesota State Arts Council did not support the interests of its constituents, but rather focused only on big institutions in Minneapolis and Saint Paul (Lowell, 2004). In response to these complaints, legislators amended Minnesota's state arts agency enabling legislation in 1976, decentralizing state arts agencies' funding in response to a period of populist criticism. They formally allocated 27%



Figure 3.2 Four different organizational structures of state arts agencies

of the new Minnesota State Arts Board's budget to support a system of 11 regional arts councils, each serving specific areas of the state to enhance local heritage. For example, northern Minnesota is home to a Scandinavian community composed of third and fourth generations of the Nordic diaspora (Steiner, 2022). Artisans in this region express their connections with Scandinavian heritage, the natural landscape, and the community through their artwork. The establishment of regional arts councils created a two-tiered system of funding that is still the current model, which entails that large organizations are funded by the state arts agency, and very small community organizations are funded by the regional arts councils. The regional system continues to be strong and active. Moreover, the regional arts councils belong to a consortium, The Forum of Regional Arts Councils in Minnesota, where they can learn from each other about programming, management, and leadership (Minnesota State Arts Board, 2024b).

The New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs manages the largest state-sponsored museum system in the United States, alongside historic sites and a range of cultural heritage organizations (New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs, 2024). Within the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs, the Museum Resources Division serves as a centralized services group, consisting of skilled museum professionals dedicated to supporting the state institutions, including designers, woodworkers, mount makers, preparators, conservators, marketers, writers, editors, and educators. I discovered the state-sponsored museum system when visiting one of its sites, the New Mexico Museum of Art in Santa Fe. The museum, housed in two buildings, features a small downtown location designed in the Pueblo Revival style, using modern materials to emulate the historic churches found throughout the state's pueblos. The downtown location showcases sculptures in the courtyard, a collection of historic furniture, and temporary exhibits of New Mexico art. It was during this visit that I discovered the CulturePass, which offers access to a range of different cultural sites and encourages their visits. This initiative brought to the forefront the central role of the state arts agency in managing both museums and heritage sites and made me discover this unique network within the United States.

Maryland and New Mexico have robust initiatives in cultural districts, which are increasingly utilized by state arts agencies as mechanisms to cultivate place-based economic development and community revitalization through the arts and culture (Redaelli, 2019b). A survey of local arts district managers showed that the benefits of state intervention vary from district to district (NASAA, 2018). Despite variation in outcomes across districts, a number of concrete values of state certification were highlighted, such as recognition of a local area, making it easier to market its offerings, acting as a catalyst for collaborative efforts, and facilitating knowledge exchange among managers in different districts in the state. As of 2024, 19 states have formalized

cultural districts (NASAA, 2024c). The creation of a certified cultural district supports the network among local organizations and the integration of the arts and includes a growing emphasis on providing technical assistance, a cautious approach to implementing state tax incentives, and a focus on thorough program evaluation. Yet, scholarly attention to state-level interventions in cultural district creation remains limited, often overshadowed by localized perspectives.

The Maryland State Arts Council has established 29 arts and entertainment districts, while New Mexico Arts has authorized 12 districts statewide (NASAA, 2024c). Since 2001, the Maryland Arts & Entertainment Districts program has yielded measurable economic benefits, including increased state GDP, tax revenues, and job creation. The arts and entertainment district designation offers property tax incentives for businesses, artist income tax modifications, and admission and amusement tax exemptions to counties and municipalities, aiming to create diverse artistic centers that provide unique local experiences, drive economic development, and attract tourism. In New Mexico, municipalities with a population over 50,000 can establish state-authorized or municipally authorized cultural districts. The program, a public-private partnership established in 2007, involves collaboration between New Mexico MainStreet, the Department of Cultural Affairs, and the McCune Charitable Foundation. The goal of the program is to represent the breadth of the state's cultural heritage and celebrate both historic buildings and traditional and contemporary art forms. Incentives for these districts include assistance with developing cultural plans and enhanced historic tax credits.

The development of folklife programs in each state has also been a significant initiative. Maryland Traditions, the nation's oldest state folklife program, began in 1974 as a partnership between the NEA and the Maryland State Arts Council. It was founded based on the efforts of a folklorist researching vernacular practices and living cultures across the state (Stefano, 2016). This program also established public folklore as a field of research characterized by co-intervention with the community to sustain its traditions for future generations (Baron, 2016; Stefano & Murphy, 2016). Earlier, I mentioned how the definition of art supported by the law has blurred the lines, including entertainment (Baumann, 2007), folklore (Stefano, 2016) and the vernacular arts, which are not based on single recognized artists (Price, 1989). To implement this definition, the NEA has developed a nationwide infrastructure of state-level folklife programs, which was established during the mid-1970s. Thanks to funding from the NEA's Folk and Traditional Arts Program, state arts agencies have received financial support to employ public folklorists. Folklorists play a crucial role in expanding access to grants and other programs, which have traditionally centered around Western fine arts, to historically marginalized cultural and traditional arts communities (Stefano, 2016). In addition to state

arts agencies, folklife programs also partner with universities. For instance, the Oregon Folklife Network is located in the Museum of Natural and Cultural History at the University of Oregon (MNCH, 2024).

Over the years, some states have also experimented with new ways to create support for local culture that goes beyond what their state arts agencies do, such as cultural trusts. Cultural trusts are varied in concept and implementation (WESTAF, 2000). Their primary purpose is fundraising to integrate the funding coming from legislative appropriation. As of 2024, 18 states have cultural trusts, although five of them are inactive (NASAA, 2024d). The state arts agencies that have developed cultural trusts have done so outside the leadership and policymaking apparatus of both the NEA and the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, and the Oregon Cultural Trust is widely regarded as the most successful one (Lambert et al., 2019). In 2001, the Oregon Legislature created the Oregon Cultural Trust, which is both a joint venture that brings together state institutions for the arts, humanities, and historic preservation and a funding mechanism to broaden support for cultural activities in the state. It has created collaborations among the arts, humanities, and historic preservation—fields that typically develop separate programming, which caught my attention as it is a central theme of my book and is illustrated throughout its chapters. The five partners are the Oregon Arts Commission, Oregon Humanities, the Oregon Historical Society, the Oregon Heritage Commission, and the Oregon Historical Preservation Office (Oregon Cultural Trust, 2024). The innovative funding mechanism consists of the cultural tax credit: Oregonians who donate to nonprofit cultural organizations can make a matching donation to the Oregon Cultural Trust, and they will receive a state tax credit for the same amount up to \$500. This mechanism allows residents to ensure that money that would go into the general tax fund is instead invested in culture. The Oregon Cultural Trust is funded by charitable contributions to the cultural tax credit, interest from investments in the trust account, and fees for cultural license plates (Oregon Cultural Trust, 2018).

This overview of the state arts agencies' organizational structures and programs highlights how the state level is a crucial tier in cultural federalism to understand how public administration shapes culture (Schuster, 2002). State arts agencies represent the administrative efforts to adjust to local context and values. Each state has a different history of government support for the arts, with Minnesota establishing an organization back in 1903 and later commitment to local artists by the development of regional councils that would further decentralize the distribution of funding. Maryland and Oregon have strong ties with the state economic departments, whereas New Mexico includes the arts in a larger organizational structure dedicated to heritage and the identity of the state. New Mexico and Maryland support cultural districts as a way to incentivize the connection between art and place-based economic development, and

Oregon created a cultural trust to go beyond what the state arts agency could do. The creation of a folklife network, once again, started with incentives from the NEA but developed differently in each state. This program, in particular, demonstrates how vernacular culture and living traditions have become integral to the definition of art, highlighting the enhancement of local values and traditions. However, this also creates a paradox in the overall work of the state arts agencies: by celebrating the diversity of local traditions, it becomes difficult to bring each state's efforts to national attention. With 50 states and six territorial jurisdictions, it is easy to lose sight of the bigger picture amidst such variation. If these efforts don't reach the national level, they become even harder for an international audience to recognize.

CONCLUSION

This chapter analyzed the rationale for *why* the government should support the arts, *what* the arts are, and *how* public administration shapes them. *Why* the federal government should support the arts is encapsulated in the public value of the arts and the debates surrounding its meaning. The law declares that the vitality of the arts is crucial for democracy, honoring and preserving multi-cultural artistic heritage, and supporting new ideas. The arts and humanities collectively embody American cultural heritage and the various values of its diverse population. They hold great importance for the nation and are accessible to all Americans. These disciplines cultivate critical thinkers, strengthen democracy, and encourage mutual respect for differing values. The Arts and Humanities Act states that even though the arts and humanities are primarily a matter for private organizations and local governments, the federal government should play a supportive role by creating a climate that favors free imagination and inquiry.

The definition of *what* the arts are is broad and comprehensive, going beyond conventional art forms to encompass modern mediums like photography, graphic and craft arts, industrial design, costume and fashion design, motion pictures, television, radio, film, video, tape, and sound recording. The definition also includes folk art, which consists of traditional and vernacular arts practiced by diverse American cultural groups. A broadening of the definition occurred over time, notably expanding its range from the 1950s to the 1990s as the debates in the policy realm evolved. Programs at national, state, and local levels reflect these wide ranges of artistic expressions, and the NEA moved its focus to education and access. The state arts agencies and local arts agencies emphasize the promotion of local artists and community traditions.

I also explored *how* public administration shapes the arts through the creation of a bureaucracy whose mission and programming aim to support various art forms and their public values. Through multilevel governance structures,

such as state arts agencies and local arts agencies, public support for the arts has, since the 1970s, been decentralized from major art institutions to better reach diverse and local arts communities. Each state has a folklife network. Maryland created the first folklife program in the nation and also has a program of cultural districts for the arts and entertainment. Oregon created a cultural trust to develop synergies among the arts, humanities, and heritage. Minnesota has a robust system of local arts agencies, and New Mexico developed the largest state-run museum system. These initiatives show how multilevel governance gives each state opportunities to emphasize their artistic priorities, with the downside that this incredible variation makes the system invisible.

4. The wisdom and vision of the humanities

“Democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens.”

—National Foundation for the Arts and Humanities
Act of 1965

INTRODUCTION

Two books published in the 1980s sparked changes and debates in the humanities that continue to shape conversations in the field today. In 1980, the historian, playwright, and social activist Howard Zinn published *A People's History of the United States* (Zinn, 1980), a groundbreaking work that highlights the stories of those often overlooked in traditional historical accounts. Since its release, the book has sold over 2 million copies. Zinn's work provided a counternarrative to the typical focus on American exceptionalism; instead, it shed light on the hardships faced by marginalized groups, such as the dispossessed, enslaved people, and factory workers. In contrast, Allan Bloom, a renowned political philosopher, famously challenged the relativism of contemporary postmodern academics with his 1987 monograph *The Closing of American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students* (Bloom, 1987). The book was a runaway success, spending a year on the *New York Times* bestsellers list (Hartman, 2017). Bloom claimed that sloppy thinking was threatening the American soul and disputed the idea advanced by Black Power activists that standards merely offer cover for institutional forms of racism. The themes of these two books raise questions about the public value and the definition and practice of the humanities. Are there universal values for moral judgment and aesthetic appreciation? Whose history should be taught in schools, universities, and museums? If the government supports the humanities, what kind of programming should be offered to the public?

The humanities—as an organizing concept of the university—are a product of reforms in American universities between 1930 and 1950 (Collini, 2012; Harpham, 2011; Reitter & Wellmon, 2021; Small, 2013). This period saw

the resurgence of the research university, where professors focused on research for the advancement of knowledge and disciplines became specialized. Paul Reitter and Chad Wellmon (2021), American literary scholars, explain that “starting about 1930, literary scholars, philosophers, and historians at dozens of schools banded together to form a new institutional structure that claimed a monopoly over questions of morals and values. They called it ‘the humanities’” (p. 223). Of course, the term *humanities* long predates these events. Rooted in a well-established tradition of Renaissance humanism, since the early 19th century, the term has been used to refer to classical literature and learning as the Anglicized form of the *studia humanitatis*. In 1902, Felix E. Schelling, a professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania, argued for a broader conception of the humanities to counter the practical utility of modern education. His assertion opened the path for changes that also saw American intellectuals and scholars untethering the humanities from their roots in classical philology and claiming them as a resource for democracy. Consequently, literary scholars, philosophers, and historians organized themselves around a common purpose in the context of the new research university.

The international debates around the value of the humanities have been especially lively in the context of education, particularly concerning the broader role of higher education and its curriculum. Supporters of the humanities can be categorized as fierce defenders (Shorris, 2000), saviors (Miller, 2012), and activists (Ceccato & Snickars, 2000). These discussions within academia often intertwine with critiques of the university, highlighting the emergence of a neoliberal university driven by economic goals and vocational ambition. For instance, Eleonora Belfiore and Anna Upchurch (2013), two cultural policy scholars based in the UK, engage in the debate about value, impact, and utility, and set a research agenda that pushes beyond market priorities. Zoe Hope Bulaitis (2020) claims that since 2008, higher education in the UK, an economic context grounded in a “business ontology,” has overshadowed alternative approaches to evaluation. Bulaitis investigates the value of the humanities in contemporary universities to portray not one, but multiple alternative values. She analyzes what humanists do by articulating the humanities practice, instead of trying to justify it. I recognize the same “business ontology” in trends at American universities and experience it firsthand in our faculty meetings. It can be found in opinion pieces in the *New York Times* denouncing the numerous cuts of departments in the humanities and arguing how colleges should be more than just vocational schools, considering that American universities were founded on the liberal arts (Devereaux, 2023).

The ongoing debates on the value of the humanities have spurred multifaceted arguments, with the American discourse uniquely emphasizing democracy and public purpose. The literature contrasts the value of the humanities with notions of utility, impact, and the market (Belfiore, 2015; Belfiore &

Upchurch, 2013). It also develops pluralistic frameworks for understanding value (Small, 2013) and synthesizes diverse arguments surrounding the humanities' role and significance (Holm et al., 2015). Some scholars focus on research (Holm et al., 2015) and others on teaching (Bate, 2011; Brooks & Jewett, 2014). Helen Small (2013), a British literature professor, provides a taxonomy for a pluralistic account of the value of the humanities: meaning-making, the modest value of the humanities, collective happiness, and the need for democracy, each for its own sake. When elaborating on the connections between the humanities and democracy, she highlights how this argument is central in American society, in contrast to its lesser prominence in British debates. American universities based on the liberal arts system rely on this argument to underscore the value of the humanities. Geoffrey Galt Harpham (2011), an American literary scholar and advocate for the humanities, asserts the centrality of the humanities to American higher education because they are rooted in the country's founding principle of freedom and the pursuit of happiness. The humanities make sense in a society based on individual freedom and where authority is mobile.

I argue that a strong connection between democracy and the humanities is laid out in the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act of 1965, which states that "democracy needs the wisdom and vision of the humanities." The interpretation of what this wisdom and vision entail has shaped the debate and the role of public administration in the humanities. In this chapter, I examine how the humanities have been shaped as a public value by the law and implemented, in particular at the federal and state levels. I start by analyzing the main points the law makes to justify federal intervention in this field. I continue by illustrating the public value of the humanities and tackling a few questions about the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH): How is a federal agency dealing with the various challenges faced by the humanities? How can they keep supporting a field considered in crisis? What conception of the humanities does it seek to advance, given the very fragmented field? Then, I describe the state humanities councils and conclude by turning the spotlight on Oregon, Minnesota, Maryland, and New Mexico to gain better insights into how the public value of the humanities emerges in different states, comparing state humanities councils to humanities centers.

NATIONAL SETTING FOR THE HUMANITIES: FEDERAL ROLE AND DEFINITION

The National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act explains the role of the federal government in the humanities (see Box 3.1 in Chapter 3). The law regards the arts and humanities together, affirming that while their support primarily falls to private and local initiatives, it is also a legitimate

federal concern. The federal government's role is seen as complementary to the efforts of private and local entities, aiming to support and enhance existing programs for the advancement of the humanities and the arts. The federal government's involvement includes providing assistance and introducing new programs to supplement existing ones to ensure universal access to the humanities regardless of people's backgrounds or where they live. The focus is on *what* the federal government should do in the overall ecosystem. Additionally, the law declares a "prohibition against federal supervision," indicating that federal agencies should interact at arm's length with the other actors. At the same time, the law reiterates that *what* the government does should relate to the *why* established by Congress: "Public funds provided by the Federal Government must ultimately serve public purposes the Congress defines" (20 U.S.C. § 951). This latter argument is built on the 1964 *Report of the Commission on the Humanities*, which built an argument for *why* the federal government should intervene, focused on the need to bring the humanities to all people and not limiting their offering to schools as a matter "no less serious than that for national defense" (Commission on the Humanities, 1964, p. 1).

In Section 952.a, the law distinguishes the arts and the humanities, providing a definition of the humanities that includes a broad range of disciplines and topics of inquiry (see Table 4.1). In the previous chapter, I analyzed the arts; in this chapter, I examine how the law defines the humanities, keeping the definition of the arts next to it to highlight their differences. The law clarifies that the humanities are focused on scholarship, stating, "The term 'humanities' includes, but is not limited to, the study and interpretation of the following: language, both modern and classical; linguistics; literature; history; jurisprudence; philosophy; archaeology; comparative religion; ethics; the history, criticism and theory of the arts" (20 U.S.C. § 952.a). In 1968 and 1970, the legislation that created the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) was amended to include under the term *humanities* "the study and application of the humanities to the human environment with particular attention to the relevance of the humanities to the current conditions of national life" (Miller, 1984, p. 76). This taxonomy, which differentiates the arts from the humanities, is quite relevant from a public administration perspective because it provides the rationale for the establishment of two different federal agencies: the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), established to support the arts, and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), established to support the humanities.

BOX 4.1 DEFINITION OF THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES

Arts	Humanities
“The term ‘the arts’ includes, but is not limited to, music (instrumental and vocal), dance, drama, folk art, creative writing, architecture and allied fields, painting, sculpture, photography, graphic and craft arts, industrial design, costume and fashion design, motion pictures, television, radio, film, video, tape and sound recording, the arts related to the presentation, performance, execution, and exhibition of such major art forms, all those traditional arts practiced by the diverse peoples of this country.[.] and the study and application of the arts to the human environment”(20 U.S.C. § 952, a)	“The term ‘humanities’ includes, but is not limited to, the study and interpretation of the following: language, both modern and classical; linguistics; literature; history; jurisprudence; philosophy; archaeology; comparative religion; ethics; the history, criticism, and theory of the arts; those aspects of the social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods; and the study and application of the humanities to the human environment with particular attention to reflecting our diverse heritage, traditions, and history and to the relevance of the humanities to the current conditions of national life”(20 U.S.C. § 952, b).

The strategic partnership between the arts and humanities to secure federal support through legislation, while initially successful in gaining congressional approval, has left the humanities struggling to define their public role, a challenge the arts have navigated more naturally (Zainaldin, 2013). The rise of the *public humanities* as translational work that brings humanistic knowledge to a diverse group of people has been a major effort to claim the public-facing aspect of the humanities (Schroeder, 2021). However, this way of thinking about the humanities created a lot of pushback from scholars who support a more traditional perspective. To this day, this broader, more inclusive definition of the humanities is still tentatively finding its way into academia (Berkowitz & Gibson, 2022; Lewis, 2024). I will further elaborate on the idea and struggle of the public humanities below, when describing the work of state humanities councils. For now, I want to emphasize that the program offices in the NEH underscore its public mission and embrace connections with new technology (NEH, 2024d). This approach contrasts with the NEA, whose program offices reflect the definition of the arts by organizing around specific disciplines. The NEH offices include challenge programs, digital humanities, federal/state partnership, preservation and access, public programs, and research (see Figure 4.1). This list demonstrates how only one office, and connected grants, is dedicated to scholarly research, and one office focuses on the recent digital humanities, which is not mentioned in the law.

The NEH operates under the leadership of a chair appointed by the president of the United States, subject to Senate approval, for a four-year term (see Figure 4.1). This arrangement brings attention to the political connections of the chair, which could impact how the organization's mission is interpreted. Since its inception in 1965, the NEH has been led by 11 chairs. Two chairs appointed by Ronald W. Reagan played a significant role in fueling the culture wars, articulating arguments reflecting divisions within the humanities establishment. William J. Bennett, a philosopher appointed in 1984, lamented the perceived decline of the humanities, attributing it to factors such as specialization leading to a loss of breadth in the Western canon. In particular, in his pamphlet *To Reclaim a Legacy: A Report on the Humanities in Higher Education* (Bennett, 1984), he criticized the politicization of the curriculum, which was deepened by the identity politics that created new programs founded in the 1960s, such as black, ethnic, and women's studies. He emphasized the importance of reclaiming a traditional view of the humanities, advocating for an understanding of Western civilization's origins and development among American students. His successor, Lynne Cheney, pushed the politicization of the NEH even further. A literary scholar, Cheney was chair from 1986 to 1993. She used her veto power to stop any program that had an overt reference to race or gender. For instance, she rejected a proposal for an exhibit about Haitian Vodou presented by the Museum of Cultural History at the University of California, Los Angeles (Cosentino, 1995). In 1995, after serving for two consecutive terms, she summarized her perspective on the culture wars in *Telling the Truth: Why Our Culture and Our Country Have Stopped Making Sense and What We Can Do About It* (Cheney, 1995). She criticized the academic left's rejection of truth through postmodern relativism and highlighted the importance of defending American culture and ensuring truth-telling in education. But where she saw truth, postmodern scholars inspired by the French philosopher Michel Foucault saw regimes of power (Hartman, 2015).

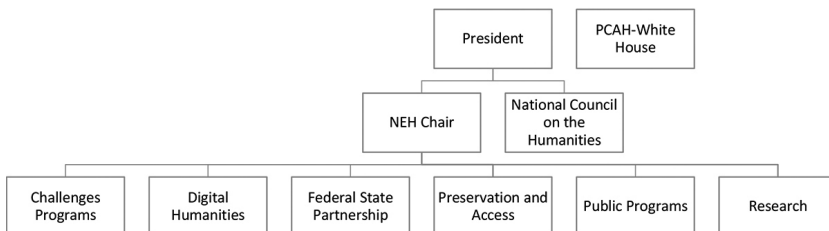


Figure 4.1 NEH organizational structure

The National Council on the Humanities plays a pivotal role in advising the chair of the NEH, whereas the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAHA) advises the president, as I explained in the previous chapter, shaping the direction of the organization. The 26 members of the National Council are appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate and serve staggered six-year terms. The council convenes three times annually. In 1991, the nomination of literary critic Carol Iannone to the council caused an outcry in academic circles, resulting in the Senate's rejection of her appointment (Innerst, 1991). The argument for opposing her nomination was built on the NEH's founding law, which specifies that council appointees must have "established records of distinguished service and scholarship or creativity" (20 U.S.C. § 955.b.C.i.II). Cheney, serving as NEH chair at that time, countered the rejection with a populist argument. She contended that Iannone's experience at a community college could benefit the NEH by offering advice and perspectives from beyond the ivory tower. Cheney believed that the NEH needed more input from scholars outside of research universities. However, it has been suggested that what may have been unappealing was not Iannone's experience but rather her ideological stance (Hartman, 2017). A few years earlier, in 1987, Iannone founded the National Association of Scholars to challenge perceived liberal bias in academia. Additionally, her ideological orientation was highlighted by her contributions to *Commentary*, a neoconservative publication.

In a multilevel governance analysis of the national settings for the humanities, it is crucial to highlight the role of various national and private organizations that have contributed to the activities and debates, alongside the NEH. The American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), a nonprofit organization dedicated to the circulation of humanistic knowledge and which represents 80 scholarly organizations, was founded in 1919 in the wake of World War I to bolster the need to create a spirit of connection within a fractured international scene. It was instrumental in the creation of the Commission on the Humanities, which provided a great argument for federal support with the 1964 *Report of the Commission on the Humanities* (Commission on the Humanities, 1964) mentioned earlier. In 1989, the American Council of Learned Societies published the *National Task Force on Scholarship and the Public Humanities* (ACLS, 1989), which has been crucial in shaping humanities debates. Another noteworthy national organization is the National Humanities Center. Established in the mid-1970s, it is privately funded and offers residential fellowships to humanists of different backgrounds. A national advocacy organization called the National Humanities Alliance was founded in 1981 and advocates on Capitol Hill for funding for the humanities, focusing not only on the NEH but also on the international programs of the Department of Education, the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS), and the National Archives.

The American Academy of Arts & Sciences runs *The Humanities Indicators Project*, collecting data about trends in the humanities (American Academy of Arts & Science, 2007). Another key organization is the Federation of State Humanities Councils, established in 1977, which serves as a support and guidance hub for state humanities councils, offering convenings and resources to further their missions.

PUBLIC VALUE: CONFLICTING INTERPRETATIONS

The Arts and Humanities Act provides the foundation to explain the role of the federal government and the public value of both the arts and the humanities. However, it defines the humanities as a different category from the arts and creates two distinct federal agencies. The NEA supports the arts, and the NEH is dedicated to the humanities. In this section, I will examine how Congress framed the public value of the humanities in the law to justify government intervention, followed by an analysis of the conflicting interpretations of this framing that emerged during the establishment of the NEH's mission, programs, and initiatives.

PUBLIC VALUE AS STATED BY THE LAW

The National Foundation Act uses powerful language that I find quite rich and inspirational. Over nearly two decades of attending conferences and meetings on cultural policy, I encountered for the first time someone citing this law during a humanities advocacy day organized by the National Humanities Alliance. Their endorsement underscores my interest in exploring the law's language to reflect on the humanities' value. As I showed in the previous chapter about the arts, in the "Declaration of findings and purposes," which is section 952 of the law, Congress articulates the public value of the arts and humanities for the United States and the role of the federal government in supporting them. These arguments do not differentiate between the arts and humanities (see Box 3.1 in Chapter 3), which are divided into two different groups only in the "Definitions" section. At the same time, after close analysis, I realized that a few elements of the argument about their public value differentiate between the two domains. For example, the law talks about "the practice of the arts" and "the study of the humanities," pointing out how the humanities' focus is on scholarship (20 U.S.C. § 951). In this section, I highlight some of the arguments of the law that resonate more closely with the academic debates in the humanities, in particular the ones that highlight the value of the humanities in fostering wisdom, aesthetic appreciation, and multiculturalism.

Before examining these three main values, I want to trace the language of the law back to its roots. It draws from the 1964 *Report of the Commission*

on the *Humanities*, which has been described as having a very idealistic tone of Puritan anti-materialism (Harpham, 2011). The report was written by representatives of 24 organizations, each focused on a different academic discipline. The three leading organizations were the American Council of Learned Societies, the Council of Graduate Schools, and the Phi Beta Kappa Society, an undergraduate honor society. The report highlights two crucial elements: The need for the humanities is “no less serious than that for national defense,” and the humanities are not disciplines limited to schools and colleges but “functioning components of society” (Commission on the Humanities, 1964, p. 2). These two arguments strongly state the public value of the humanities and, in so doing, were crucial for convincing the federal government to intervene in this matter. These ideas are echoed in the law, which connects the benefit of the arts and humanities to fostering traits necessary for democracy, such as wisdom, vision, multiculturalism, and new ideas. Moreover, the law states how the arts and humanities belong to everyone (wherever they live and whatever their background might be), serve a public purpose, and advance civilization by supporting national progress.

The law emphasizes how the humanities play a crucial role in cultivating wisdom and vision, which are essential for a functioning democracy. But what is wisdom? Harpham (2011) explains that when the law was written, the idea of wisdom was grounded in a rationale developed in academia in the mid-20th century. Wisdom was considered a quality of mind that exceeds learning and understanding, even though it is grounded in them. Wisdom benefits the citizens of a democracy, where collective governance is based on self-governance to create a system that can benefit as many people as possible. The humanities, he claims, can help develop wisdom by “opening the pores of imagination in a way that would permit the individual to respond to the unpredictable challenges of life” (Harpham, 2013, p. 516). Harpham connects this public value of the humanities to their value claimed by the *General Education in a Free Society* (Report of the Harvard Committee, 1950), a 1945 report written by a committee of Harvard professors as a model for mass education, also known as the “Harvard Redbook,” that advocated for including general education classes in the curriculum to cultivate well-rounded citizens. This attention to training a well-rounded citizen was echoed later in the 1964 *Report of the Commission on the Humanities*, which advocates for the need to bring the humanities to everyone in society, not just to schools (Commission on the Humanities, 1964). Building on these two reports, the aim of the law was to facilitate the growth of wisdom for all Americans by providing stimulation through a general education curriculum in college and public programming outside academia.

The law claims that the arts and humanities promote wisdom and vision by fostering an appreciation for the aesthetic aspects of our lives. Aesthetic appreciation is also acknowledged in international literature as one of the core

values embodied by the humanities, as fields like literary research, art history, and musicology promote the enjoyment and appreciation of artistic works. However, as explained by sociologist Daniel Bell (1992), with the advent of postmodernism, the spread of relativism denied the idea of standards and judgment, which complicates the interpretation of what aesthetic appreciation entails. These debates have led to a division within the humanities community when discussing curriculum, with some advocating for the preservation of the Western canon and others supporting multiculturalism (Hartman, 2017). For instance, some claimed that it was crucial for students to read the *Two Treatises of Government* (1689) by the English philosopher and physician John Locke, in which he defined a theory of political authority that refutes the divine rights of kings and asserts the natural rights of individuals. Others challenge the Western canon, proposing the reading of texts such as *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) by the francophone Afro-Caribbean psychiatrist Franz Fanon, which explores the psychological, social, and political dehumanizing effects of colonization on both the colonizers and the colonized.

Aesthetic appreciation has been overshadowed by the ontological debates about the legitimacy of knowledge that started in the 1960s. Allan Bloom's critique of this widespread cultural relativism sparked a significant debate within academia, particularly among traditionalist scholars and humanities centers, who responded with a defense of modern thought's embrace of uncertainty and perspective in knowledge. His 1987 monograph, *The Closing of American Mind: How Higher Education has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students* (Bloom, 1987), was the most popular critique of the relativism of postmodern academics (Hartman, 2017). Bloom claimed that cultural relativism destroyed the pursuit of the good through scientific reasoning. In 1989, the American Council of Learned Societies issued a long statement, "Speaking for the Humanities," signed by six directors of humanities centers in six universities. The statement sought to answer the criticisms of traditionalist scholars, including Bloom and Cheney, the conservative chair of the NEH. The authors of the statement pointed out that "modern thought has—or ought to have—made us uncertain about the boundaries and limits of knowledge" and that modern social science has indicated "that all thought inevitably derives from particular standpoints, perspectives and interests" (Bell, 1992, p. 101). This defense of the legitimacy of multiple perspectives and sources of knowledge became the foundation of multiculturalism.

Grounded in the Civil Rights Movement, multiculturalism is connected to the rise of social history in the 1960s, which brought greater attention to the history of blacks, Native Americans, and Chicanos. Black Power and other identity movements pushed for a new form of knowledge, which in the 1980s was brought to the curriculum in the form of multiculturalism. Gary Nash's groundbreaking 1974 book *Red, White, and Black: The Peoples of Early*

America offered a revisionist account of race relations in early America. He brought Native Americans and blacks into history as actors, rather than mere victims of the Europeans. This perspective was then popularized by Howard Zinn, whose 1980 *A People's History of the United States* gave voice to history's voiceless. Zinn's work offered a different perspective from the emphasis on American exceptionalism, highlighting the struggles of marginalized groups from Christopher Columbus's arrival through President Clinton's administration. Writing about these aspects of US history—the grassroots-level fights of American women, African Americans, Native Americans, factory workers, and immigrants—was a way for Zinn to call for a more just future. Traditionalist historians pushed back on this perspective. For instance, Gertrude Himmelfarb, a scholar of the Victorian era and neoconservative thinker, considered this new history a politicization of history and criticized its anachronistic hyper-attentiveness to the “race/gender/class” holy trinity (Himmelfarb, 1989). Historian John Patrick Diggins criticized the social history approach, suggesting that even though it claimed to be from the bottom up, it was, in reality, arrogant and elitist, imposing the present-day view on people of the past (Diggins, 1973). The most recent critique is by activist, writer, and filmmaker Christopher F. Rufo, who emphasizes how left-wing intellectuals have pushed a race-based redistribution system. He claims that their ideas have shaped how equality is now pursued in American institutions, dominated by diversity and inclusion, or DEI, offices (Rufo, 2023).

The contrasting arguments around multiculturalism picked up in the 1990s (Hartman, 2015). One controversy erupted around a 1991 exhibit at the Smithsonian American Art Museum titled *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820–1920*. It encouraged visitors to reflect on how art about the American frontier romanticized westward expansion through a depiction that helped the federal government's efforts to subdue the land and people of the West. This exhibit was criticized as the most politically correct museum exhibit in American history. The same year, the report *One Nation, Many People: A Declaration of Cultural Independence* recommended that the US Commissioner of Education amend the social studies curriculum to teach about the cultures, identities, and histories of the diverse groups that comprise US society (Verhovek, 1991). The report included some dissenting opinions of committee members. The most famous dissent was by liberal historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr., who elaborated on his opinion in the best-selling *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (1991). He saw multiculturalism as going against schools as instruments of assimilation. He argued that the celebration of diversity, over assimilation, risked undermining a common American identity. While acknowledging the positive effects of ethnic awareness in addressing historical prejudice, Schlesinger warned that an excessive focus on ethnicity could threaten societal unity, a perspective

rooted in the normative Americanism of the 1950s. The debates led to the launch of the *National History Standards* project funded by the NEH and the US Department of Education. The publication of the standards in 1994 did not placate the controversy and spurred further polemical debates. The major newspapers engaged in these controversies, with conservative perspectives refusing an approach that would downgrade George Washington to upgrade less crucial Americans. The standards were ultimately put to rest when the Senate voted 99–1 in favor of a resolution claiming that national history standards should show more respect for Western civilization, but most importantly, that such curriculum standards should not be decided by a federal body (Nash et al., 2000).

I believe that the language of the law allows for the integration of the Western canon with multiculturalism, rather than forcing a choice between them. On the one hand, the law claims that the arts and humanities are a manifestation of the country's rich heritage and that they foster "mutual respect for the diverse beliefs and values of all persons and groups" (20 U.S.C. § 951). It is worth noting that the law links the idea of aesthetic appreciation with the concept of diversity of excellence, stating that "the diversity of excellence that comprise our cultural heritage, and artistic and scholarly expression." I think this is a crucial connection that claims the need to nurture multiculturalism as a fundamental feature of American aesthetics, showing a stronger connection with postmodern ideas. On the other hand, the law states that the federal government should "provide models of excellence to the American people" and also "transmit the achievement and values of civilization from the past via the present to the future" by making widely available the greatest achievements. I interpret these statements as an aspiration to share canonical work with everyone. As the law states, these two perspectives, both points of view, could be pursued: the fostering of diverse values and the distribution of the Western. However, the debates around multiculturalism have significantly influenced the development of the NEH and its programming. Over time, the perspective emphasizing multiculturalism has become the most influential.

PUBLIC VALUE AND THE NEH

The controversies discussed above demonstrate how the humanities establishment has gradually become quite divided about the interpretation of its value. The initial enthusiasm for the wisdom of the humanities, as articulated in foundational documents like the 1945 *Harvard Redbook* and the 1964 *Report of the Commission on the Humanities*, gradually transformed into a battleground over the source of this wisdom. Postmodernism and multiculturalism clashed with the Western canon. The most heated cultural conflicts have revolved around education in primary and secondary schools, especially

regarding American history textbooks, and at universities, where the debates have centered on the curriculum of core education classes. These disagreements extended to questioning the missions and programming of government institutions, such as the NEA and NEH (Bell, 1992). In this section, I will explore the NEH's mission, its major programs, and highlight how the goal of serving the public purpose ignited one of the harshest controversies regarding the NEH's activities.

The NEH's mission and its major programs often refer directly to the language of the National Foundation Act. The NEH's mission connects directly to the main value attributed to the humanities by the law: "Because democracy demands wisdom, NEH serves and strengthens our republic by promoting excellence in the humanities and conveying the lessons of history to all Americans. The NEH accomplishes this mission by awarding grants for top-rated proposals examined by panels of independent external reviewers" (NEH, 2024a). The emphasis is on reconciling the idea of excellence with opportunities and access that would bring programming in the humanities to all Americans. Besides awarding grants for programming in the humanities, including fellowships for individual scholars, the NEH honors distinguished achievements in the humanities through the National Humanities Medal, publishes a monthly magazine, and provides resources for Native and Indigenous communities. It is interesting to note that in describing its activities, the NEH often refers to the language of the law. For instance, when presenting its *American Tapestry* initiative, the website explains that the initiative "takes its inspiration from the agency's 1965 founding legislation and the goals it sets forth for NEH: 'a better understanding of the past, a better analysis of the present, and a better view of the future'" (NEH, 2024b). The *American Tapestry* program promotes projects that enhance the importance of civics in schools and public programs, advocates for media literacy, and uses humanities research to examine challenges to democracy.

Wisdom and multiculturalism are cultivated through a range of NEH programs (NEH, 2024c). One program that supports wisdom and vision for everybody is the Public Scholar program, which offers grants for individual authors to write nonfiction books for the broad public, aiming to reach the broadest range of readers (NEH, 2024g). Multiculturalism is framed around international opportunities for collaborations and translations with numerous countries, along with several initiatives for a better understanding of the cultural diversity of the country, including the initiative *A More Perfect Union*, an investment in understanding the history of the country. Examples range from the support of Pulitzer Prize-winning monographs to databases of the 12 million enslaved Africans who crossed the Atlantic and movies on topics ranging from suffrage to civil rights. In 2021, President Biden appointed Shelly C. Lowe as chair of the NEH. Lowe is a citizen of the Navajo Nation and is the

first Native American to lead the NEH (McGlone, 2022). Her commitment has been to diversity and inclusion, reaching organizations and areas not previously engaged in the past, and that could provide a fuller picture of America. For instance, in 2023, the NEH launched the *Pacific Island Cultural Initiative* to support humanities programs in American Samoa, Guåhan (Guam), Hawai'i, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas (NEH, 2023).

In developing NEH activities, one major issue was the interpretation of the definition of the humanities as serving the public purpose. Does it mean bringing the classics to everyone, or providing everyone the opportunity to express their diverse beliefs and values? These questions were raised in the context of the larger culture war between the Western canon and multiculturalism, as illustrated earlier. One of the first disputes involved Chair Ronald S. Berman, who was appointed by President Richard Nixon in 1972. Berman, a Shakespeare scholar, did not support a broad view of the humanities, claiming that it was a way to dumb down culture, implying a confusion between humanities and humanitarianism. When he was accused of being an elitist, he responded, "You can be accused of elitism if you confine it [education] to the elite, but you can't be accused of elitism if you bring the best to the most" (Charlton, 1972, p. 32). Some members of the NEH staff resigned because of differences in viewpoints. Herbert McArthur, the director of the NEH Education Division, explained that he disagreed with the new director's views and did not feel he could support his vision. He thought the humanities should help everyone have a more decent life and should challenge academic institutions through experiments and innovation. Berman's vision of the humanities also clashed with the views held by Senator Claiborne Pell, who sponsored the bill to establish the NEH. In Pell's view, NEH funding should go to support ordinary people, and they should use it as they see fit, an argument that framed the debate over the agency as one of elitism versus populism, similar to the one developed around the NEA (Geary, 2018). The disagreement resulted in Pell blocking the vote for Berman's confirmation for his second term.

The wisdom and vision of the humanities are essential to democracy and summarize how Congress explained their public value. However, conflicting interpretations of what these values meant have characterized the implementation of programs by the NEH. Some debates revolved around aesthetic appreciation and others around multiculturalism, creating a growing divide about what the humanities should be and what they should be used for. In particular, the disagreements grew around the public purpose of the humanities and picked up during the efforts to cast a role for the states through the public humanities. The process took many years and resulted in the creation of 56 private nonprofit organizations called state humanities councils.

CULTURAL FEDERALISM AND THE STATE HUMANITIES COUNCILS

As highlighted in the previous chapter, the concept of cultural federalism is fundamental to understanding the relationship between culture and government in America. Kevin Mulcahy (2002), a political scientist and pioneer of cultural policy studies in America, introduced the idea of cultural federalism when examining state art agencies, building on Michael Kammen's earlier work on the history of the relationship between culture and the state in America (Kammen, 1996). Kammen, a cultural historian, traces the development and interactions of both the NEA and NEH and contrasts federal efforts with the efforts of cultural ministries in other countries. He concludes that in the United States, national, state, and local organizations complement each other, and recommends strengthening cultural federalism through state organizations, called state humanities councils, which are dedicated to promoting the humanities for all. The creation of state humanities councils has been overlooked by the international literature that has examined the NEH's role in the humanities, missing a foundational aspect of cultural policy in America that leads to the development of cultural federalism (Belfiore & Upchurch, 2013; Holm et al., 2015). In this book, I examine the links between these two levels of government, demonstrating how national and state organizations complement each other and analyzing their roles.

In addition to providing competitive funding to universities, museums, and archives, the NEH has established state humanities councils in each state and jurisdictional territory. The creation of this infrastructure has been quite important, although controversial, for the NEH. One perspective argues that state humanities councils have been the most contentious of the NEH's programs (Miller, 1984), while another view praises it as a unique initiative with no equivalent elsewhere, having "no other parallel in federal-state relations" (Zainaldin, 2013, p. 34). Another analysis, using the maintenance of agency lens, suggests that by establishing the state humanities councils, the NEH created a clientele that helped protect it from being abolished (Geary, 2018). In contrast to this latter view, through a multilevel governance analysis, I argue that the NEH's creation of state humanities councils was pivotal in fulfilling a fundamental objective of the law, which aimed to bring the humanities to everyone, "to make people of all backgrounds and wherever located masters of their technology and not its unthinking servants" (20 U.S.C. § 951). In other words, I see the state humanities councils as the NEH's primary purpose, rather than just a means to enhance its image. At the same time, I recognize the enduring conflicts over the purpose of the humanities, and I will examine how state humanities councils have positioned themselves—whether by supporting

scholars and promoting access to excellence, or by celebrating the ordinary and the everyday.

Today's state humanities councils are independent nonprofit organizations focused on fostering community dialogue through humanities programs. Unlike their twin state arts agencies, which are public entities, state humanities councils are nonprofit organizations, free from political and financial ties with their state government. Since 1994, each state and territorial jurisdiction has its own council, which provides grants and organizes community-based programs, often centered on historical and literary topics. Their staffs are small, typically fewer than 10 people. Their boards of directors are volunteers drawn from higher education, business, community, educators, elected officials, and the nonprofit sector. Fundraising is one of their major tasks, given that they do not receive a state allocation. They do not provide fellowships to scholars; instead, this support has been facilitated through the establishment of humanities centers at universities (Brownley, 2012). They serve as state-level partners of the NEH and, by congressional mandate, the NEH provides general operating support grants to all 56 state humanities councils in the 50 states and the six jurisdictional territories of the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa.

The NEH was slower to expand at the state level than the NEA, which had established state arts agencies by 1974—twenty years earlier. It was only in 1994 that the NEH followed suit, albeit reluctantly, in adopting a similar model (Zainaldin, 2013). The first NEH chair, the medievalist Barnaby Keeney, who led the commission for the establishment of the NEH, rejected the state arts agency model as the wrong fit for their knowledge-based enterprise, which needed to be protected from state politics. Like others, he envisioned the NEH as the counterpart of the National Science Foundation, dedicated to fostering scholarship at a national level (Ferington, 2015) and supporting the humanities primarily by funding first-rate research (Finn, 1984). Moreover, he resisted supporting local programming for a wider audience, wanting to focus on the scholarly community rather than the general public (Miller, 1984). The American Council of Learned Societies saw the function of NEH grants as supporting expertise, and its grants process was supervised by a panel of experts who would be in charge of judging professional standards (Geary, 2018). These perspectives were rooted in the models of other professional independent agencies, such as the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health, but also in the ambition of boosting America's intellectual leadership of the free world (Zainaldin, 2013).

Shifting these perspectives required strategic maneuvering by Pell, who worried that the humanities might become an esoteric field and asked, "What about those who have no college degree? A shoemaker by trade, but a humanist

by avocation?” (as in Geary, 2018, p. 81). While he attributed the NEA’s success to providing local funding through state art agencies, which were tied to their respective state governments (Ferington, 2015), he understood the challenges faced by the humanities. Given that the performing and visual arts involve public audiences in a way that some core humanities tasks, such as research and writing, do not. Following Keeney’s departure, Pell persuaded Wallace Edgerton, the NEH’s acting chair, to experiment with state-level humanities counterparts modeled after the NEA’s state arts agencies. In 1971, after just one year of experimentation with volunteer committees, Wallace Edgerton handed over the reins to the next NEH chair, Ronald Berman. By that time, 36 state nonprofit humanities committees had been established to distribute NEH funds, all following the volunteer committee model. In 1975, the committees became councils; however, they remained private nonprofit organizations, which meant they were removed from state political influence but were also missing out on direct support from the state. By 1979, there was a citizen-governed humanities council in each of the 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. The 1980s marked the end of a decade of experimentation and the beginning of councils as professional independent grantmakers and program developers rooted in local experience (Zainaldin, 2013). By 1994, state humanities councils had been added to all states and the territorial jurisdictions (NEH, 2016).

Today, state humanities councils create public humanities programs rooted in a civic methodology based on confidence in the power of humanities-based dialogue to create just and informed civil societies (Kammen, 1996; Zainaldin, 2013). Esther Mackintosh, president of the Federation of State Humanities Councils, describes the early years of the state humanities councils’ initiatives as profoundly innovative. Developing public programs centered on the humanities was a completely novel concept, especially at the state level (Ferington, 2015). The state humanities councils developed a new group of professionals dedicated to making the humanities accessible and transforming their ecosystem to bridge the divide between academia and the surrounding communities. The state humanities councils also invested in creating strategies to involve academic scholars in a “public pedagogy” that would propose a series of options regarding how to approach leaving campus and engaging with the public. A first attempt was *The Extracurricular Curriculum: Academic Disciplines and Public Humanities Programs* (Smith & Weiland, 1980), which presented a series of reflections about the use of the humanities in public. Since then, research has conceptualized the idea of public pedagogy around five categories: (a) citizenship within and beyond schools, (b) popular culture and everyday life, (c) informal institutions and public spaces, (d) dominant cultural discourses, and (e) public intellectualism and social activism (Sandlin et al., 2011).

The state humanities councils' emphasis on public humanities has, on one hand, perpetuated the divide in the vision of the humanities' scope—originating with NEH chairs Bennett and Cheney—and, on the other hand, prompted changes in academic scholarship. First, the divide is expressed by some highlighting the competition between the councils and academia, while others argue for diversity and collaboration. Some scholars, as illustrated in an article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (Burd, 1994), worry that the public work of the councils can become a threat to academic research. This concern stems from the fact that both the councils and academia compete for the same NEH funding, but the councils might have greater political influence. Other scholars highlight the powerful social relevance of the public humanities (Berkowitz & Gibson, 2022). Carin Berkowitz and Matthew Gibson (2022), executive directors of the New Jersey and Virginia humanities councils, respectively, state that public humanities practices are “more rooted in a form of knowledge construction that embraces people who have been systematically and historically excluded from the construction of the academic humanities” (p. 70). On this basis, they advocate for an ecosystem of co-creation that includes academia, nonprofits, and individuals from across all sectors of society, engaging a multitude of publics. Second, the work done by the state humanities councils prompted changes in academic scholarship, thanks to the support of recognized scholars and learned societies for their approach. Of particular importance is the 1989 *National Task Force on Scholarship and the Public Humanities* (ACLS, 1989), which was the result of conversations between the American Council of Learned Societies and the Federation of State Humanities. It recommends recognizing public humanities scholarship and fostering more collaborations between scholars and state humanities councils. Public humanities gradually became an academic field, marked by the first Master of Arts program at Brown University, whose first cohort graduated in 2007 (Schroeder, 2021).

The work of state humanities councils, along with the idea of the public humanities, embodies what has been described as the spatial turn of the humanities (Warf & Arias, 2008). The geographical dimension is highlighted as an essential aspect of the production of culture, an aspect that addresses the goals stated by the law to serve people of all backgrounds, wherever they live. Each state humanities council's grants and programming are tailored to their state or jurisdiction in consideration of demographics, interests, traditions, and resources. Locality is paramount to the work of these organizations. The NEH has emphasized locality not only by pushing for the creation of state organizations all around the country but also by requiring them to create a strategic plan that is framed around the specific needs of each state and jurisdiction (Zainaldin, 2013). Moreover, an emphasis on place is important because it highlights the dynamic relationship between human settlements

and the natural world. State humanities councils distribute grants within their state, aiming to enhance access in different areas of the country. However, this distribution system could be further improved to achieve equity. For instance, a study of the distribution of humanities grants in Kansas found that a number of counties have not received grants and that the receipt of grants is linked to networks of social capital and greater levels of creative capital (Johnson & Pierce, 2014).

State humanities councils' support the public humanities by highlighting the involvement of communities in the co-production of cultural and intellectual activities. While this approach fosters inclusivity, it also continues a longstanding divide between public humanities and academia, challenging efforts to foster adequate collaboration between scholars and state humanities councils. This divide aligns with broader tensions within the humanities, which are grappling with both internal and external challenges. Internally, the emergence of multiculturalism has marked a profound shift, as feminist and anti-Eurocentric critiques challenge traditional humanism—a movement rooted in the Renaissance ideal of universal humanity. Patrick Fuery and Nick Mansfield (1997), two Australian scholars in cultural studies, argue that the so-called *new humanities* represent an attitude change toward this universal model, embracing irreducible differences and multicultural perspectives over the Western canon. Externally, the humanities face pressure from an education system increasingly shaped by business-oriented values, further complicating their role in contemporary society (Bulaitis, 2020). In the following section, I will explore in more detail the public humanities in action by presenting examples from Oregon, Minnesota, Maryland, and New Mexico to demonstrate how public administration highlights regional differences and emphasizes local traditions and values. Additionally, I will explain how the academic and public humanities, along with the traditional academic humanities, have influenced the development of two different administrative structures: the state humanities councils and the humanities centers.

SPOTLIGHT: OREGON, MINNESOTA, MARYLAND, AND NEW MEXICO

A multilevel governance analysis of cultural federalism in the humanities reveals its multifaceted nature encompassing the NEH, nonprofit national organizations, state humanities councils, and, as I will explain in this section, university-based humanities centers. In the previous sections, I described how one major debate around the NEH's mission was the divide between a focus on academic scholarship and a focus on public-facing programming. A few other debates were intertwined, including the emergence of postmodernism and multiculturalism and the critique of the Western canon. Over time, the NEH

supported the establishment of state humanities councils in each state and territorial jurisdiction, which embodied the emergence of the public humanities by constructing knowledge with communities and questioning what academic scholarship could be. Today, state humanities councils not only provide grants to local organizations but also offer a range of programming to enhance dialogues about the traditions of different cultural communities. In this section, I will also introduce the humanities centers at universities, which serve as hubs for scholarly pursuits, encouraging conversations that transcend disciplinary boundaries. Some centers were created through NEH-dedicated grants. For instance, the Oregon Humanities Center at the University of Oregon was initially funded with money from an NEH grant. Through an examination of Oregon, Minnesota, Maryland, and New Mexico, I will examine the aims of state humanities councils and humanities centers to better understand the differences in their mandate and their contributions to the debates about the humanities.

STATE HUMANITIES COUNCILS

“State and jurisdictional humanities councils are the public humanities in action” (NEH, 2024e). In addition to redistributing NEH funds through grants to local organizations, these councils curate a blend of programming that introduces national cultural initiatives to communities—reflecting Chair Berman’s vision of government involvement, albeit criticized for elitism—and locally oriented programs that resonate with community values, promoting grassroots creativity—embracing Senator Pell’s idea that state funding should benefit ordinary people. For instance, the *Crossroads: Change in Rural America* traveling exhibit of the Smithsonian Institution, brought by Maryland Humanities to rural communities, paired national narratives with locally curated programming, fostering dialogue about change and resilience (Maryland Humanities, 2022). Similarly, the New Mexico Humanities Council’s investments in digital humanities, such as the *Augmented Humanity* podcast and the *Manitos Community Memory* project, exemplify how technology can preserve and share cultural heritage (KUNM, 2022; New Mexico Humanities Council, 2024). The *Manitos Community Memory* project is a community engagement project creating a digital archive of the cultural heritage of rural Indo-Hispano villages of northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. Meanwhile, the Minnesota Humanities Center organized a series of story circles where people came together to learn from and listen to one another (Minnesota Humanities Council, 2024b). Other programs focused on enhancing the diversity of the state through both co-production with the councils and the community and scholarly endeavors: The program *From Mountain to Lakes* broadened awareness of the Hmong American community, and the *Dakota and Ojibwe*

Languages Symposium convened scholars and released biographical publications to promote the revitalization of the Dakota and Ojibwe languages.

Oregon Humanities, in particular, offers a noticeable range of programming focused on elevating people's voices (Oregon Humanities, 2024). One of its major efforts is to create connections between different communities in the state, which hold differing beliefs, through a training program. In the training, people learn how to lead challenging conversations in the *Conversation Project*, 90-minute conversations on topics such as "Housing and Belonging" and "Working Our Whiteness." The *So Much Together* program blends presentations, conversations, and workshops to build an understanding of how lives and lands are changing in Oregon. *Dear Stranger* is an ongoing letter-exchange project that connects Oregonians through the mail to share their experiences, beliefs, and ideas. Oregon Humanities also launched the *Community Storytelling Fellowship*, which supports fellows to share community stories that are unrepresented in Oregon media. Three times per year, the organization publishes *Oregon Humanities*, a magazine which showcases the ideas and experiences of Oregonians to promote different ways of knowing. Finally, Oregon Humanities offers several guides for curriculum development based on the stories published in the magazine to help facilitate conversations in schools and support teacher development.

Defining the humanities is a central task for some councils; however, understanding how they frame the public value of the humanities is more complex. Maryland and New Mexico, for example, provide definitions on their "About Us" pages that paraphrase the definition given by the NEH. On the contrary, the way they carry out the public value of the humanities is deeply intertwined with their administrative practices. A review of their websites and annual reports, which outline activities such as public programs and grants, reveals that these practices are shaped by how events are presented, the organization of the website, the clarity of reporting, and even the broader ecosystem within the state. For instance, David Tebaldi, CEO of Mass Humanities since 1985, worked for several years at the Wyoming Humanities Council (Ferington, 2015). He described how different it was to promote the humanities when he moved from a state with almost no humanities resources at the time to a place surrounded by world-class universities and numerous museums. His story is representative of the unique challenges of each state, as the broader ecosystem significantly influences how the value of humanities is promoted.

HUMANITIES CENTERS

Humanities centers at universities provide fellowships to scholars in the humanities, regardless of their tenure home, and offer public programs. The first two humanities centers were founded in 1959, one at the University

of Wisconsin–Madison and the other at Wesleyan University. By 1980, a Rockefeller report presented the findings of a 1979 survey, marking the first study of humanities centers. This survey identified 100 academic institutions engaged in similar activities in the humanities, which had not been previously studied together as a collective (Brontë, 1981). Currently, humanities centers receive funding and support from a variety of sources, including federal and state grants, university funding, donations, and endowments (Zorich, 2008). Some humanities centers include the performing arts under their definition of the humanities, while others follow a more traditional definition, aligning with the one offered by the Arts and Humanities Act (Brownley, 2012). Humanities centers offer professors a liminal position within the university. Operating outside direct tenure politics and degree program constraints, they offer flexibility for experimental teaching approaches and promote interdisciplinary perspectives that transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries. Moreover, these centers provide an intellectual community and a space that emphasizes the idea that knowledge is a social enterprise. While the centers give individual scholars time to work on their projects, they also create a space for encounters, conversations, and informal learning among professors from different departments and the larger community.

Across various states, humanities centers vary significantly in numbers, focus, and structure. Just looking at Oregon, Minnesota, Maryland, and New Mexico, I noticed a great variation. For instance, New Mexico lacks any university-based center dedicated to the humanities, whereas Oregon has two centers: the Oregon Humanities Center at the University of Oregon and the Center for the Humanities at Oregon State University. The Oregon Humanities Center offers internal fellowships to faculty and dissertation students as well as research scholarship opportunities for undergraduate students. They also provide teaching fellowships and offer a series of lectures bringing together scholars in different disciplines to discuss pressing contemporary topics. Minnesota, by contrast, has four centers. Three of them are university-based: one at Carleton College and two at the University of Minnesota. Remarkably, one of them is located within the Mayo Clinic, a highly ranked medical institute. Called the Center for Humanities in Medicine, its mission is to incorporate humanities and arts into the healing environment, engaging patients, families, staff, and learners. Examining its programming, I noticed that it predominantly uses art events, so I wonder if the choice to call it a center for the humanities rests on some common interpretation of the humanities that overlaps with the arts. Maryland stands out with up to seven centers, four on different satellite campuses of the University of Maryland, one at Princeton, and two at Johns Hopkins. One of them, the centerNet at the University of Maryland, has a specific focus on the digital humanities and has created a global network, exemplifying a specialized and collaborative approach within the field.

Whereas the state humanities councils, as nonprofit institutions supported by a federal agency, are an institution unique to the United States, university-based humanities centers are spread around the world. A platform that fosters an exchange of ideas and practices in the humanities among academic centers around the world is the Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes. Founded in 1988, the idea of a consortium of humanities centers first emerged at a conference for the inauguration of the University of California Humanities Research Institute. Titled *The Institutional Impact of Institutes*, this conference reflected on the influence of these centers (CHCI, 2024). As mentioned earlier, only a few years earlier, a Rockefeller report (Brontë, 1981) identified the existence of a group of centers with similar goals and identified them as humanities centers. By 1988, these centers were starting to connect internationally. Today, the Consortium counts more than 300 members in the Americas, Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Pacific Rim. The Consortium's directory was also the source for the identification of the humanities centers within Oregon, Minnesota, Maryland, and New Mexico that I discussed in the previous paragraph. This extensive network facilitates global conversations and comparisons regarding the significance of the humanities within universities and for the public. The Consortium hosts annual meetings that offer best practices and discussions around one major theme and member-oriented sessions. In 2024, the theme was *...at Risk*, questioning what defines a scholar at risk and examining whether traditional models of refugee and academic freedom are sufficient in the modern era. The locations and themes of the Consortium's meetings show how the conversation around the humanities is still led by the United States, as I briefly mentioned in the introduction of this chapter. Moreover, the last theme shows how university-based humanities centers focus on scholars and their struggles in the current political and institutional landscape.

CONCLUSION

Debates about the public value of the humanities have centered on their contributions to wisdom, multiculturalism, and aesthetic appreciation, with the development of the NEH—through its programming and support of a state humanities infrastructure—at the heart of these discussions. Overall, *why* the federal government should support the humanities is framed in the Arts and the Humanities Act around their value for the public, because their overarching goal should align with public purpose as defined by Congress. The humanities foster wisdom and vision: two aspects that the law claims are crucial for a democracy and whose value has been at the root of American higher education. Also, the humanities help people appreciate the aesthetic dimension of their lives and recognize and understand the different cultures that exist within the United States, which include a variety of ways to achieve excellence. This

view of the humanities is connected to a recognition of the multicultural understanding of the heritage of the country with its diverse beliefs, values, and excellence, a perspective that started to prevail in academia in the 1980s and 1990s.

In the definition of *what* the humanities are, the law not only lists a series of traditional disciplines focused on the study of specific domains—such as linguistics, literature, history, jurisprudence, philosophy, archaeology, comparative religion, ethics, and the history, criticism, and theory of the arts—but it also extends beyond these disciplines to include interpretive social science, the study of the environment, and the present state of affairs in the country. The creation of the NEH, however, was characterized from the outset by an intellectual elite divided over *how* the federal government should support scholarship and make the humanities accessible to the public. The debate was split regarding what “bringing the humanities to the public” truly meant—whether it entailed fostering widespread educational programs, supporting community engagement, or encouraging a deeper appreciation of academic scholarship through public initiatives. Moreover, some thought it meant bringing the best of human achievement to all the people in the country; others thought it meant including groups previously excluded from the production side of the humanities. The activities of the state humanities councils further complicated these debates by implementing programs that emphasized community-based approaches, local history projects, and public dialogues. These efforts gave rise to what has become known as the public humanities, a dynamic and contested field that blends academic scholarship with grassroots engagement, pushing the boundaries of how the humanities are defined and practiced in the public sphere.

The case for federal support of the humanities is centered around their public value. The role of the federal government is defined as offering grants judged by panels of experts and ensuring access to the humanities for all. The state humanities councils redistribute grants to local organizations and produce programs that aim to reach all people in all states. This geographical emphasis has also shaped the way people think about the humanities, linking them to specific places and their representations. The enduring controversies over the purpose of public programs have shaped debates about the definition of the humanities and influenced the role and functions of humanities scholarship. Today, universities offer programs in the public humanities, and faculty are pushing to have their work with communities recognized as scholarship, reframing what and how research is conducted. Arguably, it is only together that the NEH, the state humanities councils, and the humanities centers embody the idealism of the 1965 legislation: “Democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens [...] to make people of all backgrounds and wherever located masters of their

technology and not its unthinking servants”—an important link among different institutions that illustrates how public administration shapes culture.

5. The spirit and direction of historic preservation

“The spirit and direction of a nation are founded upon and reflected in its historic heritage.”

—National Historic Preservation Act of 1966

INTRODUCTION

In the January and February 1975 op-ed pages of the *New York Times*, Herbert J. Gans and Ada Louise Huxtable engaged in a debate about the public significance of historic preservation (Hayden, 1995). Gans (1975b), an urban sociologist, criticized New York’s Landmarks Preservation Commission for what he saw as a biased approach that favored preserving elite architectural structures while allowing popular architecture to vanish. He argued for a more inclusive approach to preservation, particularly with publicly funded initiatives. Huxtable (1975), an architectural critic at the *New York Times*, defended the commission’s record, emphasizing the importance of preserving significant architectural monuments. She claimed that labeling the preservation of these monuments as an elitist cultural policy ignored their role in civilization. Moreover, she highlighted the commission’s efforts to designate historic districts, which included many vernacular buildings. Their contrasting visions revealed a fundamental difference in definitions and priorities regarding architecture, aesthetics, and social history. Although Gans and Huxtable’s debate focused on the specifics of historic preservation in New York, it also reflects broader questions about the public value of heritage and the challenges of balancing aesthetic considerations with social and cultural significance that were unfolding throughout the country.

This debate echoes ongoing discussions in cultural policy studies, which, despite analyzing heritage from various global perspectives, have largely overlooked the US context. Heritage has been analyzed from various angles, including efforts to develop a common European heritage to support a shared European identity (Aceska & Mitroi, 2021), as well as a legal framework that facilitates the inclusion of ethnic and cultural minorities (Giakoumis, 2019).

Other angles have focused on the role of heritage professionals and their impact on governance processes (James & Winter, 2015), and the growing collaboration between heritage professionals and local publics (van der Hoeven, 2016). Among the numerous case studies, however, the United States is missing. Does this gap in the cultural policy literature exist because the United States lacks policies for protecting its heritage? Or, even more dramatically, is historic preservation un-American? Preservationists themselves have questioned their role over time. In 1979, Clem Labine, publisher of *Traditional Building* magazine, expressed concerns about the possible reconciliation of historic preservation and the American mentality driven by consumption. In the magazine *Historic Preservation*, he stated, “Preservationists are un-American because they oppose the conventional American idea of consuming ever more, and are the new wave of pioneers struggling to reverse the ‘use it up and move on’ mentality” (Labine, 1979, p. 18).

Since the enactment of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (hereafter Preservation Act), which claims that historic preservation provides the spirit and direction of a nation, America’s commitment to the history of the country and the preservation of its heritage has increased dramatically. Michael Tomlan, who worked in the field for nearly 40 years, praises how the United States has fostered and funded contemporary preservation. He gives the example of the tax code as a crucial indication of how highly the country values historic preservation: “We have even linked our social agenda to the tax code, providing historic properties with some of the same financial advantages as desirable social goals such as low-income housing” (Tomlan, 2015, p. vi). Today, the historic preservation debates in America center on several main topics. These include questioning the attention given to individual buildings versus a more urban approach (Mason & Page, 2020) and emphasizing the dichotomy between tangible and intangible cultural resources (Buckley & Graves, 2016). Additional concerns include the sustainability of preserving too many things (Avrami, 2016), the effects of historic district designation (Nelson, 1991), and the relationship between local actors and developers (Guinand, 2020; Newman, 2001). Moreover, scholars are scrutinizing whether preservation could be a roadblock to development (Baer, 1995), the role of adaptive reuse in combating climate change (Foster, 2020; Melnik, 2009), and the broadening of heritage and societal values (Avrami & Mason, 2019).

This chapter contributes to the debate about historic preservation in America by distinguishing between the public value of historic preservation, which provides the spirit and direction of a nation, and the determination of what is worth preserving. The 1966 Preservation Act articulates *why* historic preservation is important and the need for federal intervention in preserving historic properties. However, the explanation of *what* has historic significance, or in other words, what is worth preserving, is defined and decided by the programs

put in place by the Preservation Act. The scope of this value expanded with the 1966 law, which brought attention to local heritage—as supported by the seminal 1966 report *With Heritage So Rich* (Rains & Henderson, 1966)—and further increased in the decades that followed, as exemplified by two anthologies: *The American Mosaic: Preserving a Nation's Heritage* (Stipe & Lee, 1987) and *A Richer Heritage* (Stipe, 2003). In this chapter, I start by analyzing how the Preservation Act gave the federal government a role in historic preservation and how it defines it. I continue by examining the public value of preservation and analyzing the role of state and local organizations. As in previous chapters, I conclude by shining a spotlight on Oregon, Minnesota, Maryland, and New Mexico, showcasing how administrative diversity allows for regional differences in the articulation of historic significance.

NATIONAL SETTING FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION: FEDERAL ROLE AND DEFINITION

America's commitment to historic preservation at the national level began with the Antiquities Act of 1906, which authorized (1) the president to designate federally owned or controlled properties as national monuments and (2) the Secretaries of the Interior, Agriculture, and the Army to issue permits to investigate archaeological sites and objects on lands they control (Frank & Petersen, 2002; King, 2008). In 1916, the National Park Service (NPS), a bureau of the Department of the Interior, was created to care for the country's national parks, including cultural resources associated with national parks and national monuments. Later, the NPS became the foremost historic preservation advocate under the Historic Sites Act of 1935 with the establishment of the National Historic Landmark program, which identifies places of national significance and evaluates their potential addition to the National Park System. The volume *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America* (Murtagh, 2005) provides an overview of this preservation movement, detailing significant milestones and developments. Finally, America's commitment to its heritage has increased dramatically since the enactment of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (hereafter Preservation Act).

The Preservation Act clarifies the role of the federal government in historic preservation and distributes the stewardship of preservation among federal, state, and local organizations while also encouraging private involvement. It highlights how historic preservation is an integral part of economic development and aims to increase knowledge of historic resources while encouraging their preservation and administration (see Box 5.1). To achieve these goals, the Preservation Act expanded existing preservation programs and activities in both the private and public sectors, establishing a role for the federal government that would help to improve the limited preservation infrastructure.

Moreover, it ensured that federal development activities would not harm the country's historic and cultural resources, thus protecting the nation's history. Section 106 of the Preservation Act requires federal agencies to consider the effect of their projects and programs on historic properties and provide the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, a federal agency, a reasonable opportunity to comment on them (ACHP, 2024a). Over time, several amendments to the law have further elucidated the nature of the federal government's responsibilities, creating clearer mandates. For instance, the addition of Section 110 gives federal agencies the responsibility to preserve the historic properties they own. In particular, the 1980 amendments established specific procedures, and the 1992 amendments required agencies to establish an internal historic preservation program (ACHP, 2000).

BOX 5.1 THE ROLE OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Assist economic development by:

- increasing knowledge of historic resources
- establishing better administration of historic resources
- encouraging the preservation of historic resources
- expanding and accelerating historic preservation programs and activities.

(Adapted from Section 1 of the National Historic Preservation Act, Pub. L. No. 96-515)

Globally, the term “heritage conservation” typically refers to what is known in the United States as historic preservation (Kaufman, 2009a, p. 296). The Preservation Act defines historic preservation as “identification, evaluation, recordation, documentation, curation, acquisition, protection, management, rehabilitation, restoration, stabilization, maintenance, research, interpretation, and conservation” (see Box 5.2). Moreover, the law adds that historic preservation activities include education and training about each of these practices listed. This definition encapsulates the complexity of historic preservation, highlighting the multiple steps involved in this practice. Through a public administration approach, I emphasize how the Preservation Act created an infrastructure that can coordinate all these steps and integrate public and private efforts by establishing new organizations and structures to aid in further organizational development. This definition has been criticized as being so broad that it can justify any project or oppose any change (Rose, 1981).

However, I argue that the law confines the definition of historic preservation to a set of specific actions, leaving open the question of what is actually worth preserving. In the next sections, as I unpack the bureaucracy and the programs it develops, I will also highlight the debates about what is worth preserving, which involves determining how to assess historic significance.

BOX 5.2 DEFINITION OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

“(1) Identification, evaluation, recordation, documentation, curation, acquisition, protection, management, rehabilitation, restoration, stabilization, maintenance, research, interpretation, and conservation; (2) education and training regarding the foregoing activities; or (3) any combination of the foregoing activities”

(54 U.S.C. § 300315).

The two major goals of the Preservation Act were the creation of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) and the National Register for Historic Places (hereafter the National Register) (Law, 2016). The ACHP is an independent federal agency in charge of protecting national heritage and is led by a chair nominated by the president and confirmed by the Senate (Frank & Petersen, 2002; King, 2008; Nelson, 2016). At work since the approval of the Preservation Act, the ACHP was removed from the Department of the Interior in 1976 and established as an independent agency (see Figure 5.1). The ACHP advises the president and Congress on national preservation policy, but it has no legal power over policy or the protection of monuments. One of the ACHP's key responsibilities is the administration of the Section 106 and Section 100 process. Section 106 requires federal agencies to evaluate the effect of their projects on historic properties (Fowler, 2003; Frank & Petersen, 2002). The ACHP has developed regulations and guidelines for this process that provide up-to-date advice on how federal agencies can incorporate attention to heritage resources in their projects. The ACHP also provides the framework to address issues raised by Indian Tribes, Native Hawaiians, and Indigenous people, supporting the importance of engaging them in the protection of places significant to their religious and cultural heritage, and urging federal agencies to better understand their perspectives on land management (ACHP, 2024b). The chair who heads the agency is appointed by the president, with Senate approval.

The other accomplishment of the Preservation Act was the creation of the National Register, administered by the NPS alongside the National Historic Landmark program, which dates back to 1935 (see Figure 5.1). The director of the NPS is appointed by the Secretary of the Interior, who in turn is

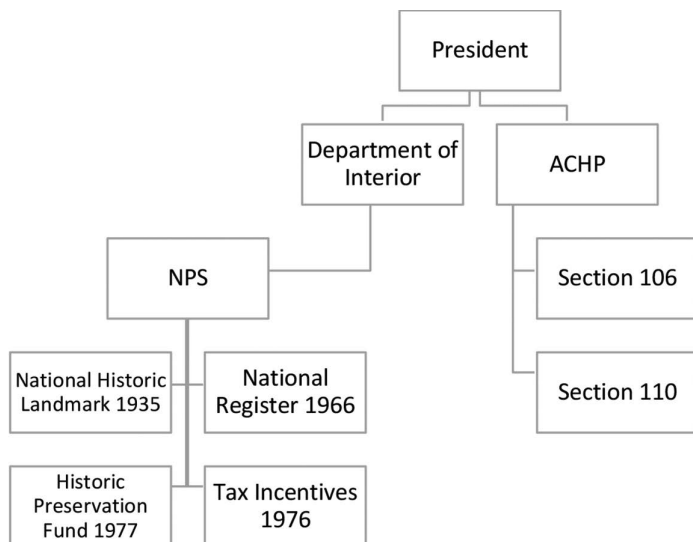


Figure 5.1 *Federal organizations and programs in historic preservation*

nominated by the president. The National Register includes state and local cultural resources, extending protection for cultural resources beyond the national level (Fowler, 1976). In contrast to the National Historic Landmark program, which focuses solely on places of national significance, the National Register serves as a planning tool to identify significant historic properties at the local and state level (Banks & Scott, 2016; Hardesty & Little, 2009). The director of the NPS oversees the administration of both programs, ensuring their coordination while also managing the Historic Preservation Fund and the Historic Preservation Tax Incentives. The process of listing a property in the National Register consists of determining its historic significance and assessing its integrity. While listing offers several benefits, such as eligibility for government funding and tax incentives, it does not necessarily protect properties from demolition, alteration, or neglect (Silver, 1982; Tyler et al., 2018). The benefits of listing vary widely, from modest outcomes like a bronze plaque to more substantial steps such as initial discussions before any changes to the building, whether it is renovation or demolition, to eligibility for grants and tax incentives, or serving as a catalyst for private investments. In some cases, it can also trigger discussions before any changes to a building, including renovation or demolition (Silver, 1982; Stipe, 2003). These benefits, however, also come with certain restrictions for property owners, such as compliance with federal standards for any of the four recognized approaches to the treatment

of historic properties: preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction. Additionally, state and local governments may impose additional restrictions, such as safeguards against relocation (Oregon Heritage, 2022).

The Preservation Act, rather than focusing on the preservation of specific areas or buildings, enhances the need for coordination and expanded stewardship, as explained by Section 106 and Section 110. Section 106 requires federal agencies to take into consideration cultural resources in their projects by factoring in the effects of their undertaking on historic properties (Fowler, 2003; Frank & Petersen, 2002). Both government agencies and private organizations need to check if their projects encompass any historically significant cultural resources listed in the National Register. If they do, they must work with advisory offices and technical experts to evaluate how to proceed and consult with the ACHP (Nelson, 2016) (see Figure 5.1). For instance, in 1966, in one of the very earliest projects subject to Section 106, the US Department of Transportation wanted to construct Interstate 310 in New Orleans in a way that would have impacted the Vieux Carré (also known as the French Quarter), a historic district listed in the National Register. After consultation with the ACHP and drawing from regulations in Section 106, the highway was not built as the public need for the interstate was not great enough to justify the destruction of the historic district (Nelson, 2016). In other instances, however, consultation with the ACHP results simply in delaying the project (Birch & Roby, 1984). For instance, in 1981, Poletown, a blue-collar neighborhood of Detroit, was demolished to make room for a new General Motors automotive plant. An agreement between the city and the automaker, supported by millions of federal dollars, destroyed more than 1,000 homes, 144 businesses, 16 churches, two schools, and a hospital. Following Section 106 requirements, the ACHP was involved in the decision, but its input could not alter the overall course of the project (Wylie, 1989). Poletown was built by Polish immigrants starting in the late 1800s. “By 1980 Poletown’s homes were selling for an average of \$9,000, among the cheapest in Detroit. Half of the area’s residents were young, black families, the majority of whom were renters” (Wylie, 1989, p. 23). In her book, *Poletown: Community Betrayed*, Jeanie Wylie notes that the residents had a strong emotional attachment to the place, despite major demographic changes. The ACHP advised minimizing the destruction of historic buildings, but this recommendation did not stop what Ralph Nader, in the foreword to *Poletown*, called “the bulldozers of corporate socialism” (Wylie, 1989, p. i).

Section 110 requires, in coordination with the Secretary of the Interior, all federal agencies to establish their own historic preservation programs to identify, evaluate, and protect the historic properties they own (Bagus, 1980; Hardesty & Little, 2009). After the 1980 and 1992 Preservation Act amendments, the law expanded the stewardship of America’s heritage and further specified the responsibilities of each federal agency to historic preservation

(ACHP, 2000; NPS, 2022b). These programs vary greatly in scope, depending on the degree to which the agency owns, controls, or affects historic properties. Today, all federal agencies—from the Department of Agriculture to the Department of Justice—have at least one historic preservation officer on staff who works closely with the ACHP. For example, the Architect of the Capitol works under the US Congress and Supreme Court and is responsible for the maintenance, operation, development, and preservation of the United States Capitol Complex. Agencies are required to consult with Indian Tribes, Native Hawaiian organizations, all levels of government, and private groups when one of their projects may affect a cultural resource owned by these entities. Sadly, often the processes required by the law are time-consuming, overloading the cultural resources staff. Agencies usually have a very limited staff overseeing Section 100 (Banks & Boen, 2016). Over the years, federal agencies have been struggling to fully implement Section 110, either for lack of financial support or limited staff, even though many have been successfully involving volunteers (Jones & Weir, 2016). In 2008, a report issued by the National Trust for Historic Preservation criticized the US Forest Service for failing to adequately comply with its stewardship obligations under Section 110. Among the report's numerous recommendations was the need to increase funding and staff (Destrey, 2008).

Alongside the different actors in the government, nongovernmental organizations have also played a prominent role in historic preservation, not only at the local level, but also at the national level. In particular, the National Trust for Historic Preservation (hereafter National Trust) has been pivotal for the field. In 1949, the National Trust was established as a nonprofit corporation modeled on the like-named organization in the UK. The National Trust was integral to the passage of the 1966 Preservation Act, and it is still held in high regard for its policy and advocacy work (King, 2008). For 30 years, the Preservation Act provided federal funding to the National Trust, an appropriation that was terminated in 1996 by mutual agreement (National Trust, 2024). The National Trust continues to be a driving force advocating for historic preservation. For instance, it created the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund to support the preservation of black heritage (National Trust, 2022a). Over the years, the National Trust has established partners at the local level to develop training and professional approaches to preservation. These organizations allow for regional variations of political processes, institutional settings, and local programming (Velez, 2018). Today, thanks to its groundbreaking work, countless local preservation groups are involved in connecting with different communities to support the preservation of their history.

PUBLIC VALUE: THE PAST FOR THE FUTURE

The Preservation Act grounds federal intervention in historic preservation by emphasizing its value for future generations of Americans. The law highlights concerns about the increasing loss of cultural properties and explains why it was important to dedicate more effort to the nation's heritage, as I illustrate in this section. However, the framework for evaluating the nation's historic heritage is not in the law itself but is instead provided by the NPS, which administers the National Register. Over time, since the establishment of the National Register, the framework has shifted by paying more attention to local variation, ordinary people, and unrepresented communities. Therefore, the NPS has subsequently developed a pluralistic view of the past through its programs, represented by the idea of the American mosaic (Stipe & Lee, 1987). In this section, I also illustrate how the framework for listing in the National Register changed to allow for understanding historic significance, including ordinary people and unrepresented groups and show how this change took place in two other programs: the Historic Preservation Fund and the Historic Preservation Tax Incentives.

PUBLIC VALUE: LAW'S DEFINITION AND INTERPRETATIONS

The Preservation Act opens by articulating the public value of historic preservation (see Box 5.3). It states how "the spirit and direction of the Nation are founded upon and reflected in its historic heritage" (Pub. L. No. 96-515§1.1), bringing attention to heritage as a core value that nurtures the soul of the country and suggests where the country should go next. It states that the historical and cultural foundations of the country "should be preserved because they constitute the living part of a community" (Pub. L. No. 96-515§1.2). Heritage should not be consigned to the past and abandoned so it fades away; rather, it should be acknowledged as a living part of community life that offers "a sense of orientation to the American people" (Pub. L. No. 96-515§1.2). The law explains the public interest in heritage by listing the multiple facets of its importance: "cultural, educational, aesthetic, inspirational, economic, and energy benefits" (Pub. L. No. 96-515§1.4). The goal is to preserve the country's heritage for future generations and develop a vital legacy by enhancing economic development projects and increasing awareness of historic resources. The law expressed concern for how historic properties were increasingly being lost or altered because historic preservation programs at the time were inadequate. The definition of the public value of historic preservation, along with the consideration of the limited preservation infrastructure in place before 1966,

justified the push for federal intervention to expand existing programs by both agencies and the private sector.

BOX 5.3 THE PUBLIC VALUE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

- Cultural, educational, aesthetic, inspirational, economic, and energy benefits
- Sense of orientation
- Spirit and direction of the nation
- Living part of our community life
- Preserving irreplaceable heritage is in the public interest
- Vital legacy

Adapted from Section 1 of the National Historic Preservation Act, Pub. L. No. 89-665, as amended by Pub. L. No. 96-515

The foundational document for the enactment of the Preservation Act was the report *With Heritage So Rich* (Rains & Henderson, 1966), which also recommended the creation of a National Register, among other measures. The report, supported by the National Trust under the auspices of the United States Conference of Mayors, was written by a Special Committee on Historic Preservation with representatives from both the private and public sectors. They stated that while the United States is a nation constantly on the move, where people often change their place of residence, the longing for a sense of stability is a powerful force. The report emphasized that the preservation movement “must do more than revere a few precious national shrines. It must attempt to give a sense of orientation to our society, using structures and objects of the past to establish values of time and place” (Rains & Henderson, 1966, p. 207). The focus should be broader than individual buildings, in order to preserve the meaning of the community. Preservation should focus not only on individual outstanding examples but on all that is worth preserving from the past and highlight “the total heritage of the nation” (Rains & Henderson, 1966, p. 208). Carl Feiss (1991), an urban planning professor who served as technical director for the Special Committee on Historic Preservation that wrote the report, tells the story of how, on a trip to Europe, the committee identified a model for a national preservation system that could work in the United States. In The Hague, Feiss saw the national registry of all historic buildings in the Netherlands, including photographs, building types, conditions, and historic data. He concluded that such a registry was essential for the United States to

realize the value of its national heritage, inspiring the creation of the National Register.

Historic preservation offers “the spirit and direction of the Nation” (Pub. L. No. 96-515§1.1). The spirit of the nation resides in its historic heritage, as it is described as a “living part of our community life” (Pub. L. No. 96-515§1.2). A community development approach that focuses on local assets and uses historic preservation as a tool for revitalization further strengthens this idea of heritage as the spirit of the nation. This approach to community development aims to rebuild distressed communities by focusing on their strengths, instead of their deficits (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). It encourages creating an inventory of skills and knowledge among community members and emphasizes the physical attributes of neighborhoods as assets (Green & Haines, 2012). Through surveys, historic preservation identifies historic resources as community assets and integrates them into planning policies (Bernstein & Hansen, 2016). Overall, preservation reinforces a community’s sense of place by emphasizing its unique identity and legacy. A growing number of scholars have also explored the intersection of historic preservation and urban revitalization. For instance, since its founding in 1956, the Providence Preservation Society in Rhode Island has been saving buildings by raising their market value, and it has been considered a national model of pro-market preservation since the 1950s (Greenfield, 2020). Another example is Atlanta, Georgia. The city has focused on market-driven preservation through heritage tourism (Eskew, 2009). However, despite a few positive examples, much more needs to be examined to understand the economic impact of preserving as compared with demolishing historic buildings (Ryberg-Webster & Kinahan, 2014).

The idea that the direction of the nation is shaped by historic heritage is reflected in debates about the integration of historic preservation into planning, by grounding new plans into a sense of common identity (Redaelli, 2020a). Recent scholarship stresses how the 1966 Preservation Act formalized the inclusion and consultation of historic preservation in planning after years of neglect (Banks & Scott, 2016; Rogers, 2016). Eugene Ladne Birch and Douglass Roby (1984), a scholar and an active planner, analyzed the evolution of the relationship between preservationists and planners in the United States. They articulate how planners worked with preservationists to establish their larger goals: “Thus, the alliance, though uneasy, has encouraged a new vision of the desirable urban scene and is forging a permanent heritage for the nation” (Birch & Roby, 1984, p. 204). They highlighted how preservation had nationalist and romantic roots, whereas planning was rooted in rationalism. The first significant cooperation between the two disciplines occurred with the Charleston Old and Historic District, created in 1931 with an ordinance that protected 23 blocks and approximately 400 buildings (Yuhl, 2020). The Housing Act of 1949 stressed clearing buildings as the primary mode of urban

redevelopment. In contrast, the Housing Act of 1954 focused on rehabilitating buildings for urban renewal (von Hoffman, 2008). Philadelphia's midcentury plans for urban renewal featured an inherent value placed on historic buildings, thus functioning as implicit support for preservation (Ryberg, 2013). A strong alliance between planners and preservationists emerged in the 1980s (Birch & Roby, 1984). This alliance was exemplified by the 1983 plan for San Francisco, which included the protection of almost 500 buildings in five architectural conservation districts.

On the contrary, a less positive view of the role of historic preservation in the community raises issues of gentrification (Kennedy & Leonard, 2001; McCabe, 2019). Historic preservation efforts can sometimes drive up costs, making areas unaffordable to maintain and contributing to gentrification by displacing minority and low-income residents who cannot keep up with rising expenses (Shaw, 2005; Zukin, 1987). In particular, the economist Edward L. Glaeser, in his book *The Triumph of the City* (2011), claims that historic preservation reduces the housing supply and threatens affordability. For instance, in Boston in the early 1980s, upper-middle-class residents and real estate agents defeated African American and Hispanic activists advocating for public housing. Despite these claims, more empirical research is needed to fully examine how historic preservation changes neighborhoods, especially given that the few existing studies show contrasting results. A recent study of Baltimore, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Providence, Richmond, and St. Louis demonstrates that preservation efforts cause minimal socioeconomic changes and have little effect on the racial composition of housing (Kinahan, 2018). A different study focused on New York City neighborhoods reveals that while preservation has little effect on the racial composition of neighborhoods, it causes a remarkable increase in the socioeconomic status of current residents (McCabe & Ellen, 2016). Other studies have highlighted the complexity of outcomes. For instance, a case study of the South Street Seaport in New York reveals both the pitfalls of privatizing urban renewal and the benefits of transforming an old waterfront into a tourist destination (Lindgren, 2014).

Despite these complex outcomes, local communities have become the focal point of historic preservation. Preservation of the "irreplaceable heritage is in the public interest," and the interpretation of "irreplaceable heritage" has increasingly shifted its focus from national significance alone to embracing local diversity (Pub. L. No. 96-515§1.4). For many years, the dominant emphasis was on a national canon, neglecting the rich tapestry of regional variations (Lee, 1992). Charles Hosmer's three-volume book *Presence of the Past* (1965) had a major influence on historic preservation for decades, encouraging the preservation of traditional history focused on heroic individuals and institutions mainly in the Northeast. New ideas about preservation in the 1960s brought attention to local variations and new efforts to preserve places and

their local culture. By the 1990s, the scope included elevating the importance of the diverse history of places, leading preservation toward a democratic and inclusive approach, and innovative practices had been developed to encourage preservation rooted in local knowledge (Dubrow, 1998). For instance, in 1994, the African American Heritage Preservation Foundation was established as a resource group. At the same time, public art and public history used new methods to celebrate underrepresented histories (Hurley, 2010). Today, preservation historians look beyond the linear narrative of national history to uncover the influence of distinctive local movements and diverse communities (Mason & Page, 2020). However, the toolbox for engaging the community in policymaking to impact preservation has been slow to develop, and the integration of community-driven approaches in preservation policymaking remains a work in progress (Avrami, 2020).

This shift toward celebrating a pluralistic view of the “vital legacy” can be achieved through various approaches (Pub. L. No. 96-515§1.4). These include assimilation, the melting pot, core plus, pillar, or mosaic (Ashworth et al., 2007). The NPS has moved away from the idea of a melting pot, blending the diverse groups together in a new identity as one, toward embracing the idea of an American mosaic, keeping the single local tradition alive unaltered, one next to the other (Stipe & Lee, 1987). This new emphasis on local diversity, focusing on the contributions of ordinary people, became well known through the dispute between Gans, an urban sociologist, and Huxtable, an architectural critic at the *New York Times*, mentioned at the beginning of the chapter (Gans, 1975b; Huxtable, 1975). Gans, author of the renowned *Popular Culture and High Culture: An Analysis and Evaluation of Taste* (1975a), mentioned in Chapter 2, championed the importance of memorializing the contributions of ordinary people, whereas Huxtable advocated for preserving the heritage of national significance. Over time, as attention to local diversity has grown, historic preservation has elevated the history of ethnic and racial minorities and revealed forms of violence against these minorities perpetrated by totalitarian as well as democratic countries (Harrison, 2010). In particular, scholars have underscored the spatial realities of race (Frank & Petersen, 2002) and the prevalence of whiteness in historic preservation (Saito, 2009). Through the 1990s, efforts to highlight the diversity of the history of places led to a more democratic and inclusive approach to preservation (Hayden, 1995). Currently, historic preservation is moving toward eliminating the diversity deficit by focusing not only on “fine things” but also on spatial elements that tell the story of underserved communities (Roberts, 2019, p. 74) whose struggles have been long forgotten but are essential to the history of the country (Kaufman, 2009b).

PUBLIC VALUE AND THE NPS

The idea of the American mosaic, as a new interpretation of what the nation's vital legacy is, impacts the way *historic significance* is assessed when properties are evaluated for inclusion in the National Register. This process is based on a theoretical framework created by the NPS, which supports research to establish historical contexts within the multifaceted history of the United States (Tyler et al., 2018). The NPS has changed the framework several times to reflect the way scholarship approaches the past. *The New American History* (1997) by Eric Foner provided a new basis for historical research (NPS, 1994). It promoted the expansion of the boundaries of historical inquiry to include ordinary people and everyday life (Dubrow, 1998; Foner, 1997; Nash et al., 2000). In 1993, scholars and NPS professionals convened to reshape the framework to include this broader perspective through eight themes (NPS, 2018b): peopling places, creating social institutions and movements, expressing cultural values, shaping the political landscape, developing the American economy, expanding science and technology, transforming the environment, and the changing role of the United States in the world community. The new framework shifts its focus from identifying what is important to outlining how to study what matters, broadening the approach to include the memorialization, protection, and interpretation of historically significant places. This approach has resulted in greater representation within the properties listed in the National Register (Hanson et al., 2022).

Even though the new framework allows for a broad definition of historic significance, some scholars are critical of the evaluation process (Cresswell & Hoskins, 2008; Grant, 2016). The process to evaluate historic significance was defined in 1969, when the NPS established four criteria that require buildings, sites, objects, districts, or structures to: (1) represent an important part of history, (2) be associated with people significant to our past, (3) embody a construction style from a specific time period, and/or (4) yield important historic information (NPS, 1990). All properties nominated are required to demonstrate historical relevance under one or more criteria (Sprinkle, 2014). A property deemed to be historically significant also needs to have retained enough integrity to be able to convey its significance. Integrity is the ability of a property to communicate its historical significance. It is assessed using seven aspects: location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association (NPS, 1997). A critique of this process focuses on the four evaluation criteria, claiming that behind their objectivity, they have promoted a limited view characterized by early preservation practices (Grant, 2016). Moreover, another critical argument is that the National Register process requires nominators to articulate the importance of their cultural resources according to

what the institution predetermines as valuable and think about their heritage in terms that are compatible with those criteria (Cresswell & Hoskins, 2008).

Despite these critiques, the increased focus on a pluralistic approach to what is worth preserving, as seen in the framework of historic significance in the National Register, is also highlighted in two other programs developed by the Park Service: the Historic Preservation Fund (NPS, 2021) and the Historic Preservation Tax Incentives (NPS, 2023a) (see Figure 5.1). The Historic Preservation Fund provides financial assistance to carry out preservation activities. Although federal funding was available under the 1966 Preservation Act, Congress established the Historic Preservation Fund a bit later, in 1977 (NPS, 2023c). Authorized at \$150 million per year, the funding comes from offshore oil and gas lease revenues, not tax dollars; although, since the establishment of the fund, Congress has yet to appropriate the entire amount each year. The Historic Preservation Fund provides funding for preservation activities in two ways (DeSantis, 2020): first, with formula-based apportionment grants that assign funding based on needs as determined by the Secretary of the Interior and second, with competitive grants programs that support a wide range of preservation activities. As of 2024, there are nine competitive grant programs that highlight what topics the NPS identifies as worth preserving: African American Civil Rights, History of Equal Rights, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization, Save America's Treasures, Semiquincentennial (commemorating the founding of the nation), Tribal Heritage, Disaster Recovery, and Underrepresented Communities (NPS, 2024b).

In 1976, with the enactment of the Tax Reform Act, the NPS introduced the Historic Preservation Tax Incentives (NPS, 2023a). The goal of this program was to incentivize private sector actions in the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings (Swaim, 2003). The State Historic Preservation Offices, which I will introduce in the next section, administer the program. However, the NPS makes the final decision about which projects receive tax credits, and the Internal Revenue Service handles the administration of the tax credit. The tax policy related to preservation has evolved, with some programs supporting the rehabilitation of historic buildings in general and others spurring economic development in distressed African American and Latinx communities (National Trust, 2022b). States vary regarding how many projects the tax credit supports. In 2022, the number of projects ranged from 509 in New York to one in Alaska (NPS, 2022a). A major outcome of this policy is the real estate community's increased investment in the rehabilitation of historic properties (Ryberg-Webster, 2015). It also plays a major role in preserving postindustrial downtowns (Ryberg-Webster, 2014). Since 1976, the program has leveraged \$116.34 billion in private investment toward 47,000 historic properties (NPS, 2022c). A study of tax credit investment that occurred in Richmond, Virginia,

between 1997 and 2010 showed that it offers a means for resiliency in a volatile real estate market (Ryberg-Webster, 2016).

The work of the NPS, through the National Register program, the Historic Preservation Fund, and the Historic Preservation Tax Incentive, reflects a shift towards inclusivity and broadened perspectives in historic preservation. The framework for *historic* significance, initially shaped by early preservation practices, has since adapted to encompass a diverse array of historical contexts, emphasizing the importance of ordinary people and diverse groups. In particular, it has expanded to include a wide range of properties, more representative of the social history of places. Essential support for this local shift has been provided by state offices, at first State Historic Preservation Offices and later Tribal Historic Preservation Offices.

CULTURAL FEDERALISM AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

As I explained in the section about cultural federalism in Chapter 4, Michael Kammen (1996) introduces the idea of cultural federalism when tracing the development and interactions of both the NEA and NEH. He observes how national, state, and local organizations complement each other and recommends strengthening cultural federalism. In this book, I further develop the illustration of cultural federalism by examining how it works in historic preservation. Section 101b of the Preservation Act required all states, territories, and the District of Columbia to create a State Historic Preservation Office (hereafter, State Preservation Offices) and prepare a statewide plan for historic preservation. State preservation programs existed before the 1966 Preservation Act but were quite scattered (Lyon & Brook, 2003). By 1976, all states had established State Preservation Offices. The State Preservation Offices assist the NPS in reviewing nominations for the National Register, administering tax incentives, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) in supervising federal projects involving historic properties as established by Section 106 of the Preservation Act. During the 1980s, the NPS also required the states to promote survey activities, and by the end of the 1990s, states were able to archive the survey inventories in computer databases integrated with geographic information systems. Furthermore, State Preservation Offices help local preservation constituencies, such as local governments and citizens, with public education and technical assistance through newsletters, factsheets, publications, workshops on landmarking and financial incentives, and conferences. Today, the debate about their role is still controversial. Oftentimes, state preservationists think that state committees are reviewing projects to support development rather than preservation (Stapp, 2016). Others claim that the state

merely implements programs at a different level of government and does not serve a primary role in preservation (Pollard III, 1989).

To provide an example of how a State Preservation Office works, I looked at Oregon Heritage, Oregon's State Preservation Office (see Figure 5.2). Oregon Heritage was established in 1967 and is located within the Heritage Programs Division of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (Stapp, 2016). The department's revenue comes from the lottery, park user fees, and RV fees, which dropped dramatically after the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the department had to lay off part of its staff, with Oregon Heritage experiencing a 30% reduction in personnel (Oregon Heritage, 2024b). As of 2024, Oregon Heritage consists of a staff of 13 people, two commissions—the Oregon Commission on Cemeteries and the Oregon Heritage Commission—and two committees—the State Advisory Committee on Historic Preservation and the Historic Assessment Review Committee—which support preservation activities throughout the state. The State Advisory Committee on Historic Preservation (SACHP), which is composed of nine governor-appointed technical experts in the preservation sector. Its main purpose is to review and make recommendations on the state's National Register nominations, a process that, as we saw in the previous paragraph, is informed and supervised by the NPS. For instance, the committee is instructed on updated processes by Oregon Heritage and NPS staff through presentations and informative brochures, fulfilling the Preservation Act mandate to distribute practical preservation

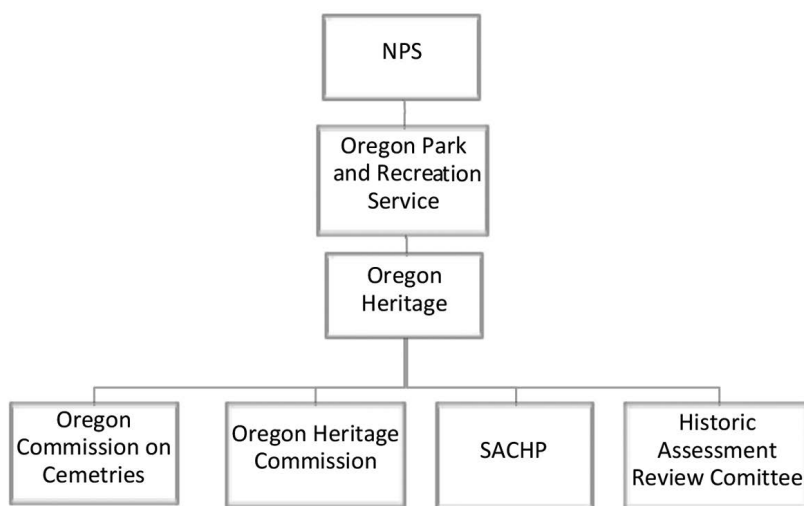


Figure 5.2 Oregon's State Preservation Office—Oregon Heritage

information to the public (Potter, 2016). Oregon Heritage has a flurry of programs that involve the community in developing policies and tools that can better highlight the state's heritage through workshops and surveys, awards to celebrate preservation activities, and mentorships and fellowships (Oregon Heritage, 2024a).

State Preservation Offices supervise tax incentive programs, in some cases not only at the national level but also at the state level. Through the logistic support of the National Trust, 39 states have enacted historic tax credits, with New Mexico establishing the first state historic tax incentive in 1984 (National Trust, 2022b). These incentives aim to entice private investment to rehabilitate buildings that otherwise would most likely be demolished. States frame these policies differently, tackling issues from rural economic development to affordable housing. The National Trust encourages instituting tax incentives that tie historic preservation to affordable housing, sustainable development, and the reduction of carbon emissions. Furthermore, it highlights that rehabilitation projects not only create local jobs due to their labor-intensive nature but also help conserve farmland and minimize material waste. Tax incentive programs aim to attract private investments in neighborhoods that have been neglected by public maintenance for a long time and encourage public-private partnerships. One successful example is the Illinois Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program, implemented in 2019. It has generated thousands of jobs, minimized waste from building materials, stimulated millions in private investment in historic sites, and provided essential affordable housing. Due to its economic and environmental benefits, the program was renewed for another five years, and its funding was increased from \$15 million to \$25 million (National Trust, 2023).

State governments do not have jurisdiction over Native American land where tribes maintain a sovereign government, a status established through historical confrontations, wars, and subsequent treaties (Wilkinson, 1991; Wunder, 1999). The report *Keepers of the Treasures* (Parker, 1990) examined tribal preservation funding needs and established the foundation for the creation of Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (hereafter Tribal Preservation Offices) (NPS, 2023d). In the same year, 1990, the NPS issued National Register Bulletin 38, which recommended recognizing the historic significance of Native American properties (Alexander, 2012). These two documents were key milestones in the development of NPS tribal consultation on Native American heritage, which resulted, through a 1992 amendment to the Preservation Act, in the establishment of the Tribal Preservation Offices (Alexander, 2012). In 1996, the first year of the program, 12 Tribal Preservation Offices were established (NPS, 2023b). Since then, Tribal Preservation Offices hold the same responsibilities as State Historic Preservation Offices on tribal lands and advise and work with federal agencies on the management of tribal historic properties. Tribal

Preservation Offices also preserve and rejuvenate the unique cultural traditions, practices, and languages of their tribal communities (NATHPO, 2024). In 2023, there were 574 federally recognized tribes and 202 Tribal Preservation Offices (NPS, 2023b). Tribes believe that with a federally recognized Tribal Preservation Office, they gain more tribal sovereignty, particularly over their cultural heritage sites on tribal and ancestral lands. At the same time, this program has limitations: “The downside to this title and recognition is that it follows the parameters set by the federal agency rather than the tribal values” (Law, 2016, p. 50). Including tribal values within the bureaucratic process, and not only in the evaluation of historic significance, could be the next step for a further harmonious relationship.

The first Tribal Preservation Offices emerged in the 1970s, when tribes began to assert control over how Native American heritage was interpreted, challenging the interpretation previously dominated by non-Natives (Steeves, 2015). For instance, the Pueblo of Zuni in New Mexico established a Tribal Preservation Office in 1973, followed by the Navajo Nation in 1986. Throughout American history, tribes have had little control over their heritage. For instance, tribal graves have not been protected, and remains were unearthed and displayed in museums. Also, objects were removed from tribal lands in untold numbers, almost exclusively without tribal consent (Fine-Dare, 2002). The enactment of the 1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act was one of the first steps toward ensuring the need to honor and respect Native American cultural traditions, next to economic and political sovereignty, which became increasingly recognized and supported through legal protection (Alexander, 2012). However, it was only through the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) that tensions between archaeologists and Native American communities began to ease. By mandating greater collaboration between academics and Indigenous communities, NAGPRA has gradually opened the field of historic preservation, challenging non-Native control over tribal heritage. (Steeves, 2015; Watkins, 2000).

The work done by State Preservation Offices is supported by Certified Local Governments, which help to distribute some of their workload and expand their outreach efforts. The Certified Local Government Program, a federal initiative established in the 1980s, provides states with a mechanism to further assist local communities (Cofresi & Radtke, 2003). Created through amendments to the Preservation Act, it enables local governments to increase participation in National Register decisions. To qualify, local governments must adhere to specific program standards: “Requirements include adopting a preservation ordinance, maintaining a historic landmarks commission, contributing updated information to the statewide inventory of historic properties, and reviewing nominations to the National Register of Historic Places” (Potter, 2016, p. 386). The results of the implementation of Certified Local Governments consist of

an enhancement of the development of local infrastructure for preservation, including an increase in direct subsidies in the form of loans, grants, and tax incentives and a stronger local network of experts. Some of the major activities they carry out are the surveying and designating of historic resources (Tomlan, 2015). Scholarly emphasis on the importance of Certified Local Governments underscores their role in providing protective measures at the local level, where preservation ordinances, regulations, and incentives are formulated and where property owners interact with government authority (Tyler et al., 2018). However, research also highlights some limitations of the program, such as the need for stronger efforts to recruit and train a more inclusive leadership (Roberts, 2020). Despite some current limitations, the collaboration between local governments and state and federal partners continues to grow; as of 2024, there are a total of 2,109 Certified Local Governments (NPS, 2024a). Oregon has 56, Minnesota has 43, Maryland has 23, and New Mexico has 10.

This overview of cultural federalism for historic preservation has traced the development from the federal to the state and local levels, illustrating how contemporary American preservation efforts evolved to emphasize place and community. This approach aligns with the “total heritage” concept, defined in the 1966 report *With Heritage So Rich* (Rains & Henderson, 1966, p. 208), which goes beyond the value of single buildings by highlighting the social history of places, involving communities, and uncovering spatial struggles. It moves beyond a linear narrative of national history to uncover the influence of distinctive local movements and diverse communities (Mason & Page, 2020). As the American historian David McCullough said, “The stage lights are coming up on a larger cast, illuminating the wide diversity of population groups and cultures that have contributed to present-day America” (Lyon & Brook, 2003, p. 80). Throughout the country, urban sites have hidden racial assumptions that assigned people of different races to different spaces, causing unequal access to shelter, education, transportation, and employment (Lipsitz, 2011). The public work and writing by historian and architect Dolores Hayden (1995) claim urban landscapes as public history that narrate the social history of places. She focuses on Los Angeles’s urban communities to propose new perspectives on gender, race, and ethnicity and aims to expand urban history to include spatial struggles in our public memory. This perspective brings attention to vernacular cultural practices where the community frame of reference is at the center: It encompasses a wide range of ordinary activities, characterized by the expression of community values and the inclusion of many participants (Markusen, 2009). In the next section, I examine this new emphasis toward the local through the programming of the State Historic Preservation Offices in Oregon, Minnesota, Maryland, and New Mexico. This section complements the two previous spotlight sections about the arts and

the humanities and adds another layer to this book's exploration of how public administration shapes culture.

SPOTLIGHT: OREGON, MINNESOTA, MARYLAND, AND NEW MEXICO

As reiterated throughout this book, the invisible character of American cultural policy is the result of a fragmented organizational structure. This bureaucratic fragmentation, however, serves to highlight different cultural elements and regional values. For example, in Oregon, Minnesota, Maryland, and New Mexico, State Preservation Offices function under different state agencies, illustrating varied approaches to historic preservation (see Figure 5.3). Oregon Heritage is part of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, aligning preservation efforts with the management of natural resources, which is not one of the values promoted by the Preservation Act but is part of the mission of the NPS (Oregon Heritage, 2024a). In Minnesota, the State Preservation Office is housed within the Department of Administration, emphasizing a purely administrative framework (Minnesota Department of Administration, 2023). Maryland integrates its Historic Trust into the Department of Planning, connecting preservation with broader planning processes and illustrating how it shapes the spirit and direction of the nation (Maryland Historical Trust, 2024). Meanwhile, New Mexico situates its Historic Preservation Division within the Department of Cultural Affairs, framing preservation as part of a larger cultural management strategy and fostering synergies across the cultural sector (New Mexico Historic Preservation Division, 2024). These varying affiliations demonstrate how state-level administration shapes historic preservation's public value. However, this variation also makes these public agencies difficult to identify and navigate across the country, underscoring the invisible character of American cultural policy discussed throughout this book.

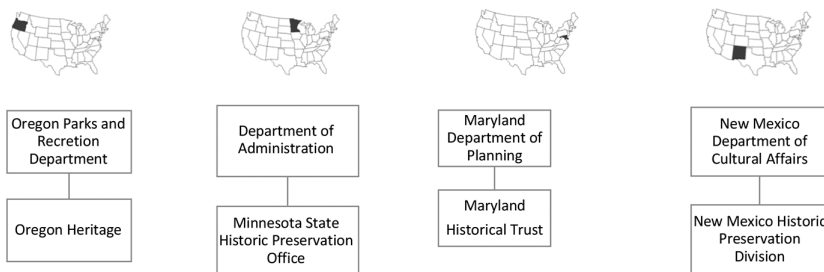


Figure 5.3 The parental organizations of State Preservation Offices

On tribal lands, some or all the functions of State Preservation Offices are assumed by Tribal Preservation Offices (NATHPO, 2024). These functions are designated by a federally recognized Indian tribe after the NPS approves an official plan. Tribal plans for historic preservation underscore the importance of oral traditions and the consultation of tribal elders and spiritual leaders who hold deep knowledge of the tribe's customs. Additionally, these plans consistently emphasize the responsibility to review federal undertakings that may impact historical properties, highlighting archaeological survey work as an essential component in identifying, preserving, and mitigating potential impacts to cultural heritage. This process ensures that significant sites are recognized and protected. There is a wide variation in the number of Tribal Preservation Offices within each state. New Mexico counts 16 programs, including the Jicarilla and Mescalero Apache tribes and 14 New Mexico Pueblos. These programs do not include all the tribes in the state, nor the Navajo Nation, which extends from Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico (New Mexico Indian Affairs Department, 2024). Oregon has seven and Minnesota has ten, whereas Maryland does not have any. However, the Maryland governor's office includes a commission on Indian Affairs, which supports Native American communities and, in particular, helps in the recognition processes, promoting cultural awareness and site protection (Maryland.gov, 2024).

Another insight into the variations of the organizational structure among the states, which reflect the differing values held by each of them, is exemplified by the Main Street program. This program brings economic vitality to small downtowns while celebrating their history and their role as a gathering place for the local community. Main Street was established as a National Trust program in 1980 to support historic downtowns (Main Street America, 2023). In 2013, it became an independent subsidiary of the National Trust, and two years later, it was rebranded as Main Street America. Each state Main Street program is affiliated differently. For instance, Oregon Main Street is coordinated by Oregon Heritage, and Minnesota Main Streets is run by Rethos, a nonprofit organization committed to advancing equity in historic preservation. Main Street Maryland is managed by the Department of Housing and Community Development, and New Mexico MainStreet is managed by the Economic Development Department. This variation in the leadership structure mirrors the values each state attributes to the program. In Oregon, the program is valued as a public responsibility for historic preservation; in Minnesota, it is valued for historic preservation purposes, but it is administered by a nonprofit organization. In Maryland, it is incorporated into planning for housing and community development, emphasizing its economic benefits and value to community life. Finally, in New Mexico, it is valued for its economic revitalization potential, which is considered the responsibility of the government, in particular the state department of economic development.

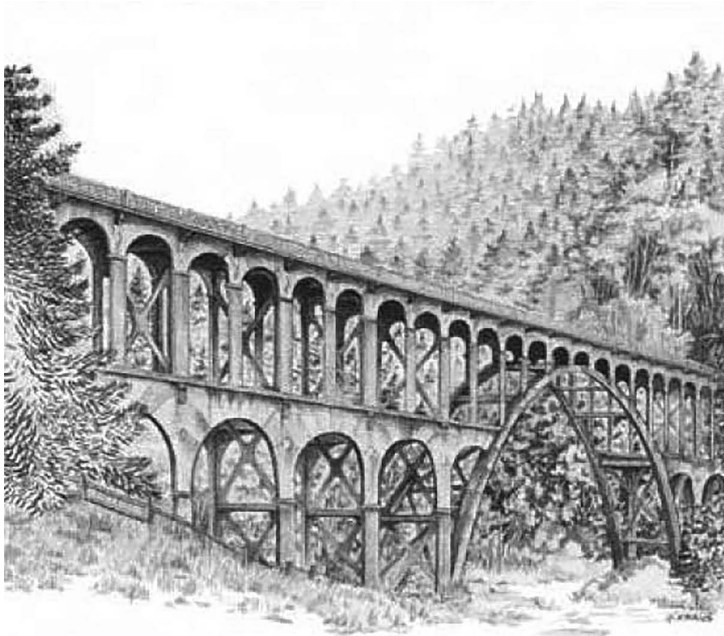
A key difference between the states is how *historic significance*—which determines what is worth valuing and preserving—is determined, illustrating how this bureaucratic fragmentation gives the opportunity to celebrate regional values. In the previous sections, I explained how the law defines preservation and articulates the public value of historic preservation, while the NPS establishes a framework for determining how historic significance can be recognized within the multifaceted history of the United States. However, *what* is valued and preserved is not determined at the national level; it is determined by each individual state. Since 1977, the NPS has required each nomination for the National Register to provide a Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPD) (NPS, 1996). This document provides historic context to determine what should be valued. It delineates a period of significance and a list of property types, such as residences, commercial, and professional buildings—a “grouping of individual properties characterized by a common physical and/or associative attributes” (NPS, 1999, p. 14). Moreover, it includes methods for the identification of property from the delineated period (Hardesty & Little, 2009; NPS, 1996). An MPD is a guiding document that serves as a contextual basis for evaluating the eligibility of individual properties for inclusion in the National Register (NPS, 1996). Most importantly, an MPD collects a large amount of local history to help understand a place through the specific historical events of its community. Arizona and New Mexico were pioneers in sponsoring the production of historic contexts (Hanson et al., 2022). The Arizona State Preservation Office, for example, researched historic context studies for the historic trails, helping to identify and evaluate the cultural and historical significance of these routes. This work played a crucial role in ensuring that the trails’ historical value was recognized and protected within the broader context of Arizona’s heritage. Today, MPDs are actively solicited by State Preservation Offices and are produced by independent agencies, professional consultants, preservation scholars, and public historians.

To identify the unique value each state places on historic preservation, I have analyzed the MPDs from Oregon, Minnesota, Maryland, and New Mexico, which are available through their respective State Preservation Offices. For a general overview, Minnesota and Maryland list them on their websites (Maryland Historical Trust, 2022–2023; Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office, 2024), whereas Oregon and New Mexico’s database is not available on the public-facing side, but their staff offered immediate information (R. Olguin, personal communication, November 20, 2023; S. Moffson, personal communication, November 20, 2023). These documents offer fascinating insights into how each state’s unique history and geographic features shape what they consider to have historic significance. For instance, each state has a distinctive geographic element: Oregon’s coastline, Minnesota’s Lake Superior, Maryland’s Chesapeake Bay and its watershed, and New Mexico’s

Rio Grande. Of course, this is just one part of each state's distinctive geographic terrain, but it provides a preliminary overview of the contextual differences between these four states. Below, I summarize the distinctive elements emerging from the MPDs released by each state over the years, which highlight what they consider to have historic significance and portray the unique character of each state.

Oregon: Lighthouses, the Oregon Trail, Bridges, and African American Heritage

Next to historically and architecturally significant properties, both recreational and residential, Oregon frames what is worth preserving by articulating historical contexts that highlight the natural features of the state. The history of its settlement is recognized by MPD, focusing on the Oregon Trail, dwellings



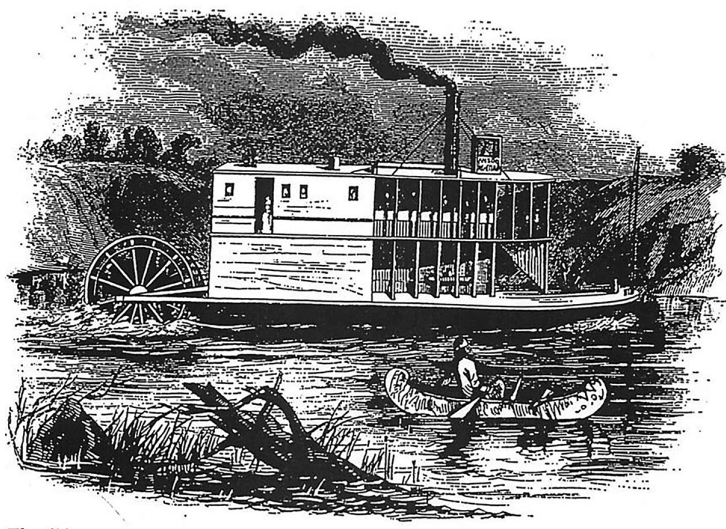
Source: Reprinted from Smith, D. A., Norman, J. B., & Dykman, P. T. (1986). *Historic Highway Bridges of Oregon*, Oregon Department of Transportation, cover page. Copyright Oregon Department of Transportation.

Figure 5.4 *The Cape Creek Bridge, located on the Oregon Coast Highway in Lane County*

and farms, covered bridges, and mining resources. MPDs about the creation of infrastructure celebrate post offices from 1900 to 1970, coast highway bridges (see Figure 5.4), highway bridges in Portland, and maritime heritage, such as lighthouse stations. After years of neglect, the complicated history of African Americans was finally recognized in 2020 with the “African American Resources in Portland, Oregon, from 1851 to 1973” MPD (Galbraith et al., 2020).

Minnesota: From Timber Farms to Shipwrecks

The Minnesota State Preservation Office began systematically surveying and recording Minnesota’s historic resources, both historical and archaeological, in 1977 (Minnesota Department of Administration, 2023). Minnesota recognizes its immigration linked to the logging industry by describing the timber farms of German immigrants and Finnish log buildings, and the development of state infrastructure by highlighting grain elevators, commercial logging, and railroads. Steamboats brought thousands of immigrants to this area (see



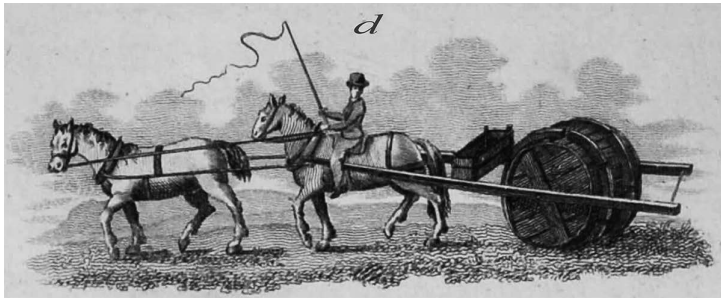
Source: Reprinted from Hall, W., Newell, S., & Birk, D. (1998). *Shipwrecks of Minnesota's Inland Lakes and Rivers*. National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form. Copyright *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, from 1860.

Figure 5.5 *The Anson Northup, first steamboat on the Red River*

Figure 5.5). The maritime history of the inland lakes and Lake Superior, delineating the border with Canada, has been studied with a focus on shipwrecks. The heritage of Native Americans has been celebrated through the study and description of earthworks, such as mounds constructed over a period of 2,500 years, and rock art, including both petroglyphic and pictographic iconography.

Maryland: The Diversity of the National Capital Region

Maryland's MPDs paint a rich tapestry of Maryland's history and highlight the development of the area from prehistoric times to more recent events. The pre-historic period includes geological complexes and Native American cultural sites, while African American historic resources, Quaker settlements, Chinese and Korean immigration, and the women's suffrage movement depict the history of Maryland's diverse communities. Specific architectural styles represent the local heritage, such as cast-iron architecture, covered bridges, schools, and tobacco barns. Roads were created to roll hogsheads of tobacco to port towns (see Figure 5.6). Military history has had a big impact on the area, marked by national cemeteries—from the Civil War era and the inter-war period—battle-field sites, and National Guard armories. Several sites mark important events from national history, such as the hotels built to host immigrants on the road from Baltimore to the West, the development of the region's park system, and the construction of NPS structures built during the Mission 66 program, which modernized and increased NPS facilities. Also, southern Maryland, since the



Source: Reprinted from Thursby, L., & Schomig, C. (2010). *Tobacco Barns of Southern Maryland*. National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form. Copyright Tatham, W. (1800). *An Historical And Practical Essay on the Culture And Commerce of Tobacco by William Tatham*. printed for Vernor and Hood, by T. Bensley.

Figure 5.6 *Transporting a hogshead of tobacco in the tobacco barns of southern Maryland*

mid-1600s, has been a unique tobacco-growing region, which shaped its history and landscape.

New Mexico: Historic Trails and the Pueblos

The state's history is rich and diverse, shaped by historic trails, cultural exchanges, and the establishment of commercial routes. New Mexico examines and highlights its major eras of history and diverse cultural influences, starting with archaic sites in the northwest mountains and late prehistoric development along the Rio Chama. Pueblo culture is studied in its variety, from the ancestral Puebloan before the arrival of the Spanish explorers in the 1540s to pueblo spring sites and Navajo refugee pueblos. One of the popular architectural styles is called the Pueblo Revival Style (see Figure 5.7). Historic trails paved the way to and through New Mexico: El Camino Real, 1598–1881, the route of Spanish settlers coming from Mexico bringing their Catholic faith and efforts to missionize the Native American Nations; the Santa Fe Trail, 1821–1880, a commercial route connecting Missouri to New Mexico; and Route 66, a highway established in 1926 connecting Chicago, Illinois, to the Southwest. With the development of the railroad and the advent of motion pictures, movie theaters connected the local community to the wider world. Starting in 1905, through the 1960s, modestly designed small movie theaters appeared along main streets throughout the state, bringing a new form of entertainment that also transported viewers beyond the horizon of their daily lives.



Source: Reprinted from Crocker Ltd. (2001). *Historical Cultural Properties Inventory Manual*. New Mexico Office of Cultural Affairs, p. 49. Copyright Crocker Ltd.

Figure 5.7 Spanish pueblo revival

To conclude this spotlight on Oregon, Minnesota, Maryland, and New Mexico, it illustrates how the bureaucratic fragmentation in American cultural policy underscores regional differences and the involvement of diverse organizations. Viewing these dynamics through the lens of multilevel governance provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how cultural federalism integrates governmental and private entities into preservation efforts. In historic preservation, alongside State Preservation Offices and Tribal Preservation Offices, each state benefits from the contributions of nonprofit organizations, including museums, archives, historical societies, and friends' groups, all dedicated to safeguarding its heritage. Each state has nonprofit organizations focusing specifically on historic preservation, such as Restore Oregon, Rethos, Preservation Maryland, and Cornerstones. The oldest one is Preservation Maryland, which began in 1931 to save sites associated with George Washington; its activities now include education and resources to save threatened historical resources and battlefields and support redevelopment, revitalization, and smart growth (Preservation Maryland, 2023). Their activities reiterate a vision of preservation integrated with planning that I noticed with the placement of the State Preservation Office. Active since 1977, Restore Oregon, with its longstanding advocacy for preservation policies, also supports promoting preservation education and programs (Restore Oregon, 2021). In Minnesota, since 1981, Rethos has addressed preservation through a community-centered lens, emphasizing the adaptive reuse of buildings to foster vitality (Rethos, 2023). Lastly, Cornerstones, which began in New Mexico in 1986, highlights the role of hands-on training, cultivating practical preservation skills among adults and youth alike (Cornerstones, 2023). These nonprofit organizations demonstrate how citizens are directly involved in matters of historic preservation, showcasing a shared commitment to safeguarding cultural heritage while addressing the unique histories, needs, and values of their respective regions.

CONCLUSION

Through a multilevel governance analysis, in this chapter, I illustrated *how* public administration shapes historic preservation by providing a definition, articulating its public value, and developing multiple programs. The Preservation Act articulated *why* historic preservation is crucial for the American people. Preserving the country's heritage animates the spirit of the nation, making the past a living part of the community and providing direction for future plans by grounding them in a sense of common identity. The law also brought federal intervention into the field by creating new programs to preserve the past and distribute preservation responsibilities among all the federal agencies, as well as state and local organizations. Included in

this multilevel governance structure are the ACHP, the NPS (in charge of the National Register and Historic Preservation Fund), and the State Preservation Offices, Tribal Preservation Offices, and Certified Local Governments. The private sector continues to perform an important leadership role as well, through the National Trust and other local organizations that actively engage the community.

The law does not determine *what* is worth preserving; that is defined by a framework developed by the NPS. Interestingly, over time, the NPS delegated responsibilities to state and local organizations, who conduct research and uncover the histories of communities that have been underrepresented and even mistreated by the government. The MPDs for Oregon, Minnesota, Maryland, and New Mexico unveiled the many facets of each state's history and how each state sometimes emphasizes different values in their approach to preservation. Bringing attention to what the states are doing also reveals a narrative that is more complex than the one celebrated through national monuments and uncovers spatial realities of racism and episodes of government violence. By weaving together these two narratives, American historic preservation illustrates a perspective that integrates grandeur and everyday life. Most importantly, it acknowledges both the positive aspects and the flaws of the past, fostering a balanced understanding of heritage.

The legal and bureaucratic infrastructure created by the Preservation Act has produced a wealth of information about the history of the nation, large and small, as generated by agents in the field, the legal literature, and the professional literature. Scholarship has also pushed for an evolving definition of what to preserve that more truthfully represents the history of the nation, both in its glory and shortcomings. In other words, the preservation movement benefits from the legal and practical literature as well as from socially oriented critique, continually evolving to more truthfully represent the nation's history in all its complexity. The increasing involvement of communities has added another important layer of synergy for what is at stake, as clearly articulated by the Preservation Act: "The historical and cultural foundations of the Nation should be preserved as a living part of our community life and development in order to give a sense of orientation to the American people" (Pub. L. No. 96-515§1.2).

6. How public administration shapes culture in America

INTRODUCTION

In August 2023, NEA Chair Maria Rosario Jackson and NEH Chair Shelly C. Lowe visited Santa Fe, New Mexico, immersing themselves in the local arts and cultural scene (NEA, August 2023). In their journey, they experienced the rich tapestry of the region with a special focus on engaging with tribal leaders, cultural institutions, and Indigenous artists and culture bearers. A highlight of their visit was the Southwestern Association for Indian Arts' annual Indian Market, a grand celebration featuring over 900 artists from hundreds of tribes. Among the participants was Elizabeth James-Perry (Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head, Aquinnah), a 2023 NEA National Heritage Fellow whose work was prominently showcased. During the visit, Jackson met with Michelle LaFlamme-Childs, the executive director of New Mexico Arts, to discuss pressing cultural issues at the state level, gathering valuable insights into the state's unique challenges and opportunities in the arts. Jackson and Lowe also toured the Institute of American Indian Arts, one of just three federally chartered colleges in the country, and they visited the Pathways Festival and the 2023 Indigenous Fashion Show, both of which showcased the vibrant creativity of Indigenous students and artists. The fashion show, in particular, celebrated the fusion of traditional Indigenous craftsmanship with modern design, underscoring the ongoing evolution of cultural expression in Native American communities.

Jackson and Lowe's visits to New Mexico provide a snapshot of the collaborative relationship between federal agencies and the states in the cultural sphere. In particular, it illustrates how the federal government's intervention in cultural matters, as described in the book, has resulted in a place-based policy, leading to the development of cultural federalism. This place-based policy established the interactions between different levels of government as well as the kind of work that is valued and celebrated. My investigation has revealed the features of cultural federalism that foster state autonomy, aiming to reach all Americans and support different cultural domains, despite

operating through different and autonomous bureaucracies. This place-based approach to policy has impacted the bureaucratic structure, decentralizing the decision-making process from the federal level and transferring it to the state and local levels, where the federal government serves as a facilitator. Intertwined with the process of bureaucratic decentralization, the definitions and values of each of these cultural domains—the arts, the humanities, and historic preservation—have been molded by a focus on place. This process has led each domain to center on place-specific aspects, such as community arts, the public humanities, and vernacular historical properties. A focus on place shapes the domains' values—the vitality of the arts, the wisdom and vision of the humanities, and the spirit and direction of historic preservation (the titles of the previous chapters)—highlighting how they generate public value, which aims to strengthen democracy by serving all the American people.

The federal government's intervention in the arts, the humanities, and historic preservation through place-based policies underscores the growing significance of their geographical dimension. Empowering states to nurture their specific artistic, humanistic, and historical environments emphasizes the importance of context over standards and generalizations. Postmodernism—described as the loss of standards in the arts, the denial of the Western tradition as the basic source of knowledge and education, and the inclusion of race and gender as terms for understanding history and society (Bell, 1992)—intertwined with a focus on place shapes these domains. The arts and humanities emphasize the co-production of their practice, which becomes interdependent with place and communities. The arts and place mutually emerge in the artistic production (Volvey, 2007), and cultural planning is meant to serve the general community more than the specialized art sector (Borrupt, 2019). The humanities develop place-based meaning in the specific context of natural landscapes and climate (Warf & Arias, 2008). Historic preservation embraces a place-based approach that emphasizes community over special buildings and everyday activities and underrepresented groups over national heroes (Lyon & Brook, 2003; Mason & Page, 2020). It is a move toward recognizing *total heritage*, defined in the 1966 report *With Heritage So Rich* (Rains & Henderson, 1966) and later explained as the urban approach, which connects preservation outward with other fields, in contrast to the curatorial approach, which focuses inward on specialized craftsmanship (Mason, 2006).

In this chapter, I connect the threads from my investigation of the arts, the humanities, and historic preservation, comparing and contrasting the findings presented in the previous chapters. Public administration shapes culture by defining the role of government at each level and fostering valuable partnerships with the private sector. Interestingly, the impact of public administration extends beyond the mission and nature of the bureaucracy. It influences the definitions of the disciplines within each cultural domain and the articulation

of their public value. These three aspects are intertwined in a complex relationship that cannot be reduced to simple cause and effect, as they influence and reshape each other in a dynamic, nonlinear way. They are also connected to the discussions occurring across various epistemological realms, including the literature on federalism, cultural theory, and value studies. I highlight how place-based policy has shaped the role of the government, the definition of culture, and the creation of public values. The last section explains how this perspective reveals that public administration in America shapes culture as a *pluralistic public culture* to strengthen democracy.

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT: CULTURAL FEDERALISM

The federal government's intervention in the arts, the humanities, and historic preservation has developed cultural federalism through place-based policies. In political science, cultural federalism refers to federations that have been constructed, blending a diversity of cultures within the same country (Paquette, 2019). In the context of cultural policy, the idea of cultural federalism was introduced by Michael Kammen (1996), who traced the development and interactions of both the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), observing how national, state, and local organizations complement each other, and who recommended strengthening cultural federalism. Building on this analysis, Kevin Mulcahy (2002) examined state arts agencies and illustrated how the NEA played a pivotal role in fostering cultural federalism by establishing state arts agencies, a system of state agencies devoted to the arts that decentralizes cultural funding. Other scholars of American cultural policy have further articulated the meaning of cultural federalism: Carole Rosenstein (2018) explains that it entails intergovernmental collaborations, while Douglas Noonan (2015) highlights that it involves more autonomy for the states, promoting a more democratic federalism. In this book, I have further examined how cultural federalism plays out in three different cultural domains, producing a pluralistic cultural governance that extends across both a horizontal and a vertical dimension. The horizontal dimension includes the government and the private sector, along with the simultaneous development of concurrent cultural domains, such as the arts, the humanities, and historic preservation; the vertical dimension involves federal, state, and local organizations. In this section, I tie together the domain-specific information, providing a cohesive view of cultural federalism's operations and comparing and contrasting the three domains.

The federal government has intervened in cultural matters, developing cultural federalism by acting as a facilitator, equalizer, collaborator, and enhancer of efforts undertaken by local and private entities. Both laws I examined—the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act of 1965 (hereafter

Arts and Humanities Act) and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (hereafter Preservation Act)—justify federal intervention to eliminate inequalities around the country. The NEA and NEH were established by the Arts and Humanities Act to “complement, assist, and add to programs for the advancement of the humanities and the arts by local, State, regional, and private agencies” (20 U.S.C. § 951), highlighting the pluralistic governance of cultural federalism. Moreover, the NEA and NEH are responsible for distributing government support “to foster and support a form of education, and access to the arts and the humanities, designed to make people of all backgrounds and wherever located masters of their technology and not its unthinking servants” (20 U.S.C. § 951). The Preservation Act states that “historic preservation programs and activities are inadequate” and that the federal government should “expand and accelerate” private and individual efforts (20 U.S.C. § 951). The National Register of Historic Places, established by the Preservation Act, expands protection to state and local resources, in addition to resources of national relevance. Moreover, the Preservation Act addresses issues connected to Indian Tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations, urging the federal government to recognize their perspectives on land management instead of imposing national principles on them.

Cultural federalism decentralized cultural matters to the states, with federal infrastructure ensuring equal opportunities and representation nationwide. This process is grounded in the 1960s, a transformative era of federal and state relations when the government recognized the critical role of the law and the federal government in defining and promoting equality (Kettl, 2020). This national intervention was meant to ensure that each state could nurture its distinctive regional expression within each of the cultural domains. Some states had already developed a solid infrastructure over the years, but others needed support, direction, and resources to develop their commitment to culture. However, even though the NEA and NEH were funded simultaneously, their efforts to establish state organizations took different paths. The NEA successfully established state arts agencies in all states and jurisdictional territories, whereas the NEH faced challenges in developing a parallel infrastructure. The NEH instead created state humanities councils as nonprofit organizations. In addition, the organizational structure of state arts agencies as governmental entities subjects them to political influence, unlike state humanities councils, whose nonprofit status provides greater independence. In historic preservation, in contrast, all states have a State Historic Preservation Office to assist the National Park Service (NPS) in reviewing the nominations for the National Register, administering tax incentives, and supervising federal projects involving historic properties. Moreover, the establishment of Tribal Historic Preservation Offices, which determine the historical significance of tribal properties for potential listing in the National Register, gives tribes a

larger voice in the preservation of historic resources on tribal lands and challenges previous non-Native interpretations of historically significant tribal properties (Alexander, 2012; Steeves, 2015). In 2023, there were 202 Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (NPS, 2023b).

The relationship between the federal government and the states, however, developed differently among the three domains. Although both the Arts and Humanities Act and Preservation Act aimed to foster collaboration, what followed was a dynamic interplay between federal and state agencies, with historic preservation emerging as the domain with the most straightforward collaborative relationship between the federal and state levels. In the arts, the relationship between the NEA and the state arts agencies has been characterized by some tension regarding the nature of their relationship. In 1968, the state arts agencies established the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies to provide services to individual state arts agencies and assert their independent roles from the NEA (Lowell, 2004; Mankin et al., 2001). By the 2000s, state arts agencies and the NEA had developed a harmonious relationship, working collaboratively. As for the humanities, different perspectives describe the relationship between the NEH and state humanities councils: Harsh critics of the NEH's programs (Miller, 1984) and helped protect the NEH from being abolished (Geary, 2018), while a different perspective praises how this unique collaboration between the government and nonprofits has "no other parallel in federal-state relations" (Zainaldin, 2013, p. 34). In historic preservation, the relationship between the states, the NPS, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation is quite straightforward and involves fulfilling procedural requirements, ensuring that state preservation efforts align with national policies while including regional variations.

Cultural federalism not only includes different governmental levels but also integrates private organizations at all levels within each domain, developing a pluralistic cultural governance. This kind of governance illustrates how the role of the federal government integrates the actions of private organizations, such as those carried out by foundations and nonprofit organizations, which were often active before federal intervention and directly involved the citizens in their efforts (Redaelli, 2012). Examples of key national foundations involved in the arts are the Ford Foundation, which has encouraged large foundations to support the arts; the Rockefeller Foundation, which has promoted the role of the performing arts; and the Wallace Foundation, which is active in audience development. Two other key national organizations contribute significantly to the field of the humanities: the American Council of Learned Societies, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the circulation of humanistic knowledge that represents 80 scholarly organizations, and the National Humanities Center, an independent institute that offers residential fellowships to scholars. In historic

preservation, the National Trust for Historic Preservation (hereafter National Trust) is a nonprofit organization that has played a key role at both the national level, by advocating for the passage of the Preservation Act, and the local level, by influencing preservation policy, advocacy, and training. At the state level, as I illustrated in the Oregon, Minnesota, Maryland, and New Mexico case studies, several nonprofit organizations directly involve their residents in historic preservation. This integration of the private and public sectors further illuminates the federal government's role as a facilitator and collaborator.

As the decentralization process extended from the state to the local level, the arts, humanities, and historic preservation sectors wrestled with defining their roles: the arts and humanities questioned *whom* to serve, while preservation reframed *what* is worth preserving. The arts grappled with whether to prioritize communities or art providers, audiences or artists. The humanities faced a similar division between serving communities or scholars, the public or academia. In the arts—illustrated by Minnesota's pioneering case—the decentralization process from the NEA to the state arts agencies fostered the growth of local arts agencies, which has helped discover local talent, meet local demand, and ensure a more equitable distribution of resources (Cohen, 2002; DiMaggio, 1991; Svenson, 1982). However, the strongest critique of the creation of such local-level infrastructure is that it creates close ties with politicians, which can lead to political misuse and unbalanced support for hobbyist artists over professionals (DiMaggio & Useem, 1978). Conversely, the humanities, which struggled with state-level decentralization, developed no such local infrastructure, establishing sparse academic centers instead. Historic preservation mirrored these shifts by reframing *what* is worth preserving, turning from national heroes to the local history of everyday people. Amendments to the Preservation Act enabled local governments to increase their participation in National Register decisions through the establishment of the Certified Local Government program. Created in the 1980s, this program provides states with a mechanism to further assist local communities and preserve local history (Cofresi & Radtke, 2003).

One peculiar aspect of cultural federalism is that the process of decentralization operates uniquely within each domain. Rather than a parallel bureaucracy for the arts, the humanities, and historic preservation, each domain has a different configuration, contributing to the invisibility of cultural policy. While the NEA and NEH are twin organizations at the federal level, historic preservation involves two distinct organizations: the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) and the NPS, each serving different roles, with the ACHP focusing on policy oversight and consultation, and the NPS managing implementation and preservation efforts (Fowler, 2003; Frank & Petersen, 2002). At the state level, the arts and historic preservation formed state agencies, whereas the humanities created nonprofit organizations (Mulcahy, 2002;

Zainaldin, 2013). However, both state arts agencies and historic preservation offices are integrated differently within their respective state governments, as illustrated by my analysis of the four states (see Figure 3.2 and Figure 5.3). For instance, Oregon's Arts Commission operates under Business Oregon, including the Cultural Trust for ongoing arts funding, whereas Maryland's State Arts Council is part of the Division of Tourism, Film & the Arts under the Department of Commerce. A comparable variation happens in historic preservation: Oregon Heritage operates under the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, whereas the Maryland Historic Trust is placed within the Department of Planning. These variations not only highlight how the cultural policy infrastructure is different in each domain and state—primarily to support the different professional needs, values, and local traditions among states—but also underscore how such differences contribute to the overall invisibility of cultural policy.

To further understand cultural federalism, two observations offer important context within the American federal system. First, in the 1960s, when both the Arts and Humanities Act and Preservation Act were passed, the federal government played a significant role as an equalizer (Kettl, 2020). Policy scholars continue to emphasize the importance of this role, advocating for strengthened intergovernmental relations to support place-based assistance (Gordon, 2018). Place-based policies capitalize on investments by concentrating resources in targeted areas, leveraging the compounding effect of well-coordinated action (Shambaugh & Nunn, 2018). Second, state variation is a fundamental characteristic of American federalism. States are self-governing entities with broad authority within their boundaries. For example, to name just a few prominent issues in the news during this hot 2024 summer, each state has different laws for elections, the legal status of recreational marijuana, curriculum requirements, and abortion. Political scientist George Hoberg described the variations between the different states as “pluralism by design.” His study of the regulatory system of environmental policy revealed notable variations in both regulatory approaches and policy outcomes (Hoberg, 1992). Cultural federalism reflects both these aspects: the federal government acts as an equalizer by supporting cultural programs through place-based policies and by facilitating state variation. In the following sections, I will summarize how cultural federalism, through its pluralistic cultural governance and varying programming, frames culture by shaping both the definitions of the different disciplinary domains and their public value.

DEFINITION OF CULTURE: ARTS, HUMANITIES, AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

In this book, I argue that American cultural policy is shaped by cultural federalism through a place-based approach. As illustrated in previous chapters, American public administration does not use the word “culture” as a comprehensive or monolithic term, but rather supports different domains based on what Raymond Williams (1976) called the aesthetic sense of the word that “describes the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity” (p. 90). I chose to focus on three specific artistic and intellectual activities—the arts, the humanities, and historic preservation—and I unpacked how cultural federalism has been developed based on the foundational definitions present in the law. The process of implementing the law into bureaucracy and programming engages in the latest debates about culture in theory and in action. Through this process, an anthropological perspective slowly emerges within each domain that illustrates the less technical aspect of how they are defined, leading to a more pluralistic and broader categorization (Eagleton, 2000, p. 13). This anthropological interpretation moves toward a less technical approach and entails a more pluralistic and broader categorization by infusing a place-based approach into the definition of each of the domains. This shift happened through the decentralization and redistribution of resources to the states, which allowed for local autonomy in programming. In this section, I weave together how place-based definitions for each domain—the arts, the humanities, and historic preservation—have emerged through the decentralization of government support.

The definition of the arts shaped by a place-based approach emphasizes two main elements: community and location (Borup, 2019; Redaelli, 2023). First, the definition of the arts evolved to embrace community arts as decentralization efforts shifted the focus toward state and local audiences. The definition of the arts provided in the Arts and Humanities Act is quite inclusive. It blurs the boundaries by including entertainment and popular culture (Baumann, 2007; Gans, 1975a; Levine, 1990) and embraces classic art forms, modern media, and, more recently, folklore (Stefano, 2016), which comprises the traditional arts practiced by diverse American cultural groups. The definition shifted toward community arts as state arts agencies began focusing on the audience rather than the artists. The NEA’s early commitment to making excellent art forms accessible nationally through performers touring the country decreased over the years, reflecting the shift in focus from supporting exceptional artists to promoting access and education in the arts.

Second, the focus on location highlights the geographical dimension, as illustrated in the previous chapters through the examination of arts

programming in four states. Oregon, Minnesota, Maryland, and New Mexico exemplify local variation, reflecting the uniqueness of each region. Indeed, the programs showcase the influence of national coordination, as they developed similar programs, such as cultural districts, folklife, and “percent for art” programs (NASAA, 2024a; Redaelli, 2019b; Stefano, 2017). However, their implementation allows for significant local variation to celebrate the diversity and distinctiveness across different regions. For instance, Minnesota aims not only to support big organizations in Minneapolis and Saint Paul but also local traditions, such as the Scandinavian community composed of third and fourth generations of the Nordic diaspora (Steiner, 2022). Folklife programs enhance the living traditions of each state, and the percent for art programs use a percentage of public building construction costs for artwork to display in public buildings, usually commissioning a local artist selected by an ad hoc commission (NASAA, 2024a). Some of the programming includes attention to heritage as well, focusing in particular on the living and intangible heritage that the field of historic preservation is still struggling to embrace (Buckley & Graves, 2016).

The rise of the public humanities has been a place-based interpretation of the list of disciplines provided by the law, claiming the public-facing aspect of the humanities (Schroeder, 2021). The definition of the humanities in the Arts and Humanities Act contains a list of disciplines dedicated to scholarship—language, both modern and classical; linguistics; literature; history; jurisprudence; philosophy; archaeology; comparative religion; ethics; and the history, criticism, and theory of the arts—including the interpretation of the human environment, with particular attention paid to reflecting our diverse heritage, traditions, and history and to the relevance of the humanities to the current conditions of national life. The humanities councils paved the way for the rise of the public humanities, encouraging co-production with the community and serving as an outlet that gives voice to the people. This approach not only shaped the work of the humanities councils but also started to change how academia frames programs in the humanities by initiating public humanities degrees. At the same time, in the programming of the councils, tension existed over the initial interpretation of the role of government in the humanities. The councils organize a blend of programming that brings national cultural initiatives to communities and locally oriented programs that resonate with community values, promoting grassroots creativity. The former programming reflects Chair Ronald S. Berman’s idea of government involvement that envisions bringing “the best to the most” (Charlton, 1972, p. 32), whereas the latter programming embraces Senator Claiborne Pell’s idea that government funding should benefit ordinary people (Geary, 2018).

A place-based definition of historic preservation, akin to that seen in the arts and humanities, is evident in the NPS’s shift in the framework it uses

to evaluate *historic significance*, aiming to include vernacular buildings and the heritage of minorities (NPS, 1994; Tyler et al., 2018). Interestingly, as described in Chapter 4, the Preservation Act's definition of historic preservation describes the process itself, outlining the steps required for this multifaceted practice without specifying what should be preserved. The framework provided by the NPS to evaluate historic significance brings attention to what should be preserved. Notably, this framework suggests *how* to study what is important; however, it is up to each state and community to highlight what is important to them (Hanson et al., 2022). This place-based evaluation of historic significance has resulted in greater representation in the properties listed in the National Register, including, for instance, the struggles faced by black communities (Redaelli et al., 2024). Oregon brings attention to lighthouses, the Oregon Trail, and African American heritage; Minnesota wants to preserve the timber farms of German and Finnish immigrants, shipwrecks, and the heritage of Native Americans; Maryland, such a small state, is committed to a rich historic tapestry from prehistoric geological complexes to Quaker settlements and immigrants from China and Korea; and New Mexico studies its historic trails, pueblos, Navajo settlements, and prehistoric developments along Rio Chama.

By including regional narratives alongside national ones, American historic preservation provides an all-encompassing view of the country's history, embracing many aspects, such as its grandeur, flaws, and everyday life, that sometimes contradict one another. The states' programs unveil a historic narrative richer than the one celebrated through national monuments. They uncover the struggles of groups who have been long forgotten but have been essential to the history of the country (Kaufman, 2009b) and shed light on the spatial realities of racism (Frank & Petersen, 2002). This approach includes revealing long-unacknowledged episodes of government violence and discrimination that challenged the idea of American democracy (Nieves & Alexander, 2008) while also demonstrating that forms of violence are committed not only by totalitarian countries but also by democratic ones (Harrison, 2010). The regional perspective has further evolved, as demonstrated by the creation of Tribal Historic Preservation Offices in 1996, which recognize tribal sovereignty in matters of cultural heritage on tribal land. Throughout American history, Native American tribes faced significant challenges in preserving their heritage, as graves were often unprotected from desecration and remains were displayed in museums without tribal consent (Fine-Dare, 2002). The 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act was a crucial piece of legislation that fostered a more collaborative approach between archeologists and tribes, challenging the non-Native practices that were previously used to recognize and preserve tribal heritage.

Along with the trajectories toward a place-based interpretation of the three domains, two main struggles persist between the arts and humanities. First, even though the Arts and Humanities Act has provided a separate definition for the arts and humanities, a confusing overlap persists between them. The first categorization that divided the two domains can be found in the concepts of “the practice of the arts” and “the study of the humanities” (20 U.S.C. § 951). This means that the visual arts fall under the arts, and art history falls under the humanities. However, this differentiation does not reflect a universally agreed-upon understanding of the two domains. For instance, the Center for Humanities in Medicine in Minnesota offers programming that predominantly includes arts events in the healing environment of hospitals. I wonder if the choice to call it a center for the humanities rests on some common interpretation of the humanities that overlaps with the arts. Even looking at the programming of state humanities councils, some overlap persists. Indeed, humanities centers located in universities have a clear focus on scholarship, whereas state humanities councils organize exhibits, crossing the line between artistic endeavor and scholarship. For example, Maryland Humanities brought the *Crossroads: Change in Rural America* traveling Smithsonian Institution exhibit to rural areas around the state, highlighting the council’s activities to foster public engagement through artistic outputs as outputs of scholarship (Maryland Humanities, 2022). Moreover, the story at the beginning of this chapter—about the visit of the two chairs of the NEA and NEH to New Mexico—brings to the forefront the synergies between the arts and humanities, even though they are supported by two different agencies. Judith Butler, a politically influential American philosopher, claims that “whatever the future of the humanities might be, it will be critical not to separate the humanities from the various art forms on which it depends” (Butler, 2022, p. 51).

Second, the enactment of the Arts and Humanities Act was the result of an alliance between the humanities and the arts (Zainaldin, 2013), but the humanities have struggled to adopt a place-based definition similar to that of the arts. Federal support has helped the arts thrive in defining their public role, while the humanities continue to grapple with this challenge, particularly through the evolving concept of the public humanities and its mixed reception in academia (Lewis, 2024). The efforts to tease out the public aspect of the humanities began at the national level with the NEH. For instance, the arrangement of the NEH program offices, which include challenge programs, digital humanities, federal/state partnerships, preservation and access, public programs, and research, emphasizes the organization’s mission and connections with new technology (NEH, 2024d), whereas the NEA’s complex organigram has program offices that mirror the disciplines included in the law’s definition, including music and opera, museums and visual arts, media arts, presenting and multidisciplinary works, dance, theater and musical

theater, and literary arts (NEA, 2024). The rise of the public humanities as translational work brings humanistic knowledge to a diverse group of people (Schroeder, 2021). However, to this day, this broader, more inclusive definition of the humanities is tentatively finding its way into academia (Berkowitz & Gibson, 2022; Lewis, 2024).

Moreover, the examination of the programs of state organizations revealed differences in where emphasis is placed between the humanities and the arts. Maryland Humanities and New Mexico Humanities Council list the definitions of the humanities on their websites, both paraphrasing and citing the 1965 Arts and Humanities Act. The New Mexico Humanities Council states, “The humanities focus on human culture with particular emphasis on storytelling and the liberal arts; the cultural implications of the natural sciences, social sciences, and the professions; and individual self-expressions that deal with abiding and perennial questions. The humanities are ways to understand and evaluate the human experience” (New Mexico Humanities Council, 2024a). Whereas for the arts, the focus is not as much on what the arts are but rather on the tangible benefits. For instance, Maryland and New Mexico developed cultural districts programs. The goal of these programs is to leverage the economic development and community revitalization benefits of the arts. For example, Maryland has established 29 arts and entertainment districts since 2001, which have yielded measurable economic benefits, such as increased state GDP, tax revenues, and job creation (NASAA, 2024b).

VALUES OF CULTURE: CREATING PUBLIC VALUE

Cultural federalism shapes culture through place-based policies, creating public value by embracing a pluralistic perspective that reflects the diversity of each region. Through a place-based approach, the arts, humanities, and historic preservation generate public value by enabling local communities to interpret and preserve their unique cultural narratives within the broader national context. The federal government’s efforts to define culture have gone beyond focusing on genres or art forms or praising artistic techniques and intellectual activities, raising issues of the value of culture for all Americans. The explanation of value becomes crucial if the government is involved because articulating the public value of culture is what justifies why the government needs to intervene in this sector. Therefore, understanding how the government is involved in matters of culture becomes a question of how the value of culture creates *public* value. The emphasis on “public” reiterates the need to articulate how cultural value serves the public, the collectivity of the American citizens. In the policy context, the concept of public value is often understood as the benefits or outcomes delivered to citizens. One succinct definition states that “‘public value’ is what gets produced on behalf of the public” (Johnson,

2021, p. 1528). Public value is not private value transposed to public institutions, nor is it a scaling-up from the single consumer to a public imagined as an aggregation of single consumers. Public value is a social dialogue in which plural perspectives about what is of value coexist without a specific hierarchy (Meyrick & Barnett, 2020).

Each domain's value, as stated in the laws—the vitality of the arts, the wisdom and vision of the humanities, and the spirit and direction of historic preservation—has been interpreted and implemented by American public administration to create public value. Public value is defined as serving the “public purpose” in the 1965 Arts and Humanities Act (20 U.S.C. § 951) and as preserving the “public interest” of future generations of Americans in the 1966 Preservation Act (Pub. L. No. 96-515). Even though the publicness of these values is clearly emphasized by the law, the interpretation of this public value is not straightforward and has been subject to a range of perspectives. The interpretation of the vitality of the arts, the wisdom and vision of the humanities, and the spirit and direction of historic preservation as creating public value has sparked ongoing debates, which have resulted in gradual shifts in programming. The analysis of the previous chapters reveals that since the 1965 Arts and Humanities Act and the 1966 Preservation Act, the interpretation of these policies has evolved toward pluralism. For instance, in Chapter 3, I described how the vitality of the arts in the early years of the NEA translated into developing programs that make excellent art forms accessible nationally; over time, it focused on promoting access to and education in the arts. This shift reflects a growing emphasis on a place-based approach to interpreting each domain-specific value. The aim is to create public value, as Michael Moore argues, using public assets to serve the citizens (Moore, 1995, 2014).

The vitality of the arts generates public value by fostering multiculturalism and advancing new ideas, adding a place-based dimension to their significance. The arts bring an understanding of the different cultures that make up the fabric of the country and provide the opportunity to represent them. Especially during the 1980s, the NEA programming embraced culturally diverse communities, reflecting societal and artistic shifts, such as changes in the composition of the audience (Peterson, 1990) and the impact of social dynamics and formal aspects in art production (Hauser, 1982). However, controversies in the late 1980s challenged public funding of new artwork, questioning their moral and societal impact (Kammen, 1996; Zeigler, 1994). Over time, the NEA shifted from promoting artistic excellence to focusing on accessibility and arts education (McNeely & Shockley, 2006; Saunders, 2005; Wyszomirski, 1987). The debates continued with contrasting views supporting either elitism or populism. The chairs of the NEA were on the front line of these controversies. Some of them, such as Livingston Biddle, John Frohnmayer, and Bill Ivey, presented their arguments in their memoirs (Biddle, 1988; Frohnmayer,

1993; Ivey, 2008). The NEA's evolution toward a place-based approach to the vitality of the arts developed community-focused grants and national partnerships, emphasizing the role of the arts in community development (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010; Redaelli, 2018).

Cultural federalism through the creation of state arts agencies brought the debates about the arts' significance closer to where people live. Looking at Oregon, Minnesota, Maryland, and New Mexico, I examined how each state art agency is placed within different branches of the state government and how the different placements underline the public value they want to enhance. For instance, Oregon and Maryland highlight the value of the arts as a catalyst for commerce, while Minnesota and New Mexico underscore how the arts contribute to the state's identity. Moreover, the cultural district programs in Maryland and New Mexico emphasize how the public value is an economic revitalization tool. The decentralization process of cultural federalism also raised questions about whose interests state arts agencies serve. A key study by the RAND Foundation recommended prioritizing public interest (Lowell, 2008a, 2008b). In a related effort, the Wallace Foundation worked with Moore, whose theory on the creation of public value in public administration (Moore, 1995) was applied to help state arts agencies redefine their missions and focus on serving the public (Moore & Moore, 2005). The further decentralization that led to the growth of local arts agencies brought public arts administration even closer to the people (Cohen, 2002; DiMaggio, 1991; Svenson, 1982). This place-based articulation of the vitality of the arts is a way to create public value.

In the humanities, a place-based approach aims to create public value by offering wisdom and vision to all Americans, reaching beyond both urban areas and educational institutions to engage people across the country. Harpham (2013) claims that the humanities can develop wisdom and vision by "opening the pores of imagination in a way that would permit the individual to respond to the unpredictable challenges of life" (p. 516). The 1964 *Report of the Commission on the Humanities*, which was foundational for the Arts and Humanities Act, advocated for the need to bring the humanities to everyone in society, not just to schools (Commission on the Humanities, 1964). This opened the path to the public humanities as a co-production of knowledge that serves the public purpose (Schroeder, 2021). At the same time, it unleashed enduring wars about how to create public value. As illustrated in Chapter 4, the culture wars took different forms, from elitism versus populism, excellence versus access, to the Western canon versus multiculturalism. However, the place-based definition is the one that closely grapples with the issue of creating public value by involving people directly, not just those who are pursuing a formal education.

The state humanities councils have developed programs centered on the public humanities, which was a completely novel concept (Ferington, 2015). The focus on the public humanities is the result of decades of organizational experimentation around the mission of state humanities councils and their effort to reconcile the humanities and public programs (Lynn, 2013). Programs are rooted in a civic methodology based on dialogue and the involvement of communities—ordinary people—in the co-production of cultural and intellectual activities to create just and informed civil societies (Kammen, 1996; Zainaldin, 2013). At the same time, public humanities programs celebrate the traditions of each region. A few examples selected from the programming in the four states illustrate how a place-based approach to the humanities developed public programs. For instance, the New Mexico Humanities Council developed the *Manitos Community Memory* project, a community engagement initiative that creates a digital archive of the cultural heritage of rural Indo-Hispano villages of northern New Mexico and southern Colorado (New Mexico Humanities Council, 2024b). Meanwhile, the Minnesota Humanities Center focused on enhancing the diversity of the state through both co-production of the councils with the community and scholarly endeavors: The program *From Mountain to Lakes* examines the Hmong American community, and *The Dakota and Ojibwe Languages Symposium* convened scholars and released biographical publications to promote the revitalization of the Dakota and Ojibwe languages (Minnesota Humanities Council, 2024).

In historic preservation, a place-based approach highlights the importance of protecting local histories, which serve as the spirit and direction for the future of these places. A place-based approach promotes a “total heritage” concept (Rains & Henderson, 1966, p. 208). This idea goes beyond the preservation of singular buildings isolated from their community and, at the same time, uncovers the spatial struggles of neglected groups. Across the nation, urban areas conceal underlying racial biases that segregate people of varying races into distinct spaces, resulting in unequal opportunities for housing, education, transportation, and jobs (Lipsitz, 2011). Over time, the idea of total heritage has brought attention to vernacular practices that do not necessarily celebrate national triumphs (Mason & Page, 2020). It focuses the spirit and direction of historic preservation on serving the public interest as the public value of future generations. State Historic Preservation Offices, Tribal historic preservation offices, and Certified Local Governments implement a public administration working with local communities and diverse groups paired with the new framework for the evaluation of historic significance based on the idea of an American mosaic that displays how historic preservation creates public value (Stipe & Lee, 1987).

Historic preservation generates public value uniquely in each state in two key ways: how each state defines historical significance and where the

preservation office is placed within the state government. First, in Chapter 5, I illustrated how different histories, traditions, and groups have settled in different states through examples from Oregon, Minnesota, Maryland, and New Mexico. Moreover, I illustrated how their landscapes and natural conditions have determined how these settlements happened and the typology of heritage as well. For instance, each of these four states is home to diverse Native American tribes, each with different traditions and historical interactions with settlers. Different explorers and immigration groups and patterns transformed the landscape in different ways: New Mexico with Spanish explorers, Minnesota with Finnish and German immigrants, and Maryland with Quaker settlements and Chinese and Korean immigration. Second, just like in the case of the arts, the State Historic Preservation Offices are located differently within each state's bureaucracy. How they are affiliated illustrates how the state administration envisions the public value of historic preservation. Oregon highlights the interconnectedness of historic preservation with natural resources, whereas Minnesota focuses on preservation's administrative process. Maryland considers preservation as part of the larger planning process, enhancing its value as the spirit and direction of the nation. Meanwhile, New Mexico emphasizes a comprehensive cultural management approach that fosters collaboration across various cultural domains and positions preservation's value in the larger cultural identity of the state.

Although economic benefits were not prominently featured among the values discussed throughout the book, it is worth noting how the debates about this value manifest differently across domains. The economic impact of the arts has been a major argument among arts advocates, even though it has been criticized as ineffective (Cohen et al., 2003; Sterngold, 2004). The work of state arts agencies has focused on the economic potential of the arts, and some states highlight the value of the arts as a catalyst for commerce. For instance, state arts agencies in Oregon and Maryland are placed within their state's economic agency. Interestingly, the topic of economic benefits did not emerge in the literature or programming of the humanities, whereas it is prominent in historic preservation, which is even listed in the Preservation Act alongside cultural, educational, aesthetic, inspirational, and energy benefits. The Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program serves as a prime example of federal and state initiatives that bolster the argument for the economic impact of historic preservation (NPS, 2022a, 2023a). Studies have corroborated that this program has increased private investment in the rehabilitation of historic properties (Ryberg-Webster, 2015). One successful example is the Illinois Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program, which has generated thousands of jobs, minimized waste from building materials, stimulated millions in private investment in historic sites, and provided essential affordable housing (National Trust, 2022b).

A place-based approach to the interpretation of the law developed programming that is characterized by co-creation between the administration and the citizens in all three domains. Since the 1960s, the tension that occurred in the process of implementing the laws has focused on how the vitality of the arts, the wisdom and vision of the humanities, and the spirit and direction of historic preservation could be supported by serving the public purpose and the public interest. The emphasis on aiming to serve the public brought the programming closer to the people by focusing on place. Through the histories and traditions of their people, places have shaped the interpretation of each of these domains and their values. By implementing a place-based approach, the government has developed a form of cultural federalism that supports a pluralistic culture, ultimately fostering democracy. In the next section, I conceptualize the result of this process as a pluralistic public culture.

PLURALISTIC PUBLIC CULTURE

Cultural federalism shapes culture as a *pluralistic public culture* through a place-based approach to policy. The goal is to sustain and strengthen a democratic country characterized by *pluralism* in the form of the coexistence of diverse cultures, values, and perspectives within a society. Pluralism encapsulates three dimensions: a web of institutions and organizations, multiple cultural domains, and a variety of values, such as the vitality of the arts, the wisdom and vision of the humanities, and the spirit and direction of historic preservation. In my analysis, I unpacked the role of the federal government, examined the development of state bureaucracies, and looked at four different states to illustrate how each state developed unique administrative structures. The exception is the state humanities councils, which are nonprofit organizations and are, therefore, independent agencies in every state and jurisdiction. Moreover, along with different administrative structures that emphasize the different values each state attributes to culture, within each domain, a variety of interpretations exist across the country. A place-based policy has aimed to reach people where they live and to enhance the distinctiveness of each place. The result is the enrichment of pluralism to support American democracy.

Along with pluralism, the emphasis is on the publicness of culture as something that is supported for the benefit of the public. The laws emphasize “public interest” (20 U.S.C. § 951) and “public purpose” (Pub. L. No. 96-515), and the development of cultural federalism has brought the decision-making process for cultural programming in each domain closer to the people in order to involve everyone. The value of each of these domains is filtered through the public purpose and interest to create public value. Public administration creates public value, as explained by Moore (1995), when it serves the public by focusing on what is both valued by the public and beneficial for the public

(Bryson et al., 2014; Virtanen & Jalonen, 2023). By connecting public leadership with citizens through co-creation, the vitality of the arts, the wisdom and vision of the humanities, and the spirit and direction of historic preservation become public value. The intervention of the government in matters of culture is justified by the intent to serve the public, the collectivity of the American people, and to create public value. Ultimately, public value is a social dialogue among a plurality of perspectives (Meyrick & Barnett, 2020). Rather than hierarchies, there are co-production and co-creation processes that aim to strengthen democracy.

Notably, the idea of pluralistic public culture builds upon and integrates two prior concepts: public culture and cultural pluralism. Kevin Mulcahy (1991) argued that public culture should aim to promote socially desirable outcomes and address public needs, as it is funded by a public agency like the NEA. He explained how the concept of patronage for a democratic institution is very different from how it operates under aristocratic rule. For instance, Mulcahy mentions how the Medici family could indulge their personal tastes when commissioning artwork without including the public, whereas the use of taxpayer money to purchase artwork empowers citizens to participate in oversight of cultural programs. I agree with these ideas, which are echoed in my analysis of American cultural policy, where public culture emerges as supporting the arts, the humanities, and historic preservation to serve the public interest and public purpose by creating public value. However, some perspectives do not share my optimism and express skepticism toward the current implementation of public culture (Ivey, 2008; Kidd, 2012). Bill Ivey, chair of the NEA in the late 1990s, highlights the shortcomings of the American government in coordinating government actions, nurturing expressive lives, and regulating the marketplace. Whereas Dustin Kidd, a pop culture expert, claims that America has had limited success in fostering culture. Indeed, I agree about the need for better coordination of government actions, which is one of the motivators of my research. However, even though there is still room for improvement in promoting public culture, my investigation has uncovered how much has been done so far and what is needed to improve the general understanding of this massive effort.

Along with the idea of public culture, pluralistic public culture integrates another analytical element into the understanding of how public administration shapes culture, which is cultural pluralism. Horace M. Kallen (1924; Kallen & Chapman, 1956) introduced the concept of cultural pluralism at the beginning of the 20th century when addressing issues of immigration and describing the complex relationship between democracy and culture in the United States. He suggested that the idea of America did not involve the destruction of distinctive cultural groups to conform to the dominant Anglo-Saxon one, but rather cherished every ethnic group's cultural heritage (Ratner, 1984). He contraposed

the idea of democracy with the notion of the melting pot, linking the fear of cultural diversity to elites' concerns about losing authority (Toll, 1997). In my analysis, I have highlighted how, in opposition to the idea of a melting, which suggests cultural assimilation,, a pluralistic culture enhances and supports democracy. I further expand on this idea of cultural pluralism as a celebration of diverse heritage across multiple dimensions. These dimensions include different institutions at the national, state, and local levels; the private and public sectors; different cultural domains; the regional variations among the domains; and the multiple values each domain embodies. Combining public culture and cultural pluralism, the idea of pluralistic public culture conceptualizes how public administration shapes culture within and toward democracy.

The goal of a pluralistic public culture is not only to strengthen democracy but also to better understand it in its complexities and contradictions. The Arts and Humanities Act grounds the values of the arts and humanities in the goal of developing a strong democracy. The Preservation Act does not link historic preservation to democracy; however, it does mention "public purpose," "the American people," and "future generations" (Pub. L. No. 96-515), expressing concern for creating public value. As stated throughout the book, the Preservation Act has been considered a procedural law (Alexander, 2012), whereas a more foundational discussion about the connection between historic preservation and democracy emerged out of the creation of the NPS framework. This framework considers what is worth preserving and guides the process of establishing historic significance. The NPS has changed the framework several times to reflect the way scholarship approaches the past. Through the 1990s, efforts to highlight the diversity of the history of places led to a more democratic and inclusive approach to preservation (Hayden, 1995), elevating the importance of the diverse history of places and leading preservation toward a democratic and inclusive approach (Dubrow, 1998). In 1993, scholars and NPS professionals convened to reshape the framework to adopt this broader perspective (NPS, 2018b), which includes ordinary people and everyday life (Dubrow, 1998; Foner, 1997; Nash et al., 2000). This approach to evaluating historical significance has been gradually elevating the history of ethnic and racial minorities and revealing forms of violence against these minorities perpetrated not only by totalitarian countries but also by democratic ones (Harrison, 2010). This underscores an important aspect connected to democracy that American public administration has been grappling with: acknowledging the atrocities of the past while empowering all people.

CONCLUSION

American public administration shapes culture as a pluralistic public culture through a place-based policy that implements and shapes cultural federalism,

multiple cultural domains, and public value. The goal is to support a democratic country characterized by pluralism in the form of the coexistence of diverse cultures, values, and perspectives within a society. The emphasis is on its publicness as something that is produced for the benefit of the public. The trajectory of the American government has developed a cultural federalism where each domain is defined through a geographical dimension, and the value of each domain is interpreted as serving the public purpose and public interest. What emerges is a place-based approach that aims to reach people where they live and enhances the distinctiveness of place. The result of this process is the enrichment of pluralism to support a strong democracy. Culture is plural not only because it is developed in different domains, such as the arts, the humanities, and historic preservation, but also because within each domain, different variations exist in different parts of the country. Overall, my analysis has revealed how pluralism encapsulates multilevel governance and multiple cultural domains as well as a variety of values, such as the vitality of the arts, the wisdom and vision of the humanities, and the spirit and direction of historic preservation. Together, these aspects of a pluralistic public culture strengthen democracy.

7. The paradox of a pluralistic public culture

This exploration of the American government's role in matters of culture led me to discover how American public administration supports a *pluralistic public culture* characterized by cultural federalism, multiple cultural domains, and various cultural values. Through a multilevel governance analysis of cultural policy in America, I have aimed to uncover a cultural federalism defined by a web of organizations that may seem invisible at first glance but are, in fact, numerous and actively sustaining the dynamics of the cultural sector. Cultural federalism encompasses multiple domains, and I have focused on three: the arts, the humanities, and historic preservation. For each domain, I have conducted a longitudinal analysis that presented the key laws that articulated their value for the country and established a federal bureaucracy. I traced how cultural federalism developed across national and state bureaucracies. At the same time, through a hermeneutic exercise, I highlighted the debates surrounding each domain, which sometimes directly and other times indirectly impact the programming of the organizations, revealing ever-changing definitions and values. These definitions and values are grounded in the language of the law but have slightly changed with the rise of new intellectual debates that influence the interpretation of the law. The following conclusive thoughts highlight (1) the defining characteristics of a pluralistic public culture, (2) the paradox of a pluralistic system meant for all yet invisible to many, and (3) the relevance of this exploration for scholars and practitioners, as well as a few ideas for future research.

PLURALISTIC PUBLIC CULTURE

A pluralistic public culture can be described as the harmonious coordination of diverse elements and even conflicting ideas, much like how the performance of an orchestra is shaped by the tension between the score and an ever-changing process of interpretation. Each section of the orchestra (cultural domain), such as the strings or woodwinds, is made up of different kinds of instruments (the states and the jurisdictional territories), such as the violin or the oboe.

All these instruments are part of this great orchestra performance (pluralism). The conductor (the government) ensures that the contributions of each instrument are finely tuned to create a balanced and cohesive performance (public value). However, the performance is not just about the resulting harmony; it is also shaped by the deeper underlying process of interpretation. Beneath this performance lies tension from the ongoing interpretation of the score (the law) and how the score is performed according to the evolving practices of each instrument or specific interpretations of the conductor (the intellectual debates). These tensions are what make each performance vibrant and unique and remain a driving force beneath the pluralistic public culture explored in the book.

Invisible Cultural Policy in America unveiled how the American government engages with cultural matters by fostering pluralism through cultural federalism. The system is pervasive and expansive as it includes federal, state, and local governments, intersects with the private sector, and includes several domains of culture. Programming in each domain is quite distributed and representative of the local population. I illustrated this aspect by examining the programming in each cultural domain in the states of Oregon, Minnesota, Maryland, and New Mexico. Pluralism is a characteristic of American public policy in general, and it has been studied in different fields (Hoberg, 1992; Sinclair & Whitford, 2012). In cultural policy, federal intervention guarantees that no state is left behind, with the federal government acting as an equalizer, ensuring that all Americans have access and opportunities regardless of where they live.

Cultural federalism functions through place-based policies, enhancing communities' traditions and their sense of place, and promoting place-based cultural practices. In Chapters 3, 4, and 5, I described the development of cultural federalism for each domain, illustrating how programming has grown at the state level through state arts agencies, state humanities councils, State Historic Preservation Offices, and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices. For instance, among the four states analyzed, each state has a different history of government support for the arts. Minnesota created a state arts organization back in 1903 and later developed regional councils that would decentralize the distribution of funding, supporting the needs of local artists and organizations. The development of cultural federalism has led each domain to adopt place-based practices, such as community arts, public humanities, and preservation of vernacular historical properties. In Chapter 6, I discussed how contemporary trends in programming reflect a spatial turn within each field. For example, programs like Oregon Humanities' Conversation Project exemplify public humanities by facilitating dialogues in community centers and libraries across urban and rural areas, grounding discussions in the cultural and historical context of each region. Similarly, the New Mexico Historic Preservation Division

works to preserve adobe buildings that represent vernacular practices, capturing the unique cultural and architectural heritage of the Southwest, while collaborating with local communities on restoration projects. These place-based approaches deepen connections with communities, emphasizing co-production and co-creation between local residents and the administration that developed these programs.

By embracing a pluralistic perspective that reflects the diversity of each region, cultural federalism shapes culture, aiming to create public value. The vitality of the arts, the wisdom and vision of the humanities, and the spirit and direction of historic preservation have been interpreted and implemented by American public administration to create public value. Even though the publicness of the values of each domain is clearly emphasized by the 1965 National Foundation of the Arts and Humanities Act (hereafter Arts and Humanities Act) and the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act (hereafter Preservation Act), their interpretation as *public value* is not straightforward and has been subject to a range of perspectives. The analysis of the public value of each domain was developed in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, illustrating how each domain generates public value by serving the collective needs and interests of American citizens. For instance, in Chapter 3, I described how the vitality of the arts in the early years of the National Endowment for the Arts translated into developing programs that make excellent art forms accessible nationally; over time, it focused on promoting access to and education in the arts. In the context of cultural federalism, bureaucracy shapes the values of each cultural domain, reflecting regional variations and traditions, creating public value by fostering a closer connection with the community. In Chapter 6, I highlighted how the place-based interpretation of the law enables the values of each domain to serve the public purpose and interest, supporting a pluralistic public culture that is representative of all people. By bringing bureaucracy and programming closer to the people, cultural federalism strengthens democracy.

The text of two laws provided the backbone of the analysis. As described in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, both the Arts and Humanities Act and the Preservation Act describe the role of government in matters of culture and state the values of the arts, humanities, and historic preservation for all Americans. Moreover, as highlighted in Chapter 6, the language of these laws emphasizes the democratic aim of supporting culture. One major difference is the nature of the two laws, which shapes the public administration discourse in these domains in different ways. The Preservation Act is defined as a procedural law, and the literature often places the law itself at the center of historic preservation debates. This focus highlights how procedural requirements shape practices (King, 2000) and reveals where the field is after so many years (Potter, 2016). In contrast, the Arts and Humanities Act serves as a foundational law that established the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National

Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). As a result, discussions center less on procedural elements and more on the roles and public influence of these organizations, with their leaders often at the forefront of cultural policy debates. Throughout the book, I have illustrated the prominence of these agency chairs as public figures, a contrast to the relative lack of attention given to individual leadership in the historic preservation literature.

In my hermeneutic analysis, I focused on the democratic process of the interpretation and implementation of these two laws, highlighting the intertextuality of intellectual debates. In Chapters 3, 4, and 5, I examined how the debates in each domain impacted government cultural programming over time, bringing together the debates about culture in theory and culture in action, as briefly illustrated in Chapter 2. The implications for cultural programming have continued to evolve, shaped by diverse perspectives and sometimes divisive disagreements. The controversies, including the interpretation of a monument or an art exhibit, are part of a democratic process that seeks to support pluralism while fostering public value. The point is not to silence these controversies, choose one point of view over the other, or eliminate the conflict. Rather, I align with Hunter's (1991) view that "[m]ost of the time such disagreement does not create confusion in the public order but is simply part of the give and take of social life in a democracy" (p. 60). Moreover, these debates bring to the surface the evolving conception of democracy, highlighting the failures that coexist with the ideals of democracy, especially when considering what is worth preserving. As noted by the historian Michael Kammen (1972), "There is both grandeur and pettiness in the so-called American experience" (p. xiii). Ultimately, the entanglements between public administration and intellectual debates underscore the significance of intertextuality in shaping our understanding of programming and policy implementation in a democracy.

This investigation revealed a unifying thread among the arts, humanities, and historic preservation, three distinct worlds that not only have separate administrations but also engage different intellectual communities. Each of these three cultural domains has its own journals, academic departments, and bodies of knowledge, and they are typically studied in isolation, with little overlap. However, studying them together unveiled a common thread beneath a vast and distinct body of literature and a notably fragmented public administration system, revealing how place-based policies shape collective practice across these three domains. Through cultural federalism, each of these fields developed by strengthening ties with specific locations, suggesting that their practices can be better understood by applying urban studies concepts, which emphasize spatial relationships. For example, a recent study highlighted the intersection of the arts and historic preservation in urban contexts (Ryberg-Webster et al., 2024). Building on this example of integration with urban tools, future research could explore arts-led, humanities-led, or heritage-led

development. Further investigation could explore how applying urban studies concepts to these fields can uncover new insights into their place-based impacts and contribute to more cohesive policy development.

After considering the strengths of a pluralistic public culture, I would be remiss if I didn't also acknowledge its limitations. While a pluralistic approach to culture brings resources to communities and supports diverse cultural expressions, it also has inherent limitations shaped by the interplay between pluralism and public value. Cultural expressions that generate public value often prioritize community over professional expertise, the ordinary over the exceptional, and family-friendly content over more provocative or edgy expressions. For example, programming decisions might favor community art projects, like local festivals or murals, which engage a broad audience while limiting support for avant-garde theater or experimental installations that might challenge societal norms. Viewing the vitality of the arts through this lens of public value creates room for a specific range of actions—yet, however pluralistic, it inherently limits the breadth of artistic possibilities. If a pluralistic public culture must account for representation, potential offense, and perceptions of obscenity, it may struggle to accommodate expressions that are provocative, unsettling, or even considered obnoxious. This observation poses a few questions: By defining pluralism as serving the public value, is the government expanding cultural definitions in one direction while excluding others? What about artists whose work challenges the canon and traditional norms? Should it be the role of the private sector to support this provocative type of work, especially when artists' motivations may aim at something that is not necessarily aligned with public value? Indeed, donors and private businesses play a significant role in fostering culture's limitless possibilities, which underscores the importance of maintaining a plurality of actors to support and advance the cultural sector.

THE PARADOX

After uncovering the complex infrastructure that supports a pluralistic public culture, I am left grappling with a paradox: While the government's support for culture is everywhere, its very ubiquity renders it invisible. Four main factors contribute to this invisibility. First, culture is not a monolithic concept in American cultural policy, and it is articulated in many different domains, resulting in a fragmented cultural system. The existence of different cultural domains preceded the federal government's intervention, which occurred quite late. As the laws shaping these cultural domains were passed in the mid-1960s, this intervention entered cultural fields already developed in their professional infrastructure and intellectual norms. Second, American cultural policy is not mandated by a single national government. Instead, it is decentralized,

leaving the majority of programming and activities to the states (Schuster, 2002). Third, each cultural domain has developed unique state infrastructures. For instance, the arts have established state arts agencies, which are government institutions, while the humanities operate through private nonprofits as state humanities councils. Finally, within each cultural domain, the bureaucracy is often different from state to state. For instance, in Oregon, the State Historic Preservation Office is a part of the Parks and Recreation Department, whereas in Minnesota, it is part of the Department of Administration. With 50 states and six jurisdictional territories, capturing this diversity is challenging, which makes these organizations difficult to recognize and further contributes to the invisibility of government activities. This diversity in bureaucratic organization not only makes these institutions hard to identify but also highlights an intriguing paradox. On the one hand, these variations across domains and states obscure the visibility of the cultural policy infrastructure. On the other hand, this very system ensures that its presence across the country meets diverse professional needs, values, and local traditions wherever people live. Quite a paradox, indeed.

Highlighting this paradox raises the need to better understand how this system is appreciated by academia, practitioners, and the general public. In particular, future research could identify which groups have limited awareness of these government processes, as such gaps in understanding can reduce opportunities for collaboration and also weaken civic engagement because the government is not recognized as a contributing actor. A future investigation could examine public awareness of government involvement in these programs and evaluate the effectiveness of citizen engagement developed through co-production and co-creation initiatives. This investigation could provide deeper insights into public participation in government programs, adding nuance to existing data. For instance, since 1982, the NEA has been administering a survey of public participation in the arts, monitoring how people take part in artistic activities throughout the country (NEA, 2023a). This survey can be the ideal research tool to collect information about people's awareness of the government's role in the arts. The results could reveal if there are significant gaps in public knowledge or misconceptions that need to be addressed through targeted educational initiatives and outreach campaigns. Moreover, it would be important to verify how much awareness there is among artists, practitioners in each field, and policymakers.

As I further reflect on the paradox of an invisible cultural policy and its limitations, I also wonder whether this invisibility is truly an issue. Indeed, for practitioners in the sector, navigating such a complex system can be confusing and frustrating. For instance, museum professionals often face the challenge of maneuvering through a maze of local, state, and federal funding opportunities, each with its own set of requirements and reporting standards, which can

be both time-consuming and overwhelming. However, this complexity is also what is necessary to support a pluralistic democracy. Cultural policy invisibility stems from the intricate workings of public administration, rather than a deliberate attempt to hide government involvement. The crucial aspect is the pluralistic nature of the American system, which is designed to support a public culture to strengthen democracy. The invisibility of cultural policy can be compared with a car engine: even though it is hidden and complex, it makes the car function, fulfilling its purpose. In other policy contexts, this invisibility has been judged as detrimental to democracy. Suzanne Mettler's (2011) *The Submerged State* analyzes three reforms from the Obama administration—student aid, tax relief, and health care—revealing hidden state actions. Mettler argues that the invisibility of government policies is harmful to democracy by making it difficult for the public to recognize these efforts, which in turn fuels public distrust of government. While I share some of Mettler's concerns, I contend that the invisibility of cultural policy is not necessarily harmful to democracy. Instead, it serves as a functional aspect to foster democratic pluralism. This perspective suggests that cultural policy, although often invisible, plays a vital role in supporting a pluralistic public culture. I appreciate these public administration efforts to support pluralism, and at the same time, I encourage further research to better understand them and help practitioners navigate the challenges posed by this complexity.

A PATH FORWARD: COLLABORATIVE INSIGHTS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Invisible Cultural Policy in America articulates the complexity of how public administration is intertwined with such different realms as the arts, the humanities, and historic preservation, providing a basis for understanding several other aspects of the cultural system. First, understanding cultural federalism helps clarify not only why the United States lacks a ministry of culture but also that this absence does not imply a lack of interest in culture. What is needed is a deeper understanding of cultural federalism in its pluralistic governance. Second, understanding how public administration shapes culture can help the process of cultural planning. If the process could start from a clear understanding of the bureaucracy and the cultural activities attached to it, the subsequent planning and implementation could be more intentional and efficient. Third, bringing attention to the definition of each domain, from the language provided in the law to an examination of cultural programs, demonstrates that definitions are not an empty intellectual exercise. They determine what gets funded, taught, and presented. This dynamic shows the entanglements of what I described in Chapter 2 as culture in theory and culture in action, underscoring the need to merge theoretical conversations about culture

within cultural policy. Moving forward requires a synergy between scholars who can bridge theoretical frameworks, practitioners who implement programs, and policymakers who shape the systems of support.

By mapping out the main organizations involved in cultural federalism, *Invisible Cultural Policy in America* provides the lay of the land for further research, as mentioned earlier, while also addressing some limitations of the study. For instance, while Chapters 3, 4, and 5 only briefly mentioned the local level when examining each cultural domain, it should not be seen as a dismissal of local cultural policy. Instead, it underscores the importance of understanding the intersection between the national and state levels, a perspective that could be further explored in specific cities. Additionally, my analysis of federal organizations enacted by the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act did not consider the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), created in 1996 with the Museum and Library Services Act as an amendment to the Arts and Humanities Act. Future research could explore the cultural governance fostered by this organization, recognizing libraries as invaluable treasures of American communities. Other paths to continue exploring the complexities of American cultural policy could include comparing practices across regions or investigating the politics of funding in each state, examining whether differences reflect the states' Republican or Democrat affiliation. Finally, given that this study intersects with broader public administration concerns, further research could examine how evolving conceptions of federalism, the framing of budgetary priorities at both the state and federal levels, and the setting of the US president's overall agenda impact cultural policy.

Better collaboration and coordination between different cultural domains could bring to the forefront a united cultural sector that could amplify its collective impact, advocate more effectively for public support, and create more cohesive strategies for addressing societal challenges through the arts, humanities, and preservation efforts. How can coordination be orchestrated? Previously, I mentioned how applying urban studies concepts could fuel a more cohesive approach, leveraging the place-based impact of each domain. Now, I would like to provide three additional suggestions. First, as illustrated in Chapter 3, the Oregon Cultural Trust is a funding mechanism that aims to support Oregon culture, including the arts, humanities, and historic preservation. The five partners in the Oregon Cultural Trust are the Oregon Arts Commission, Oregon Humanities, the Oregon Historical Society, the Oregon Heritage Commission, and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (Oregon Cultural Trust, 2024). Second, each domain has several national organizations that bring together the state actors; for instance, in the humanities, the Federation of State Humanities Councils serves as a support and guidance hub for state humanities councils, and the National Humanities Alliance is an advocacy organization. Third, significant data collection efforts have

been undertaken through a 2024 partnership between the American Academy of Arts & Sciences, the NEH, and the NEA to create a comprehensive inventory of American cultural organizations (NEH, 2024e). Future research could focus on ways to develop synergies in the form of collaboration between citizens and government, different states within the same domain, and different domains at the national, state, and local levels.

I hope *Invisible Cultural Policy in America* has sparked some interest in discovering more about American efforts in the arts, humanities, and historic preservation. An enormous aspect of cultural production is mainly commercial, globally exporting American culture, sustained by big businesses. As mentioned in Chapter 1, this highly visible aspect of American culture is what drew my attention to American culture while growing up in Italy. However, my investigation has also revealed the existence of significant government support for people's cultural lives. Despite the paradox of creating an invisible cultural policy, fostering democracy has been the overarching goal of governmental intervention in matters of culture. This goal is supported by pluralism, co-production, co-creation, a network of organizations, public values, a multitude of artistic expressions, the public humanities, and the preservation of vernacular buildings. Yet beneath this kaleidoscopic cultural infrastructure, strong tensions persist over the interpretation of the fundamental elements of cultural policy—specifically, the debates around who should benefit from government intervention and what forms of culture should be nurtured. Ultimately, this robust infrastructure, combined with the dynamic tensions about who and what should be prioritized, reveals a great example of a democratic government's intervention in matters of culture. Pluralistic and dynamic, this infrastructure is constantly evolving, with the potential for further improvement as ongoing exploration deepens the understanding of the complexities of American cultural policy.

I began the book by highlighting the negative implications of invisible cultural policy, referring to something that lacks the necessary attention or recognition. I now see it from a more positive perspective: invisibility represents the mechanisms that, though unseen, allow systems to function—like a car engine. In the case of cultural policy, it quietly support democracy. I conclude by embracing the paradox of cultural policy's invisibility—a pluralistic system serving all, yet invisible to many—as something both puzzling and fascinating, and ultimately worth examining.

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