

The land of (almost) no central government arts spending? Cultural policy, Protestant denominations, and the cultural policy singularity of United States of America

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Abstract

Cultural policy in USA has usually been considered an exception at the international level, not only because it constitutes a unique model due to its liberal orientation and its lack of central coordination, but also because it stands out for the limitations it places on federal action. The explanation for this has traditionally focused on external factors such as the rejection of totalitarianism or the strength of the private cultural market.

However, this emphasis on factors external to the cultural system is exaggerated and above all, underestimates internal factors of a religious nature. For this reason, we propose that one of the explanatory factors for this singularity is Protestantism in its most fundamentalist variants, which promotes an anti-intellectual and puritanical political culture. Consequently, a part of the population and especially the political elite linked to the Christian right has limited the consolidation and empowerment of cultural policy since the 1960s.

Keywords: cultural policy model, arts funding, religious denomination, Protestantism, Christian right, United States of America.

Introduction

One of the big questions in comparative cultural policy is explaining why a country with a very high per capita income, the relatively strong presence of the creative industry, and a growing

population with high levels of education, has some of the lowest levels of cultural policy development. The suggestion that the US does not have a cultural policy (or at least not in the sense it is understood in Europe) may seem exaggerated, but when considering other countries, the difference between public cultural spending is abysmal: in the US, local spending on art is 860 million dollars, state-level spending is 379 million dollars, and federal agency spending (the National Endowment for the Arts, or NEA) is only 155 million—an expenditure that in real terms (discounting inflation) has remained stationary since the year 2000 (Stubbs and Mullaney-Loss 2020). In contrast, cultural spending in other European countries was 15,230, 11,740, and 6,378 million dollars for France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, respectively (European Commission 2014, Eurostat 2018). If we compare this spending per capita, the difference becomes more evident: \$4.19 in the US (Stubbs and Mullaney-Loss 2020), compared to €236 in France, €131 in Germany, and €101 in the United Kingdom (European Commission 2014, Eurostat 2018).

The usual explanation for this exception is based on three main sets of arguments used to justify the unique weakness of central government intervention in the arts in the US. First, the political anti-totalitarianism sentiment in the US as a result of the traumatic experience of the Second World War stands out, especially with the anti-communism messages of the Cold War later coming to represent the country's rejection of the model of State control of culture (Cherbo and Wyszomirski 2000, Wyszomirski 2004). Second, the liberal and libertarian spirit of the US political culture is based on the culture of not-for-profit associations unrelated to the State (Mulcahy 2003, Mulcahy 2002). Thirdly, the overwhelming dominance of the private cultural market and commercial cultural products in the US, in a context of global cultural dominance in the creative industries, constitute the bulk of cultural consumption in the country (DiMaggio and Mukhtar 2004, Gans 1985).

Although these factors are relevant to the political culture of the US during the 20th century, to us they seem to not completely explain its uniqueness. There are other countries with an anti-totalitarian and pro-market experience, such as its former Metropolis, Great Britain and

its other former colonies. However, these countries have not developed the US's aversion to cultural intervention by the State¹. While countries like Great Britain have established mechanisms for the control and limitation of state power in culture (Mangset 2017a) and are at the bottom in terms of per capita spending in Europe (Rius-Ulldemolins, Pizzi, and Rubio Arostegui 2019), their cultural spending per capita is, as we have already pointed out, 20 times higher than that of the US. Indeed, a global trend which also encompasses European cultural policy (Rius-Ulldemolins, Pizzi, and Rubio Arostegui 2019, Schuster 1998), is based on the predominance of the market—or of the neoliberal ideology that justifies it. However, this does not mean that cultural institutions have been privatised or European cultural spending reduced to the level of the US. Finally, although anti-communist values certainly continue to characterize the political culture of a part of the North American population (Perrin et al. 2014), the Cold War ceased to be a central axis in national politics a long time ago and in any case there are many European countries with right-wing populist tendencies, and this has not limited—at least for now—cultural policy in these countries (Bonet and Zamorano 2020, Jansma 2019).

Given all the above, we find the explanatory hypotheses put forth so far to be relevant but insufficient and believe that an additional factor has not yet been sufficiently considered: the influence of Puritan Protestantism. As shown in the European case, and in addition to other variables usually considered, the influence of the non-conformist or Calvinist Protestant religious denomination partly explains the formation of various arts councils and limited development of European social policies in Great Britain, Switzerland, and Germany (Rius-Uldemollins and Pizzi 2020). Some authors have analysed the determinants of public spending in the US, highlighting the demographic characteristics associated with different attitudes towards financing the arts in each of these countries (Jacobsmeier 2021). In some cases, this analysis has focused—as in this article—on the opponents of arts funding by examining classic sociodemographic variables such as age, gender, ethnicity, education, or income. However, to date, only conservative versus liberal self-identification has been used to assess ideological or

cultural logics in this field of public management which are thus, also subject to the debate on values.

Furthermore, in relation to religious characterisation, only the declaration as Christian or non-Christian has so far been used, even though 70% of the US population state that they belong to the Christian denomination (Pew Research Center 2014). Therefore, the most notable analysis error of previous studies was that they ignored more than 10 different religious denominations and churches, especially Protestant ones, representing a great range of positions and orientations (Smith 1990). Likewise, since the 1990s, the capacity to mobilise, influence, and radicalise positions in sectors of Protestant denominations has become especially relevant (Layman 1997). In this sense, the traditional divisions between Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and religiously unaffiliated individuals are insufficient to understand the different political positions or their attitudes towards cultural politics.

Given all the above, in our opinion, the influence of the different branches of Protestantism on cultural politics has not yet been sufficiently studied in detail. Thus, in this article we assume that this religious denomination is significant not only to understand the choices of individuals or of political culture, but also to understand how the influence of this religious factor can explain the singular pro-disarticulated institutional configuration limited to federal cultural policy in the US. Likewise, this article tries to illuminate this question both from a *longue durée* and an international perspective by relating it to the root of this phenomenon in Europe, in terms of the influence of non-conformist and Calvinist Protestants. We believe we must take this viewpoint to understand the uniqueness of the US and its permanent deviation from other international models².

Religion and cultural policy: the influence of protestant denominations

Some authors have taken a comparative perspective to study the influence of religiosity and its attitude to the arts (Katz-Gerro and Meier Jaeger 2012), but far fewer studies have focused on the influence of religion on cultural politics (Rius-Uldemollins and Pizzi 2020). In the case of Europe, some studies highlighted differences in the institutional roots of the different states as well as the division into three broad religious categories: Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox. This division explains significant national differences in today's European countries that go beyond individual religiosity (Nelsen et al. 2015). In fact, they can be considered as social and political phenomena observable as a *longue durée* trend, where the sway of majority religious denominations (or minorities with State-level influence) can explain the public policy models (Knutsen 2004), including differences in the models of cultural policies (Rius-Uldemollins and Pizzi 2020). In this respect, religious denomination is a component of the factors explaining inequalities in access to, and participation in, culture. Furthermore, it is significant that religious denomination can help explain political processes such as the varying promotion and acceptance of the Welfare State and the social policy models adopted by European States. According to Esping-Andersen (Esping-Andersen 1993), Central European States can be characterised by their conservatism and unwillingness to spend money on social policies. Additionally, Manow (2004) argues that there is a clear difference in Central European policy that cannot be explained solely by political and institutional factors but rather, requires an explanation in terms of religion (at least in part).

Religion has led to differences among welfare regimes in Catholic, Lutheran Protestant, and Reformed/Non-Conformist Protestant countries (Huber, Ragin, and Stephens 1993, Castles 1994). According to Manow (idem), Reformed/Non-Conformist Protestantism's starting point is an anti-State stance which conceives the State as an actor that is subsidiary to the community's voluntary action—a societal model found in Great Britain, The Netherlands, and Switzerland. Thus, these differences in cultural policies stem, in part, from the influence of diverse religious denominations in each case. They also explain why Germany lags behind France in cultural policy development, as well as the greater separation between politics and cultural management

in Protestant countries (Ahearne 2003, Mangset 2017b)³. More specifically, the influence of religion is not limited to the differences between Catholic and Protestant countries. This is because we must also distinguish between Lutheran Protestantism and other variants such as Calvinist and Non-Conformist Protestantism, given that the latter shaped the development of the State and culture in other directions (Gorski 1993). In countries such as Germany and Sweden, Lutheran Protestantism became a Church that was very close to, and in some respects dependent on, the State⁴. In contrast, in countries including Switzerland, The Netherlands, and Great Britain, the Reformed, Non-Conformist Church played a key role both in shaping, and later, in developing the State (Heidenheimer 1983).

Thus, the presence of reformed currents of Protestantism, such as Calvinism, led to a disciplinary revolution that fostered a State imbued with asceticism, bureaucratic control, and rationality (Gorski 1993). The disciplinary revolution in countries such as The Netherlands led to most of the population calling themselves Calvinists; the same also occurred in other countries including Germany, which was united under Prussia. In the latter case, although the population remained Lutheran, many in the State's elite were drawn from Calvinist immigrants or were educated in schools where Calvinism held sway. As a result, it was Calvinism, not Lutheranism that decisively shaped the long-term development of the State and of its social institutions (Gorski 1995). The key impact of this orientation is that it strengthened direct State control over the population, not through physical commercial means but rather, through iron self-discipline and asceticism, which led to little money being spent on culture. In addition, other non-conformist currents—such as Methodism—created a political awareness among the working classes that rejected State interference and control in citizens' lives. Non-Conformism's insistence on responsibility, the autonomy of the local congregation, separation between the Church and State, and ascetic, prudent individualism led to a decentralised, local, Congregationalist, anti-State Church that starkly contrasted with the Episcopal conception of the Church.

These characteristics were the fruit of the religious persecution suffered by non-conformist creeds at the hands of other religions and by the State (Manow 2004). Non-Conformism was present in politics through highly influential parties in parliaments and governments, and in broad social movements (Catterall 1993). Thus, this religious and social logic, which decisively influences the forms of social and political organisation, would later be clearly reflected in the internal social and religious diversity and unique institutional configuration of the US (Fischer 1989). Hence, the non-conformist and puritanical currents of the diverse Protestant denominations would be especially influential through the centuries of *longue durée* (Morone 2003). Indeed, authors including Robert Bellah have highlighted the heritage of American culture in the form of the Protestant structure (Bellah 2002). One of the effects of these cultural patterns is specified, among other elements, in the inheritance of the congregational logic and therefore, in the rejection of central coordination and its principle of local self-government. This logic would translate into the rejection of a central local authority (evidenced in Europe in the ‘arm’s length’ model) and in promotion of the institutionalisation of culture at the local level. In this sense, far from disappearing with the relative secularisation of USA society, we believe that this inheritance must be considered to understand the particular development of cultural policy in the US in the 20th and 21st centuries (Butler, Wacker, and Balmer 2011), as well as the limitation of its institutionalisation as public policy.

Development of cultural policy in the United States: the characterisation of an exception

The *zeitgeist* of the 1960s and its focus on the empowerment of individual creativity pushed cultural policy to grow in every developed country (Wyszomirski 2004), albeit at different levels and orientations, especially in terms of the financing model and the delimitation of responsibilities between the public, private, and third sector (Cummings, Milton C., Schuster, J. Mark Davidson, 1989). The US was certainly not an exception in this sense and so,

during the last third of the 20th century, there were examples of the development of agencies with public funding at different levels of various public administrations, with their emergence at the state and local levels being especially relevant (Cherbo and Wyszomirski 2000, Redaelli 2019). However, this convergence of worldwide cultural policy models, which was touted as a growing trend in the 1990s by various authors (Schuster 1998, Moulin 1997), did not affect how public activities directed towards culture in the US were implemented because they did not change the values that legitimised or slowed down the characteristic cultural development of this country (Wyszomirski 1996).

Therefore, there is now a consensus that the US constitutes an international cultural policy model in itself. Indeed, some authors including Kevin Mulcahy have pointed out the country's libertarian liberal character, which differentiates it from the Anglo-Saxon model rooted in Britain but still present in Britain's former colonies (Mulcahy 2002, Mulcahy 2017). The USA model widely divides cultural policy, under many guises, into around 200 programs through some 30 federal agencies (Wyszomirski 2004) and the federal level, although it is supposed to exercise national leadership of cultural policy, usually this is implicit, indirect and segmented (Wyszomirski 1995). On the contrary, although the so-called liberal model is characterised by the premise of the arm's length management that separates government from direction by the arts, it has a central body or central agency (or sub-state agencies in the case of decentralised countries) that advises it, or even directly manages funds to aid the arts (Mangset 2017a). Likewise, in decentralised countries, coordination agencies, such as in the Swiss or German case (Paquette 2019, Zamorano, M., Rius-Ulldemolins, J., Bonet, L. 2018), have been developed and strengthened at the federal level since the 2000s. However, the most relevant characteristic of US policy is its great weakness and the inexistence of a federalising and coordinating logic at the federal level (a vertical federalism), making it a singularity among advanced countries (Loughlin 2017).

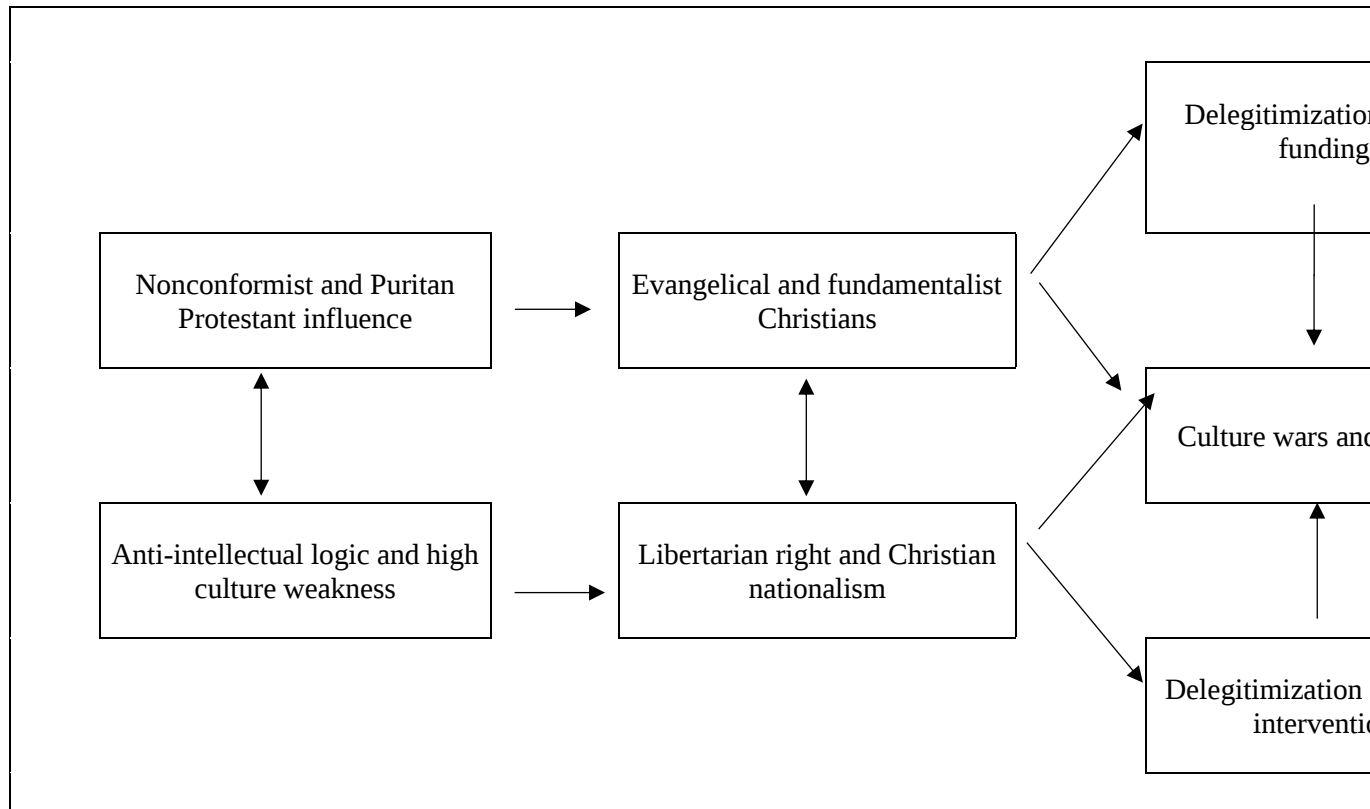
Firstly, compared to other advanced countries, there was a significant 'delay' in the US in terms of the official creation of cultural policy. While the Arts Council of Great Britain was

created in 1946 and the *Ministère des Cultural Affairs* of France was created in 1959, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), a federal agency for the promotion of the arts in the US, was not created until 1965⁵. As stated at the beginning of this article, according to Margaret Wyszomirski, this phenomenon can be explained by the rejection of totalitarian models and especially, anti-communism sentiment (Wyszomirski 1994). The presence of anti-communism sentiment in the post-war witch hunt was revitalised as a rejection of the Chinese cultural revolution and the defections of Soviet artists. This period coincided with the establishment of the NEA and constituted an argument against the intervention of the State in culture. This was because this thinking was considered a way to control individual creativity and therefore, American values, pushing towards closer and more local cultural policy (Wyszomirski 2004, Redaelli 2020). Other authors have highlighted the American political culture and prevalence of a bottom-up federalist logic in which anything not specified as federal in the constitution and its amendments must be developed at the state or local level (Paquette 2019, Zamorano, M., Rius-Ulldemolins, J., Bonet, L. 2018). Indeed, cultural policy has become more federalised since the 1970s (Binkiewicz 2004). However, starting in the 1990s and continuing up until today, it quickly ran into limitations and opposition that slowed the process, with state and local arts agencies being the most active leaders in the development of cultural policy in the US (Mulcahy 2002, Redaelli 2008).

Fundamentalist Protestantism and the instability of federal cultural policy in the United States of America

Although, as previously analysed, the attitude towards cultural spending can be explained by multiple factors, we believe this emphasis on external factors is exaggerated. Above all, it underestimates internal factors such as political culture (with religion featuring prominently among these factors) and its influence on public policy, as proposed in figure 1.

Figure 1. Conceptual diagram of the influence of Protestantism on cultural policy in the United States of America.



Source: the authors.

First, institutions of high culture were created later in the US compared to Europe and were located in the large cities of the West Coast and Midwest, thereby enjoying less legitimacy and protection by elites (DiMaggio 1992, DiMaggio 1991). Second, the division between the tastes for high culture and other cultural forms in the US was less marked and its legitimacy to impose itself upon the private and public spheres was less notable (Lamont 1992). All this can be explained by the hostile climate to intellectualism that, since the beginning of the 19th century and through the 20th century, has promoted fundamentalist Protestantism, specially some branches of Evangelicalism (Hofstadter 1963, Hankins 2010).⁶ Thus, fundamentalist

Protestantism generates an anti-modernist logic and creates a moral and cultural cleavage between rural, conservative, and upright America and the avant-garde and perverted big city (Hofstadter 1963: 123). This opposition was ever present in the imagination of a large part of the American population up until the 21st century and would once again be updated in the culture of the Tea Party and in nationalist Christianity (Perrin et al. 2014).

Given all the above, opposition to the development of cultural policy is not new; it first arose in the 1930s when congress prevented the financing of aid to creators, arguing that their motives were subversive (Binkiewicz 2004). In other words, even before the logic of the cultural battles that began in the 1970s, there was an attitude of resistance in relation to the development of a federal cultural policy⁷. This would not be completely overcome until the Presidency of John F. Kennedy (the first Catholic president) who boosted and legitimised the future federal artistic agency (Martel 2011). In any case, from the time of the founding of the NEA in the late 1960s, it encountered volatile and changing institutional political contexts, both during the Carter and Reagan presidencies. Furthermore, in 1989, a turn against the politics of the arts led to another large cut in funding and an organisational adaptation (Wyszomirski 2004).

In this sense, the first great cultural battle that legitimization of cultural politics had to face began in the 1990s with the controversy of an exhibition containing the work *Piss Christ* by Andrés Serrano and photos by Robert Mapplethorpe, which were considered sacrilegious. These cultural battles in the conservative media were led by the Association of American Families, chaired by Pastor Don Wildmon of the United Methodist Church. This was the most important of the Methodist/Pietist churches at the time, and their agenda put the NEA at the centre of one of the chief cultural clashes of the time. There were successful campaigns against federal arts funding that received considerable support both in the Senate and in Congress, albeit without actually managing to revoke the funding (Moen 1997). Indeed, the House of Representatives voted twice (in 1997 and 1998) to abolish the NEA, although the Senate has maintained the

agency and its budget since then. Nevertheless, the context of institutional instability the NEA was subjected to limited its posterior development (Wyszomirski 1994).

There is also debate about the causes of this unusual instability and the regression of cultural politics, which has been interpreted in two ways: either as a result of hostility from political elites or because of citizens' detachment from cultural policy (Tepper 2011). As DiMaggio pointed out, rejection of the arts and state aid was not supported by the general polls. Notwithstanding, since the 1970s a growing hostility could be detected, especially between conservative Christians and Republican partisans who, despite being a minority (representing 15–20% of American society) mobilised forcefully and effectively against federal cultural policy (DiMaggio and Pettit 1999, Rozell and Wilcox 1996). For this reason, one of the peculiarities of the US is the attitude of its population towards the arts. Thus, variables that are normally related to high participation in the arts (higher educational and income levels) are also consistent with a conservative vision of the role of the State towards the arts, especially at the federal level (DiMaggio and Pettit 1999). This attitude, which is typical of the middle classes, can be associated with affiliation to conservative Protestant denominations. This weakens what are usually the social bases of legitimization of cultural policies in Europe—where the middle layers of the population are always more inclined to adopt cultural innovations (Menger 2017). On the contrary, this conservative Christian minority, which are usually affiliated to the right wing of the Republican Party, have developed a discourse that is antagonistic to the concept of what they consider elitist high culture and have made elimination of support for the arts, especially at the federal level, one of their priorities (Jacobsmeier 2021, Wyszomirski 1994).

In this sense, the appearance of the Tea Party meant a deepening rejection of USA cultural policy by an increasingly mobilised minority against what they perceived as denationalisation and capture by the country's elites (Perrin et al. 2011). However, the Tea Party was not a coherent group but rather, a movement with a deep cultural and symbolic content characterised by a Christian nationalism and right populism. This was rooted in what they conceived as the essential aspects of the nation and, in terms of the arts, supposed an

appreciation of what they believed to be their own rejection of ‘foreign elements’, either coming from outside or within their own borders (Perry 2013). These characteristics are now shared with other far-right populist movements rooted in nativist nationalism—idealisation of the past, and rejection of postmodernity (Jansma 2019, Vrhoci 2019), in the US, this is related to a cultural policy that a large part of the population ascribes to and a logic of rejection of cultural policy by the State. This logic has crystallised in the reinforcement of the cultural populism previously present in the US which connects with the populism of the extreme right and focuses on idealisation of the past, rejection of foreign elements, and nativism. Hence, this represents an attack on the supposed cultural elitism reinforced by the State—a dialogue present at a global level, especially in the US and Europe (Jansma 2019, Vrhoci 2019).

In this sense, there is debate about whether this logic constitutes a confrontation between elites or an opposition between the moral and political values of the US. According to opinion polls such as the General Social Survey (NORC 2016), support for financing of the arts has remained stable or has slightly improved since the 1990s. Therefore, some authors argue that the tension against funding of the arts is now mainly preserved by the conservative elites (Jacobsmeier 2021) because of the electoral revenues they expect to gain from it. A good example of this was the cultural battle played out at the Brooklyn Museum with Mayor Giuliani’s attack Chris Ofili’s *The Holy Virgin Mary* (1999) visual exhibition there. However, according to other studies, these cultural battles are not limited to elites but rather, reveal deeper clashes in political culture (Hankins 2010). This is reflected in the conflict generated by cultural activities and attempts to censor cultural products by civil society (individuals, churches, or associations) at the local level rather than the national level (Tepper 2011).

In this context, the activities of the fundamentalist minority have been decisive in explaining the ability to block the development of cultural policy. According to various surveys, members of conservative denominations are less likely to support high culture and its presence in education, be it avant-garde or classical (DiMaggio and Bryson 2000). This trend is especially marked in denominations considered conservative according to the classification

developed for the General Social Survey in their report, *The influence of religion on willingness to spend* (Smith 1990). In 1980 and 1987, Protestants were less favourable towards the idea of subsidising the arts than Catholics, Jews, or religiously unaffiliated individuals (DiMaggio and Pettit 1999: 21). Thus, in contrast to northern and central Europe in which the middle classes represented the central support for the legitimization of cultural policy, fiscal conservatism reduced the likelihood of the most educated sections of society supporting spending on the arts (ibid.: 28), thereby weakening support for cultural spending. On the contrary, in the US, various studies in the 1980s and 1990s under the title *Americans and the Arts* (National Research Center of the Arts 1973, 1974, 1980, 1987 and 1992) found significant opposition to general spending on the arts. This was especially the case at the federal level among educated white men of Protestant denomination, although this resistance was less pronounced for arts education programs at the local level (DiMaggio and Pettit 1999). However, these surveys considered religious families but disregarded the influence other elements might have had on the type of denomination or its relationship with the ideological orientation of the interviewees.

Methodology and data use and exploitation

The article aims to delve into this detected trend in opposition to cultural spending by fundamentalist Protestants and was based on exploitation of the data from the 2016 General Social Survey (GSS). This is a representative survey of 2,867 cases throughout the US, first collected in 1972, that aims to capture and allow the analysis of trends in public opinions, attitudes, and behaviours. Currently based at the University of Chicago, the surveys are implemented biennially. We chose the 2016 survey because it focused one of its questionnaire blocks on the arts commissioned by the NEA. The 2016 study surveyed 2,687 nationally representative people and collected 961 variables that covered opinions and attitudes about the values, religion, and national politics of Americans, among other elements.

To clarify the influence of religious affiliation on attitudes towards cultural spending we used the recoding of religious denominations available in the RelTrad coding resource and constructed by Steennsland and others (2000), which is widely used by many researchers. We also used the SPSS software syntax developed by Jerry Parks and available on the Association of Religion Data Archives website (ARDA 2021). The RelTrad recoding creates seven categories: (1) Evangelical, (2) Mainline Protestant, (3) Black Protestant, (4) Catholic, (5) Jewish, (6) Other faith, (7) Unaffiliated, and was necessary for the purposes of this article to analyse the influence of evangelical Protestants upon cultural spending. Thus, the recoding in this current work produced the following distribution for the 2016 GSS data: Evangelical (23.8%), Mainline Protestant (10.6%), Black Protestant (7.3%), Catholic (22.6%), Jewish (1.8%), Other faith (5.5%), Unaffiliated (21.6%), Unknown/No response (6.8%) (NORC 2016).

Two different techniques were applied in the statistical analysis: (a) a logistic regression and (b) a multiple correspondence analysis (MCA). The former was useful to validate the statistical relationship between certain categories of the religious denomination variable and the attitude towards government spending on the arts and was adjusted with other significant variables to help explain the attitude towards cultural spending (Brooks 2001). The latter was used to represent the categories related to the denomination and its association with the fundamentalist logic (according to a long trajectory of typologising USA Protestantism) within a two-dimensional graphical space (Smith 1990).

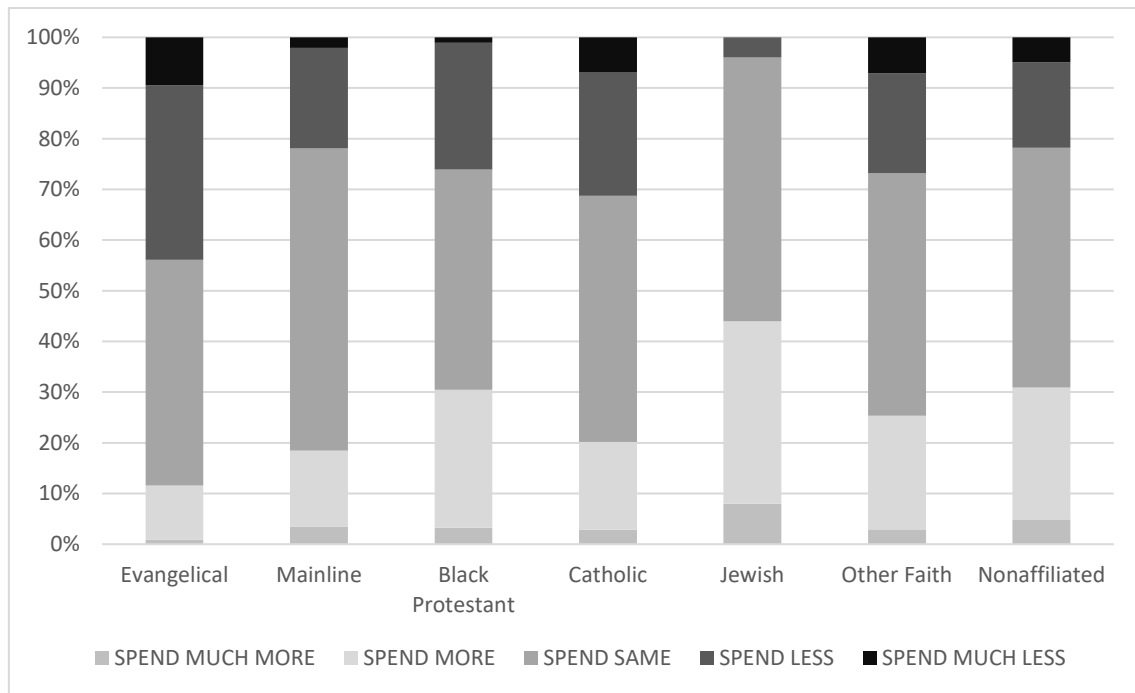
On the one hand, the age of the interviewee (age as a continuous variable) and their income as an indicator of socioeconomic position (interviewee income as a continuous variable) were used as the adjustment variables in the logistic regression analysis. On the other hand, the following variables were introduced into the MCA analysis: (1) feelings about the Bible; (2) the rater's confidence in the existence of god; (3) sex education in public schools; (4) homosexual sexual relations; (5) belief in life after death; (6) low income (cannot afford more children) and abortion rights; (7) cuts in government spending; (8) confidence in the scientific community; (9) allowing communists to speak freely in public; (10) sex before marriage; (11) how often the

rater attends religious services; (12) political party affiliation; and (13) government spending on culture and the arts.

Analysis of the structuring dimensions: religious, moral, and political attitudes, religious denomination, and spending on the arts

As some authors have previously pointed out, support for arts funding has remained stable or has increased slightly from the 1990s to the present day (Jacobsmeier 2021, Lewis and Rushton 2007), with a core group of almost half of the American population (48.2%) declaring themselves in favour of such spending. For this reason, some authors have claimed that cultural policy in the US is no longer at risk, at least in terms of popular support. However, the truth is that almost a quarter of the population (24.2%) favours spending less on the arts. That is, if we add the supporters of spending less or much less to those in favour of the status quo, 3 out of 4 Americans do not favour expansion of artistic spending. This data contrasts with the vigour of the discourse in favour of the creative economy as well as local cultural policy that has been widely disseminated over the last decade in the US (Redaelli 2019). How can this phenomenon be explained? As already stated, we believe that the religious factor becomes relevant in this case, and that strong differences between the attitude of individuals in relation to their religious denomination can be observed, as shown in figure 1.

Figure 2 – Religious denomination (RelTrad) and sSpending on the arts (Sparts) in the 2016 General Social Survey.



Source: elaborated by the authors based on the 2016 General Social Survey (NORC 2016).

A significant relationship was observed in the logistic regression analysis between different categories and individual support or the absence of support for cultural spending, which we recorded as a ‘spend less’ (1) or ‘spend the same or more’ (2) binary. Table 1 shows that the odds ratio of supporting less spending on the arts for RelTrad category 1 (Evangelicals) was 2.583, which was significantly higher than for the Unaffiliated reference category. There were no other significant correlations for any other religious denomination categories.

Regarding the adjustment variables, interviewee age but not income was significantly correlated with individual spending attitudes. Based on the above, we can state that the Evangelical category within the Protestant denomination was relevant in our analysis of support for cultural spending (see table 2).

Table 1 - Logistic regression of the spending on the arts variable (sparts) and the variables related to interviewee religious denomination (RelTrad), age, and income.

	Odds ratio	Sig.	Odds ratio *	Sig.	Odds ratio **	Sig.
Unaffiliated		.000		.000		.000
Evangelical	2.817	.000	2.501	.000	2.999	.000
Mainline	1.010	.969	.824	.448	1.185	.620
Black Protestant	1.269	.390	1.120	.686	1.662	.157
Catholic	1.633	.009	1.460	.049	1.784	.020
Jewish	.150	.066	.118	.039	.291	.242
Other faith	1.314	.369	1.261	.449	1.969	.089
Constant	.278	.000	.166	.000	.160	.000

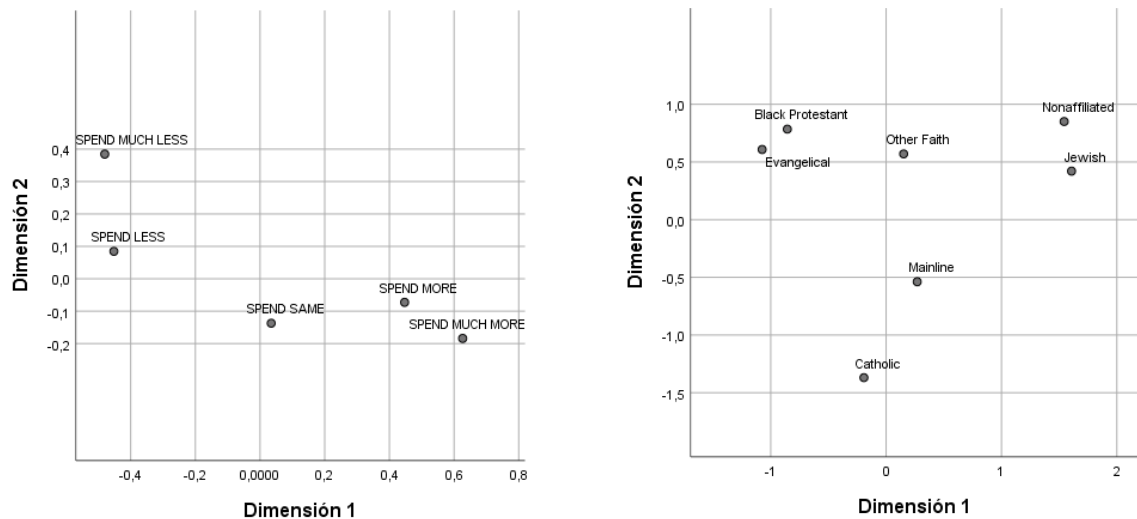
* Adjusted for age.

** Adjusted for income.

Source: elaborated by the authors based on the 2016 General Social Survey (NORC 2016).

To delve more deeply into this relationship between religious denomination and attitudes towards cultural spending (and to understand its logic), we related these factors to other variables from the GSS, including elements of political culture as well as measures of the degree of religious fundamentalism. Thus, the MCA (see figure 2) showed the association between the position of the different recoded religious denomination variables and attitudes towards cultural spending, which were largely structured into dimension 1.

Figure 3 - Multiple correspondence analysis variable representation of religious denomination (RelTrad) and government spending on culture and the arts (Sparts).



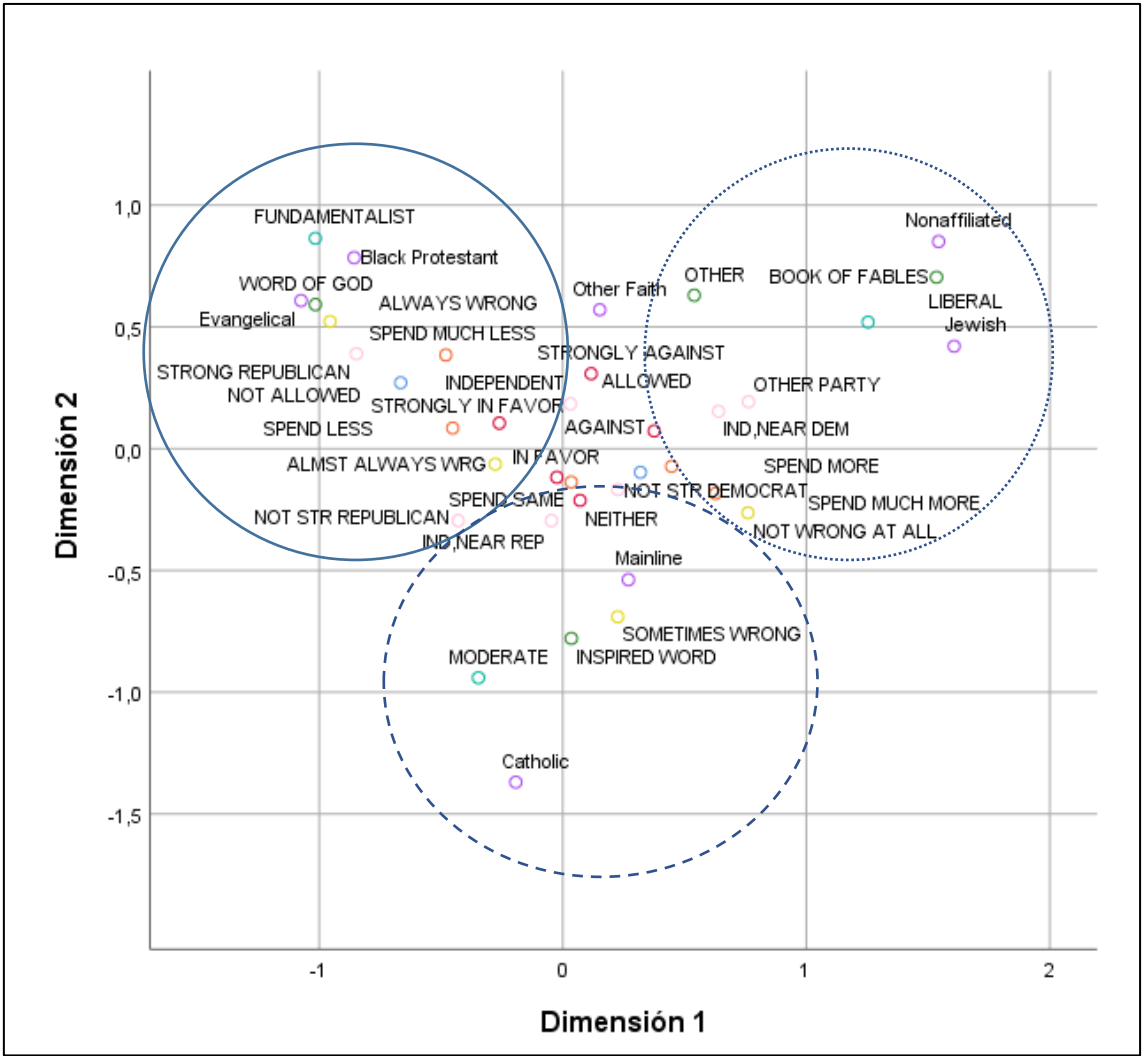
Source: elaborated by the authors based on the 2016 General Social Survey (NORC 2016).

Figure 3 shows how dimension 1 in the MCA presents a logic from less to greater support for spending on arts that is practically horizontal, except in the step between the ‘spend less’ to ‘spend much less’ categories. The latter is oriented vertically and highlights a different logic that links into the logic of dimension 2. This second dimension reveals a hidden logic or, in any case, one that has not yet been adequately analysed. If the first dimension shows an affinity between Jewish people and those without a religious affiliation (in terms of their strong support for artistic spending) as well as opposition by Evangelicals and Black Protestants in the form of support for the lowest levels of spending, the second dimension reveals a logic beyond the usual distinctions between denominations. In this second case, the difference is not so much in the differentiation between Protestants, Catholics, other faiths, and unaffiliated individuals, but in the degree to which the different currents of Christianity, and especially Protestantism, are associated with fundamentalist variants of the religion.

In previous work these variables have been used to create a fundamentalism/liberalism continuum and to classify religious denominations, especially Protestant ones (Smith 1990). This classification was also statistically significant in relation to social, moral, and political attitudes in other work (Steensland et al. 2000). Among the variables that comprise the

fundamentalist/liberal continuum are the interviewee’s self-definition on this spectrum as well as various other associated dimensions related to their current degree of fundamentalism in terms of religiousness: (a) attitude towards the Bible and (b) attitude towards homosexual relationships, and politics: (c) allowing communists to express themselves freely in public, (d) attitude towards the Republican or Democratic parties, and (e) attitude towards public spending.

Figure 4 - Multiple correspondence analysis of religious denomination, degree of fundamentalism, and desired level of spending on the arts (2016).



Legend:

- Allowing communists to speak freely in public
- Cuts in governmental spending
- Feelings about the Bible
- Government spending on culture and the arts
- Homosexual sexual relations
- How fundamentalist the rater currently is
- Political party affiliation
- RelTrad

- Group 1
- Group 2
- Group 3

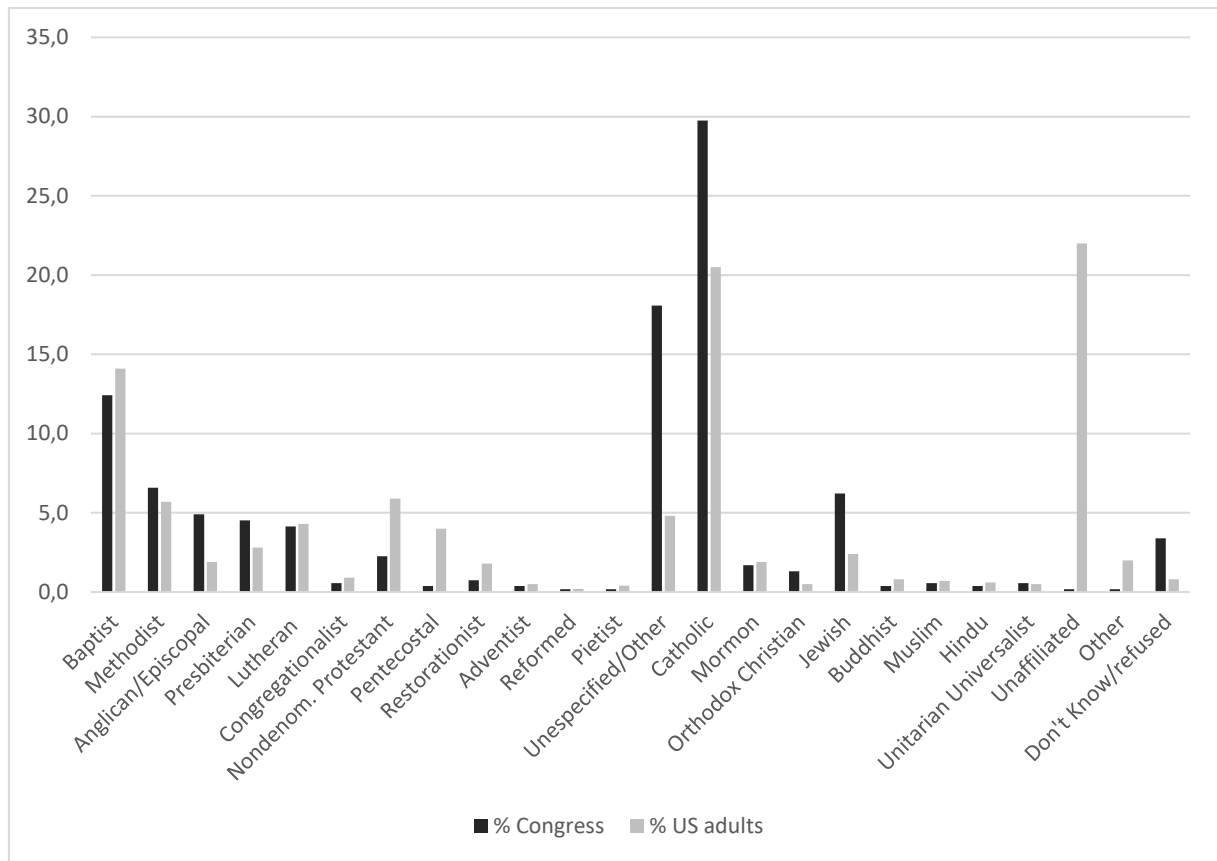
Source: elaborated by the authors based on the 2016 General Social Survey (NORC 2016).

In this sense, the representation of the MCA results (in figure 4) showed three general spaces (a joint graph of category points⁸) and their affinities in terms of religious denomination and political position: (1) a liberal space on the top right that is sceptical of the Bible, not opposed to homosexual relationships, and in favour of allowing communists to express themselves publicly. This group is usually aligned with the Democrats or other similar political parties and is in favour of public spending. This pole of the MCA also shows an affinity between Jewish and religiously unaffiliated individuals which is more strongly associated with categories rejecting the notion of government cuts. (2) A moderate space that considers the Bible a text inspired by God and which has a temperate attitude towards homosexuality. This group has no clear affinity for the Republican or Democrat party and are neither for nor against cuts in spending on the arts. There is an equidistant space between the central position occupied by mainstream Protestants and by Catholics. Finally, in (3) we can observe a clearly fundamentalist space that considers the Bible the literal word of God, always considers homosexuality as

wrong, and is against allowing communists to speak freely in public spaces. This space is occupied by Black Protestants, especially Evangelicals, is closely associated with individuals strongly in favour of the Republican party, is in favour of reduced government power, and who consider themselves fundamentalists. As we have already noted, understanding this space is fundamental in cultural debates and wars and thereby, also in explaining the limitations of cultural politics.

One of the particularities of the US shown in this MCA analysis is that it would be wrong to consider this fundamentalist space equivalent to that of a liberal logic in the economic sphere. Without a doubt, the individuals in this space are closer to the category in favour of cuts in public spending, but this variable adds little structure to the space we characterised as occupying a central region and is not strongly linked to the remaining categories. On the contrary, the categories of the ‘spending on the arts’ variable presented a very distributed structure associated with the three subspaces we characterised. In this sense, the attitude of fundamentalists towards artistic spending is divergent from that of general government spending alone (a space linked to the Evangelists and Black Protestants) and is more favourable than that of the liberals (associated with Jews and individuals with no religious affiliation); the moderate intermediate position (Mainline Protestants and Evangelists) want to maintain the status quo. Of note, this minority also seems to exert a disproportionate influence on political elites: one study showed that, in 2011, Protestants were clearly over represented in the 117th Congress (accounting for 55.4% of all the members when they represent 48.3% of the overall US population), especially in the case of the Evangelical branches present in the Other faiths category (Pew Research Center 2014), as shown in figure 5.

Figure 5 -Religious denomination of the 117th United States Congress Representatives and in the general American population.



Source: elaborated by the authors based on data from the Pew Research Center (2021). For the data related to religious denominations, we used the RelTrad variable to distinguish between religions and the 'chprotfam' variable (a created variable used as an alternative to 'family' as a way of collapsing 'denom' into a reduced set of categories within Protestantism in order to summarise the respondent's current religious identity) from the 2016 General Social Survey.

Conclusions

Cultural policy has been developed in the US at all levels of the administration over the last 50 years, but it remains a unique case among developed countries because of its decentralisation, atomisation, and especially, its weakness at the federal level. These characteristics have even threatened its continuity during several periods because the governmental chambers consider this expense as disposable or even detrimental to the country's interests. We examined the arguments commonly used to explain this phenomenon which include anti-totalitarianism, anti-communism, liberalism, and federalism (Wyszomirski 2004, Mulcahy 2017, Paquette 2019,

Redaelli 2020). Although these factors play an explanatory role, in our opinion, the weakening elements of public support for the arts such as populist logic, rejection of high culture, and the power of the private market can also be added to this list. However, none of these factors seem to sufficiently explain the disparity in arts spending seen between developed countries. Therefore, here we also highlighted the religious facet because, as we have repeatedly seen, the affiliation to Evangelical Protestant denominations is negatively associated with support for spending on the arts, especially at the federal level, and appears in the GSSs as a significant variable.

However, cultural policy is not the simple result of majorities or minorities or of an average in an opinion poll; if this were true, as we have seen, neutral opinion would prevail, and cultural spending would remain the same. Rather, the USA case must be interpreted from a *longue durée* perspective and according to the influence of the Non-Conformist and Puritanical Protestant denominations. Since the founding of the US, and in a ‘radicalisation’ of a trend detected in other European countries, these denominations have limited artistic spending to prevent cultural, moral, and religious dominion by the State and to protect the plurality of religious freedom. At the same time, since the 19th century, a social and political bloc has formed (which although now a minority, remains central in its social and political influence) that defends a puritanical and anti-intellectual conception of culture and society. Since the 1970s, this conception has crystallised into a well-organised minority of very active activists that are able to successfully lobby the House of Representatives and which is present in the media and on social media networks (Tepper 2011, Guth 2014).

In short, it is not just a temporary alliance (which has been repeatedly established since the 1990s through to the present day) between Evangelical elites and the Republican right (DiMaggio and Pettit 1999). Rather, it is a more fundamental and long-term trend that explains the general weakness of the legitimacy of US cultural policy, which sits in contrast with other developed countries, especially European ones⁹. Thus, although opposition to the financing of the arts has remained stable since the 1970s (Jacobsmeier 2021), it implicitly links a large part

of the political culture of the USA population (Uhlmann and Sanchez-Burks 2014). Finally, the activities of this mobilised minority of fundamentalist Protestantism (which is also linked to nationalist Christianity) tried but were unable to eliminate federal cultural policy during the Trump Presidency. However, in the last decade they have revitalised populist discourses and threatened the continuity of the NEA (Perrin et al. 2014, Murdock 2020). This shows, once again, the weakness of USA cultural policy and thus, the uniqueness of the US cultural model within the international arena.

Notes

¹ On the contrary, countries that share historical origins, political traditions, and form part of the liberal-capitalist bloc (such as Canada or Australia) have made cultural intervention by the State an essential part of their strategy and national branding since the 1990s (Hesmondhalgh et al. 2015).

² Certainly, as Mark Schuster pointed out at the end of the 20th century, comparing models of cultural policy is complex because of their multidimensionality and the idealisation of some of them (especially European ones) which, for many international policy makers and analysts, made them objectives to be achieved (Schuster 1987). So, can we legitimately compare the US with Europe in this respect? In our understanding presented in this article, we can. Moreover, we argue that this comparison allows a more adequate understanding of the reasons for the relatively reduced development of cultural policy in the US compared to other developed countries. Furthermore, it allows us to rethink the appropriateness of the most common responses used to explain this disparity: anti-totalitarianism, anti-communism, and the link to the capitalist model. As we can see, all these factors are shared with other European countries that formed part of the capitalist bloc but which all developed strong cultural policies (Dubois 2015).

³ The difference between these religious denominations can also be seen without only examining countries that have a historical record of various faiths. For instance, in a comparative study of Switzerland, it was found that there was less support for public spending on leisure and culture in Protestant areas (Basten and Betz 2013).

⁴ Germany's case is singular because both its Catholic and Lutheran denominations vie for dominance in the country. This makes the nation harder to classify. Nevertheless, as argued in this paper, we must not only consider the country's religious makeup, but also take into account the influence of religious denomination in the birth of the State. In this case, Germany is the child of Prussia, a Lutheran State that was heavily influenced by the disciplinary revolution begun by Calvinism (Gorski 1993).

⁵ Indeed, there had previously been attempts to promote cultural policy at the federal level: in the 1960s, Arthur Sckesinger, advisor to the White House, defended the importance of developing a national cultural policy. Nevertheless, this national objective is rarely mentioned in August Heckscher's 1963 report to the President (Wyszomirski 2004).

⁶ Certainly, not all the Puritans and their descendant's could be characterized as "anti-intellectual", as the New England Puritans themselves produced a great deal of fairly learned theology, for example. And their descendants -- the Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Unitarians and Presbyterians of the 19th century -- produced much of the "high culture" of that era (Miller 1956). However, we can affirm that the Puritans were iconoclastic: they despised elaborate images, rituals and music. They were not anti-elitist or populist either. On the contrary It was their sectarian enemies -- the Baptists, Methodists and later revivalist groups who really "democratized" American Christianity in a populist vein. However, these "low church Protestants" hailed from the lower classes as well. It was the Puritans' high church descendants who dominated American politics and culture until the mid-20th century (Balmer and

Winner 2002). The crucial period for this particular analysis is almost certainly the decades from around 1920 -- when the Fundamentalist movement first emerges -- through around 1950 -- when the "evangelical" movement takes shape -- through around 1980 -- when the "Christian Right" helped put Ronald Reagan into the White House. It was during this period that art became one front in the "culture wars"

⁷ We do not pretend here to affirm that the Federal Government of the USA has not developed any action until the creation of the NEA in 1965, certainly there have been various government programs and actions previously, such as the Works Progress Administration created in 1935 and the Federal One program that developed commissioned by thousands of creators (Martel 2011: 135). However, this program lasts only ten years and although it has an influence on the history of the State's cultural intervention, it does not constitute the development of a federal cultural policy due to the opposition of a part of Congress to contemporary creation (idem: 140-142).

⁸ To allow its accurate reading, we selected only six variables for the MCA category point chart. However, more variables were considered in the MCA, as indicated in the methodology section and shown in the annexes.

⁹ The population that says it is in favour of spending up to 30% less in the US, according to the GSS (NORC 2016) contrasts with other countries such as Spain, in which only 3.4% of the population (CIS 2005) considered that the State was spending too much on culture in 2005. In fact, this figure remained almost identical when the same question was repeated in 2017, having increased by only 0.2%, to a total of 3.6% (CIS 2019).

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