



IAN R LAMOND

The Emergence of the Arts as an Object for Governance: A Case Study of the Labour Party Manifesto 1966

Between the formation of the Arts Council of Great Britain in 1946 and the creation of a minister for arts and leisure in 1964, government policy towards the arts in Britain had progressed very little. The Labour Party manifesto of 1966 marks a significant break from that proceeding status quo. Although the manifesto contains just one short section outlining the party's position with regards to cultural policy, it presents a fundamental shift in how the arts were to be construed within government. That shift marks the start of a journey which was to see cultural policy

drawn ever more closely into the centre of state governance in the UK. This paper approaches that shift from two perspectives. Firstly, the results of a quantitative content analysis of election manifestos from 1945 to 2010, is used to identify the 1966 election as a key turning point in establishing the arts as an object for governance in the UK. By placing that move, understood as a transition from *arm's length* to *arm's length but hands on*, in its socio-historical context we gain an insight into how the arts became drawn into the discourse of British governmental politics.

Secondly, in locating the emergence of the arts as an object for governance within a framework of the social capital of three key actors, operating within government and in the

Arts Council, during this period, we are able to gain a deeper understanding as to the shaping of arts and cultural policy following the 1966 election.

In discussing the findings of this case study, the changing construction of the arts as an object for governance, since 1966, will be reviewed. The conclusion will draw connections between the construal of the socio-cultural value of access to culture and the arts to be found in the 1966 Labour manifesto, with the conceptualisation of the *Big Society* presented in the book of that name, written by the Conservative MP Jesse Norman.

[This paper will be of value to researchers working on social capital and democracy; the application of discourse analysis to policy studies, and those interested in research methodology and emerging research avenues.]