

Leadership, Advocacy, and Communication
Cultural Policy at the Grassroots:
Policy Issues Facing the Los Angeles Cultural Community

Wednesday, November 12, 2003
Summary of Seminar Proceedings

OPENING REMARKS

In his opening remarks **Leslie Thomas**, Assistant General Manager, City of Los Angeles, Cultural Affairs Office, commented on Los Angeles' many assets, but noted its size can be overwhelming. The city is also complex—by the nature of its geography and in the diversity of its population. The challenge is how to craft policies to deliver services to this diverse population. He anticipated that the seminar outcomes would inform his work, and open up new opportunities for his department to work with the cultural community.

Ellen Lovell of the Center for Arts and Culture discussed the juxtaposition of “culture” and “policy.” Policies, she noted, are ideas that guide actions and the allocation of resources. While the discussion often revolve around resources, there are policies that affect artists and how culture is developed, presented, and accessed; though they may not be considered “cultural policies.” She referred to the latter as “unintentional” cultural policies, adding that such policies should be part of the public policy discourse, in the same manner in which environmental policy is part of the public policy discourse.

Dean **Barbara Nelson** introduced the participants to the work of the School for Public Policy and Social Research at UCLA and invited all of the participants to be in close contact with the SPPSR.

Helmut Anheier, of the Center for Civil Society at the School of Public Policy and Social Research presented an initial glimpse of the Los Angeles cultural community (the five county region of Los Angeles). He based his findings on data from IRS 990 forms, a fact that would result in a reduced picture of the total cultural community, since some organizations are not officially incorporated as a nonprofit and have not filed tax returns.

- 11% of all nonprofit organizations in the region are devoted to arts and culture, approximately 800-900 organizations.
- 43,000 nonprofit organizations produce \$20 billion in revenues; arts and culture organizations account for \$1 billion in revenue.
- If related commercial industries are counted (arts, entertainment, creative industries)—4% of revenue is from nonprofit arts and cultural organizations.
- Arts and cultural organizations in the region comprise half of all arts and cultural organizations in the state of California and account for 1/3 of arts and cultural revenues for the state. Los Angeles County boasts the highest number of organizations of the five-county the region.
- Museum revenue accounts for 20% of the nonprofit arts and culture sector.
- West Los Angeles and the Wilshire area have high densities of arts and cultural organizations.

The Center for Civil Society plans to conduct an extensive survey on the arts and cultural sector and hopes to be able to present more detailed and accurate findings within a year.

PANEL 1: LOCAL PERSPECTIVES

Helmut Anheier opened the panel by noting that Los Angeles, unique in its size and diversity, still harbors a sense of isolationism with a vacuum in specific leadership skills and infrastructure to meet special needs of its population. He asked the panelists to comment on how their organizations have managed to succeed in a challenging environment such as Los Angeles?

Tomas Benitez of Self Help Graphics explained that Self Help's development has been organic and artist-driven. As the organization grew it transitioned to becoming more of a traditional nonprofit organization. At the same time, the tradition of participation and maintaining key participation at all levels has remained central. Increasing and engaging participation not only can strengthen an organization, but also build the case for the importance of the arts. Self-Help Graphics is now considering a membership program for support. This is something new to them, and could enlarge their audience. They have also diversified their income stream. His advice is to take what you have and to make more.

According to **Irene Hirano**, of the Japanese American National Museum, the Museum's success resides in its relationship with and engagement of its constituents. JANM has expanded programming through partnerships (e.g., with "Finding Family Stories," JANM partnered with Self Help Graphics). Successful partnerships are based on common values. Utilizing both public and private sector funding is also important. Public sector funding, in particular, can help leverage additional support from the private sector. Participation is a core value to the JANM, linking engagement to policy development. Engaging the business and religious community who share similar values on a project (e.g., community preservation) can help insure the continuation of history and culture.

Ayanna Hudson of the Los Angeles County Arts Commission explained that what contributed to the successful adoption of the Arts for All plan was the creation of a 10-year plan of systemic change for the 82-school district. The organizers realized early on that policy changes were crucial to systemic change. Reaching out to the policymakers and practitioners was also important. The blueprint created was designed to help build capacity within each school district in order to identify funding for arts education. The goal is to have each school spend 5% of its budget towards arts education.

While there are state laws that set standards for arts education, they are not mandated. However, state policies exist that help support the local goals (e.g., UC system admission requirement of at least one year of arts education). Working with state legislators such as Senator Jack Scott was helpful to the plan. She suggested talking with policymakers about issues and concerns, but also working to elect arts/culture friendly school board members or other elected officials. She stressed the need to get policymakers on board and to connect what you are doing to their goals.

Participant Discussion:

- The dramatic cut to the California Arts Council budget could be an opportunity to galvanize the community.
- The importance of arts and culture needs to be made obvious. The arts community needs to be considered as part of the community network and a team player in community development.
- The community cannot be exclusive and needs to expand the audience and find allies in those who value culture.
- To effectively participate in the special interest process of budget appropriations, the cultural community needs to learn how to participate in the process and to engage in dialogue with elected officials. The cultural community can learn from others on how to be more effective in the policymaking process (e.g., the labor community).
- An attitude and paradigm shift needs to occur to put the cultural sector on par with business interests. The major challenge is how to galvanize/play to our own strengths.

- New and strengthened leadership must be created. Create a concrete plan with goals and strategies.
- The network of support that exists for the arts should be exposed. Legislators appropriated \$1 million to the CAC when they realized they would be losing matching NEA federal funding if the budget was zeroed out.
- Different messages should be created for different audiences, based on their values and interests.

PANEL 2: PERSPECTIVES BEYOND LOS ANGELES

Jerry Yoshitomi, independent cultural facilitator, told participants that he approached the day's agenda with some skepticism. The cultural community has already been in discussion about the issues presented. For those in the room the main issue is a lack of resources. His hope for the day is that the discussion moves to the level of action. He asked the panelists to bring their perspective to Los Angeles' context.

Barbara Goldstein of the City of Seattle Public Art Program asserted that cultural activities should permeate all departments in city government. When she arrived in Seattle, the city had a reputable public art program, but was overlooking the strength of the neighborhoods and how to engage the neighborhoods in its public art program. Her agency engaged artists in the civic dialogue and place them within city departments (water, electricity) and neighborhoods with the goal of telling a story about the agency or community. This work is harder to measure because the product is not necessarily a physical piece of art. By integrating artists into community issues, you make a stronger case for the arts and why it is important. She is also working to get her agency at the table of other discussions, outside the arts agency. Art should be a part of as many dialogues as possible—housing, youth, economic development, etc. Her agency is now part of the Youth Task Force and the Economic Development Task Force for the city. Not only is there more funding available in these areas, but being a part of the various dialogues demonstrates the power and the value of the arts.

Beate Becker of the Creative Economy Initiative, Boston Redevelopment Authority, explained that the Creative Economy Initiative grew out of necessity when the Massachusetts Cultural Council almost closed due to state budget cuts 10 years ago. MCC survived the cuts, but needed to make a stronger case for the relevance of the arts. One area of focus was the connection with economic development and created the Cultural Economic Development Program in 1996. At the same time, the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) published a report on the economic impact of the nonprofit art sector in the regional economy. The report was brought to the attention of the New England Council, an agency that serves as the chamber of commerce for the region. A regional working group was formed, comprised of the New England Council (representing the business sector), the state art agencies (state government), and NEFA and the Boston Symphony (cultural organizations). The diversity of this initial working group was important. The group examined how the findings could be applied to economic policy, beyond the cultural tourism perspective. They called upon Mt. Auburn Associates, a non-arts consulting firm, who suggested that a comprehensive strategy would have to consider the sector, commercial and nonprofit, as an integrated sector. From this key principle they begin to think of new strategies.

They created an action plan, “Blueprint for Investment” in June 2001. The New England Council, in the role of the spokesperson from the business community for the initiative, was instrumental in getting visibility and excellent media coverage. A partnership with the regional Federal Reserve Bank gave them a lot of credibility and a much stronger voice. Beate suggested finding people in positions of influence whose direct work may not be in the cultural sector, but who have a private interest in the arts. Such people are often willing to integrate their private interest with their professional work. She added that you need to think of the commercial and nonprofit as an integrated sector and that the cultural community should get to know the commercial sector and try to form partnerships by aligning interests. An example might be aligning the interests of the film industry with the cultural community's goals. The movie

industry should have an interest in strong arts education that would provide them with an educated workforce in the future. While she acknowledged that Los Angeles does not have a New England Council, she suggested that the community look at its own assets, framework, relationships, and structures and from that build upon what is unique to Los Angeles.

It takes time for policy makers to understand the importance of the creative sector. Recently, Massachusetts cut its state arts council dramatically even after the launch of the initiative. However, the Massachusetts legislature just recently passed a \$1 million appropriation for cultural economic development funding.

Mary Ellen Williams explained that the Denver Scientific and Cultural Facilities District administers funds generated by a portion of sales tax in seven counties in the Denver metropolitan area. The SCFD grew out of an emergency situation when four scientific organizations were going to lose their state line item funding. Board of Trustee leadership worked for six years to get the tax district passed in the state legislature. They began by assessing their obstacles and how to address them. They engaged different groups in the process—regional, major institutions and grassroots organizations and received political feedback from the county commissioners. In order to get the tax district passed in the legislature, the leaders determined the balance of support, were systematic in targeting supporters for the project, and made political allies. They realized that to get the district passed, the recipient agencies would need to give something back to the tax producing communities. They must also go through a re-authorization process and are held accountable to the taxpayers.

A benefit of creating the tax district has been the ability to collect data in order to determine fund allocations. (e.g., who is served, the numbers served, revenue). Knowing this type of data for your community is extremely valuable in advocacy efforts. She also noted that if there is no money in the state budget for the arts, you could ask for non-monetary assistance, i.e., let policymakers know how they can make your job easier, in ways other than providing direct resources.

PANEL 3: WORKING WITH POLICYMAKERS

Laura Zucker of the Los Angeles County Arts Commission moderated the panel and began by noting that those who have been successful in fundraising for the arts know that they you must have a compelling vision, and an alignment of mission and goals. Public policy operates in the same fashion. The panel began with discussion of the Public Corporation for the Arts in Long Beach whose budget has been cut dramatically over the past few years and will be further cut next year.

Doug Otto, Board member of the PCA, attorney and community volunteer, told participants that in Long Beach, they are at the beginning stage of creating a plan to establish a long-term stream of revenue for PCA independent of the City's budget situation. Because arts supporters want to have stronger voice, the working group will include arts groups as well as those in positions of influence to find additional funding stream for the arts. He made clear that in Long Beach, the budget for the PCA was cut because it was a money issue; budgets were cut across the board. He added that credibility of an organization is critical in gaining political support. Policymaking is a process that needs to be strategic, informed and must follow protocol. Passion is also essential because it can set you apart from other interests. Connect the strategy/plan to a broader vision. Every community has conducted a strategic plan, city plan or community plan. You must place your idea into the context of a wider vision.

Josephine Ramirez addressed working with larger funding institutions such as the Getty Trust, (a large organization, but a mid-size grantmaker). In order to affect change or to work with larger institutions you must learn the politics of an organization. If you are successful in doing this, you may be able to affect

change. You also have to consider the broader agenda of the foundation and realize that many foundations do not specifically fund the arts.

Josephine added that while it is hard to make generalization about private foundations and their policies, foundations are interested in public policy and may be interested in leveraging opportunities where a grant small contribution could have large impacts. In Los Angeles there is the LA Arts Funders group, a group of public and private funders that come together to discuss local funding issues. Dialogue with foundations is two-way and is built upon relationships. If the cultural community can come together to establish a collective agenda, they should begin a dialogue with the LA Funders group.

Bill Lasarow discussed his work with the Mural Conservancy of Los Angeles and its recent \$1.7 million line item appropriation from the California Department of Transportation. The Conservancy realized they had to do something two and half years ago when the Los Angeles freeways murals were being covered with graffiti. They found there were no state policies for the conservation of murals and went to Jackie Goldberg who was their legislative contact person and understood what the murals meant to her constituents. Bill emphasized establishing equal-peer relationships with policymakers and government agencies and suggested inviting them to see the work you do and find out what their interests are. You also need to take the time to get to know the legislators before you approach them for a favor. By providing information that is useful to legislators you can show them you are expert that they can rely upon. In terms of fitting your concept into a broader context, policymakers do not need to see your larger vision to support a project; they only need to see a fit with their job description, agency mission, or connection with their constituents. He warned against fitting a project to a grantmaker's agenda. You need to translate the importance of art and culture in terms that foundations and policymakers can understand and appreciate.

Laura Zucker noted that policymaking is unpredictable, an open ended proposition, and not without risks and requires long term commitment.

WRAP UP SESSION: THOUGHTS AND SUGGESTIONS

- Need for long-term education of policymakers.
- Establish umbrella organization, advocate, active lobbying, central clearinghouse, and mechanism to gather information.
- Identify leaders that support arts and culture and build relationships.
- Commission a paper similar to the New England report on the creative industries.
- Gather data and research to assist with advocacy efforts. Conduct research on policymakers/key leaders and find out their interests. Conduct research to find numbers that exemplify arts participation. Make sure ideas are research based.
- Work to better organize/galvanize the cultural community.
- Create policies that affect/influence how artists/arts/arts participation are depicted in the mass media.
- Create policies that highlight the relevance of the arts to everyday life and decrease the idea of the isolated artist; that advocate arts for all; that support creativity and the artistic practice by and for all, but that also uphold the notion that it takes serious discipline to make art.
- Cultivate the idea of cultural citizens. Use the power of testimony to show cultural participation.
- Establish an entity to bring together media/nonprofit sector/entertainment industries to discuss common interests.
- Inform nonprofits the IRS rules as they pertain to lobbying.
- Establish a Los Angeles Arts Award program honoring innovations in visual arts, performing arts, media arts, etc, and engage the entertainment industry and corporate sponsors.
- Find a cultural affairs ambassador (e.g., Quincy Jones, Maria Shriver).
- Utilize an email campaign, similar to the Moveon.org campaigns.

- Connect beyond the cultural community to other sectors. Bring culture and creativity to all aspects of government: economic development, transportation, social welfare, labor, etc.
- Increase exposure and public relations of cultural activities.
- Support one another; know what others are doing within the community.

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE DAY

- The key is what to do with what you have; utilize public affairs strategies, communication.
- Building relationships with the right people/organizations is critical.
- Research is important; but it should also be done well.
- Innovative policy might be outside the current system.
- Foundations are also policymakers.
- The cultural community needs time, resources, and strategy, and some kind of intermediary organization or person to pull the parts of the sector together.
- Recognition that even among the small to mid-size organizations, there is a great variety and difference among the group. Talk about what makes us different from each other as well as what the common interests are.
- An interesting statistic: it has been estimated that the MTA strike has affected nearly 400,000 people. However, based on data collected by the LA County Arts Commission from only 100 cultural organizations, these organizations have served over 750,000 people (without any duplication).

NEXT STEPS/ACTION ITEMS

- For the next discussion, the larger cultural institutions should be included along with the small to mid-size organizations. This does not mean giving the leadership of any activity to the larger organizations, but rather the need to establish partnerships.
- Address the need for an umbrella organization. The Los Angeles Arts Commission looked into this once before (with Arts, Inc.). The question is where to site it, or to create another 501(c) 3. The Center for Cultural Innovation might be a good fit. The LA Arts Commission is willing to look into this.

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Center For Arts and Culture

UCLA Center for Civil Society, School of Public Policy and Social Research

November 12, 2003

9:30-4:00

AGENDA

- 9:30 **Welcome and Opening Remarks**
Leslie Thomas, Assistant General Manager, Cultural Affairs Department, City of Los Angeles
- 9:45 **“Culture” and “Policy”**
Introduction: Why Policy Matters to Culture: Ellen Lovell, President, Center For Arts and Culture
Public Policy Overview: Barbara Nelson, Dean, UCLA School for Public Policy and Social Research
(Preliminary) Cultural Snapshot of Los Angeles: Helmut Anheier, Director, Center for Civil Society
- 10:10 **Seminar Development: Focus Group Findings**
Roberto Bedoya & Susie Leong
- 10:30 *Moderated Discussion:* **Local Perspectives**
Ayanna Hudson, Arts for All, Arts Education Director, Los Angeles County Arts Commission
Tomas Benitez, Executive Director, Self-Help Graphics
Irene Hirano, Executive Director, Japanese American National Museum
Moderator: Helmut Anheier, UCLA
- 11:30 *Moderated Discussion:* **Perspectives Beyond Los Angeles**
Beate Becker, Creative Economy Initiative, Boston Redevelopment Authority
Barbara Goldstein, Director, Public and Community Arts Program, Seattle Arts Commission
Mary Ellen Williams, Fund Administrator, Scientific and Cultural Facilities Fund, Denver
Moderator: Jerry Yoshitomi, Independent Cultural Facilitator
- 12:30 **Lunch**
- Break out groups/Discussion**
- 1:45 *Panel:* **Working with Public and Private Policymakers**
State Assemblymember Jackie Goldberg, 45th District (invited)
Bill Lasarow, Founder and President, Mural Conservancy of Los Angeles
Douglas Otto, Board Co-Chair, Public Corporation for the Arts, Long Beach
Josephine Ramirez, Program Officer, Getty Grant Program/J. Paul Getty Trust
Moderator: Laura Zucker, Executive Director, Los Angeles County Arts Commission
- 3:00 **Wrap Up and Next Steps**
- 4:00 **Conclusion**