U.S. CULTURAL POLICY

Its Politics of Participation, Its Creative Potential

by Roberto Bedoya

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The National Performance Network (NPN) is a group of diverse cultural organizers, including artists, working to create meaningful partnerships and to provide leadership that enables the practice and public experience of the performing arts in the United States.

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Designers: Tana Coman, Debra Howell
Editor: Sandra Sullivan

If cultural policy is defined as a system of arrangements which, whatever its other purposes, supports artistic production, then the artist has some reason for interest in it as an indicator of where support lies.[1]

Evan Alderson

Introduction

*I*N this paper I suggest a reframing of the discourse around American cultural policy. Embracing Evan Alderson's definition of cultural policy as a "system of arrangements," I aim to shed light on who is participating in the discourse. I ask whether there are exclusionary practices within the field of cultural policy, and conclude that there is in fact a significant sector of the non-profit arts community—specifically artist-centered and ethnic-specific arts service organizations—that has been marginalized or absent in cultural policy discussions.[2]

Addressing this issue is tough, but necessary if cultural policy work is to strengthen the system of support for artists and arts organizations and improve the cultural health of our society. The marginalizing of the artist sector has produced a less-nuanced analysis of the terms of cultural policy formation, resulting in problematic practices relating to definitions, participation, and purposes.

I have long advocated for the active inclusion of artists, artist-centered organizations, community-based organizations, and ethnic arts organizations and cultural practices in the developing cultural policy field. Today, in the wake of the dot-com collapse and recent economic downturn, when investment in building a cultural policy field has waned, there is a real opportunity to examine how this nascent field has, to date, unfolded. Most importantly, there is an opportunity to examine who is sitting at cultural policy tables—and to ask, are there policies of exclusion working in cultural policy formation?

My inquiry in this paper has been to find out where cultural policy stands and what it aims to deliver. Hopefully, the issues I raise will trigger debate and programmatic responses that will benefit the development of cultural policy activities.

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[1] Evan Alderson, *Reflections on Cultural Policy: Past, Present and Future*, Edited by Evan Alderson, Robin Blaser and Harold Coward (The Calgary Institute for the Humanities, 1993), 1.

[2] It is of course important to view the cultural community broadly, so as to better understand the relationship between the non-profit and commercial arts sectors vis-à-vis their public purposes. This relationship was explored in 1997 by the American Assembly, a think tank associated with Columbia University, at its gathering entitled "The Arts and Public Purpose." The gathering was significant in that many of the nation's arts leaders—from both the non-profit and for-profit arts sectors—began to discuss the need for cultural policy. Yet for my purposes in this paper I am focusing on the dynamics at work within the non-profit arts arena, so as to better understand how this powerful sector articulates our cultural life.

PART ONE *Stand...and Deliver*

Flashback to Fall 2000: It is the end of a long winter's day and George Yudice of New York University yells from behind his desk to me, walking slowly and thoughtfully in the hallway: "Stand and Deliver!" Is this a hold-up? Or is it a call for focused thinking and personal conduct? I laugh, knowing that it is the latter.

I recall this moment in order to share with you the precarious and vexed ground that I was standing on, for me a familiar mambo between theory and practice that now informs this paper. How does one theorize practice, and practice theory?

Before examining the developing field of U.S. cultural policy and analyzing who is participating in framing policy definitions and purposes, I would like to give a brief recap of the infamous "Culture Wars" in order to provide some context on this developing field.

The Culture Wars

The Culture Wars of the 1990s focused on issues of "decency" in the arts, and played out as attacks on artists whose inquires dealt with identity and on the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) which supported these artists, either directly through fellowships or through the organizations that presented them. Like clockwork, in the spring of each year during Congressional campaigns and budget hearings, political and religious conservatives would launch an attack on the NEA and the national artists' community, holding up a handful of artists that they characterized as "degenerates" and examples of the nation's moral decay. The artists' community's response to these attacks on the NEA took many forms, with the Finley vs. NEA lawsuit being the most notable defense. The National Association of Artists' Organizations (NAAO) became a co-plaintiff with the NEA, joining the suit to argue against the "standards of decency" language newly written into the NEA's authorizing legislation. NAAO was aware that censorious activity was being acted out against its membership, including Hallwalls in Buffalo, New York, Highways in Santa Monica, California, and Franklin Furnace in New York City.

The artists' community's defense of their practices during the Culture Wars was linked to the First Amendment right of freedom of expression. It was also linked to public arguments that artists are citizens, entitled to a constitutional right to such protection, and that works of art that make a claim upon society are acts of cultural citizenship. The value of these works lies in the visions that art creates—visions of the plural. These artistic acts of citizenship enrich society, and are an essential component of the public good. However, in the land of American pragmatism, the "good" is trumped by the "goods."

No other arts service organization became a litigant in Finley vs. NEA, but many of them spoke of the arts community's need for cultural policy. A 2000 *LA Times* article provided an overview of the developing cultural policy field: "In the face of [the] attacks, which also called for the dismantling of the [NEA], defenders argued that the government grants to artists should be seen as part of a broader effort. There will always be new critics, but many in the arts world feel that they have relied too long on anecdotes for evidence and not had enough hard facts. Thus, the current push for new research."[3] In my advocacy work I've witnessed that this "broader effort" was part of a shift in public dialogue—from debates about artists' rights and their creative process to a conversation about Art, and, in turn, its measurable capacities ... in other words, a conversation about art's economic impact, audience figures, and arts appreciation surveys.

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[3] *The Los Angeles Times,* August 18, 2000.

Arts Creation and Arts Delivery

The arts world to which the *LA Times* refers is the world of state arts councils, local arts councils, museums, symphonies, opera companies, and performing arts centers that deliver the arts to audiences for cultural consumption. These organizations function as key members of an arts delivery system, which I define as a system that foregrounds audiences and the work of delivering the arts to the public. This system's primary engagement with artists is through interpretation of the arts and the development of connoisseurship. Only to a lesser extent is it involved in the creation of new works. On the other hand, the creation system's key members can be described as artist-centered organizations, community-based arts organizations, artists' colonies, artists' co-ops, the 99-seat experimental theater, and a host of other entities that support the creation of new works and are committed to empowering talent. For ethnic arts and community-based arts organizations, the work of empowering communities is a major concern. As a Latino arts professional, I've witnessed how this concern for community empowerment is closely associated with the ideals of equity, whether in the cultural sector or in other spheres of civil society, and how the work of these organizations can question status quo practices.

It is important to point out that ethnic arts organizations occupy many sites in the continuum between the arts delivery and arts creation systems. There are strong feelings within ethnic arts organizations that their purposes are manifold: to support the artists' creative process, to empower their specific ethnic community, and to construct a delivery system for their artists and for the communities that they serve. The work of building a delivery system for artists of color and diverse cultural expressions has been a difficult undertaking. Atlatl: National Native Arts Network, the National Association of Latino Arts and Culture (NALAC), and the Network of Cultural Centers of Color (NCCC) all struggle with this responsibility. It is work that has manifested itself in a multi-faceted agenda, producing concerns and engagements with both creation and delivery and affecting the capacity of their operations. It is not my intention in this paper to unpack the complexities at work within ethnic arts organizations. Yet the emancipation movements of the 1970s instilled a belief in self-determination and a vision of humanity that resulted in art and arts organizations producing societal critiques. Cultural policy activities cannot be totally free, in neutral non-ideological policy research, from the mission of arts organizations committed to self-determination. For ethnic-specific and artist-centered organizations the ideology of empowerment is still alive, and this needs to be acknowledged when examining their relationship to cultural policy.

I am aware that my articulation of the arts delivery and creation systems is not a vacuum-packed, either/or distinction. I see creation and delivery as two worlds of activities, along a continuum that is central to the production of art. In fact, I feel that a successful arts organization is engaged in both delivery and creation, and travels the length of the continuum.

First Tier and Second Tier Arts Service Organizations

Those organizations concerned with delivering art to audiences, and those concerned with investing in creativity (empowering talent and communities), are also associated with another dichotomy: that of first and second tier arts service organizations. The arts organizations that are part of the delivery system, who can measure and speak about the delivery of the arts, are generally large cultural institutions associated with large arts service organizations. First tier arts service organizations include American Association of Museums, Americans for the Arts, American Symphony and Orchestra League, and Opera America.

Meanwhile, those arts organizations that are part of the creation system are small organizations, and are associated with small arts service organizations such as the Alliance of Artists Communities, the National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture, and NAAO. Similarly, arts service organizations for ethnic-specific organizations, such as NALAC, NCCC, and Atlatl, are associated with small organizations.

The distinctions I make between first and second tier organizations are primarily linked to their operating budgets. While large arts service organizations have budgets in the million dollar plus range, the smaller arts service organizations have modest budgets hovering between $250,000 and $750,000. Large-budget arts service and cultural organizations are privileged in the cultural policy field, receiving support to participate in current policy research.

Given that ethnic-specific organizations are out of necessity actively engaged with both delivery and creation, the first and second tier dichotomy is not always

The absence of second tier arts service organizations in many cultural policy activities begs the question of representation: who gets to speak on behalf of their constituency of artists and ethnic communities?

an exact mirror of the delivery and creation systems. It is also important to note the related dichotomy of the arts community and the artists' community. The distinction between these two concepts can be muddled, yet is a distinction nevertheless. Often, in the rhetorical world of some arts service organizations, the phrase "arts community" is used in a myopic manner that focuses on reception, therefore marginalizing artists and their support systems.

The absence of second tier arts service organizations in many cultural policy activities begs the question of representation: who gets to speak on behalf of their constituency of artists and ethnic communities? Is cultural policy research being produced that funders want … that the marketplace needs … that scholars seek? How effective or ineffective are the cultural policy research projects being produced, as they relate to the concerns of the second tier service organizations? In terms of strengthening the creation system, where does policy research intersect with the needs of the creation system? How does policy research improve relations between the delivery and creation systems?

Considering the ideological differences between organizations that focus on supporting creativity and those that focus on delivering arts to the public, we must look at what is privileged in this developing cultural policy field.

The Economics…
Causes and Effects

The Pew Charitable Trusts, a leading funder of the arts in the U.S., has recently reprioritized its granting programs, making cultural policy a priority. This effort acts as a modeling force in cultural policy, in that Pew supports, in large part, organizations that function as delivery systems. In August 1999, Pew announced the launch of *Optimizing America's Cultural Resources*, philanthropy's largest national cultural initiative ever. This five-year, multi-million dollar initiative aims to "strengthen political and financial support for nonprofit culture by building an infrastructure for the development of more effective private and public policies affecting American arts and culture." The initiative is designed to "help cultural institutions earn the support of policy makers and funders by measuring the results of their programs and activities more effectively and by developing their leadership."[4] Pew awarded recent grants to Opera America, in support of the first phase of a project to assist performing arts institutions collect reliable data on their operations, finances, and attendance and to measure the contributions their programs make to their communities; RAND Corporation, in support of an integrated assessment of the arts sector, primarily the performing arts; Americans for the Arts (whose core membership is local arts councils), in support of a project to map the distribution of cultural activities and cultural support nationally and in ten selected cities; and the Center for Arts and Culture, a think tank, to design and implement a Cultural Policy Inventory, a comprehensive database, and a directory of cultural policy resources. Pew also joined with over thirty other funders to support the Urban Institute's *Investing in Creativity*, which documented current programs of support for individual artists and their support systems.

These various partnerships exemplify the work being done to gather data as indicators of the nation's cultural

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[4] The Pew Charitable Trusts, Press Release, August 2, 1999.

vitality. They also reflect the growing demand for measurable outcomes related to arts giving. For example, outcome-based assessments ask that an organization augment how it evaluates its effectiveness, examining activities and analyzing results and outcomes. This requirement shifts the focus of evaluation from how a program operates to the impact it makes. This focus on outcome-based assessments has created a special challenge for artist-centered organizations, in that they are put in the position of identifying and developing ways to measure progress toward the achievement of an artistic goal. The creation of new work, in and of itself, is an investment in artistic risk. The collecting and analyzing of data as the primary tool for evaluating outcomes is an insufficient method when it comes to evaluating investment in artistic risk.

The relationship between outcome-based evaluation and the developing field of cultural policy is illustrated in Pew's stated policy objective: "We will help cultural institutions earn the support of policy makers and funders by measuring the results of their programs and activities…"[5] This comment begs the question of where artistic risk-taking fits in when "measuring the results." It also speaks to a tension that many in the policy community are leery of addressing, that being the tension between administrative culture and creativity—the rub between effectiveness and risk. (This tension is reflected in an organization's decision whether to deliver art to audiences in the most effective way, or to be an incubator for the arts and embrace risk as an essential criterion for creativity.) Last but not least, who should take on the work of "measuring the results"—the individual arts organization, or its service organizations?

A further challenge the creation system faces, when looking for ways to engage in cultural policy activities, is its "weak" autonomy. "Weak" is a charged word, and to suggest that "weak" means "unworthy" is not my intention. I'm using it to describe the scale of operations

of organizations that are part of the creation system. It is an economic weakness that prevents these organizations from hiring staff to research their membership needs and characteristics; from developing appropriate tools to illuminate the creative process; from attending cultural policy conferences and meetings; and from contributing their concerns to this developing field—thus affecting the direction of cultural policy activities. This weakness is also tied to the power of the delivery system, its close relationship to the marketplace, and how the power of cultural consumption sets cultural policy.

Meanwhile, as an illustration of cultural policy activity's deficiency regarding artists and cultural diversity, let us look at a few academic cultural policy centers: the Princeton University Center for Arts and Cultural Policy Studies, the Arts Policy and Administration Program at The Ohio State University, and the Cultural Policy Center at the University of Chicago.

The Princeton University Center for Arts and Cultural Policy Studies says of itself:

> "[it] was created to improve the clarity, accuracy and sophistication of discourse about the nation's artistic and cultural life. Its programs and activities are designed to create an infrastructure of well-trained scholars who have access to regularly collected information about cultural organizations, activities and providers and who produce timely research and analysis on key topics in arts and cultural policy. Ongoing Research Projects are: The Social, Political, and Cultural Impact of New Technologies: Insights from Surveys on Contemporary Patterns of Internet Use; Reinventing Downtown: Sports, Culture, Conventions and the New American City; Two Ravens Project: Digital Society and the Humanities; Trends in Arts Participation; Center and the Periphery in Communications and Culture; and Community Conflict Over Art and Culture."[6]

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[5] Ibid.

[6] The Princeton University Center for Arts and Cultural Policy Studies, http://www.princeton.edu/~artspol/cultpol

This focus on outcome-based assessments has created a special challenge for artist-centered organizations, in that they are put in the position of identifying and developing ways to measure progress toward the achievement of an artistic goal.

The Arts Policy and Administration Program at The Ohio State University[7] focuses on arts policy through symposia, public lectures, occasional papers, and a number of research projects including International Issues in Cultural Management Training; National and Local Profiles of Cultural Support in partnership with Americans for the Arts; and Mapping the Associational Infrastructure of the Arts and Culture.

The Cultural Policy Center at the University of Chicago[8] is an interdisciplinary initiative between the Harris School of Public Policy Studies and the Division of the Humanities "dedicated to fostering research and public dialogue about the practical workings of culture in our lives." They describe their activities as developing "instruments and concepts, and bring[ing] them to bear effectively on issues and problems facing the cultural sector."

Upon examination of these cultural policy centers, one quickly discovers that artist-centered and ethnic-specific arts service organizations are not active participants in their research activities. The centers are not engaged in crafting research that would illuminate these organizations' concerns. While they often make reference to the policy community, is this only a community of scholars, foundation officers, and the leadership of large-budget service organizations? There is no evidence that it is a policy community of artists or their intermediaries. This also illustrates a troubling assumption within these centers: there are those who study culture, and there are those who make art, empower talent, and make the space for artistic inquiries—and the latter group is treated as an object to be analyzed instead of a subject allowed to speak. The lack of artists or their intermediaries as deliberative participants in these academic research efforts undermines the effectiveness of the centers' work.

While the "weak" autonomy of the creation system, linked to economic capacity, limits the work of small organizations, the strength of the creation system is tied to its organizations' missions, scale of operations, and their ability to maintain and defend their autonomy. The Culture Wars attack on experimental artists and artist-run organizations spurred these organizations to commit even more strongly to freedom of expression, and defend artist-

centered practices more vigilantly than ever. The creation system is skilled at defending itself when under siege (whether from political or economic sources), and stands up for the right to speak on issues of representation in arenas like the NEA. In the case of ethnic arts organizations, their ongoing struggle for legitimacy has produced a strong, vigilant defense of their autonomy and worth, linked to their battles defending multiculturalism. As is often the case in power dynamics, the burden of proof lies with those that are excluded.

Notably, arts groups who were not an active part of the creation system often stated, during the NEA battle, that the experimental artists and their supporters were exceptions who did not represent the arts community, or else offered some other characterization that served to marginalize the artist community. Where, in the developing field of cultural policy today, is the acknowledgement of the psychological life and autonomy of artist-centered and ethnic-specific organizations?

An Entanglement of Discourses

With this question in mind, let us examine the "entanglement of discourses"[9] between the delivery system and the creation system in the cultural policy community. At times I feel that the most contested word in the policy community is not "culture" but "artist." The debate about culture as aesthetic or as anthropological gets played out in the definition of the artist as person of imagination, a maker of meanings, the creator of public worlds; or as the content provider, the market's loss-leader, the social service provider. The tension between these definitions of artist mirrors the tension between culture and policy, between aesthetics and the need for bureaucratic assessments.

Interestingly, the tension between aesthetics and assessment becomes most entangled in the sphere of community arts projects. Where do community arts projects lie in the continuum between delivery and creation? What is the role of the artist: Is she/he a maker of meaning or a social service provider? What are the expectations of funders, artists, arts organizations and community participants—to deliver civic good or create civic good? Probably both. I offer these questions not to

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[7] The Arts Policy and Administration Program at The Ohio State University, http://www.arts.ohio-state.edu/ArtEducation/APA

[8] The Cultural Policy Center at the University of Chicago, http://culturalpolicy.uchicago.edu

[9] Robin Blaser, "Recovery of the Public World" in *Reflections on Cultural Policy: Past, Present and Future*, Edited by Evan Alderson, Robin Blaser and Harold Coward (The Calgary Institute for the Humanities, 1993), 18.

If the work of articulating a cultural "We" is to succeed, how does it interface with the ideologies that reside in the arts delivery and arts creation systems, respectively concerned with consumption and creation?

discredit community art projects, but as a way to identify the entanglement of discourse that cultural policy inquiries need to address, especially as they relate to community arts practices.

Earlier I spoke about the difference between the arts delivery and creation systems as a tension between those arts service organizations who foreground "art" and those who foreground "artists." Above, I describe the debates about the words "culture" and "artist." Let us add another entanglement to be examined, again reflective of the tension between aesthetic and assessment: the entanglement of discourse between culture and administration. This entanglement is worthy of a deep investigation because, in many ways, cultural policy in its current manifestation is bewitched by this entanglement, which can be viewed as part of the ongoing privatization of culture that the nation is experiencing. This privatization is linked to administrating cultural "goods" at the expense of knowing culture as a source of knowledge and meaning, and at the expense of creating art that resists being caged or reduced to a financial, singular purpose as "product."

I have written elsewhere that one needs to acknowledge that cultural policy is a form of administration, and, therefore, come to understand the paradoxical relationship between culture and administration.[10] The philosopher Theodor Adorno has written about this paradoxical relationship, saying that "culture suffers damage when it is planned and administrated; when it is left to itself, however, everything cultural threatens not only to lose its possibilities of effect, but its very existence as well."[11] Adorno goes on to discuss how

culture is perpetually threatened, and not just by administrative concerns and ambitions such as outcome-based evaluation, contingent valuation, or scenario planning. Culture is threatened by culture itself, with its fluid, irrational, instinctual processes and its potential for radical change that challenges the administrative systems that sustain and support artists and art.

The Cultural "We"

My interrogation of cultural policy has inserted me in an odd quest. It has made me part of the field, shaped my work as an arts advocate, and kept me engaged in an ongoing meditation on the pronoun "We"—this time, the cultural "We."

The philosopher Emmanuel Levinas states that "We is not the plural of I."[12] His words operate as a touchstone for my actions, both political and personal. I understand Levinas' "We" to be the "We" that includes people you don't know—the "We" as a secular faith system as opposed to the "we" of me and my friends and associates. Is cultural policy about Levinas' "We," or is it a privatized "we" not belonging to public life?[13] In many ways, the Culture Wars of the 1990s were not just debates about artistic content and freedom of expression, but also the origin of a challenge to define our nation as a "We." This challenge evolved into calls for cultural policy.

In regards to the dominant presence of academic policy centers, foundations, and public policy think tanks currently determining the direction of cultural policy, I must ask whether their work—which acts as a modeling force in the cultural policy field—can be understood as

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[10] "…In a Time of Deep-Freeze," essay for *Movement Research Performance Journal* 26 (2003).

[11] Theodor Adorno, "Culture and Administration" in *The Culture Industry* (Routledge Press, 1991), 108.

[12] Emmanuel Levinas, "The Ego and The Totality" in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Duquesne University Press, 1987), 43.

[13] As I use the word "We" in this essay, I struggle with the nuances of how to write the word. Is it "We" with a capital W, open-ended and poetic, or a lowercase w that fixes the meaning of the word around the quantifiable? I privilege its poetic associations—the "We" that enlivens imagination through its embrace of unknowns.

the construction of a cultural identity, a cultural "We." And if the work of articulating a cultural "We" is to succeed, how does it interface with the ideologies that reside in the arts delivery and arts creation systems, respectively concerned with consumption and creation? How are these ideologies tempered in the name of cultural policy, or more pointedly stated, in the name of administrative culture? Is the articulation of the cultural "We" a "we" defined by the market measurement of cultural consumption?

Meanwhile, organizations involved in supporting creativity and empowering communities—generally second tier, and not actively engaged in the cultural policy field—tend to articulate a cultural "We" that is complex and encompasses more than consumerism. Given the political, aesthetic, and economic characteristics of these organizations, their "We" is a "We" of art makers, of diversity, full of paradoxical participants; it is a pluralist "We" that includes people one doesn't know. It is not a "we" reduced to possessive and finite measurements of consumption and

participation that functions as an authoritarian definition. But there is a growing problem of note. It appears that many of the same forces that have historically questioned the autonomy or significance of artist-centered and ethnic-specific organizations are now privileged participants in the developing cultural policy field. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, these organizations are engaged in polices of exclusion, avoiding the articulation of a complicated "We."

I believe that this pattern of exclusion brings up the question of a phobia of artists and cultural differences. Why is there an avoidance of engaging artists, their organizational intermediaries, ethnic arts organizations, and arts professionals of color? Is it because the mystery of how artists realize their vision and the complexity of diverse cultural expressions challenge the notions of safety, predictability, and the domain of our nation as a homogenous state? Is it a desire for orthodoxy that silences art controversies—and dampens the ineffable power of art that cultural policy proposes to address?

PART TWO   *Composing the World*

There is a place where we are always alone with our mortality, where we must simply have something greater than ourselves to hold onto—God or history or politics or literature or a belief in the healing power of love, or even righteous anger. Sometimes I think they are all the same. A reason to believe, a way to take the world by the throat and insist that there is more to life than we have ever imagined.[14] Dorothy Allison

To be an artist is to fail as no others dare fail.[15] Samuel Beckett

In light of current cultural policy, its focus on data, and the arts delivery system's ability to produce statistical measurements, how can and should the arts creation system engage this field? What happens if outcomes are measured in terms of investment in artists, artistic research and development, the "go know" impulse of discovery, Allison's "there's more to life than we imagined" ground of artistic explorations? But these outcomes are often themselves questions, or manifestations of cultural critiques, or experiences of "failure" that, as Beckett writes, are part of the artist's working process. Are the qualities inherent to art-making therefore vanquished, given cultural policy's call for outcomes as deliverables, for outcomes that are quantifiable?

Cultural condition always approaches what we mean by the word 'world' or the process of composing one....The world is never separately—by simplicity's trick—social, political, artistic, or sacred, but, rather, it is made up of an entanglement of discourses having to do with men, women, earth, and heaven.[16] Robin Blaser

As Robin Blaser writes, "Cultural condition always approaches what we mean by the word 'world' or the process of composing one." Assuming that cultural policy is a system of arrangements, the challenge now is to create a form of operations, of governance that makes room for the process of composing the world—which is different from measuring the world. To that end, composing the world, for those in the creation system, is the work of imagination. Yet investment in the world of imagination is investment in practices and policies that support creativity as a "composing," while investment in the world of administration has, to date, supported "measuring." This opposition creates a fundamental tension in the system of arrangements, challenging the very purposes of cultural policy.

My eyes often glaze over when I hear the word "policy"; it is such an airy and slippery word. I recall a colleague of mine, arts consultant Kathie deNobriga of Atlanta, Georgia, commenting that one of her responses to the word is a recollection of how "policy" works to keep people out—the policies of segregation, of exclusion. Bewitched by the articulations of cultural policy and having the same kind of response to the word "policy" that Ms. deNobriga had, I began to look at what's missing within the field: namely, the concerns of the creation system and second tier arts service organizations, which

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[14] Dorothy Allison, "Believing in Literature" in *Skin* (Firebrand Books, 1994), 181.

[15] Cited in Paul Auster's "Providence: A Conversation with Edmond Jabes" in *The Art of Hunger* (Penguin Books, 1997), 169.

[16] Robin Blaser, "Recovery of the Public World" in *Reflections on Cultural Policy: Past, Present and Future*, Edited by Evan Alderson, Robin Blaser and Harold Coward (The Calgary Institute for the Humanities, 1993), 18.

I detailed in Part One of this paper. In this part, I offer suggestions—both literal and metaphorical—about how artist-centered and ethnic-specific arts service organizations can engage in the field of cultural policy. My paper's aim is not primarily to argue against current cultural policy formation, but, by pointing out the deficiencies in this developing field, to argue for forms of inclusion that will positively impact cultural policy definitions, participation, and purposes.

This inquiry into "the missing" is also an examination of how the cultural sector works internally. That is, I examine the policy arrangements between large arts service organizations, small arts service organizations, funders, museums, and community-based arts organizations. I am not so much concerned with trying to understand (through the measurement of participation and consumption, valuable in itself) how the "public" views the arts; rather, I am interested in how our society supports artistic production and those incubator sites that foster creativity and articulate cultural equity and cultural democracy. I am concerned with how artistic practices imagine what is public, create the metaphors we live by, and produce actions, policies of values, and arrangements of the plural.

Equivalences

In light of the fact that many of our democratic procedures have been compromised by greed and prejudice that result in forms of exclusion, I found myself searching for ways to think of democratic practices as inclusive. This led me to the writings of political philosopher Chantal Mouffe, who articulates a form of democracy based on the idea of equivalences. She argues that democracy is not a "greater good" on the horizon that society moves toward, but a "chain of equivalences" we create among ourselves, informed by the ethico-political values of liberty and equality.

Mouffe states that "the main question of democratic politics becomes then not how to eliminate power, but how to constitute forms of power which are compatible with democratic values."[17] It is this articulation of democracy as a chain of equivalences that I feel cultural policy participants need to adopt. We need to create a cultural policy context in which the creation and delivery systems develop ways to assert the multiple values of culture and art. This kind of cultural policy could become a model for other social network systems.

As a first step, we need to examine the forms of governance that currently exist between first and second tier arts service organizations, and understand how a chain of equivalences can operate as a form of governance that produces actions and protocols. Currently, economic and ideological differences between first tier and second tier service organizations are exacerbated by the lack of a forum for ongoing communication through formal networking. If cultural policy development among arts service organizations is to occur, then a form of governance that assures equity in the face of differences needs to be articulated.

The Example of PASO

As an illustration of the chain of equivalences, I offer the example of The Peer Arts Service Organization Partnership Project (PASO). In 1997 I initiated a project that brought together nine artist-centered and ethnic-specific arts service organizations. Our purpose was to identify common core values and shared issues, explore collective problem-solving strategies, and organize a consortium for action. The PASO partners were the Alliance of Artists Communities, Alternate ROOTS, The Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers, Atlatl, NAAO, NALAC, the National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture, NCCC, and The Association of American Cultures. The average annual operating budget of these service organizations was approximately $250,000. The average staff size was two. Today, PASO operates as an informal cohort network of information sharing, advocacy, and modest partnership projects.[18]

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[17] Chantal Mouffe, "For an Agonistic Model of Democracy" in *The Democratic Paradox* (Verso Books, 2000), 100.
[18] In addition to the PASO organizations mentioned, the National Performance Network (NPN) and the Asian-American Arts Alliance have been engaged in ongoing information sharing within this group, with NPN taking a leadership role in this effort.

We need to create a cultural policy context in which the creation and delivery systems develop ways to assert the multiple values of culture and art.

PASO's common ground was an economic one. Its development was built around an "economy of shared resources that does not comprise the agendas of our organizations, but recognizes the promise and potential of working together."[19] Through a series of gatherings, the PASO consortium established programs and goals that would benefit the partners. At the core of this process was an embrace of the concept of equivalences, as achieved through dialogue and negotiations.

In contrast to marketplace endorsements of "win-win" partnerships, the concept of equivalence moves beyond the personal "I need this" to emphasize the secular "We," benefiting the entire group. Inherent in the notion of equivalences is an understanding that, at times, an individual's need is not going to be met, but that a person does not have to negotiate away his or her values in order to reach consensus. Equivalences also addresses the democratic and cultural challenge of locating oneself in the continuum between pluralism and individualism. It is not about creating either/or dichotomies; instead, equivalences affirms a lively democratic paradox necessary for the work we pursue. I recall that when PASO was developing its objectives, we had an extended debate about freedom of expression as it related to the experimental arts community and the indigenous arts community. Searching for the equivalences in this debate, we found them by creating a policy of supporting "the rights and responsibilities inherent in diverse artistic expression."[20]

In many ways PASO's articulation of equivalences is an "open source" form of governance—perpetually in development, yet grounded in the ethico-political values of liberty and equality. This approach is not so much about establishing the functions of a governance system per se, based on equivalences, but rather about making decisions that create a chain of equivalences acknowledging the power of each participant—a form of deliberative democracy. In PASO's case, the power is that of artist-centered and ethnic-specific cultural practices. Alternatively, when one looks at the current power relationship between first and second tier service organizations, one discovers politeness, but little of meaningful interchange.

According to *Expanding the Dialogue*, the 1998 PASO report to the field, PASO's "combined membership base

is only suggestive of the potential of the Peer Partnership Project. Our combined reach extends far beyond these statistics, to encompass readers from publications, arts and non-arts partners in community initiatives, student interns, participants in residency programs, and local, national and international presenting and producing partners."[21] Nevertheless, when compared to Americans for the Arts, Arts Presenters, Dance/USA, the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, Opera America, or Theater Communications Group, PASO organizations and supporters are dwarfed by the economic and bureaucratic size of these first tier arts service organizations.

Again, the economic disadvantage comes into play. A case in point is the difficulty PASO faced when it tried to have its voice heard within the developing cultural policy field. As one of its goals, PASO had decided to engage in cultural policy research. However, it was not successful in securing funds to maintain and build an infrastructure that could sustain this research. In this case, the "weak" autonomy of the PASO group was not related to the various disciplinary focuses within the group, but rather to PASO's organizational practices—which supported the self-determination of artists and communities working to compose the world or imagine futures. This commitment positioned PASO, and its organizations, outside the realm of cultural policy framing and research because it resisted the homogenizing "we" of cultural consumerism, of culture as quantifiable, that is a preoccupation of many policy makers.

PASO now exists as an informal network. Most of its engagements with cultural policy research and thinking are through panel sessions at its partners' annual membership meetings. Beyond that, there has been little activity. In many ways the PASO organizations' engagement with cultural policy is at the level of learning to understand the field's "language" and intent, or else a response to policy portraits of their activities that were produced without their input.

This kind of exclusion from cultural policy analysis, among second tier service organizations, reinforces a history of disenfranchisement. These service organizations have repeatedly experienced exclusion that, sadly, adds an element of illegitimacy to the developing field of cultural policy. As PASO observed back in 1998, "we are concerned that the democratic process suffers

[19] *Expanding the Dialogue*, The National Association of Artists' Organizations, A Report to the Field, Fall 1998, 5.
[20] Ibid., 9.
[21] *Expanding the Dialogue*, The National Association of Artists' Organizations, A Report to the Field, Fall 1998, 4.

The cultural policy field, if it is to be worthy and of significance, must begin to address the concerns of the creation system.

when artists and arts service organizations are not purposefully included in the national dialogues about cultural policy. Whether by oversight or design, the exclusion of certain artists and arts organizations—including the most diverse, experimental and audacious—is a missed opportunity for fresh perspectives on democratic life."[22] This statement holds true today.

If cultural policy is understood as a system of arrangements, to date these arrangements do not actively include arts service organizations such as the members of the PASO consortium. I do not feel that this absence is intentional, but it illustrates how artist-centered and ethnic-specific arts service organizations do not currently have the capacity to participate in the assessment of the arts—within the framework of today's cultural policy activities. However, it is important to note that the Center for Arts and Culture's "Cultural Policy at the Grassroots" project and the Urban Institute's "Cultural Indicators" project are both working with artist-centered and ethnic-specific cultural service organizations to address the absence of these networks at national policy tables. Let us hope that these leading policy organizations continue to build upon this work.

Promoting Inclusion

The cultural policy field, if it is to be worthy and of significance, must begin to address the concerns of the creation system. The field must acknowledge that it is, in effect, creating policies of exclusion that undermine the ultimate intentions of cultural policy.

Some steps that can be taken to address cultural policy deficiencies are:

* **Establish a cultural policy context that is inclusive.**

This step is not about receiving an invitation, from current framers of cultural policy, to participate in their policy analyses. Rather, it is about articulating a cultural policy context in which the voices of artists and the values of second tier arts service organizations are acknowledged and supported. Foremost in my conversations with colleagues in the PASO consortium is the desire to be supported in their policy efforts. To do this we need to understand U.S. cultural policy as a system of arrangements, and see the wide range of practices and analyses that define and shape American cultural policy. To this end, first and second tier arts service organizations must be able to communicate in a way that enables them to share their definitions of cultural policy and the research or programs they are undertaking.

* **Establish relevant and feasible research methodologies that acknowledge the different social, political, and economic contexts that inform cultural production.**

I believe that the cultural sector can take some cues from a recent turn in public policy analysis, which acknowledges the limits of collecting and analyzing facts and looks at how decisions are made and policies crafted. This dynamic process is referred to as deliberative policy analysis and practices. As I sketch out here and am

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[22] *Expanding the Dialogue*, The National Association of Artists' Organization, A Report to the Field, Fall 1998, 8.

teasing out further in a current research project, deliberative policy analysis and practices are already central to the operations of second tier arts organizations, since these organizations are in constant dialogue with the artists and communities they serve. Yet the democratic processes of deliberative policy analysis have yet to be examined in U.S. cultural policy discourse. It seems that cultural policy analysis has been preoccupied with understanding participation in terms of markets, instead of in terms of crafting organizational policies and community relationships.

* Support the leadership of second tier arts service organizations and the development of their policy research projects and articulations of cultural policy.

Such support, from foundations, academic policy centers, and policy think tanks, can address the gap in existing cultural assessments as it relates to the pictures presented about artist-centered and ethnic-specific arts organizations (which are often generated without active engagement by these organizations).

Support from within the memberships of artist-centered and ethnic-specific arts service organizations is also key. With such support, the leaders of these service organizations can better articulate how they (and their members) develop cultural and public policies through relationships, knowledge exchanges, and the practices of empowering talent and communities. The leaders of these organizations also need to set their own agendas, and come up with their own terms for presenting themselves in policy discourses.

Art as Policy

One reads of various research projects, think tanks, and philanthropic objectives that examine art and public policy; yet in these examinations rarely is there an examination of art as policy. I make a distinction between efforts to affect public policy through the arts, and how art in and of itself creates public policy. Art as public policy is tied to manifestations of cultural citizenship—the claim

one makes upon society through art. It may be a claim for inclusion that asks society to acknowledge a group; it may be a claim that asks society to address a societal problem; it may be an assertion about the ways one forms a societal identity; or it may be a claim that asks people to examine how they literally see the world—some formal inquiry different from engagement with the political, yet part of our understanding of the public sphere.

Bill Rauch, Artistic Director of Cornerstone Theatre, told me a story from early in his career when he produced an interracial version of Romeo and Juliet in rural Mississippi. The actors for the production were community members from a town in which the relationships between Anglo-Americans and African-Americans were, at best, strained. During the course of Romeo and Juliet, triggered by the play's message, the town began to examine its racial practices, resulting in the integration of some local non-profit boards of directors. This story illustrates how arts can change, influence, or produce more enlightened public policies.

Arts as public policy are aesthetic experiences. One example is the red ribbon artists created to sound the alarm on the AIDS epidemic, the subsequent public recognition of which resulted in changes in national health policies. Similarly, Ansel Adams' photographs of the American wilderness created broader environmental awareness, resulting in environmental protection policies. In fully-realized community arts projects, artists understand that engagements with the public serve to articulate valuable observations about public life and produce aesthetic experiences that create community. Too often, however, community arts become burdened with the expectations of patrons, partners and participants, who expect artists to deliver citizenship or a happy-face reductionism of civic good. Instead, we must keep our eyes on the prize: the aesthetic experience, the artistic practice as policy, art as transformative.

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Cultural policy questions about art's place in society are predicated on art's ability to be a way we define ourselves, that place of potentialities where we create our humanity.

humanity. Art's invitation is also an obligation to define our world, through a public that creates and delivers visions of the everyday. It is the work of composing the cultural "We" of differences.

What might the policies of composing the world look like? It may be an artist-designed funding program that supports the life cycle of art projects. It may be policies that support flexible administrative systems responsive to the evolving needs of artists and projects. It may be policies that acknowledge that the artistic process is a form of gift-giving, of exchange between art forms and artists, between artists and audiences, between patrons and artists, between artists and presenters/producers. It may be that the interdependence and the indeterminacy of these exchanges require practices and policies charged with a commitment to discovery, to the ethical, to the potentiality of art.

I privilege the making of arts as an activity to support— hence, my advocacy for strengthening the creation system. I do not see or define the worth of art by what it delivers, whether that is audiences, civic engagement or the "next new art thing." This perspective does not separate art from context, from the creation and delivery systems, but places the focus on the arts as transformative. Art is a passionate force that creates metaphors, images, sounds, and aesthetic experiences. Knowing that artistic practices make public policy, how do we create a policy for transformation, the joining of potentialities in a way that enables, imagines, and proceeds (as the modernist poets would say) to "make it new"?

The passion of the heart and mind that artists utilize, the composing that makes claims upon society by asking that we imagine, is an act of participation that defines "public." If cultural policy by-products are activities that eliminate passion from the sphere of art-making in order to render a rational policy, then "cultural policy" is a failure. Cultural policy activities need to utilize and mobilize these passions toward designs that benefit artists and audiences—that enrich our understanding of risk, freedom, responsibility, beauty, the poetic composing of the world … and the mystery and courage of imagination.