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Is cultural diversity good or bad for the arts and creative economies?– Stephanie N. Stallings. Tafterjournal n. 53 - novembre 2012

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Introduction

[1] Within two months, September and October 2012, no fewer than four arts policy-related events convened international scholars and the general public to problematize the connections between cultural diversity, democracy and cultural policy. All four events, discussion of which will be interwoven here as I address their respective concerns, posed some version of the following question, which became the guiding line of inquiry for this paper: “Is diversity the building block of the universal in the arts, or are the politics of diversity and identity corrosive of the universal?”

[2] Most of the literature cited in this article focuses either on cultural diversity in democratic systems or on methods for valuing the arts. I try to synthesize these topics toward an answer to the question posed in the title: “Is cultural diversity good or bad for the arts and creative economies?” What becomes clear from the evidence presented here is that though there is a marked difference between Western European and US perspectives—largely due to differences in how the arts are funded—there are also many more, sometimes surprising, similarities.

Democracy and the arts share a diversity problem

[3] On 25 September 2012, three social scientists in Riverside, California, came together to address the question “Is Diversity Bad for Democracy?” In this panel discussion sponsored by Zócalo Public Square, a project of the US Center for Social Cohesion, the commentators spoke about whether the polyglot US has become simply too big and too culturally diverse to continue as a healthy and vibrant democracy. One panelist cited rising diversity as the trigger for a recent decrease in political participation. All agreed, however, that the geographic self-sorting and political polarization that is relatively new to American politics is more a result of affluence and technology than diversity, as it is with increasing frequency that people choose the media they consume (NEA 2007, RAND 2008, Stern and Seifert 2009, Sidford 2011).

[4] The above authors are not alone in suggesting connections between a thriving democratic system and vibrant cultural institutions. The most important questions to ask when studying the relationship between cultural policies and democracy are: “Who are the agents in cultural policy-making processes, and which interests do they represent?” and “What rights and demands do taxpayers have with respect to a government-supported cultural sector?” (Vestheim 2012b).

The great arts debate: instrumental or cultural value?

[5] In Western Europe, as in the US, the recent economic crisis caused a sea change in arts and culture funding. We currently share a climate of economic uncertainty and broad-based cuts, which has led to louder demands to determine the social impact and economic value of the arts. We may not be facing a new situation, but communicating the value of the arts is weighing heavily on cultural policy researchers. On 13 October, the UK-based Battle of Ideas hosted a roundtable discussion entitled “What Is the Value of the Arts?” at the Felix Meritis Centre for Arts, Culture and Science in Amsterdam to assess the relationship between creativity and inspiration, and economic value. What is relatively new, as panelist Tiffany Jenkins noted

recently, is that even though societies have long debated how to value the arts, until recently this debate had little bearing on arts funding (2011).

[6] Culture can also be a means to deflect serious discourse about social class issues such as unequal economic power (Bonet and Négrier 2011). The US movement of arts-based civic engagement to date seems a feeble replacement for its institutions of higher education, which were, until the 1960s, the very heart of intense public discourse and vocal citizen involvement.

Data-gathering for arts advocacy in creative economies

[7] As artists and arts organizations become more proficient at marketing their services to the corporate world, business leaders, increasingly aware of how new media technologies have a direct impact on their profitmaking, find it more appealing to brand themselves as social beings by aligning with creative industries and adopting more robust corporate responsibility initiatives, such as cause-related marketing (CRM). Americans for the Arts is one national organization taking advantage of this new CRM movement through a specially designed “pARTnership” system created to enhance business and arts partnerships. This sharp turn toward research for advocacy in the US directly informs arts management policy’s deliberate shift away from supply of the arts toward the cultivation of demand, the idea being to develop the capacity of individuals to benefit from arts experiences.

[8] Tim Baker and Steven Roth asserts, “value not communicated is valueless. The better you communicate the true value you offer – value as defined by the consumer – the more you increase that value, the more likely the customer will buy” (2012, my emphasis). In the US, then, where the arts must compete with entertainment and new technologies for support, we sometimes bypass the question of intrinsic value entirely, assuming that consumers (no longer merely audience members, since they effectively vote with their dollars) are the only qualified assessors of an art activity’s value. Questions of diversity and representation are similarly dispensed to the market.

Calls for a return to cultural (aesthetic) value

[9] Not all art, after all, has a direct social or economic impact, or even a clear message. Art that is polysemic, defies category, or is controversial often suffers in discussions of non-aesthetic value. Several authors have called for an end to the “values for money” debate in favor of a discussion of “money for values.” Maurice Davies and Sara Selwood, in a special issue of *Cultural Trends* devoted to the arts policy debate, identify the main purpose of assessing cultural or aesthetic value as being intimately associated with making the case for public funding (2012). To them, that continued emphasis on research for advocacy is disappointing. Apart from advocacy, they posit, developing a more nuanced understanding of cultural value could help clarify the purpose of organizations and funding, improve organizational management, assess success and progress of initiatives, and allow funders to make the best use of their funds. Kandel argues for art as an evolutionary adaptation fundamental to an understanding of human cognition and motivation.

Conclusion

[10] Cultural diversity has often been a convenient target for those who see it as subverting universal values in a democracy (which requires robust participation) or in the arts (which require an engaged audience). This is because the more culturally diverse a society is the more difficult it is to assign specific cultural (aesthetic) value to a work of art. In the absence of clearly defined cultural value, in turn, other methods for valuing the arts (such as social benefits for individuals and communities, economic impact, and market value) must rise to take its place for a creative economy to thrive. The challenge, if adherents to cultural value are to reclaim it, is to come up with innovative ways to “make the case” for aesthetic value in order to turn policy discussions—on both sides of the Atlantic—away from a “values for money” debate toward “money for values.”

Responda as questões abaixo de acordo com o texto:

1. De acordo com o parágrafo [1], a autora menciona que 4 eventos relacionados à política das artes propõem uma problematização ao público e que todos sugerem discutir versões de uma mesma questão. Qual a problematização e qual a questão? (2,0 pts)

Resposta esperada:

A problematização consiste em abordar a conexão entre diversidade cultural, democracia e política cultural

A questão é: “Seria a diversidade o alicerce da arte universal, ou seriam as políticas de diversidade e identidade corrosivas à este sentido universal?”

2. De acordo com o parágrafo [3] quando a autora trata da relação entre *democracia e diversidade*, ela destaca a opinião de um palestrante sobre esta relação. Qual é esta opinião? (1,5 pt)

Resposta esperada:

Um dos palestrantes citou a diversidade como o gatilho para o recente decréscimo na participação política

3. De acordo com o parágrafo [4], o qual se debruça sobre a relação: *políticas culturais e democracia* quais são as questões de relevância propostas por (Vestheim 2012b). (3,0 pts)

Resposta esperada:

Quem são os agentes no/do processo de elaboração/criação/produção da política cultural e quais interesses eles representam? Quais direitos e demandas os contribuintes têm em /com relação ao setor cultural mantido pelo governo?

4. No parágrafo [5], a autora refere-se a uma observação da palestrante Tiffany Jenkins. Qual é a opinião da palestrante? (2,0 pts)

Resposta esperada:

A palestrante observou que apesar das sociedades terem debatido amplamente / por longo tempo sobre como avaliar as artes, até recentemente este debate teve pouca relação/ impacto/ interferência no financiamento das artes.

5. De acordo com parágrafo [8], qual competição é referida ao se tratar das artes no contexto americano (Baker and Roth, 2012)? (1,5 pt)

Resposta esperada:

O parágrafo se refere à competição da arte com o entretenimento e as novas tecnologias como forma de suporte(...)