



Wednesday, 5 October 2011, 1:30 pm.

Roundtable 10: Across the Divide

Speakers

Martin Drury, Arts Director, the Arts Council of Ireland

Bilel Aboudi, Deputy Director of International Cooperation and External Relations/Public Services Advisor, Ministry of Culture, Tunisia

Moderator

Anne Dunn, Consultant, Australia

Rapporteur

Natasha Eves, Research and Project Officer, International Federation of Art Council and Culture Agencies (IFACCA)

Description of the session

This session focused on creative intersections between arts, culture and other sectors based on the Discussion Paper prepared for the 5th World Summit on Arts and Culture.

Anne Dunn introduced the session by discussing D'Art 41 on *Creative Partnerships*. She asked some key questions such as: What sort of outcomes do we want to record to impress policy-makers? How can we learn to describe what happens in an intersection? Do you feel hopeful that intersections may not always be the result of the initiative of artists/artswriters? Is there some art that should not be supported by governments; that should fall outside the normal policy framework? Are we carrying out intersections as a new source of funding, or because it increases participation?

Martin Drury began his presentation by demonstrating that creative intersections are not new, in fact they are very old, the arts were embedded into the lives and belief systems of people, but western civilisation has allowed this to become buried, as we've moved into specialisation and fragmentation. Referring to the examples of intersections in D'Art 41, he suggested that we may be thinking more about

creative interventions than creative partnerships – art is being put *onto* other sectors, while the voice of other sectors is mute.

The structure of arts support organisations (such as arts councils) is also important to consider. At Arts Council Ireland there is a precise mapping between artforms, and the structure of the organisation, with only 6 teams *'struggling against the geometry'* (eg. young people, festivals, arts participation etc.). According to Martin, Arts Councils are also 'protectionist', or artists, or arts organisations and the practice of the arts – and they have funding models that match professional arts practice. Martin stated that Arts Councils behave like relief agencies rather than development agencies; they don't commit to sustained development projects. He also posed questions such as: *'Do we need to reconfigure resources?'* and *'Do we need to think about restructuring agencies to address other sectors?'*

As conclusion, Martin underlined that there is a need for new thought leadership and political will. The interests, the people and the experience of other sectors need to begin to populate arts councils and decision-making processes. He stated that: *'we need the arts to be embedded into non-arts agencies and non-arts departments. We need to advocate, and to have social commentators advocate for the arts.'*

Bilel Aboudi, began his presentation by outlining the three dimensions of culture: aesthetic, anthropological; and industrial and commercial. All of these dimensions exist depending on policy priorities.

According to Bilel, culture is a showcase for governmental activity, using the tools of funding and legislation. He posed the question: *'What happened to artists and their needs?'* as the sector is not often seen as 'public policy'. Bilel stated that culture needs to be protected and that cultural policy is defined like any other sector and is sometimes considered as the easiest because it is entertaining. There is no real analysis of managerial needs, and an underestimation of its role due to absence of specific technical knowledge.

Bilel explained that since the 1990s the situation has changed rapidly, citizens have expectations and concrete needs, and competition is becoming very popular. Culture is also a 'moving' sector, with the emergence of science and new approaches. He explained the complexity and chaos theory, and how it relates to the culture sector. He also explained the role of social network analysis tools, the interconnections between people and things (computer based tools) and how they can be applied. The impact on policy modeling is 'dynamic iteration' – if a small change is made, everything will change.

He then outlined international trends in connectivity, such as the 2005 Convention, and new tools in cultural policy, such as the Cultural Diversity Programming Lens Toolkit. He recommended that 'applied culture' be used as a new vocabulary for both sides to understand culture and said that: *'we move from sectoral division towards culture as a transversal theme in all departments'*. He also recommended the introduction of new management tools (i.e. systems dynamics) in policy analysis.

The **discussion** began by one delegate underlining the paradox of the conference as a whole – discussion is focusing on partnerships, when most funding directed towards symphony, opera and ballet. There is concern that culture is being treated as a sector, while many are trying to do cross-cutting work. Is being

'in a sector' helpful or not when trying to work across all fields? The discussion moved to whether 'core' arts should be funded, or to spread the funding more widely – to working with other sectors. It was generally agreed that this doesn't have to be an 'or', it can be an 'and'.

According to the delegates, policy should be 'facilitating' rather than dictating, and it's difficult for policy to capture the breadth of what arts and cultural practice is. Delegates discussed how the Australian National Cultural Policy could reflect ways of working with other departments and sectors. Geographical access to culture should also be reflected in policy. Institutions, arts or otherwise, are the keepers of culture.

It was noted that that 98% of the Australian population takes part in some sort of culture, but this notion doesn't filter through to the politicians. If support for culture was simply a question of political will, politicians would follow the people, but they don't believe that level of engagement.

Creative intersections discussed in the session

The focus on this session was on the practicalities of 'creative intersections'.

- **People:** Discussion highlighted that creative intersections, and the larger cultural policy, should focus on all citizens, not just artists. The training needs of managers also need to be addressed – in many cases, managers (and policy makers) have set ideas of how arts and culture should take place, and this does not involve cross-sectoral work. We also need people to advocate for these sorts of intersections. The Australian National Cultural Policy should also have 'access points' so that more people are able to interact with it.
- **Places:** Geographical need and access to culture was highlighted as a key challenge in carrying out 'creative intersections'. There is also a difference between 'Western' culture, where the need is being recognised to work with other sectors, while in many other cultures, this is already an accepted practice. In many other cultures, arts and culture always has been a key part of all aspects of society.
- **Projects:** In order to have support for 'creative intersections' we need to decide what we want to see happen, and what the strategies should be to make this happen.

Examples of good examples and practices

Please see the reports and tools referenced in the PowerPoint presentations of speakers.

Identified problems

- Lack of funding for cross-sectoral work
- An arts funding structure that does not reflect cross-sectoral work (e.g. artform boards in arts councils)
- The need to learn methods for advocating and explaining this sort of work

- Arts departments are advocates and protectors of artists, rather than the community. Whose issues are we addressing? Education policies aren't for teachers, should arts policies be for artists?

Recommendations for future actions

- An important part of the purpose of cultural policy is to tap into the artist in everyone. Cultural policy is not for the artist, it is for the citizen. An artist is a citizen who devotes his/her time in a certain way – one is an enrichment of the other.
- Professional artists alone should not be the focus of cultural policy. There is a sense that artists and funding bodies have a co-dependent relationship that needs to separate so that citizens have a place in cultural policy.
- Cultural policy should recognise community ownership and engagement – the community is served by all artists, who enrich the community.
- A strategy is needed to promote the arts/culture across sectors, and to have a voice in other sectors.

Other additional comments

- *'Perhaps we're at a point where culture, like education, should be recognised as a universal/democratic need.'*