Arts, Culture, and Quality of Life in Global Cities

Monday, December 9, 2013

Ford Foundation
320 East 43rd Street
New York, NY 10017
Arts, Culture, and Quality of Life in Global Cities

ORGANIZERS
Vishakha N. Desai—Special Advisor for Global Affairs to the President at Columbia University
Kate D. Levin—Commissioner for the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs
Saskia Sassen—Co-Chair, Committee on Global Thought at Columbia University
Roberta Uno—Senior Program Officer, Ford Foundation

PARTICIPANTS
Nora Akawi—Director, Studio X Jordan (Jordan)
Jonathan Barzilay—Ford Foundation (USA)
Carol Becker—Columbia University (USA)
Bill Bragin—Lincoln Center (USA)
Geoffrey Crossick—University of London (UK)
Teddy Cruz—UC San Diego (USA)
Vishakha N. Desai—Columbia University (USA)
Marcus Faustini—Cultural Activist (Brazil)
Tom Finkelpearl—Queens Museum (USA)
Fonna Forman—UC San Diego (USA)
Susan Freedman—Public Art Fund NYC (USA)
Christophe Girard—Mayor of 4th Arrondissement (France)
Kathy Halbreich—MoMA (USA)
Joe Hall—Ghetto Film School (USA)
Stephen Hobbs—The Trinity Session (South Africa)
Paul Ramirez Jonas—Artist (USA)
Vasif Kortun—SALT (Turkey)
Dinh Q. Lê—Sàn Art (Vietnam)
Kate D. Levin—Commissioner, DCA (USA)
Helen Marriage—Artichoke UK (UK)
Reinhold Martin—Columbia University (USA)
Maria Nicanor—Guggenheim (USA / Spain)
Sérgio Sá Leitão—Secretary of Culture (Brazil)
Saskia Sassen—Columbia University (USA)
Mark Stern—University of Pennsylvania (USA)
Rajeev Thakker—Director, Studio X Mumbai (India)
Roberta Uno—Ford Foundation (USA)
Sudhir Venkatesh—Columbia University (USA)
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#creativecities

Report by Devina Kirloskar
Arts, Culture, and Quality of Life in Global Cities

Study sponsored by the Ford Foundation, in collaboration with the Committee on Global Thought at Columbia University, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.
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Agenda

9:00 – 9:30  Welcoming Remarks: Roberta Uno, Saskia Sassen, and Kate D. Levin
Introduction of participants, introduction of the program

9:30 – 10:15  **Session I**
Defining a Healthy Cultural Environment in Global Cities

Why does it matter to have a healthy arts and cultural environment in global cities undergoing constant change? How do we define success in developing cultural strategy beyond economics, and for whom? What are the barriers in developing a successful system?

Moderator: Vasíf Kortun
Presenters: Saskia Sassen, Dinh Q. Lê

Discussion among participants

10:15 – 10:30  **Session II**
Assessing the Impact

How do we measure the impact of arts and culture on the quality of life of all citizens? What are the most important criteria in evaluating a successful program?

Moderator: Geoffrey Crossick
Presenters: Mark Stern, Christophe Girard

10:30 – 11:00  **Discussion among participants**

11:00 – 11:15  **Break**

11:15 – 12:00  **Session III**
Public-Private Partnership in Developing a Healthy Cultural Ecology

What is an appropriate role for the private sector in developing cultural ecology for a City? How should the for-profit sector engage and work with city governments as well as artistic communities? What are the risks in such a partnership?

Moderator: Susan Freedman
Presenters: Maria Nicanor, Sérgio Sá Leitão

Discussion among participants
Session IV
Arts and Culture for an Equitable City: Access for All

Often arts and culture are perceived as being elitist and disconnected from less privileged communities such as new immigrants or those who live on the edges of affluence. However, culture can be central to the formation of identity for these same groups of people. How do creativity and cultural production become central to the creation of an equitable city? How might this differ in different cultural contexts?

Moderator: Carol Becker  
Presenters: Stephen Hobbs, Teddy Cruz

Discussion among participants

Lunch

Session V
Developing Criteria for a Successful Arts and Culture Strategy, Identifying Barriers, and Next Steps

Moderator: Vishakha N. Desai

Breakout group discussion

Reports to the whole group

Concluding Thoughts: Kate D. Levin, Roberta Uno, and Vishakha Desai

Session VI
Public Session: Arts, Culture and Quality of Life: Creating Equitable Cities for the Future

Welcoming Remarks: Darren Walker  
Introduction: Kate D. Levin  
Panelists: Kathy Halbreich, Tom Finkelpearl, Joe Hall, Maurine Knighton  
Moderator: Vishakha N. Desai

Four minute presentations by Kathy Halbreich, Tom Finkelpearl, and Joe Hall

A brief presentation focused on the following questions:
— How do we measure the impact of a robust cultural strategy in NYC?
— What is the role of artists, curators and the private sector in developing a healthy cultural sector?

Discussion with the panelists and responses from international participants: Teddy Cruz, Rajeev Thakker

Audience discussion, closing remarks
Introduction

Vishakha N. Desai
Special Advisor for Global Affairs
Office of the President
Professor of Professional Practice, SIPA
Columbia University
New York City, USA

The presence of arts and cultural institutions and networks is vital to the health of any global city, old, and new. But it is less apparent how we measure their contributions to quality of life issues in the rapidly changing mega cities of the global north or south.

How do we develop quantitative and qualitative measurements to assess the impact of arts and culture on the quality of life in cities? How do we balance issues of social justice and creativity in cities where the super-rich and the ultra-poor of the world reside and often collide? What are the roles of public and private sectors in creating a healthy cultural ecology in a global city? How do we measure value beyond the economic impact of the arts—numbers of tickets sold, number of tourists visiting the city, the gentrification of a neighborhood? What are the key ingredients for a healthy cultural ecology of the city, taking into account artists, large established institutions, as well as smaller arts organizations? What are the barriers to the successful implementation of cultural policy in global cities?

Columbia University’s Committee on Global Thought, in partnership with Ford Foundation and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA), organized a one-day program to bring together scholars, policy makers, private sector and non-profit leaders, and practitioners—artists, architects, planners, community activists—to discuss some of these urgent issues around developing a better understanding of the role arts and culture can play in the social health of global cities.
The purpose of the program was two-fold:
1) To explore the role of arts and culture in cities from a global perspective; and
2) to highlight the experience of New York City over the last twelve years under the Bloomberg administration in order to focus on past challenges and successes in the context of developing a blueprint for future city development.

We envisioned that this multi-disciplinary, trans-national gathering would be the beginning of a conversation that could result in a longer-term project with a substantial and relevant research and policy agenda concerning global cities, especially those that are changing rapidly or those that are developing anew.

Throughout the discussion, we tried to answer the following questions: Why do the arts matter in sprawling cities? How do they matter? What are the ways in which we can measure their impact, especially in creating more equitable cities?

While some of our colleagues resisted the idea of any measurements, if we don’t want to be at the mercy of others in defining success, we need to develop strategies to outline a set of criteria undergirding the healthy arts and ecology of a global city. While the morning sessions were intended as a series of thematic conversations among the participants, the last session was public, with a focus on New York City.

The idea for the forum emerged from a conversation with Kate Levin, during the last year of her remarkable tenure as the Commissioner for Cultural Affairs for the Bloomberg administration. During her twelve-year tenure, Kate worked hard to make the case for robust support of cultural activities in the city. While it was easy to make the economic argument—hotel rooms booked, Broadway tickets sold—it was far more difficult to argue how it affected the lives of New York citizens.
As we talked about documenting the lessons learnt during her tenure, she and I also realized that the issues of measuring the impact of arts on the quality of life of all citizens of big cities like New York was of global relevance and would benefit from a broader conversation with a diverse group of artists and community organizers from around the world.

I also happened to talk to Darren Walker, now the president of the Ford Foundation, about our nascent idea for a forum, and he immediately supported it with his usual enthusiasm and smart thinking. The project then became a three-way collaboration: Columbia University, Department of Cultural Affairs of New York City, and the Ford Foundation.

At Columbia, Mark Wigley, the Dean of the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation at the time, immediately saw the importance of the project. He provided valuable advice and suggested colleagues from around the world. Saskia Sassen, the Co-Chair of the Committee on Global Thought and world-renowned scholar of the dynamics of global cities signed on and provided the academic drive for the project.

Special thanks also go to Carol Becker, Dean of the School of the Arts, and Reinhold Martin, Professor of Architecture, Planning and Preservation for their involvement.

At the DCA, Kate’s efficient team was led by Danai Pointer, who served as an able coordinator. At the Ford Foundation, Roberta Uno, Fiona Guthrie, and their staff were partners in recommending participants, ensuring that the logistics were flawless and proceedings were recorded.

Christopher Lucas in my office was the glue that held the myriad of details together, supported by staff members of the Committee on Global Thought. Devina Kirloskar came to the project early, and carefully recorded the proceedings so that we could prepare this report. My special thanks to everyone who worked so hard to make this project possible in a very short period of time.
Ultimately, I am truly grateful to the participants of the forum. Amazingly, just about everyone we approached accepted our invitation. Some travelled for thirty hours just to be with us for less than two days, others changed their plans to attend the forum, mainly because they recognized the importance of the conversation.

As one of the participants remarked at the end of the meeting, “this is only the beginning of a much larger and very important conversation.”

In that spirit, this report is intended not simply as a record of the meeting, but more importantly, as a pathway to identify the next set of questions and strategies that can help all of us—policy makers, arts professionals, artists and academics—to understand better the impact of arts and culture on the quality of life in global cities.
Executive Summary

Kate D. Levin  
Former Commissioner  
NYC Department of Cultural Affairs  
New York City, USA

A number of themes cut across the various conversations that took place in the course of the day. Given the diversity and breadth of experience of the participants, these points of confluence constitute areas of contention and consensus that are ripe for further exploration.

Defining the Unique Role of Culture in Cities

Cities were generally characterized as increasingly important vectors of opportunity, growing economic inequality, and intense physical expansion. Against this backdrop, the “importance of indeterminacy” (Sassen) and the “role of the informal” (Cruz) were ways of describing a dynamic deemed essential to political and personal coexistence in urban areas. Arts practices were described as contributing to this dynamic in numerous ways.

Many speakers described culture as a means of productively negotiating complex needs across a broad range of citizen relationships to wealth and institutional power. One participant posited that even under a repressive regime, he and his colleagues were afforded a modicum of cultural freedom because “at some level, they think…we are doing something…the community needed” that “they don’t know how to do” (Lê).

Perception: Accessible or Elite?

The toxic problem of culture being viewed as elite, and therefore exclusive, was discussed by a number of speakers. Engaging with audiences as a matter of urgent importance was raised in relation to both institutions and the larger practice of art. The reputation of institutions was often deemed less important than their local impact.
One positive formulation noted that the “accessibility and the proximity of these spaces to our homes…was essential. It gave us pride and a sense of belonging” (Becker). Others sought a deeper form of engagement stemming from the “inclusion of the community in framing their own cultural boundaries and institutions. Not the symbolic inclusion that many institutions practice” (Cruz).

The particularly fraught perception of the arts in the United States was analyzed as a function of the “attitude of easy access to ideas” which “breeds a tremendous anti-intellectualism.” This “presents a great problem for artists…who often work in metaphor and gesture” (Becker). Access to intellectual and emotional complexity enabled by culture was portrayed as an extraordinary strength, but also as a vulnerability. For some, the problem was understood as a tension between the powerful appeal of art and its use as a transactional marker. How should the emphasis between ‘creative’ and ‘economy’ be stewarded at a time when “political leaders frequently do not distinguish between culture and entertainment?” (Girard)

An internecine rift surfaced in discussions about culture as an aesthetic practice versus a vehicle for social service and economic justice. Parallel formulations referenced the debate between intrinsic and instrumental value. Several speakers called for an approach embracing a range of expression from “purely non-market…to high arts…to entertainment” (Girard). As one participant put it, the key to advocating for the full value of culture is to “be fluent across that spectrum” (Hall).

**Evaluation**

Several promising approaches were offered for moving toward a more nuanced, comprehensive form of assessing culture. Rather than struggling to “quantify outcomes” in ways that don’t capture the expansive nature of the arts, the field was encouraged to focus on its unique attributes: “All sorts of activities produce economic impact, but it is much harder to say what else produces reflectiveness, empathy and an engaged civic society” (Crossick). And rather than shying away from its layered complexity, the multivalent impact of the arts should be embraced as “essentially collective” (Stern).
Conclusion

This convening allowed a wide array of topics to be addressed with candor and expertise. Points of view were drawn from—and expressed in—very different kinds of professional vocabularies. As the following report shows, perspectives range from deeply theoretical to fully applied, mirroring the ‘spectrum’ of culture itself. Our hope is that these proceedings will help forge a better shared language with which to advance this and many ongoing, related conversations.

Darren Walker’s unscripted remarks about Detroit Institute of Art, then at a dire inflection point that Walker subsequently did so much to redress, reflected with eloquence and rigor the stakes of the discussion he so graciously hosted:

“I feel that the work that you all are doing today is hugely important and I salute the efforts and the great research that have been put together for this meeting. But I think there is a bigger issue at hand and that is our need to take control of the argument and not feel defensive or sissified because we believe that culture is central to our civilization.”
A special thanks to Vishakha Desai for masterminding the event and making it happen. This is an extraordinary gathering and the people gathered today are experts and leaders doing groundbreaking work in the field of arts and culture in the world today and in the vibrancy and the health of cities. The purpose of this gathering is to have an intimate conversation as practitioners and thinkers on this issue of equitable cities and arts and culture.

I would like to say thanks to colleagues at the Ford Foundation, Vishakha and to all the participants here for your gifts of ideas, time, candor, throughout the course of the day. In one of the early conversations about doing this event, it was noted that in the United States, in terms of government innovation, the momentum has generally tilted away from federal and state levels towards cities. While the reasons for this are not cheering, many localities have taken the opportunity (often out of desperation) to ramp up their capacity to find new and different ways of creating positive change. To take advantage of this situation, we need to find more comprehensive and nuanced ways of expressing the value of arts and culture to urban leaders. Today’s conversation is therefore timely, bringing expansive perspectives to understanding the present and potential future of this field.
I agree with Kate. I do not work with arts and culture, per se, but my expertise lies with the city. I think of the city as a complex but incomplete system. One of the major threats to cities today is that there is a strong tendency of over determining urban space. The city is a critical mixture of incompleteness and indeterminacy. This is a timely conference as in the last thirty years there has been a major rebuilding of cities with the emergence of the global city. I think of arts and culture as a social practice. It has become a strategic issue and the challenge of a social question; rather than one variable, it consists of many different modalities.
SESSION I
DEFINING A HEALTHY CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT IN GLOBAL CITIES

Why does having a healthy arts and cultural environment in global cities matter?

How do we define success in developing cultural strategy beyond economics, and for whom?

What are the barriers in developing a successful system?

MODERATOR
Vasif Kortun — Istanbul, Turkey
Director, Research and Programs
SALT

PRESENTERS
Saskia Sassen — New York City, USA
Co-Chair, Committee on Global Thought
Columbia University

Dinh Q. Lê — Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
Co-Founder and Chairman of the Board
Sân Art
TOWARDS A HEALTHY ARTS AND CULTURE ENVIRONMENT

Dinh Q. Lê — Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

I found it difficult to prepare for this session, especially with the subject being a ‘healthy cultural environment’ for arts. I asked myself, what do I know about a healthy cultural environment for arts? Because living in Vietnam, it is not exactly the right place to ask that question. So, instead, I will narrate a short story.

I live in Ho Chi Minh City, which is a global city with a population of twelve million. Vietnam is one of the last Communist countries in the world. There is little freedom of press and freedom of expression. During the war against the French and the United States later, the Socialist government controlled and effectively used the arts to mobilize people.

So I cannot complain that my government does not understand the importance of the arts. The problem is that they understand it only too well. Thirty-eight years hence, they still maintain a tight grip on the arts—given paranoia and fear that it would be used against them. Thus, we can safely assume that Ho Chi Minh City has one of the unhealthiest cultural environments in the world.

Under these extreme conditions, I ask myself, what do I know about a healthy arts and culture environment? The answer is, not that much.
What is a healthy arts and culture environment?

I asked my colleagues in Ho Chi Minh City to help me define a healthy arts and culture environment that they might wish for.

Some of the conditions that they came up with are:

1) An open and free environment for artists and cultural institutions;
2) An environment that allows artists and cultural institutions to experiment and push boundaries;
3) A vibrant public discourse that is free from censorship;
4) A healthy education system that is open to experimentation, innovation, and diversity. Schools today become the producers of the next generation of cultural workers;
5) A healthy and diverse number of cultural spaces from big museums to small non-profit art organizations;
6) A city with an economically viable environment for artists, not only in which to live but also to have time to focus on their work. A healthy cultural environment in any global city needs a healthy community of cultural workers;
7) Lastly, a government policy that invests in the arts but does not require the arts to serve its agendas.

After we came up with all these conditions, I asked my colleagues if these conditions would materialize in Ho Chi Minh City in the near future. They all laughed. None of them think any of these conditions will be achieved in their lifetime. For them it was a good exercise of dreaming. The answer was depressing so I asked again, what was the one condition that they wish for the most? The answer was freedom. Freedom is all that they needed and everything else was a luxury.
Why did I go to Vietnam despite the unhealthy conditions?

I started Sàn Art seven years ago. The Vietnamese government runs the Fine Arts Association. They do not recognize new forms of art practices. Also, the schools are so heavily controlled by the government that new ideas and thoughts were not allowed to enter because they fear it will corrupt the young minds there. These are extreme conditions. Artists know what is happening through stories. We started Sàn Art in order to support these artists and to encourage international exchange and to bring information from outside into Vietnam.

This is not easy because the government is constantly trying to limit cultural exchange. But so far it has been seven years and they have not shut us down. At some level, they think that we are doing something that the community needs, but they don’t know how to do it themselves. Of course, they are nervous about us. Although visiting artists can come and go, in order to have an exhibition, they require permits, which take about one month to process.

The Sàn Arts Model

“If we try to abstract this situation a little bit, then we can say that the concept of Sàn Arts is not simply a cultural institution or a received model. That is, it is not a typically Euro-American institutional model. Rather, it is a model that is embedded into the context. It has invented itself through the situation on the ground. As far as we see, it is not trying to normalize the situation.”
To elaborate on the model, we started off building a community. There was no community for the arts where people could gather. Owing to the poor condition of the educational system and the art schools, we ended up doing a lot of educational programs that we didn’t intend to when we set out. Currently, we have a laboratory program where we take in six artists per year. We fund everything from living space to studio space as a six month graduate program and provide each artist with a mentor.

We work intensively with artists. We push them to ask deeper questions. We ask them to do research. For the first time artists are asking questions about history. They feel like they do not know enough because history is so controlled by the Vietnamese government.

We are working with two private universities, six cultural workers, six international thinkers, from mathematicians to anthropologists. We are trying to cut across disciplinary thinking and we also need to branch out.
I will focus on the differentiation between the global city and the provincial city. I think of the global city as an analytic concept, a constructed concept that can be used as an analytical tool. The whole of New York City cannot be defined as a global city.

One of the interesting issues here that differentiates the provincial city and the global city is, for example, in big cities (such as Mumbai, São Paulo and even New York) the powerless can make a history. These ‘powerless’ make a presence, that is, they can make a history and they can make a politics. It does not necessarily mean that they can get empowered because the word ‘empowered’ has a different connotation. There is a zone between the words ‘powerlessness’ and ‘empowerment’ that is undefined, that is, there is a gap. In a provincial city, ‘powerlessness’ does not have the chance to become complex in the way that it can in the global city with its vortexes of energy, newcomers, and immigrants.

Let us consider the artists. Looking at the global city, it is a place, analytically speaking, which has an economic production function and a political production function; and arts and cultural practices have a place in both. The global city is also a place where the immigrant community and the artists develop these production functions. That is, there is a making where immigrant communities occupy space where nothing existed before.

The global city allows for such a function. The political production function is a bit more complicated. The corporate sector, or much of what is known as the neo-liberal project, has been made by the corporate sector in global cities. They made or innovated the rules and then sent it back to the capitals of the cities into what gets dressed as public law. This making of new laws happened in global cities through the corporate sector. Thus, what emerges as the public law is the informal political production of the global city.
When we look at the ‘politics of the disadvantaged,’ one also sees a political production function. It would be interesting to look into how artistic and cultural practices also feed into that.

We can take an example of 500 undocumented people from low income groups in a corporate farm located in a small town or a suburb. They stand with signs saying, ‘I have rights.’ Nothing happens and they may go unnoticed, but if the same people perform the same act of protest in a city like Chicago—or any other global city—something happens.

There is something about the kind of space, and its multiplicity of the space, along with the multiplicity of norms, rules and laws that enables some kind of making; and it creates also a political production function.

**Global Street as a Space of Indeterminacy**

I have started a small project called Theatrum Mundi-Global Street. This project has two components.

One is the notion of the global street as a space of indeterminacy—not a piazza with its own rules, or norms, but as embedded codes in space. For example, in rush hour traffic in the city, when you get bumped into or someone steps on your foot you don’t complain and you don’t take it personally.

These same embedded codes in a smaller neighborhood are considered acts of aggression. So the way urban space recodes, the global street for instance, is precisely a space for making, especially for those without access to formal instruments of making—whether those are political or cultural.

This brings us back to the importance of indeterminacy in a city. When we over build or do mega projects, we are really at risk of killing, if we were to call it, that indeterminacy.
The second component of this project is the hypothesis that starts with a notion that the urbanity of the center (here, the center does not mean literally in some geographic sense) is usually understood in juxtaposition to the thick cultures of the neighborhoods. I want to unsettle that duality.

I am interested in understanding what elements constitute that urbanity of the center that we all like so much. But they actually get transformed, there is a metamorphosis, reverting to the provincial city. I think it would not have all those properties, it would be more homogenous than a global city.

“I am not an artist and do not claim to know much about art, but the question of time and indeterminacy of a city are good grounds for artistic practice to thrive.”

I am not an artist and do not claim to know much about art, but time and the indeterminacy of a city are good grounds for artistic practice to thrive. I think ‘city-ness’ is very important. A city that knows itself, a city that has great histories and is made of diverse cultures has a capacity to ‘talk back.’ Here I refer to an essay I wrote, Does the City Have Speech?

The creation of standards, the making of state-of-the-art projects always let you know which city you are in, which means there are unique markers, which are important to maintain.

The infrastructural components are necessary but indeterminate. For example, trains can be used to carry bombs and the same could be used to carry food, or even refugees. Cities can prosper when more of the built environment is actually infrastructure, rather than buildings. How it gets used is what matters.
KEY ISSUES AND QUESTIONS RAISED IN DISCUSSION

Is the example of Vietnam an extreme case or is it the norm? Is the notion of freedom contextualized?

Even in countries where the governments encourage a healthy environment for arts and culture there is a shift in their stance on supporting creative economies. Even where governments are passionate about the creative economy, for example, the United Kingdom, they do not see the point of ‘creative people,’ that is, of people doing things that are deeply uncomfortable, radical or challenging. Governments believe that creativity can be constrained within a box or can be controlled.

“Governments believe that creativity can be constrained within a box or can be controlled.”

What does freedom mean to a community that is oppressed and pushed? What does freedom mean to a community say in Vietnam, Guatemala or San Diego where there are differences in economic, political situations, and cultures? Would it be possible to distinguish between free imagination and urgent imagination?

What is the value of networks in a global city?

What are the ways to guard against or avoid becoming a victim of the ‘complete ecology’ of the art world, i.e. where the art world becomes its own small ecology leaving out the public? There is a restructuring of endowment policies of many funding institutions, endowments, and dependence on markets and creation of networks in countries of the global south.
How does one set parameters for the development of art and culture given the ever changing market conditions?

A city like Mumbai is a series of communities and neighborhoods, which are bound together by adjacencies. The city develops through natural selection. When the Indian art market was booming a few years ago and everyone was buying everything, valuations went through the roof. When the market crashed, everyone stopped purchasing art.

People are still not buying art. So the artists who were purely commercial have not grown and thus are stuck in stasis. Whereas, artists who are ideologically focused on a series of concepts were constantly moving and they ‘chameleonized’ their own art practice to turn the market around and to focus instead on the conditions and the problems of the city. That is the difference: how different urban relations develop into arts and culture.

The question is not about aestheticization, but rather how one understands a cultural or social issue and revitalizes the idea of art. Thus, the form of art has evolved, as the conditions of market have not stopped the artists from working. However, their art form has taken a different route of aesthetics as they become involved in social and urban issues plaguing the city. Neighborhoods have an inbuilt sustainability and resilience.

In the subject of ‘creative economy’ is the emphasis more on ‘economy’ rather than its ‘creative’ component?

Is this the dilemma of the provincial city versus the global city or the challenge that any industry faces—of local going global? The same can happen in an art industry. There is a need for qualitative research that is rigorous. We cannot run to the numbers all the time.
On the Impact of Arts and Culture

It is difficult to measure with conventional quantitative tools the impact of arts and culture on cultivating collective capacity at the scale of the neighborhood. And yet funders and governments demand accountability; they want to know that their investments make sense. One solution is to think about impact less as a matter of quantifying outcomes and ‘deliverables’ and more as a rigorous qualitative and analytic approach to evaluating processes. How do arts and culture change communities? How do they cultivate a sense of collective agency? How do they stimulate civic engagement?

“One solution is to think about impact less as a matter of quantifying outcomes and ‘deliverables’ and more as a rigorous qualitative and analytic approach to evaluating processes.”

An emphasis on process in our grant writing and reporting should rest on the best research today in the fields of cognitive science and social psychology on how communities learn and the transformative power of arts and culture.
On Creating More Equitable Cities

There is growing consensus that engaging urban inequality today requires new experiments in public space, arts education, and cultural infrastructure, supported by cross sector collaborations to mobilize a new civic imagination. In recent years, many cities around the world, from Portland to Seattle, from Copenhagen to Medellín, have prioritized citizenship culture, public participation, and innovative cross-institutional collaborations to produce dramatic urban and economic transformations that have caught the attention of the world.

Many of these urban success stories began with a political leadership committed to integrating the knowledge and resources of universities, neighborhood leadership, civic philanthropy, the private sector, and government to creatively rethink urban policy and produce new models of public infrastructure.
SESSION II

ASSESSING THE IMPACT

How do we measure the impact of arts and culture on the quality of life of all citizens?

What are the most important criteria in evaluating a successful program?

MODERATOR
Geoffrey Crossick — London, UK
Distinguished Professor of the Humanities
Director, AHRC Cultural Value Project
School of Advanced Study
University of London

PRESENTERS
Mark Stern — Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA
Kenneth L.M. Pray Professor of Social Welfare and History
Co-Director, Urban Studies Program
University of Pennsylvania

Christophe Girard — Paris, France
Mayor of the 4th Arrondissement of Paris
MEASURING THE IMPACT OF ARTS AND CULTURE

Geoffrey Crossick — London, UK

There is a danger in the discussion on how do we evidence or how do we measure the impact of arts and culture on the quality of life of all citizens. It is important to begin with some preliminary reflection on the questions that have been presented to us for this session, in particular to ask why we want to know the answers to them. Why do we want to measure the impact of arts and culture on the quality of life?

The three reasons, in my view, are:
1) To understand the difference that art and culture makes and why it makes that difference;
2) To seek a more formative way to evaluate—to help people who are practicing in arts and cultural organizations to do what they are doing better, by understanding the outcomes of what they do; and
3) To persuade funders that their funding is justified and should be maintained or even increased.

These three reasons are, of course, connected to each other but they are not the same, and far too often we fail to make those connections. Instead, we leap to the third of these reasons, and end up trying to persuade governments, at the local or national level, of the reason why investing in art and culture matters.
The goal becomes advocacy and little more. We end up telling governments what we think they want to know, and we assume that to mean that arts and culture have a major economic impact. So, we construct the story that it has major economic impact, and methodologies are devised to demonstrate that. In the UK, at least, neither the arts organizations that produce the reports nor the Treasury (i.e. the Finance Ministry) that receive them, have confidence in the methodologies for measuring economic impact or in the findings that they yield.

In reality, I don’t believe that governments fund arts and culture because they believe they’re good for the economy, though they may use the evidence that it benefits the economy to justify what they’re actually doing for other reasons. And the cultural sector, mistakenly in my view, goes along with all of that. Surely we can do better?

**Changing Our Understanding of the Impact of Arts and Culture**

If the advocacy imperative drives our understanding in certain directions, what happens if we start looking elsewhere? We could start by asking what arts and culture distinctively does in the city. So far in our discussions we have focused primarily on art practice, but for the majority of people in cities it is above all about arts as an experience, and we must think about that dimension.

That means highlighting the fundamental ways in which art and culture make a difference to the good functioning of great cities, because it is here that we find one part of the really distinctive role that they play.

The important aspect that I wish to highlight might be called reflectiveness, empathy and difference, and its significance in diverse global cities driven by the dynamics of migration, diasporas, and diversity.
Engagement with the arts helps you see and understand others differently, something that is so important in global cities where differences abound and which can as a consequence be tense, challenging spaces in which to live. Global cities are places characterized by difference, including differences of language, ethnicity, and religion.

The arts play a fundamental role in helping people to understand their own place in society and the city, to understand difference, and to appreciate it. It doesn’t remove the tensions but it can much of the time turn them into something else, something more engaged and productive. I remember Neil McGregor, Director of the British Museum, recently describing global cities as Towers of Babel, and that it was cultural institutions and cultural engagement that were crucial to shaping a world in which the Tower of Babel would not collapse.

Having considered reflectiveness, empathy, and difference, we might then move on to many other dimensions where arts and cultural engagement make important contributions to global cities: dimensions such as mental health, energetic not passive civil societies, subjective well-being, dynamic innovative environments, and much more.

Those are the kinds of things that we need to be evidencing if we want to move on from the simplistic story about economic impact. And what makes these aspects and benefits more exciting and more satisfying to talk about is that, in contrast to economic impact, they relate to the fundamental experiences that people have when they engage with the arts.

All sorts of activities produce economic impact, but it is much harder to say what else produces reflectiveness, empathy, and an engaged civil society, as well as the other benefits to which I’ve just referred.
How do we understand and evidence the difference that arts and culture make?

How then are we evidencing that contribution across the various dimensions of impact that I’ve mentioned? When we broaden our focus, we are freed to look at arts and culture in a much more expansive way. That means that we should be talking not just about the specific part of arts and culture that is publicly-funded, but also about the totality of commercial, subsidized, participatory, and amateur arts.

There is a related danger, which is that our interest in the character of great cities and the role of culture within them becomes rapidly translated into technical, methodological, seemingly neutral questions about evaluation, metrics, and methods. These are important but they are not the whole question. If we take for granted what it is that we are trying to evaluate, without trying properly to understand the phenomena, we run the danger of seeking ever more refined ways of measuring something too limited and too simple.

The final point I would like to make is that if we look at the question that we have been asked, I wonder whether it is right for us to be trying to measure the impact of arts and culture as opposed to seeking to evaluate it. Nor should we be limiting ourselves to the evaluation of programs, as if that were the only or even primary form of people’s engagement.

We need to embrace the much broader ecology of culture in global cities. Measurement can be a part of that process of evaluation but should not be the whole of it. It takes us back to the three reasons for evaluating that I highlighted before.

By calling it evaluation rather than measurement, we are signaling that we’re rejecting the simple methodological hierarchy, one that sees quantification (and often randomized control trials for specific interventions) as the best way of demonstrating the difference that is made and all other methods of evaluation as necessarily inferior.
There are, for sure, areas where quantification is essential to demonstrate the differences we’re seeking to evidence. But there are many other areas where it is serious qualitative research that is what is needed, and where only qualitative evidence can give us the answers. It should not be regarded as weaker than quantitative evidence, but the passion for measurement means that it all too often is.

**The plural of anecdote is not data.**

If our qualitative evidence is to be convincing then it must also be rigorous. People in arts organizations love telling good stories about the transforming power of what they do, and these stories are indeed important. But, as someone once observed, ‘the plural of anecdote is not data.’ If we believe in the power of qualitative (as well as quantitative) evidence, then we need to move beyond the anecdote to qualitative research that is itself rigorous and conclusive. In that way we shall avoid having to seek numbers all the time as if they represented the only form of rigorous evidence.

If we try to understand the difference that arts and culture make better, and not get our evaluation entirely focused on advocacy, then we might actually find that our advocacy improves at the same time. I agree that it’s a challenge but I do think we should not simply get into a position where we seek to do in terms of evaluation and evidence what governments and funders expect us to do.

We need to develop rigorous methods to evidence those many dimensions of the difference that arts and culture make that we regard as important, to do so self-critically, and to make the case for seeing qualitative and quantitative approaches as equally relevant. If we don’t try to do that, we shall end up diminishing our understanding of what the arts and culture achieve and the difference they make, and as a consequence, diminishing the case that we can make to others.
The Importance of the Neighborhood as a Unit of Analysis

Whenever the topic of impact comes up, it almost invariably leads to the discussion of individual impacts. How does viewing a painting or listening to a piece of music produce changes in the individual listener or viewer? The assumption often is that social impacts are simply the sum of these individual impacts.

This model misses the fact that the production and consumption of culture are essentially collective, socially constructed processes. In recent years, we’ve become much more aware of the role of social networks in cultural engagement, but this awareness has had only limited influence on how we think about impacts.

Neighborhoods are a particular kind of social network, one that exerts a powerful influence on cultural engagement. We’ve used the idea of a neighborhood cultural ecosystem to underline the point that the variety of cultural assets present in a neighborhood and their interaction with one another is the context within which the arts have a social impact.

Breaking Out of the Economic Development Framework

Social Impact of the Arts—University of Pennsylvania (SIAP) was founded with the intention of developing methods to study the non-economic benefits of the arts, culture, and humanities. Through much of our existence, we have worked a bit on an ad hoc basis. If we found some data on public health or racial harassment, we’d examine its relationship to the arts.
Recently, we’ve adopted a more integrated framework for thinking about social wellbeing, the capabilities approach associated with Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. The publication of a number of comparative studies of social inclusion, social justice, and social wellbeing, all of which drew from the capabilities literature demonstrated its empirical usefulness.

Combining our commitment to the neighborhood as our unit of analysis with capabilities use of a multi-dimensional view of social wellbeing, we resolved to develop an index of social well-being at the neighborhood level. Over two years, we worked with a group of undergraduate and graduate students to pull together data on twelve distinct dimensions of well-being and study their relationship to the arts and culture. We’ve circulated one of the two papers we’ve completed on the project.

The scatterplot shows how our measure of morbidity is associated with cultural participation at the neighborhood level. The work has a long way to go, but we believe that this framework—one based on a clear conception of social and distributive justice—can serve as the roadmap for this study. In the next two years, we hope to refine our estimates for Philadelphia and develop new estimates for several other American cities.
Elitism and Inequality

My third point is more painful. When we began SIAP, we were attracted to the study of the arts and culture because the map of cultural assets didn’t look like the map of poverty, crime, HIV/AIDS, or incidents of child abuse. Cultural resources were not so strongly correlated with other measures of social advantage and we saw that as an opportunity to leverage cultural assets to improve the lives of socially excluded populations.

Unfortunately, today Philadelphia’s cultural assets are less equally distributed than they were in the 1990s. Indeed, measures of economic well-being now explain twice as much of the variance in cultural assets than they did then.

One effect of this increased inequality is the ‘mortality’ rate of cultural organizations.

Many low-income neighborhoods that used to have significant cultural assets—what we call civic clusters—have lost their resources.

We don’t know exactly what caused this mortality crisis. I suspect some of the factors are national—like the ‘marketization’ of the nonprofit world—while others may be more local. We also suspect that global cities, like those that are the subject of this meeting—may be different from cities like Philadelphia.

We should view the increasing inequality in cultural assets as an existential threat to the cultural sector. A generation ago, the cultural wars tried to portray the arts as an elitist field of marginal importance to ordinary Americans.

The reality is that arts and culture is more the province of elites today than they were during the cultural wars.
What does culture do to the economy and to the civilization?

In Europe we are facing a very crucial moment and I would like to express some anger and some fear. Our political leadership, which I am a part of, has a ‘cultural level’ that is decreasing drastically. Political leaders frequently do not distinguish between culture and entertainment. They actually believe that it is easier to spend public money on entertainment rather than helping a small theatre in a district, or a small museum in Paris.

France is considered a country where a high amount of public money is spent on culture and cultural activities, but it seems now that even France has reached its limit. When the money for culture was doubled in France, it allowed for new operas to be built, new libraries to be built, but now, so many years later, we have to spend public money just preserving these places. Thus, when I was a deputy mayor for eleven years, we carefully chose places to be shut down, in order for new places to be born. If you just accumulate places for showcasing of art, what will be the place for the artist to create his art?

When we were elected in 2001 everyone said, of course Paris, the city of lights and lovers, Notre Dame, the Louvre, there’s not much to do, but I think it is quite opposite. We had to change that path. So when we look at Paris, for centuries, the culture is along the river, from east to west.

“If you just accumulate places for showcasing of art, what will be the place for the artist to create his art?”
We have international exchange with cities. In Madagascar, we painted public toilets because we felt that was the main issue; in Bethlehem, we decided to give benches so people could sit; in Kabul, we did a public theatre.

I believe that in order to use cultural initiatives for a civil society, there has to be reorganization. We have to reorganize the mess that permits nothing to bloom, and also, who wants the world to be wonderless, smooth, and sterilized? Nobody. We need more artists and not more police.

“We need more artists and not more police.”
KEY ISSUES AND QUESTIONS RAISED IN DISCUSSION

How do we persuade governments that art does matter?

One concern is that all artists and arts organizations want from the government is money. They want no supervision and want to be left alone. This situation is not that appealing to governments. It may be the set of conditions under which art thrives, but it’s difficult when determining what the value proposition is. Other government investments have a predetermined civic good. So, if money with no deliverables and constraints are the set of conditions in which the arts community seeks to work, then the case still needs to be made that these investments do pay off.

Indeterminacy has to be respected. Global cities are magnets of diversity. We have to be able to say that over time and in the aggregate that these investments do pay off. People have to be made more comfortable with these concepts of indeterminacy and porosity. It cannot be seen as individual parts but rather as a genus that does pay off, down the road.

People migrate and create heterogeneous environments. What art does to this value of diversity is it creates an imaginative environment. This could be a tool for measurement, assessing the value of art to diversity, and the value of diversity to the creation of art.

Art must be understood as a total ecology.

We may not understand the full roles each part plays, but they are in the system so they are important. Institutions like museums—rather than recording the attendance of museum visits, they should look at whether they have reached a cross section of the population of the city. Success of the institution cannot be determined by figures alone.
We need our polar bear.

The environmental movement has managed to get their message across with the image of the polar bear on a shrinking ice cube. Everyone gets that image. The arts community needs such a powerful image. We are looking at this the wrong way. The relationship is ordinarily seen as an authoritative institution versus the receivers—who is the audience, i.e. we see the audience as the customer. The city has to introduce ‘co-ownership’ of the institution, i.e. public co-ownership of the institution.

Take the example of the strikes in Paris in 2004 when there were changes in benefits for artists and technicians. There was almost no festive activity on the street for a few months and the mayors panicked. They realized that artists bring the humanity and make a city beautiful. It is important to let people in the process.

The complexity of dichotomies in art practices such as high art and popular culture need to be considered.

There has been a shift from the conception of graffiti and street art as being purely popular expression coming from certain neighborhoods and certain communities. At some point it was assigned value as art, as opposed to public nuisance, because it was commoditized and displayed in art galleries in a certain way. At some point it became a setting for a McDonald’s commercial. We must consider the full range of the way that the same expression can travel between a purely non-market expression component to a high arts component to an entertainment component—and back and forth.

Citizenship vibrancy is not something that can be quantified. Learning to ‘listen’ to the city that speaks is also a way of response. A healthy cultural environment is one that is sustainable or well-balanced, universal, or accessible.
In very big and complex global cities there are three main challenges faced by a policy maker:

1. **How do we cover the whole city?** With all the programs, tools, funding, and systems? How do we cover the full diversity? How do we make what we do accessible for all? This is not only access to consumption but also to ways and means of production.

2. **How do we balance supply and demand?** All cultural policies focus on arts communities. There should be a balance between the interests of the cultural organizations and the community. This means there has to be a change in the way we do things.

3. **How do we make culture a priority for a society’s agenda?**

**Entertainment cannot be defined out.**

In many ways expressive impact, consumption versus participation in the entertainment context, cannot be ruled out as part of the continuum, both from the economic impact and from the expressive impact as well as from the communal self-definition component. This should be inserted into the conversation. When we define separately, consumption versus participation, we describe a lot of art that happens in the entertainment context. For example, a garage-band playing rock songs—are we considering that arts practice or not? We need to reign in that complexity.

**Having a physical space for the Artist matters as much as a metaphorical artistic space.**

Neighborhoods are critical spaces where such ‘spaces’ become available. Something of the sort that makes Berlin such an extraordinary space. Berlin is admired for being such a center for art, but it is forgotten that it started out being a city with a lot of empty and unoccupied space.
What is shrinking in Manhattan, Paris, and other global cities are places for production of art. One example is the creation of a participant budget in Brazil, in which the local community decides what city hall should do with the money. Surprisingly, the budgets in Brazil were cut down considerably. Elected politicians must accept that they are participating in a long-term process.

**It is the nature of global cities that they are very diverse.**

We might celebrate the diversity of global cities, but they are also places of conflict. What arts and culture can do, is not create a ‘harmonious whole’ but create an appreciation across cultures, which can help that dynamic environment to become more stable.

The digital space must also be considered where coproduction is much more significant than physical space.

“**What is shrinking in Manhattan, Paris, and other global cities are places for production of art.”**
What is an appropriate role for the private sector in developing cultural ecology for a city?

How should the for-profit sector engage and work with the city governments as well as artistic communities?

What are the risks in such a partnership?

MODERATOR
Susan K. Freedman — New York City, USA
President
Public Art Fund

PRESENTERS
Maria Nicanor — New York City, USA / Barcelona, Spain
Curator, BMW Guggenheim Lab
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

Sérgio Sá Leitão — Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Secretary of Culture
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
There has certainly been an evolution in the support and an enlightened self-interest in the way corporations fund. We saw the evolution in terms of the whole mentality and approach; it changed not only how corporations felt about supporting art but how we had to present differently to them.

Governments and government collaborations are not all about funding.

Public Art Fund Projects

“When you work in public spaces, when you make four manmade waterfalls in the East River, that are 90-110 feet tall, you are in uncharted waters (literally speaking). It is easier to say no than to say ‘yes’. In New York City, there is a mandate to really ‘make things happen,’ and it has been a glorious time for us, especially working with the artists.”
In order to help artists realize their dreams, over 200 engineers were working on the waterfalls. We had a situation where there were not only people from cultural affairs, but someone sitting in the mayor’s office helping us coordinate all of this. So it is a very different attitude.

Thus, again, it’s not about the money, it’s about the way of thinking and supporting the arts and empowering the government and agencies to do that. This is something I hope will continue, because it makes all the difference in the world.

**There just aren’t permits for things that require out-of-the box thinking.**

There must be willingness for that, for example, when we built a living room around Tatszu Nishi. It was the first time with that we really had a gate to keep. And it made me nervous because, on one hand it was great, but you soon become very number oriented. I would just love to sit there and watch the diversity of people who were coming in because it was free.

The beauty of what we do is that we try to give people a way to see the city in a whole new way through the eyes of artists and artist-initiated projects. So people were seeing Christopher Columbus face to face in a way they never have before and never will again.

I can’t tell you how many New Yorkers told me that they have never been on the water in New York City before the Waterfalls.
I have lived here my whole life and never been in the water.

People usually use City Hall Park as a transient space, and go through it. We have our art projects there and they stop to experience the space. So giving people a way to see the city differently can be very exciting, and then when we are in a location, trying to mine the people around them for support.

For example, we are right in front of the Time Warner building, so we went to Time Warner for support for Tatszu Nishi, and we went to the developers. We knew that they would benefit from these hundreds of thousands of people who were going to be standing in line and need a place to get something to eat, shop, or whatever. And they did support us. So we try to be strategic in collecting funds when we go after companies.
I will begin with a background for context before delving into funding. I am representing a museum today and a very specific project. Within that museum, I have been working at the Guggenheim for almost ten years and I worked in a variety of exhibitions that were not directly related to cities but rather, were more traditional exhibition formats.

It was not until 2009, while celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Guggenheim Museum, that the BMW Lab would become the most visited exhibition ever in the history for the Guggenheim.

The fact that we got the numbers—which many of us around the table have to talk about—convinced the institution that talking about cities and talking about architecture was an important thing to do, and in that context, both my colleague David Van de Leer and I started thinking about what we could do. Although the institution has championed architecture in many ways throughout its engagement in the past, unlike the Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim Museum does not have an architecture collection.

So, it was in this context that a funder came to us. And we had to determine how to work around experiences that were not so passively contemplated, but being more participatory in nature because we did not have the space of the Guggenheim museum rotunda to play with. We needed to go elsewhere, so we started thinking about what we could do off-site. It was around this time that BMW, a car company came to the museum and asked if we would be interested in pitching a project to them that related to cities. That was the only information they gave us—it must be something related to urbanism. Luckily, we were able to put our own ideas into this participatory experience in cities to the service of this funder, and try to see how, what we originally thought was a subversive idea, could fit the parameters of what this funder wanted.
Why does culture matter?

To go back to the idea of museums in the case of this particular project—that is—addressing life in cities through programs and workshops, it mattered because it could address real life issues, and because it was doing something that our museum wasn’t doing directly, which was getting out of the museum and reaching a type of audience that generally we don’t reach and having people to look at cities in a different way.

In New York, we were not doing the project uptown on 5th Avenue but rather downtown on the Lower East Side; in Berlin at the Prenzlauer Berg in the Pfefferberg Complex; in Mumbai we were close to the Bhau Daji Lad Museum. We were looking for different kinds of people, those who don’t visit our museum. So to talk about the project in terms of the way it was funded rather than the content—I will elaborate that this project was fully funded by BMW. That tremendously affected the impact that the project had around the world. It was heavily criticized in some places. It was, in my opinion, incredibly effective in most of the cities we went to.

BMW in Berlin.

An important example of the perception of the project, is in the case of Berlin, where the funder was being perceived as a ‘big problem’—a German Car Company with a Nazi past—as we were reminded very often. The mayor of Berlin called a parliamentary session, to ask me in particular, why the Guggenheim was doing this project. Why was it a temporary pavilion that travelled around the world that had no walls and that had no art hanging from it? What was our intention? Were we trying to sell them cars? Or were we trying to gentrify Prenzlauer Berg. The questions were asked at a table like this. Many members of the parliament did not understand why this was important; why we needed to look at cities differently and why we could do that in a multi-disciplinary way. Why we were not only engaging artists and architects but also musicians, urban designers, urban farmers and poets.
So why the ‘funder’ was such a big problem, is the question, and it got to the very middle of the messaging of our project, and probably most projects like this. We became involved in a series of very result-oriented practices to find out the results of this process-oriented project were.

When we reported to BMW, they wanted to know what the KPI’s (key performance indicators) were for this project, was there a tangible prototype of something that came out of it? How many people came? We were asked to present the quantitative usals. It was a challenging process to change the mindset of the funder in talking about quality and process and messiness. Even so, they let us play. They did not get involved in the content either.

**Who funds these projects?**

I would like to conclude by saying that there is a huge level of hypocrisy when it comes to who funds these projects, and how these projects are read. There are many museums new in town that are funded by big corporations that have not named their projects with the name of their brand, and they have been incredibly successful.

Having said that, it is very challenging to get the message across and package the message of the project, when telling people how you are funded.
In Rio de Janeiro, we are involved in all types of public-private partnerships. We are trying to diversify all the programs that we have in order to face the complexity of the cultural environment of the city, to reach a broader area and a broader diversity in terms of cultural expressions.

We believe that culture is something that belongs to civil society, not to states or governments. So the role of local governments is to recognize, promote, and protect all the cultural expressions in the city. So, we have to act together.

So everything that we do, we do not do directly, but engage with our non-governmental partners. The protagonist is civil society and not the government. We think that culture is a powerful frontier of development. We deal with a development concept that includes more than just economic growth, it is far more complex than that. We respect these three pillars of liberty, diversity, democracy, which are essential for a healthy and sustainable cultural environment.

“We think that culture is a powerful frontier of development. We deal with a development concept that includes more than just economic growth, it is far more complex than that. We respect these three pillars of liberty, diversity, democracy, which are essential for a healthy and sustainable cultural environment.”
Working with the Private Sector of the City

When we say ‘private sector,’ it’s not only corporations or companies, it is arts organizations, arts associations, everything that is non-governmental. We are facing challenges, of course. The cultural supply is concentrated. Access is not equal. The demands in some parts of the city are lower. We also face a low level of efficiency, in city hall. This is the reality we have to deal with.

To work in partnership with private companies and organizations is also a way of bringing efficiency in the process and to get better results; to be closer to what society really wants and really needs. The process is to engage and involve all kinds of social actors interested in culture and to establish a real public-private partnership in order to increase, to diversify, and democratize the ‘cultural supply’ in the city.

Cultural Vision

Another challenge we have is to have the cultural vision in what we do. The only way to achieve that is to work closely with people who work with culture and experience culture in all parts of city. So we incorporate the Socratic thought of “We know nothing. We have to learn with society. And we have to enable what they want to do.” We have experienced many types of public-private partnerships and we have talked briefly about them.

We have a cultural funding program in Rio de Janeiro where we directly fund all kinds of cultural projects such as training, education, theatre, circus, visual arts, dance, and others. We put money directly into companies, associations and organizations and those who really make these activities happen.

We have another way of funding, which is the cultural incentive law, in which private companies can put part of the tax that they have to pay to the city, toward cultural projects. It is a very interesting way to attract them to cultural environments and to make them more responsible in social and cultural terms.
It is a very successful instrument and they devise ways to put in their own money to fund cultural projects. In Rio de Janeiro, we have a large chain of public cultural spaces and we manage about sixty different kinds of cultural centers.

We manage them through public-private partnerships in order to make things more dynamic and to use private know-how. The key issue is, we, the government have to ensure that we take care of the public interest. We must play an active role in the kind of things that must be done or how things must be done, it is very important in a public-private partnership to establish rules and oversight, in order to attract private money.

KEY ISSUES AND QUESTIONS RAISED IN DISCUSSION

There is no free money.

Who is funding? There is a slippery slope of ‘value’ based philanthropy or strings attached when it comes to funding.

Where do lines get drawn regarding who decides what is to be done with the money? There is an uneasy hypocrisy involving ‘corporate money.’ In the case of Guggenheim Lab Project, BMW becomes a soft target. Is the corporate funder trying to buy ‘absolution?’

What is the value proposition of culture and do arts organizations underestimate the degree to which it is valuable? All money is not equal. Each kind of money allows different kinds of projects to happen.
What is the role of censorship?

Are governments innocent partners? If the role of government is to protect the public interest, what is the role of censorship in making decisions for private interest or greater public good? The positioning of ‘value’ is important. Culture has a value, and at what point does the economic and production costs cross a line that affects its ‘value.’

Freedom is not absolutist.

How can we have a partnership in the context of private-for-profit sector that makes clear for us what the intent is? How can there be an equal partnership between the for-profit and the non-profit sector? How do we negotiate the different sectors—private, public, corporations, individuals—whose funding and sponsorship gets used in the project?

How far does public money take responsibility? Is government money more susceptible to politics than corporate money? It is very hard to adjudicate morality when it comes to people involved in making money. We have to be very careful about moralistic terms.

Power is an aesthetic practice.

Power needs reproduction, to be reproduced in the imagination. It is also the buying of an imagination and a space. There are particularities. For example, German companies funding art practices and taking responsibility for public institutions.
Often arts and culture are perceived as elitist and disconnected from less privileged communities such as new immigrants or those who live on the edges of affluence. However, culture can be central to the formation of identity for the same group of people.

What are the ways that creativity and cultural production become a key part of creating an equitable city? How might this manifest in different cultural contexts?

MODERATOR

Carol Becker — New York City, USA
Dean, School of the Arts
Columbia University

PRESENTERS

Stephen Hobbs — Johannesburg, South Africa
Curator and Cultural Organizer
The Trinity Session

Teddy Cruz — San Diego, California, USA
Professor in Public Culture and Urbanism
University of California, San Diego
What makes cultural institutions appear elite?

Institutions are thought to be elite or exclusive when there is a perception that only select groups have access to them. But art and culture are not inherently elite. They are interpreted through certain matrices such as, knowledge, proximity, accessibility, inclusivity, and intent. I will try to complicate these further in what follows.

Anti-intellectualism in the United States

American society is a very utilitarian society. It therefore is difficult to defend the importance of art and culture in such an environment, even though they are central to the mission of democracy. In such a society, everything that is not directly functional or immediately comprehensible is quantified as elitist. Because US democracy, which is so essential to the country’s sense of itself, is rooted in the lowest common denominator approach, which is to say that everything should be understandable to everyone at every moment, art and culture are often misunderstood. This attitude of easy accessibility to ideas breeds a tremendous anti-intellectualism in the United States, which presents a great problem for artists, thinkers, and writers who often work in metaphor and gesture.
Because there is no agreed upon tradition of the avant-garde or ‘experimentation’ in the arts in the United States (although of course such work has often originated in this country), people do not understand that a central component of the role of arts in society is to push boundaries, to be experimental, and to take on complicated social issues in innovative forms.

“This attitude of easy accessibility to ideas breeds a tremendous anti-intellectualism in the United States, which presents a great problem for artists, thinkers, and writers who often work in metaphor and gesture.”

Thus, since this is just not part of the general American conception of what art should be, it is difficult to explain how art actually functions and its importance to the dissemination of ideas. It is also difficult to explain that it is precisely because art is complex and not just entertainment that it is useful for the expression of the complexity of human thought.

And we also know that artwork and art forms, which are seen as cutting edge at one moment, end up as mainstream over time and increasingly, with digitization and social media, such transformation is accelerated. It seemed radical when montage was used in MTV and rock videos. It changed the way people saw and what was acceptable. Now this kind of assimilation of form happens overnight. We have to be very careful about labeling something elitist, since it may very soon become dominant in the popular imagination.

Recently, while in Rio de Janeiro, I went to the new Museu de Arte do Rio (MAR) where there was a photo exhibition of the history of Rio—large crowds attended. And, at the same time that this exhibition was up, there also was an avant-garde video installation in the adjacent space, by a woman performance artist in which there was nudity, killing of animals, and religious imagery—all conflated. Visitors were moving between these exhibitions very
fluidly, and I heard people say, “Oh, that’s very symbolic work.” No one seemed to be having a hard time with it at all. They understood that this performance was operating on a different level than the historical photographs straight ahead in the major exhibition. In this case, the MAR was trying to be accessible and welcoming to the entire city, without losing its contemporary mandate.

**Accessibility**

There are spaces in this city that work hard to be accessible to their constituencies. The Bronx Museum, the Brooklyn Museum, the Queens Museum all make an enormous effort. They reach out to their complex (diverse) communities and these groups turn out for these institutions again and again, precisely because they are close to them physically and emotionally.

Galleries in Chelsea are a different matter. They aren’t particularly interested in anyone who is not capable of buying art. They make this clear and therefore these spaces often create an intimidating environment. You could be someone important in the art world—the chief curator at MOMA for example—and you might still sometimes feel uncomfortable walking into these spaces. There is an attitude here that can be detrimental to the arts, because often the artists showing in such contexts are actually making works that take on personal and social issues and need a more mass audience.

**The Intent of Institutions**

I want to say something about growing up in Crown Heights: I grew up in Brooklyn where there is the Grand Army Plaza Library, the Brooklyn Museum, and the Botanical Gardens. This was an amazingly rich environment for me as a child. Many of the people in my building were ‘refugees’ from WWII. The building was predominantly Jewish. None of these people went to these public spaces. I should say, our parents didn’t go, but we, the
children, went. We used the Brooklyn Museum almost every day. On weekends, we took classes in which we drew African masks and Egyptian mummies. We dreamed of the period rooms and Colonial America. I don’t remember anybody ever asking for, and I don’t remember ever buying, tickets. I don’t remember security guards. I don’t remember any of those things, because these cultural institutions were our playground. They belonged to us—or so it seemed. Access to these institutions was essential to my own development.

Had I not had these experiences, coming as I did from an uneducated family where no one went to college, I would not have ended up as Vice President of the School of the Art Institute in Chicago. And how would I ever have become Dean of Columbia University School of the Arts? It just wouldn’t have happened. The permission to be in these environments came from this early accessibility. So the accessibility and the proximity of these spaces to our homes—was essential. It gave us pride and a sense of belonging.

The National Museum of Mexican Art was the first museum of Mexican art in a neighborhood in Chicago. It is a real museum that can borrow work and can lend work, because it has climate control, security, and so forth. The MacArthur Foundation helped fund the Museum initially, which was very important. In Chicago, the many art worlds convened at exhibitions there, because the work was great and because there was a party at every opening. It brought art people from the north and south sides together with people from Pilsen, because it was right there in their neighborhood. No one had to feel intimidated. It was accessible, local, and also global.

**Elitism is Relative**

I want to say something about opera. Growing up with Italian neighbors, I went to the opera and listened to opera many Saturday afternoons. We stood at the old Metropolitan Opera House for a dollar, in boxes high up but near the stage. I stood with the Italian men who came from the neighborhoods of New York City and these men brought roses—hidden in their coats.
The officials said: “Don’t throw roses. Don’t throw roses.” But, of course, at the end of the opera when the cast came to take a bow, the Italians would open up their coats and next to their bodies were long-stemmed, red roses that they threw onto the stage. It wasn’t until I went to college that I sat in a real seat and watched an opera. At that time I had a boyfriend whose parents had a subscription with orchestra seats.

This was so boring compared to standing with the Italians. I still like to stand at the opera, because you meet true aficionados. Eastern European culture is also very much part of my life. In Eastern Europe everybody goes to the opera. You see people arriving in their work clothes at the end of their workday. Why? Because it’s part of the culture and it’s affordable. When I lived in Chicago, I was on a research grant with Native American women. It was a grant to develop leadership in these amazing women leaders who ranged from ages 16 to 80. My job was to make all culture accessible to them—to take them wherever they wanted to go. But where did they want to go? That was my question to them. First of all, they wanted to go to the opera because they had never been to one. And then, they wanted to go to jazz clubs. So my role was to help them gain permission to attend. Going once with me, allowed them to feel that as leaders of their community, they could take others. So the concept of elitism, as it relates to art and culture, is not a fixed reality. It is relative, sociological, and always needs to be contextualized.
JOHANNESBURG: ENGAGEMENT WITH CONTRADICTION

Stephen Hobbs    —    Johannesburg, South Africa

I live in Johannesburg and have done many online searches for desirable holiday destinations in South Africa. The most common feedback from travel sites is to avoid Johannesburg as much as possible, and only if necessary, to use it as a connection to other places—game reserves, sea side resorts, Cape Town, and so on. Johannesburg’s tourism offering, therefore has been pre-occupied with heritage development, creative place-making, urban design and public infrastructure, with the view to regenerate the former downtown area to match that of burgeoning Sandton City, north of Johannesburg, described as the richest square mile on the continent of Africa, its only other business competitor being Lagos.

Johannesburg: City in a Vacuum

The stock exchange’s move from downtown Johannesburg to Sandton, in 1997, for example, symbolized the final death knell in the city’s economic decline. As with most ‘white flights,’ the vacuum created a typical slum condition in various parts of the city, and with that, numerous institutional failings. The Johannesburg Art Gallery, holding one of the most important European, modern, traditional, and contemporary African art collections on the continent, is doing well if it receives an annual visitor count of 50,000. Its surroundings today are typified by deteriorating art deco and modernist buildings; the surrounding architectural heritage is noticeable and now communicates the force of Africans reclaiming space and territory.

One’s choice as an artist/cultural producer to make meaning of this sustained engagement with social and spatial contradiction and inversion requires a multi-disciplinary approach to problem solving the effects of segregated communities, still suffering the physical and psychological effects of the Group Areas Act during the Apartheid Era.
The Market Theatre Gallery

In the context of South Africa’s political resistance art movement during Apartheid, the stages and galleries of the Market Theatre complex in Newtown, offered a critical voice and important meeting place in the city, for activist artists and liberal audiences. And to this day the Market Theatre Precinct promotes and attracts similar values. During several years as a gallery curator, I saw how the building demonstrated its true power, its willingness to engage the street, the city, in a conversational process of creation and production. Having produced numerous exhibitions over a seven year period, my greatest lesson was the relationship between exhibition production relative to the places from which the content was researched and selected.

For a young fine artist, performing the role of gallery manager and curator, The Market Theatre became a window onto the world of the ‘new’ South Africa and particularly of a hyper-transformative Johannesburg.

“My greatest lesson was the relationship between exhibition production relative to the places from which the content was researched and selected.”

During this time, Johannesburg’s two Art Biennials came, and went just as quickly, losing out on a critical opportunity for constructive dialogue between mega exhibition-event and municipal co-operation, with a subsequent disinvestment crippling any hope for similar in the future.
Despite the gap in international mega exhibition projects as experienced in the ‘90s, South Africa’s commercial art market is flourishing internationally, from Art Basel/Miami to Frieze and London. Locally the trend around gallery strips in Johannesburg and Cape Town is established and expanding.

**Artists as Consultants**

The failings of the big international exhibitions in the ‘90s to convert artistic practice to cultural capital for urban change prompted a conscious strategy in the early 2000s for artists to engage directly with city managers and their cultural policies.

The Trinity Session, founded in 2000, identified a role for a curator-facilitator for city art programs linked to urban regeneration and urban infrastructure developments, supported by the 1% for public art policy, linked to all urban upgrade projects.

The City of Johannesburg has led the way, perhaps on the continent, for the interface between art and public space (at least in terms of sheer output in the past twelve years). On the other hand, the precinct-by-precinct development model of much of the city’s urban design schemes often reduces the potential for extended community participation and continuity for communities after completion of works.

The Trinity Session’s approach has been to capitalize on the momentum of city commissions, with a view to cohering a broader network of ‘community’ based artists, who in time cross pollinate skills and experiences through lengthy workshop-based commissioning processes—such that the public art outcome—often a significant piece of sculpture—is also a networked, up-skilled group of practitioners, more empowered to enter into a formal art market economy.
The Art Object as a Vehicle
In recent years, city regeneration projects have extended to varying outlying townships, from Soweto to Diepsloot. The priority of the city to produce medium to large-scale commemorative objects in space is too often in contradiction with the desires of those on the ground, impacted directly by the effects of a public environment upgrade. The workshop method of procurement when linked in a site-specific way generates particular and local narratives, rooted in history, memory, politics, and specific events. The role of local language systems relative to the site offer up radical alternatives to city expectations.

A case in point was the commemoration for Archbishop Desmond Tutu, planned for the pavement outside his residence in Vilakazi Street, Orlando West, Soweto. While the city’s preference was for a life-size commemorative bronze statue, the family preference was for a less representational, more symbolic solution. The propensity for the recycling of semi-precious materials, hacksawed from the public domain, is all the more reason to depart from the traditionalist mode of commemorating public persona’s in bronze, with a view to new material and narrative solutions for creative communication in public space.
I would like to contribute with some issues in my own practice as an architect and an urban researcher at the border. In the context of my own field in architecture, at times I get into trouble because I suggest in many debates that the future of the city today depends less on building and more on the reconfigurations of socio-economic relations.

Sometimes I wonder, not particularly in terms of architecture but in arts and culture, what might be the role of arts and culture today in the intervening of this reconfiguration, or reorganization of the political itself. In that sense, earlier we talked about how important it is to measure impact. I am glad that somebody mentioned that instead of measurement the appropriate term would be evaluation. How do we construct a new brief, a new process, and a new set of questions, a new set of provocations that can reorganize those institutional protocols.

I have mentioned many times that the best ideas in term of urban transformations today exist in the gap between institutions and communities in the context of the urban asymmetry. That is the crisis today—socio-economic inequalities.

The best ideas that address these issues of origin do not come from centers of economic power in abundance. Can anybody explain what has been advanced with the explosion of urbanization in the UAE and China in terms of issues of socio-economic inequality in civic imagination?
Where do ideas for socio-economic reform come from?

The best ideas come from the sectors of marginalization and conflict and, in fact, from geographies of conflict where the very nature of that urgency or those issues of concern prompt communities to move from the neutrality of culture and from the neutrality of institutions that address these issues to the very specificities of rights, cultural rights.

That’s the reason my work is located in heart of San Diego, California, at the border between the two cities Tijuana and San Diego—a geography of conflict itself. Polarization of wealth and poverty happens in many places in the world. In this region it is really dramatized. Very often we can find some of wealthiest real estate at the edges of San Diego barely twenty minutes away from some of the poorest settlements in the Latin Americas in Tijuana. This radical proximity of wealth and poverty and of inequality has prompted me to reorganize my own practice and procedures as an artist and as an architect. In fact, disillusion with the powerlessness of my own field (architecture) and institutions is revealed when one faces the fundamental problems of urbanization head-on.

Failure of Institutions

Today the main hurdles are as follows:

1) The incapacity of institutions to question the very politics and economics of unfettered urban growth today. The socio-economic inequalities continue to really define the urban asymmetry that is central to today’s urban crisis;

2) The incapacity of institutions to absorb and deformalize informal densities and economies within the global city;

3) The incapacity to rethink urban policy; and finally,

4) The erosion of the civic imagination.
The best ideas come from the sectors of marginalization and conflict and, in fact, from geographies of conflict where the very nature of that urgency or those issues of concern prompt communities to move from the neutrality of culture and from the neutrality of institutions that address these issues to the very specificities of rights, cultural rights.

So my practice has been centered in marginalized neighborhoods—on both sides of the border—trying to understand as an architect and urban researcher the very tactics of adaptation of resilience and retrofitting in many of these communities across these formidable barrios invested in trying to build up strategies of survival.

The impact of immigration and the transformation of the American neighborhood has been a fundamental topic in my research, obviously, serving to expand my mode of practice. Instead of designing buildings, I might probably be designing the conditions within which these strategies can be interpreted and facilitated, to enable them to trickle upwards in the transformation of land use policy and of exclusionary zoning.

Rethinking the Role of the Informal

I have been interested in the socio-economic contingencies of communities of practice, the role of the informal in this case not as an aesthetic category, as we do in institutions of art sometimes, but in fact, as a praxis. The informal as a set of practices are embedded in these geographies of conflict.

Somebody has to interpret and mediate these types of knowledge in order to reimagine urban policy today and I am thinking this as more and more artists are interested in not necessarily focusing on the product or the object and more in the intervention between interface of things.
I found that in this dynamic that these processes of alteration of the city by informal urbanization, by immigrant communities we can find there embedded a very different notion of citizenship. It has less to do with having the papers that belong to a private globe, but in fact a citizenship as a creative act that reorganizes institutional protocol. Those, in fact, produce a kind of economic production and political production. The function of that emerges from here to reimagine most of governance and so on.

So, I am interested in a kind of practice of mediation and facilitation. Because I believe that the crisis today pertains also to the crisis of knowledge transference from the bottom up to the top down and back.

**Creation of a New Political Language**

It is in that process of interpretation, facilitation of invisible alterations and transformations of space of the political, of governance, of social relations in these environments, where we begin to also create a new political language. One pragmatic issue for me has been the rethinking of urban density through observation of these processes. Density for the institution is just an ‘amount of things’ per area. In this marginal immigrant neighborhood densities are conceived as an ‘amount of cultural exchanges per area’ or an ‘amount of socio-economic exchanges per area.’

In that sense, I am thinking that more than political art, I think we must speak about art as a way of constructing the political itself as embedded in these new interfaces with the drama of everyday realities. I also want to suggest that these processes of engagement of the marginalized neighborhoods brought me, in fact, to participate within governments in my city of San Diego. Out of this border research I was asked to lead with informal political theories, what used to be called the ‘incubator for civic imagination’ inside the mayor’s office. It is now called the ‘Civic Innovations Lab.’ We have been trying to suggest that innovation is not about the product but about the process itself.
We have now been able to enter into the city government to carve out space for collaboration and creativity. How to intervene into new forms of collaborative government? This space, the civic innovations lab, begins to open up new types of civic convenience. No process can begin without a new type of civic engagement across sectors.

“Art is not a decorative thing. It is a cognitive tool to read complexity, to inspire new participatory pedagogical models, to inject into public space education.”

Finally, a lot of inspiration for these kinds of ideas comes from Latin America. The governments began with the idea that a new kind of citizenship can be generated through a civic engagement and participation model.

KEY ISSUES AND QUESTIONS RAISED IN DISCUSSION

Architecture is not just about designing buildings.

The role of art, architecture, and communities must be redefined, that is, become inclusive rather than exclusive when architects talk about buildings as discrete interventions. In fact the libraries and parks exist in relation with a variety of agencies that enable the interfaces with the community, institutions, philanthropy, and community. Architecture is not just about designing buildings but a coproduction between community and the governing institutions. What about housing? What happens when there is gentrification? How do these spaces connect with the vibrancy of the center? It would require the creation of new types of citizenships and civic engagement models where democracy works at various levels. Units need to be embedded in socio-cultural infrastructural programming thus allowing infrastructure to achieve another scale.
Making the process of making art on a huge scale a political act.

There is a need to define the role of art and its institutional context. What is the risk of institutionalizing what is ‘unsettling?’ That is, the unknown, or the alternative knowledge that does not exist? The importance of letting in that is, inclusion of the community in forming their own cultural boundaries and institutions. Not the merely symbolic inclusion that many institutions practice.

The word institution does not always mean a building. It is alright for institutions to die, but it needs to be examined why they die, because does it mean that they have stopped playing a role? What does it mean for the community in which the institution exists? What is their role in the making and sustaining of the institution or the death of the same?
THREE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS CONCERNED WITH ARTS, CULTURE, AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN GLOBAL CITIES WERE DISCUSSED:

Why are Arts and Culture important in these globalized environments of cities?

What are the barriers against making Arts and Culture more central in our lives?

How do we go forward from this conversation to consider artistic practices and policies, questions of ‘measurement’ and further research?
Why are arts and culture important in the globalized environments of cities?

Art as a facilitator of difference
- By making visible the foundations of disagreements in the society - Through exposing conflict - Dissent - Capacity to imagine other realities - Creates complexity; one can see things from multiple perspectives.

Art as a mediator
- It articulates urban space - A tool to read complexity - Cultivating risks - Move from individual to collective agency.

Art as knowledge
- Art as institutional memory — revealing the spatial complexity of the city - Pedagogical dimension of art and its ability for enabling the meeting of knowledge to facilitate a new conversation - Pro-sumer - Transformation.

Art as memory
- Art creates or enlarges imagination - Access - Inclusivity - Classical notions of art
- Pleasure - Beauty - History - Reflection - Awe.
Art as a mirror for society
• Art being horizontal—even, but not accessible • Art enlarges the frame of reference, enlarges experience • Representation • Survival.

Art as Performance
• As a narrative • Highlights urgency • Heightens emotional response, emotional impact is unique to the arts • Challenging—(for or against) • Memorialization • Commemoration • Liberty • Fraternity • Pirates.

Art evokes feelings
• Wonder • Awe • Excitement • Passion • Intimacy.

Six words not to use
• Community • Local • Culture • Inclusiveness • Blue-sky thinking • Access.
What are the barriers against making arts and culture more central in our lives?

Polarization and inequality
• Art and culture has been corrupted by the social service-industrial complex.
• Perpetuating of polarization between top-down and bottom-up i.e. a gap between cultural institutions and communities.
• Neutrality of institutions by way of certain procedural processes does not produce the desirable outcomes eventually in terms of urbanization. They end up reaffirming the structure of inequality.
• Neutrality of institutions—inability to take more political positions about what are arts and culture can do.

Money
• Funders • Functionality • Utilitarianism • Distrust of ‘creative people’ • Business model for arts discourages risk taking ('you can’t fail!' attitude) • Dominance of practical, measurable utilitarianism.

Pedagogical barriers
• ‘Fetishization’ of art • Replacement of digitization and reproduction.

Institutional barriers
• Obsolete disciplinary categories • Institutions as barriers • Circulation of cultural forms which creates a loss of presence • Glamour • ‘Mystified specialized field’ (you’re stupid and you can’t understand! We are privileged to explain to you!) • Devaluing of everyday art, delegitimizing everyday art, class divisions, race and other complexities, complexities of class • Patronizing attitude from institutions.
Fear
• Class conflict • Fear of the public.

Perception
• “Oh! That’s not for us!” • Image of artists as makers rather than problem solvers
• Insularity about how we speak about art • Comfort in complacency.

Censorship
• In some or most parts of the world (maybe all of the world, but disguised differently).

Lack of access
• Disadvantaged audiences—physical access, money mobility • Irrelevance (by the artist).
How do we go forward from this conversation to consider artistic practices and policies, questions of ‘measurement’ and further research?

Integrate processes

- The accountability of institutions and the definitions of their practices need to be expanded.
- Community practices—not just about delivering a product but could also involve process itself. Indeterminacy must be incorporated in the processes themselves.
- Reorganize protocols to encourage funding processes without assurance of the product.
- How to develop new cultural industries in order to be competitive in new ways, i.e. develop new business models

Develop knowledge (more indigenous models of knowledge development)

- What dies, what is born and what survives?
- Cultural institution’s role in cross-sector policy discussions
- How does a city maintain its edge
- Opportunity and access.

Address the issues of inequality and isolation

- Investigation of privilege and value in art
- Remove barriers of resistance.
- Move from silos to a more interdisciplinary practice
- Stress not art form but a form of practice
- How to understand a complex ecology of arts and culture that is inclusive of various kinds of art form?
- Participation
- Should artists really change their working relationships to audiences?
- Are we distorting artistic practice by thinking about audiences?

Data versus Anecdotes

- “We are for doubt and against fear, we are reluctant prisoners of hope, we are for anecdotes and against data”
- We must care about data. Social activists and many of our colleagues in the non-profit sector use data.
SESSION VI
PUBLIC FORUM: CREATING EQUITABLE CITIES FOR THE FUTURE

WELCOMING REMARKS
Darren Walker — New York City, USA
President
Ford Foundation

INTRODUCTION
Kate D. Levin — New York City, USA
Former Commissioner
NYC Department of Cultural Affairs

MODERATOR
Vishakha N. Desai — New York City, USA
Special Advisor for Global Affairs
Columbia University

PANELISTS
Kathy Halbreich — New York City, USA
Associate Director
Museum of Modern Art

Joe Hall — New York City, USA
President & Founder
Ghetto Film School

Tom Finkelpearl — New York City, USA
Executive Director
Queens Museum

Maurine Knighton — New York City, USA
Senior Vice President of Operations
Nathan Cummings Foundation
PRESENTATIONS BY PANELISTS FOCUSED ON THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

How do we measure the impact of a robust cultural strategy in NYC?

What are the roles of artists, curators, and private sector in developing a healthy cultural sector?

Brief presentations by Tom Finkelpearl, Kathy Halbreich, and Joe Hall, followed by a conversation with panelists, responses from international participants Teddy Cruz and Rajeev Thakker, and discussion with the audience.
Welcoming Remarks

Darren Walker
President
Ford Foundation
New York City, USA

It is hard to imagine that Kate Levin is leaving her role as the head of DCA. She has been absolutely sensational and it is very difficult to imagine DCA without her. It is her fierce determination and advocacy on behalf of all of us in the City Hall that has and will endure for many years to come. We all wish you great success.

Big thanks also go to Vishakha Desai, who came to see me for this cause, and it was impossible to say no. It was an easy decision. This convening today is hugely important because it is essential that we come to terms with the value proposition of arts and culture. We all know why it matters. I don’t want to stand before you and preach the same.

I will depart from my prepared remarks to say a couple of things. Mainly, because Kate’s observation of Detroit is very timely for me as I am heading there today for a meeting. Detroit is a city, which is very important to the Ford Foundation, but I am not going to make the argument that the Detroit Institute of Art (DIA) is an important economic engine for Detroit. I am so angry and outraged with what is happening in that city and the potential that this great treasure could be liquidated. We should all be outraged. Where are the social media and the letter-writing campaigns? Who from around the country have come to the defense of this institution? Where are the voices on the front lines? They are silent. Are we so beleaguered? So worn down for having to justify our very existence? That one of the greatest calamities is unfolding before our very own eyes?

I am shocked by the lack of engagement from the nation’s arts community on the issue. Not only because of what is happening in Detroit, but because it is about all of us, our democracy and about who we are as a civilization.
I wonder what do we have to do. Have we allowed ourselves to be brow beaten and pushed and bullied so that the only we seem to be able to actually have a place at the table is through an economic argument? I would simply say that I, and certainly this institution are not prepared for this reality.

There are so few institutions in our society who any longer seem able and willing to speak truth to power. We can’t expect it any more from our university presidents and it is understandable why. Because they are all fund raisers. And when you, as one of them recently told me, you are absolutely right about bringing forth the reality of inequality in the world but we university presidents can no longer do that because we cannot afford to anger our donors. These are the very people whom we have to go to for our naming opportunities. So, for us to be expected to be able to stand up on the front lines is simply unrealistic at this moment in our history.

I feel compelled as the President of the Ford Foundation to speak the truth which is that we have allowed ourselves, in this country, to be put in a box and marginalized in a conversation about what our country and our nation is. For me, I feel that the work that you all are doing today is hugely important and I salute the efforts and the great research that has been put together for this meeting. But I think there is a bigger issue at hand and that is we need to take control of the argument and not feel defensive or sissified because we believe that culture is central to our civilization.

I understand there is no reason to preach to the choir because I know that you all agree with me but I would just ask that we think about the DIA and to think about our position in relation to this institution. This institution, which one year ago was celebrating a landmark, which is that tax-payers, even in the middle of a recession were willing to pay higher taxes to secure the future of DIA.
This program is a part of a series of conversations aimed at articulating value of arts, culture, and quality of life in global cities. The topic is being addressed and explored with increasing frequency in the field, and now the Ford Foundation and Columbia University in bringing us here today are providing essential leadership. This morning a working group gathered to explore several themes from an international perspective. This afternoon’s session looks at these themes through the lens of New York City. Before our distinguished panel begins, I have been asked to take a moment and talk about the Bloomberg administration and culture over the past twelve years. Because I am from the government and therefore here to help I am going to give a brief overview and then say a bit about the key challenges we continue to face.

Let me begin by stressing that arts and culture are paramount to New York City’s economy and identity. Arts organizations across the five boroughs are known internationally for presenting the best cultural programming anywhere in the world. Our non-profit cultural sector is 1,200 organizations strong with missions as diverse and dynamic as the city itself. These organizations generate eight billion dollars annually and employ forty thousand workers and are part of a twenty-one billion dollar creative industry that employs over 220,000 workers. Almost half of last year’s record-breaking fifty-two million tourists said they visited New York City specifically to attend cultural activities.

In addition to economics and identity, this administration recognizes that culture is also a part of another government priority, which is ‘quality of life.’ My agency’s cultural grants are aptly called public service awards because the work they support creates inimitable, transformative experiences in ways that the government on its own could not begin to deliver.
Under the leadership of Mayor Bloomberg and First Deputy Mayor Patricia Harris our mandate has been to say yes whenever possible to a range of innovative ideas and projects. For example, over the past twelve years the city has hosted nearly 500 temporary public art projects from Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s “The Gates” to the annual “Make Music New York” and “Sing for Hope Pop Up Piano” events to Olafur Eliasson’s “The New York City Waterfalls.” We completed over a hundred permanent public art installations through the city’s Percent for Art program and have eighty projects underway. We reformed my agency’s funding process to expand access and equity increasing the number of grant recipients by over thirty-four percent. We allocated over three billion dollars for capital improvements for arts organizations city-wide and currently have over 820 million more in the pipeline for projects at one hundred and eighty organizations. And yes, I am the queen of cultural plumbing.

Using the city’s new Design Excellence Program, we have commissioned some of the best architects in the world to work for organizations, both large and small. Cultural projects are leading the way in sustainable design. The first city-owned LEED platinum building is the Queens Botanical Garden Visitors Center. My domain includes some of the city’s first city-owned composting toilets. (I wasn’t kidding about the plumbing royalty thing.)

We incubated an innovative non-profit real estate entity dedicated to developing affordable rehearsal and studio space for artists—with two pilot projects already on-line and four more in the pipeline. We provide technical assistance to hundreds of organizations annually across a spectrum of cultural disciplines and budget sizes and that spectrum is indeed broad. Of the 900 organizations we fund each year almost half have annual operating budgets of less than 250,000 dollars.

These accomplishments are things we can all be proud of, and I mean ‘we’ in the most collective and collaborative sense. My agency works entirely in partnership with the city’s creative community.
I want to turn now to one of the areas, in which we (here I do mean solely the Department of Cultural Affairs) have made little progress. It is a classic case of how great strength can be a perilous weakness: the case for culture is often hard to make because there are so many cases to be made.

The problem is not just that the impact of the arts can be hard to quantify; the problem is that cultural organizations span a spectrum of achievement. A single totalizing form of measurement, like economic impact, doesn’t properly reflect the significance of the entire field. The most obvious way this plays out is in the critical distinctions that make up the vast majority of the news coverage about culture.

I am talking about reviews which tend to describe the quality of arts based on dominant aesthetic trends. In fact, however, creativity is always expansive. In her recent review of a group show featuring 300 artists, Roberta Smith acknowledges the insularity of critical narratives in saying, “The show makes you see the narrowness of both fashion and history. It confirms that most art ideas and styles are in use at all times.”

Too often the cultural community is fragmented by competing visions of what is most important rather than acknowledging value across the continuum of cultural practices.

So, for example, organizations that provide human services and embrace social justice missions are pitted against those that focus on aesthetic achievement. Or organizations and individuals who have a distinctive physical presence in neighborhoods are often held responsible for gentrification—of which they are often prime victims. Or advocates for access and participation face resistance from those troubled by the notion of acknowledging amateur art-making alongside the work of professionals.

On this last point, new research offers some insight in understanding cultural value.
The National Center for Arts Research has recently shown evidence that arts participation by younger audiences is actually on the rise—following years of reports detailing the opposite. The lead researcher explains these findings by saying, “When we think of arts and culture…we have a tendency… to think about opera, symphony—instead of thinking about the broader spectrum of nature and science museums. You’ve got community-based organizations and arts education.”

After all, a key goal of the government is to deliver standardized services. “I want my garbage picked up with the same frequency and efficiency as yours even if you live miles apart in very different neighborhoods.” In the case for culture, value is directly opposite to the degree that it can be standardized.

What is essential is that we develop and embrace a multivalent way of expressing the value of culture. If we don’t, the very uniqueness at its core will continue to limit recognition of its value. One option that may be promising is the formulation about culture’s multiple ‘bottom-line,’ as espoused by Tim Jones of Artscape in Toronto, and more recently by Beth Tuttle, Anne Bergeron and others.

The argument is that the arts deliver at least three simultaneous benefits: a diverse dynamic cultural environment; a strengthened local economy; and a richer, inclusive social fabric.

Let me leave you by stating two examples of what’s at stake here if we don’t reshape our understanding of cultural value.

First, after the annual Mayor’s Award for Arts and Culture several years ago, one of our daily newspapers ran an editorial titled ‘Cops versus Culture,’ criticizing the mayor for spending resources on the arts that would be better used to enhance public safety, according to this newspaper. Now, no one would ever run an article titled ‘Cops versus Small Business.’ But clearly the role of cultural organizations as a robust small business sector hasn’t penetrated the general consciousness.
Second, just last week, a *New York Times* editorial about the possibility of selling the Detroit Institute of Arts collection to help meet the city’s fiscal challenges stated “Some creditors argue that the Art is not necessary for the city’s mission. One creditor said the DIA is not an essential asset and especially not one that is essential for the delivery of services in the city.”

I’d like to think our experience here in New York, through the successful support of so many kinds of projects and organizations, across so many neighborhoods and disciplines, can inspire a rejoinder by better expressing the multiplicity of culture’s value.

My hope is that our work here today, and in the months ahead, will redefine and advance the conversation so that, in the years to come, our colleagues in Detroit won’t face this kind of critique because everyone will understand all the ways in which art IS in fact “an essential asset and especially...one that is essential to the delivery of city services.”
From Left:
Vishakha N. Desai, Tom Finkelpearl,
Kathy Halbreich, Joe Hall, Maurine Knighton
We are talking about creating equitable cities for the future and I want to say that it is not necessarily the case that museums do that because the museums have traditionally been the markers of class difference. That is something that we have to overcome in the tradition of the museums that we have and are talking about today.

The Queens Museum has been recently expanded. We had a one-word architectural program for the architects (Grimshaw Architects) which was ‘openness.’ So, the museum is open from the sides, the center and has a big open space. One of the primary elements of the Queens Museum is the panorama of the New York City. It is an object that is open and accessible, where you don’t have to speak English or love contemporary art to see it and appreciate it.

Thus with the Queens Museum, the idea of museum is to be as open as we can be. This is reflected within the architecture. It is also reflected in the fact that we have therapists on our staff. We are not only open to people with disabilities coming to our museum but we are ready to meet them with professionals who understand the difference between, for example kids within the autism spectrum or Down’s syndrome, in terms of what is the reasonable expectation of a meaningful educational experience for them.

There is a model within museums which are known as ‘outreach.’ This is an old model which suggests that ‘you’ are ‘out there’ and we are here to reach out pull you into the museum. We think a better model is community engagement and there are people who actually know how to do that. They are called community organizers.
We have hired community organizers and we’ve had them on our staff for six to seven years. These are folks who understand and are professionally trained to understand how to communicate and understand what is going on in the community and express to the outside world what it is up to. It is also a conflict-based practice which gets us into some kind of trouble as well. But it is worth it.

One of the great democratic models for cultural institutions in America is the public library. We have a lot to learn from libraries. Public libraries as institutions are explicitly open and free. We have a long-term partnership with the Queens Library system. This is one of the most successful cultural institutions in New York City. Everybody in Queens goes to the Queens Public Library. They have fifteen million visitors at Libraries every year. There are only two and a half million people in Queens. So we can assume how many times a typical average person may be visiting the library.

Hence, when talk about museum ‘visitors’ and library ‘users.’ Why can’t we have museum users? People who think it is a useful thing to walk into. We have an idea that it is also important to train the next generation of people who are interested in social interaction in the arts. So we formed a partnership with Queens College, CUNY.
So we started a Social Practice MFA program.

There is this idea that Europe supports the arts more than America in the public sector. It’s not true. We support it through tax structure. So if you look at a private museum with one hundred million dollar budget, you have look at it as half the money being taxes that were not collected. So, the decision-makers in America are people with a lot of money. So my question with the Detroit Institute: Is the net worth of the average person walking in the museum always going to be a direct relationship to the net worth of that institution? Are we coming to a point that Detroit cannot afford to have a museum because the public sector support is in question? Also, is it the case that a museum or arts center from a low income community has to be a low income art center? I think we have a flawed system.
Six years ago I moved to New York after sixteen years as director of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis; I’ve had to learn to pace myself as there always are myriad of events I would like to attend every evening—museum and gallery openings, readings, dance and theater performances, or panels such as the one I recently attended at the Tisch School—that brought scholars together to discuss the issues raised by Radical Presence, the groundbreaking exhibition on black performance hosted collaboratively by the Grey Art Gallery on Washington Square and the Studio Museum in Harlem.

One of the most debated topics was *Some Sweet Day*, a series of inter-generational and cross-cultural performances curated by choreographer Ralph Lemon for MoMA that examined issues of blackness both within and outside the institution and the field of dance. Artists help us speak, in this case about the combustible mix of money, race, and artistic discipline. For me creative practitioners are the suns around which the rest of us circle, converse, and connect. New York is a magnet for such people. I often am the only native New Yorker in the room.

I believe a cultural strategy is best measured, then, by the presence, diversity and leadership of creative professionals, who bring us together to buy a beautifully designed book by Badlands Press, founded by artist Paul Chan, or to watch a performer haltingly present her first work. Artists make necessary the existence of small but extravagantly experimental places such as Danspace which inhabits St. Mark’s Church, Light Industry which shares a space with the Triple Canopy, or the Laundromat Projects whose mantra “Wash Clothes: Make Art: Build Community” gives new meaning to the spin cycle. These organizations, three founded in the last six years, prosper by inventing ways to support choreographers, filmmakers, writers, and artists despite the escalating price of real estate.
But what do creative people really need? Recently Sam Miller, Director of the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, Cynthia Mayeda, Deputy Director for Institutional Advancement at the Brooklyn Museum, and the choreographer Elizabeth Streb whose rehearsals at her Lab for Action Mechanics are open to the Williamsburg community, and I debated that question over dinner.

The idealists among us voted for housing and health care. Streb and I argued for money to experiment with as few strings as possible, basic places to rehearse ideas and novel ways to engage audiences. I hope the incubator initiated by the New Museum encourages creative people to drill holes in the floor, collaborate as desired, and fail when necessary. When I was employed by MIT, the place of greatest invention (where nine Nobel Prize winners worked) was Building 20, a humble 1943 structure that was considered to be temporary, was consequently, malleable to the needs of the experimental practices housed there.

Artists really need ‘trust.’ Trust in their circuitous process of discovery. This was something discussed with my fellow board members at the Duke Foundation in considering how to shape a ten-year, fifty million dollar program of fellowships of $225,000 each for theater, jazz and dance practitioners. We added an additional $25,000 for only those grantees most committed to audience development as well as a $25,000 contribution towards retirement vehicles; professional counseling also was offered by Creative Capital and gatherings planned so recipients could learn from each other.

Most importantly, the grantees, who range in age from their early 30s to 70s, receive these fellowships through an anonymous review process that is not tied to a specific project. Artists, in fact, do not apply for these grants but are rewarded for past innovation and as a vote of confidence in future achievements. And, because I believe artists know who the rule breakers are before curators or producers do, I am happy to report a program of smaller grants for less established artists, to launch in 2014, rests on an entirely artist-driven process, beginning with nominations of an anonymous panel of artists; its suggestions will be adjudicated by another group of artists who will award the grants.
While I have mentioned how key creative professionals are to smaller spaces, large institutions like MoMA also depend upon adventuresome individuals both as audience and advocates. Forty-one percent of MoMA’s New York City audience of roughly 800,000 people self-identify as creative professionals while seventy-one percent of MoMA PS1’s public does. Roughly 2,100 of our members are artists who receive a discounted $50 membership while another 3000 in the collection receive a lifetime membership.

Here I want to add one bit of crucial information regarding how important access is to MoMA: while our admission price is $25, roughly 683,000 visitors attend MoMA each year for free, including all children under the age of 16. I’d wager many of these participants would fall within the definition of creative professionals.

While MoMA was an early proponent for the commissioning and exhibiting of new work, with its Project series beginning in 1971, the museum’s efforts must be seen as part of an emerging, widespread interest in contemporary art.

Despite a national economy slowed by the oil crisis and the near bankruptcy of New York, this city became a singular place for the creation of new alternative spaces where provocative art could be made, shown, and debated. These included P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center; Food, the artist-run restaurant; the Kitchen, an artists’ collective; artists’ space; the DIA Art Foundation; and Franklin Furnace.

Perhaps the growth of these important organizations—all but one of which are still in existence—in a decade of economic stagnation stemmed from a renewed sense of the power of the individual in the face of disappointment at the hands of most authorities.

Let me provocatively suggest that culture should be a process of reinvention and reinterpretation that requires a recalculation of ideas about permanence and independence in order to support the huge economic impact on our daily lives.
Some organizations, such as The New York City Opera or The Minnesota Orchestra, may be replaced by those that are more disruptive and searching and nimble and collaborative, that better serve artists and engage a public. As I’ve tried to suggest, it is possible to imagine that these times will also prompt brave people to create new opportunities for artists from down the street and around the globe. The health of this city (to say nothing of the many fields that have a huge economic impact on our daily lives) depend upon it.

“Let me provocatively suggest that culture should be a process of reinvention and reinterpretation that requires a recalculation of ideas about permanence and independence in order to support the huge economic impact on our daily lives.”
Joke Hall
President and Founder
Ghetto Film School
New York City, USA

“Art is what makes us human.”

Art is what makes us human. That’s what was overheard during one of the December 9th breakout sessions: a cultural activity—whether the participants are making or appreciating art—helps strengthen their humanity.

The battle for cultural equity is not about where investments are made; it is about who is deemed ready to make and engage art. Culture policies too often follow the greater conventional wisdom that at-risk, disadvantaged communities are the raw material that someone else must be paid to fix. Poor kids don’t get to make art; and if there is a local program, it’s funded to prevent participants from being pregnant, violent, truant, obese, substance abusers, or some other bad thing that enables us to interact with them. Going deep into the craft of making art—building skills and appreciation along the way—just isn’t a reasonable pursuit for these folks.

And if you’ve been lumped into a group deemed unhealthy, then the art museum may have an ethnic cooking program to teach you healthier options. We’re teaching you about your food, at the art museum—think, for a moment, about all that implies.

Until poor people have the financial, political and moral support to make and engage art as a fundamental part of their human condition—without outcomes tied to the social service industrial complex—there can be no equitable global city. No matter how much money is spent on their behalf.
The focus is on ‘participatory practices’ whether it is involving artistic communities, audiences, children, ownership of budget processes. Are we talking about change in the dynamics of the authority and the voice of the institution that still remains very strong? What happens with the funding equation in such institutions?

It is important for communities to represent themselves, to be by, for, and about themselves. Not only is it important for larger institutions to be reflective of and responsive to specific communities but it is also important for those communities to represent themselves. It is important at every level of an institution starting with staff. One of the first ways to accomplish inclusivity is by hiring staff which is reflective of the community that you aspire to serve.

In addition to that there needs to be a series of authentic relationships which can be at various stages. Some relationships are more robust than others and relationships ebb and flow over time. Sometimes you are drawn closer and at other times you love one other from a distance, but there is always a dynamic relationship that accrues to the good at the end of the day. That is something that funding institutions are always looking for. Arts and culture have a specific and powerful role to play in regard to economic and social justice.

**Art practice—social interactive model**

It is not a suggestion that all institutions must follow the same path and hire community organizers or follow the same path (as suggested by Tom and Joe). There is a set of practitioners and artists who believe in social and participatory practices. For example, Tania Bruguera’s Immigrant Movement International at the Queens Museum funded along with Creative Time where she is working in collaboration with community members over many years and that projects looks and acts like a community center but it is an act of relational, interactive, participatory art. The Queens Museum has been led by such artists and practitioners to follow a path where community organizers and thus the socially interactive model have transpired.
There is credit due to the artists from the communities and those working for communities in Queens which have generated these practices. For example, the Queens Museum is trying to be the Queens Museum by engaging with its community. There should not be a reason why every institution should not represent the community that it is located in.

There should not be a universalizing of criteria by which we deploy our institutions and practices. The liberating thing about art is that there are no answers. We have to look for answers every day.

A collective narrative must be developed in order to make a case for the arts. If we look at the ambiguity and specificity of arts, how do we create that collective narrative?

Sometimes it feels like social and economic justice and art-making seems to make art-making an instrument of change rather than pursuing art-making as a creative endeavor.

Instrumentalism has a bad name in the art-world. Art can be a tool for social justice and there are artists who are willing to do that. There is a transformation in the way the art-world is shifting and we must salute the foundations which are looking for social justice outcomes. It is not for all institutions and for all foundations.

On the other hand, we cannot leave anything on the table with regard to the material and spiritual conditions in which people live and operate. That is, art cannot be transactional. Arts and culture allows us to connect to and exert our power and agency so that we can bring about the material conditions we want to see for a more vibrant and just world.

Social justice victories, policy change, and legislation are markers along the way. They are milestones, but they are not the be-all and end-all.
**Arts and Culture Operates On a Spectrum**

There are some times when instrumental uses of arts and culture are precisely what an artist has in mind, what feels like the right thing at the right time and seems powerful and effective. We believe there is an intrinsic value in arts and culture and arts and culture is always in dialogue with the world. We live in the world and respond to that world.

We also believe in high aesthetic quality. There are all these points along the midline between intrinsic value and instrumentality. In order to tap into that value we have to be able to be fluent across that spectrum.

**Have we become good at saying what we think people want to hear? Or have we become complacent about articulating how we want to define the importance of the work we do (in regards to art and cultural advocacy)?**

What are museum directors are scared of? What artists need is trust. What we don’t do is trust the creative person. We need to have more people who ask tough questions, even politically. Artists don’t permit that passivity. Which is why we don’t embrace them, we don’t necessarily do something that is challenging. The question to be asked is challenging to whom? We have a great luxury.

Even though we are dependent on individual funders, government funders, or corporate funders, the best of us are most engaged with the human need to be creative.

**As the New York City administration is changing, what are the things that one would like to see changed, modified, and kept the same in the new administration as citizens of New York?**

When thinking about issues of policy, if we go back to the ‘70s in the city in New York, it was a very difficult time. It was also a time of enormous opportunity for those courageous people who did not let these bog them down.
Learning from this experience, we must not let difficult economic times constrain us. It may be that, we may not need new glamorous buildings. We may need different types of buildings. We may need to share better. We must be enormously ambitious and creative in times of constraints, maybe even because of them.

In a provocative statement, one can also say that everything need not be supported. For example, if the Metropolitan Opera and Great Minnesota Orchestra are sinking, perhaps they have lost their purpose and not just their funding. There are smaller, mid-size, new, experimental unknowns that may need seeding. We, as a group, may have to grapple with the fact that not everything may survive.

There were no cultural institutions in the Queens in the 1970s. PS1, the Hall of Science, the Botanical Gardens—all of them are 1970s children. It was an incredible cultural expansion in the boroughs in difficult times.

There are different kinds of strings attached to every kind of money. But, Cultural Affairs has the kind of support that few other organizations are able to deliver. When the Natural History Museum started in 1869 it was a great deal that New York City created and this tradition needs to be continued. The hope is that the new Cultural Affairs Commissioner is not fooled by the campaign narrative, which seems elite and out of touch in the Bloomberg era.

The Ghetto Film School received the Mayor’s Award for Arts and Culture and DCA support in the amount of 250,000 dollars. The organization was handed a platform and plugged into the larger ecosystem of cultural organizations.

All the directors of large and small institutions have felt they had ‘access’ to the very top. Kate Levin shows up to a small but very important dance organization’s event in Bronx on a Friday night a week before Christmas, on her own. This is the standard that the Bronx community expects the new Cultural Affairs Commissioner to uphold.
RESPONSES FROM INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPANTS:

Rajeev Thakker  —  Mumbai, India

These were some of the words we recently gave during the Artists Residency in Mumbai that were from England, practicing with a bunch of local artists looking at issues on urban future. The interesting thing is when you give narratives like this one would think that they are greatly diverse in the different cities around the world but they were scarily similar issues that everyone was dealing with. The Mumbai artists paired with the New York artists may speak of different interests or issues affecting their work, but eventually they may be able to understand these differences through the medium of art.

The point I want to focus on, which has been discussed throughout the day, is the essence of collaboration as a way of integrating the arts into everyday practice of life. The necessity and the sense of urgency that people feel are very different around the world but the values are very similar.

Collaboration is not new and its power, now and always, stems from its ability to assemble, choreograph, and produce multiple perspectives on different subjects.

“Safety, perseverance, corruption, the sea, love, terrorism, money, strength, walking, cycling, driving, flying, relax, noise, films, traffic, dense, space, slum, encroachment, money, water, power, porn, racist, migrant, tolerant, artist, talent, political, archaic, future, gastronomic, celebrate, Hindu, Muslim, Parsi, Gujarati, Sindhi, Marathi, dirty, monsoon, Bollywood, tragedy, communal, religion, comedy, sinking, compassion.”
This is power in the process of production. Collaboration exists in many forms and not between the arts and the community but collaboration can exist between government and communities as well. It is a trust and social building exercise and collaborations diversify skill-sets among specialists whether in New York or other cities in the world. They are integrative processes.

So the collaboration of the artist with the community is not really the question for me if you think about who the artist is, he is as much part of the community whether in New York or in Mumbai.

I will end with this quote:

“Art is individualism, and individualism is a disturbing and disintegrating force. There lies its immense value. For what it seeks is to disturb monotony of type, slavery of custom, tyranny of habit, and the reduction of man to the level of a machine.”

—Oscar Wilde, from The Soul of a Man Under Socialism, 1891

This is very apropos in my current position as the curator of studio X, Mumbai which is a platform for dealing with the future of cities and how art can integrate with the various platforms of architecture, arts, urbanism, economics, and policy.
RESPONSES FROM INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPANTS:

Teddy Cruz — San Diego, California, USA

I am inspired by Darren Walker’s welcoming remarks and I want to say that in order to aspire for a more equitable city we first need to expose the conditions that have produced the current socio-economic inequality and also expose the apathy of the institutions which cannot re-imagine themselves in the context of the new inequality. It is very obvious by now that the current economic downturn is very similar to the Great Depression of the late ‘20s.

In those two peaks in the history of this country we find the largest socio-economic inequality. However, we seldom expose what happens in between those two peaks between the early ‘30s to the late ‘70s when there was seemingly more equitable distribution of resources in this country. What happened in those times? What happened when FDR produced the new Bill of Rights?

A New Deal emerged which implied a new synergy of cross-sector collaboration between civic philanthropy and government and community leadership to invest in unprecedented ways in public infrastructure across the board, in other words, freely investing in public imagination, the civic imaginations. For example, WPA programs, infrastructure, bottom-up and top-down levels. Today the public has become a forbidden word in the political language.

So in creating more equitable cities in the future we need to begin by pressing the fact that we need to move from individual to collective agency, from urbanization of consumption to neighborhoods of cultural production. In fact, new forms of coproduction of culture and new forms of the political languages, policies that are inclusive are required in marginalized communities.
The emergence of new creative and equitable cities will also result in the re-imagination and re-thinking of public space, one that is beyond the sphere of beautification, beyond leisure and beyond the neutrality of public space. Thus we are moving in the right direction, so that the city and public space is seen as infrastructure for cultural production and education in cities in Latin America, like Bogota and Medellín. These are public spaces at the scale of communities and neighborhoods and not at the center of the global city.

It is in that context in Latin America where it is proven that the construction of citizenship is to mobilize through cultural action. New forms of civic engagement are thus needed. To imagine more equitable cities we all need to expand our artistic practices. The foundations need to reimagine their own protocols and criteria so that they can not only demand deliverables that are quantifiable but also invest in processes that are full of risk and full of experimentation.

Therefore art can facilitate meetings of knowledge processes and top-down institutions and bottom-up communities where this mediation helps to expose conditions of the conflicts themselves. New forms of the political are invited to intervene and produce more inclusivity and finally to we need to ‘hijack the narrative.’ All institutions of culture need to take a political position.

They need to confront the socio-economic inequalities head on, they need to intervene in that debate and need to take that risk.
Arts, Culture, and Quality of Life in Global Cities

PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES

Nora Akawi
Director, Studio-X, Amman Lab
Columbia Global Centers | Middle East
Amman, Jordan


Her thesis research focused on the political role of collective archives in the visualization of spatial narratives and in imagining alternative political organization.

She returned to Jerusalem in October 2011 to teach in the Department of Architecture at Bezalel, and with a group of young designers, visual artists and filmmakers co-founded Al-Ma’mal Lab, a shared studio and gallery space in the Old City of Jerusalem. In September 2012 Nora became the Director of the Amman Lab, a node within the Studio-X Global Network run by Columbia University’s GSAPP.

Jonathan Barzilay
Director, Freedom of Expression Team
Ford Foundation
New York City, USA

Jonathan Barzilay is director of the Ford Foundation’s Freedom of Expression team, which includes the foundation’s global work in Media, Arts and Culture, and Religion in the Public Sphere. Jonathan began his career as an attorney specializing in First Amendment issues and spent 25 years in the media sector, holding senior management positions at ABC, CBS and Qualcomm. He is a graduate of Harvard University and Columbia Law School.
Carol Becker
Dean of the Arts
Columbia University
New York City, USA

Carol Becker is Dean of Columbia University School of the Arts where she has also been Professor of the Arts since 2007. Becker was previously Dean of Faculty and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago from 1994-2007 where she was also professor of Liberal Arts. She earned her B.A. in English from State University of New York at Buffalo and her Ph.D. in English and American Literature from the University of California, San Diego.

With research interests that range from feminist theory, American cultural history and the education of artists, to South African art and politics, she has published numerous articles and books of cultural criticism including: *The Invisible Drama: Women and the Anxiety of Change* (translated into seven languages); *The Subversive Imagination: Artists, Society and Social Responsibility; Zones of Contention: Essays on Art, Institutions, Gender, and Anxiety*; and *Surpassing the Spectacle: Global Transformations and the Changing Politics of Art*. Her latest book *Thinking in Place: Art, Action and Cultural Production* was published in 2008 by Paradigm Press. She lectures extensively in the United States and abroad and is the recipient of numerous awards.

Bill Bragin
Director of Public Programming
Lincoln Center
New York City, USA

Mr. Bragin oversees the Midsummer Night Swing and Lincoln Center Out of Doors festivals, and programs free events at the David Rubenstein Atrium. Previously, Bragin presented more than 3,000 concerts as Director of Joe’s Pub at The Public Theater. At the Public, he also initiated the Tony award-winning rock musical *Passing Strange* by Stew, which transferred to Broadway and then premiered as a film by Spike Lee.

In 1999, he founded Acidophilus: Live & Active Cultures, an arts consulting service working with such clients as the TED Conferences, Lincoln Center Festival and choreographers Susan Marshall, Ben Munisteri and Wally Cardona. Bragin serves as a board member of the Association of Performing Arts Presenters.
**Geoffrey Crossick**  
Distinguished Professor of the Humanities  
Director, AHRC Cultural Value Project  
School of Advanced Study, University of London  
London, UK

Professor Geoffrey Crossick is Director of the Arts & Humanities Research Council’s Cultural Value Project and Distinguished Professor of Humanities in the School of Advanced Study of the University of London. Until July 2012 he was Vice-Chancellor of the University of London, having previously been Warden of Goldsmiths, University of London. Until 2002 he was Professor of History at the University of Essex, where he held various senior management positions.

He then served as Chief Executive of the Arts and Humanities Research Board, which he led through its successful transformation into a full Arts and Humanities Research Council before joining Goldsmiths in 2005.

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**Teddy Cruz**  
Professor in Public Culture and Urbanism  
University of California, San Diego  
San Diego, USA

Teddy Cruz is known internationally for his urban research on the Tijuana/San Diego border, advancing border neighborhoods as sites of cultural production from which to rethink urban policy, affordable housing, and civic infrastructure.

Recipient of the Rome Prize in Architecture in 1991, his honors include representing the United States in the 2008 Venice Architecture Biennale, the Ford Foundation Visionaries Award in 2011, and the 2013 Architecture Award from the US Academy of Arts and Letters. Teddy is a professor in public culture and urbanism at University of California, San Diego.
Vishakha N. Desai
Special Advisor for Global Affairs
Office of the President
Professor of Professional Practice, SIPA
Columbia University
New York City, USA

Dr. Vishakha N. Desai is Special Advisor for Global Affairs to the President of Columbia University and Professor of Professional Practice at the School of International and Public Affairs. She also serves as Senior Advisor for Global Programs to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation. From 2004 through 2012, Dr. Desai served as President and CEO of the Asia Society, a global organization dedicated to strengthening partnerships between Asia and the United States.

Prior to becoming President, Dr. Desai held numerous senior positions within the Asia Society, initiating presentations of several major exhibitions of Contemporary Asian and Asian American art in the 1990s, among the earliest efforts of its kind.

Marcus Vinicius Alves Faustino
Filmmaker, Writer, and Cultural Activist
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Marcus Vinicius Faustini is a 42-years-old carioca filmmaker, writer, theater director, cultural activist, creator of the methodology from Agência de Redes para Juventude (The Agency), and the new weekly columnist of the newspaper OGLOBO, where he writes every Tuesday about culture, city and behavior. Faz Diferença Award winner (2012), ORILAXÉ Human Rights Award winner (2010), Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Award winner (2012), and Prêmio Shell de Teatro 2012 nominated for innovation with the Home Theatre Festival, Marcus grew up in Cesarão—the biggest housing project in Rio de Janeiro, in the district of Santa Cruz, in the west zone of the city.

Also known as Faustini, with a background in theatre and film, he has stood out in the cultural scene since 1998. Before that, he had a significant role in the student movement, getting to be vice president of AMES-RJ.
Tom Finkelpearl serves as the Executive Director of the Queens Museum, which operates as a cultural crossroads in America’s most diverse county through art programs, community organizing, and educational outreach.

The museum recently completed an expansion that doubled its size. Finkelpearl was previously Deputy Director at PS1 Contemporary Art Center, Director of New York City’s Percent for Art Program, and Executive Director of Program at The Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine. Finkelpearl has published two books: *Dialogues in Public Art* (MIT Press, 2000) and *What We Make: Conversations on Art and Social Cooperation* (Duke University Press, 2013).

Fonna Forman is a political theorist best known for her revisionist work on Adam Smith, recuperating the ethical and public dimensions of his political economy. Her current work focuses on theories and practices of global justice as they manifest at the local scale, and the role of civic engagement and cross-sector collaboration in strategies of progressive urban reform.

Fonna is associate professor of political theory at the University of California, San Diego, where she is founding co-director the Center on Global Justice and the Blum Cross-Border Initiative. She is also special advisor on Urban and Public Initiatives for the City of San Diego, leading the development of its new Civic Innovation Lab.
Susan Freedman
President
Public Art Fund
New York City, USA

Susan Freedman is internationally recognized for her vision and ongoing leadership in the field of contemporary public art. As president of Public Art Fund since 1986, Susan has led the organization in bringing some of the most ambitious and engaging public art initiatives to the people of New York City.

Christophe Girard
Mayor of the 4th Arrondissement of Paris
Paris, France

Deputy to Mayor Bertrand Delanoë since 2001—re-elected in 2008—elected Mayor of the 4th district in 2012, Christophe Girard has launched several major cultural projects, including the well-known Nuit Blanche. He benefits from a long and sound experience working for the fashion industry, for instance as head of the LVMH fashion and leather craft strategy department. He also is a documentary film co-producer as well as a writer, since he published three books (a novel: La Défaillance des Pudeurs, an essay about homosexual parenting entitled Père Comme les Autres, and Le Petit Livre Rouge de la Culture).

He sits on several boards of directors including those of various higher education, academic, cultural and medical institutions (Centre national d’art et de culture Georges Pompidou, Musée d’Art et d’Histoire du Judaïsme, Foundation for Arts Initiative, CENTQUATRE, Université Paris VIII, Hôtel-Dieu. He is also a wine producer in southern France (Gigondas, Côtes du Rhône).
Kathy Halbreich
Associate Director
Museum of Modern Art
New York City, USA

Kathy Halbreich joined the Museum of Modern Art in the newly created position of Associate Director in February 2008 to focus on curatorial and strategic issues designed to amplify contemporary programs and initiatives at MoMA and MoMA PS1, both locally and globally. She leads the Contemporary Working Group, a curatorial committee dedicated to contemporary art. She is developing the museum’s acquisitions of very recent works through the Fund for the 21st Century, oversees research designed to expand curatorial expertise in a more global view of art history, and partners with Museum Director Glenn Lowry on advocacy issues.

Joe Hall
President and Founder
Ghetto Film School
New York City, USA

Joe Hall is a social entrepreneur building a national creative education model that uses cinematic storytelling and production training to develop broad-based 21st century skills. In 2000 he founded Ghetto Film School (GFS) in his South Bronx neighborhood, training 650 teens annually through various pre-professional programs including Digital Bodega, an in-house production company.

Joe led a collaborative partnership with the NYC Department of Education to open The Cinema School in 2009 as the nation’s first film high school. His award highlights include 2005 Mayor’s Award for Arts & Culture and a 2011 Rockefeller Foundation residency in Bellagio, Italy.
Stephen Hobbs
Curator and Cultural Organizer
The Trinity Session
Johannesburg, South Africa

Through an extended practice of urban investigation and experimentation, focused particularly on Johannesburg since 1994, Hobbs has sustained a dialogue with urban space through video, installation, special curated projects, and an interrelated approach to photography and sculpture. Hobbs’ particular fascination with the conflicted social and political changes in Johannesburg has resulted in numerous observations on the precarious state of cities undergoing radical physical change.

Stephen Hobbs graduated from Wits University with a BAFA in 1994. He was the curator of the Market Theatre Galleries (Johannesburg) from 1994 to 2000. Since 2001, he has co-directed the artist collaborative and is a public art specialist at the Trinity Session, the Gallery Premises (closed 2008) at the Joburg Theatre, and since 2004 has coproduced a range of urban and network focused projects, with Marcus Neustetter, under the collaborative name Hobbs/Neustetter.

Paul Ramirez Jonas
Associate Professor
Hunter College
New York City, USA

Paul Ramirez Jonas is an artist based in New York City. His selected solo exhibitions include Pinacoteca do Estado, São Paulo, Brazil; The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, Connecticut; The Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, Texas; a survey at Ikon Gallery (UK) and Cornerhouse (UK); Solo gallery exhibition at Koenig & Clinton (NYC), Roger Björkholmén (Sweden), Nara Roesler Gallery (Brazil), and Postmasters Gallery (NYC). He has been included in group exhibitions at the Gallery for Contemporary Art Leipzig (Germany); P.S.1 (NYC); The Whitechapel (UK); Irish Museum of Modern Art (Ireland); Künstlerhaus (Austria); The New Museum (NYC); and Kunsthaus Zurich (Switzerland). He participated in the 1st Johannesburg Biennale; the 1st Seoul Biennial; the 6th Shanghai Biennial; the 28th São Paulo Biennial; the 53rd Venice Biennial and the 7th Bienal do Mercosul, Porto Alegre, Brazil.
Vasif Kortun  
Director, Research and Programs  
SALT  
Istanbul, Turkey

Vasif Kortun is a curator, writer and teacher in the field of contemporary visual art, its institutions, and spatial practices. He is the Director of Research and Programs of SALT, Istanbul/Ankara. Kortun is a member of the Board of Directors of Foundation for Arts Initiatives, CIMAM International Committee for Museums and Collections of Modern Art, and the Advisory Board of Asia Art Archive.

A recipient of the Award for Curatorial Excellence from Bard College, he was the founding director of a number of institutions including the Platform Garanti Contemporary Art Center, Istanbul, Proje4L, Istanbul Museum of Contemporary Art and the Museum of the Center for Curatorial Studies. Kortun has worked on a number of major biennale projects, including: Taipei Biennale (2008) co-curated with ManRay Hsu and the 9th International Istanbul Biennial (2005) co-curated with Charles Esche.

Dinh Q. Lê  
Co-Founder and Chairman of the Board  
Sàn Art  
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Dinh Q. Lê was born in Ha-Tien, Vietnam. He received his BA in Art Studio at UC Santa Barbara and his MFA in Photography and Related Media at The School of Visual Arts in New York City. In 1994, Lê returned to Vietnam, and in 1997 Lê settled down in Ho Chi Minh City.

Besides being an artist, Lê also co-founded Vietnam Art Foundation-VNFA based in Los Angeles, an organization that supports Vietnamese artists and promotes artistic exchange between cultural workers from Vietnam and around the world. Through funding from VNFA, Lê co-founded San Art, the most active not-for-profit gallery in Vietnam. He is currently on the Arts Network Asia Peer Panel, board member of Danish Embassy’s Cultural Development and Exchange Fund (CDEF) in Hanoi, Asia Society Global Council, and Guggenheim Asian Council. In 2010, Lê was awarded the Visual Art Laureate, Prince Claus Fund, Amsterdam.
Kate D. Levin was the commissioner of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. In this role, she directed cultural policy for New York City, supporting and strengthening nonprofit cultural organizations throughout the five boroughs through public funding, technical assistance and advocacy.

Prior to her appointment, Levin taught at the City College of New York/CUNY, worked at several New York City cultural organizations, and served in the Koch administration.

Helen Marriage is a co-director of Artichoke, which she founded with Nicky Webb in 2005. Her previous work has included a seven-year period as Director of the Salisbury Festival which she transformed from a local affair to what The Times described as a ‘miracle of modern British culture.’

Helen went to Salisbury after creating the first Arts & Events program for the developers of Canary Wharf in London. Prior to that, she was an Associate Director of the London International Festival of Theatre. She began her working life with Artsadmin where she managed a variety of independent artists in the early 1980s.
Reinhold Martin

Professor of Architecture, Planning and Preservation
Member, Committee on Global Thought
Columbia University
New York City, USA

Reinhold Martin is Associate Professor of Architecture in the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation at Columbia University, where he directs the Ph.D. program in architecture and the Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture. He is a member of Columbia’s Institute for Comparative Literature and Society as well as the Committee on Global Thought.

Martin is a founding co-editor of the journal Grey Room and has published widely on the history and theory of modern and contemporary architecture. He is the author of The Organizational Complex: Architecture, Media, and Corporate Space (MIT Press, 2003), and Utopia’s Ghost: Architecture and Postmodernism, Again (Minnesota, 2010), as well as the co-author, with Kadambari Baxi, of Multi-National City: Architectural Itineraries (Actar, 2007). In 2012, Martin co-curated with Barry Bergdoll Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, for which he and Bergdoll also co-edited the exhibition catalog.

Maria Nicanor

Curator, BMW Guggenheim Lab
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum
New York City, USA

Maria Nicanor joined the curatorial staff in October 2005 and now heads the architecture and urbanism initiatives of the Guggenheim Museum. When she first joined the Guggenheim, she worked on several exhibitions, including Spanish Painting from El Greco to Picasso, Cy Twombly for the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, Frank Lloyd Wright, From Within Outward, Contemplating the Void: Interventions in the Guggenheim Museum, and Color Fields for the Deutsche Guggenheim Berlin.

Nicanor leads the curatorial team of the BMW Guggenheim Lab, an international traveling laboratory for urban experiments and public programs and has recently curated the exhibition Participatory City: 100 Urban Trends from the BMW Guggenheim Lab. She has lectured internationally on the future of museums in the twenty-first century and new museum formats that facilitate innovative audience engagement.
Sérgio Sá Leitão
Secretary of Culture
Ministry of Culture, Rio de Janeiro
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

With a degree in Journalism at Rio’s Federal University (UFRJ) and post-graduation degrees in Public Policies and Marketing, Sérgio Sá Leitão is Rio de Janeiro’s Secretary of Culture (since December 2012) and RioFilme’s CEO (since January 2009). He was a Director at Ancine (Brazilian National Film Agency) from 2007 to 2008 and worked as a consulting advisor specializing in audiovisual and entertainment projects for many companies and institutions in Brazil.

From 2006 to 2007, he supervised at the Brazilian National Development Bank (BNDES) the creation of the Culture Economics Department (now culture, Entertainment and Services Department) and the Audiovisual Industry Financing Program. He was Head of Cabinet of the former Brazilian Minister of Culture, Mr. Gilberto Gil, and Secretary of Cultural Policies at the Brazilian Ministry of Culture, as well as VP of the Inter-American Culture Commission (ICC-OAS), from 2003 to 2006.

Saskia Sassen
Robert S. Lynd Professor of Sociology
Co-Chair, Committee on Global Thought
Columbia University
New York City, USA

Saskia Sassen’s research and writing focuses on globalization (including social, economic and political dimensions), immigration, global cities (including cities and terrorism), the new technologies, and changes within the liberal state that result from current transnational conditions. Her interests include urban sociology, the sociology of transnational processes and globalization, technology, the dynamics of powerlessness in urban contexts and migration.

In addition to her appointment at Columbia University, Saskia Sassen serves on several editorial boards and is an advisor to several international bodies. She is a Member of the Council on Foreign Relations, and a member of the National Academy of Sciences Panel on Cities. She regularly contributes to The Huffington Post, OpenDemocracy, The Guardian, The New York Times, Le Monde Diplomatique, The International Herald Tribune, Newsweek International, and the Financial Times, among others. She serves on the Advisory Committee of Theatrum Mundi.
Mark J. Stern
Kenneth L.M. Pray Professor of Social Welfare and History
Co-Director, Urban Studies Program
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, USA

Mark Stern is the Kenneth L.M. Pray Professor of Social Welfare and History and co-director of the Urban Studies program at the University of Pennsylvania. He has authored or co-authored six books, including *One Nation Divisible: What America Was and What It Is Becoming* (with Michael B. Katz) and *Engaging Social Welfare: An Introduction to Policy Analysis* (2014). Since 1994, Stern has been principal investigator for Penn’s Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP). His monograph, *Age and Arts Participation: A Case Against Demographic Destiny*, was published by the National Endowment for the Arts in 2011.

Rajeev Thakker
Director
Studio X, Mumbai
Mumbai, India

Rajeev Thakker holds a BArch from Syracuse University and a MSAAD from Columbia University’s Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation. He moved to Mumbai in 2000 to pursue a career in teaching and has lectured, hosted workshops, and led Architectural Design Studios at institutes like KRVIA and BSSA Schools of Architecture.

He currently runs a design studio called ‘a-RT’ which provides a consultancy and design service for architectural and interior projects combining cartographic, architectural and other creative processes (i.e. drawing, painting, and photography). He is also currently Curator for Studio X Mumbai, a platform developed by Columbia University’s Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation exploring the future of cities.
Roberta Uno
Senior Program Officer
Ford Foundation
New York City, USA

Roberta Uno is Senior Program Officer for Arts and Culture, in the Freedom of Expression unit of the Education, Creativity, and Free Expression program of the Ford Foundation. She headed the development of, and programs the new Arts and Culture initiative in the United States, Supporting Diverse Arts Spaces. The initiative is focused on identifying and supporting exemplary facilities-based arts organizations that are national exemplars of artistic excellence, cultural diversity, innovative and equitable space development, and social justice. This initiative is also the focus of Ford Foundation Arts and Culture work in Egypt and Mexico.

Prior to her arrival at Ford in 2002, she was the founder and Artistic Director of the New WORLD Theater, in residence at the Fine Arts Center at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, and a professor of directing and dramaturgy in the University’s Department of Theater.

Sudhir Venkatesh
William B. Ransford Professor of Sociology
Member, Committee on Global Thought
Columbia University
New York City, USA

Sudhir Venkatesh is William B. Ransford Professor of Sociology, and member of the Committee on Global Thought, at Columbia University in the City of New York.

In addition to several published books and articles, Venkatesh’s editorial writings have appeared in the New York Times, the Chicago Tribune, and the Washington Post. He writes for Slate.com, and his stories have appeared in This American Life, WIRED, and on National Public Radio. His next book, under contract with Penguin Press, will focus on the role of black market economies—from sex work and drug trafficking to day care and entertainment—in the revitalization of New York since 1999.
## Links and Resources

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