

SESSION V

BREAKOUT GROUP DISCUSSION



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 • Prosumer • 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.