

**MAPPING THE PUBLIC LIFE
OF THE ARTS IN AMERICA**

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The Arts and Society

The artifacts that have endured from the dawn of human existence remind us that the arts have been a ubiquitous part of human life from its inception. So evident are its manifestations from our early history -- cave paintings, pictographs, petroglyphs, simple carvings; body painting, adornments of dress, tools, weapons, housing; musical sounds from early instruments, chanting, and songs; ceremonial movements or dance --- it is tempting to speak about an "aesthetic dimension" that is generic to the human species.

In all likelihood the same forces that drove our predecessors throughout history to paint, sing, dance and act are the same rudimentary motives that drive us to artistic expression today: the need to celebrate the unknown, mystical aspects of being; to indicate social distinctions; to establish and honor power; to document affiliation; to educate, decorate, entertain, express oneself; and to solve social problems. Art has and continues to serve countless purposes, both social and personal.

The fascination of the arts' universality, however, resides in their extraordinary historical diversity. Tribes, towns, nations, civilizations, eras have produced a wide, variable and rich array of artistic expressions and products ranging from the glorious to the mundane. And the social context of the arts has been organized in different ways in various times and places. Certain art forms take precedence in each era; the functions art serves will vary along with the meanings and valuation associated with them; how the arts are produced, supported and distributed are variable; the range of artistic activities and their stratification among the population differ in time and place as well as how they

are linked to power and government, and how they are taught.

The limitations of historical data often fail to provide us with an in-depth look at how the arts were practiced in different historical contexts, especially in the case of those artistic practices not of the dominant classes. We know little about the practices of the multitude of court painters, craftspersons such as glassmakers and metalworkers; fashion designers, furniture makers, and a multiplicity of other artists whose work didn't find their way into the historical record. We know little about the arts of the lower classes and peasantry. In effect, it has rarely been topical among those vocations vested with the task of understanding the social context of the arts to research the full range of artistic practices and their relationship to society in different historical settings (inquiries usually vested in art historians or cultural social scientists). We primarily know the dominant art historical themes.

For instance, sculpture and architecture dominated artistic forms in ancient Greece and Rome. Architecture, in the form of cathedrals, marked the Christian Middle Ages. Large-scale historical and mythological paintings were esteemed in 19th century France, while music proliferated in 18th century Germany. In China, for over 2000 years, calligraphy and painting were considered major art forms; Japanese screen paintings, used as wall separations in elite homes, lasted as significant artistic expressions for over two millennia. Indigenous arts, painting, weavings and sculptures are dominant art forms in present day Haiti. In 20th century America, an enormous range of artistic expressions prevail with film being our most frequented art form, largest capitalized arts industry, and second largest export.

Arts patronage too has taken many forms and mixes ranging from the coffers of nobility, monarchs, popes and the wealthy, to federal, state, and local government agencies; quasi-municipal agencies; religious institutions, foundations, business entities; guilds, associations, and the marketplace. Different art forms connect with various patrons. European governments have historically subsidized a variety of traditional arts. The wealthy bourgeoisie underwrote the portraiture and association paintings of 17th century Netherlands. Present day Haitian art is tourist driven. Contemporary American art is supported primarily by the marketplace as private and public subsidies provide only a small portion of total arts support.

Artists themselves have been treated as craftspersons, professionals, or as special creative people, and their training has varied from apprenticeships to formal academic training to self-taught. In some places, artists are revered; in others, they are treated as simply another form of worker. Ancient Greece and the Roman empire considered the arts and humanities as means of illuminating themes central to sustaining and embellishing civil society. Ideas arising from the Enlightenment and Romanticism produced the 20th century vision of the artist as a creative genius and the notion of art for art's sake.

Clearly, while the arts are an integral part of human life, their expressions and organization within the social fabric are highly variable. There is no standard; each society treats its arts and artists differently.

According to Joseph Alsop in "The Rare Art Traditions" (1982), among the vast number of visual art traditions, only five times in the whole of human history the artistic

enterprise blossomed into a full scale industry, one that included not simply the production and patronage of the arts but also art collecting, art history, an active art market, the existence of art museums, art forgeries, revaluation of artworks, a focus on antiques, and super prices for works of art -- all practices we take for granted today.

In present day America, such an arts industry is flourishing. By a number of measures, both objective and subjective, the arts can and should be seen as a defining aspect of contemporary American existence.

According to a variety of public and industry sources:

- The nonprofit arts industry generates \$36.8 billion in economic activity annually.
 - Nonprofit arts support 1.3 million jobs; return \$3.4 billion in federal income taxes; spur
 - \$1.2 billion in state government revenues; and bring in \$790 million in local government revenues.
 - The overall economic impact of the nonprofit arts industry in terms of expenditures, full time jobs, personal income generated, and public revenues was estimated as over million in 1994.
- Nonprofit arts institutions have experienced a dramatic growth over the last 35 years spurred in part by the establishment of the National Endowment for the Arts in 1965.
 - Dance troops have grown from 28 in 1958 to over 400.
 - Opera companies with budgets of over \$100,000 have grown from 29

in 1964 to 209 by 1989.

- Chamber music groups, most formed in the last 20 years, now number around 1120.
- Half of America's 8200 museums have come into existence since the 1970s.
- The nonprofit regional theater movement, begun in the 1960s, now consists of more than 900 theater groups.
- At least 37 mixed-arts complexes have sprung up nationally in various urban centers in the last 20 years.
- America's combined cultural industries (the output of artists and other creative workers in entertainment, publishing, audio visual, music, and recording) are 5.68% of GDP, generating \$443.9 billion in annual revenues:
 - The combined culture industries are our nation's leading export generating over \$60 billion annually in overseas sales.
 - The entertainment industry generates about \$270 billion in revenues annually, over half the revenue of the cultural industries.
 - Movie multiplexes are growing in every corner of the country, and top film stars command millions per picture.

People have a significant interest in the arts and culture.

- 96% of the US population is engaged in some aspect of the arts, from attending a film, to listening to CDs, to engaging in an artistic hobby or attending live art performances.

- A 1997 National Endowment for the Arts study found that among adult Americans, attendance at 7 of the higher arts (symphony, plays, musicals, ballet, jazz, opera, museums) grew from 41% in 1992 to 50% in 1997, while participation via the media (CDs, TV, video tapes, radio) for the same art forms engaged 75% of the population.
- About 46% of US travelers include visiting a cultural institution or site as part of their vacation.
- America is considered a leader in many of the arts and the premier nation that nurtures creative exploration, drawing a number of artists to our shores. The value America places on innovation is reflected in the 550,000 copyrights for music, art manuscripts, and software registered per year.
- American openness and cultural diversity continue to produce internationally recognized, innovative artistic expressions such as jazz, American musical theater, and modern dance.
- Many American celebrities hail from the arts and entertainment field. Their performance histories and private lives dominate the media, popular magazines, and conversation.
- A handful of artists, both contemporary and deceased, in various artistic disciplines, command astronomical prices for their artworks.

Reflecting the scope of the American artistic enterprise, cultural policy issues are attracting greater attention and import both at home and abroad.

- Approximately 200 federal programs, 50 state arts agencies, and nearly 4,000

local arts agencies are engaged in dealing with cultural policy issues ranging from funding concerns to regulatory issues to public/private partnerships and investment incentives.

- Overall, public support for the arts (federal, state, local) continues to increase. In 1983, public support was approximately \$500 million; in 1998 it amounted to over \$1 billion.
- A growing number of organizations such as policy think tanks, foundations, service and advocacy organizations, and research institutions are also involved in cultural policy issues.
- The attention garnered by the culture wars far surpassed the minuscule NEA budget; it was a flash point for competing visions of America.
- So pervasive is the American movie industry abroad, that it is often accused of cultural imperialism prompting a number of western nations to convene in an effort to protect themselves from this perceived takeover.

Surrounded by this plethora of artistic activity, we fail to recognize the arts as an extraordinary and defining aspect of contemporary American life. Reflecting on our present-day artistic Renaissance, Tyler Cowen commented:

Mid to late twentieth century Western culture, although a favorite target of many critics, will go down in history as a fabulously creative and fertile epoch. The culture of our era has produced lasting achievements in cinema, rhythm, dance, graphic and commercial design, fashion, jazz, the proliferation of classical, early music, and original instrument recordings, the short story, Latin American

fiction, genre fiction, and the biography, to name but a few examples.

Field Building

Despite the extraordinary growth of American arts activity, their popular involvement, and domestic and international esteem, it appears that most Americans view the arts as marginal. As a consequence, educators and law makers often fail to recognize the pervasiveness of the arts in American life --their economic value, symbolic importance, and the benefits to individual communities, and personal well-being. The aesthetic dimension needs consciousness raising.

In many disparate corners of the arts community, the realization is taking hold that there is virtue and advantage to thinking in terms of an arts sector or arts industry. We have entered into a period of field building -- an accelerated and concerted thrust to define this field -- its boundaries and players; to document its facts and figures; to relate its importance to life and American society; and to institutionalize an informed arts policy in the polity.

One might suspect that the arts and cultural community is at a similar point to that of the environmental movement in the 1960s. The conservation movement, formed at the turn of the 20th century, was originally a collection of citizen groups dedicated to saving America's natural sites. Over time this movement became an identifiable proactive policy community concerned with a number of issues ranging from preserving national parklands, wildlife habitats, and ecological systems, to saving endangered species, maintaining clean air and water, and beautification of roads and highways.

Similarly, we are now engaged in constructing a new policy paradigm for the arts and culture. Once separated into distinct cultural issue areas, arts interest groups and disciplines are beginning to find kindredness and to rally around both the concept and potential of delineating an arts sector or industry. Changing social, economic and political circumstances and an evolving arts infrastructure, not simply controversy over the fate of the NEA, have brought us face to face with the necessity to redefine and update our aging arts and cultural policy paradigm.

These changing circumstances both spurred and shaped the 1997 American Assembly, "The Arts and the Public Purpose". The background materials and final report of that meeting together with the 1997 report of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, "Creative America," addressed issues related to the changing arts and cultural paradigm. Currently, the establishment of the Arts and Culture Center in Washington, DC, the growing interest among foundations in cultural policy, and the development of various academic programs and institutes concerned with cultural policy are all evidence of a dynamic field building.

Our Evolving Arts and Cultural Paradigm: Maps and Paradigms

What is a policy paradigm? We can think of it as a multi-dimensional map that organizes a complex of information into an understandable, coherent format. It does so by identifying key features and concerns and laying them out in relation to one another so that we can understand what is likely to be encountered between different points.

There are many different kinds of maps: geological maps that detail the

underlying strata; topographical maps that identify major ground features and landmarks; road maps that sketch out routes, distances, and road conditions; weather maps that track changing atmospheric conditions; and distribution maps that illustrate how the incidence and intensity of a specific commodity or characteristic varies from place to place. If all of these maps for a particular area were overlaid, they would provide rich and coherent information to assist potential travelers as well as regional planners. If the maps were accompanied by an explanation of how their relationship to and influence upon one another worked, then this collection of information would constitute the basic ingredients of an empirical theory explaining how existing features interrelate in a defined area of concern. While creating complete maps of any terrain may be an ideal, the attempt to do so is a necessary and justifiable effort for a specific policy area.

Policy, then, might be thought of as an empirical theory that has been politically validated and thus justifies collective action. Once enacted, policy sets into action a number of political processes and activities, and becomes fixed in particular organizational structures and administrative procedures. Over time, a policy construct acquires a normative quality in that it embodies a belief or preference about how things should be. These empirical and normative factors constitute a policy paradigm -- a generally accepted understanding of how select assumptions, conditions, values, interests, and processes are interrelated; what goals are desirable and feasible; and what outcomes are expected.

Accumulated change is normally slow, sometimes almost imperceptible, requiring a modest adjustment of empirical maps. On occasion, however, significant changes can

require the entire realignment of a conceptual paradigm. The last few years have been such an instance for the arts policy community; we are adrift between a dysfunctional old paradigm and a protean new paradigm. During such periods of change, it can be difficult to get our bearings and reorient our thinking. Yet, the effort must be made; identifying essential issues and elements helps us understand how the previous arts funding paradigm has fallen out of sync with current conditions, what form an emerging paradigm is likely to take, and where its construction could be assisted.

The Public Leveraging Arts Paradigm

In 1965, nearly two centuries after the birth of the nation, Congress created the first federal agency dedicated to the ongoing and direct support of the arts in U.S. history. This model, the Public Leveraging Arts policy (PLA), was centered on the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and entailed many aspects and assumptions.

The PLA paradigm was primarily concerned with professional nonprofit arts organizations; was organized, in the main, around discrete arts disciplines; and worked largely by awarding matching grants to nonprofit organizations and grants in aid to the states. The federal government according to this paradigm was to be responsive to the needs of the arts community and specific arts fields rather than to the larger populace, and to catalyze support from other patrons both local and private. Other issues such as regulations policy effecting the commercial arts were outside the boundaries of the PLA paradigm.

The arts were seen at that time as an asset for diplomacy and the political environment of the times trusted the capacity and accountability of government. Parity

with federal support for the sciences was claimed for the arts and humanities.

The PLA paradigm presumed that the so-called high arts were socially valuable and deserved assistance, as they could not be sustained by the marketplace. It regarded the popular arts as entertainment, commercially self-sufficient, and mundane, and therefore in need of being counter-balanced by government assistance to the more worthy, but financially precarious high arts. It also sought to provide greater individual access to the nonprofit arts, especially to those who were disadvantaged, whether by reason of geography, economic means, or cultural heritage. A supply-side strategy was adopted to address these twin problems -- the financial instability of nonprofit arts organizations and the inequitable access of the public to these arts. The strategy involved subsidizing an increase in nonprofit artistic production and distribution and encouraging greater financial contributions from private foundations and corporations as well as from state and local government. The strategy presumed an expanding base of artistic and managerial talent and a large, untapped populace that was likely to have the time, money, and interest needed to join the nonprofit arts audience if given the opportunity.

The arts funding paradigm was based on a belief in artistic excellence and that quality should be determined by professional peer panels entrusted with reviewing grant applications. In the name of artistic freedom, it assumed that creative artists and nonprofit arts organizations should enjoy considerable autonomy from government intrusion and, thus, that public funding judgments should be aesthetically based and not influenced by political, social, or ideological considerations.

In the thirty years of its dominance, the public leveraging policy succeeded in

three important regards: (1.) It expanded artistic access for citizens throughout the country and dramatically increased the number, variety, dispersion, and professionalism of nonprofit arts organizations. (2.) It cultivated both an inter-governmental and a mixed public-private financial support system for the nonprofit arts. (3.) It institutionalized the arts as an area of valid public policy concern at all levels of government. In realizing these accomplishments, the PLA policy paradigm significantly changed the public stature and face of the nonprofit arts in the United States.

Ingredients of a New Paradigm

Times change. During the reigning years of the PLA policy, especially in the past decade, many of its assumptions, conditions, and procedures have either changed or been challenged. Some of these changes were imperceptibly slow. Some related to specific paradigm elements (such as peer review) but not others (like mixed funding). Some were overt, as in the case of the culture wars. Yet cumulatively, time and circumstances have shifted the very foundations of federal arts policy.

Three new topological features presently seem to characterize the emerging cultural policy paradigm: (1.) Blurring and enlarging of the boundaries of inclusion and concern which, in turn, has led to a focus on redefining key policy terms and assumptions. (2.) The adoption of a systems approach rather than a focus on individual artists, specific arts organizations, particular disciplinary fields, or distinct cultural communities. (3.) The development of a more complex and diversified approach to all aspects of the policymaking process. This includes giving more explicit attention to the

public purposes of federal arts and cultural policies; developing more ongoing coalitions and advocacy strategies; and developing a repertoire of policy strategies and administrative mechanisms for effecting and supporting arts and cultural policy.

Blurring and Enlarging Boundaries of Inclusion

Significant tectonic shifts occurred within the arts themselves. The long-standing arts hierarchy lost its inviolable status. The evaluative distinction between the high and popular arts became blurred. Rather than being perceived as virtues, the high arts were characterized by some as elitist. The notion that we could objectively identify artistic excellence came to be thought of as discriminatory both by those within and outside the high arts. Although the popular arts were still criticized for a tendency to be common, vulgar, and violent, they were no longer dismissed as mere entertainment. American commercial arts had become an essential producer of local mass culture, a dynamic export industry, and a pervasive aspect of American life. Furthermore, entertainment often commingled with high art, blurring the boundaries between them.

Unlike the PLA paradigm, the current discussion is no longer exclusively focused on the professional, nonprofit arts. It has expanded to also include the commercial as well as the unincorporated (avocational, hobbies and community-based arts) – exploring the intersections between them as well as shared interests and concerns, programs, and goals. Crossovers, transfers, and collaborations (both actual and potential) among the nonprofit and commercial arts as well as between the unincorporated arts are proliferating and garnering attention.

Though policy concerns related to the nonprofit arts and commercial arts remain distinguishable, they have begun to overlap. Issues such as copyright, intellectual property, trade agreements, preservation and heritage increasingly affect both commercial and nonprofit arts. Both encountered controversy over content control and standards in the form of television rating systems, the V-chip, decency in programming on networks and public television, or the political correctness of certain museum exhibitions. Furthermore, the balance of public costs and benefits came under scrutiny with regard, for example, to broadcast spectrum allocation, public television funding and programming, and computer software marketing.

Recent regulatory changes are now affecting all the arts and arts-related enterprises. These include the first major reform of telecommunications policy in fifty years; an extension of copyright terms; antitrust action against Microsoft, mega-mergers in the entertainment field; a more entrepreneurial Corporation for Public Broadcasting; and a number of international trade agreements that affect global traffic in cultural goods, personnel, and services.

While it used to be customary to treat nonprofit issues such as arts funding, humanities support, and broadcast regulation as operating within separate policy arenas, the emerging paradigm seems to be based on the perception that each of these is part of a segmented but interconnected cultural policy framework. It is also now more generally recognized that policies that concern the arts and culture emanate from many federal departments and agencies operating in a variety of policy areas, such as education, taxes, communications, immigration, trade, charitable and business incentives, international

cultural exchanges, trade regulations, broadcast licenses, copyrights, and grants.

In sum, the new policy paradigm is broadening to encompass the high, popular, and unincorporated arts, whether nonprofit or commercial, and deepening to include a number of issues that touch upon the activities of many arts disciplines and are invested in many federal departments and agencies and levels of government.

Along with this widening of perspective comes a heightened awareness that the goals of arts policy are not confined to funding issues or to annual appropriations. Funding concerns become subservient to larger goals. Today, a different perspective animates arts policy discussions, one that focuses on how the arts can and do meet public purposes, the needs of the nation, and its citizens. The 1997 American Assembly, "The Arts and Public Purpose," identified four such purposes: (1) helping to define American identity, (2) contributing to the quality of life and to economic prosperity, (3) helping to form an educated and aware citizenry, and (4) enhancing individual life.

There is even some discussion that the term policy should be extended to cover the public goals of private, nonprofit institutions such as foundations, service and professional organizations, and arts and entertainment organizations. For example, the acquisition of the ABC television network by Disney recently gave rise to questions about how such business arrangements might affect freedom of the press; an unfavorable investigative story done by ABC about the Disney Corporation was squelched. In such a case, the policy decision of a private corporation has public implications.

Furthermore, it is argued that a more inclusive notion of policy would be justifiable because arts and cultural activity is predominantly a private sector

phenomenon. In addition, the NEA relies on nonprofit arts organizations to actually provide cultural activities for nontraditional audiences or arts educational programming for children. The agency may help fund such services but does not directly provide them.

The blurring and enlarging of many boundaries embodies reconsideration and reconfiguration of key values and goals with potentially profound implications for the policy topography and construction of public programs. For example, the core value of artistic excellence, originally a guiding principle for public subsidies, seems to be transforming into a focus on creativity. Artistic excellence was associated with elitism and tended to focus attention on artistic products; creativity, however, can more easily accommodate cultural pluralism and tends to focus attention on the artistic process.

The core value of artistic access seems to have migrated from a concern with unequal availability of the nonprofit arts based on geography and economic condition to one based on inclusion of a wide range of artistic expressions of multiculturalism. Thus, access is being transformed to a value that highlights multiple choices. Also, the concept of participation in the arts is changing from a presumption of passive spectatorship into a wider notion that includes active and interactive modes. It is expanding from being synonymous with audience attendance to encompass a broader range of artistic involvement including arts instruction, personal creative pursuits, media consumption, Internet usage, arts collecting, and volunteering.

Adopting A Systems Approach

This is perhaps a subtle yet potentially far-reaching aspect of the emerging cultural

policy paradigm. One might describe it as a shift in the unit of attention from the individual artist, a particular public art commission, a specific arts organization, a distinctive project, or a particular arts discipline to a reconceptualization of larger policy concerns that cut across and can relate to many of these entities. It could be argued that a systems perspective is a mark of maturity in the evolution of a policy or sector. Certainly, we can discuss a systems approach in cultural policy today in large part because the substantial infrastructure built during the last thirty years under the old arts funding paradigm now allows us to envision its greater potential.

Today, many nonprofit arts organizations are more financially sophisticated and sustainable, less threatened with insolvency than before, and Americans have more cultural opportunities. The successful expansion of artistic production and public access has diminished the necessity for public intervention in these regards. Similarly, the successful cultivation of a multifaceted support system for the arts has diminished the urgency for direct federal subsidy.

The old arts policy paradigm succeeded in establishing arts policy as a valid area of federal concern. The fact that arts policy survived the criticism and opposition of the past decade is itself a demonstration of the degree to which it has been legitimated in the federal arena. Indeed, the level of political attention directed to the arts and federal cultural policies far surpassed the federal financial commitment. A corollary was that this institutionalization of the arts policy-making system impeded its ability to adapt to changing circumstances including increased scrutiny of federal cultural agencies.

Although systems thinking is relatively new to arts and cultural policy, it is

common in other areas. For example, we generally understand what is meant by the term biomedical systems used in reference to the digestive or the nervous systems, even if we can't name the component parts and can't describe exactly how these systems function. Similarly, we comprehend that a regional transportation system includes many modes of travel and transport from personal autos to mass transit buses and subways, from railways and airways to shipping and trucking. We also understand that systems like a water system can serve various functions; for example, human water supply, agricultural uses, transportation, scenic and tourist attraction, and so on.

Systems thinking sensitizes us to the intersections between elements and thus helps us to develop empirical maps. Currently, systems thinking is developing with regard to the arts and culture precisely because of a growing awareness of the scope, intersections and linkages among nonprofit arts, entertainment, the unincorporated arts. Furthermore, a systems perspective can help identify weak and/or opportunistic points for policy intervention and begins to suggest possible options for the kind of intervention that might prove feasible and effective.

At present, we can identify five system functions that seem central to the operation of the arts. Broadly conceived, they are: creation, production and presentation, distribution and marketing, maintenance, and evaluation.

The scope and demand of adopting systems thinking into a new cultural policy paradigm would depend, in part, on how we define the boundaries of an arts sector or industry. If, indeed, the new policy paradigm expands to include broader artistic and cultural horizons, then the scope and complexity of a systems approach will be

considerably more extensive than at present, producing many new and important challenges.

The creative system involves identifying talented individuals and assembling synergistic teams; developing talent through education, apprenticeships, and on the job training; providing incentives and opportunities for creativity, such as artist residencies and sequential educational programs; linking creative output to production and distribution; and working to preserve the creative legacy of this generation for the future. Activities that contribute to these tasks take place within all the arts across the arts sector as well as within educational and other institutions, though unevenly and with different degrees of success.

Numerous public policies concerning matters ranging from copyright protections and tax incentives to fellowship grants and commissions affect the maintenance and enhancement of our creative artistic infrastructure. Together all this activity, in a variety of different arts practices, using a range of instruments and programs, constitutes the creative infrastructure of the arts in America. A systems perspective facilitates our ability to answer the questions of how we (as a nation) assist or hinder the creative process and how we might improve our creative infrastructure.

Although artistic creation is thought of as a solitary endeavor, it actually takes a bevy of people to bring an artwork to fruition and public appreciation. Thus, for many art forms, creation is an intrinsically collaborative venture. Though a particular individual may provide more of the creative spark, innovation in dance, opera, theater, film, and music generally requires a number of individuals to collaborate for an extended time period. The

creative process requires experimentation, revision, studio time and facilities to see or hear a production performed, and professional and audience feedback before it goes fully public.

Unlike professions such as medicine and law where the cumulative steps for professional growth are known and routinized, artistic career development often stops abruptly after formal schooling. The interim steps from student to master are dimly lit and erratically supported. For each of the arts, we know little about what pre-professional career supports are in place. This contrast between vocations is particularly striking regarding research, experimentation, and development possibilities. For medicine and law, opportunities and linkages are relatively well-known. The road to creative development in the arts is not well charted. We know little about the availability, sophistication, and effectiveness of resources for artists and artistic teams interested in creating new products. Without a clearer systems perspective, attention to enhancing outlets and opportunities that assist in creative development is likely to remain meager.

The NEA's "American Canvas" report touched on this phenomenon by noting some weak spots in the creative infrastructure: "...the diminution of places and spaces for composers to air new works beyond campus recitals, performances in alternative spaces, and independently produced CDs; helping a composer locate an ensemble to perform a new composition: establishing laboratories where musical theatre artists can find partners; assisting playwrights to locate theatre space, actors and mentors to workshop plays in process."

Obviously, this bottleneck in the creative infrastructure is not limited to the nonprofit arts. Cultural industries such as commercial films, the recording industry, theater, and

publishing (and probably other art forms), all express a concern for the high risk, low return for most new productions.

For example, historically only 20-25% of all theater pieces that preview on Broadway are successful. Furthermore, many of the hits of the 1990s have been English, Irish, and Canadian imports and many are revivals. The costs--and therefore the financial risks--of getting a new Broadway play up and running is about \$6 to \$9 million and for a musical it is \$11 to \$15 million. Producers are hesitant to finance new American productions because they are so risky. The theater industry is actively engaged in finding solutions to these problems, including pursuing joint ventures with nonprofit theater groups.

Similarly, of the 125 new American operas that premiered during the 1990s, only twelve have had a second production. The most frequently performed operas in any season are from accepted European canons. Yet both national and discipline statistics show musical theater and opera audiences have not only grown over the last decade but that their members express a desire to see more of both art forms than they presently do.

Clearly, the development process is a common problem among assorted artistic disciplines, both nonprofit and commercial. Insiders of each art form can offer a number of reasons why new productions are so difficult to achieve and sustain. A systems perspective helps us to learn from one another--about efforts to enhance the creative process in individual disciplines, about new pre-professional training programs, about new creative development models, about innovative financing methods and so forth.

The evaluation system seems to engage at least three components or subsystems: professional review, political oversight, and public opinion. All three of these

components have been operating for years at the NEA and other public arts agencies.

Under the old public leveraging paradigm, it was often assumed that the three evaluation components were, in large part, complimentary. A decade of controversy regarding federal arts support has revealed that each evaluation component has distinctive standards; that knowledge about one (public opinion) is only rudimentary; and that another (political oversight) is neither static nor merely a supportive formality. Nor do all three function in lockstep.

The case of the NEA illustrates the operation and interaction of all three evaluative components. The practice of professional peer review was highly developed both in terms of the decision-making procedures and accepted networks that existed within each program of the NEA. It was augmented by private juried selection procedures and assisted by service and professional associations in each art discipline. Now, however, peer review at the NEA has been cross-pollinated with political evaluative elements; laypersons have recently been included in peer review panels, and members of Congress on the National Council of the Arts. Indeed, as the NEA continues to evolve, some peer review functions may gravitate to the service and professional organizations.

As the old public leveraging paradigm stabilized, political oversight seemed to be predictable and ritualized. Annual appropriation and reauthorization hearings were, for the most part, friendly show-and-tell events in which members of the arts community and local supporters endorsed current policy, praised the work of the NEA, and argued for more resources in order to do more good work. In this context, the arts community and the NEA abjured the very idea that political concerns or conditions were legitimate

consideration for arts policy administrators. However, political controversies resulting from dramatic shifts in the partisan and ideological composition of Congress have resulted in troubled or delayed reauthorization and declining appropriations. They have vividly demonstrated that political evaluation is an inescapable fact in the life of a public agency. These conflicts over the NEA have clearly demonstrated that peer evaluation and political evaluation may employ different standards and reach different conclusions.

Public opinion -- the third evaluation component -- manifests itself in audience participation, representative democracy, and survey opinion. It interacts with both the peer review and the political evaluation components. During much of the old paradigm era, relatively little was known about public opinion and the arts, although marketing and information about audience behavior, preferences, and composition in general became increasingly more sophisticated. Major gaps still exist in what we know about public opinion regarding the arts, arts policy, and the attitudes and preferences of that part of the general public who are not arts participants. Judging from limited public opinion studies, it appears that over the last decade public knowledge of and support for arts policy has tended to be ambiguous, ambivalent, and quite malleable. Opinion is essentially divided among those who are intensely supportive, those who are intensely critical, and a large group for whom the issue is not particularly salient.

Finally, the maintenance system, which is the means by which a society sustains, encourages, and protects its artistic endeavors and heritage, might be thought of as being comprised of four components or subsystems: advocacy, preservation, financial support, and public policy, all of which are interrelated.

The advocacy component for the nonprofit arts evolved out of the effort to organize, develop, and support these arts forms, to foster intradisciplinary communication, to further professional development, and to mobilize political support for the NEA and its programs.

The commercial arts have lobbyists to protect and advance their interests. Given the increasing global reach of the entertainment industry, they have also become active players in the formulation of international trade agreements.

The preservation subsystem includes a variety of institutions such as museums, archives, historic preservation societies, and significant individuals such as folk art masters, collectors, entrepreneurs and conservators. It encompasses concern with artifacts, artworks, cultural traditions, historic sites and buildings, books, films, audio or video recordings, and documents.

The financial support system for the nonprofit arts involves federal, state, regional, and local public agencies, private foundations, corporate contributions, individual patrons, direct and indirect tax incentives, and revenue considerations for nonprofit arts organizations, all of which are interconnected in an interdependent, cross-leveraging web. The financial well-being of the commercial arts depends upon a complex weave of tax, legal, and trade regulations that affect market and production conditions as well as various local tax, zoning, and investment incentives.

Finally, the policy component has brought together organized arts interests from both nonprofit and commercial sectors, congressional proponents, public arts program administrators, and lobbyists, as well as intermittently-concerned presidential personnel

and assorted political allies from other policy areas. Legislation that impacts on arts business is closely watched and influenced by the media and entertainment industries. Until recently, nonprofit players had been quite adept at securing annual funding for the NEA. However, the nonprofit policy subsystem was not well-suited for dealing with sustained opposition to federal funding or with policy issues other than obtaining and distributing public patronage.

These four components, which were developed under the old paradigm, were seldom seen as interrelated parts of an integrated maintenance system. Examining them as parts of a system, however, we can see and address the importance of each component, tap the unrealized potential of each one, address and rectify the flaws, and focus on additional capacity-building for the arts sector.

Some maintenance resources are currently missing or inadequate. For example, a more effective maintenance system would require engaging policy intellectuals with diverse political viewpoints. It would be more active in identifying new policy issues, formulating policy alternatives, and devising methods for policy evaluation. To accomplish more expansive goals, the arts community must mature into a more sophisticated policy community; a task that while still in its infancy is currently well underway.

A New Approach to the Arts and Cultural Policy Process

Developing a more complex, diversified, and comprehensive approach to the policy making process is the third apparent ingredient of an emerging cultural policy

paradigm. Because of shifting paradigms, current concerns seem to emphasize what may be called the beginnings and ends of the policymaking process. That is, much debate and discussion focuses on the evaluation of old policies and programs and the identification of new issues and mechanisms for dealing with them. In the language of public policy, these are the agenda setting, issue defining, and option developing stages that occur at the beginning of the policymaking process, as well as evaluation and feedback that occur at its end.

While concern with these stages is a natural part of making policy, this focus marks a shift from what was the expected, standard practice during the heyday of the old arts funding paradigm. While a particular policy paradigm holds sway, attention is focused on the middle of the policymaking process; that is, on budgeting and program implementation. For the most part, policy attention is expended on securing more resources to support or augment variations on existing programs. Although new issues may arise and assert themselves while a paradigm is in place, they are treated within the context of an accepted set of issues and definitions, a continuing agenda, a stable set of policy actors, and implicit standards for evaluating how well the system is working.

After more than two decades of refining, adapting, and polishing the capacity of the old arts funding paradigm, the arts community was largely unprepared to deal with many new and insistent challenges.

The old paradigm assumed that potential audiences for the nonprofit arts were infinitely expandable. Today, this presumption is questioned in the face of intense competition for the time and money of cultural consumers across the arts, entertainment,

and leisure spectrum. Even as cultural opportunities expand, consumer taste preferences seem to be reconfiguring. Some participants are narrowing their choices. Others are participating in a wide range of arts activities. Still others are domesticating their consumption habits opting for at-home media participation rather than going to live performances and entertainment events. These taste shifts, coupled with years of inadequate in-school arts education, do not provide a common cultural literacy. Absent a familiarity with the high arts and their traditions, the nature of arts participation in the next generation remains unclear.

Another obvious challenge arose within the political environment. Although international affairs remain a concern, economic (rather than military and ideological) issues came to predominate following the end of the Cold War. Electoral shifts produced dramatic political changes. The 1994 election of the 104th Congress gave Republicans control of the House of Representatives for the first time in forty years. Nationally, domestic politics became more ideological, more aggressively partisan, and more polarized. Opposition to the expansive, welfare state basis of the PLA model was mainstreamed, eliminating or endangering many federal subsidies and entitlements. Republican control introduced new legislative oversight standards and expectations for many long-standing Federal programs and agencies, and prompted a move away from centralized federal leadership and toward decentralization of funding and program administration.

The country went through a two decade-long erosion of trust in the institutions of government, especially those at the federal level. The consequences of such distrust can

be seen in the demand for policy reform in welfare and education; for reinventing government (in part a concern with waste, fraud, and abuse); and an increased awareness of the unintended consequences of old policies such as welfare dependency, tax disincentives, environmental costs, and urban decay. In short, the assumption of programmatic positivism implicit to the formative era and the establishment of the federal arts funding policy paradigm shifted dramatically.

Calls for greater governmental accountability of arts funding proliferated, stoked by a polarized partisanship, a displacement of liberal dominance, and highly mobilized social conservatives. A very vocal and morally orthodox minority objected to what it saw as offensive, indecent, and even pornographic art. Governmental conservatives argued that there was no constitutional basis for a federal role in the arts. Fiscal conservatives protested against the affordability of federal arts subsidies. Aesthetic conservatives decried what they considered to be the populism and political correctness of federal cultural programs.

Until quite recently the NEA was myopic about the necessity of coping with changing political forces and criticism. They found themselves on the defensive, rather than anticipating and dealing with the multitude of new issues arising out of changing political, social, and technological conditions. They were primarily reactive rather than proactive. In contrast, many state and local arts agencies were both more politically adept and publicly persuasive. As a consequence, state and local arts agencies have, on the whole, rebounded from the controversies and recession of the early 1990s with increased financial and public support.

New approaches to policy process at all levels of government began to be tested. The recent shift from the middle to the ends of the policymaking process is the effort to see policy and policymaking process as complex and variegated, predicated on a longer perspective, and based on a systems approach. For example, rather than a reliance on variations of the matching grant as the policy tool of choice for nonprofit funding, there is an effort afoot to develop a repertoire of implementation devices that could assist arts and cultural activities, such as program-related investments, loans and underwriting funds, international trade and immigration agreements, copyright and spectrum auctions, and public trust funds.

Whereas arts funding policy was seen to be the province of the NEA, now, with a smaller budget and staff, the agency is shifting and widening its activities from leveraging and catalyzing other funding contributors to brokering policy, project ideas, and information, as well as helping to forge alliances between the arts and other communities of interest. Leveraging support has become more innovative at all levels of government. Communities are experimenting with a variety of funding devices from earmarking taxes and fees for the arts to searching internationally for models and examples of other revenue sources, and exploring the possibility of different kinds of federal assistance.

The stable set of political and institutional arrangements that characterized the old arts funding system is swiftly becoming more open, variable and fluid. New interest groups are asserting their right to participate. The system must now accommodate opponents, as well as advocates, growing and diverse interests and ideologies, artists and

analysts, and so forth. It engages the attention of numerous congressional committees as many executive agencies administer programs germane to the arts community. It remains to be seen in what varying and innovative ways these agencies will operate and interrelate in effecting arts and cultural programs.

Conclusion

A new arts and cultural policy community is being born. People and interests previously outside it are being seen as an inextricable part of it. At present, there is no current consensus as to what is included under the rubric “art.” We banter about undefined concepts such as an arts sector, arts industry, infrastructure, or ecology. We have only a vague sense of what is meant by the term “unincorporated” arts. Our systems approach is decidedly embryonic. Paradigm maps are concepts that we struggle to operationalize with clarity and utility. We still grope for ways to identify the public purposes of public art programs. But this is as it should be in the midst of a paradigm shift and a field-building effort.

Is this a justifiable re-conceptualization, a useful perspective, a better vantage point on the way things really work? So it appears, at least to those immersed in the public life of the arts in America. It remains to be seen what benefits and arrangements will result from the new paradigm and to what extent we can influence its composition for the betterment of the nation and its citizens.

Rethinking the role and relationship of the arts and the American polity is not an activity of a handful of self-interested arts professionals. It is predicated on the affirmative realization that the arts are essential because of their ability to bring

transcendence, utility, joy, escape, meaning, and imagination to human beings. Tracking and reconfiguring their social arrangements is not only justifiable, but also can be potentially rewarding.