

Korkor Amarteifio

World Summit panel discussion

Specialized funding for “other”, perpetuation of the ghetto or necessary for empowerment

When public funding agencies initiate policies to support artistic practices within marginalized or minority communities, are they creating a ghetto or are they empowering the artists in the community? The short answer to that is, it is not about receiving and spending that money and having somebody define how much you need, when you need it , how you use the money and for what it is used. Empowerment is about being placed in the position to influence the conditions attached to the grant and its usage as well as the policies from whence the grants emanate. Empowerment is about institutional policies ensuring that mainstream programming reflected and provided cultural diversity.

During In the 1980's I was a festival producer in Montreal. The festival was called Rythmes Du Monde/World Rhythms and brought to Canadian and North American audiences, the best in African, Caribbean and Latin American Music. After the festival folded, I worked at the Canada Council for the Arts, creating an equity office for minority and aboriginal artists. When I moved to Ghana, I was the director of programs for the National theater of Ghana and now the Associate Director of the Institute for Music and development. I have therefore lived and worked both in the art and funding communities and consequently my presentation is about these experiences.

According to the Department of Canadian heritage, approx. 200,000 immigrants a year from all parts of the globe continue to choose Canada. In 2006, 19.8 % of the population was born outside Canada. 73% of immigrants chose to live in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver which have become home to the largest concentration of Canadian artists and art organizations.

The contribution of the immigrant and first nation's communities to the transformation of Canadian artistic landscape and the development of new artistic forms is enormous.

In Canada, during the 1970s and early 1980s, artistic works from the 3rd world were promoted predominantly by Canadians of European stock. The efforts of the original artists and indigenous promoters to gain access to the mainstream culture were largely ignored. In view of this constraint, most of their major events were organized their events in church halls, church basements, community centers and school auditoria instead of at professional venues.

The funding Institutions that funded the arts had their own complexities and were not easily accessible to the minority communities. They did not operate at a level that created awareness of their existence to artists or art professionals in these communities. Consequently, the

culturally diverse communities were largely unaware of their mode of operation. The processes for making use of their facilities were complex and many applicants were routinely shifted from areas where their creativity will be enhanced and promoted. They were pushed into the Secretary of States, Department of Multiculturalism. At that time, people had the tendency to equate the department of Multiculturalism with folk or amateur art and it became an artistic ghetto for minority or culturally diverse artists. My first grant to set up the festival was awarded by this department. My second grant came from the Explorations program of the Canada Council for the Arts. In those days Explorations was one of the few ways for minorities to access Canada Council grants.

The Canada Council is the federal Government's chosen instrument to foster public enjoyment of the arts, expand existing audiences and create new audiences.

During the early 1990's the Canada Council was accused by the immigrant communities and the aboriginal communities that their cultural traditions, artistic forms and practices as well as their esthetic concerns were being systematically excluded from Council's policies and programs. Given their contribution to the Canadian economy and to the cultural fabric of the society they were no longer content to live with the disregard of their investment.

- The growth and development of the art institutions and groups in the Aboriginal and culturally diverse communities were seriously curtailed by lack of funding.
- program and assessment criteria at the Council did not take into consideration the unique nature of programs coming from the cultural traditions of minority communities and these were therefore equated with folk or amateur art.
- Language issues, representation on boards, advisories and assessment committees, as well as lack of personnel reflecting the cultural and racial diversity of the artistic community were also cited.

Within the Canada Council itself, staffs were becoming increasingly aware of the issues as they surfaced across disciplines and regions. A discussion paper was presented by the head of the Exploration department, indicating that Council needed to be more sensitive to the heterogeneous cultural complexity of the Canada society in its policies, programs and practices.

Within the artistic Communities, there was a significant mobilization not only in Canada but also in Britain where artists were bringing about changes and ensuring that cultural diversity remained on the agenda of funding bodies. The Canada Council recognized the need to change its policies and programs to provide access to minority artists. It set up the racial equality and 1st People's advisory committees, made up of senior artists from the various art disciplines and regions of Canada. These committees made recommendations to ensure that Council's

policies, programs and practices became appropriately responsive to the reality of Canadian artistic practices

An Equity coordinator was hired and her role was to empower both the communities and council to understand and deal with the changes that must occur for council's policies and programs to reflect the general overall artistic profile of Canada.

Strategies

Positioning cultural diversity as a priority within the organizational structure of the Council

- Long range plans made commitments to cultural diversity
- Multi year assessment and funding policy based on universality, peer assessment and flexibility to include qualifying organizations of all cultures
- Standing committees on race and 1st people established
- Research papers commissioned

Developing communication and outreach strategies to sensitize council and the communities about the issues and the gains made in the initiatives

- Communication section developed a more proactive community based approach to information dissemination to artists. This included in-depth information about application requirements, the jury assessment process, information about potential jurors
- Increased number of information sessions on council programs
- Work closely with artists and art organizations within the communities to ensure that they are better informed about Council and its works
- All publications begun to reflect Canada's cultural diversity
- Application forms and brochures were made more accessible to the culturally diverse communities
- Mailing list reviewed to be more strategic
- Reaching out to new communities

Creating dialogue among council, arts institutions and artists from the culturally diverse communities

- Advisory committees, jurors and the board became inclusive of artists and art professionals from the Aboriginal and culturally diverse communities
- conferences and staff sensitization workshops on the issue funded by various sections
- Discussions around cultural appropriation

Creating employment equity and an internship program to ensure the presence of people of color in the various sections of council

Today, 11% of the Council's work force is visible minorities, 6% aboriginal people which exceeds Canadian work force levels

Paradigm changes

Sectors started to change Definitions e.g. classical music became **classical music** of all world cultures

Today the Canada Council still recognizes the rich contribution of culturally diverse and aboriginal artists and art organizations to Canadian culture. The culturally diverse community has been identified as a strategic funding priority, along with youth and the aboriginal community.

It still has an equity office with close links with experienced members of the Canadian arts community who have critical understanding of matters relating to cultural diversity. The office collaborates with all divisions of Council to ensure that the principle of equity are reflected throughout the organization.

It has capacity building programs which have helped organizations in these communities grow artistically and administratively. Council also supports groups and artist from these communities to go to art markets so as to create greater awareness of Canadian aboriginal and culturally diverse artists.

The persistence of the artistic communities to ensure that cultural diversity remained on the agenda of the Canada Council; that it is a guaranteed part of the institutional structures; that artists and their audiences are aware of the issues and engage in it on a continuous basis necessitated these changes

The initiative was a transformative force, building partnerships between the aboriginal, the culturally diverse artistic communities and the staff, senior management and the board of directors of the Canada Council.

The Canadian government's approach to enhancing the artistic development of the culturally diverse communities was extended into the international arena and Canada was in the forefront in pursuing the International Instrument on Cultural diversity.

My experiences at the Canada Council were instrumental in informing my efforts as the Institute for Music and Development became involved in creating a fund for artists in Ghana.

In Ghana we did not have funds to support artistic creations and development and many artists seek employment outside the arts to live and continue to create works or fall on development partners for grants to build capacity, create works and exhibit them or travel to participate in conferences etc. Development partners have their own policies which are deeply embedded in their countries' cultural and development policies. Such policies and the artistic leanings of the heads of mission and cultural attaches determine the direction that the artistic and cultural development of the host country that they fund would go. In the event of changes in policies and or when ambassadors end their tours, local cultural projects and partnerships could come to an end or change. As a result, at the National Theater we produced Images of Denmark with the Danes; 300 years of Dutch/Ghana Diplomatic relationships with the Dutch; jazz ambassadors with the Americans, the Yosakoi festival with the Japanese among others.

However there is a growing recognition in Africa of the importance of the cultural sector and the creative industries as the new complementary avenues for promoting social and economic development. In response, countries such as Ghana, Mali, Nigeria and Senegal, have integrated culture into their Poverty Reduction Strategies. Ghana for instance has placed emphasis on development of the creative Industries as potential sources of employment generation, wealth creation and skill development. In the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy II and its successor (GPRS), the government committed to promote research into existing policies, legal and legislative framework in order to create, review and revise legislature and policies, providing the right legal and regulatory framework to develop and promote the creative Industries. For Human and institutional resource capacity building, government agreed to expand opportunities for specialists and stakeholders in the creative industries to acquire industry related knowledge and resources. As one of the indicators for Production and Gainful employment in the GPRS, the government agreed to create avenues for distribution, exhibitions, awards and live performances on national and international levels through the Embassies and missions abroad.

These provisions provided entry points for the private sector and other stakeholders to initiate programs that can help realize the broader objectives of promoting development in these areas. Civil society and other interested local and foreign institutions have taken up the challenge and have designed and implemented some programs in that regard.

Indeed as part of the activities to enhance the implementation of the GPRS and an African music network, the Institute for Music and Development (IMD) and the Danish Center for Culture and Development (DCCD) signed an agreement in 2006, to address some of the issues facing the music industry in Ghana. This is part of a larger Africa South-South culture program funded by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and implemented by DCCD in collaboration with 5 host organizations in Africa. The overall aim of the project is to strengthen the capacity

in the music industry in Ghana through micro-credit, management training for musicians and producers and establishment of rehearsal facilities.

The idea of a fund for the promotion and development of culture in Ghana is the result of further collaboration between the Institute for Music and Development, the Danish Centre for Culture and Development in Copenhagen, and the Royal Danish Embassy in Ghana. It was the first attempt in Ghana at establishing a fund specifically managed and directed by Ghanaian artists and art professionals and aimed at support to contemporary artists for the creative value chain in Ghana as well as to cultural exchange between Ghana and the country of origin of the development assistance. Hence the uniqueness and significant place of the Ghana Cultural Fund (GCF) in Ghana's overall development.

The fund is demand driven, based on the expressed needs of the Ghanaian artists, arts professionals and institutions and has two calls for application a year. Ghanaians dominate the structure of the fund and share fully in the decision-making processes of managing the fund through peer review committees and the board. The administration of the Fund is contracted to a Ghanaian non-profit, non-governmental organization, the Institute for Music and Development.

Media announcements and the grant website provide information for artists to apply to the fund and the application procedure is simple.

In the past three years of its existence, the fund has supported 46 projects ranging from documentation and preservation of historical records; promotion of artistic and cultural knowledge; improving the library capacity of schools; research; Equipment/instruments acquisition; performances; production, promotion and exhibition of films, music and the visual arts including the use of waste material to create art.

The GCF has made impact on the work of the individual beneficiaries, has boosted morale and rekindled creative energies to keep going on with greater optimism. It has also created new meaning and dimension to the cultural development in Ghana. The fund enabled many beneficiaries to complete projects that otherwise would have taken a much longer time to finish, or would have been halted halfway. It enabled others to turn ideas they had dreamed of and planned for a long time into feasible projects.

It supported training institutions to acquire the logistics necessary to facilitate their programs and to achieve their mandates. On a broader community or national scale, the Fund has given voice to artists to articulate their work and has helped raise awareness of the direct linkage between art and fundamental environmental and existential questions confronting various communities. The majority of the projects supported address, or have elements that support preservation of artistic products or performances. Some make major contributions to

retrieving and documenting (film, photography, writing) historical material that would otherwise become extinct. Nearly all projects make a direct or long-term contribution to the advancement of knowledge. There have been those that have generated important ripple effects with positive national impact such as a project that would distribute a three-volume book on Danish-Ghana historical experiences. This project succeeded in enticing the Ghana government (the Ministry of Education) to make contributions to expand the numbers of beneficiaries to include more schools that would receive copies of the books.

The fund, even though quite young, has achieved a lot in the artistic communities but there are challenges. In order to make the fund produce maximum results, it was found necessary to give more support to senior artists and applicants with a track record of producing results. As a result, at the initial stages experimental projects and applicants with little or no record of achievement were less favored and attempts are now being made to include these projects by inviting younger and more experimental artists as part of the juries and the board. The sustainability of the fund in the event of the departure of the current ambassador, its expansion and ensuring its continuous development and promotion of the sector are now the most critical question.