Cultural Organizations as Platforms for Civic Engagement

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Abstract

Cultural Organizations as Platforms for Civic Engagement research capstone examines the contemporary theories, rationales and practices in cultural programming at regional cultural organizations that generate civic engagement, public participation and community-based representations. The questions asked in this study are: How do cultural organizations, such as regional cultural museums and public folklore institutions develop cultural programming in order to generate public participation and civic engagement? How can cultural community organizations be placed as public participation platforms? What are some alternative strategies these organizations bring into the public participation strategies? How does cultural heritage and identity become assets for inclusion in the public participation process?

While the literature written from the perspective of the participating cultural groups is scarce, there is a very large body of literature accounting for the process development and effectiveness of the different levels of community participation during the initiatives' design coming from cultural studies and to some extent from the public sector. These accounts give the research a roadmap for the analysis of the current practices and tools available for community members to participate in creating collaborative initiatives for representation and public participation through the cultural organizations.

Keywords:

Public Participation, Civic Engagement, Collaborative Initiatives, Cultural Programming, Cultural Groups, Cultural Organization, Cultural Heritage, Community Representation, Cultural Democracy.

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Chapter 1: Introduction & Background

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

The aim of this research capstone is to analyze through an extensive scholarly literature review, the contemporary theories, rationales and practices in cultural programming at specific regional arts and culture organizations, in order to generate civic engagement, public participation and community-based representations. Furthermore, the research will examine the relationship of cultural organizations with their communities and how these relationships can foster these communities' respective identities. Building from an analysis of community engagement tools, this research capstone project focuses on the role of cultural organizations, such as regional cultural museums and folklore institutions, that foster diverse local cultural traditions, arts and history in creating programs addressing opportunities for community empowerment and representation, and possible public participation. Thus, the study examines how community organizations within the arts and culture sector serve as vehicles for community engagement, and how they can become public participation platforms. Additionally, this research examines how cultural programing can be used to lead initiatives to build inclusive community participation and representation of specific cultural groups within the larger community. These initiatives have the potential to inspire collaborations to generate public participation and provide alternative tools to the public sector to develop more inclusive civic engagement.

Recurrent themes and concepts are defined and redefined through out the study. These concepts support the foundation for the development of cultural programs and

the level of relevancy of cultural organization within their communities. Concepts such as cultural identity, interpretation of regional place, representation and heritage create the base and framework for these cultural programs. Definitions and roles of these concepts in regards of cultural programs are given later on and through out the research capstone. Finally, the research is informed by the course work completed at *PPPM 452/552: Public Participation in Diverse Communities* and *AAD 410/510 Public Folklore and Cultural Programming*.

The study provides a historical survey of the development of cultural organizations, building a context for these institutions within their communities. This historical approach enhances the analysis of how the public participation strategies of the public sector can be enhanced in a creative manner when approached with an understanding of the cultural history, identity and representation of communities. The study is complemented by a web-based document analysis, survey of programs and examples taken from current practitioners in the public sector and cultural programming.

Thus, the questions asked in this study are: How can cultural community organizations become public participation platforms? What are some alternative strategies these organizations can bring to public participation strategies? How do cultural heritage and identity become assets for inclusion in the public participation process? How do cultural organizations create inclusive cultural programming? One main focus of this research is to place the alternative platforms of civic engagement provided by cultural organizations, as a tool for diverse communities to generate community engagement, within spaces where multiple voices are present, represented and included in the processes that would directly affect their present and future. Thus,

cultural organizations that have reached various levels of relevancy to their communities can become places for dialogue and platforms for public participation and engagement for diverse communities, who might not have other outlets of representation and engagement in the more traditional public participation structures.

PROBLEM STATEMENT & SIGNIFICANCE

In a diverse society such as the pluralistic communities of vast areas of the United States (US), it is important to create spaces where multiple voices are present, represented and included in the processes that directly affect their communities. These multiple voices, coming from diverse communities, need to be understood from the cultural and historical background of each group, and they need to be offered the opportunity for public participation in a manner that meets their communities' needs, concerns and assets. Thus, regional cultural organizations can become places for dialogue and platforms of public participation and engagement for diverse communities. Furthermore, these institutions have the opportunity of representing and including their communities in authentic ways, which includes and validates cultural background and history. As found in the literature review, issues of representation and interpretation have improved through institutional paradigm shifts where the cultural institutions are working with the community as collaborators in the development of projects (Simpson, 2001), and in this manner furthering the possibilities for individuals to engage in public participation and dialogues of community issues.

Although, these cultural organizations' community collaborations are in many cases unique to the particular cultures of the institutions and communities (Harrison,

2005), these collaborative projects can become instruments for broader public participation and civic engagement by providing tools and techniques of community self-representation of the particular cultural groups to the larger community. Thus, regional cultural organizations and their communities become pivotal in the public participation process. What remains to be explored is the readiness to share collaboration processes and creative civic engagement techniques that can overlap with the community's needs, an authentic community representation and a voice in the larger realm of public participation. Hence, these collaborations will yield an improvement of the relationships between communities and their cultural organizations, in addition to broadening the collective effort to include civic engagement and public participation from multiple communities, and adding diverse voices in building past, present, and future of our broad spectrum of cultural histories in our communities.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The United States has been built by a constant influx of different cultural groups settling in various places. These cultural groups are composed of self-identified, ethnic, and association groups. They shape their environment, culture and social interactions in different regions making each environment distinct, which should lead to the development of regional institutions with goals to serve and include the voices of the local communities. From these institutions, regional cultural organizations emerge with the potential to be crucial agents for community involvement in the decision making and public participation, starting from representational cultural programming. However, it is important to understand how the cultural organizations have developed in order to

contextualize these institutions and their community relevancy and the importance of their programming. Additionally, these institutions provide alternative strategies for the public participation process. Public participation should incorporate the inclusion of those individuals affected by decision-making processes in order to better meet the communities' needs. Thus, it is here where cultural institutions, and their cultural program development, play a role for community inclusion and empowerment, particularly the inclusion of those who might have been marginalized by more traditional mechanisms of engagement or representation.

Organizations, such as cultural museums and folklore institutions, are experiencing a dynamic paradigm shift from the one-sided structure of the late 18th and 19th century Western colonialist model to a more post-colonialist paradigm, which mirrors the shift in the public participation field as understood by the government sector, and create a natural opportunity for collaboration between cultural and public sectors. These shifts break down power dynamics, creating opportunities for alternative and inclusive participation process and authentic multi-directional flow of dialogue, collaboration and civic engagement. This research capstone looks at the role of cultural institutions in the communities they serve, and how the dynamic is shifting between these two groups. This shift of the one-dimensional relationship that cultural organizations have had with their community when developing cultural programming has perpetuated a top-down model of program development and now is driven by new ethical and theoretical attitudes in cultural sector as well as the public participation sector. These current frameworks show the need for a collaborative process between

cultural institutions, decision -makers and community members to create authentic representations of cultural objects, histories, stories, arts and identity.

Corrine Perkin (2009) in the article *Beyond the rhetoric: negotiating the politics and realizing the potential of community-driven heritage engagement*, shows how these cultural organizations are described as vehicles for social cohesion aiming for social benefits, such as contrasting poverty and inequality (p.109). Perkin's framework positions cultural organizations, particularly cultural museums and heritage institutions, as agents for change and engagement. In addition, the author Kylie Message's (2007) article shows how cultural institutions can be seen as "open and inclusive public space that encourage debate about what constitutes citizenship in postcolonial multicultural societies" (p. 236). Subsequently, after placing the cultural organizations within the scope of the research, they and their communities' traditional backgrounds will be positioned. These communities have power that comes from their characteristic and inherent ability to assess their own needs for space and representation.

Hence, the exhibits and programs developed within the cultural organizations can serve both the community's and the organization's goals. Moreover, communities participating in the representation initiatives and programming are responding to the external forces that historically have limited their participation and representation. Therefore, their participation at the cultural organizations' programs promotes self-worth and the dialogue as vibrant and active members of the larger community. While the literature written from the perspective of the participating cultural groups is scarce, there is a large body of literature accounting for the process development and effectiveness of the different levels of community participation within the cultural organizations. These

accounts provide a roadmap of the current practices in community-based program development and an analysis of the roles and tools available for community members to participate in creating collaborative initiatives for representation and public participation in the cultural organizations,

Additionally, the current collaborative model of cultural organizations paves the road for crafting alternative participatory tools, tools that can be incorporated in the public participation of the larger community to reach a broad range of community governance. By adding collaborative and participatory initiatives, a space is created where multiple voices and interpretations are welcomed, enhancing the shift in power dynamics within a community, and encourages individuals to engage in community public participation. Finally, the outcomes of collaborative strategies used within cultural organizations with pluralistic communities complements the cultural organizations' mission to establish themselves as pivotal arenas for the larger public participation dialogue and processes.
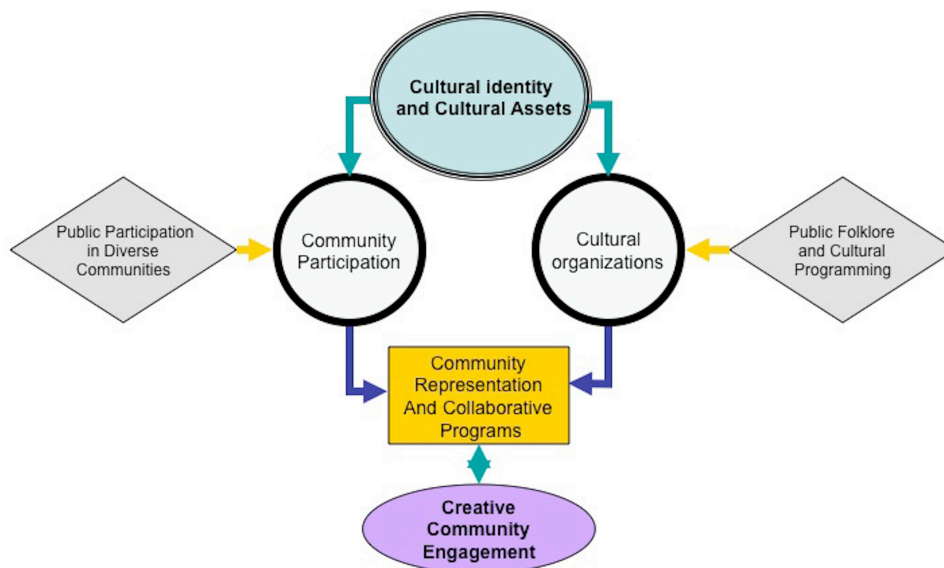

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Chapter 2: Research Design

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this research capstone I approached the research from a qualitative methodology and placed myself as an interpretivist and social constructivist researcher to examine my findings. The purpose of this study is to understand how collaboration practices between cultural organizations and their communities generate programs that foster civic engagement and representation. The study focuses on the tools and initiatives that cultural organizations design around community cultural assets in order to reach out beyond the institutions' walls, and bring diverse voices into the public discourse and decision-making affecting specific communities. The goal of this research capstone project is to record, illustrate and analyze the strategies of cultural organizations creating collaborative cultural programming and bringing alternatives that include multiple voices in public participation dialogues.

This study is informed by the theoretical framework of cultural programming and public participation through the reading analysis of the selected capstone courses, PPPM 452/552 Public Participation for Diverse Communities and AAD 410/510 Public Folklore and Cultural Programming. The concepts explored in both fields are complemented by the exploration of community organizations and practitioners in the development of programs stimulating public participation and community empowerment.

In order to best answer the study's inquiries it is necessary to determine the language and terminology used throughout the research. Such terms and key words include in this research are:

- **Public Participation:** The process by which public concerns, needs, and values are incorporated into the decision making process. It is a two way communication and interaction, with the overall goal of the better decisions that are supported by the public (Creighton, 2005)

- **Civic Engagement:** The American Psychological Association definition is: "individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern. Civic engagement can take many forms, from individual voluntarism to organizational involvement to electoral participation. It can include efforts to directly address an issue, work with others in a community to solve a problem or interact with the institutions of representative democracy. Civic engagement encompasses a range of specific activities such as working in a soup kitchen, serving on a neighborhood association, writing a letter to an elected official or voting. Indeed, an underlying principal of our approach is that an engaged citizen should have the ability, agency and opportunity to move comfortably among these various types of civic acts. (www.apa.org)

- **Advocacy:** Working towards creating a dialogue in favor of a particular community issue, or the community itself. Raising awareness of community issues in the public discourse, through dialogue, events, representations and interpretations.

- **Representation:** The process of an individual or community generating their own life-narratives and interpretations of the world, and describing their particular placement within that world.

- **Identity**: Construct of who an individual or community is, based on external

factors such as cultural heritage and life experiences, which indicate who he/she was, is and will be.

- **Cultural Groups:** Communities and groups of people sharing similar cultural determinants such as geographic delimitations, interests, common historical pasts, cultural heritage, and/or ethnicity.

- **Cultural Organization**: A public or private non-profit organization that supports the dissemination, collection, preservation, promotion and creation of cultural heritage, arts, and special cultural interests of specific groups.

- **Cultural Assets**: Skills, interests, behaviors, spiritual values and any material or immaterial aspect that determines the identity of a community (Borrup, 2009).

- **Collaboration:** Intentional work between groups from different backgrounds to reach common goals that are mutually beneficial.

Limitations and Delimitations:

In order to increase the validity and trustworthiness of this research I have determined preliminary limitations and delimitations to the study. These delimitations and limitations build the feasibility of the proposed research. This research is focused on examining the literature covering topics of public program development, the analysis of strategies to create relevant cultural programs at organizations that will foster public participation and civic engagement, and how public participation concepts are applied in the development of these programs or presented as results of the programs. In addition to examining a body of literature, this research looks at examples of cultural programs working in a range of fields from cultural heritage to urban planning, in order to illustrate

and evaluate the relationship of art and culture as a tool for civic engagement. Furthermore, in this study I am not including any considerations of possible shifts in funding structures that might result from accommodating more collaborative initiatives at the cultural organization and in the public sector. Additionally, the shifts in institutional structures, such as staffing and facilities are only briefly described in this study just to illustrate the dynamic environments when incorporating inclusive and collaborative initiatives. These delimitations are defined by the academic examination done in both courses, Public Participation for Diverse Communities and Public Folklore and Cultural Programming.

RESEARCHER ROLE

My professional experience within different cultural organizations and advocacy groups, in addition to my personal interests of community representation informs me as a researcher through out the study. Nonetheless, the outcomes given in the study come from the understanding that there are multiple goals in the design of cultural programming within particular cultural organizations; and that civic engagement, public participation and advocacy, as contended as they might be, are not always intended organizational goals but can appear as byproducts of the nature of cultural programming. However, the focus of this study are organizations that are intentionally seeking advocacy roles and goals; and the examination of the possibility of regional organizations drafting their missions and visions toward the fostering of civic engagement.

Thus, my position in this research, as a practitioner and advocate, leads me to

pose the question of how are cultural organizations building their community relevance and how can cultural community organizations be placed as public participation platforms through programming? There are secondary questions brought up throughout the study, such as: What are some alternative strategies these organizations bring into civic engagement process? How do cultural heritage and identity become assets for inclusion in the public participation process?

DATA COLLECTION:

Public Participation in Diverse Communities:

During the Winter 2013 term the PPPM 452/552 Public Participation in Diverse Communities class visited 9 organizations in the Portland-Salem-Eugene area. As stated in the class syllabus "this public engagement course exposes students to community engagement strategies and tools for encouraging public participation in low-income and ethnically diverse communities. The course examines key theories in public participation and traces the history of public engagement between planning institutions and underserved communities. Students will explore issues of public participation in this field experience course by speaking to practitioners dealing with issues of Latino immigrant integration" (Sandoval, 2011, p.1). This course focused on urban planning discourses but allowed my study to explore how principles in that field could be translated into cultural organizations efforts for public participation.

The practitioners who shared their experiences with us belonged to organizations that ranged from the public school sector to organic gardening and farming for Latino communities. Each organization has specific services and programs to offer to their

constituencies. Such programs included dual-language school programs in the public school system, advocacy campaigns for migrant laborers' rights, programs for secure food sources through organic farming, and healthcare services for farmworkers. The organizations visited during my participation in this class were: The Woodburn School District (Woodburn, OR), City Hall of Woodburn, PCUN (Woodburn, OR), South Meadows Middle School (Hillsboro, OR), Salud Clinica (Tualaty, OR), Martin Luther King, Jr. Worker Center (Portland, OR), CAUSA (Salem, OR), Downtown Languages (Springfield, OR), and Huerto de la Familia (Eugene, OR).

This course provided my study a large body of literature discussing theories of public participation strategies in the public planning sector. Analyzing this literature led me to examine the discourse in current literature about alternatives and changes in approaches and paradigms in the field. I was able to relate this theory to real-life stories shared by the practitioners at the different organizations visited. This interaction allowed me to start framing a context for my research capstone.

Public Folklore and Cultural Programming

During Spring 2013 term the AAD 410/510 Public Folklore and Cultural Programing course provided literature "exploring practice and theory related to arts and cultural programming in the public sector," with a primary focus "on the intellectual history of public folklore, especially its intersection with the field of community arts (Fenn, 2011, p. 1). The course was supported by talks and presentation of practitioners, who brought up different issues that cultural programmers (folklorists, museum specialists, community arts managers, or arts advocates) face everyday in the arts and

cultural sector. The cultural programming theory covered in the class was complemented by a project development group activity, where theory learned and the enquiry of cultural programmers' skills intersected. This project involved the assessment of how the cultural program been developed will fulfill community needs. Additionally, the project asked of each student to asses his/her skills as to determine what aspects of the program development they could contribute. Program development theories about project planning, project design and determining timelines, were able to be explored through this activity.

This course provided my research capstone with important literature encompassing the field of public folklore and the general arts and cultural programming sector. This created a framework for dialogue about cultural programming related to community identity, cultural heritage and community-based assets. These issues are central in the further discussion of my research capstone, and are supported by the examination of practical aspects and the strategies used in cultural programming. Thus, the Public Folklore and Cultural Programming course provided this study with a large body of literature about the intersection between the culture and public folklore discipline and the adaptation that organizations and practitioners make to provide relevant programing to their communities.

Literature Review

Photo by Maya Muñoz-Tobón 2012

Chapter 3: Role of Cultural Institutions

While cultural organizations may play different roles within their communities, it is important for these institutions' to reflect on the intentions of the organizations' envisioned outcomes of their programs and initiatives and the participants' experiences. This study examines the capacity of cultural organizations to cultivate their role as advocates, mediators, agents for change and "socio-cultural animators". The organizational role as advocates of local communities and constituencies, is particularly important when the organizations work with diverse communities, especially communities with minimum channels of representation and participation, such as native communities, immigrant communities, and communities of color.

First, it is important to revisit the definition of what a cultural organization is within the scope of this study. The term cultural organization is used to refer to public and non-profit institutions working regionally and locally in providing and creating spaces for community cultural representation. Cultural institutions as examined in this research are places where dialogues of inclusion, cultural heritage, representation, participation, and identity cohesion occur. Local organizations working with arts and cultural assets as means of community representations include community centers, folklore institutions, cultural centers and cultural museums. They can become part of the infrastructure bringing alternative platforms for community engagement and public participation. In order to determine the institutions' community relevancy it is important to understand the context in which they were created and their existing dynamics with their communities

As Gail Anderson (2004, 2012) describes in *Reinventing the Museum: Historical and contemporary perspectives of the paradigm shift,* cultural institutions, in particular cultural museums, have been going through challenging processes to assert themselves as meaningful institutions in their communities. These processes are "internal and external- that is, given the external environment and contemporary issues (external) and the museum's capabilities and available resources (internal)" (2004, p. 9). Thus, the rationale and goals of the programs created within these institutions are responding to local and/or regional needs. Some of these goals present advocacy aspects, cultural continuity concerns, and consciousness raising. Whether the organization is raising consciousness of issues in pluralistic communities or sustaining traditional arts, these initiatives serve as opportunities to enhance strategies for public participation at local and regional levels. These initiatives become a primary tool for cultural organizations to build their significance in their communities and place themselves as facilitators for representation, interpretation, engagement, and empowerment. Cultural institutions pose a social relevancy, when they can "contribute to the understanding or resolution of issues and problems and can act in good faith" (Freed, 1991, p.67). This social positioning is evident in the planning of the organizations' programs, and how they bring inclusive spaces for communities to present their perspectives on particular issues, and in engaging and activating individuals.

There are two types of organizations that by the nature of their work become platforms for inclusion and representation of communities. They are cultural museums and public folklore organizations. Their roles are examples of cultural institutions where

cultural heritage, community identity and representation are the main aim for program development. These two types of organizations are defined broadly in this study and their programming is examined from how components of civic engagement and goals for larger public participation are present. Cultural museums and public folklore organizations are building strategies for public engagement and participation beyond their institutions' walls, and at the same time they are expanding their relevancy in the community by creating collaborative initiatives with community participants. However, it is not expected for all cultural museums or folklore organizations to develop programming around issues of advocacy and civic engagement. As these organizations are described and contextualized in later sections of this paper, the emphasis of this research capstone is on how programs incorporate cultural assets and community input from their communities as tools of inclusion and participation.

CULTURAL MUSEUM

Cultural museums in the United States and the Americas come from a Westernized background that has historically created one-sided representations and interpretations of the cultural groups. This power dynamic comes from the Western colonialist model of the late 18th and 19th centuries that gave birth to institutions looking at the "other" as different and a source of further examination (Davis, 1999). Cultural museums' historical development is closely related to the private interest of privileged groups who collected objects to satisfy personal curiosity about "otherness." These collections became public, and a systematic classification and interpretation of the world was established by an elite group, reflecting "the heritage of bourgeois and aristocratic

culture to the exclusion of popular or folk culture" (Cameron, 1971, p. 53). Such phenomenon lead to what is described as museums as temples and shrines that created a one-sided normalization of reality and the world (Cameron, 1971, p. 59).

This historical position of cultural museums generates immense challenges for these organizations to place themselves as relevant in their communities, especially when looking to play an important role of inclusiveness of pluralistic voices. However, such definitions have been revised in the 20th and 21st centuries, and cultural museums have worked on advancing their missions and community roles. The modern museum today is defined by its nature and activities. Theodore Low was already pointing out in 1942 when he recognized these cultural organizations are now defined by their functions or phases of activity. As the author describes, museums have the functions of: preservation, transmitting knowledge through objects, and enhancing people's life through knowledge. These functions have been hierarchized through out history, usually placing the preservation and interpretation of objects as the principal aspects of museums' role. However, the function of transmitting knowledge for the betterment of the communities, which is designated through the education division of the institution, has been strongly incorporated in American museum since the late 1940s. Theodore Low (1942) started the dialogue about how the cultural museum sector has been challenged to expand their role as facilitators, and bringing education to the public, and how the main goal of such institutions should target the internal infrastructures to sustain overarching educational programs (p. 36-39).

Consequently, when cultural museums' educational goals inform their programs, programming concerned with issues of inclusion, participation and advocacy is created.

Opportunities to outreach and create collaborative initiatives with community organizations expand the museums' role and practice within the social inclusion sphere. So institutions found that by adjusting their power dynamic with their immediate communities they were bringing more relevancy to their existence and the institutions' programs. As stated by Jonathan Paquette (2011) "for cultural organizations, the postcolonial turn in cultural governance involves dealing with the colonial past and moving forward by questioning the normative principles and the knowledge base that structures and shapes the strategies of State intervention in the field of culture" (p. 128). In other words, cultural organizations and specifically cultural museums, while moving farther away from colonialists' paradigms and mindsets, were approaching a sense of social responsibility and mission towards the communities interpreted and represented within their programs. Additionally, this shift allows cultural organizations to question and explore new structures of governance, where the elitist views of boards of trustees and other leading positions is abandoned for a more inclusive and diverse governance body. The directing and governing bodies work from a respect for the organization's mission and vision, understanding that they are shaping that social responsibility of the organization towards their community (Paquette, 2011, p.134 - 135).

As author Stephen E. Weil describes in the article "From Being About Something to Being for Somebody: the ongoing transformation of the American Museum" the cultural museum has gone through a shift of collection-based organizations to a more educationally focused one, with a public service orientation. Traditional activities of museums such as preservation, interpretation and scholarly research then become tools for reaching out to an external goal beyond the museum's walls. As Weil points out

some museum workers see these institutions as "value-neutral technolog [ies]" and "highly adaptable instrument that can be employed for a wide range of purposes." (p.171).

Such adaptability is seen by the organizations belonging to The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (www.sitesofconscience.org), which serves as a networking facilitator for international organizations working on regional historical sites, where dialogues about "past struggles for justice and addressing their contemporary legacies" occur. The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC) is an agency located in New York City, providing funding and technical support for organizations around the world that are working for community participation and dialogues of representation beyond the organizations' walls. The criteria for organizations to belong to the ICSC network are: interpret history through historic sites; engage in programs that stimulate dialogue on pressing social issues; promote humanitarian and democratic values as a primary function; and share opportunities for public involvement in issues raised at the site. The network is composed mainly by regional, local, or public cultural museums throughout the world. Some examples of these museums in the United States are the Museum of Tolerance, Arizona State Museum, National Hispanic Cultural Center, Museum of International Folk Art, New Mexico History Museum, and Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation[1].

These organizations listed above have been working with their local communities to create spaces for safe dialogues about complex issues such as immigration. Their proximity to the USA/Mexico border, and their large immigrant constituency, makes

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[1] Please see Appendix A for a full list of organizations mentioned in this study.

these organizations to adopt a specific role within their communities. These organizations' programs "draw explicit connections between past and present; foster dialogue among diverse stakeholders; and open avenues for citizen participation in other human rights or transitional justice efforts." (www.sitesofconscience.org). Therefore, these cultural organizations are using historical events and cultural heritage as assets to include the communities they represent as active participants of their social and cultural environment. While not all the programs in the organizations listed above exclusively incorporate community collaborative strategies, they are focusing on the educational goals of bridging pluralistic voices in their communities and making pressing issues be part of the discourses between community members inside their organizations' walls; participants ranging from law enforcement officers to educators come together since they are who can bring up discussions of community issues in the public sphere.

Moreover, this educational approach within cultural programming at the cultural museums allows for multiple voices from participants to come together and learn from their differences and find common grounds. At the same time, these programs are reflecting the deliberated decision for the museums to take on the role of community advocates by bringing forward issues affecting historically underrepresented and marginalized communities, and opening dialogues in the larger public arenas. While not all the programs are developed from a community collaborative process, these cultural programs present a collaborative and participatory process of audience participation. Their audiences are members of regional communities, who some might belong to the communities been represented and interpreted in the cultural museums. Thus, this

brings up concepts of how cultural museums work in participatory culture, creating exhibits and programs for community involvement. When this participatory programming exists the community members and constituents of the cultural organization find the institution as a place for sharing, connection and for dialogue. As author Nina Simon (2010) describes throughout her book *The Participatory Museum,* such inviting museum programs encourage institutional goals to place these institutions as relevant parts of community members' lives, where is safe to construct their own meaning of their experiences and then articulate it beyond the museums' walls. Strategies of collaboration, participations and engagement are examined in a later section of the study. These collaborations also include institutional collaboration, where internal and interdependent collaborations with different types of organizations are essential for extending the placement of cultural organizations as a starting point in the larger public participation.

PUBLIC FOLKLORE ORGANIZATIONS

Public folklore organizations are working under similar historical and social frameworks of cultural museums, where power dynamics between the communities and institutions have been changing towards more collaborative models. First it is important to understand that different types of art and culture organizations are doing work that fits into what is considered public folklore. Thus, when referring to public folklore institutions in this study, I am referring to the nature of specific programs and/or organizations, along with more formal folklore institutions such as state folklore agencies and cultural heritage organizations. Similarly to the cultural museums described earlier, public

folklore institutions have the potential to become facilitators in dialogues of representation and community participation. The cultural and community celebratory nature of public folklore allows communities to explore their strengths and resources to bring in their own voices in the participation process.

Folklore as a discipline in the United States was professionalized in the "period between the end of World War II and the early 1960's," when "the number of university courses grew rapidly, folklore graduate programs were established, and efforts intensified to establish a unified body of theory for folklore" (Baron, 2007, 308). Nonetheless, folklore, as many other social sciences, has contended with several paradigm shifts prompted by Postcolonial shifts promoting more participatory and inclusive society. Social sciences, such as cultural anthropology, that give folklore some of its methodologies, are challenged by the opposition to normalizing discourses of one-sided power dynamics, representations restating the "otherness" of different groups, and possible tools for oppression from dominant groups.

In addition to facing larger paradigm shifts, folklore is confronted by internal challenges between definitions of academic folklore versus public folklore, and where each stand in the discipline. In very simplistic terms academic folklore and public folklore definitions are based on the methods of presentation and implementation of the phenomena studied. As author Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1988, 2007) describes in her article *Mistaken Dichotomies*, " the academic folklorist generally appears as author, editor, or compiler, holds the copyright, and collects the royalties on folklore collections he or she publishes" (p. 34). This description of academic folklore is very charged but gives an idea of how it is possible for the academia to become distant from the goals of

serving a public, and from public folklore. Public folklore is not free from the potential of falling into conflicts of power dynamics or positioning as well, especially since it is dealing with the representation of the cultural expressions of specific cultural groups.

In order to understand the subtleties of public folklore, it is important to give a definition of public folklore and then examine the environments where it takes place. Public folklore is "the representation and application of folk traditions in new contours and contexts within and beyond the communities in which they originated, often through collaborative efforts of tradition bearers and folklorists or other cultural specialists" (Baron & Spitzer, 2007, p.1). Public folklore is present at such organizations like state folklore agencies, cultural centers, cultural consulting organizations, and community organizing institutions. Thus, practitioners in the folklore field work in organizations, which goals including advocacy, representation, art, cultural critique and cultural revitalization. These types of organizations work on creating opportunities to seek outlets for representation such as festivals, exhibits, and interpretative activities for communities looking for such cultural outlets. Therefore, the nature of the public folklore worker is to connect the communities and community members beyond the walls of the organization and their contexts, in order to bring multiple-voices in the public dialogue and place bearers of a community's culture as active members and participants of a region.

Public folklorists become the facilitators and cultural brokers, bridging needs of communities and creating opportunities for programs fulfilling those needs. The practitioners embarking on cultural programs that evoke local/regional identity are not particularly bound to a type of organization, as long as the environments foster genuine

dialogue for representations and presentation. Baron & Spitzer (2007) describe how practitioners are accountable to their communities no matter their organizational affiliations, "being a conscious and conscientious public folklorist depends less upon employment venue than the primacy of collaboration with traditional artists and communities in the representation of their cultural expression" (p.2). These collaborations result in mediations of the arts, crafts, and any traditional expressions, and are expressed as writings, multimedia productions, teaching materials, exhibits, festivals etc. The representation of traditional cultural expression takes place outside the culture bearers' contexts, therefore, the role of the public folklorist is to make sure that the mediation is respectful and does not fall into cultural stereotypes and top-down models of representation.

Whenever a mediation of culture is present, there are risks of misrepresentations and objectification of culture. However, if public folklorists, or the organizations developing the cultural program, are transparent about their position, the objectification can take a different meaning. As Robert Baron (2010) describes in his article *Sins of Objectification? Agency, Mediation, and Community Cultural Self-Determination in Public Folklore and Cultural Tourism Programming*, "in practice, public folklorists engage dialogically with community members to mutually shape frames of representation. This may entail progressive disempowerment of the folklorists, with their authority diminishing as community cultural self-determination is enhanced" (p. 64). Thus, the mediation and objectification of the culture can become beneficial to the cultural group, since there are preliminary dialogues where participants impact the outcomes based on their life experiences. The participants' input in the development of

representation platforms reflect the empowerment placed on the culture bearers and how it validates their perspectives about their ever-changing environments.

Therefore, public folklore and its practitioners become catalyst for empowering communities by offering spaces for a community's cultural expression. It is usually the case that these representational outlets are developed with and for communities that have been marginalized in different historical contexts and; thus, open channels for these cultural groups to self-determine their position and participation in the larger community. For instance, when exploring the development of folklore in the United States, we can encounter the challenges of the field in discrediting the notion of "the folk" as "backwards", "alienated" or "stuck in the past". In order to eliminate these perceptions, public folklorists seek representation outlets that place these communities within a cultural continuum, linking the importance of cultural heritage narratives to the communities' cultural adaptations to changes in economic climates, political conditions, media discourse or physical environmental changes.

Returning to Robert Baron's arguments on agency and objectification of culture, it is important to highlight how the representation platforms available to the cultural groups, are designed from principles of shared power dynamics with all participants acting as agents. Agency is understood here as the power to influence and affect outcomes in any interaction, "in the social situations of public folklore programming, all parties possess agency as they interact –the community members whose traditions are represented, folklorists, administrators, and audiences" (Baron, 2010, p. 65). In order to avoid shallow displays without meaningful returns to anybody, each participant needs to bring his/her perspective in how the represented cultures need to be placed within

cultural programming. It is here where the public folklore practitioner can play an important role as an advocate for the community. In order to facilitate honest community exposure, public folklorists need to work under ethical standards.

The power of the advocate comes with many responsibilities toward the community members he/she is representing, and the main one is to listen to what the culture bearers are seeking as the main goal of their participation in the cultural program. In other words, the public folklorist needs to facilitate an environment – physical intellectual and cultural- where the tradition bearers reach benefits, whether these are tangible or intangible. It is not to say that the interactions of culture bearers in cultural programming and between public folklorists and other program participants are a frivolous relationship. On the contrary, the relationships that are building between culture bearers, general participants, public folklorists, and any partner organizations, are creating significant networks leading to more paths for communication and inclusion. The social capital emerging from public folklore programs is the evidence of the important role of public folklorists as advocates for communities that might not have previous access to public dialogues. The advocacy taken by the public folklore sector makes cultural groups and community issues visible in the larger mainstream society. Once culture bearers are introduced to environments, such as exhibits, festivals or workshops, there is a chance for them to create self-reflective dialogues about how to present themselves, and be empowered by telling and re-telling their stories to an audience and themselves. The visibility of cultural groups achieved through the participation on public folklore programming allows for other sectors, such as government agencies and other decision makers, to become aware of the empowering

resources that different cultural groups bring to the conversation. Additionally, these culture mediations can foster dialogues of alternative ways for achieving safeguarding the continuity of groups bearing a communities' traditions.

The safeguarding of the traditions and the environments that encourage the transmission of these traditions is not a passive activity. Culture bearers are not passively waiting for folklorists to design strategies for the representation and exposure of cultural expressions. Communities are having conversations of how traditions, cultural self-determination and cultural adaptation are occurring in their everyday lives; thus, public folklorists come to facilitate representation and dialogue outlets into communities who are already asking questions and identifying needs. Then, the role of the public folklore organizations and practitioners is to help communities, artists, and tradition bearers to explore those alternative outlets for major visibility, which communicate community's perspectives of the world around them. The advocacy done by public folklorists can become facilitation between decision-making agents - who affect the circumstances where communities live – and the culture bearers. The goal for the connections built between a culture bearer and the mainstream community is to generate empowerment within culture bearers groups to step into spaces where they can influence other realms of society. Public folklore programming can place itself as a catalyst for negotiating forces that can threaten=traditions and culture bearers. This means that the public folklore sector takes on the job of creating - in collaboration with the communities - strategic actions for achieving equity to the access to resources, such as granting fund sources, and participation in decisions shaping their communities' cultural policies and planning policies. The public folklorists advocacy is then

demonstrated by the level of visibility that culture bearers obtain and how often their voices are included in future initiatives coming from different sectors, such as government, the market place or educational fields.

While the public folklore examination given in this paper comes from the historical development in the United States, there is an international example that helps illustrate the roles of public folklorists as facilitators and advocates of culture bearers. The *Unión de Museos Comunitarios de Oaxaca* (UMCO) (Network of Community-based Museums of Oaxaca), in Oaxaca, Mexico is a regional network of communities who seek to represent themselves through locally managed museums and programs coming from these institutions. Two anthropologists, Teresa Morales and Cuauhtémoc Camarena, are turned into cultural workers by the facilitation of the development of these museums and cultural programs. Although they are not trained in the folklore discipline, both practitioners act as advocates and facilitators between different community sectors in order to carry out projects. In addition to building the museums and designing exhibits, community members and the facilitators develop festivals and other public events as part of the comprehensive cultural programing connected to the museums. These programs and the content in the museums are deeply connected to cultural traditions of each local indigenous and "mestizo" community. One particular case is the museum at the town of Matatlán, Oaxaca, the "Mezcal Capital of the World."

The community museum in Matatlán was built after a long consensus process, where a variety of community members agreed to honor the local tradition of Mezcal (alcoholic beverage made from maguey -a type of Agave plant). Shamans use Mezcal during healing ceremonies, it is used as an offering to the earth at harvesting seasons,

and it is also drank regularly in social situations, thus, it is part of all aspects of life in Matatlán. Additionally, Mezcal is sold and distributed by local distilleries to other communities throughout Mexico, so it is a source of income and economic development in the town and surrounding areas.

The cultural facilitators, the anthropologists who helped with the development of the community museum, came in to the community because there was an interest from the "mezcaleros" – traditional Mezcal producers – to preserve and promote Zapotec's (local indigenous group) knowledge of the beverage. Thus, they acted as public folklorists by providing their mediation skills between funding sources from different sectors of society and the culture bearers. Moreover, they advocated for the local Mezcal producers to fully participate in a commercial Mezcal festival organized by the city of Oaxaca and many industrialized distilleries. Matatlán's "mezcaleros" presented small-scale replicas of traditional Mezcal distilleries and production, and combined it with traditional crafts and music; in addition to have stands to sell the local Mezcal. The "mezcaleros" and the tradition bearers' participation in this event, could be seen as the "objectification" of their culture, nonetheless, it occurred with full agency from the community members who were seeking benefits from this cultural visibility.

The public folklorists negotiated how these benefits manifested and advocated for the inclusion of traditional "mezcaleros" in the future of the industry. The benefits were not only monetary but also an invitation for the mainstream community to listen the spiritual and cultural connotations of the production of Mezcal, this listening was achieved through a collaboration of the city of Oaxaca and Matatlán to offer party buses from the city to Matatlán to visit the community museum. Ethical considerations were

taken by both the tradition bearers and the public folklorists, such as not emphasizing the economic value of the Mezcal production but focusing the museum' displays and dialogues around the use of Mezcal as a healing tool and a levitation drink during important rites of passage in the community.

Finally, the relationship between the public folklorists and culture bearers was of shared power since both parties were bringing different expertise in the negotiation. Matatlán's residents came together to build identity cohesion around a cultural object, Mezcal, and took agency of how to speak about it to themselves and other audiences. The public folklorists advocated for the community in more formal structures such as cultural planning arenas, and national and international funding infrastructures. This advocate work lead to longer-term interest of from both sides, culture bearers and funders, to develop cultural programs such as language transmission in the local schools designed by residents of Zapotec origins. The community museum and cultural program are examples of collaborative process that can be achieved through conscious public folklorists and communities of tradition bearers ready to share and reflect on their cultural wealth. Public folklorists, in this sense, are the facilitators and cultural brokers, bridging needs of communities and creating opportunities for programs fulfilling those needs through organizations committed to fostering cultural cohesion and empowerment.

INSTITUTIONAL PARADIGM SHIFTS

As mentioned earlier, cultural organizations moved from colonial mentalities to a post-colonial paradigm, where power dynamics changed from a top-down model to

lateral collaborations of the institutions and their communities. These paradigm shifts within cultural organizations, are responses to the 21st environments and ideologies; they also respond to issues of institutional sustainability and social relevancy. The shift of cultural organizations toward fostering and enabling regional identity, by highlighting local cultural assets, places the institutions as facilitators in an educational dialogue. Hence, the educational emphasis of the cultural programing makes the institutions move to the role of advocates. This advocacy is demonstrated as the cultural organizations create multidirectional dialogues and collaborative initiatives. Such concepts and organizational strategies - collaboration, civic engagement, participation and advocacy – become a reality when cultural institutions make a genuine effort to examine the sector's values and driving forces. This creates a ground-up infrastructure model for the organizations, where the programs and ideologies are not imposed by the institutions but built in collaboration with their communities, allowing a cultural democracy to be fomented within the cultural sector.

Cultural organizations began a process of reevaluation starting in the 20th century, and it still continues as they place their relevancy and potentials within their communities. The first consideration for these institutions is to evaluate their institutional values, and even when this might be an individual exercise for each particular organization, there are spectrums and starting points for dialogues, drawn by scholars and practitioners. One of such tools is the one offered by Gail Anderson (2004, 2012), "Reinventing the Museum Tool", which serves as a mean for the organizations to discuss where they stand in the paradigm continuum. Although the author centers her study on cultural museums, I believe this is a useful tool that can be expanded to other

types of cultural organizations, such as folklore organizations and those discussed earlier. Anderson's guide also includes an examination of institutional values, governance, management strategies and communication ideologies (Anderson 2004, 2012, p. 24-25)

Institutional values give the organizations their raison d'etre, becoming a driving force for organizational missions, strategies and goals toward their constituents. Within the spectrum given by Gail Anderson (2012) there are pairings of values that represent the traditional organizational position to a more current and relevant position. Some of such values are: Insular society contrasted with civic engagement, social activity as opposed to social responsibility, internal perspective contrasted to community participant, accepted realities and cultural inquiry, voice of authority and multiple voices, and information provider contrasted with knowledge facilitator (p. 2-4). For a cultural organization to act as change maker it is necessary that it transitions from a figure with a voice of authority to an inclusion of multiple voices, and this transition must occur in a genuine and transparent manner. When this paradigmatic shift occurs, other transitional steps happen that start making these cultural organizations relevant institutions in the 21st century. After the shift where multiple voices are included in the organization's dialogue, other shifts follow or occur simultaneously as a natural transition. For instance, managerial shifts aiming for collaborative processes, for responsiveness to stakeholders, and open access to all members of the community, are evidence of how these paradigm changes happen within cultural organizations and influence their institutional infrastructure.

As introduced earlier in the study, Stephen E. Weil (1999) presents the transformation of American museums during the late 20th century to enter the 21st century, through the previously mentioned paradigm shifts; his analysis of cultural museums can be compared to the large sector of cultural institutions. Cultural organizations needed to start looking outward and re-restructuring themselves to offer relevant services and opportunities to the public and communities, this restructuring can be seen as an educational role for these institutions, outreaching and inviting community members. This educational focus brings the cultural organizations to integrate multiple points of view, meaning that it is necessary to incorporate interdisciplinary perspectives. Weil (1999) explains that it is important to examine how cultural organizations, particularly museums, have followed a division by disciplines that has restricted their functions and created a hierarchical division of work among the staff. This environment created institutions with inflexible structures for overarching programs, and organizations dictated by specific disciplinary lines (p.182). The alternative form is one organization about "something" with multidisciplinary approaches, and for "somebody." This disciplinary shift within cultural organizations creates the opportunity to start dialogues and take on advocacy positions.

In addition to the shifts in the disciplinary focuses, there shifts in the organizations' infrastructures. Paquette's (2011) article, mentioned in an earlier section, describes how the changes in managerial and administrative structures within these cultural organizations also adds shifts in the institutions' programs leading to more inclusive and participatory initiatives. These managerial shifts can be seen as the outcome of cultural organizations' efforts to challenge their messages and meaning-

making philosophies. As the author illustrates with the case of the New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, it is important to highlight the change from a Westernized administrative model, that of a hierarchical structure with isolated roles of museum staff, to a collaborative management, where biculturalism and recognition of local cultures is the driving force in the human resources, starting with the co-direction of the museum [or cultural organization] to the strategic bi-culture staffing of the organization (p. 133 – 135). This managerial shift is reflected in the programs' development, where there are authentic collaborative initiatives with local communities, inviting for participation within the museum to discuss sensitive community issues, such as material culture repatriation and social equity, both inside and beyond the organization's walls.

Parallel to the paradigm shifts occurring within cultural organizations there are organizational and strategic shifts in the public sector as well. These shifts are also dictated by ideological and paradigm shifts within the sector. As described in Cooper, Bryer, and Meek's (2006) article *Citizen-Centered collaborative public management*, the emphasis on collaborative management structures, where the focus is on the citizen - community member - leads to an activation of community members and increased civic engagement. The authors give a historical survey of how different approaches to civic engagement have developed in the United States, such as the voluntary association of interest groups and self-organized groups; and what these descriptions revealed is how community structures have adapted to social changes. Starting in the 1990s the deliberative approach, which sits "on the opposite side of the spectrum from adversarial kinds of civic engagement" (Cooper et al., 2006) started to dominate public management dialogues. This approach looks to achieve consensus and joint actions

from the parties involved in the decision-making, articulating shared responsibilities and dialogue among different types of people. This description fits the institutional culture that had been developing inside cultural organizations since the same decade. Cultural organizations, as mentioned earlier, start to shift their ideologies and institutional paradigms, taking them to that consensus building approach that leads to closing gaps between community members and the organizations by including multiple voices in the decision-making.

Finally, these institutional paradigm shifts occurring in both the cultural sector and in the public sector, which are leading to a major community relevancy of cultural organizations, are also fostering cultural pluralism, collaborative processes, a broader representation and a global perspective in community participation. In this manner, cultural institutions become key players in offering platforms for community participation through inclusive collaborative initiatives. These paradigm shifts are reflected in the programs, exhibits, festivals and other initiatives that cultural museums and folklore organizations are design all around the United States. These programs are responding to the traditional objectification of material and immaterial cultures from a previous top-down and colonial power-dynamic, by genuinely engaging the members whose stories, past, present and future are been represented.

Chapter 4: Public Participation and Civic Engagement

This section explores more closely how the theories of public participation and civic engagement intersect in the cultural sector, especially on how cultural organizations incorporate these principles, and how a symbiotic relationship forms between these institutions and other agencies. In this section the definitions for public participation and civic engagement are informed from both sectors, the public sector of traditional governmental participation practices and the paradigms shaping the cultural sector. The participation of community members in projects designed by the different organizations is measured in different ways; however, this study looks at how the incorporation of participation tools leads to dialogue and inclusion of previously disadvantage issues and communities. The outcomes that this study is focused on are the actual participation process in cultural organizations and the public sector, and examining the rationale of why these collaborative initiatives are created.

Public participation and civic engagement concepts are approached from a multi-disciplinary perspective that move them beyond the definitions of the government and public sector. Nonetheless, this original contextualization of the terms opens the dialogue about how these concepts have shaped strategies for inclusion of different sectors of the communities.

When speaking of public participation and civic engagement, one tends to make reference to the political and governmental participation infrastructures. As author James L. Creighton (2005) describes in the first chapter of The Public Participation Handbook:

Public participation is the process by which public concerns, needs, and values are incorporated into governmental and corporate decision-making. It is two-way communication and interaction, with the overall goal of better decisions that are supported by the public (p. 7).

However, public participation can be approached as a guiding principle for the opportunity of community members to bring their points of view to situations that affect them directly. For instance, cultural organizations acting as facilitators for community representations and community interpretation need to include the voices of those been affected by the final decisions on the design of programs and representation outlets, such as exhibits, festivals or media productions. When public participation is understood from this perspective it is seen as the process for information exchange between individual community members and organizations. These information exchanges are experiences that can activate the individual in learning processes of engagement and expand into other sectors of their community configurations, such as in social process affecting their environments, cultures or identities.

Throughout this research the terms civic engagement and public participation are sometimes interchangeable. The fundamental concept is the participation of community members around an issue through programs or organizations. Nonetheless, civic engagement needs to encourage a more active participation from the community members in order to incorporate their opinions, based on their own life experiences, into larger dialogues that seek for solutions to community issues. As the example given earlier in this paper, the American museums along the US/Mexico border, members of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience incorporate strategic programs that

offer access points for their communities to join the dialogue. Community discussions about pressing local issues, such as immigration, invite community members to explore their own experiences regarding the topic and create tools to articulate their position and how to bring solutions in the larger community. Civic engagement then is presented as the ability for community members to participate in the development of cultural organizations' programs, or as contributing participants, and take on skills to incorporate into their larger "civil" society.

Graham Black (2010) describes how cultural organizations are concerned with incorporating their role for activating communities for building their future through inclusive programs and initiatives. Black uses the term "civil" engagement instead of "civic" engagement, to refer to the efforts of the cultural organizations to participate with, and to create access points for the civil society. Civil society is understood as the formal and informal collaborations of groups with shared values, goals, and purposes. The author uses the definition of civil society given by the London School of Economics Centre for Civil Society, as "populated by organizations such as registered charities, development non-governmental organizations, community groups, women's organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, trades unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy groups" (p. 269). Thus, the creation of programs that welcome people to bring their own experiences from their participation in their larger civil society will make them feel that their experiences in both a cultural organization and their communities will enrich each other. In other words, the experiences within the cultural organizations can validate and empower community members' engagement with other sectors of their communities.

Civic engagement, and "civil" engagement, is then pertinent to the relationship of cultural organizations with other significant entities in their communities, and relevant to the level of activation that community members develop through their participation in the cultural organizations' initiatives and how they can incorporate this empowerment in their communities.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGIES

Similarly to the institutional paradigm shifts occurring in the cultural sector, the public participation field, as understood by the government sector, has been going through changes of principle and strategies as well. These changes are a response to the process in urban planning and policy drafting where government agencies are looking for the public's input and are encountering obstacles to achieving multi-directional participation with communities. Before reviewing traditional approaches and strategies and how they have been contested by newer approaches, it is necessary to explore the reasoning behind the need to bring broader community participation into public process, whether this is urban planning or cultural representation in a museum. The rationale brings forward the importance of including those who would be affected by any decision or program created by specific agencies, and how the inclusion of community members' voices will affect the final decision-making. This focus on the individual, and his/her community, decentralizes the power that has been concentrated in some of our societies institutions.

This change in power dynamics includes the multiple points of view and levels of skills of the participants, who are looking for respect for what they have to bring at the

table. Nina Simon (2009) describes this inclusion at cultural organizations as a natural response to the current environments of participatory learning experiences. People are expecting "the ability to respond and be taken seriously. They expect the ability to discuss, share, and remix what they consume. When people can actively participate with cultural institutions, those places become central to cultural and community life" (p. ii). The author continuous describing a "participatory cultural institution as a place where visitors can create, share, and connect with each other around content" (p.iii), which increases the relevancy of these institutions. While Nina Simon's book, *The Participatory Museum*, is focused on strategies for museums to increase audience participation in their exhibits and programs, the principles are also describing how a community interacts with systems that are unintentionally becoming irrelevant to them.

Thus, there is an opportunity for these infrastructures, agencies and organizations to build organizational sustainability and inclusiveness through new and alternative strategies. New approaches to public participation are taken by cultural organizations through different strategies, such bringing community members as advisory groups or as focus groups. Although these are inclusive strategies, they present limitations in the sense that most of the time the number of participants is small and that ~~the~~ agendas are drawn by the institution. Thus, a broader approach for participation can be achieved by creating opportunities within programs and exhibits for community members to add to their voices to the agendas and content. This content is created by programs designed where the information flows in a multidirectional manner, where content is created, shared and distributed from the participants to the institution, from the institution to participants, and from individual participant to individual participant

(Simon, 2009, p. 2-4). This content and information flow is created on the principle that the cultural institution respects the participants' own experiences and levels of interpretation of their world, giving the participation strategy a more human scale where access to dialogues within and outside the organizations are less intimidating and controlled by the imposing institutions.

Now, let us continue with the overview of traditional strategies of public participation, as approached by government agencies and the public sector. This overview illustrates how there are different levels of participation in our communities and how they manifest in different contexts. It also examines how paradigm shifts are occurring at traditional public participation infrastructures that break down power dynamics, and allow participation of larger sectors of the communities. These shifts in the public sector are important for cultural institutions because they open outlets for program development and collaboration; additionally, both sectors - the public and the cultural organizations - can feed each others' institutional values and principles working towards inclusive decision-making coming from community members, who are directly affected by the outcomes, and perhaps whose voices had not previously had platforms for representation.

Judith Innes (2000) takes a critical look at the traditional tools of public and civic participation in her article *Public Participation in Planning: New Strategies for the 21st Century*. She describes how these tools fail to bring real and authentic participation from the public, and how more contemporary strategies, such as collaborative planning, are essential for ensuring sustainability and evolution of institutions. The sustainability of institutions depends on the credibility and trust built with community members, and how

accessible they appear to be, and actually are, for all community members, thus comprehensive participation strategies are necessary. Traditional methods of public participation such as public hearings, written public comments and citizen commissions are one-directional methods, where none of the participants interact with one another decreasing any chance for dialogue and evaluation of how the opinions affect the final decision making.

In the planning process at the government level there are four models for public participation: the technical/bureaucratic model, the political influence model, the social movement model and the collaborative model. Judith Innes (2000) shows how these models contend with each other in the approach to public participation. The first two models present pre-established projects and decisions made by powerful groups with specific interests, and public participation is seen as a step to validate their decisions and actions. Sometimes this participation process is only practiced because is dictated by law. The final decisions are already defined in these two models so the information flow is one-directional, and the input from the public is just a formality (p. 13-17). Social movements and the collaborative model are participatory models at different levels. Social movements arise as a result of large groups of unsatisfied community members who were not included in the decision-making process; their impact on future participation opportunities is through their large numbers. In the other hand, the collaborative model operates from the principle that there has to be "face-to-face dialogue among those who have interests in the outcomes, or stakeholders" (Innes, 2000, p.18). Under this model, public participation is a joint effort from all participants in order to develop goals and common purposes. Collaborative efforts bring together

participants with different interests and who have an investment in the issue been discussed. The participants are interested in reaching outcomes by sharing points of view and understandings about particular issues, and that can lead to agreements that will move community forward as a whole (p. 18-20).

This last public participation model, collaborative model, often occurs outside formal planning or government agencies. This approach is familiar in the new models within the cultural organizations, which are challenging traditional institutional paradigms. These organizations then become of great importance for the public dialogue around participatory processes. Additionally, a dynamic between formal public participation agencies and the cultural sector is built through the parallel approaches for participation that both fields are implementing. Once a cultural organization embraces consensus-driven and inclusive strategies, they open pathways to collaborate beyond their institutions and cultural realms. Local governments and agencies can then seek these cultural organizations as allies and resources for drawing constituencies and stakeholders' perspectives, at the same time that the cultural organizations make communities' voices evident to government agencies and the larger society.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH CULTURE

Institutions in either the cultural or government sector can create strategies that create different points of access for their constituencies. If these strategies are not encompassing of the communities' assets they do not create genuine incentives for participation, then community members' voices are not recognized. Participation initiatives, whether they come from planning agencies or cultural organizations, need to

incorporate the skills, values, activities, believes and identities of community members in order to create welcoming environments in their institutions. These forenamed elements are the cultural assets that make up particular communities and create identity cohesion. Cultural assets of a community are all those material and intangible artifacts that build networks within groups of people. For instance, creative endeavors such as storytelling, language, traditions, crafts, arts, media, and gathering places (churches, cultural centers, plazas etc.), can help form community cohesiveness. The relationships built when participating in such activities and spaces shape the identity of the community and create networks (Strom, 2001, p. 13-17). Thus, incorporating these characteristics in participatory initiatives not only benefits the institutions but also encourages community members to validate who they are, where they come from and where they are going.

Cultural organizations understand the importance of creating collaborative programs that invite these experiences in order to build interpretation of the community's environment, and empower people starting from what they already have to offer in the participatory relationship. This internal collaboration at cultural organizations is a beneficial tool for public agencies as well. The opportunity for collaboration between these different institutions is a strategy to tear down walls for community engagement, particularly for groups that have been marginalized by the traditional methods of public participation. Once these communities' stories are welcomed in these institutions, individuals find themselves empowered to actively engage in finding solutions and building dialogues around community issues.

Subsequently, the intersection of cultural organizations and more traditional public participation agencies occurs through collaborative process that can bring authentic multi-directional flow of information - from participants to the institution, from institution to institution and back to community members. Research completed by the American Planning Association, in collaboration with the RMC Research Corporation (2011), examines how arts and culture contributes to: strengthening cultural values and preserving heritage and history, building community character and sense of place, enhancing community engagement and participation, and enhancing economic vitality. Authors Beavers and Hodgson (2011) discuss how these alternative cultural tools enhance engagement strategies during public planning and development in order to engage a diverse constituency. These strategies create more opportunities than traditional formats of public participation such as town-hall meetings, surveys or hearings. Strategies such as involving visual arts, performance arts, storytelling and cultural preservation give individuals the space to make their voices heard, describe their own life experiences and make sense of their communities. These creative tools are more engaging strategies for city planners, or other practitioners, to use during public participation initiatives. Nonetheless, the arts and culture sector already thrives with organizations fostering spaces for such engagement, which naturally makes them platforms to bring community members to the larger public participation process.

In addition, cultural organizations are not only bringing the relevance of cultural assets as a tool for individuals' empowerment and civic engagement but they are a large part of the local planning and decision-making. Then, the constituents of the cultural organizations become vocal stakeholders when deciding the future of a place,

and their communities. Thus, cultural organizations are a driving force in urban and rural planning, and in any public decision-making, once they responsively adopt their role as facilitators for community inclusion. The collaboration initiatives and outreach programs coming from these cultural institutions are reaching sectors of the communities that decision-makers and planners are interested in reaching as well. Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa (2010) give a brief description of the understanding of the arts and culture sector, in their article *Arts and Culture in Urban or Regional Planning: A Review and Research Agenda*, in order to create "creative cities". This article helps position the potential for decision-makers to elaborate strategies and resource allocation within the arts and culture sector to build communities and encourage sense of place among all community members. Positioning the arts and culture sector as highly important in the city planners realm speaks of how local culture works as a mobilizing factor for community building and for individuals' activation, in addition to placing the cultural programming as thriving and engaging tools for community participation.

As author Message (2007) states in *Museums and the Utility of Culture: The Politics of Liberal Democracy and Cultural Well-Being*, "…museums [and cultural organizations] concerned with social inclusion tend to present themselves as either an agent of social regeneration at a local level (often in the case of regional museums or cultural centers), or as a vehicle to facilitate broader social change through advocacy" (p. 236). Cultural organizations "exist as variously configured sets of institutional coordinates that aspire to function as popular, demotic spaces dedicated to representing a variety of experiences and modes of citizenship" (Message, 2007, p. 235). In other words, the programs in these cultural organizations are not pretentious or

oppressive by positioning themselves as authoritative voices, but rather placing the organizations as safe incubators for dialogue engagement through everyday language and life experiences. These cultural programs draw from the experiences of the local community, and many times cultural heritage is a valuable engaging tool for communities who have been historically marginalized.

Hence, the question to explore is how do cultural heritage and identity become assets of inclusion for public participation? Organizations serving this purpose of fostering cultural identity within communities are helping to build thriving and healthy environments by providing spaces that celebrate the communities' achievements. For instance, author Lane Arnett Jensen (2008) conducts research with young Latino and Indian immigrants to study their level of civic engagement in their new environments. Some of her findings indicate that the connection of these individuals to their cultural identity motivates them to participate in civic engagement; individuals might feel more "motivated by their commitment to their cultural groups, in particular that discrimination against may motivate political activity to assert the voice of one's cultural group" (p. 75).

Additionally, the briefing *Community Heritage and Culture: How the arts and cultural sector strengthen cultural values and preserve heritage and history,* from the American Planning Association research (2011), presents key findings where preservation, inventing and reinventing of a culture within a particular community can build inclusive spaces and participatory initiatives: "…efforts to preserve, affirm, and advance cultural heritage can have important beneficial impacts on attempts to build community and create place identities…[many of these efforts] involve arts and cultural activity and the leadership of artists, historians, folklorists, anthropologists, planners and

a range of community stakeholders" (p. 2). Thus, the emphasis on cultural identity - however this identity is defined - becomes an incentive for individuals and organizations to build participatory opportunities.

Chapter 5: Collaborative Initiatives

As mentioned in earlier sections, institutions can find sustainability and relevancy once they genuinely include all community members in the purpose and desired outcomes of their cultural programs. In order to foster participation from community members and generate a sense of civic engagement, institutions need to design inclusive collaborative initiatives. This study is concerned with two types of collaborative initiatives, those happening internally at cultural organizations, which invite individual community members to participate, and the possible collaborations between different institutions to move projects forward. It does not mean that these collaborations cannot take place at the same time, occasionally they intersect and occur inter-institutionally. Thus, cultural organizations, such as cultural museums and folklore institutions, by offering spaces for dialogue and collaboration with community members become platforms for community engagement and possible partners of agencies outside the cultural sector.

Collaborative initiatives can take the form of consultative collaboration and co-development collaboration. Author Nina Simon (2010) describes these collaboration types as:

- Consultative projects, in which institutions engage experts or community representatives to provide advice and guidance to staff members as they develop new exhibitions, programs, or publications.

- Co-development projects, in which staff members work together with participants to produce new exhibitions and programs. (p. 235).

These collaborative approaches differ in the way that participants are involved with the project. In the first category participants are guiding the project by giving recommendations, this can happen through focus groups or formal advisory boards. Members from specific groups, such as those based on age, ethnic background, or any specific interest group, compose these advisory groups. They advise the organization on how the outcome, such an exhibit or program, might be received by the larger community. It is important that during this type of collaboration participants are given specific issues to resolve so the feedback is meaningful and community members see how their opinions affected the final outcome. In the other hand, co-development collaboration invites participants as "co-creators" of the program, exhibit or any other desired outcome. Participants work closely with the organizations' staff in coordinating, planning and developing programs and projects (Simon, 2010, p. 235). The participants' opinions and expertise are incorporated in the program development; additionally these projects have a more educational focus where participants are learning new skills such as leadership, program coordination, and evaluation creating a stronger investment of community members in the institutions and vice versa. Co-development collaborations require long time commitments from institutions and participants, and more emphasis is made on the process of collaboration that in the final outcome of the programs (Simon, 2010, p. 236-239). The skills gained by participants in such collaborations can be used in other contexts outside the cultural organizations where civic activation is necessary, such as when community development decisions need to be made.

Although the descriptions of these collaborative initiatives are given from a cultural organization perspective, these characteristics are present in various kinds of

participatory initiatives wanting to collaborate with community members. Cultural organizations, which are willingly working towards community inclusion and moving away from an authoritative position, create environments where these collaborations happen organically. At the same time, these institutions become important contributors to public dialogue and community participation by providing settings where community members have built trust with the institution. Therefore, other non-cultural organizations can reach out to cultural museums, folklore institutions or any other organization working on community collaboration, in order to build broader and more inclusive solutions to issues through tools such as community planning, policy making, human rights and resource distribution. Collaborations between institutions need to follow the same guiding principles and structuring that collaborations within cultural organizations have. Continuing with Nina Simon's (2010) analysis of collaborations, both community collaborative initiatives at cultural organizations and collaborations between different institutions must include: "clear institutional goal[s], as well as respect and understanding for participants' needs and abilities." (p. 238). The collaborations will always depend on the culture and dynamics built among the different participants. Hence, community assets that can be highlighted in one collaboration program might not be so relevant for collaborative initiatives in other communities or between different organizations. These collaborations and their goals are unique to each context, whether they are the creation of an exhibition or the amendment to public policies. However, the underlying principle for these collaborations is the genuine respect and inclusiveness of the participants' skills, life stories and interpretations of their worlds.

OUTLETS FOR REPRESENTATION AND COLLABORATION

As described in the previous section, the creation of collaborative programs and initiatives is the best strategy for cultural organizations to create spaces for dialogue and inclusion of multiple voices. These collaborative processes mirror, and are a consequence of the new and dynamic paradigm shifts of the cultural organizations. Such changes are visible in programs that ensure that the content is inclusive, and programs that include a variety of sources –media, activities, objects etc.   These programs share authority in the development of an initiative, and that they ensure interaction between participants to create conversations among contending points of view about the past, present and future. It is through these inclusive and collaborative programs, which incorporate community members' experiences, that cultural organizations position themselves as platforms for community representation. When organizations honor what members bring to the table, the create paths for outlets of community representation.

As explored in the earlier section of the historical survey of cultural museums and folklore institutions, we observed that these institutions developed with an interest of understanding the complexities of cultural groups and their environments. Nonetheless, these representations have not always been genuine and inclusive, and many times they have caused misrepresentations and marginalization of entire groups. Thus, it is important to define what is meant by representation with and through cultural organizations in this context.

Representation can be mediated through objects, symbols, language, festivals and exhibits, which can be context for community members to "talk back" to an

audience or themselves. Returning to the scholar work of Robert Baron (2010), cultural workers are always looking for opportunities for community members to do more than "talk back", instead the mediation and the culture brokers "want to enable communities to represent themselves on their own terms" (p. 71). Representation should enable participants with the power to create multiple narratives about the meanings, symbols and perceptions of a community's context. Cultural workers should be the facilitators to achieve this. Cultural programming, then, brings different frameworks of presentation and mediation with which communities can express the different dimension of their experiences.

In the United States there are cultural organizations that are taking on important roles in their local communities. These institutions have become active initiators of regional dialogues of representation, community participation and civic engagement. Animating Democracy, a program of the Americans for the Arts, a national advocacy agency, "bring (s) national visibility to arts for change work, build knowledge about quality practice, and create useful resources. By demonstrating the public value of creative work that contributes to social change and fostering synergy across arts and other fields and sectors, we work to make the arts an integral and effective part of solutions to the challenges of communities and toward ensuring a healthy democracy" (www.animatingdemocracy.org). While Animating Democracy's institutional goal uses the term arts as the tool for change, this study replaces the term art for culture, as an encompassing term, where art is seen as a cultural expression. The overall foundation for the initiatives illustrated in the Animating Democracy network, as well as in the previous examples highlighted in this paper, is the level of collaboration with particular

communities who are represented in the programs. These initiatives and programs follow the different models of collaboration. They occur in organizations focused on particular cultural identities and localities and place these factors at the center of their program development. As mentioned earlier, the outlets for such representations are found at community arts organizations, museums, and festivals, which can allow for the intersection of arts, culture and activism. The opportunity for these organizations to work under a cultural activism is, as author Moira G. Simpson (1996, 2001) when addressing issues of representation in museums, discusses how "inaction can be interpreted as a political stance; therefore, museums [and cultural organizations] which attempt to remain objective by refusing to address political issues might be seen to be condoning the very actions they seek to avoid addressing" (p.37). Thus, it is important for local cultural organizations to be transparent when drafting and positioning their goals and missions so their programs reflect and foster accurate community representations.

CULTURAL PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

This study has examined the rationale that leads cultural organizations to create collaborative programs and initiatives. Cultural organizations are building their foundations and roots in their communities by providing welcoming and safe spaces for members to carry out dialogues about sensitive issues, about celebratory moments and reflecting on who they are. Cultural organizations creating these programs need to adopt well thought out strategies to provide initiatives that are accountable to their communities and relevant to the local culture. There are several approaches to planning cultural programs, and they are unique to the regional cultures and context in which

they are created. Nonetheless, there are essential aspects that cultural organizations can follow to create inclusive cultural programs in their communities.

As observed in earlier, this study postulates cultural organizations as agents for civic engagement and participation of community members in their community's development. This is only possible if the programs and projects follow concepts of honest collaboration with constituents and stakeholders, and if the programs provide structures for evaluation and self-reflection, in order to hold participants and facilitators accountable. These steps follow the best practices for creating plans that would enable effective collaborations. The first step for any cultural organization is to assess the needs of the community they are working with. Understanding the community and the cultural context where the programs are going to function determines how the decisions are going to be delivered. Author Gaylene Carpenter (2008) outlines the process of how to create cultural programming in her chapter *Programming Tasks and Functions* in Arts and Cultural Programming: A Leisure Perspective.   These foundations of cultural programs are: needs assessment, program development, program implementation, program evaluation, and program modification (p.39). However, for the purpose of this study's relevancy this section highlights needs assessment and program development as defined as follows:

- Needs assessment: Generating ideas for programs and services and assuring that the organization has a system to incorporate participant input into program decisions. In other words, it focuses on who is delivering the program and for whom? (Carpenter, 2008, p 40-41).

- Program development: Engaging in decision-making of tasks and functions to create logistic use of resources –both human and nonhuman. The main tasks involved in program development are: determining program objectives, determining project format, developing program policies and procedures, and addressing leadership and staffing. (Carpenter, 2008, p.42 – 45)

Once a cultural organization can articulate its values about how to address and fulfill the needs of its community, and demonstrate how it delivers cultural programing that invites community members to help develop the program and its design, there is a further step that occurs naturally: the inclusion of cultural competency discussion (Blandy, p.176- 177). Cultural competency understood as "an ongoing pursuit of self-reflection, knowledge acquisition, and skill development practiced at individual and systems levels in order to effectively engage a culturally diverse population" (p. 177). This must be a motivating principle for cultural workers developing inclusive cultural programming in local communities. When working under a cultural competency principle, cultural workers and their organizations can understand how people participate and approach programs and activities based on the communities' background. These factors can be socio-economic background or personal beliefs and attitudes toward participation activities (Carpenter, 2008, p. 18). These factors must be taken into account by cultural workers when inviting community members to participate in the design of programs. Once community members recognize that a cultural organization incorporates an understanding of who they are, the collaboration to design programs' objectives, program delivery methods, project formats and program procedures will happen in a mutually respectful manner.

Finally, for a collaborative initiative to be inclusive it needs to start from the cultural organization's transparent values to incorporate participants input in the mission and vision of their programs. The projects of the organizations are the result of goals to fulfill the needs of a particular community, and this is not achievable if the voices of those been affected are not included from the programs' conception. Collaborative program development, as described earlier in the study and listed in this section, is the first step in creating inclusive and relevant cultural organizations. When community members have tasks, goals and authority to design the programs' formats, they are empowered to take action on what they want the possible outcomes to be and how these programs will benefit their communities.

Analysis

Photo by Maya Muñoz-Tobón 2012

Chapter 6: Findings & Recommendations

In order to generate public participation, cultural organizations must build collaborative programs that engage community-based representations. Community organizations within the arts and culture sector serve as vehicles for representation and participation of diverse communities, leading to civic engagement and further public participation in larger sectors of society. This paper examined the historical positioning of cultural organizations, such as cultural museums and the public folklore sector, in addition to reviewing public participation strategies in government agencies and the public sector. The study examined examples of how some national and international cultural organizations are finding intersections between the empowerment that collaborative cultural programming generates in community members, and how this empowerment is carried out into public participation dialogues and participation opportunities in realms beyond the arts and culture sector.

The literature found in the study shows a parallel relationship in the paradigms driving the current public participation sector and the arts and culture sector. Both fields have undergone historical processes, which lead them to seek more collaborative opportunities with communities and constituents. These collaborative and engaging initiatives have become major focus for cultural organizations. This becomes more evident as these organizations become community builders and facilitators, which increasing their institutional responsibility and relevance. The historical parallels show how public decision-makers and cultural organizations become natural potential partners and collaborators for building alternative civic engagement opportunities.

Nonetheless, it is important for the cultural sector to maintain programs that authentically address the communities' needs for inclusion and representation, at the same time that decision-makers must not seek partnerships within these organizations with the sole purpose that they will provide the public sector a targeted audience and constituency conveniently found in one place.

Whether these collaborative initiatives come from cultural organizations, the public sector or from partnerships between institutions, it is important to incorporate an inclusive lens that builds pathways that empower individual and community members to participate in and represent themselves in various contexts of their society. A strategy to ensure inclusiveness in the cultural programs and collaborative initiatives is to include inclusive practices during program development. Some characteristics of inclusive practices include:

- Involving community members in the initial design of a program's goals, objectives and the program delivery or format.

- Diversifying (through age, ethnicity, and socio-economic backgrounds) facilitators and cultural workers working with the communities.

- Including key representatives of cultural groups in the collaborations planning process.

- Understanding and including symbols with inherent meanings for specific cultural groups.

<u>CONCLUSIONS</u>

In conclusion, for cultural organizations and the public sector to engage in collaborative practices it is not only a socially responsible action, but it also enhances the organizations' relevancy in their communities, and help build their sustainability. These collaborative initiatives reflect the institutions' efforts to move away from authoritative voices and towards multidirectional power dynamics, in order to keep up with 21st century social expectations and participatory cultures. When these collaborations include multiple voices in the programs, they bring the opportunity for organizations to create safe spaces and become facilitators for dialogues within communities to reflect on who they are, who they were and who they will be. These outlets for cultural representation create community empowerment and validate the cultural dialogues around issues of communities who have been marginalized by cultural institutions or traditional participation strategies. Thus, when cultural organizations are drafting or redrafting their vision and mission statements they have the opportunity to consciously and transparently take on a role as community advocates for communities that might not have other forms of representation and participation. The organization's positioning as advocates depend on the culture and contexts where they are functioning, and each organization needs to be honest about whether they should take on that role or not and understand what their decision means in their community.

Subsequently, the dialogue studied in this research, which comes from the cultural sector and deals with issues of inclusion and participation, intersects with the theories and frameworks of community arts and cultural democracy philosophies. As described by author Lori Hager "community arts take place in arts centers, museums,

schools, youth organizations, community centers…[and they] are about fostering local dialogue, generating social capital, and stimulating positive community change. Community arts bring people together in common understanding for working toward common goals and civic democracy" (p. 160). Thus, the cultural programming carried out by cultural workers at local cultural museums and public folklore organizations, as discussed in this study, reflect how they contribute to the larger culture field in order to position the arts and culture as viable paths for public participation in the decision-making affecting communities. These opportunities for participation can be understood as the freedom of communities to have the "right to their own history, to free and equitable access to culture, to tradition, to education, to public speech and to the construction of culture" (Blandy, 2008, p. 174) thus strengthening the cultural democracy within our communities.

Finally, this study shows that there is still a lack of literature and research in the public sector examining alternative public participation tools, and thus, there is still more work to do around how the culture and public sectors can intersect to build these alternative platforms. The theories and principles identified through this paper should be used in future studies to seize the opportunity to continue developing toolkits and guidelines for implementation of cultural programming. These alternative platforms will be inclusive and that can support community advocates, in addition to providing venues of representation and public participation. These methodologies should be drawn on the principle that they will benefit cultural organizations and their communities, regardless of size and budgetary concerns of the institutions. The cultural programming methodologies need to address issues of equitable representation of community

members and focus on those resources that are already present in the community. Mapping the community's resources, assets, stories and histories and including them all into the cultural programming of both the culture and public sectors is the first step for building trusting relationships between institutions and their communities, and it is here where culture workers start their role as advocates to facilitate the inclusion of all of the communities' resources and voices.

APPENDIX A

List of Cultural Organizations:

1. The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience –New York, NY

    (www.sitesofconscience.org)

2. Museum of Tolerance - New York, NY

    (www.museumoftolerance.com)

3. Arizona State Museum – Tucson, AZ

    (www.statemuseum.arizona.edu)

4. National Hispanic Cultural Center Albuquerque, NM

    (www.nhccnm.org)

5. Museum of International Folk Art – Santa Fe, NM

    (www.internationalfolkart.org)

6. New Mexico History Museum – Santa Fe, NM

    (www.nmhistorymuseum.org)

7. Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation - San Francisco, CA

    (www.aiisf.org)

8. Unión de Museos Comunitarios de Oaxaca – Oaxaca, Mexico

    (www.museoscomunitarios.org)

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