

Salzburg Global Seminars
Session 468
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Working Group V: Sustainability and the Role of Performing Arts in Civil Society

Chair: Larry Goldman

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Summary of Discussion:

Throughout our session the discussion was a reflection of the diversity and richness and the group.

1. Summary of discussion around key words:

- **Sustainability:** Perhaps not the appropriate goal for arts at the moment: longevity is perhaps not enough to warrant future investments; vitality is more pertinent. Sustainability may be more about building and aggregating knowledge, about sustaining a way of working and methodology- not about sustaining organisations.
- **Civil Society:** We examined as a group what this means in different contexts. Examples were given from South Africa (post-apartheid), Philippines, Beirut, Morocco, Berlin and Newark: the power and role of the Arts in contributing to repairing a society was clear. The role of the Arts changes in society as society changes.
- **Institutions v/s organizations:** The group shared multiple perspectives and experiences of organizations as validating institutions or representing colonial oppression. Often, institutions carried a perpetual meaning which is maybe not appropriate anymore. There seems to be a paradigm shift away from the organisation. It was agreed that in the past value was perhaps solely determined by organisations and institutions, what we should see is a more communal co-creation of value for institutions.

2. Three aspects of the Role of Performing Artists: Multiple perspectives, multiple roles, artists, producers, presenters, curators, funders, academics, government workers: We all have a piece in the following three aspects of the arts:

- **Intrinsic:** Creative act itself but also relation to audience (thinking, self reflection, delight, joy, celebration, sorrow..)
- **Social:** Taps into fundamental connectedness, safe place, empowerment, improving literacy, civic education, social change, health and healing (examples from various cities were given to illustrate this)
- **Economic:** Transform communities (Newark, Beirut), creative industries.

3. Reflections:

- All of the three aspects of the arts listed above are necessary to the development of a healthy society and the balance between them depends on situation as well as context.
- No institution has the right to exist. It needs to demonstrate that it is contributing to the vitality of the arts and aggregating knowledge.