



10-1999

Cultural Organizations in the Network Society

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Seifert, Susan C. and Stern, Mark J., "Cultural Organizations in the Network Society" (1999). *Culture Builds Community*. 11.

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Cultural Organizations in the Network Society

Abstract

Community arts programs are embedded in a variety of social networks, including those with institutions, artists, and participants. This paper uses data on the institutional networks for four community arts programs to understand how these programs use social networks. The database for this paper was compiled from organizational reports on their institutional contacts as well as a review of documents and observation. The data were then geocoded and linked to the SIAP's other organizational databases, including data on the presence of other types of social organizations in their neighborhood.

Community arts organizations are under two—often contradictory—pressures. Efforts to “rationalize” their organizational structure often come in conflict with their commitment to serving and engaging communities and neighborhoods. As a result, organizations are forced to be strategic in their choices of contacts, pursuing those that further their interests while reducing those that might sap their resources.

Disciplines

Arts and Humanities | Civic and Community Engagement | Social Policy | Sociology

Comments

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Social Impact of
the Arts Project

University of Pennsylvania
School of Social Work
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Cultural Organizations in the Network Society
Susan C. Seifert and Mark J. Stern
October 1999

PAPER SUMMARY

In recent years, technological and social change has altered our understanding of organizational behavior. Classic models of hierarchical bureaucracies have been replaced by interest in horizontal “enterprise organizations” for which “organizational maintenance” has been subordinated to pursuing organizational purpose. In order for these enterprises to succeed, however, they must be networked – connected by a set of formal and informal links to complementary organizations.

Community arts programs are embedded in a variety of social networks, including those with institutions, artists, and participants. This paper uses data on the institutional networks for four community arts programs to understand how these programs use social networks. The database for this paper was compiled from organizational reports on their institutional contacts as well as a review of documents and observation. The data were then geocoded and linked to the Social Impact of the Arts’ (SIAP) other organizational data bases, including data on the presence of other types of social organizations in their neighborhood.

Community arts organizations are under two – often contradictory – pressures. Efforts to “rationalize” their organizational structure often come in conflict with their commitment to serving and engaging communities and neighborhoods. As a result, organizations are forced to be strategic in their choices of contacts, pursuing those that further their interests while reducing those that might sap their resources.

This tension has implications for the networks that community arts programs form. Specifically, we suggest that the imperative for organizational maintenance and the imperative for community engagement each dictate a different organizational strategy. The difference between an organization’s *strategic* network and the profile of organizations in the neighborhood is one indicator of this tension. Often, the social networks of arts and cultural organizations do not square with the social networks of cultural participants which are more likely to reflect a *community-building* network. Therefore, we use the difference between institutional networks and the organizational profile of its neighborhood as an index of the strain that exist in an institution’s relationship to its neighborhood.

One problem with pursuing network research is inherent in the logic of networked enterprises. Although different types of contacts have different value, many contacts are important because

they are exclusive and semi-private. Furthermore, the increased “porosity” of connections means that contacts are more fleeting and difficult to document. This paper uses institutional network data on four cultural organizations to examine the strategic choices that cultural providers make in reaching out to cultural and other organizations in their neighborhoods and the metropolitan area.

The findings of our study include: 1) community arts and cultural programs maintain a wide range of contacts with other arts and cultural organizations that are usually regional in scope (Tables 1, 2); 2) arts and cultural organizations maintain diverse and varied community contacts that play a critical role in attracting audiences and raising their prominence in their neighborhoods (Table 3); 3) these neighborhood networks are often strategically constructed because organizational leaders make critical choices; 4) as a result, there is a clear difference between the organizations with which community cultural providers maintain contacts and the actual institutional profile of their neighborhood. In particular, organizations that might contribute to the formation of social capital, but are not of strategic importance to arts programs are often under-represented in cultural providers’ institutional network

Our most striking finding concerns the links between religious institutions and cultural providers. The four neighborhoods we examined in this paper are home to 361 religious institutions, but cultural providers reported having contacts with only 13 of them (Table 4). This lack of institutional contact between religious congregations and cultural providers is particularly striking because culturally-active neighborhood residents were more likely to be involved in religious groups than in any other non-arts activity (Table 5).¹

We are left then we two contradictory conclusions. First, understanding the role of social networks and developing effective ways of intervening in them are critical tasks for the future of cultural policy. Second, often the history of cultural funding, the current priorities of funders, and the organizational cultures of the major players in the cultural sector work against these tasks.

¹ The data on resident participation comes from our community participation survey, conducted in 1996-1997. See Working Paper #7 for a detailed description of this data set.

Table 1. Number of contacts in each organization’s cultural network, by location. Four community arts programs, Philadelphia

| | <i>Outside neighborhood</i> | <i>Inside neighborhood</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------|
| Cultural Provider #1 | 66.7% | 33.3% | 39 |
| Cultural Provider #2 | 47.6% | 52.4% | 21 |
| Cultural Provider #3 | 95.6% | 4.4% | 204 |
| Cultural Provider #4 | 100.0% | | 15 |
| All four organizations | 88.2% | 11.8% | |
| N | 246 | 33 | 279 |

Source: Social Impact of the Arts Project, Social network database

Table 2. Average distance between community arts programs and members of its cultural network.

| <i>Name of organization</i> | <i>Distance</i> | <i>Index²</i> |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| | <i>(miles)</i> | |
| Cultural Provider #1 | 3.0 | 130 |
| Cultural Provider #2 | 1.0 | 114 |
| Cultural Provider #3 | 4.0 | 105 |
| Cultural Provider #4 | 3.4 | 141 |
| All four organizations | 3.6 | 110 |

Source: Social Impact of the Arts Project, Social network database

² Note: 100 =average distance to network contacts of all types for organization

Table 3. Number of contacts in each organization's nonarts network, by type of organization and location.

| | <i>Cultural provider #1</i> | | <i>Cultural provider #2</i> | | <i>Cultural provider #3</i> | | <i>Cultural provider #4</i> | | <i>All four organizations</i> | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| | Outside neighborhood | Inside neighborhood | Outside neighborhood | Inside neighborhood | Outside neighborhood | Inside neighborhood | Outside neighborhood | Inside neighborhood | Outside neighborhood | Inside neighborhood |
| Bus,prof | 5.4% | 9.7% | | 3.8% | 2.1% | 3.4% | 2.6% | 5.6% | 2.2% | 5.3% |
| Church | | 3.2% | | 7.5% | 11.1% | 27.6% | 2.6% | | 9.8% | 9.9% |
| Govt | 10.8% | 3.2% | 12.5% | | 7.9% | | 7.7% | 5.6% | 8.1% | 1.5% |
| Commercial | 13.5% | 3.2% | | 1.9% | 14.8% | 6.9% | 12.8% | 5.6% | 14.3% | 3.8% |
| Fraternal | 2.7% | | | 24.5% | 4.9% | | | 5.6% | 4.4% | 10.7% |
| Funder | | | | 1.9% | 3.3% | | | | 2.9% | .8% |
| Labor | | | 6.3% | | .6% | | | | .7% | |
| Library | | | 6.3% | 1.9% | 2.7% | | | | 2.5% | .8% |
| Neighborhood | 13.5% | 32.3% | 18.8% | 20.8% | 6.6% | 3.4% | | 33.3% | 6.9% | 21.4% |
| Recreation | 2.7% | | | 3.8% | 2.7% | 3.4% | | 5.6% | 2.5% | 3.1% |
| School | 13.5% | 9.7% | 12.5% | 18.9% | 6.0% | 10.3% | 10.3% | 5.6% | 6.8% | 13.0% |
| Social service | 13.5% | 29.0% | 25.0% | 5.7% | 8.1% | 3.4% | 35.9% | 33.3% | 10.2% | 14.5% |
| Special interest | 5.4% | | 6.3% | 1.9% | 9.0% | 13.8% | 2.6% | | 8.4% | 3.8% |
| Univ, art school | 8.1% | 3.2% | 12.5% | 1.9% | 1.4% | | 10.3% | | 2.5% | 1.5% |
| Youth | | | | 5.7% | 2.5% | 10.3% | 2.6% | | 2.3% | 4.6% |
| Cultural-related | | | | | .6% | | 7.7% | | 1.0% | |
| Commercial cultural | 10.8% | | | | 7.1% | | 2.6% | | 6.9% | |
| Ethnic | | 6.5% | | | 8.5% | 17.2% | 2.6% | | 7.6% | 5.3% |
| Total | 37 | 31 | 16 | 53 | 635 | 29 | 39 | 18 | 725 | 131 |
| | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

Source: Social Impact of the Arts Project, Social network database

Table 4. Proportion of all organizations within an organization's neighborhood with which it has a relationship, by type of organization

| | <i>Cultural provider #1</i> | | | <i>Cultural provider #2</i> | | | <i>Cultural provider #3</i> | | | <i>Cultural provider #4</i> | | | <i>All four organizations</i> | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------|----|-----------------------------|---------|----|-----------------------------|---------|-----|-----------------------------|---------|-----|-------------------------------|---------|----|
| | In neighbor- hood | Network | % | In neighbor- hood | Network | % | In neighbor- hood | Network | % | In neighbor- hood | Network | % | In neighbor- hood | Network | % |
| Cultural | 158 | 11 | 7 | 40 | 13 | 33 | 6 | 1 | 17 | 36 | 9 | 25 | 240 | 34 | 14 |
| Neighborhood improvement | 41 | 11 | 27 | 43 | 10 | 23 | 7 | 6 | 86 | 16 | 1 | 6 | 107 | 28 | 26 |
| Social service | 125 | 3 | 2 | 46 | 9 | 20 | 4 | 6 | 150 | 22 | 1 | 5 | 197 | 19 | 10 |
| Youth | 9 | 3 | 33 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 300 | 22 | 6 | 27 |
| Business / professional | 33 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 60 | 57 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 50 | 97 | 7 | 7 |
| Social clubs | 51 | 13 | 25 | 42 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 25 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 122 | 14 | 11 |
| Special interest | 110 | 1 | 1 | 22 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 4 | 67 | 140 | 5 | 4 |
| Labor | 47 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 50 | 0 | 0 | 13 | 0 | 0 | 116 | 0 | 0 |
| Houses of worship | 85 | 4 | 5 | 138 | 1 | 1 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 113 | 8 | 7 | 361 | 13 | 4 |
| Public Schools | 16 | 10 | 63 | 32 | 3 | 9 | 4 | 1 | 25 | 14 | 3 | 21 | 66 | 17 | 26 |
| Library | 3 | 1 | 33 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 3 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 1 | 9 |
| Total | 678 | 59 | 9 | 390 | 39 | 10 | 160 | 16 | 10 | 251 | 30 | 12 | 1479 | 144 | 10 |

Source: Social Impact of the Arts Project, Social network database; social organization inventory

Note: Some organizations listed on network lists did not appear on our inventory of social organizations. In addition, some school contacts were with private or parochial schools.

Table 5. Types of community participation, cultural participants in five Philadelphia neighborhoods, 1996-97

| <i>Type of organization</i> | <i>Participation rate</i> |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Religious group | 51.3 |
| Library | 43.6 |
| Neighborhood association | 39.7 |
| Block association | 35.4 |
| Cooperative | 29.8 |
| Home & school assoc. | 27.2 |
| Town watch | 25.6 |
| Recreation | 23.1 |
| Continuing educ. | 18.6 |
| Social & special interest group | 18.3 |
| Garden or park group | 16.3 |
| Community development corp | 13.5 |
| Political group | 13.1 |
| Business association | 11.2 |
| Historical society | 6.4 |
| N=312 | |

Source: Social Impact of the Arts Project, Survey of Community Participation 1996-1997