

The Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage

Cultural Policy

The Center's interests and practical work in cultural policy are framed principally around local agency and cultural democracy in grassroots communities, and collaborative projects designed to foster self-representation.

Issues in cultural policy have increasingly emerged as an independent domain as well as topics central to the planning, implementation, and evaluation of initiatives in public, private, and government practices. The possible intrinsic, humanistic, and material benefits to be gained from understanding culture and devising rational ways for dealing with it socially have been sought by artists, cultural workers, scholars, corporations, museums, universities and pre-collegiate institutions, racial, ethnic and gender communities, the health professions, environmentalists, and economists. These and many other professional and social sectors are engaged in unprecedented explorations of the meanings and significance of culture and cultural policy.

The formulations and contestations of group and national identities occurring across the world put culture on a par with economic, military and other major statecraft issues. "Cultural wars" and bloody conflicts influenced by perceptions of cultural differences command attention from Los Angeles to Jerusalem, from Rwanda to Bosnia, from Chiapas to Capitol Hill.

Major issues of cultural policy between the United States and France or the United States and Canada have been disputed and tried in the World Court, and new rifts about global trade and local and national culture are emerging in the World Trade organization. UNESCO, the World Bank, the International Network on Cultural Policy, and the International Network for Cultural Diversity are among a growing number of multilateral and global civil society organizations focused on issues of culture and policy.

Linked here is information on the formation of the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity, Center research and initiatives relating to cultural policy, articles published by Center staff on cultural policy issues, Center and civil society events dealing with cultural policy, and an online discussion forum discussing current national and global cultural policy issues.

We invite your critical reflections and comments about issues in cultural policy.

James Early, Director of Cultural Heritage Policy

Source: http://www.folklife.si.edu/center/cultural_policy/index.html