

Who is responsible for the success of the arts and culture sectors?

The arts are an essential part of life. This is a statement that can be evidenced in many ways, such as the important role the arts play in documenting history, helping people cope with difficult times, celebrating joyous occasions, expressing cultural or individual identity, and the arts are a key economic engine – employing hundreds of thousands and generating billions in revenues.

In economic struggles of recent years, however, arts and culture activities have often suffered or been eliminated entirely. Some view the arts as a non-essential luxury that shouldn't be afforded in hard times. I, like many readers of the Tafter Journal, will disagree with this sentiment. And I wonder, how can we make sure this attitude does not prevail?

Who, ultimately, is responsible for the success of the arts and culture sectors?

An informal poll of my colleagues produced answers such as: artists; arts and culture organizations; local, regional, or national governments; and even “people that care”.

Although no one said, “no one is responsible,” every person I asked seemed to have a different perspective. The most popular answer: everyone is responsible. I don't disagree, however, I do believe that responsibility shared among many often produces unsatisfactory results; there are very few real situations in which network theory, or some other model of anarchist-leaning dis-organization, are the best model.

With the stakes so high, meaning that the arts are critically important, why doesn't there seem to be more agreement on where the *de facto* responsibility lies?

The term “cultural responsibility” is explored in Laura Salvan's article, “Cultural Responsibility. Small steps to restore anthropology in economic behaviour.” Salvan explains that cultural responsibility is an ethical issue that must address social inclusion and can effectively balance some of the shortcomings of pure capitalism.

Salvan mentions “corporate social responsibility” as an example of how cultural responsibility can be implemented. In theory, this is true. However, in a capitalist state, a company has no moral or ethical responsibility; its only purpose is to create profit.

Profit-driven companies must adopt and enforce “corporate social responsibility” rules in order to mandate moral or ethical practices, unlike American non-profit organizations or B Corporations that are structured to operate toward “missions” for public good. Companies adopting CSR policies seem to be increasing, however, some can be revealed as marketing strategies rather than genuine concern for the public.

On the other hand, Eugenia Morato addresses the issue from a different approach in the article, “Cultural hubs as powerful leverage of economic growth: Sydney and Philadelphia case studies.” Morato describes how using cultural policy in tandem with economic policy can be effective. This approach argues the proliferation of the arts in economic terms rather than as a moral obligation. For those of the mind that the

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arts are a luxury, this argument may work.

It's my opinion that most people find that arts and culture add value to society and I believe it is the responsibility of each person to uphold and promote the ideals most important to them. The arts are important to my personal and professional values, and I thereby take responsibility for promoting them. I hope my readers agree, and will consider their role and responsibility toward the advancement of the arts, as well.



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