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Title: Municipalities and Funding of the Arts: Some Policy Problems and Options

Authors: Dr Gerard Hagg

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Abstract (add a descriptive paragraph of Output):

MUNICIPALITIES AND FUNDING OF THE ARTS: SOME POLICY PROBLEMS AND OPTIONS

Gerard Hagg, Social Cohesion and Integration Programme, Human Sciences Research Council

In my presentation I would like to view the subject from a national level, with a focus on policies and their implementation or absence:

- Constitutional and capacity limitations to local cultural policy making
 - Opportunities offered by the Constitution, and other policies and legislation
- I will describe both issues without assessing their validity. In some cases I will refer to the community arts centres as examples, as they could be described as typical local infrastructure, and various municipalities have accepted responsibility for such centres.

Problem statement

Funding of the arts by municipal councils is rare in South Africa, and if funds are made available, they do not compare to housing, community services or sport, as any analysis of a municipal budget will show.

Many cultural activists and organizations have serious concerns in this regard as they believe that the arts are a core element of society, and particularly at a local level. Even the largest national cultural events, such as the Grahamstown Arts Festival, are local occasions, and participation of artists in such festivals impacts significantly on their own local circumstances, such as income, promotion of the municipality or increased capacity of the artists. The same applies to audiences. Equally important is the role of the arts in socio-economic development, such as youth development, crime prevention or urban renewal. Therefore, the arts should be of interest to local government, and thus be part of local municipal policy. However, only a few municipalities, and particularly metros, do have a cultural policy, e.g. Cape Town, Johannesburg, Polokwane. Even where policies exist, their implementation is not guaranteed or sufficient.

There are a number of reasons for this situation, which vary between municipalities:

1. The Constitution, which governs the government system, does not make provision for arts and culture as a local government function or competency (Schedules 4 and 5). At the moment it is a concurrent national and provincial function. Due to this Constitutional limitation, municipalities can, and often do, refuse to provide arts services. Provinces can delegate or devolve such functions but are constitutionally obliged to provide the necessary funds to the municipality. Such delegations are difficult due to time lags, different approaches to funding, etc. Where municipalities cannot or do not want to fund existing art programmes, they tend to hand them back to province, which usually does not have the capacity either. There are instances where provinces have agreed with municipalities to act as agencies for arts services, e.g. the community arts centres, without

- adequate funding. In such cases municipalities ended the services or retained them at minimal functionality, which is almost the same as closing them.
2. Leadership of DAC in national arts and culture programmes that are implemented at a local level or through local events, but are completely funded by DAC, or sometimes in partnership with provinces. These programmes are seldom linked to local development initiatives, programmes or directorates, such as the IDPs, etc.
 3. Lack of local cultural policy. Municipal departments find it almost impossible to do anything that is not made part of their portfolio unless there is a policy. This applies to all services, such as libraries and primary health care.
 4. Lack of a legitimate champion in local government, who can lobby for the support of the arts through existing or new directorates or programmes.
 5. Scarcity of available resources as against the strong demand for funding existing competencies, e.g. housing, water and electricity, roads. Even the largest municipalities, metros, find it difficult to defend expenditures on art when staff in other sections have to be retrenched or programmes shelved. After the 2000 redemarcation process many municipalities experienced a decrease in revenue base yet a higher demand for basic infrastructure. For example, Welkom in Free State suddenly had a deficit of R700 million due to the amalgamation of five poor municipalities with Welkom.
 6. Level of priority of the arts in the municipality:
 - a. Among the communities: contrary to the strong belief among artists, citizens express little interest in the creative arts as a primary element of life; the arts compete with sport, soapsies, home videos and movies. Audiences at most performances, except highly popular ones, are small, as many theatres experience. Even a full hall at Artscape for two weeks represents less than 1 per cent of Cape Town's population. One consolation: attendance of ward meetings is even lower.
 - b. Among councillors art is generally a low priority, partly due to their focus on voters, partly due to what can be defended in budget meetings in terms of municipal policies. In addition, many councillors have not been exposed to the arts, except as a past-time entertainment.
 - c. Among officials the arts are a low priority due to their normal work overloads which are measured in their annual performance assessments, partly due to the lack of clarity on whose responsibility the arts are, without a logical home for the arts in the municipality. For example, where municipalities have accepted the community arts centres, they usually ended in directorates for community development or parks and recreation. In addition, officials often have negative perceptions (and sometimes experiences) of artists and art organizations, as the latter do not fit the typical accountability framework and bureaucracy to which officials are used. If the typical

- municipal official would have been an entrepreneur rather than a civil servant, this perception might have been quite different.
4. Generally municipalities are not per definition against the funding of the arts. In fact, artists are used for all types of municipal promotions and sometimes even receive remuneration. However, funding and support are generally on an ad hoc basis, through grants-in-aid, not as an integral part of municipal policy. As a result there is little sustainability in municipal art support, and the largest festivals could be terminated at short notice, due to a shift in interest, or reallocation of funding. For sustainability, policies are imperative.
 5. Fragmentation of the arts and culture sector, and low numbers of interested people. Notwithstanding the organization of civil society, such as through NACSA, in most areas competition among art organizations for scarce resources is stronger than cooperation. For example, community arts centres generally find it difficult to form partnership with local groups. One important reason is the lack of resources, another is the lack of management capacity. In addition, one finds a lack of understanding of the municipal system among artists.

There are a number of opportunities of which stakeholders should be aware:

1. The Constitution encourages municipalities to go beyond Schedules 4b and 5b The Bill of Rights gives people right to culture. The Constitution also emphasises the need for an integrated approach in government, not just sectoral or departmental focus, which would open opportunities for the promotion of the arts.
 - Since 1998 the limiting approach of the Constitution's Schedules 4 & 5 has been replaced by the central concept of *developmental local government*., which could be defined as "...municipalities committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives (WPLG, 1998:17).

Section B of the White Paper on Local Government deals with Developmental Local Government, and refers to: "Local government can also promote social development through functions such as arts and culture, the provision of recreational and community facilities...". while 1.4 refers to "investing in youth development ... and building on their creativity and motivation...". Section B 2.3.2 refers to the provision of special economic services. This could take place through art training, production and marketing in community arts centers, as has happened before in many centres.

This developmental approach is continued in the Municipal Systems Act (2000) with its emphasis on holistic and intersectoral service delivery, and its pro-poor bias. It is at this level that the role of arts and culture in socio-economic development and the constitutional rights to cultural expression and art education could be maximized most.

3. Local government legislation encourages municipalities to explore a maximum number of services and linkages, e.g. through the IDP system. Integrated development implies that all human activities should be taken into account if they contribute to the livelihoods of people. It is thus necessary to lobby for the acceptance of the value of the arts in livelihoods, and not only its artistic or economic value, e.g. the value of arts activities for life-skills, youth development, therapy and recreation.
 4. Integrated development policies increase the potential for intergovernmental cooperation, where funding could be shared. However, cooperation between spheres of government is extremely difficult, due to different priorities, approaches and capacity for delivery. Government is still sectorally structured, with little interaction at the same level, let alone between levels. Even within municipalities there is generally little interaction between various departments or directorates.
 5. Policies in environmental, economic and tourist sectors indicate the need for municipalities to fund activities that build social capital, job creation, tourism, local economic development and urban renewal strategies.
 6. New urban and rural development strategies make provision for arts and culture as beautification, environmental upgrading, economic incubators or urban community participation stimulators, partly due to their potential for low entrance of the sector for women, untrained people, etc.
 7. Besides policy opportunities there are other reasons for acknowledging the need to include the arts in municipal funding. A number of studies show evidence of the value of the arts to municipalities, e.g. the promotion of the city (Johannesburg, Cape Town or Grahamstown), income generation from tourists. Several cities in Europe have been regenerated through culture.
 8. However, support for the arts requires reorientation in the arts sector. Effective lobbying largely depends on the existence of dedicated champions, and the availability of information on the municipality, e.g. hard data on the contribution of the arts to the municipality and its citizens. Lobbying for support is more effective if it is done in partnership and not in isolation or competition. The development of the Cape Town Cultural Policy in the 1990s is an example of social mobilization at a local level.
- Summarised: there is a good case for acceptance of the arts as a local government responsibility. This is recognized by DPLG which is reviewing Schedules 4 and 5 of the Constitution. On the other hand there is good reason for the arts sector to negotiate better deals, using better methods and cooperating with dedication.
- Thank you