

CREATIVITY IN URBAN PLACEMAKING:  
HORIZONTAL NETWORKS AND SOCIAL EQUITY IN THREE CULTURAL DISTRICTS

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The research and writing in this dissertation expands upon and deepens work I did a decade earlier in writing the Creative Community Builders Handbook, published in 2006. I refer the reader to extensive acknowledgements in that volume in recognition of people with whom I learned and practiced many of the concepts addressed herein beginning in the 1980s.

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## Abstract

Many authors point to expanding disparities related to wealth and social benefits brought by globalization and the creative city movement while culture and creativity emerge as growing forces in urban placemaking and economic development. The phenomenon of cultural district formation in cities around the globe presents challenges and opportunities for leaders, planners, and managers. Emerging theory related to cultural districts suggests culture can serve to build horizontal relationships that bridge people and networks from different sectors and professions as well as across ethnicities, class, and interests.

Research for this dissertation examined the formation of three urban cultural districts social and their respective organizational networks in different contexts. I employed a multiple case study approach to ask: How do horizontal networks form in the process of planning, organizing and/or ongoing management of cultural districts, and what kinds of benefits do those networks generate within their communities? Field research focused on districts in Los Angeles, Minneapolis, and Miami. This dissertation is positioned within ongoing discourse around the tension between form and function in the production of space (Lefebvre, 1974/1991) and within the dialectic of centralization and decentralization in urban planning and governance (Friedmann, 1971) characterized by the push for broad social equity and the pull of local control. Research found that strong horizontal networks characterized by dense and active grassroots leadership were present at the same time as relative community stability and higher levels of social and economic equity. Where horizontal networks were weak, social and economic tensions were higher. The research did not examine other potential factors and thus cannot ascertain whether strong networks resulted in greater stability and equity or whether stability and more equitable conditions

brought on by other factors fostered the formation of stronger networks. This dissertation is available in open access at AURA, <http://aura.antioch.edu/etds/> and OhioLink ETD Center, <http://www.ohiolink.edu/etd>



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## Chapter I: Introduction

If we look at space as a social form and a social practice, throughout history space has been the material support of simultaneity in social practice. That is, space defines the time frame of social relationships. This is why cities were born from the concentration of the functions of command and control, of coordination, of exchange of goods and services, of diverse and interactive social life. (Castells, 2010, p. xxxvi)

This dissertation focuses on the formation of social and civic networks in place-based communities, part of what Landry (2000) called *soft infrastructure*. In the research I looked specifically at the formation of organizational structures and networks in the context of sub-sections within cities known as districts or quarters that form around clusters of cultural, creative, and artistic assets. Literature review and research place this dissertation within the ongoing discourse around questions of the primacy and the efficacy of form and function in the production of space (Lefebvre, 1974/1991) and of social capital, leadership, and organizational forms required to plan, build, and manage urban spaces and places. Simultaneously, the phenomena examined in this research are situated within an ongoing dialectic of centralization and decentralization in urban planning and governance (Friedmann, 1971) characterized by the push for broad social equity and the pull of local control.

This chapter summarizes the backdrop and the phenomena addressed in the research—issues facing urban leaders and planners related to global economic changes and inequities and some of the challenges confronting leaders and planners in attempting to address these issues. My position as researcher is stated and the research question framed. This chapter also introduces key terms used in the dissertation and describes the phenomenon of cultural district formation addressed in greater depth in the literature review (Chapter II).

## **Form and Function of Cities in the Post-Industrial Economy**

Cities across the globe in the post-industrial era face unprecedented challenges and opportunities. Greater demands are being placed on their leadership, social systems, and infrastructure as populations grow and become more diverse, as economies change, and as infrastructures age. City leaders, planners, and managers are hard-pressed to balance physical and social needs in the presence of these and other challenges including complex cultural and political climates.

Cities in the United States are particularly pressed as public investments, along with population growth and political winds, have favored suburban sprawl for more than half a century (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, & Speck, 2000; Stahl, 2012). While cities in most parts of the world continue to house the majority of people, significant shifts in population patterns are predicted and already in evidence in the United States. Most cities there experienced significant population and economic decline since the 1950s but that trend has begun to reverse (Grogan & Proscio, 2000; Nelson, 2013). Many industrialized cities in Europe experienced similar deterioration as manufacturing changed and shifted to newly developing parts of the globe.

One of the major forces impacting the organization, financing, physical design, and socio-political management of post-industrial cities is that of globalization. As a phenomenon outside the control of any city, the emerging global economic order has major impact at all levels including neighborhoods and districts and how they organize and identify themselves. It is thus important to gain a broad understanding of these economic changes as cultural districts emerge in response to the new economy and how they are shaped by it. In the face of globalization, the cultural and creative assets of cities—from



institutions and creative sector industries, to individual artists and entrepreneurs—have increasingly become critical assets and economic drivers like commodities city leaders want to acquire, contain, and brand (Landry & Bianchini 1995; Markusen & King, 2003; Montgomery, 1995).

From the beginning of the industrial age in the 1800s, towns and cities across many parts of the world confronted vast changes. Expanding beyond centers of trade, secure residence, and artisan production, cities grew—and new cities were built—to meet the needs of an increasingly robust manufacturing apparatus (Amin, 2006; Hall, 1998; Scott, 2006). Industrial cities grew exponentially in the late 19th and early 20th century and as they did, they confronted many challenges and responded to crises including overcrowding, disease, and environmental pollution (Rohe, 2009). City planning and development became an increasingly complex endeavor requiring the housing, education, and entertainment of large labor pools, along with concerns for public health, safety, and the accommodation of waves of immigrant workers who brought different languages and cultures. “Engineers, planners, and scientists invented and built a new infrastructure of sewers, power grids, expressways, and housing complexes,” wrote Bradford (2004, p. 3). However, these engineers, planners, and scientists were largely ill-equipped for the social and cultural dimensions of building cities.

In his observations of the evolution and emergence of the post-industrial economy, Scott (2006) wrote:

Nineteenth-century capitalism gave birth to the classical factory town, as found in Britain, France, and Germany. This rise of fordist mass production in the twentieth century was associated with the growth and spread of the large industrial metropolis, as epitomized most dramatically by Detroit. . . . The peculiar forms of economic order that are in the ascendant today represent a marked shift away from the massified structures of production and the rigid labor markets that typified

fordism, and they appear to be ushering in an altogether new style of urbanization that is posing many unprecedented challenges to policymakers around the world. (p. 3)

With changes in industrial structures and the nature of production, new styles of urbanization began to emerge. Cities that once served as manufacturing centers found themselves looking for new roles and reasons for existence. Some rather desperately underwent major economic and institutional restructuring while a few approached the challenges in more planful and successful ways than others (Donegan & Lowe, 2008; Landry, 2006).

Scholars of urban development patterns of the late industrial era cite environmental degradation, social disintegration (Grogan & Proscio, 2000), labor strife and infrastructure deterioration (Orfield, 2002), and a movement towards “placelessness” (Gratz, 1994; Kunstler, 1993), among a variety of other ills that have befallen many once-prosperous cities. Modernist urban planning solutions seemed to work well for a growing middle class during a good part of the 20th century, but, as Bradford (2004) observed, planning practices “separated citizens, compartmentalized problems, bureaucratized services, and too often relied on the bulldozer rather than people to build community” (p. 3).

Apparent preferences for suburban lifestyles drove city planners to generate policies, investments, and building codes that further reduced the density of urban populations, and in the second half of the 20th century to accommodate more automobile movement and parking within their city limits. Some cities tried to physically remake themselves in the image of suburbs, denying their own nature as compact centers of population, culture, and commerce (Duany et al., 2000). Bianchini (2004) described the resulting urban fabric as unnecessary sprawl characterized by homogenization of retail and

entertainment choices contributing to decline in distinctiveness of each city. “This dull, pedestrian-unfriendly and ‘placeless’ expanse of tarmac, in many cases surrounded by badly designed sheds, is clearly not the most stimulating place for socializing and conviviality” (p. 2) he wrote.

Many cities, although altered, began a return to a place of importance in their regions by the beginning of the 21st century. Scholars from a variety of disciplines have illustrated how cities as hubs of creativity and invention throughout history have demonstrated resilience as centers for production of knowledge, culture, and wealth. Through his 10,000-year anthropological survey, Weatherford (1994) described how cities serve as vital forums for innovation, as places of trade and learning, where cultures mix and new ideas foment. Hall (1998), in an historical analysis of global cities, identified creativity, culture, and inventiveness among the key attributes that propel some cities into economic and cultural prominence while other cities languish.

In her lesser-known work on the role of cities in regional economies, Jacobs (1984) asserted that aesthetic curiosity, not necessity, is the mother of invention. And Scott (2006) observed that “cities are always something vastly more than just bare accumulations of capital and labor, for they are also arenas in which many other kinds of phenomena—social, cultural, and political—flourish” (p. 2). These characteristics of urban places, their inhabitants, and social organizations provide the impetus for urban regeneration sometimes with the help of planners and policy-makers and sometimes in spite of them.

Cultural amenities built during the industrial era and the centrality of cities as transportation hubs along with other infrastructure assets, made them indispensable to the

very people who fled them during the second half of the 20th century (Amin & Thrift, 2002; Grogan & Proscio, 2000). A gradual rebuilding of many post-industrial cities began and some gained considerable traction towards the end of the 20th century.

In counter-balance to the mobility of manufacturing and capital that typifies globalization, Florida (2002) observed that flows of talent and human capital are likewise highly mobile and for different reasons. Widely credited for altering the global conversation about the economies and values of cities and their creative assets, and widely criticized for his assertions, Florida championed the importance of a creative and well-educated class of professionals to the economic competitiveness of cities. This set off more purposeful efforts by many cities around the globe to attract this particular brand of human capital by creating bohemian, culture-rich environments attractive to this mostly young, highly mobile population and to enter a creative city competition (Evans, 2009a; Kunzmann, 2004; Pratt, 2010). Such strategies, adopted by cities to recast themselves as creative cities, became known as culture-led regeneration, a phenomenon surveyed in Chapter II.

Florida (2010), Nelson (2013), and others have predicted global shifts in lifestyle, work, and local economies as great as any the world has seen in the past two centuries. The new economy and globalization, they asserted, require new physical forms and different patterns of habitation, consumption, and placemaking. These authors assert that such changes began to evidence themselves at the start of the 21st century and will fully unfold over the next 20 to 30 years. An economy dominated by agriculture gave way to one dominated by manufacturing, and now by one in which knowledge, creativity, and instantaneous global communication set the terms. The physical patterns and

infrastructure needs of each era are distinctly different (Hou, 2013; Wood & Landry, 2008). What the patterns of the emerging era will look like is a matter of speculation but is beginning to take shape as city neighborhoods and districts take on stronger identities based in culture, ethnicity, and creative practices.

At the same time that some celebrate a re-birth of cities, globalization and the growth of the creative economy in most urban centers across the world have been accompanied by heightened economic disparities. Some post-industrial cities began to re-emerge freshly invigorated and finding new growth during the economically robust turn of the 21st century only to confront new challenges related to sharpened inequities related to prosperity and resource distribution, along with growing environmental threats (Pratt, 2010). Most city leaders have discovered that the new economy is one in which they have to position themselves and compete globally for talent, investment, and identity and in which old approaches to economic growth and wealth distribution are not working.

Some efforts to regenerate cities during the past two or three decades gained traction leading Porrello and Tommarchi (2008) to observe that by the turn of the 21st century, “cities as centres of political and economic power, of production and public life seem nowadays to have [overcome] the decline that characterized the shift from industrial economy to [the] post-industrial and knowledge economy” (p. 1). Most cities, however, remain hampered by a lack of understanding among planners and leaders of emerging global economies, global movement of populations, and the added fact that most urban planners were trained in mid-to-late 20th century modernist ideas about cities and regional economies that led to massive suburban sprawl. On a more nuanced level one of the more complex challenges cities face emanates from modernist concepts that isolate

form and function (Glazer, 2007). Planners and city leaders struggle with complex, interdependent systems that call for holistic, cross-domain solutions (Bradford, 2004; Sandercock, 2004).

### **The Crisis of Specialization**

The push and pull between the needs of spatial forms on the one hand and social structures on the other, complicate the process of place-based community building—the ongoing formation and management of social and civic processes in cities, towns, and neighborhoods. Castells (2010), Forrest and Kearns (2001), and Talen (2006), explored this chicken/egg conundrum in ways cities and communities form without explicitly asking the question of which came first, the physical structures or human interactions that shape those spaces. Duany et al. (2000) suggested such efforts represent a continuous loop when they wrote, “we shape our cities and then our cities shape us” (p. 83).

Bedoya (2013) argued that the process of making places is tethered to images of the built environment while people, cultures, and especially those who are economically and culturally disenfranchised are not in the picture. “Before there is a vibrant street one needs an understanding of the social dynamics on that street—the politics of belonging and dis-belonging at work in placemaking in civil society,” wrote Bedoya (2013, p. 20). This results in what he described as a troubling legacy in “acts of displacement, removal, and containment” (p. 20). Emphasis on the built environment in city building and placemaking result in reliance on the bulldozer, as described by Bradford (2004), in which people are often in the way.

Bradford (2004) elevates urban policy issues beyond the level of complex, calling them *wicked*. Wicked policy problems, he says, are resistant to traditional mono-sectoral

solutions or interventions, and “demand flexible strategies built from the ground or street up on the basis of local knowledge, and delivered by multi-party networks crossing program silos and jurisdictional turfs” (p. 5).

Some social critics fault modernism for embedding separations within most forms of organization including discipline-based thinking (Glazer, 2007). Based largely in modernist spatial and social concepts, the practice of urban planning and design lack holistic thinking and problem-solving capacities to address the inter-related needs of the physical, social, and organizational forms (Talen & Ellis, 2004). Bradford (2004) called for new forms of collaboration among government departments that cross levels of government, and connect governments with the private sector and community organizations. Sandercock (2004) argues, “new modes of thought and new practices are needed to shift what was once considered as natural, some of the outmoded assumptions embedded in the culture of Western planning” (p. 140).

Cities in the post-industrial era require sweeping changes to established policy routines, planning practices, and organizational forms, argued Landry and Bianchini (1995), who went on to observe that city institutions are still “largely based on rigid functional specializations, without sufficient sharing and cooperation between different departments, disciplines and sectors” (p. 22). To address some of these challenges Healey (2006) advocated the planning profession build horizontal relationships and new forms of local governance.

Shifting paradigms and the increasingly complex make-up and needs of cities require more adaptive, creative, and horizontal approaches—a heightened ability to apply creativity to problem solving, to apply more cross-sector and interdisciplinary approaches,

and to adapt more quickly. Chrislip and Larson (1994) found traditional forms of civic and political leadership, developed in response to industrial era needs and structures, increasingly unable to cope with challenges facing cities. “Most of the leadership difficulties are caused by fragmentation of power in . . . cities and regions: authority, responsibility, and the ability to act have become so diffuse that no one person or group can successfully address difficult issues”(p. 19).

Civic leaders, city planners, and policy mechanisms have struggled to adapt to the global, post-industrial transition, as have leaders at the helm of education, arts, and culture institutions. Uhl-Bien, Marion, and McKelvey (2007) found that top-down hierarchical models, effective for an economy premised on physical production, are not well-suited for a more knowledge-oriented or creative economy. They argue that, “despite the needs of the Knowledge Era, much leadership theory remains largely grounded in a bureaucratic framework more appropriate for the Industrial Age” (p. 301).

This leads to another, more nuanced challenge related to the capacity of leaders, planners, and others to bring to bear the needed tools and resources to effectively respond. The established fields of city planning, management, and leadership are largely unprepared for contemporary challenges including diversity, creative thinking, economic inequity, complex social relations, and issues around environmental sustainability (Bradford, 2004). Cities require practices that bridge cultural differences, remedy social inequalities, and re-frame the conversation to merge economic, social, cultural, and environmental goals (Hawkes, 2001). Sandercock (2004) argued that among the greatest challenges cities face are established views of planning that limit its field of view and box of tools.



## **The Production of Space as Interdisciplinary Challenge**

This dissertation is situated within the discourse around questions of the primacy and the efficacy of form and function in what Lefebvre (1974/1991) called production of space. In this process of production he includes social orders and value systems that plan, build, and manage places as well as everyday lived experiences—ways people use and subsequently shape space. Lefebvre saw space as socially produced and composed of these three interdependent layers, the physical, social, and lived experience.

Efforts in contemporary practices related to space production, or the renewal or regeneration of cities, too often neglect the conceived space, or the social systems and civic infrastructures as well as lived experience. Instead they favor the perceived space, the land uses and the physical structures. Regeneration efforts often fail to account for social needs, everyday experiences and the cultures of place. “Space is simultaneously produced both as a concrete entity and as an abstract entity; it is *perceived* and *conceived*,” wrote Karplus and Meir (2013, p. 25). They described space as “emotionally and poetically infused with symbolism and meaning derived from the lived experience of everyday life” (p. 25). Bedoya (2013) asserted that urban spaces should enact “identity and activities that allow personal memories, cultural histories, imagination, and feelings to enliven the sense of ‘belonging’ through human and spatial relationships” (p. 21). Karplus and Meir (2013) also argued that “coherent spatiality is central to the formation and preservation of social cohesion and provides an empowering framework with which to overcome obstacles and respond to different ecological and social challenges generated from within or from outside” (p. 32). The interdependent nature and the empowering framework of these three elements form the basis of sustainable communities.

In the ongoing construction of cities, leaders and planners generally take the simpler route focusing on the built or perceived space. Landry (2000) wrote,

Planners find it easier to think in terms of expenditure on highways, car parks and physical redevelopment schemes rather than on soft infrastructure such as training initiatives for skills enhancement, the encouragement of a lively night-time economy, grants to voluntary organizations to develop social networks or social innovations and the decentralization of powers to build up local capacity and encourage people to have a stake in the running of their neighborhoods. (p. 18)

Investment in the soft infrastructure Landry described too often comes second to investments in the physical—or not at all. Attending to holistic social connections and systems, weaving a social fabric within a physical environment, and making use of interdependent and complementary assets (McKnight & Kretzmann, 1993) are not as simple. Results are not as immediately evident as building a new residential or retail block.

Building a community requires much more than constructing clusters of buildings. It consists of work that Bradford (2004), Landry (2000), and others argue is typically outside the purview or skill set of many in the planning professions as well as many elected and appointed public sector leaders. Most city leaders and administrators gained their skills through training and experience in the management of one or more municipal or institutional departments or areas of specialization (Bradford, 2004; Sandercock, 2004). Social workers, artists, and even those in the healing professions may be better equipped to attend to the social fabric but rarely engage with those planning, designing, and constructing the physical landscape of cities (Dang, 2005; Sarkissian & Hurford, 2010). In fact, some argue that much of the work of artists and healers is devoted to repairing damage done to individuals and to the social structures by those responsible for building the physical or *perceived* environment (Borrup, 2006; Cleveland, 2000; Goldbard, 2006; Talen, 2006).

Due to this neglect and disconnect, many social scientists exploring contemporary urban communities warn of a “crisis of social cohesion” (Kearns & Forrest, 2000, p. 995). Putnam (1998) argues that communities large and small have become increasingly fragmented as the result of a dramatic decline in social capital over the second half of the 20th century. Scholars argue that maintaining social cohesion and building new social capital is further complicated by rapid globalization and growing ethnic and cultural diversity. Concepts related to trust, social capital, social cohesion, and the capacity of people in place-based communities for collective action (Fukuyama, 1995) are central to this dissertation and reviewed in Chapter II to help understand these social phenomena.

This dissertation takes an in-depth look at the formation of social and civic networks in place-based communities. It looks specifically at the formation of functional organizational structures and networks in the context of sub-sections within cities (known as districts or quarters, among other terms) that form around clusters of cultural, creative, and artistic assets. Within these creative or cultural districts scholars observe that a kind of horizontal network or bridging of organizational and social structures connects people across sectors, professions, and types (Mommaas, 2004; Sacco & Tavano-Blessi, 2007). In this dissertation I examined the context in which cultural districts form and how social and organizational networks organize during the process of their planning and through their ongoing existence. I explored how those social networks exhibited and derived value from horizontal, or cross-domain relationships.

The organization and emergence of cultural districts or quarters in cities around the globe comes at a time of great change for cities. In some respects the formation of those defined districts constitutes a response to urban challenges and in other respects they may

create or contribute to new challenges. Assertions in the literature point to culturally and creatively defined spaces as having an unusual capacity to foster social networks that cross domains, sectors, professions, ethnicity, and class, known as horizontal networks (Sacco & Tavano-Blessi, 2007). Other scholars point to growing social and economic disparities in cities and in the context of cultural district formation (Evans, 2005; Pratt, 2010; Zukin & Braslow, 2011). This dissertation contributes to the understanding of cultural districts and their social and organizational networks. I examined how horizontal networks contribute to social cohesion and collective efficacy in urban environments in areas that are often economically challenged and ethnically diverse.

### **Positioning of the Researcher**

I approached the dissertation initially through interest in the ways social and civic relationships form and function in place-based communities, specifically those identified as diverse and as culturally active or robust. Such places often incorporate community festivals, resident artists, and active public and private cultural and social spaces and organizations. Through my work in the cultural sector, my curiosity grew about how culturally defined districts, and their activities and organizations help build social capital and, in turn, how cross-cutting or horizontal networks help to power robust civic cultures. Through my consulting practice and as a planner and teacher, I observe and participate in the phenomenon of cultural district formation, now the subject of nearly two decades of study by scholars across the globe. The planning, organizing, and management of such districts appear to provide fertile and unique opportunities for social and civic network formation, an important part of the conceived and lived experience in the production of space.

My professional work revolves around cultural and community-based planning and subsequent development or regeneration of place-based communities. I arrive at this work through a career as a cultural manager, community activist and leader. In the nonprofit cultural arena, I led an arts organization for over 20 years that focused on community-based social change. Through this organization I engaged in place-based cultural organizing, applying the capacities of artists, arts, and culture on behalf of various social and neighborhood issues and I engaged in professional field-building locally and across the United States in what is known as the community based arts field.

Outside my day job I engaged as an activist involved in neighborhood change through informal neighbor-to-neighbor organizing, as well as through formal city-defined neighborhood organizations and the local political process as a resident of an active, progressive, and multi-ethnic neighborhood. Perhaps most significantly, during more than 20 years as executive director of Intermedia Arts, I blended creative and cultural interests with neighborhood engagement and activism in the building of one of the most multi-cultural and innovative arts organizations in the United States. I worked with artists using multiple cultural forms and creative practices to advance social, economic, and physical change in neighborhoods surrounding the art center. Founding a program known as the Institute for Community Cultural Development in 2001 (now called the Creative Community Leadership Institute) I brought together artists and other community activists on a wide range of collaborative change projects in the context of a professional development program.

I define my outward identity as a community builder, planner, and facilitator who employs creative methods. More recently I find myself a teacher and writer concerned with cultural equity and social justice.

### **Purpose of the Dissertation**

The purpose of the dissertation research is to expand understanding of the phenomena of cultural district formation and how horizontal networks contribute to them. Paiola (2008) described horizontal networks as “a local resource endowment.” Novy, Swiatek, and Moulaert (2012) called them “public platforms of knowledge exchange” (p. 1882). Social networks organized around concerns of people in urban neighborhoods become everyday activities that build trust, social capital, and social cohesion and enable community members to take collective action.

Within urban districts inhabited by people of diverse ethnicities and interests, Talen (2006) argued

Interaction or the opportunity for interaction among diverse peoples is believed to be necessary for overcoming certain types of social problems. Place diversity is important because it may help build social capital of the ‘bridging’ kind by widening networks of social interaction. (p. 238)

Horizontal networks connecting people across differences help build more resilient, sustainable, and creative communities—places with greater balance between perceived, conceived, and lived experience as described by Lefebvre (1974/1991).

My findings through this research are that horizontal social networks in place-based communities serve as bridges and mechanisms for communities to engage a wider mix of actors and to better respond to complex local issues. These networks enable interdisciplinary problem-solving and provide the motivational resources and actual capacity to maintain social cohesion and enable collective action. Social networks in

diverse communities that cross domains of professions, sectors, and expertise, and that connect social, political, economic, and other bases of power, provide the utilitarian capacity and momentum for collective actions on behalf of the community. At the same time these networks have limitations and present potential problems. In the pull for localization narrowly focused coalitions may neglect or even work against broader concerns around social and economic equity among other matters. At present, the formation and functioning as well as the benefits and pitfalls of horizontal networks within cultural districts are not well understood within place-based planning and urban leadership.

This dissertation aims to expand knowledge available to the urban planning practice, to city leaders, and to cultural district organizers so as to build stronger, more resilient, more equitable and more culturally robust place-based communities. Through this research I hope to expand thinking within the practice of urban planning—a practice grounded in modernist approaches to land allocations and infrastructure design—to place higher value on the cultural and social relationships built across sectors, professions, ethnic groups, and economic strata and to develop greater appreciation for lived experience and holistic thinking related to city building.

### **The Research Question and Subject**

The formation of urban districts organized around ethnic and creative identities is a growing phenomenon, especially in post-industrial cities around the world (Landry & Bianchini, 1995; Roodhouse, 2010; Santagata, 2000). Neighborhoods, downtowns, clusters of former industrial facilities, and other left-over spaces have emerged with identities as arts districts and cultural quarters. Formation of such districts comes partly in response to

the transition from the industrial to the knowledge-based or creative economy (Bianchini & Ghilardi, 2007; Mommaas, 2004; Shorthose, 2004). As such, research and literature on the phenomenon focuses on economics, development of real estate, place branding, global positioning, and competition among cities. Some research focuses on adverse effects attributed to the phenomenon related to social equity and displacement often referred to as gentrification (Evans, 2005; Pratt, 2010; Zukin & Braslow, 2011).

A number of scholars compare cultural clusters and districts that have been organized and managed through bottom-up or grassroots activities with those planned, developed, and managed employing top-down strategies. Some research finds more equitably distributed benefits, greater sustainability, and other positive results in districts organized using bottom-up approaches (Chapple, Jackson, & Martin, 2011; Mommaas, 2004; Sacco & Tavano-Blessi, 2007; Stern & Seifert, 2005b, 2007). No research has been conducted, however, that looks inside bottom-up approaches and horizontal networks in the context of cultural districts, how they form, function, and contribute to other aspects of community life.

Emerging theory related to cultural districts suggests culture and creative practices serve as a vehicle for building horizontal relationships. Sacco and Tavano-Blessi (2007) called this “the activator effect of culture” (p. 4). Approaching their research through an economic perspective they cite cultural districts as bringing a unique capacity to foster horizontal integration versus the kinds of vertical relationships typically found in traditional industrial or commercial clusters or districts.

Scholars find that communities that possess greater social capital, social cohesion, and capacity for collective action, are more resilient and that such attributes derive from



broad-based social networks (Sampson & Graif, 2009). Such communities tend to have lower crime, greater personal security, and stronger ability to overcome obstacles and bounce back from crisis. This, together with observations on the greater benefits of bottom-up organizing of cultural districts, points to the added value in cross-cutting horizontal networks as an under-explored phenomenon.

This dissertation employed qualitative research methods based on multiple case studies to examine the question: How do horizontal networks form through the process of planning, organizing and/or ongoing management of cultural districts, and what kinds of benefits do those networks generate within their communities?

My field research focused on three cultural districts in the United States formed during the past 20 years in different cities, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, and Miami. These three districts represent a geographically dispersed set of cases with common characteristics and some considerable differences.

Case study research looked at the context in which these communities exist as well as the process of formation and governance of the districts including how stakeholders are linked across a spectrum of interests and personal characteristics. Through this research I explored the presence, nature, and development of horizontal working relationships in each district across sectors, race, class, professions, and individual areas of civic, social, and economic interests and benefits.

### **Terminology of Cultural Clusters and Districts**

The literature reveals a variety of terminology used in reference to cultural and creative clusters and districts. In different parts of the world and in the work of scholars from different disciplines, such areas within cities are generally identified by their primary

or most prominent activity or cluster of assets. In the literature and in practice, they are named with one or more of these words: arts, artist, creative, cultural, design, entertainment, film, gallery, media, museum, or theater. Ethnically-identified areas, considered by some as cultural clusters, are typically named with a specific national, city, or ethnic term (e.g., Thai Town, Little Tokyo, Greektown, etc.)

In reference to the physical place itself, various names are found in use, including: alley, belt, corridor, district, place, precinct, quarter, row, or zone. In practice in the United States, clusters most frequently refer to themselves as districts and most commonly use *creative, cultural, or arts*. Roodhouse (2010), Shorthose (2004) and other scholars in the United Kingdom refer to them as *quarters*, while some in Europe and Australia called them *precincts*.

Although *creative industry* clusters and *arts* clusters are often indistinguishable in practice, scholars go to considerable lengths to separate the two. Creative industries are mostly characterized by for-profit entrepreneurial activities to produce goods and services defined within the realm of design and enterprises based in intellectual property development. Arts or cultural clusters are typified by forms of artistic, ethnic, or heritage activities, and comprised largely of artists, nonprofits or fine arts organizations where traditional and/or original work is created for public presentation and/or sale.

In some places creative enterprises form a cluster around a single industry type. Like industries coalesce and build shared resources and sometimes a branded identity in support of similar or related products or services. Creative industries may include the design and/or production of ceramics, film, fashion, furniture, jewelry, wines, etc. Sacco and Tavano-Blessi, (2007) described these as vertically integrated systems. Cultural

clusters, on the other hand, typically cross product types or arts disciplines such as painting, sculpture, music, dance, theater, photography, etc. As such, they belong to different supply chains (Sacco & Tavano-Blessi, 2007). These distinctions may seem artificial to many artists and entrepreneurs. In many places creative and cultural entrepreneurs do not coalesce around a single industry type, nor do they self-identify in one or the other category (Markusen, 2011). Activities in such districts are generally mixed and/or indistinguishable as to whether they are *creative* or *cultural*.

Kong (2009a), based in Asia, observed that in European literature *cultural cluster* is most widely used and in the United States and Australia, *creative cluster* is more common. The creative identity, she asserts, stands in contrast to a cultural identity. In her framing, a cultural cluster may be rooted in historic assets, high art, and/or ethnic traditions and typically emphasizes experience and consumption. Use of creative cluster, Kong argues, most often refers to the presence of creative sector industries, or districts focused on incubating and producing design, fashion, media, and entertainment-related products. Kong proposes the word combination *creative cultural cluster* to best describe places where the focus is on artists and formal arts practices to distinguish them from heritage districts and from creative industry clusters.

Mommaas (2009), from The Netherlands, proposes *cultural-creative* as the most apt descriptive term. He acknowledged the clumsiness in this word construction while he suggests cultural cluster is too narrow and *creative cluster* too broad. He appears to assume a Western art and cultural frame in which the making and consumption of the fine arts are primary. Heritage or ethnic clusters fall outside his definition of either culture or creative. Mommaas argues that creative cluster opens itself to inclusion of creative

industries or enterprises (software development, design, fashion, etc.) that do not fit within his fine art frame.

Stern and Seifert (2012), working in the United States, prefer the use of *culture* versus *creative* or *arts* because it is a more inclusive term that incorporates a wider variety of ethnic, heritage, traditional, and localized practices and forms of expression. Creativity as a value is paramount among some cultures while heritage preservation or traditional practices are more important in others. In their view cultural production may be defined by creative activities as well as by traditional or ethnic cultural practices.

For many economists and scholars such as Barreca, Ferraro, and Fiorani (2011) and Sacco, Tavano-Blessi and Nuccio (2008), a *district* can include an entire city or region made up of numerous municipalities while a *quarter* is distinctly a unit or part of a city. This makes the use of the term district problematic in international and various discipline-based literatures. The term district, typically in practice in the United States, compares more closely with *quarter* as it refers to a neighborhood or area within a city.

The terms cultural cluster and creative cluster tend to be indistinguishable in practice in many cities because of the frequent co-location or hybrid nature of both fine arts and creative enterprises. Culture or cultural, as a descriptor of activity, speaks to a broader range of people as in ethnic and cultural groups. Creative cultural cluster (Kong, 2009a) may be more precise for academic purposes but cultural district suggests a deliberate designation of a place, whether formal or informal. District is more attuned to policy-based recognition by municipal entities in the United States and is more easily recognized by practitioners whereas a cluster describes more of a phenomenon that is

observed by scholars or analytical policymakers and may not constitute a recognizable place identity.

In this dissertation cultural is used for its more inclusive meaning as cited by Stern and Seifert (2012), and district is used as it conforms with common use in the United States within urban planning, policymaking, and the arts sector to designate a division or neighborhood within a larger city.

### **Summary**

In addition to positioning the researcher, framing the research questions, and defining key terminology, this chapter summarized arguments related to the sweeping changes taking place in cities in the post-industrial era of globalization and the emergence of the creative or new economy. The phenomena of social capital and social cohesion were introduced and challenges to urban planners and leaders summarized. This dissertation places itself within the discourse of constructing both the concrete and abstract, or perceived and conceived dimensions of urban spaces and communities, thus the attention to the physical and economic structures as well as to the importance of social fabric and cultural activities or everyday lived experience (LeFebvre, 1974/1991).

Formation of cultural districts in many parts of the world, including the United States where a practice referred to as *creative placemaking* is a newly popularized phenomenon, calls for a better understanding of the organizational forms and networks that best serve these communities. A growing body of research on cultural districts from economic and urban planning vantage points has emerged with limited research from a sociological perspective. The research conducted for this dissertation helps to fill a void in

understanding the organizational and social networks that help form cultural districts and that conduct their ongoing coordination or governance.

Appropriate organizational forms and networks within place-based communities, including urban cultural districts, responded to the global changes discussed. Resulting from this research, I argue that cross-cutting or horizontal organizational forms and networks provide bridges and mechanisms for communities to better respond to complex and evolving issues—challenges that come from within and from outside communities.

## Chapter II: Review of the Literature

### Introduction

Among the broader phenomena at work in cities today, argues Castells (2010), is “a world characterized by simultaneous globalization and fragmentation” (p. 22). Whether this represents splintering or compatible co-existence of the global and local, remains an active debate (Amin, 2004; Hou, 2013; Osti, 2013; Purcell, 2006). Swyngedouw (1997) labels this *glocalization*, a term repeated in scholarly literature and popular media, along with the similar phrase, think globally, act locally.

The parallel and possibly oppositional forces of global and local, grow in significance through the advance of globalization in what Hou (2013) described as the everyday transcendence of physical and cultural boundaries resulting from global transportation networks, more mobile populations, technology, and boundless social networks. While this “transnational flow of ideas, information, knowledge, money, people and cultural influences” (Hou, 2013, p. 33) grows, the appearance of fragmentation is characterized by the drawing of more decentralized place-based, or neighborhood/district, identities and localized forms of governance (Healey, 2006; Ruffin, 2010).

Place-based communities may appear to look inward, but some are highly networked outside their borders (Osti, 2013). They function, as Lowndes and Sullivan (2008) describe, as “multi-level, multi-actor and e-enabled” (p. 53). Other scholars are more skeptical of the local (Amin, 2004; Purcell, 2006). Organizational and social networks within urban cultural districts embody complex local and global dynamics. These include the push and pull of local and global identities, changing social and cultural blending, and simultaneous presence of local and global networks.

The interdisciplinary nature of this dissertation requires review of scholarly literature from several related fields as well as an exploration of how ideas in this literature relate to the formation and function of horizontal networks in urban cultural districts. To help paint the backdrop, I ground the dissertation in five areas of scholarship. These relate to social capital and social cohesion, culture-led regeneration and creative cities, local planning and governance, the formation of cultural districts, and the development of horizontal organizational networks and leadership within districts.

Chapter I presented the challenges facing cities related to economic transformation—commonly referred to as globalization in the post-industrial economy—and described challenges confronting urban planners and leaders expected to respond to such changes.

While there is well over a century of scholarship related to city and local neighborhood planning, the phenomenon of creative cities and cultural district formation has gained attention among scholars across the globe for less than 20 years. It is suggested in some scholarship that social capital and social cohesion in place-based communities comes about through bottom-up or grassroots organizing and the formation of horizontal or cross-cutting organizational and social networks. Other scholars suggest that cultural districts may tend to foster as well as benefit from bottom-up organizing and horizontal networks. Such assertions provide the basis for the exploration of horizontal networks that have not been examined in any depth in the literature.

Local organizing and horizontal network development are at best tangential in urban planning practice. The building of social capital, social cohesion, and new forms of civic governance are rarely addressed in traditional planning. Some scholars advocate for



the process of planning to serve a dual purpose and help build community relationships and capacity for more localized governance.

In some progressive schools of the planning profession, practitioners and scholars advocate highly participatory practices, as well as the use of creative and culturally specific processes, to foster development of diverse indigenous leadership and to elicit outcomes that draw directly on local assets and local knowledge. Some reference positive side effects of such practices in building organizational capacity and horizontal networks. As the cultural sector is increasingly called upon in urban regeneration initiatives, the building of social relationships or local governance, either as a result or by-product of cultural initiatives, is also a little-explored subject.

This review includes literature from five areas: (a) social capital and social cohesion; (b) culture-led regeneration of cities, specifically the creative cities movement; (c) local or neighborhood planning and governance practices; (d) creative and cultural clusters and districts in cities; (e) horizontal networks and organizing strategies. Figure 2.1 illustrates how each is progressively embedded within larger concepts. This review encompasses these areas, each complex and diverse.



*Figure 2.1.* Literature review map.

Many authors reviewed here make reference in one way or another to new partnerships, to cross-sector collaborations, and to the need for new kinds of relational thinking in urban planning, regeneration, and formation of cultural districts. Newly forming horizontal relationships in communities are cited as connecting local actors in new and constructive ways. This review identifies a gap in the literature related to the understanding of organizational and social networks that help form cultural districts and help cultural districts conduct ongoing coordination among their key actors.

### **Social Capital and Social Cohesion**

In establishing some of the building blocks to understand social systems, Granovetter (1973, 1983) observed relationships he labeled “weak ties.” He found that the possession of many weak ties enabled individuals to more easily acquire needed resources

such as employment and for groups to engage in collective action. Weak ties include familiarity and casual relationships with a wide range of people. At the same time, Granovetter (1983) pointed out that an abundance of and reliance on what he called *strong ties* can have the opposite outcome, limiting the individual and isolating the group. Strong ties are close ties that confine trusting relationships to a group of similar individuals such as family or tribe. Portes (1998) described strong ties as “dense networks [that] tend to convey redundant information, while weaker ties can be sources of new knowledge and resources” (p. 6).

Yang (2006) pointed out that within communities made up of a collection of unique individuals, each possesses differing inclination or propensity to trust others. Beginning as a personal trait, Yang asserted, trust leads to a “generalized expectation about the trustworthiness of others” (p. 580). Some scholars observe that the propensity to trust tends to run parallel with family groups and cultural patterns and that it varies in different parts of the world. Fukuyama (1995) advanced ideas about the nature and implications of the phenomenon pointing to cultural traits and social behaviors that contribute to or detract from the economic and political success of different societies or ethnic groups around the globe.

Fukuyama (1995) pointed to social and cultural traits that enable people to trust one another and subsequently to work together to build economic enterprises and civic organizations. He argued “the most important form of sociability from an economic standpoint is the ability of strangers (that is, non-kin) to trust one another and work together in new and flexible forms of organization” (p. 91). By extension, Fukuyama described how different groups of people, clans, tribes, and ethnic or cultural groups

possess differing levels of trust within their groups and external trust with those outside their groups. It is through these capacities, he argued, that businesses, cities, and even nations find varying degrees of success and failure.

Kearns and Forrest (2000), like Fukuyama (1995), asserted that trust is an essential element of the social order and key to the success of communities of all sizes. “Trust . . . sustains and encourages interaction, exchange and movement: without these things, urban vitality is lost” (Kearnes & Forrest, 2000, p. 1007).

The related phenomenon of social capital has been subject of research from a variety of discipline-based vantage points including sociology, economics, psychology, urban planning, and others. Bourdieu (1986) is widely credited with attaching the concept of capital to this social phenomenon and opened up thinking about relationships as a kind of currency held and exchanged among individuals and collectives to co-exist and act together. He defined it as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources, which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (as cited in Portes, 1998, p. 3). According to Portes, the concept “calls attention to how such nonmonetary forms can be important sources of power and influence” (p. 2). Economic capital, wrote Portes, exists in concepts of ownership and in the bank accounts of individuals, while “social capital inheres in the structure of the relationships” (p. 7).

Putnam (2007) examined how trust and social capital form differently in places with a greater ethnic mix of residents. He found that “people of all ethnicities living in those places tend to ‘hunker down’”(p. 149). Hermes and Poulsen (2012) similarly found less social capital in places with a greater ethnic mix. They claimed that levels of trust

“including trust in the outgroup, ingroup, and the generalized other, are lower in places with higher ethnic diversity” (p. 22). Leonard, Croson, and de Oliveira (2010) concluded that “social capital is a resource utilized differently by the rich and the poor and perhaps across other demographic features” (p. 475).

Assuming that, as with trust, some communities possess greater amounts of social capital and others less, it is often correlated with the socio-economic condition of places or neighborhoods. Portes (1998) reflected on the “dearth of social connections in certain impoverished communities” (p. 13) without raising the question of which came first, the lack of connections or the impoverished state. For Putnam, social capital brings “social organizations, such as networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate action and cooperation for mutual benefit” (as cited in Portes, 1998, p. 18). Kearns and Forrest (2000) wrote,

Putnam has argued elsewhere that poor neighborhoods tend to lack the necessary qualities for self-help, mutuality and trust which could assist in their regeneration—and in part explains, and is a cumulative product of, their decline. In taking up these ideas, regeneration strategies have increasingly come to be seen as working with and building on the stock of social capital in a neighborhood. A key implication is that without sufficient social capital, regeneration policies will not take root or be sustainable. (p. 1010)

Since the 1990s considerable quantitative research has been conducted to examine the size and flows of relationships within the construct of social capital. Some argue, however, that more work on the quality of relationships and networks is overdue (Kearns & Forrest, 2000).

It is widely recognized that social capital is a resource that can aid a variety of beneficial outcomes in communities (Talen, 2006), but that “the potential ‘downside’ of social capital has received relatively limited attention in research to date” (p. 1556). Novy et al. (2012) cited Max Weber’s concept of social closure in which “a dominant group

safeguards its position and privileges by monopolizing resources and opportunities while denying access to outsiders” (p. 1879). This is what Granovetter (1983) cited in the overabundance of strong ties and what Putnam (1998) warned of in the excess of bonding social capital. Portes (1998) pointed to “at least four negative consequences of social capital: exclusion of outsiders, excess claims on group members, restrictions on individual freedoms, and downward leveling norms” (p. 15). His consequences appear more attributable to an over abundance of bonding social capital.

As social capital can be built, so can it deteriorate. David, Janiak, and Wasmer (2010) described the erosion of social capital citing Coleman (1988) who expressed the idea that “social capital can depreciate if there is no investment to renew it” (p. 192). Most scholars recognize unequal distribution of these capacities that privilege some groups over others. Those already possessing power and wealth generally have higher capacities for engaging in collective action, reinforcing existing social systems (Novy et al., 2012; Forrest & Kearns, 2001). Activists and scholars advocating social equity recognize the chicken-or-egg conundrum inherent in these phenomena.

A community with a healthy mix of social capital can be considered one that possesses social cohesion, another related field of research. “As part of social capital, social cohesion is characterized by a sense of belonging, mutual help, solidarity, trust, and reciprocity, occasionally including a set of shared core values” (Hermes & Poulsen, 2012, p. 20). Forrest and Kearns (2001) delineated five domains of social cohesion: (a) common values and a civic culture; (b) social order and social control; (c) social solidarity and reductions in wealth disparities; (d) social networks and social capital; and (e) territorial belonging and identity. Unlike Hermes and Poulsen (2012), Kearns and Forrest (2001) see

social capital as a contributing component of social cohesion rather than the reverse.

Whether social cohesion is part of social capital, a product of it, or made possible by it, is not fully addressed or resolved in the literature.

Novy et al. (2012) credited Durkheim for popularizing the term social cohesion.

They defined the general term as,

the action, or fact, of holding firmly together or forming a unit. It refers to a state in which components “stick” together to form a meaningful whole. . . . Scholars consider a cohesive society as a goal or at least a general direction towards which society should evolve, and often as the means by which it may be achieved. (pp. 1873–1874)

Arriving at a coherent and meaningful understanding of social cohesion is made more difficult in the face of rapid globalization and urban change, argued Miciukiewicz, Moulaert, Novy, Musterd, and Hillier (2012), as different cultures and subcultures practice different ways of forming social relationships, using public space, and interacting with civic and governmental entities. During the era of industrialization including the first half of the 20th century, Forrest and Kearns (2001) assert, “traditional ties of community—shared space, close kinship links, shared religions and moral values [were] replaced by anonymity, individualism and competition” (p. 2125). The kinds of community ties and characteristics that will characterize the post-industrial, globalized, and instantaneously connected work are yet to be seen.

Social cohesion is given various meanings in the social sciences, communities of practice and policy arenas.

Most frequently, it is presented as a policy objective with reference both to the social forces and public actions that are needed for the inclusion of all groups, citizens and migrants into urban society and, more recently, as an opportunity for diverse urban communities and the collective making of “their” city. (Miciukiewicz et al., 2012, pp. 1855–1856)

Novy et al. (2012) pointed out challenges to creating cohesion in ethnically diverse contexts as well as how some responses to diversity result in negative impacts.

Socioeconomic polarization tends to increase the spatial concentration of excluded or deprived groups in certain neighborhoods with contradictory dynamics of gentrification and social mixing. Although the impact on local cohesion might be positive within a gated community, social exclusion in the sense of segregation between rich gated communities and poor neighborhoods might be increasing, thereby threatening cohesion in the city as a whole (pp. 1878–1879)

As for in-groups with an over-abundance of strong ties or bonding social capital: “strongly cohesive neighborhoods could be in conflict with one another and contribute to a divided and fragmented city” (Forrest & Kearns, 2001, p. 2128).

The challenge as stated by Novy et al. (2012) is that “social cohesion is cultural and focuses on identity and common culture as key dimensions of belonging to a social whole” (p. 1879). Place attachment and the intermixing of identities with places can be important elements in the formation of social cohesion. Cities in general and some neighborhoods are places of encounter where social and civic networks form to bring people together across different backgrounds, ages and lifestyles. “This creates hybrid cultures and cultural heterogeneity in multiple time-space frameworks” (Novy et al., 2012, p. 1879). Forrest and Kearns (2001) asserted that connection to place matters. Neighborhoods become “part of our statement about who we are” (p. 2130). In fact, they went on to say, “neighbors and neighboring retain greater importance for the poor and the elderly, while the mass of the population develops new and more spatially diffuse networks” (p. 2131).

While growing virtual communities may be increasing in significance, most random as well as routine encounters continue to take place in local communities, in real space. Kearns and Forrest (2000) cited a long-standing belief that a cohesive society remains one in which there is a high degree of face-to-face social interaction. In this view, they wrote,



“social cohesion is maintained at a local level, through socialization processes and through mutual support mechanisms based on family and kin, mostly within the neighborhood but increasingly across the city as well” (p. 999).

### **Culture-Led Regeneration and Creative Cities**

While grappling with a panoply of adverse conditions in recent decades, city leaders and planners have witnessed the industrial era—characterized by large manufacturing plants and pools of nominally-educated labor—give way to an economy based increasingly on knowledge production, innovation, global exchanges, and creativity (Florida, 2002; Montgomery, 2005; Scott, 2006). “‘Be creative—or die’ is the new urban imperative” wrote Peck (2005, p. 740). Cities in many parts of the world moved intentionally and unintentionally into the realm of creativity and culture, sometimes in desperate attempts to regain their economic and socio-cultural footing. Sacco and Segre (2006) wrote, “creativity and innovation—or lack of it—make the difference, specially when cities face a period of transition” (p. 8).

Many city leaders believed cultural institutions could play a catalytic role in their regeneration and some made significant investments in the arts in attempts to make their cities more appealing, boost their image, and attract people with wealth and/or higher education. Johnson (2010) traced a history of arts-led urban regeneration projects from the 1950s and 60s in the United States. She found early efforts characterized by construction of large-scale and sometimes iconic performing arts centers and implementation of tourism strategies. “For sixty years policymakers have been experimenting with clustering different arts activities as a revitalization strategy and a way to demonstrate a city’s cultural reputation” (p. 10).

While artists and the creative class were on their way to becoming the vanguard of urban regeneration (Zukin, 1989), the companion concept of creative industries surfaced in Europe in the mid-1980s where the term *culture-led regeneration* also became popular. Since then, countries, states, cities, and even small towns have turned to arts, culture, and creativity as strategies to spur economic development and urban revitalization (Evans, 2005; Landry, 2000; Markusen & Gadwa, 2010a). Peck (2005) called it the dawn of a new kind of capitalism, a more focused competition for talent.

Creative industries are characterized by for-profit entrepreneurial activities for the production of goods and services within the realm of design and innovation based in intellectual property development. These include advertising, architecture, software and gaming, and the design and/or production of ceramics, film, fashion, furniture, jewelry, wines, etc. (Howkins, 2001; Scott, 2006). Lange, Kalandides, Stober, and Mieg (2008) studied creative industry programs in Berlin as “a profit-oriented segment covering all enterprises, entrepreneurs and self-employed persons producing, marketing, distributing and trading profit-oriented cultural and symbolic goods” (p. 534).

In a broader definition of the creative sector used by some in the United States, both the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors are encompassed under the idea of the creative economy (DeNatale & Wassall, 2007). This puts artists, along with nonprofit arts and cultural organizations of all sizes, together with creative fields mentioned above into a larger interdependent ecosystem (Markusen, 2011). These creative industries and iconic cultural institutions became must-haves for post-industrial cities struggling for economic footing and to polish their reputations.

Although his ideas were not entirely new, Florida (2002) set off a global firestorm of interest, as well as criticism, with assertions that the newly branded *creative class* serves as fuel to power a successful post-industrial economy. He estimated this category of workers as nearly one-third of the workforce and claimed they are responsible for generating over half of the economic activity. In response, many cities began chasing creative talent (e.g., highly educated designers, scientists, engineers, software developers, artists, marketers, and others considered part of the creative class) as something of a cash cow to replace a variety of older economic development and industry attraction strategies. Transformation of old factories into loft living spaces, coffee shops, and art galleries, became an operative urban redevelopment strategy (Donegan & Lowe, 2008).

In contrast to past city planning and economic development practices, Sacco and Segre (2006) suggested that educated and creative people are now considered the crucial resource for cities. “Human cleverness, desires, motivations, imaginations and creativity [are] the driving forces; replacing location, natural resources and market access” (p. 8).

Florida (2002) offered cities a road map to move urban economies out of a rusty industrial age and into a shiny new era of technology, information, and the arts. To rise to the occasion he asserted that cities must provide a wide portfolio of amenities and lifestyle choices to attract large numbers of creative and thus potentially entrepreneurial people. Planners and politicians want their communities to appear innovative, exciting, creative and safe places in which to live, visit, play, and consume. Festivals, spectacle, cultural events, flagship arts institutions, and a robust arts scene were increasingly appropriated as symbols of a dynamic city (Peck, 2005). Creative industries and creative class inhabitants, together with an identity as a creative city, promised to address a number of key

government policies and concerns from job development to environmental and quality of life improvement (Bagwell, 2008).

The notion of creative cities grew quickly and by the turn of the new century set off a competition among urban centers around the world. Bradford (2004) described creative cities as dynamic locales of experimentation and innovation where new ideas flourish and people from all walks of life come together to make their communities better places to live, work, and play. He suggested that among their desirable attributes they must deal imaginatively with complex issues and value holistic thinking. According to Lange et al. (2008), "in a post-industrial Western world, knowledge and innovation are recognized as basic growth motors, that may give new chances even to cities with a weak industrial basis" (p. 538).

Glaeser and Gottlieb (2006) described such places as *resurgent cities*.

Over the past twenty years the desire of consumers to live in these cities has increased enormously as a result of changes in style of government, improvements in law enforcement technology, and rising incomes that have raised demands for high-end urban amenities. (p. 2)

Markusen and King (2003) argued that it is less clear which came first, cultural amenities and artists or rising incomes from successful enterprises. In a different turn from Florida's roadmap, they suggested innovation and growth come to businesses and industries as a result of a robust creative and cultural scene, still placing value on creativity and talent as key in the formula for success in the new economy.

Cities of all sizes began to vie for positions in the international eye as creative cities (Bagwell, 2008; Evans, 2009a; McCarthy, 2006). Perhaps the most extensive program around culture-led regeneration and global creative city competition is the European Capital of Culture Program (Evans, 2005; McCarthy, 2006). The European Commission

selects two cities from different European Union countries each year through a highly competitive process to conduct extensive cultural programs as part of wider economic revitalization schemes. The program began in 1985 with 40 cities now having participated. Prior to 2011 only one city was selected each year.

Based on the 1990 designation of Glasgow, and its subsequent economic and cultural boom, this designation is considered by cities an important opportunity to reinvigorate their economy and international image (McCarthy, 2006). Griffiths (2006) analyzed bids from three of the six United Kingdom cities that competed for the 2008 title. Through these case studies that include Bristol, Cardiff, and Liverpool, he explored the fervent discourse within those cities around culture and urban regeneration.

Some nuanced arguments make the point that not all cities can nor should be centers of creative industries and cultural production beyond meeting the demands of very localized markets (Montgomery, 2005). "It is in general not advisable to attempt to become a Silicon Valley when Silicon Valley exists elsewhere" argued Scott (2000, p. 27). According to Evans (2009a), this warning is often ignored by city leaders who favor heady prospects for growth. "Rather the aim should be to establish whether or not a city has any established or emerging creative industries and whether there is a niche to be worked, or a business cluster to be grown" (Montgomery, 2005, p. 341). Such strategies call upon city leaders to think like product branding experts to understand their unique qualities and competitive advantages on a global scale.

In scholarship related to public sector leadership and management, Ruffin (2010) looked at the responses of municipal governments in the context of globalism and the contemporary neoliberal environment. She observed the public sector moving from the

Keynesian welfare state to entrepreneurialism, what she also called the competition state. “The central priority in ‘competitions states’ is to create a favorable investment climate for transnational capital within their borders” (p. 463). The creative city movement and most state-planned culture-led regeneration projects put cities into a competitive mode.

In this competition, cities seek to capture, retain and brand creative space—artist districts, or quarters, live-arts scenes, or an overall “cool city” image. Landry (as cited in Falk, 2007) criticized this as the “Starbucks-and-Stadiums” approach, a failed regeneration strategy he said still prevails among political leaders, a strategy that negates the distinctive qualities and assets of a city. Cities pursuing such one-size-fit-all strategies confront some unintended consequences. These approaches largely represent image-makeovers, that tend to further the process of gentrification and dislocation of the less affluent (Bagwell, 2008; McCann, 2007; Montgomery, 2005; Peck, 2005; Zukin & Braslow, 2011). Lin and Hsing agreed, suggesting “formulaic models of urban regeneration . . . result in standardised landscapes in localities, displacing local symbolic content” (Lin & Hsing, 2009, pp. 1321–1322). They questioned assertions made by culture promoters of the real economic contributions of culture and whether in fact “only some global cities are able to become major cultural or creative hubs” (p. 1320). Lin and Hsing emphasized the “unique-cultural resources of place, civic society strength and place-identity as vehicles for local sustainability and urban social cohesion in the globalising context” (p. 1318).

Economists and urban policy researchers find a significant relationship between the presence of the creative class and economic inequality across the post-industrial world (Evans, 2009a; Krueger & Buckingham, 2009; McCann, 2007; Montgomery, 2005; Peck, 2005). According to Peck (2005), the global competition among cities “gives way to a form

of creative trickle-down; elite-focused creativity strategies leave only supporting roles for the two-thirds of the population languishing in the working and service classes” (p. 766). Outcomes include a growing division between the rich and poor, heightened ethnic tensions, and the escalation of economic class divisions (Evans, 2009a; Montgomery, 2005; Peck, 2005).

Darchen (2013) in his assessment of a downtown Toronto regeneration project wrote,

We can conclude that the creative city concept is applicable in a context of urban regeneration, but is severely deficient in creating a balanced, holistic, and integrated approach to regeneration. Rather it is representative of the interests of certain set of stakeholders with a vested interest to transform the area, through the creative city concept for the place-making aspect of the project, and the objective of street-life activation. (p. 14)

While dislocation of the poor through urban redevelopment is a familiar narrative, Ponzini and Rossi (2010) made several interesting contributions in their analysis of Baltimore neighborhoods. In a critique of Florida (2002), they described his creative class concept as a *weak thought*, meaning that it is malleable to the point where it is “fertile and seductive” (p. 1041). This weak thought can thus be easily used, they claimed, to rationalize policies in a variety of regional contexts in ways that serve to concentrate capital and produce further marginalization and exclusion of the already disadvantaged.

Kong (2009b) looked at culture-led regeneration efforts in Asian cities and argued that the palatial Grand Theater performing arts complex in Shanghai does not contribute to long-term sustainability of Chinese culture and identity. In that case she found such flagship facilities were conceived, designed, built, and programmed entirely with outside (Western) talent and cultural offerings. She argued that such an approach to culture and

relative global positioning by the Chinese government may be a response to the position, or perceived position of the Chinese economy on a world stage.

Kong (2009b) went on to describe a contrasting space in Shanghai—a cluster of former textile factories and engineering buildings that house about 130 studios and workshops in a riverfront complex. About 75% of the studios house artists as well as media, fashion, and product designers. Others in the 41,000 square-meter space include arts education activities and galleries. She described the complex as the center of the avant-garde in Shanghai, and argued that, in contrast to the Grand Theater, this development has potential to contribute to long-term sustainability of Chinese culture and economy on a global stage.

In the case of the German village of Wedding, Jakob (2011) examined and moved from critique to call for an overhaul of the creative city model—one with equality and civic participation at the center. The current practice of culture-led regeneration, she pointed out, reframes and repackages urban governance and development to attract highly mobile capital and professional elites. These strategies, she asserted, “reinforce social boundaries instead of overcoming them” (p. 194).

The potential to tie together urban planning, economic development and arts and cultural policy with values related to equity and social justice for the most part has evaded city leaders. According to Markusen and Gadwa (2010a), public, private, and nonprofit sectors and professional fields within urban planning, design, and economic development, find it hard to understand each other, let alone coordinate efforts. Cities become beholden to aggressive global investors and top-shelf developers, argued Zukin and Braslow (2011).



City and political leaders have not asserted values that protect their populations from growing inequity and political disenfranchisement.

Peck (2005) cited an abandonment of comprehensive planning in favor of the selective development of “urban fragments,” neighborhood-nodes of upscale housing, coffee shops, and cultural and entertainment amenities designed to attract creative class residents. Whether such efforts represent a fragmentation or a move towards localized democracy and empowerment is subject of longstanding debate in planning and municipal management circles and addressed in the next section of this review.

Discouraged by the scale of some comprehensive planning efforts and following the trend towards more localized planning and development, the fragments cited by Peck (2005) appeal to many planners and policy-makers. Building on the work of Porter (1990, 2000) and others, planners saw clusters of creative and/or cultural activity as seeds of potential development. For some they became building blocks in the larger construction of a creative city.

Some critics suggest the creative city comes with side effects leaders may not be prepared to address (Kunzmann, 2010; Markusen & Gadwa, 2010a). The creative city is an easy sell for planners and municipal officials, pointed out Peck (2005), who went on to critique the strategy as a “low-cost, market-friendly urban placebo” (p. 760). He argued that the notions of the creative class would not be sweeping cities around the globe if they fundamentally ran counter to established business and political interests. “For the average mayor, there are few downsides to making the city safe for the creative class—a creativity strategy can quite easily be bolted on to business-as-usual urban development policies” (p. 760).

Among examples of early flagship developments reviewed by Johnson (2010), the Lincoln Center development in New York City is cited for its questionable achievements. It brought high-end housing and deep-pocket culture consumers and tourists to a once down-trodden area of Manhattan (Gratz, 1994). Using culture, economics, and architecture, Lincoln Center displaced low-income residents and small local retailers in a process known as gentrification. Its presence and social milieu sent a message to poor people, people of color, and others outside the milieu of Western high art culture, they do not belong there (Zukin & Braslow, 2011).

Johnson (2010) went on to describe how other bricks and mortar projects in Dallas, Denver, and Pittsburgh represented early attempts at economic development “to enliven decaying areas that cater to underperforming industries and unsavory businesses” (p. 12). In some of these cases, Johnson pointed out, neighborhood organizers “accused local governments of using arts to encourage gentrification” (p. 5). Zukin and Braslow (2011) argued, “real estate developers and public officials often use the symbolic capital of the “artistic mode of production” to establish new place-identities for problematic industrial areas, rebranding them as ‘creative’ and increasing their economic value” (p. 131). Kong (2009b) described such bricks and mortar efforts as flagship strategies, in contrast to more decentralized or bottom-up approaches described by Jakob (2011) and Mommaas (2004).

In many ways these arts-based bricks and mortar efforts joined earlier efforts to brand historic districts and attractions that trade on cultural heritage to stabilize real estate, draw tourists and often relocate the poor in efforts to enhance the reputation of the city and attract investment. Zukin (1989) described the influx of artists and avant-garde arts groups in the SoHo area of New York and its rebranding during the 1960s and 70s. A

subsequent explosion of real estate values there dislocated those not fortunate enough to own their property or to have the wherewithal to pay escalating real estate taxes. Her classic work on SoHo and subsequent writing serve as the basis of understanding the symbolic and actual role of artists in urban gentrification. Zukin and Braslow (2011) wrote,

Land, after all, is the basic urban commodity, and in a housing market where most places are allocated by how much money people can pay, selecting the goal of a creative city gives priority to the spatial claims of those who think it is important to identify with cultural producers on the basis of lifestyles and tastes, while reducing the chances of those who do not, mainly because they lack the education and financial resources—the cultural capital—to shape and consume new art, food, media content, and fashion: the dominant symbols of modern times. (p. 131)

Ponzini and Rossi (2010) acknowledged that an inclusive approach to culture-led regeneration can renew the image of long-deprived cities and neighborhoods, provide a strengthened sense of belonging, and improve the liveliness and attractiveness of places. In their critique of a Baltimore case, Ponzini and Rossi found cultural district promoters appear “not to be concerned with the issues of social inclusion and life-chance provision that are most relevant in socially deprived areas” (p. 1039).

Mommaas (2004) examined endogenously organized or bottom-up cultural districts in northern Europe. Like Zukin (1989) he warned that increasing interest in culture and the spaces artists inhabit are “in the end ironically forcing out the very artistic-cultural values on which the trail-blazers’ symbolic work depended” (p. 526).

Suggesting that the creative economy can be fertile ground for cities, suburbs, and smaller towns in ways that do not fuel inequity, Markusen (2006, 2007) claimed the promise in many cases has been squandered for lack of strategic thinking and careful allocation of resources. While planners and policymakers are beginning to recognize the interdependence between local economic development and cultural production efforts, few

have the capacity to implement such strategic programs (Scott, 2006). This kind of global thinking has to begin locally. Creative industries spring from the diverse resources, knowledge, and character of each place argued Wu (2005). Scott (2006) warned the mere presence of creative people, however, is not enough to sustain urban creativity over long periods of time. Creativity needs to be mobilized and channeled for it to emerge in practical forms of learning and innovation. To attract or grow both creative people and firms, a city must foster a culture of innovation and provide an environment supportive of all forms of creativity (Markusen & King, 2003).

In describing the attributes of the environment necessary for a successful creative city, Wojan, Lambert, and McGranahan (2007) stressed the importance of the cross-fertilization of ideas and innovation, both between industries and between economic actors and the wider community. They largely re-stated Jacobs (1961), in pointing out that creative places are,

characterized by a high degree of human-scale interaction: street-level interaction resulting from the co-location of housing and commercial activity; diversity in the housing stock and in commercial space that would retain affluent residents amongst working class residents, and support emerging activities that tend to be economically marginal alongside established businesses; and common spaces providing venues for chance interaction marked with a sense of place. (Wojan et al., 2007, p. 4)

Hall (1998) examined major global cities in depth and observed that as successful cultural hubs, cities retained their creativity by constantly renewing themselves. Montgomery (2005) wrote, “cities in the future will need to promote artistic, design and technological skills; back local talent, grow the creative industries; offer a good cultural and artistic life; and organize services such as education to support all of this” (p. 342). Wu (2005) called for a stimulating environment and amenities for different lifestyles. Bradford

(2004), Markusen and Gadwa (2010b), Sandercock (2004), and others, have pointed out that this kind of mix is outside the vocabulary of traditional city planners and policy-makers, one of the key challenges facing how cities respond to new opportunities.

The future of cities as hubs of creativity and as producers of knowledge and wealth—consistent with their role throughout history—requires new and more nuanced leadership and organizational models that respond to radically changing environments, cultural diversity, creative entrepreneurship, and issues around economic, social, and cultural equity, among others. The post-industrial era demands leadership skills and organizational capacity that recognize and support individuality, creativity, and horizontal, collaborative approaches, argue Dugan (2006), Parker and Behnaud (2004), and Uhl-Bien et al. (2007),

Other authors have argued the need to reposition and recognize multiple cultural and creative assets such as festivals, clusters of creative industries, artist enclaves, and clusters of cultural institutions to open up new ways of thinking about urban regeneration (Grodach, 2011; Stern & Seifert, 2010; Wood & Landry, 2008). The role of artists and arts organizations as active partners or leaders in economic, social, and spatial planning and development is increasingly addressed in the literature but remains a difficult concept to grasp for traditionally trained urban planners, city leaders, established cultural institutions, and often artists themselves.

### **Neighborhood Planning and Local Governance**

In this section I review literature related to dimensions of urban planning known as local or neighborhood planning. I review a longstanding debate in the field around localism in planning and governance and appropriate and effective scale from both socio-political

and practical points of view. These ideas have bearing on the development of cultural districts and locally based governance models. For well over 100 years there has been a push and pull between approaches to planning and governance that are centralized and comprehensive versus approaches that are decentralized and locally focused.

Practices related to local or neighborhood planning within the larger urban and metropolitan planning profession can be traced through voluminous literature on the topic (Friedmann, 1971; L. Mumford, 1954; Rohe, 2009; Silver, 1985). Formal urban planning, as a discrete public sector function, came to be recognized in North America and Europe in the early part of the 20th century. By the second half of the century the practice became a full-fledged profession with trained personnel embedded in nearly every level of government (Baeker, 2002; Rohe, 2009).

Most scholars acknowledge that the foundations of modern urban planning are in the allocation of real estate and the provision of infrastructure and municipal services to meet needs of expanding or changing populations. Thus, known for its primary purpose as land use planning, this remains the core concern of the profession (Albrechts, 2005; Healey, 2010; Peterman, 2004; Zukin & Braslow, 2011). In its earliest forms, planning required technical and engineering skills to coordinate the resources and materials to implement established or pre-determined schemes. It was approached as a very top-down process. As societies and cities evolved, requirements of the planning profession became more complex and generally more localized (Bradford, 2004; Peterman, 2004; Rohe, 2009).

The emerging role of public or local citizen participation in the process of planning stems, as well, from the middle of the 20th century and evolved significantly since the 1970s (English, Peretz, & Manderschied, 2004; Healey, 2010; Sandercock, 2004).

Increasingly, organized pressure from neighborhood groups by the 1960s, in U.S. cities in particular, required planners and city leaders to accommodate more local concerns and participation (Grogan & Proscio, 2000; Rohe, 2009).

Amin (2006) charted the historical evolution of cities as first “providing the means of defence against invasion, starvation and the elements” (p. 1009). Greco-Roman cities, he claimed, moved to the next level by measuring success in how they embellished the built environment, projected power, and nurtured political and creative capacities. Two thousand years later, industrial cities organized themselves to fight poverty, grime, disease, and maintain order. While Amin pointed out that cities in different parts of the globe remain at different places on this spectrum, major contemporary global cities define themselves through human advancement based on “high-income consumer lifestyles and bourgeois escape from the ugly or dangerous aspects of urban life” (p. 1010). This leaves the planning profession with an expansive and ever-evolving menu of expectations.

Local or neighborhood planning and the appropriate role of neighborhood-level governance sit within a larger debate about scale and the value and function—even the relevance—of the neighborhood unit. In this debate, L. Mumford (1954) quoted Raymond Unwin, who he described as “surely the most fertile urban innovator in his generation” (p. 261). Unwin wrote, “how far is it possible for the growing city to secure an end so desirable as the greater localisation of life?” (as cited in L. Mumford, 1954, p. 261). This localization of life evokes the lived experience of everyday life which Lefebvre (1974/1991) claimed is central to the making of places.

L. Mumford (1954) foreshadowed the current challenge around globalization of cities and neighborhoods when he wrote “neighbors are people united primarily not by

common origins or common purposes but by the proximity of their dwellings in space” (p. 257). Neighborhoods are spatial or geographic territories defined by their plan and construction, by natural geographies, by local self-definition of the inhabitants, or by all of the above. In spatial terms, Lowndes and Sullivan (2008) defined neighborhoods using five functional characteristics:

- Support or shape the development of individuals and collective identities;
- Facilitate connections and interactions with others;
- Fulfill basic needs such as shopping, health care, housing and education;
- Are sources of predictable encounters
- Have geographic boundaries, the meaning and value of which are socially constructed (p. 56)

These characteristics suggest ideas of space production put forward by Lefebvre (1974/1991) related to “symbolism and meaning derived from the lived experience of everyday life” (as cited in Karplus & Meir, 2013, p. 25). L. Mumford (1954) described the neighborhood experience: “To share the same place is perhaps the most primitive of social bonds, and to be within view of one’s neighbors is the simplest form of association” (p. 257).

Silver (1985) surveyed the history of neighborhood planning in the United States and found “the idea of ‘neighborhood’ and of planning its character has been an enduring component of American social thought for at least the past 100 years” (p. 161). A variety of ideas, interests, and political persuasions have advanced the concept of neighborhoods and neighborhood life over time. Silver portrayed one interest group in the United States at the peak of the urban industrial period that advocated that “the dispersal of urban workers



into industrial villages would restore a sense of community stifled in center-city neighborhoods and would encourage a more productive and less rebellious laboring class” (p. 162).

From a different vantage point, by the 1880s, Silver (1985) recounted, “the ‘neighborhood idea’ was being propagated as a means to revamp the city itself, particularly by a growing coterie of social workers operating out of urban settlement houses” (p. 162). He went on to suggest that many of these Progressive Era workers who came from middle class backgrounds wanted to bring to cities the small town community lifestyle with which they were familiar. Both factory bosses and community organizers saw values in at least the perceived construction of neighborhood space (Lefebvre, 1974/1991), if not its conceived dimensions.

Lewis Mumford (1954) observed the character and purpose of neighborhoods in older European cities and asked what precipitated their deterioration at mid-century. He cited two primary reasons for the distress of neighborhoods in North America. The first is “the segregation of income groups under capitalism, with a sharp spatial separation of the quarters of the rich and the poor” (p. 258). The second, he described in greater detail as “a technical factor, the increase of wheeled vehicles and the domination of the avenue in planning” (p. 258). L. Mumford reflected on how efforts to connect people through transportation infrastructure simultaneously cut them apart and resulted in a homogenization of neighborhoods. He wrote, “the subordinate parts of the city came more and more to lack any character of their own” (p. 259).

Some arguing against localization in planning and municipal governance found cause in the progressive movement to ensure social equity. They saw neighborhoods as

enclaves segregating rich and poor and racial, ethnic, and religious groups (Friedmann, 1971; L. Mumford, 1954). The belief was that planning by neighborhoods would cement those divisions. Describing the movement towards comprehensive city planning, Friedmann (1971) wrote, “both urban and national plans came to stress the importance of ‘balance’ in the attainment of the grand design. The holistic view they propounded necessarily imposed criteria of harmony, balance, equilibrium, and consistency” (p. 316).

At least in the United States by the 1970s, proponents of comprehensive planning seemed to have won the day. Lewis Mumford opened his 1954 article writing, “During the last two decades the idea of planning by neighborhoods has been widely accepted” (p. 256). In a parallel but contrasting fashion, nearly three decades later, Friedmann (1971) opened an article writing, “In post-industrial, metropolitan America, comprehensive urban planning has finally arrived” (p. 315). L. Mumford advocated neighborhood planning, arguing “neighborhood unit organization seems the only practical answer to the gigantism and inefficiency of the over-centralised metropolis” (p. 266).

Friedmann (1971) generally concurred with Lewis Mumford and went on to discredit many aspects of centralized comprehensive urban planning: “Where it was tried, and judged by its own claims, comprehensive planning turned out to be a colossal failure” (p. 317). This failure perhaps had as much to do with difficulties in implementation, he admitted, and also in terms of its scale. In such planning, he argued, “the resulting multiplicity of societal perspectives cannot by sheer force of logic be integrated into a single normative scheme or, as planners like to put it, a hierarchy of values” (p. 317). Comprehensive planning, he went on, cannot “obtain the commitment of all parties whose interests may be affected” (p. 317).

This dialectic of the local versus city-wide or metropolitan scale is what Friedmann (1971) called “a cyclical pattern of centralization-decentralization-centralization . . . though a configuration of authority at the conclusion of each cycle will be substantially different from the pattern that prevailed at the beginning” (p. 320).

The debate over scale of centralization versus decentralization, the latter known as devolution, has gained new complexities in the face of globalization and new communications technologies. In a question similar to that posed by Unwin nearly a century earlier, Lowndes and Sullivan (2008) asked, “How low can you go? Do small units become more or less viable and/or attractive in this context?” (p. 54). They cited “double devolution—the shifting of power from central to local government and beyond to the neighborhood” (p. 53). They saw neighborhoods as “the place in which local government (and other agencies) can establish new routes for citizen engagement and improved accountability . . . enabling individuals and communities to exercise greater choice, voice, and even control over services” (p. 53). Purcell (2006) took a contrary position to warn against what he called the local trap. “We cannot assume that localised decision-making structures are inherently more democratic than global ones” (p. 1927). He argued that local decisions may be dominated by a more homogeneous group of people concerned with their limited interests and thus lack consideration of others in the society at large. Purcell went on to assert that balanced multi-scale systems of governance may not be preferable to a single-scale arrangement.

Amin (2004) took a strident view against devolution arguing that “globalisation and the general rise of a society of transnational flows and networks no longer allow a conceptualisation of place politics in terms of spatially bound processes and institutions” (p.

33). He considered this an obsolescence of geographically based politics, in which the local (the inside) and the global (the outside) cannot be considered separately. He called this “the displacement of a world order of nested territorial formations composed of a discernible inside and outside” (p. 33). Amin cited his work in British communities and politics where he found policies favoring devolution or the move towards localism “play on a conservationist regional identity that can be profoundly closed and exclusionary. . . if not explicitly xenophobic” (p. 35).

Amin is not alone in citing concern over segregation and exclusion based on the demarcation of small geographic territories within cities. L. Mumford (1954), Osti (2013), and Purcell (2006) expressed similar concerns. Silver (1985) described how middle class improvement associations emerged as early as the 1880s gaining considerable influence in some cities by 1900. These were characterized by a rigid exclusionist tendency and some advocated neighborhood planning “principally for urban segregation to protect middle- and upper-class residential neighborhoods from immigrants and blacks” (Silver, 1985, p. 164).

Lowndes and Sullivan (2008) have been proponents of localism in the contemporary era and still include diversity and equity among the challenges they cited in localized planning and governance. They reported: “Experiments with neighborhood decentralization in multi-ethnic areas have provided evidence of the marginalization of minorities” (p. 69). They called for careful design of decentralized planning and governance particularly related to resource allocation. “Some things should be decided centrally, some things locally, and others at community level. The difficult issue is deciding which things go into which category!” (p. 71). While knowing the appropriate issues for

the appropriate scales or levels of governance may be difficult, an additional challenge rests in the variable around which political persuasion is in power at any given time.

Amin (2004) raised many questions about the nature and physical manifestation of neighborhoods and how they can be demarcated. This came about with the “rise of compositional forces which are transforming cities and regions into sites immersed in global networks of organization and routinely implicated in distant connections and influences” (p. 33). In this context, he called for an analysis of a place based on its internal and external networks, what he called a *relational reading* of places made up of “composite and hybrid cultures, and hyphenated and diasporic identities” (p. 37). He went on to write that

in this new and emerging order, spatial configurations and spatial boundaries are no longer necessary or purposively territorial or scalar, since the social, economic, political and cultural inside and outside are constituted through the topologies of actor networks which are becoming increasingly dynamic and varied in spatial constitution. (p. 33)

In 1933, Wirth (as cited in Silver, 1985) made observations similar to those made by Amin (2004):

Some believe that the hope of our social order lies in the return to the local ties of neighborhood. The trend of our civilization . . . lead[s] in the opposite direction. There can be no return to the local self-contained neighborhoodly community except by giving up the technological and cultural advantages of this shifting . . . community life, which few would be willing to do. (as cited by Silver, 1985, p. 167)

Amin (2004) suggested local areas should be “recast as nodes that gather flow and juxtapose diversity, as places of overlapping —but not necessarily locally connected— relational networks” (p. 34). In tempering his argument, Amin claimed his point is “not against building regional voice and representation. Instead, it is against the assumption that there is a defined geographic territory out there over which local actors can have

effective control and can manage as a social and political space” (p. 36). This moderated argument still denies what Lewis Mumford concluded: “The neighborhood is a social fact; it exists in an inchoate form even when it is not articulated on a plan or provided with the institutions needed by a domestic community” (p. 269). Residents in the 1930s and in the global, multi-ethnic urban environments of the 2010s still occupied and shared physical space, needed to interact, and desired to exercise control over space in which they reside. Determinations related to the scale and make up of geographically based territories—whether set 300 years ago or 30—remain part of the landscape. “Place matters—again” concluded Lange et al. (2008, p. 538).

Addressing place governance, Amin (2004) posed two seemingly oppositional approaches. One he called a politics of propinquity, the other a politics of connectivity. He demonstrated his disfavor of the former and dislike of the local governance when he wrote, “the politics of a local society made up of bit arrangements and plural cultures that never quite cohere or fit together can no longer be cast as a politics of intimacy or shared regional cultures” (p. 38). Such an argument denies the capacity of neighbors to negotiate and renegotiate relationships and communities or the ability of people to adapt and effectively function together in a multi-ethnic, multi-level environment that Lowndes and Sullivan (2008) described. Amin goes on to say “there is nothing to be gained from fetishizing cities and regions as particular kinds of community that lend themselves to territorially defined or spatially constrained political arrangements and choices” (p. 42).

Expressing values similar to Lewis Mumford (1954) and Lowndes and Sullivan (2008), Osti (2013) observed the locally and the globally networked as existing together in what he called “a mix between space of flow and space of place” (p. 6). Arguing to advance

localism, he claimed the “need for grassroots participation” (p. 4), as well as both a need and a willingness of people in places to cooperate through bottom-up initiatives “on such vital issues as education, health, and environmental protection” (p. 5). Place qualities, argued Healey (2010), are “generated and maintained by complex inter-relationships between people in diverse social worlds, which potentially connect them to all kinds of other places and times in dynamic and unpredictable ways” (p. 35). This acknowledgement that physical places can function as both local and global spaces at one time, is shared by Balducci, Kunzmann, and Sartorio (2004). Through their observations of devolution efforts across Europe, they saw both kinds of spaces co-existing and called for “creative solutions to strategic and flexible boundary formation” (p. 4). Osti (2013) called this “sound localism or the moral bases of a ‘forward’ local society” (p. 12). He observed that the “local become the range of direct interactions . . . the local is thus the main space of routines and tacit knowledge (p. 3).

Osti (2013) went on to categorize localism based on his observations in Italy. He found four types of communities based on relative internal cohesion and external relationships. In the first type, *isolated* communities, Osti said internal relationships are weak and atomized; external relations are scant. In what he called *ghetto* communities, there is high internal cohesion and good capacity to self-organize while hostility is exhibited towards outsiders. In *peripheral* communities, frequent relationships with the outside world are characterized by dependencies and there is weak capacity for internal self-organization. Finally, Osti described *networked* communities as those exhibiting good and strong relationships inside and outside and capacities for innovation and high levels of cooperation. Lange, Pradel i Miquel, and Garnizov (2011) argued that in such cases, “local

decision-making processes are not isolated from the national context in which cities are involved” (p. 307). They went on to assert that in local or neighborhood governance national and supranational scales influence local action. Before the internet changed many global dynamics, Lefebvre (1974/1991) wrote, “we are thus confronted by an indefinite multitude of spaces, each one upon, or perhaps contained within the next: geographical, economic, demographic, sociological, ecological, political, commercial, national, continental, global” (p. 8).

Contrary to Amin (2004), Osti (2013) advanced the argument that local communities or neighborhoods can be spatially malleable and able to find what Balducci et al. (2004) called “creative solutions to strategic and flexible boundary formation” (p. 4). Spatial communities can thus adapt and reform internal and external relationships as flows of people and ideas require. Purcell (2006), while expressly not a fan of Lefebvre, agreed that “scale is socially constructed” (p. 1927). “Geographically scale is both *fluid and fixed*. If scales are socially produced through political struggle, then scales and scalar arrangements are fluid in the sense that they are always in historical motion” (p. 1928). Lange et al. (2008) argued, that cities have particular characteristics defined partly by place that “position them internationally, create distinctiveness and a competitive advantage” (p. 538).

The push and pull between the definition of the local space of the neighborhood and the optimal scale of planning and governance carries a long history and will continue as issues related to broad-scale equity and local control remain important to people living in physical space in proximity to one another. It remains an undercurrent in land-use-based



urban planning practice which has endeavored to accommodate and mesh both region-wide and local planning.

Comprehensive and top-down planning took center stage in the aftermath of World War II (Friedmann, 1971; Peterman, 2004). With the rise of the civil rights movement in the United States, Friedmann wrote, “the scope of comprehensive urban planning suddenly exploded to include social and economic purposes as well” (p. 316). Advocates of the comprehensive approach argued that planning was “based on making rational choices among alternatives” (Peterman 2004, p. 266). While this rational planning model continues to dominate the practice, it traditionally positioned planners as experts who informed leaders and the larger public of optimal choices. This role has changed somewhat during the past couple decades as planning has expanded to include both comprehensive and neighborhood planning at the same time. In some places the expert planning model has been at least partly replaced by expanded public participation through an increasing array of vehicles and techniques (Healey, 2010), some of which rise from neighborhood organizers and some of which help to foster local organizing (Rohe, 2009).

Reflecting on late 20th century planning, Peterman (2004) wrote that as primarily a technical field, “it was presumed that planners operated above the political process and apart from those for whom they were planning” (pp. 266–267). However, practitioners and observers quickly discovered, argued Huang (2005), that even engineers and bureaucrats had biases. She wrote, “The value-free model of planning is nothing but a myth” (p. 78). Cities and neighborhoods are increasingly comprised of a diverse mix of people, becoming what Sandercock (2004) called mongrel cities. This leaves planners to ponder

not only the desired qualities of place but whose aspirations for that place are heard and accounted for in the planning process (Healey, 2010).

In his survey of a century of planning practice, Rohe (2009) provided a view into the more specific evolution of locally-based or neighborhood approaches. This more human-scale approach, he suggested, gives the profession relevance in the daily lives of more people. Rohe categorized five major movements or stages in the evolution of neighborhood planning. During the urban renewal period that began in 1949, he recounted some of the community responses provoked by city-sponsored or sanctioned planning and development projects many of which involved the demolition and clearance of large tracts within urban centers—many of which were homes to African Americans and the poor. Over the next two decades, he wrote, many community organizers spawned local uprisings that provided planners some important lessons.

It also taught us that local social relations and networks matter greatly to people and should be given great weight in revitalization planning. Social networks are particularly important in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods. It taught us that total clearance should be a last resort, considered only when rehabilitation is not feasible. Finally, it taught us that planners do not have all the answers, but should listen to and work with local residents in neighborhood rehabilitation projects. (p. 216)

A later stage of neighborhood planning, Rohe labeled *community action*, calling for a “permanent increase in the capacity of individuals, groups and communities . . . to deal effectively with their own problems” (p. 217). This provided impetus to the idea of local capacity building fostering grassroots leadership and locally controlled development and advocacy organizations.

The professionalization of urban planning and its institutionalization within municipal government, argued Baeker (2002), undermined the capacity of the field to

maintain a holistic view or interdisciplinary nature. He argued that while planning was viewed by many as apolitical, the value of “growth and development were generally viewed in positive—and often unquestioned—terms” (p. 23).

Many critics of planning argue that urban expansion and building by private sector developers takes precedence over rational human needs or the rights of residents to maintain long-standing and cohesive communities. Huang (2005) wrote, “modern urban planning in the Euro-American context was born as a tool of the state to balance private and public interests under capitalism” (p. 78). She joined others to argue that planning has lost its balance in favor of private financial interests. Healey (1998) called traditional planning “a competition in which there are a few winners and quite a lot of losers” (p. 1534).

Zukin and Braslow (2011) asserted that in a capitalist society, cities provide two basic commodities: land and labor. Even in the transition from an industrial to a creative or knowledge-based economy, they argued, the conditions of land and the skills of labor may change, but for municipal leaders the object of “industrial and land use policy [remains] to prepare the ground for private-sector real estate developers” (p. 133).

Healey (2010) pointed out another shortcoming of the profession: “Land-use ordering practices intended to safeguard amenities and environmental qualities have instead become a tangle of rules and judgments that have long ago lost any relation to the ends they were meant to serve” (p. x). These shortcomings leave the planning profession at a difficult juncture as other economic, cultural, technological, and political changes re-shape much of the world and the way people live in it (Florida, 2010). In her arguments

to redefine planning as more people-based than land-based, Healey offered a more optimistic view of what she called the 21st century planning project.

Overall, the idea of planning as an enterprise of collective activity, of public policy, is linked to a belief that it is worth striving to improve the human condition as lived in particular situations in the context of interaction with others, human and non-human. (p. 18)

As a hybrid planning practice that models local governance, Healey (2010) described collaborative planning that helps build and support collaborative governance cultures. These can be built on what Sirianni (2007) described as

deliberative democratic forums, reciprocal accountability, asset-based community development practices, and systematic relational organizing that extends across boundaries of diverse community councils, business associations, nonprofits, and public agencies and, indeed, to watershed associations, environmental justice groups, [etc.]. (p. 383).

Sirianni (2007) reflected, “While neighborhood visioning and planning can clearly generate civic energy, the challenge to maintain it during implementation remains serious” (p. 383). Collective action can serve as a way of reframing citizen participation from citizens pushing on government to address their needs, towards a more fluid network of interacting agents or citizens acting together on those needs. However, she argued, collective action is not a panacea and cannot realize its full potential without the formal involvement of civic or municipal institutions.

The lessons described by Baeker (2002), Healey (2010), Huang (2005), Peterman (2004), Redaelli (2010), Rohe (2009), and Zukin and Braslow (2011), among others, call for neighborhoods to increase local citizen capacities for collective action and local capacity, an ongoing arena of struggle for neighborhood advocates and organizers for social justice. This becomes especially important in light of rapid globalization, neoliberal government

policies, diversification of cultures and growing urban populations. Few scholars deny the multitude of challenges that provide urgency to revamp urban planning practices.

“Of late, however, ‘one-size-fits-all’ has given way to flexibility, innovation, and community-based plans and regulations” wrote English et al. (2004). For planners to engage diverse populations and identify the unique qualities and heritage of place, while negotiating a new (if temporary) sense of normal, is a creative challenge of the highest order. This sets up another kind of push and pull related to how much local communities or neighborhoods change versus how much they build on longstanding roots. Bianchini and Ghilardi (2007) argued that

Places that did not “stay true” to their history, social dynamics, economic background and distinctive heritage and urban features tended to struggle with maintaining a new identity and brand over time while those that adopted a more “organic” and joined-up approach to identity building were more successful. (p. 284)

While globalization has complicated the practice of city planning, the idea that it results in homogenization of places has been put aside by many scholars and planners, according to Healey (1998). The seeming contradiction is that in a globalized world the distinctiveness of each city and neighborhood takes on greater significance. Healey wrote, “in a world where integrated place-bounded relationships are pulled out of their localities, ‘disembodied’ and refashioned by multiple forces which mould them in different directions, the qualities of places seem to become more, not less, significant” (p. 1531).

Each city, region, or nation develops unique political structures and traditions of public participation, pointed out Redaelli (2010), adding another dimension to the challenges. These are what Healey (1998) called planning cultures. If different localities have evolved their own ways of conducting business and making decisions, complexities

are multiplied within multi-ethnic and transitional neighborhoods, exponentially increasing the challenges in bringing people together through the process of planning and subsequent sense of ownership of plans and stewardship of place.

Maginn (2007) asserted that planners and policymakers often set up planning processes and local partnerships with insufficient knowledge of local cultures whether they are locally evolved cultures or a mix of ethnic cultures sharing one place. This is complicated by the general lack of what Vazquez (2012) called *cultural competence*. He argued that most planners lack reflective understanding of even their own cultural practices, let alone appreciation and understanding of the cultures and practices of others. This leaves planners adrift functioning within their own personal sphere of cultural experience and/or training with little or no capacity to see, let alone engage, other ways of understanding the physical and social structures within a place.

Healey (1998) similarly argued that to make urban planning more democratic and just, the organization and frameworks for decision-making within urban planning should be the focus. The knowledge of planners cannot be assumed to be superior to the local knowledge of inhabitants or other stakeholders. Healey (1997) argued that participants in planning and decision making need to “learn about each other, about different points of view and come to reflect on their own point of view” (p. 33)

Devising integrated development plans for cities that acknowledge and make best use of the full array of diverse cultures and their assets is the challenge for city planning, to create synergy between the physical and social structures.

Bianchini (2004) and Stevenson (2004) pointed out that more recent forms of cultural planning cut across divides between the public, private, and voluntary sectors,

different institutional concerns, types of knowledge, and professional disciplines. Unlike conventional urban planning, which typically focuses on weaknesses, asset-based models, as practiced by McKnight and Kretzmann (1993), Landry (2000), and Hume (2009), seek to build on strengths, local identity, and niche opportunities. The current planning system, with its stress on community engagement and environmental impact assessment, asserted Falk (2007), should welcome this approach.

Planning should be seen as the process of bringing people together, not only to share experiences and work in solidarity, but also to work through differences in transformative ways, argued Sandercock (2004). As such, it addresses the forming and reforming of spatial and social communities, bringing together perceived space, conceived space, and lived experience as part of the ongoing process of space production.

While ideas related to local planning and governance, as well as the lack of connection between the physical and the social elements remain in contention, efforts are being made within urban cultural districts to build vibrant physical and social spaces. In so doing, they attempt to employ culture and creative arts as vehicles. The following part of this literature review looks at research related to cultural districts and some that observes the relative success and impacts of different organizational strategies employed in different places.

### **Formation of Urban Cultural Districts**

In this section I review literature on the formation of urban creative and cultural clusters and districts referred to as cultural districts as explained in Chapter I. A considerable number of case studies come from many parts of the world that explore the economic, social, and political context and impacts of cultural districts. Cultural district

formation is seen by most scholars as related to creative and cultural industry clustering. Research comes predominantly from the vantage point of economists, geographers, and urban planners. Some similarities and differences are observed between cultural districts and traditional industrial clusters and several scholars offer typologies of creative clusters and cultural districts, none of which proved of significant value in this research.

This penultimate section of the literature review leads to the final that will address horizontal or cross-cutting organizational forms of local governance organization. Similar patterns are observed by many scholars who look at cultural districts. In this part I will review the formation of smaller, distinctive urban spaces or subunits and the phenomenon of industrial cluster formation and its relationship to cultural districts. A review of types of cultural districts offered by scholars will be followed by a number of case study summaries. Some of the problems with cultural districts will also be considered.

The trend toward localization in planning and governance, as discussed in the last section, is characterized partly by increased assertion of neighborhood identities, formation of ethnically and culturally defined districts, and establishment of increasingly localized governance structures (Osti, 2013; Roodhouse, 2010; Ruffin, 2010; Santagata, 2000). Urban district formation, considered fragmentation by some, comes about through a variety of factors. Smaller geographic scale provides opportunities to create a new social whole in a more face-to-face environment (Vaisey, 2007). Forming attachment to place and intermixing identities within places are important in the development of social cohesion (Lewicka, 2005).

Osti (2013) discussed evolving ideas around localism from an economic point of view. "In the past, a static idea of locale provoked an improper use of concepts such as



segregation or backwardness. Living in a small place was coupled with a negative perception of weak economic dynamism or mental closure” (p. 5). He observed a resurgence of the local that began in the 1980s with small, distinctive industrial or agricultural districts in Italy. According to Friedmann (1971), this trend began earlier in the United States where “the insistence on cultural pluralism has consequently been accompanied by a new movement towards the decentralization of formal authority and the devolution of powers” (p. 320).

In citing Lefebvre (1974/1991) and his ideas related to the physical and abstract formation of space, Karplus and Meir (2013) argued that the production of space is directly related to the economic, cultural, and political structures present. “Social change always entails at least a certain degree of spatial change and vice versa” (p. 37). These changes can present both challenges and opportunities. Place identities, and the ways different people relate to space and to the formation of social capital, become more complex as urban neighborhoods and districts become more multi-ethnic. In this context, Forrest and Kearns (2001) asked, “What connects people to one another in the same street?” (p. 2129). Is it shared cultural practices or experiences, leadership, historical identities, physical space design, quality or functionality of social networks, or all of the above?

According to Osti (2013), local subunits may be characterized on a spectrum depending on the existence and nature of their internal and external relationships. It is the quality and functionality of these networks within cultural districts that serve as the subject of this dissertation research. Distinctive and unique local places develop a combination of what he called “short- and long-distance relations” (p. 5) resulting from new promotional strategies and communication technologies. These local places become

not only “cool” for both insiders and outsiders but they have the potential to be what he called *networked* places, possessing “good and strong relationships inside and outside” (p. 7). Globalization, combined with the Internet and good bridging social capital in both real and virtual space make possible this networking both inside and outside spatial boundaries of neighborhoods and cultural districts.

The understanding of how cultural districts grow has evolved along side cluster theory, initially described by Marshall (1920) and more recently observed in the grouping of like industries including the creative and cultural sectors (Duranton & Puga, 2001; Markusen, 1998; Porter, 2000; Sacco et al., 2008; Santagata, 2000). Cluster theory explores the characteristics of specialized industry agglomerations and how both organic and planned patterns have contributed to the success of economic enterprises and to cities and regions.

In the industrial and pre-industrial economy, clusters occurred around natural resources, transportation infrastructure, and availability of labor. Successful clusters benefitted from vertical integration patterns that strengthen their specialty of focus from shoes and furniture to filmmaking or from metalwork to medicine. Vertically integrated clusters provide like enterprises with synergy and concentrations of supportive services including supply chains, training, transportation and communication infrastructure that help to further innovation, market development, and sometimes product recognition or brand identity (Anholt, 2005; Bianchini & Ghilardi, 2007).

Clusters later grew around favorable policies, interested investors (Scott, 2006), and even around an earned or cultivated reputation or brand (Krueger & Buckingham, 2009; Santagata, 2000). In the transition to a post-industrial economy, information infrastructure,

presence of knowledge workers, and symbolic value of places grew in importance (Florida, 2002; Sacco et al., 2008).

Work by Porter (1990) related to business clusters, and the scholarship of Scott (2000) around the economic and innovative efficacy of creative industry clusters, have brought added recognition to cultural clusters or districts. Such places have emerged both organically as in unplanned, natural forces (Stern & Seifert, 2012), or through centrally planned efforts in cities around the world.

Cultural clusters, referred to here as cultural districts, serve as popular approaches to urban regeneration constructed around strategies that include spatial redevelopment as well as identity or image formation. As political systems are organized around geographic place, these approaches both require and generate opportunities for civic or political involvement.

Stern and Seifert (2010) described cultural districts that evolve from bottom-up organizing as natural cultural districts. They are made up of

networks of creators, consumers participants, and collaborators that exist within geographically-defined neighborhoods. They are self-organized, emerge through community-generated action, and are cultivated and reinforced by a diverse range of participants and residents over time. They can serve as anchors for neighborhood-based economies, and also function as networks across areas, leveraging arts and culture within a regional economy. (Borup & Atlas, 2011, pp. 16–17)

Stern and Seifert used the term *natural* to distinguish these from top-down or highly planned cultural districts. Santagata (2000) examined such networks from a different viewpoint. He argued that “one of the most meaningful characteristics of a district is the interdependency of its firms: in this type of ‘industrial atmosphere’ frequent contact favors the exchange of specialized inputs” (p. 4). The idea of the industrial atmosphere, credited

to Marshall (1920), argued Sacco et al. (2008), is more fundamental than information flows. In the case of cultural districts that are considered bottom-up or natural, this atmosphere reflects networks that are horizontally rather than vertically integrated. This atmosphere represents “a truly local, shared organizational culture” (p. 7). Evans (2009b) saw values in this shared culture as

examples of mutual cooperation through informal and formal economies of scale, spreading risk in R&D and information sharing via socio-economic networks; but also as reactive anti-establishment action (avant-garde, artists’ squats); and as a defensive necessity, resisting control from licensing authorities; global firms, guilds and dominant cultures—artistic and political. (p. 34)

While creative clusters and cultural districts have been observed for some time, “such activities take on new economic significance when they assume the form of and are governed in the logic of industrial districts” argued Santagata (2000, p. 2). In the arena of culture-led regeneration, urban planning, and municipal policy, clusters of cultural institutions, individual artists, and an array of forms of creative production attracted significant attention since the 1980s (Johnson, 2010; Landry, 2000; Mommaas, 2004). Cultural districts became the latest way to revitalize a distressed urban area, even small towns, in the 1990s and 2000s.

Sacco and Tavano-Blessi (2007) warned against close comparisons of industrial clusters with cultural districts. “A too mechanical extension of the original Marshallian idea to the cultural field runs the risk of missing the basic points and of foregoing the key opportunities” (p. 4). Industrial clusters, including creative industry clusters, they pointed out, are focused on decentralized vertical integration, in other words increasing coordination of multiple firms operating within the same value chain—firms producing

similar products or services that can benefit from shared training, innovation, market access, and infrastructure.

Cultural districts exhibit substantial differences from industrial clusters, argued Sacco and Tavano-Blessi (2007). “The cultural district model is sustained by horizontal integration (viz., on increasing levels of coordination and complementarity among firms belonging to different value chains)” (p. 4). The difference begins with an assumption that cultural districts are not narrowly focused on a product type. Most are diversified in terms of artistic disciplines and may include creative industry entrepreneurs and ambient enterprises such as food, beverage, and specialty retailing. A Broadway Theater district, on the other hand, may be more akin to a vertically integrated industrial district while a cluster of artist studios occupied by sculptors, painters, photographers, digital media artists, is likely more horizontally organized.

Cultural districts, argued Sacco et al. (2008), “can be regarded as a post-industrial adaptation of the old industrial district scheme, with several important qualifications” (p. 6). Key among those qualifications, they pointed out, is this horizontal networking and the role of culture as a connecting agent.

The crucial condition for viable culture-led local development is the existence of social governance mechanisms that encourage individuals and groups to give importance to intrinsic motivation and to link social approval and recognition to commitment toward knowledge-intensive activities and experiences. This is a basic pillar of the emerging knowledge society. (Sacco, 2010, p. 35)

Stern and Seifert (2010) looked at cultural districts for the social benefits brought by the connecting agent of culture. They found that “cultural clusters spur civic engagement; cultural participants tend to be involved in other community activities, and neighborhoods

with many cultural organizations also have concentrations of other social organizations” (p. 263).

Another key quality of most creative and cultural districts is their compatibility with other land uses. Unlike older industrial producers and facilities, cultural production and consumption activities are generally complementary with mixed-use and residential neighborhoods (Sacco, 2010). This has the potential to extend their horizontal nature beyond the creative and cultural value chains to include local residents and local actors from many sectors. Cultural districts can foster place-based regeneration and neighborhood-level bridge building (Stern & Seifert, 2010). Thus cultural districts are often found within or adjacent to residential areas and become integral to community fabric. Old mill or factory buildings gain new lives as artist live/work spaces and complement or seed new mixed-use neighborhoods (Gadwa & Muessig, 2011).

Cultural districts, wrote Arnaboldi and Spiller (2011), are “characterised by interconnections between multiple systems (i.e. value chains) and a large number of stakeholders, who represent diverse and sometimes conflicting interests” (p. 642).

According to Farrell and Twining-Ward (2004), urban cultural districts represent complex adaptive systems. This, wrote Arnaboldi and Spiller (2011), “requires attention to spatial and temporary factors, and to decision making dynamics”(p. 642).

In his research in The Netherlands, Mommaas (2004) provided an in-depth look at some varieties of cultural districts and how they function. He addressed positioning strategies as well as what he called core dimensions. Through his research he explored five cultural district projects in four different cities in the Netherlands and called for “a more

sophisticated understanding of the complex dynamics involved” (p. 507). Speaking of the formation of cultural districts, he warned,

what at first glance appears as a common model, often accompanied by boldly expressed slogans concerning the new role of culture and creativity in the physical and economic revitalisation of cities, in more detail unfolds as an ambivalent and conflict-ridden mixture of cultural, economic, social and spatial interests and sentiments (p. 507)

This conflict-ridden mix of interests in some cases evolves into a productive dynamic and in others into outright conflict.

While research on the direct and indirect economic impacts of singular cultural districts has been produced, it does not compare and put into context the relative purposes and intentions of organizers or planners or the conditions of communities in which they are situated. Measuring results begins with clear intention, and much of the literature lacks meaningful indicators. Clear civic purpose extending beyond the service of capital are not well articulated by municipal entities or other governmental agencies, authors agree. Mommaas (2004) offered a comprehensive set of characteristics of different types of districts and organizational approaches, and he provided a possible beginning for a set of measures.

Gibson, Waitt, and Walmsley (2010), Healey (2006), and Chapple et al. (2011) concur with Mommaas who acknowledged that “stakeholders hold different visions of what constitutes successful revitalization—and that who benefits often remains unclear” (Mommas, 2004, p. 226). Through his multiple case studies of cultural clusters in the Netherlands, Mommaas provided a list of what he called public justifications that: (a) strengthen the identity, attraction and market position; (b) stimulate a more entrepreneurial approach to the arts and culture; (c) stimulate innovation and creativity;

(d) new uses for old buildings and derelict sites; (e) stimulate cultural diversity and cultural democracy. The degree to which districts succeed at one or more of these justifications is not discernable through any meaningful or standard measures.

Johnson (2010) offered five types of what she labeled *planned arts districts* in the United States: (a) arts anchored redevelopment district; (b) cultural taxing district; (c) artisan/artist district; (d) neighborhood arts district, and (e) creative production district. She wrote from an urban planning point of view, and within an arts and culture framework, versus the typology offered by Santagata (2000) from an economist point of view. He suggested a four-part typology of districts divided evenly between creative industry production and cultural activities and places agglomeration of commercial creative production in two categories that he titled *Industrial Cultural Districts* and *Institutional Cultural Districts*. The latter he described as those grounded in “formal institutions that allocate property rights and trademarks to a restricted area of products” (p. 8). Examples include regions or villages in which products such as wines, ceramics, cheese or other products are produced and that formally license a brand identity to enhance their value.

Santagata (2000) continued to describe two types of cultural or arts clusters, *Museum Cultural Districts* and *Metropolitan Cultural Districts*. Museum Districts include a critical mass of exhibiting institutions, draw tourists and stimulate craft and other design-related activities. Metropolitan Districts he described as more diversified, composed of “a spatial agglomeration of buildings dedicated to performing arts, museums and organizations which produce culture and related goals, services and facilities” (p. 12).



Within urban settings, Roodhouse (2010) described three types, *Cultural Quarter*, *Cultural Industries Quarter*, and “cultural iconic regeneration” (p. 25), the latter referring to a large-scale publically or privately orchestrated development. This corresponds to what Kong (2009b) called flagship and Shorthose (2004) described as engineered.

Evans (2009b) used terms similar to Roodhouse (2010) to distinguish between cultural and creative clusters. His version of a cultural quarter focuses on the arts framework while *Creative Industry Quarter* aligns with Santagata (2000) and to creative economy clusters. Evans put forth a more nuanced typology by describing four types of Creative Industry Quarters.

- *Mono-Cultural Industry Production*—characterized by vertical integration of industries such as film, music, textiles, ceramics
- *Plural-Cultural Industry Production*—characterized by horizontal integration of facilities such as managed workspaces, visual arts, architecture, design, multi-media
- *Cultural Production/Consumption*—incorporating open studios, art markets, events/festivals
- *Cultural Consumption*—composed of retail (fashion, street markets, antiques, crafts, foods) arts and entertainment, museums, theater, cinema, red light districts, restaurants/clubs

Other public justifications for the formation of cultural districts were observed by Grundy and Boudreau (2008) who recognized positive values as well as the paradox of creative citizenship. They saw liberating social values advancing side by side with neoliberal social engineering. Critical analysis of citizenship practices enacted through

cultural initiatives, they claimed, remain underdeveloped. Along with Griffiths (2006), they called for further research into creative and cultural initiatives. Such research they contend, “might shed light on the way in which people enact creative citizenship in politically contingent ways many of which may be decidedly un-neoliberal” (Grundy & Boudreau, p. 360).

Lin and Hsing (2009) observed two general justifications used by cities in post-industrial, culture-led urban regeneration. The first has as its purpose global competitiveness where policymakers try to solve issues around economic and physical decline. This approach includes city branding, cultural flagships, and high-visibility festivals. The authors cited Zukin (1989) and others who suggested that such competitive motives may result in strategies that are short-sighted and have what they called unavoidable problems (which they do not delineate in the article).

Stern and Seifert (2012) applied distinguishing characteristics useful across all types of cultural districts. One reflects what they called *single-asset* districts that form around a dominant organization or type of use. This may be similar to *flagship* type (Kong, 2009b) but their typology includes natural or bottom-up districts. Likewise, it may include the *Mono-cultural Industrial Production* type described by Santagata (2000) that are focused around a singular enterprise or cluster of like enterprises. The single asset may be a major institution or facility such as a museum or artist live/work complex in a converted factory, or it could be a cluster of like organizations in a singular art form or creative industry, such as a group of galleries, a cinema complex, or a textile-producing district.

The second type characterized by Stern and Seifert (2012) are *complex cultural districts*, those with multiple assets or more diversified resources and activities. These may

include creative industries, cultural organizations, or both, but of a wider or more diverse mix. Single-asset districts, they suggested, are less sustainable as they are more vulnerable to market changes in the way any city or town may be overly dependent on a single major industry or employer. Complex cultural districts they found are more stable and “more likely to grow over time (by increasing their density, that is, number of enterprises and artists located there) and much less likely to decline” (p. 7).

Chapple et al. (2011) looked at two cultural clusters in Berkeley and Oakland they referred to as arts districts. In their research, they employed business data to map the areas in terms of the presence of creative sector entities and fiscal activity of nonprofit arts groups and annual sales of arts related businesses. While they make no reference to Mommaas (2004) the thrust is similar: to explore the origins and purposes of arts districts and the relationships between them and the social, cultural, and economic development strategies employed by cities.

Little consideration was given by most authors to the profoundly different contexts of each of their cases. Miles (2005), a long-time scholar and critic of the arts, culture, and cities questioned the transferability of culturally based strategies. “To what extent can policies and strategies which are successful in one city be mapped onto others in which conditions differ?” (p. 890). Scholars reviewed here define the location or locations of their studies, however, descriptions are rarely put within a larger global or comparative cultural or economic context.

The exception is Stern and Seifert (2012). They categorized districts in relation to their socio-economic and locational positions. Residents, real estate, and business enterprises within some geographic areas possess greater economic advantages. These

they called *high market* and *market districts*. Others carry historic disadvantages in regards to economic inequities, racial exclusion and discrimination, as well as physical deterioration. They called these *civic clusters*. Locational factors have relevance in their assessment as well. Some districts may sit near a more vibrant downtown or other neighborhood hub, have access to key transportation infrastructure, or exist in proximity to a desirable natural amenity, such as a body of water or park. Others may be isolated or suffer from natural or built obstacles inhibiting movement of people or goods.

Mommaas (2004) also identified relative geographic position as a way of appreciating context, placing a cluster or neighborhood in relation to a city center where they may be highly visible with a heavy flow of tourists, or in a more marginal location with an avant-garde image.

Johnson (2010) warned of a downside and described how some urban planners target low-income areas for arts-based revitalization strategies deliberately placing real estate development ahead of housing needs and the stability of cohesive communities.

Zukin and Braslow (2011) described a pattern in New York City where “the unanticipated consequences of unplanned or naturally occurring areas where artists work and live are higher housing prices, more intensive capital investment, and eventual displacement and gentrification” (p. 131). They took the argument further to suggest that such consequences are not always unintentional and that often cultural districts “are not the ultimate focus of public officials’ concern. Instead, the object of their industrial and land-use policy is to prepare the ground for private-sector real estate developers” (p. 33). In such cases, they suggest public officials see the cultural district as transient, as a means to a different end.

Another way of approaching spatial positioning is to address a place in time or in relation to its cycle of development, decline, or regeneration. In her case study of a Berlin cultural initiative known as Kolonie Wedding, Jakob (2011), described the community as a classic post-industrial site with a mix of neglected industrial and residential buildings and high numbers of low-income inhabitants and immigrants. Artists and small visual and performing arts groups, as well as a few small businesses, found their way there because of cheap, appropriate building stock. This spawned bars, cafes, and restaurants. Economic dynamics of the 1970s and 1980s described by Zukin (1989) in the SOHO district in New York have played out in similar ways at different times in many other places (Mommaas, 2004).

Looking even further into the context of place and the cultures of place adds another important layer that few of the authors really addressed. While most attempted to evaluate the value and efficacy of various approaches to culture-led regeneration, only Healey (2006), a scholar with a sophisticated understanding of planning in a community setting, brought national and cultural context into her research.

Similar to Mommaas (2004), Chapple et al. (2011) acknowledged that “stakeholders hold different visions of what constitutes successful revitalization—and that who benefits often remains unclear” (p. 226). On the other hand, Jakob (2011) and Ponzini and Rossi (2010) offered more certain assessments of who benefitted and who did not—or in fact lost ground—through cultural district development. They argued that cultural districts, like SoHo as described by Zukin (1989), often end up benefitting economic interests to the detriment of lower-income residents, small shopkeepers, and often artists. To prevent this, Mommaas called for a turn in local policymaking, more reflexive involvement with cultural

districts, and stronger involvement of the arts and culture sector in their planning and organization.

In a critique of urban cultural policy in Baltimore, Ponzini and Rossi (2010) assessed efforts to revitalize neighborhoods through the arts. Ponzini, an architect and urban planner, and Rossi, an economic geographer, concluded that “a primary effect of these policies has been the sparking of the real estate sector” (p. 1050). Some artists and a small number of cultural organizations did benefit, they asserted, as did the Mayor (who went on to successfully run for Governor of Maryland) and his close associates. However, the success of cultural districts in Baltimore has come, they argued, at the expense of “poorer, longer-term residents who are excluded from the benefits” (p. 1039).

Finding a different pattern of benefits, Stern and Seifert (2010) mapped cultural assets in different parts of Philadelphia and correlated the density of these assets with changes over time in economic conditions and other social indicators. This quantitative study builds on much of their past work. They cited their sociological study (Stern & Seifert, 2005a) where they found that “block groups with a high number of cultural assets were more than four times as likely to see their population increase and their poverty rate decline as areas with few assets” (p. 268).

In acknowledging the “growing political salience of the cultural sphere” (p. 416), Griffiths (2006), like Evans (2005), questioned whether claims about the role of culture and creativity are overblown. Griffiths saw these claims as having been absorbed uncritically into urban policies around the globe:

There is little sign, in any of the bids [for European Capital of Culture], of culture being viewed as a medium for collective emancipation; of culture as a field of struggle and resistance; of culture as a source of oppositional identities; of a more fundamental politics of culture. (p. 430)

Urban redevelopment efforts including cultural districts are riddled with compromise and typically produce a mixed bag of results. Local officials are often faced with the choice of doing nothing or doing something that will bring uncertain outcomes. With little empirical evidence to guide officials in their choices of strategies and outcomes, cultural districts promise a variety of social and economic outcomes, few of which can be fully measured (Evans, 2005).

Many authors suggest that inclusion of endogenous artists, historical or symbolic resources, skill sets, and even local business entrepreneurs and suppliers has a marked and positive impact on the success of cultural districts. Such inclusion leaves behind greater benefit through the development of local stewardship, capacity, goods, cohesion, and more equitable distribution of economic gains. The flip side—initiatives that rely on exogenous artists and assets—is reported to have detrimental impacts and to be less stable (Jakob, 2011; Kong, 2009b; Lin & Hsing, 2009).

In conclusions on their Bao-an Temple Area case in Tapei, Lin and Hsing (2009) wrote that a focus “on the endogenous cultural resources and festival activities linked with the local cultural context that will generate the civic energy for a regeneration project” (p. 1338). This was echoed by many of the other authors reviewed (Gibson et al., 2010; Jakob, 2011; Kong, 2009b; Paiola, 2008; Stern & Seifert, 2010).

In European scholarship on cultural districts there is generally the lack of association between ethnic cultures and cultural districts and a lack of awareness of issues related to multi-cultural or multi-ethnic environments. While most districts are fairly open and innovative with the cultural and creative forms they embrace, they tend to be

organized around a Western elitist notion of culture—as in the work of academically-trained artists and civic or nonprofit arts organizations.

In their Taipei case Lin and Hsing (2009) referenced the cultural context and the historic district in particular. They cited a variety of existing unique cultural resources within the Bao-an Temple Area. A significant historical heritage site, it is one of the city's oldest areas anchored by the Temple, which they describe as a community center for local social interaction. Lin and Hsing offered more in-depth cultural context in regards to the history and function of the Temple than other authors describing urban cases. This may be the function of their self-awareness of writing in a western language for an audience less familiar with eastern cultural nuances. In any event, it helps to illustrate that, as Miles (2005) suggested, a specific approach taken in one context is not likely to work well elsewhere.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, nearly all of the authors reviewed here reference in one way or another new partnerships, cross-sector collaboration, and the need for new kinds of relational thinking. In formations of cultural districts, and their ongoing coordination, horizontal relationships in communities were cited as connecting local actors in constructive ways.

At the same time it was often referenced, the phenomenon of horizontal organization and networks were not the focused subject of any research. Some authors made reference to other scholarship around new forms of governance or cross-sector partnerships. However, within the emerging field of culture-led regeneration and cultural planning, the organizations and networks themselves have not been a subject of research.



Professional practices engaged in development of economic, social, and cultural capital in place-based communities have operated within separate silos for decades. Only recently have they come to overlap in meaningful and sometimes intentional ways. Scholars have barely begun to develop shared terminology or theories to inform practice. Research I found that addresses the simultaneous engagement of these practices in place-based communities relies largely on case studies with only a few mixed methods and quantitative studies.

### **Horizontal Networks in Local Governance**

In this final part of the literature review I discuss scholarship related to horizontal networks and leadership approaches relative to cultural districts and other urban places that self-organize as sub-units of municipalities. Horizontal networks comprise formal and informal relationships that span sectors, interest groups, professions, class, and sometimes ethnic and other traditional divides. This topic is central to the dissertation research as it explores organizational and social relationships in the context of cultural district governance. The preceding section of this literature review looked at cultural districts in which horizontal networks are nested. Cultural districts, themselves partly products of localization in urban planning, exist mostly within cities where culture-led regeneration efforts and/or the creative city movement are at work. Ultimately horizontal relationships in cultural districts are both local and global. They contribute to inside and outside networks (Osti, 2013) and are related to the weak ties/strong ties (Granovetter, 1973) and bridging/bonding social capital (Putnam, 1998) that fuel or stand in the way of social cohesion in global post-industrial or creative economies.

Sacco and Tavano-Blessi (2007) pointed out that cultural districts tend to exhibit different characteristics in their organizational structures or cultures than do traditional industry clusters or districts. These authors asserted, “the cultural district model is sustained by horizontal integration” (p. 4). Horizontal relationships in these settings are formed and maintained by what Sacco et al. (2008) described as the connecting agency of culture or what Paiola (2008) similarly called the propulsive effect of culture.

Scholarship does not explore more deeply this role of culture as a connecting agent or for its propulsive effect in the context of local governance structures although artists and others in the field of community based arts have made this case for some time (Goldbard, 2006). Lange et al. (2011) called for “new forms of governance within the framework of creative and knowledge industries” (p. 306). Just what these new forms look like and how they organize remains an open question. In this part of the literature review I look at related ideas and concepts and at theoretical work in regards to horizontal networks and local governance, drawn largely from urban planning literature. From leadership theory I also look at ideas related to leadership in horizontal organizations and environments. From case study research in cultural districts I looked at local organizational and governance strategies in those contexts. Finally, I review research into a form of localized urban governance known in most countries as business improvement districts (BIDs). BIDs are relevant here as they may be the closest relative to entities in cultural districts that serve a similar, though often less formal, role in local network organizing. BIDs were integral entities in two of the three case studies in this dissertation.

**Horizontal thinking in urban planning.** Discussion of the value and utility of horizontal networks is found in progressive urban planning literature, addressing ways

that community challenges can be best approached through interdisciplinary and/or cross-sector partnerships. Such partnerships are described by Healey (2006) as horizontal in nature because they cross vertical silos of knowledge and relationships.

A central idea raised by Healey (2006)—challenging to those in both planning and governance—is what she described as the disintegration of heretofore vertical systems in place-based communities. These include such urban systems as infrastructure, education, law enforcement, recreation, culture, etc., that usually operate city-wide or sometimes region-wide as individual silos. She suggested they can be re-configured as spatially defined interdisciplinary or horizontal systems. This necessitates major changes in thinking, or in what she called the *planning imagination* on a municipal level. Healey referred to this as *relational complexity*, that she says poses “the intellectual challenge of articulating and expressing multi-relational urban and regional dynamics in spatial terms” (p. 535). This directly contradicts Amin (2004) who argued the obsolescence of spatial organization or what he called the *politics of propinquity*.

Healey (2006) advocated horizontal organization and recognized it as a challenge for the planning field that she asserted, has “a weakly-developed relational imagination” (p. 541). She argued that horizontal relationships and new forms of local governance do not remove the need for municipal government but necessitate the formation of new models as well as the inclusion of local government as participant but not authority. Sirianni (2007) similarly argued for continuing inclusion of formal municipal government as an essential partner in regeneration and ongoing local organization. Lange et al. (2011) argued that within “complex governance mechanisms, government still matters” (p. 323).

One of the recognized roles of central government remains protection of rights and assurances of some level of legal, social, and economic equity (Friedmann, 1971). Localized forms of neighborhood district governance are not inclined nor empowered to provide such assurances. Healey (2006) asked, "What are the prospects for developing spatial and governance imaginations which release creative energies and synergies and reduce exclusions and oppressions?" (p. 526). In other words, is it possible to have localization, creative cities, and broader social equity at the same time? This question remains to be answered.

One approach to more equitable regeneration came from practitioner-scholars McKnight and Kretzmann (1993) in the United States. Their asset-based community development (ABCD) model encourages communities to become more aware of their own resources and power, have confidence in their own capacities, and take charge of solving their own problems (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003). The process laid out by McKnight and Kretzmann, begins with an inventory of community assets purposefully looking to all corners for strengths and capacities that a city, neighborhood, or organization can put to work through holistic strategies. Creativity, relationships, and individual and group empowerment are high on those lists of assets. ABCD was devised with and for communities lacking traditional forms of wealth and power. Its intention is to identify and marshal new forms of endogenous power while leveraging and maintaining local control of outside resources.

Focusing attention on holistic connections and capacity to weave together assets within communities remains typically outside the skill set of many in positions of municipal and institutional leadership. The ABCD process emphasizes active broad-based

participation in asset identification as a way to build relationships and networks within communities. Healey (2010) addressed similar ideas in the evolving practice of urban planning,

nor can the qualities of places be easily captured by the image of a place as a collection of assets clumped together. Place qualities are generated and maintained by complex inter-relationships between people in diverse social worlds, which potentially connect them to all kinds of other places and times in dynamic and unpredictable ways. (p. 35)

As Healey suggested, relationship building may not have immediate purpose but can serve to prepare people for unknown or future challenges. L. Mumford (1954) described neighbors connecting through “intermediate links of association” (p. 258). He wrote, “In times of crisis, a fire, a funeral, a festival, neighbors become vividly conscious of each other and capable of greater cooperation” (p. 258).

The presence and value of social and horizontal networks and cross-sector partnerships in urban districts are described by scholars including Chapple et al. (2011), Griffiths (2006), Koppenjan, Kars, and van der Voort (2009), and Mommaas (2004). Characteristics or functions of these networks resemble weak ties described by (Granovetter, 1973) and bridging social capital described by Putnam (1998). They serve as relationship-building capacities connecting people across sectors, professions, race, class, other differences—and in the globalized world, across distance. Horizontal networks serve a pivotal function by fostering social cohesion that helps communities function more effectively and equitably (Khan, 2007).

Schweitzer (1999), as cited in Kearns and Forrest (2000), did not use the term horizontal but described a healthy community as one that includes,

a vibrant social infrastructure consisting of numerous formal and informal connections and organizations which are held together by the social fabric of the

community. Social networks link organizations and individuals with each other and enable the community to function in a healthy way. (p. 1010)

Local social networks are credited by different scholars with serving multiple purposes in place-based communities, from support of mental health (avoiding isolation, stress, depression and discouragement), to prevention of marginalization and provision of emotional, material, practical and social support (Kearns & Forrest, 2000). Novy et al. (2012) described these networks as “public platforms of knowledge exchange” (p. 1882) and asserted they are essential to mobilizing people to achieve goals such as to “combat exclusion, foster cohesion and facilitate participation” (p. 1882).

The related idea of friendship networks, Kearns and Forrest (2000) argued, is an under-researched area and as such these networks may be under-estimated as a source of social cohesion. As communities become more mobile and diverse they suggest the “so-called weak ties of friendship may be of even greater importance” (p. 1000). Similarly, Wissink and Hazelzet (2012) cited a host of studies on various dimensions of neighborhood involvement and pointed out “there is limited general research into local social networks as a neighborhood effect” (p. 1527).

Talen (2006) described social-network characteristics including reciprocated exchange and sociability, along with the idea of collective efficacy (see Sampson & Graif, 2009). Social networks, she argued, enable “mutual trust, solidarity, and shared expectations regarding informal social control” (p. 1558). Through his studies of cultural festivals in Italy, Paiola (2008) used the term *local relational capital* that he found significant as “a stable network of relations at a local level, contributing to sustaining local creativity and innovation” (p. 516).

Thinking horizontally involves seeing value and potential in relationships, conceiving new possibilities, and acting in new coalitions as circumstances warrant (Chapple et al., 2011; Mommaas, 2004, 2011; Quinn, 2005). Like the “public platforms of knowledge exchange” cited by Novy et al. (2012), this sort of “partnership or multi-stakeholder approach may also be justified as a way of tapping into the knowledge of local actors, to make a strategy more robust” (Healey, 2006, p. 538). Successful horizontal networks provide benefits to all participants, some short-term, some long-term. For some individuals, the benefits may be in the immediate social relationships and long-term benefits may be unpredictable. Such informal networks do bring risks, Healey pointed out. They may foster fragmentation, inefficient resource use, or loss of voice among weaker individuals or groups if alliances form within the group that may be narrow or exclusive in focus.

**Leadership in horizontal and creative settings.** Reflecting on 20th century theories of leadership, Dugan (2006) said these models were largely governed by industrial era understandings of organizations, focused primarily on the individual as leader and on binary relationships between worker and owner. Such command and control models, he found promoted “power and authority, rational and analytical thinking, and strong managerial influences” (p. 217). Such models were not developed to nurture creativity, attract creative workers, engage diverse new community members, or invest workers in enterprises—important 21st century modes of thinking for businesses, cities, and the non-governmental or nonprofit sector. “Empowered people and organizations are stressing out today’s leaders, challenging traditional command and control styles”, wrote Li (2010, p. xvi).

Leadership styles and theories have struggled to adapt to the industrial/post-industrial transition within the business sector as well as in the professions and institutions related to planning and city governance. Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) found that top-down hierarchical models, effective for an economy premised on physical production, are not well-suited for a more knowledge-oriented or creative economy. “Despite the needs of the Knowledge Era, much leadership theory remains largely grounded in a bureaucratic framework more appropriate for the Industrial Age” (p. 301). Particularly in the face of new communications technologies and social media, leaders find people in organizations and communities exchanging information at a dizzying pace forcing leaders to re-think how they lead (Jackson & Parry, 2008; Li, 2010).

Lange et al. (2008) explored efforts by the city of Berlin to promote creativity and creative industries, asking: “can they be steered by public administration?” (p. 532). To support this sector, these authors called for “informal alliances between private and public stakeholders, self-organized networks to promote new products in new markets and context-oriented forms such as branding of places, represent new forms of managing the urban” (p. 535). While many city leaders champion the idea of creative cities, few possess this kind of leadership skill set. Shifting paradigms and the increasingly complex make-up and needs of cities and neighborhoods require adaptive and creative approaches—a heightened ability to apply creativity to problem solving, to engage across sectors and domains, and to learn to adapt more quickly.

Chrislip and Larson (1994) found traditional forms of civic and political leadership increasingly unable to cope with the challenges facing communities. They advocated collaborative leadership in which the motivation of the leader is to achieve resolution



through a participatory process, bringing divergent parties together in the generation of innovative solutions to complex challenges. In environments that call for collaborative or distributed leadership, Jackson and Parry (2008) suggested that “leadership—like power and like information—can move between people at differing levels of the organization or societal hierarchy” (p. 88). Leaders in more horizontal models place emphasis on leading others to lead themselves, on developing capacity in others, and in challenging the leader-follower dyad (Jackson & Parry, 2008).

Stewardship and servant leader models that serve to build and maintain institutions, governmental units, and some business enterprises, tend to look inward and protect the organizations and individuals within them, according to B. Smith, Montagno, and Kusmenko (2004). The intellectual curiosity and stimulation needed to transcend existing boundaries, foster more holistic thinking, and build more bridging social capital, are better served through transformational and creative leadership, argued Brown and Trevino (2006).

To motivate and build appreciation for the value in each of the professional or expertise-based silos, leaders are called upon to practice and promote asset-based thinking and build strategies rooted the unique qualities and strengths of their organization or community. In so doing they help build power and capacity within their communities and organizations (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003; McKnight & Kretzmann, 1993).

Transformational leaders who build on endogenous assets, emphasize vision, values, and intellectual stimulation (Brown & Trevino, 2006) and collaborative leaders do the same, said Chrislip and Larson (1994). But this is by engaging participants in the process of identifying and clarifying values and generating a shared vision. Collaborative structures

link both leaders and followers together, not in hierarchies, but in what Kotter (1990) called “thick, informal networks” (p. 89). What is needed, he argued, “are good working relationships among many people in order to establish direction, align people, and inspire them to act” (p. 91). These thick, informal networks are by definition horizontal.

Creating effective leadership in horizontal organizations and place-based communities requires a significant shift in style and approach from industrial era models. Describing their collaborative approach, Chrislip and Larson (1994) asserted that effective leaders challenge the process and the way things are normally done, take risks, experiment, innovate, and learn. Collaborative leaders inspire a shared vision and enable others to act.

Li (2010) postulated a form of what she called *open leadership* that follows on the heels of new technologies sweeping the globe. She called on leaders to serve as catalysts and provide “inspiration for people to pull together and accomplish things together” (p. 197). This approach mimics open source systems that involve wide participation in the co-creation of software, or design of products and systems (Shirky, 2008; Tapscott & Williams, 2006). Forms of group thinking, involving people in many parts of the world, have resulted in a growing list of innovations and solutions to complex problems. Participatory structures such as these may pave the way for new modes of group problem-solving and require leaders who can facilitate interactions and tap possibilities.

There is considerable scholarship addressing leadership in creative environments. M. Mumford, Connelly, and Gaddis (2003) noted that leaders of creative efforts have to devote as much effort to managing the context surrounding the work as to managing the work itself. In urban planning practice, Sandercock (2004) similarly observed that a leader acknowledges creativity and gives it space to flourish. The leader creates an environment

in which exposure to new ideas and experimentation is rewarded, and demonstrates by example. Open leaders, according to Li (2010), create and nurture an environment in which openness prevails, engaging people in goal-setting and building a culture that encourages innovation and risk-taking.

To lead efforts in a creative environment M. Mumford and Licuanan (2004) argued that leaders must possess strong domain knowledge—substantial technical and professional expertise—as well as creative thinking skills. This stands in contrast to Chrislip and Larson (1994) who found that collaborative leaders who are most effective are not necessarily those who know the most about the issues. Rather they are the ones who have the credibility and facilitation skills to get the right people together to create visions, solve problems, and reach agreements about implementable actions.

Purdue, Diani, and Lindsay (2004) argued that there are two kinds of leaders key to successful networks. The inside leader serves as a central point within a dense organizational or network cluster, one who builds on the strong ties or bonding social capital. A second kind of leader serves as a broker or boundary-spanner who links with other clusters. Together these leaders parallel the values of both weak ties and strong ties, or bonding and bridging social capital. The inside leader builds and maintains internal ties; the boundary-spanner builds and maintains weak ties that may be local and/or global. A horizontal network may, in fact be populated by members who are leaders within their own spheres. They each act as a boundary-spanner bringing many weak ties together into a network. A horizontal network may thus be the organizational equivalent of bridging social capital or weak ties, in other words a network of networks with an inside leader who

helps to maintain relationships and the flow of information and an outside leader who links with information and resources that refresh the network.

**Horizontal networks in cultural districts.** Gibson et al. (2010), Chapple et al. (2011), and others, observed new cross-sector partnerships and strengthened social networks resulting in both top-down and bottom-up cultural districts. Stern and Seifert (2010) also acknowledged unique cross-sector partnerships that come together in planning and implementing cultural districts. Such involvement and the activities within the districts themselves, they asserted, spur “higher levels of community building and civic engagement” (p. 265). Pointing to evidence that cultural districts generate widespread neighborhood-centered economic and social benefits, Stern and Seifert argued that these clusters do this partly by creating citizen-consumers, reflecting new patterns of participation that bridge civic engagement and economic consumption (see Griffiths, 2006).

Citing work by Jeannotte (2003) in which she connects cultural participation and citizenship, Stern and Seifert (2010) described this phenomenon as *cross-participation*. “Residents who were culturally active were four times more likely than those who were not to be involved in other community activities” (p. 273). They asserted that involvement in local cultural activities builds connections across barriers of class, ethnicity, and geography agreeing with Jeannotte that cultural participation corresponds with or positively influences participation in other forms of civic life. This relates to the idea advanced by Sacco et al. (2008) of culture as a connecting agent.

Cultural initiatives—whether spatial or activity-based—as well as cultural planning, all require and help to forge cross-sector, interdisciplinary, and often unique horizontal partnerships. Such relationships generally fall outside the box of traditional municipal

government and necessitate the formation of new and localized models. This represents a consistent thread through nearly all of the scholarship on cultural districts—recognition of new relationships and partnerships coming about through place-based initiatives and that cultural and place-based initiatives require horizontal relationships to be successful.

Through his analysis of five Dutch cultural clusters, Mommaas (2004) identified horizontal collaboration or synergy among activities such as arts consumption, shopping, dining, etc. as a common element. Among the positive attributes of cultural districts, he concluded that they involve formation of new coalitions as they fall “between established cultural, economic, social, and spatial policies” (p. 530).

Consistently scholars researching cultural districts, festivals, and cultural planning identified horizontal organizing and governance strategies as critical to successful outcomes, yet they offered no evidence of whether practitioners in the field were conscious or unconscious of these choices. Many authors concluded that organizational or governance strategies that retained local control and grew from ground-up efforts delivered more favorable benefits to their communities. What several authors termed bottom-up versus top-down approaches were generally cited as providing more equitable social outcomes (Chapple et al., 2011; Mommaas, 2004; Paiola, 2008; Ponzini & Rossi, 2010; Stern & Seifert, 2012).

In a similar vein there was general acknowledgement among those authors that market forces either exploited regeneration efforts or took control of them as a result of neglect, lack of clear intentionality of local organizers, or through economic coercion. Mommaas (2004) warned that divergent interests at work in geographic communities can undermine each other and adversely affect their communities. He pointed out the major

complexities present in these environments—places where culture and commerce blend, along with

the mixed composition of artistic and entertainment elements, the labyrinthine mingling of global, large-scale and local, small-scale cultural enterprises, the shifting composition of the cultural field and the related changing notions of artistic excellence, expressive autonomy, creative innovation or cultural progress. (p. 509)

Paiola (2008) observed a similar mix in his three different models of how cultural festival organizations work, concluding that “different organizational models present different value creation possibilities” (p. 517). Categories offered by Paiola include the top-down model, the bottom-up model, and a middle-ground he called the ad hoc network model. The top-down model can produce some success, he asserted, especially attracting tourists, but leaves a vulnerable system in its wake. It “has not left any valuable local richness, neither in terms of knowledge accumulation by local actors nor in terms of local entrepreneurship activation” (p. 526). This model hinders local interaction and limits creative potential he found.

The bottom-up model depends on high local social capital and involvement of local cultural, food, and service producers as well as links to national and international ideas and resources (see Fernandez, 2008). It relies on what Paiola (2008) called a co-creation model (see also Sirianni, 2007) of action that democratizes cultural production, transforms associations, and leaves behind valuable experiences and creative physical outcomes such as public art and enhanced design. The ad hoc network model mixes the above. In his cultural festival case study Paiola (2008) described how the ad hoc model shares the structure of the top-down model but intentionally draws on local sources, adapts to the context of place and involves local community associations, schools, and nonprofits. The ad

hoc model festival was more rooted than the top-down model and benefits were more widely shared, he concludes.

Arguing for the bottom-up approach, Lin and Hsing (2009) cited the importance of engagement with a desired sense of belonging among residents, traditional cultural practices, heritage conservation, the process of local cultural festival activities, and environmental improvement. They argue that in this bottom-up model, what they called community mobilisation, brings the dual benefits of involvement in place-making decisions that encourage “local inhabitants to reshape a distinctive regeneration project and to enhance active citizenship in the long term” (p. 1322).

In two California districts, Chapple et al. (2011) described how a horizontal network of artists, small businesses, nonprofits, city planners, and ultimately market-driven real estate developers, made the two cultural districts possible. “Though most envision their efforts as discrete, the district’s success arguably depends on these unintended synergies” (p. 323). Like Chapple et al., Paiola (2008) concluded that local cultural production benefitted most from the bottom-up or horizontal model. “The most valuable factor for the sustainability of the local activation process is the creation of a local resource endowment (network-based), which has a propulsive effect” (p. 527).

It is this network-based propulsive effect that contributes to the cycle of trust building, social capital development, social cohesion, and capacity for collective action. According to Putnam (1998) it is people drawn together in place-based communities combined with bridging expertise, social groups, and other resources, that generate momentum and keep social systems functioning and productive.

Ponzini and Rossi (2010) shared a variety of findings similar to Mommaas (2004). They found that efforts to build cultural districts bring people together, form new partnerships, and empower new and different entities and interests that include artists and arts organizations. Most of these interests, they pointed out, typically have weak connections to local government. Ponzini and Rossi (2010) advanced a concept of how the creative class becomes what they called a new macro-actor by reordering and repositioning cultural organizations, artists, and other creative sector enterprises under a new and more efficacious banner. This newly empowered player, they suggested, becomes an ally of political and economic development interests whose actions, when well-intentioned, can have beneficial impacts on communities. However, these authors asserted that as a player this macro-actor is easily seduced by less well-intentioned economic and political forces that may spark gentrification through economic and social exclusion.

**From government to governance: BIAs, BIDs, and CIDs.** The new partnerships and coalitions cited by Ponzini and Rossi (2010), among others, can result in what some call shadow government. Constructs such as district management, business improvement districts, and local chambers of commerce, add a layer of unofficial governance (Mommaas, 2004). This added layer some see as engaging more people in the governance process or a more nuanced spread of democracy. Others see it as weakening existing formal democratically-elected structures. Nelson, McKenzie, and Norcross (2009) argued that “small, local, flexible administrative organizations that, compared with the alternative of state or citywide bureaucracies, will often be better equipped to determine the best regulatory policies for the immediate neighborhood” (p. 14). Bryson (2004) wrote,



We are moving into an era when networks of stakeholders are becoming at least as important, if not more important, than markets and hierarchies, even if those networks are often “operating in the shadow of hierarchy” or “in the shadow of markets.” (p. 24)

Ruffin (2010) examined collaborative network management in the context of urban regeneration. “In this era of urbanism, regionalism and globalism, public organizations are shifting from a hierarchical, top-down command-and-control approach to shared authority across horizontal meta-sector network arrangements” (p. 459). She described this as moving from *government* to *governance*.

Lange et al. (2011) wrote, “governance refers to new relationships between state and society that imply a blurring of traditional boundaries of governmental agency” (p. 307). Referring to such arrangements as *new governance*, Morcol and Wolf (2010) said this represents a blend of public and private spheres characterized in part by relations among participatory organizations as networked, not hierarchical. Koppenjan et al. (2009) similarly defined new governance as consisting of networks that “cut across existing territorial, administrative, and functional boundaries” (p. 769). Lange et al. (2008) called these new arrangements, “a mode of decision-making which does not only follow top-down patterns, but that includes these as well as horizontal or bottom-up processes” (p. 535).

These new governance models operate on negotiation and persuasion more so than command and control. Lange et al. (2011) asserted “negotiations are necessary in forming alliances and social networks guaranteeing visibility and attention in public administration as well as within the private sector” (p. 307). According to Morcol and Wolf (2010) these models require new leadership skills they called enablement skills. They argued that, “traditional organizational management skills are not sufficient for meeting the requirements of network governance” (p. 911).

Nelson et al. (2009) explained that in the United States most local governments born in the past half-century are suburban municipalities. Most exist on a population scale smaller than many neighborhoods in older cities. Larger cities, said Nelson et al. (2009), with complex constituencies and older bureaucratic structures, have not competed successfully with these suburban communities. Economic development projects, infrastructure expansion, business attraction, among other contests have been won by suburbs with less contentious electorates and more nimble administrative bodies.

For Nelson et al. (2009) new governance models including business improvement districts (BIDs), if adequately empowered, may enable cities to regain a competitive edge. Ruffin (2010) described BIDs as “a submunicipal public administration innovation” (p. 460). She put them in a global as well as regional context describing them as an “institutional framework for cities to compete in the global market by combining private resources and expertise with local governmental power” (p. 462).

The first BIDs were established in Canada with authorizing legislation in 1969, known there as Business Improvement Areas (BIAs). They grew exponentially during the 1980s and 1990s (Ruffin, 2010). Darchen (2013) cited that by 2007 there were 347 BIAs in Canada and 404 BIDs in the United States as well as significant numbers in Australia, Japan, South African, New Zealand and in several European countries. BIDs are defined by Nelson et al. (2009) as “a sub-local district in which there is compulsory assessment on local property owners and businesses to fund a privately directed organization that provides common services beyond those of the wider municipality” (p. 1). BIDs range in size from one city block to 100 blocks or more. Most BID organizations are incorporated as

nonprofits or non-governmental organizations governed by self-appointed boards (Morcol & Wolf, 2010).

Nelson et al. (2009), consider BIDs a policy success and describe their purpose as “solving urban quality of life problems . . . restoring urban morale and making older downtowns more attractive places to shop, visit, do business, and seek entertainment” (p. 3). BIDs fill gaps city governments are unable to address and enable “small groups of neighborhood business owners to act collectively” (p. 4). They are typically initiated and governed by property or business owners and, according to Morcol and Wolf (2010), “Many BID management organizations are closely intertwined with other organizations of business interests” (p. 909). Nelson et al. (2009) advocated “Granting of additional powers to BIDs while devolving those powers away from higher forms of government” (p. 2).

BIDs present issues around equity similar to those posed by the creative city movement and in the centralization-decentralization debate (Friedmann, 1971). Nelson et al. (2009) pointed out that “neighborhoods with a BID may have the financial resources to purchase better services than are available to other neighborhoods in the same urban jurisdiction” (p. 12). As such BIDs can create inequities and have a “fragmenting and privatizing effect” (p. 12). In Canada, Darchen (2013) concluded that the BIA he studied is “federating stakeholders with different interests in a regeneration process that is incremental and not based on a vision built on consensus” (p. 14). He found the BIA has been used to “promote and enhance the identity of a former underutilized downtown area with a high potential for real estate development” (p. 14).

BIDs are born, according to Ruffin (2010) in the context of the neoliberal transition of governments from those “primarily concerned with effective provision of social welfare

services to citizens, to that of entrepreneurialism, strongly characterized by a pro-economic growth strategic approach, risk taking, innovation, and an orientation towards the private sector” (p. 460). The state, she wrote, is being “transformed into more of a facilitator, manager, mediator, and redirector of processes of geo-economic restructuring” (p. 463). Ruffin described this entrepreneurial form of governance as “activated through public-private partnerships and negotiative networks” (p. 480).

Koppenjan et al. (2009) argued that “horizontal governance arrangements potentially conflict with the very principles of representative democracy and, likewise, with the existing political institutions” (p. 769). They found that “key societal decisions are increasingly taken outside the influence domain of the vertical steering and accountability relations of representative democracy” (p. 770).

### **Summary and Gaps in the Literature**

This chapter reviewed academic literature related to five areas:

- social cohesion and social capital;
- culture-led regeneration of cities, specifically the creative cities movement;
- local or neighborhood planning and governance practices;
- creative and cultural clusters and districts in cities; and
- horizontal networks and organizing strategies.

Authors advanced arguments pertaining to both the merits and shortcomings of culture-led urban regeneration. Most notably, many authors pointed to expanding disparities related to wealth and social benefits brought by globalization and in the context of the creative city movement. Addressing needs related to social cohesion and economic

inclusion takes on added importance as culture and creativity become growing forces in urban placemaking and economic development.

Scholars cited devolution in the governance arena as, sometimes, a countervailing force to broader social justice concerns. The dialectic in urban planning of centralization and decentralization is tied closely with the pull towards local control and the push for the protection of social and economic rights.

In the context of globalization, localized place governance, and social equity, there is a growing trend of urban cultural district formation. This trend exists within the phenomenon of devolution and appears to foster the proliferation of cross-cutting or localized horizontal networks of people drawn from different sectors and professions as well as sometimes different ethnicity, class, and social interests.

Scholars have found that communities that possess greater social capital, social cohesion, and capacity for collective action, are more resilient and that these attributes derive from broad-based social networks (Sampson & Graif, 2009). This, together with observations on the greater benefits of bottom-up organizing of cultural districts, points to value in cross-cutting horizontal networks as an under-explored phenomenon.

While there is well over a century of scholarship related to city and local neighborhood planning, the phenomenon of creative cities and cultural district formation has gained attention among scholars across the globe for less than 20 years. It is suggested in some scholarship that social capital and social cohesion in place-based communities can come about through bottom-up or grassroots organizing and the formation of horizontal or cross-cutting organizational and social networks. Other scholars have suggested that cultural districts foster horizontal organization as well as benefit from bottom-up

organizing and horizontal networks. Such assertions provide the basis for the exploration of horizontal networks that have not been examined specifically and in depth in the literature.

The formation of urban districts organized around creative and cultural identities is a growing phenomenon, especially in post-industrial cities around the world as has been shown through the literature. Research related to this phenomenon has focused on economics, development of real estate and place branding, global positioning and competition among cities, as well as the adverse effects attributed to these efforts related to social equity and gentrification. No literature can be found that examines the nature of these organizational and governance networks within cultural districts and their contributions, if any, to the communities in which they reside.

How these horizontal networks form, how they function, and what are some of their benefits and pitfalls, are questions not addressed in existing literature. This dissertation aims to expand knowledge available to the urban planning practice, to city leaders, and to cultural district organizers so as to build stronger, more resilient, more equitable, and more creative place-based communities. I hope to broaden the practice of urban planning—a practice grounded in modernist approaches to land allocations and infrastructure design—to place higher value on the cultural and social relationships built across sectors, professions, ethnic groups, and economic strata and to develop greater appreciation for more holistic thinking about city building.

A number of scholars compare cultural clusters and districts that have been organized and managed through bottom-up or grassroots strategies with those planned, developed, and managed employing top-down strategies. Research finds more equitably

distributed benefits, greater sustainability, and other positive results in districts organized using bottom-up approaches (Chapple et al. 2011; Mommaas, 2004; Sacco & Tavano-Blessi, 2007; Stern & Seifert, 2010). No research has been found that looks at bottom-up organizational approaches and horizontal networks in the context of cultural districts, how they form, function, and contribute to other aspects of community life.

Emerging theory related to cultural districts suggests culture serves as a vehicle for building horizontal relationships. Sacco and Tavano-Blessi (2007) called this “the activator effect of culture” (p. 4). From an economic perspective they cited cultural districts as bringing a unique capacity to foster horizontal integration versus the kinds of vertical integration typically found in traditional industrial or commercial clusters or districts.

In the United States, heightened interest in urban placemaking and the involvement of artists and nonprofits in the process has taken root during the past few years. As the cultural sector is increasingly called upon in urban regeneration initiatives, the building of social relationships or local governance, either as a result or by-product of cultural initiatives, is also a little explored subject.

This review identified a gap in the literature related to the understanding of organizational and social networks emerging through the formation and ongoing management of cultural districts. These networks help connect and coordinate key actors and may do so in ways that cut across difference and in ways that present opportunities for addressing local issues related to social and economic equity.

## Chapter III: Research Methodology

### Introduction

This dissertation employed qualitative research methods based on the multiple case study model described by Stake (2006) in its examination of the question: How do horizontal networks form through the process of planning, organizing and/or ongoing management of cultural districts, and what kinds of benefits do those networks generate within their communities?

Field research focused on three cultural districts that formed during the past 20 years in three cities in the United States, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, and Miami. The three districts were chosen from written descriptions and from my personal experience with over 40 urban districts across the United States based on their general characteristics. Selected cases represent a geographically dispersed set of cases with common characteristics and some differences. These similarities and differences make the multiple case study fitting. Stake (2006) described how the multiple case approach looks at cases that are linked by a broad issue or phenomenon—what he called a *quintain*—yet share no direct or programmatic connection. The researcher is called upon to look at the individual cases and at the quintain in separate steps.

Case research examined the context in which these cultural districts exist as well as the process of their formation and that of civic, cultural, social, and place-based organizational management entities within each of the districts. Research focused on how stakeholders are linked horizontally across a spectrum of professional, personal, and civic interests, as well as through personal characteristics. The research explored the presence, nature, and development of horizontal working relationships in each district and how these



formed networks that cross sectors, race, class, professions, and individual areas of civic, social, and economic interests. I also looked at both intended and unintended consequences of the networks and employed a process to draw findings across cases.

### **Case Study Method**

Yin (1994) suggested the case study as a suitable way to study complex social phenomena, a method particularly effective at exploring how such phenomena play out in real life situations. Where there are many variables of interest and multiple sources of evidence, Yin advocated, the case study as an empirical inquiry that best answers how and why questions. Through the multiple case study method, this dissertation approached each case individually. Stake (2006) emphasized the “need to organize separately our data gathering and reporting of the individual cases” (p. vi).

This dissertation explores how questions in an attempt to gain greater understanding of the ways in which networks and organizations form and function within cultural district settings. Research methodology in this multiple case study was based in an interpretive constructionist approach as described by Charmaz (2003), as opposed to a positivist approach, more common in the physical sciences. This study builds an understanding based on specifics and variables in different contexts rather than finding averages or obstacles as positivist researchers generally do. Using the illustrative capacities of the case study, story-telling was employed as a device to deepen meaning (Seidman, 1991). “Sometimes you can see trends and relationships through statistical analysis that you cannot see with the naked eye. However, if you stop the research at the counting stage, you miss a great deal” (Charmaz, 2003, p. 24).

Because this research included multiple cases, the study lends itself to findings around patterns or practices that have relevance to the broader practice of cultural district organization and governance. Thus, drawing findings across cases adds value. Starks and Brown Trinidad (2007) remind that “choosing the method that is best suited to the line of inquiry is vital to obtaining the desired results” (p. 1372). As a planning practitioner and teacher, it is my desire to offer useful insights and ideas applicable to the field based in stories of real places.

Most commonly associated with the field of sociology and the concept of grounded theory (Benson & Holloway, 2005), case study research incorporates views of actors in the case and requires attention to completeness in observation, reconstruction, and analysis (Tellis, 1997). As a diagnostic and teaching tool for analysis and creative problem solving, Tellis suggested case studies help researchers and students to become more aware of the interrelatedness of various disciplines and to think in terms of wider problems and solutions. It is my hope that this research brings useful information to light for local organizers, planners, students, and other researchers around the interrelationships among the elements in cultural district formation and governance to generate the most effective and equitable outcomes.

Starks and Brown Trinidad (2007) addressed the challenge of examining multiple dimensions in case studies by naming “the six Cs’ of social processes (causes, contexts, contingencies, consequences, covariances, and conditions) to understand the patterns and relationships among the elements” (p. 1374). These elements of social processes were examined in each of the cases through questions designed to elicit relevant information and background research on contexts and conditions. Stake (2006) described how cases have

an inside and an outside with key elements both within and outside the boundaries of the case. The researcher, he wrote, “may be unable to draw a line marking where the case ends and where its environment begins” (p. 3). This is especially of relevance in these cases as the nature and reach of networks can be boundless. Similarly, the existence and nature of the three cases studied is closely tied to the environments in which they sit. While these cases are based in physical space with individuals who have a stake in that space (for a discussion of stakeholders, see Bryson, 2004), network members bring weak and strong ties (see Granovetter, 1973, 1983) into that space from any number of other places or relationships. Politics, economics, and other forces that may be city-wide, region-wide, or global impact ways local networks form and function.

“Qualitative understanding of cases requires experiencing the activity of the case as it occurs in its contexts and in its particular situation,” wrote Stake (2006, p. 2). First hand experience including walking and photographing streets and public spaces, as well as attending cultural events, was part of the research process to give additional context and texture to the report and findings.

In these cases, the nature of the social interactions and functioning of the social structures served as the central focus along with their consequences. In final examination of the cases, each was explored in its unique context, “To see how social processes are constructed and constrained by the physical and social environments in which they are practiced” (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007, p. 1375). Grounded theory, they said, inquires, “how social structures and processes influence how things are accomplished through a given set of social interactions” (p. 1374). While not explicitly grounded theory method,

the cross-case analysis process described by Stake (2006) is similar and results in what he called assertions.

This multiple case study sheds light on emerging theory related to the activator effect of culture (Sacco & Tavano-Blessi, 2007) and to the formation of horizontal networks and organizational structures in cultural districts (Mommaas, 2004; Sacco et al., 2008). Exploring links between such phenomena are most fitting for case study design as described by Yin (1994). Linking findings with past research, this study identifies correlations between theory and practice related to urban planning and local governance.

Tellis (1997) asserted that case studies can be designed as a triangulated research strategy for purposes of validation. Data, the vantage point of investigators, theories, and even methodologies can be triangulated. Stake (2006) described triangulation as “an effort to assure that the right information and interpretations have been obtained” (p. 35). In relation to these cases, the researcher brought direct experience working intimately over 10 years in an urban cultural district in addition to a similar number of years as a planning consultant on behalf of over a dozen other cultural districts in the United States—none of which are among the selected cases. These vantage points allowed me, as the researcher, to better understand inner workings as well as larger social, cultural, physical, and economic considerations in an urban planning context. Triangulation in this research occurs with the primary data collection, extant theory, investigator experience, and dissertation committee review. “Triangulation is expected to lead either to confirmation that the observation means what we think it means or to ideas about how the observation would be interpreted differently by different people” (Stake, 2006, pp. 35–36).

In addition to stakeholder interviews, initial background research was conducted related to the context of each case to contextualize the specific case as well as to inform the construction of final questions to be asked of interview participants. Background research included historical information, relevant municipal urban plans and economic development strategies, if any. Demographic and employment data as well as a profile of business sectors and information on nonprofits were collected. Economic and social conditions of the geographic district and of the cities in which they sit also aided in setting context. Local governmental structure and civic culture were also examined as relevant to organizational structures and civic cultures in the districts. Stake (2006) argued “historical context is almost always of interest, but so are cultural and physical contexts. Others that are often of interest are the social, economic, political, ethical, and aesthetic contexts” (p. 12). These were all of interest in these cases. Multiple case studies have particular value, according to Stake (2006), in illuminating context, especially those that are complex or problematic.

### **The Cases**

Among the common characteristics of the three cases is the presence of working artists and productive creative activities, along with their ascending local and regional identities as cultural districts. Public cultural events and celebrations are held regularly in each district. They all include a mix of commercial and nonprofit cultural, food service, and retail activity. The three districts exist within economically transitional areas in their respective cities and are comprised of a mixture of residential, commercial and—especially in Minneapolis and Miami—converted industrial spaces. Residential populations include a mix of longer-term and newer residents with some upward economic pressures on those residents, especially in Miami where rapidly rising property values and large-scale

development projects appeared more likely to force dislocation of low-income residents. Economic and physical conditions within each of the case study districts vary with different trajectories and rates of change related to both internal and external forces.

As cases for dissertation research, each provided an active endogenous organizational entity initiated and controlled by stakeholders internal to the district and with a significant role in the formation and ongoing management or governance of the district. All the districts experienced relatively low levels of municipal intervention in terms of investment and/or planning throughout most of their formation. They are what some scholars call bottom-up (Mommaas, 2004; Paiola, 2008) or natural (Stern & Seifert, 2010) cultural districts.

Sacco and Tavano-Blessi (2007) suggested that in many cases “the initial push comes from the bottom to be eventually taken over or supplemented by top-down initiative” (p. 5). These authors also cited the reverse where districts formed through top-down initiative are taken over, or become part of the agenda, of grassroots organizers. Rather than bottom-up or top-down, they called such cultural districts *progressive*. Paiola (2008) referred to those in this middle ground as *ad hoc*. All three cases selected for this research have just such a mixed heritage. They began as grassroots efforts and gained active support of municipal agencies, developers, and some philanthropic entities, yet they are primarily reliant on local actors and the capacity of these actors to work collaboratively to advance the goals of the districts.

### **Participant Identification**

In each of the cases a broad mix of stakeholders were identified and interviewed. Traditional definitions of stakeholder often confine them to “people or small groups with

the power to respond to, negotiate with, and change the strategic future of the organization [or community]" (Eden & Ackermann, 1998, p. 117, as cited in Bryson, 2004, p. 22). In this research, a definition was used to include what Bryson argues represents "a broader array of people, groups or organizations as stakeholders including the nominally powerless" (p. 22). He cited his definition as "more compatible with typical approaches to democracy and social justice in which the interests of the nominally powerless must be given weight" (p. 22). As theory related to cultural district organization cites horizontal networks as contributing to social equity, particular attention was paid to ensure participation of the nominally powerless.

Selection and sampling of stakeholders interviewed included, and was limited by, "participants who have experienced the phenomenon under study" (Stark & Brown Trinidad, 2007, p. 1374). In this case that phenomenon was the formation and/or ongoing management, and the social and/or organizational networks in the cultural district.

In case study and grounded theory research, according to Stark and Brown Trinidad (2007), sample sizes may range from 10 to 60 persons. It is important, they argued, to identify and secure participation from individuals with different experiences and vantage points "so as to explore multiple dimensions of the social process under study" (p. 1375). Kools, McCarthy, Durham, and Robrecht (1996) argued that in the research and analysis it is important to achieve a critical mass of dimensions. In the cases studied for this dissertation, participants numbered between 17 and 20 for each case.

In each of the three cultural districts studied, the effort to achieve a breadth of experiences relative to cultural district was balanced with maintaining parallel between each of the cases. In drawing relevant comparisons between the cases, a similar number

and mix of types of participants identified and interviewed. Based on their sector or professional relationships, or the experiences they bring, participants were identified and categorized. One or more nonprofit administrator, business or property owner, individual artist, journalist covering the area, creative entrepreneur, city planner or policymaker, and resident, were among the consistent categories. Some snowballing occurred as participants recommended others to be interviewed for their unique perspective, valued information, or pivotal role. Some participants were outside the immediate network, and some were considered negatively by other members. While this does not exclude consideration of any interview, it helped to contextualize comments.

Inside leaders and outside leaders (Purdue et al., 2004) describe some participants based on a dimension of their participation. Some participants were part of the network relative to paid employment, others by virtue of a vested interest in property or business ownership. Others were moved by civic volunteerism or less clearly defined goals.

### **Participant Interviews and Questions**

Rubin and Rubin (2005) described a variety of interviewing techniques including one that seeks concept clarification and one that addresses theory elaboration. The purpose of a concept clarification interview, they said, is to explore meaning while interviews seeking theory elaboration attempt to pull out themes that have broader significance. This study employed both these techniques in constructing and conducting interviews.

Tellis (1997) described three interview forms: open-ended, focused, and structured (or survey). In open-ended interviews respondents are asked to comment about events or phenomena that may corroborate evidence from other sources. Focused interviews are



used where the respondent is interviewed for a short period of time and usually answers set questions often used to confirm data from other sources. Interviews for this case study used the open-ended approach with many consistent questions and with casual and conversational elements added to establish a comfort level with participants.

A series of questions were asked of participants in an order and variation as appropriate to their type and level of involvement and to the flow and response of the exchange. Benson and Holloway (2005) suggested that beginning interviews with open-ended questions and then moving to more specific creates a reflective environment for participants producing better results. Additional follow-up or clarifying questions were added as needed. Starks and Brown Trinidad (2007) pointed out that it cannot be “assumed that the researcher and participant necessarily mean the same thing when they use the same words” (p. 1375). Thus, they recommend redundant or clarifying questions explicitly about meaning. “The selection of issue questions is crucial” wrote Stake (2006, p. 10). Construction of those questions is equally critical, he argued. For instance, “changing ‘Did’ to ‘Does’ changes thinking from the particular to the general” (p. 10). This change can direct participants to frame their thinking on a specific incident or on a pattern of activities or behaviors. Many questions in this research were framed more by “does”.

General questions used consistently<sup>1</sup> were as follows:

Personal relationship to district:

- Describe your relationship and personal history relevant to the district
- Describe your participation in or understanding of district formation

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that some questions were more or less relevant for some interviewees because of their relationship to the district or the network, or because of their area of expertise or experience.

- Describe your current involvement

Perceptions of district:

- In your experience or understanding, what was the impetus for district formation
- Does the district have a purpose or role in its larger urban setting
- Does the district have a distinctive character—how do you describe it
- What are the most active social and professional gathering places

Structure, functions and reach of lead organization/network/individuals:

- Does the district have a lead organization or consortium/network
- Describe what this organization or network does
- How do goals and activity plans get made
- Describe relationships of members outside formal meetings
- How are city officials or city agencies involved
- Do individuals bring their connections and resources to the group

Leadership of district/perceptions of key actors

- Does the organization/network have identified leaders and/or spokespeople
- Describe the leaders and key actors
- What or who are your primary sources of information on what's going on in the district
- Are there inside leaders (who hold the district together) and outside leaders (people who bring wider connections)
- Are there broader city or social issues that a lot of people in the district get involved in

Role of culture, artists in network:

- How are artists and arts organizations involved in the district

And the interviews would usually conclude with the question, “Who else should I be sure to speak with?”

### **Data Collection**

Interviews were documented through hand-written notes by the researcher. Each interview was between 60 and 90 minutes. With each interview and each case, I looked for meaningful information and for an overall story narrative. I tried to understand how each district was formed, how individual leadership and personal relationships contributed to or detracted from the process, how communication took place and was facilitated, and how collective action was initiated and carried out. I also sought to learn how far networks stretched and to what kinds of resources they connected to the district. While initial stakeholder mapping identified most interview participants, some occurred especially if there was an opportunistic interview. I explored assessments of each participant relative to the efficacy of the network and ways in which the network fostered community change, such as progress towards social equity, economic opportunity, and physical or aesthetic improvements.

### **Data Analysis**

In reviewing data from the three cases, common themes from individual interviews guided the analysis. Stake (2006) argued that in multiple case studies “the individual cases should be studied to learn about their self-centering, complexity, and situational uniqueness” (p. 6), and that this should be completed before looking at cross-case analysis. Larger concerns, or the quintain, he said, should be given little attention until each case is

fully analyzed and understood. Theoretical concepts from other research will have relevance in the final cross-case analysis as data explicitly bear them out or contradict them.

Responses from interview participants were coded and organized around patterns. All the interviews from each case were coded and organized separately without consideration of the others.

Analysis techniques described by Tellis (1997) include rearranging data arrays, placing evidence in a matrix of categories, creating flowcharts or data displays, tabulating frequency, using means, variances and cross tabulations. Yin (1994) presented two strategies for analysis: relying on theoretical propositions to analyze evidence based on propositions; and developing a case description as a framework for organizing the case study. In these cases, evidence formed a unique case description. Theory did not serve as the framework.

Kools et al. (1996) described a method of dimensional analysis that involves charting the variety of dimensions revealed through a case study. The method allows a picture to emerge from data using a matrix. Coding of the data based on the dimensions identified, they suggested, should be scrutinized to find a critical mass that reveals key findings. "In dimensional analysis, the explanatory matrix is considered to be the cornerstone of the analytic process" (p. 317). This offered a useful approach to coding for this dissertation. Kools et al. recommended writing of memos as formulations develop. Benson and Holloway (2005) also recommended ongoing memo writing and that data analysis proceed concurrently with data collection. This, they argued, informs subsequent research allowing it to go deeper. Memo writing was not practiced outside dictation of

personal observations made while walking and observing each district. However, full write-ups based on interviews and background research were completed before moving to the next case or to cross-case analysis.

In this multiple case study design, it was important to begin each set of interviews with fresh eyes, acknowledging their different contexts and conditions and that they may reveal different patterns or results. This required the researcher to bracket ideas or assumptions and to approach each case with an open mind (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). Given the geographic distances and limitations of this study, interviews for each case were conducted in clusters sequentially. In Minneapolis, where I live, I conducted one or two interviews in any given day spread out over four months. In Los Angeles and Miami, I made a total of five visits to each and conducted three to four interviews many days while also spending time attending events, observing and photographing the district, and spending time in gathering places that I was told were popular.

Starks and Brown Trinidad (2007) suggested

a constant comparison method of coding and analyzing data through three stages: open coding (examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data); axial coding (re-assembling data into groupings based on relationships and patterns within and among the categories identified in the data); and selective coding (identifying and describing the central phenomenon or 'code category' in the data. (p. 1376)

I practiced axial coding, allowing the data to reveal patterns and key categories. Like Benson and Holloway (2005), Starks and Brown Trinidad (2007) also suggested that in the ideal "each interview or observation is coded before the next is conducted so that new information can be incorporated into subsequent encounters" (p. 1376). In this dissertation research, this was not possible, as travel to two of the three case study sites required an intensive schedule of interviews and events over a few days. Identifying

patterns across multiple interviews through coding made more sense after the data from each case was collected.

Starks and Brown Trinidad (2007) described interpretive analysis as an “iterative, inductive process of decontextualization and recontextualization” (p. 1375). During the first stage, the researcher pulls data out of its context as it is coded. In recontextualization, the researcher locates patterns, reducing them to key themes and then re-integrates them. This method of coding, grouping and theme identification proved very useful in this research.

**Cross-case analysis.** Comparing the three case study districts supplied another level of meaning to the research. As Stake (2006) pointed out “too much emphasis on original research questions and contexts can distract researchers from recognizing new issues when they emerge. But too little emphasis on research questions can leave researchers unprepared for subtle evidence supporting the most important relationships” (p. 13). This warning called on the analysis process to consciously maintain another balance, that between following the methodology and employing peripheral vision or looking for data or ideas outside the prescribed method.

I found some patterns in the process of network formation and reach, common issues, difficulties, and similar or dissimilar impacts of the networks. Yin (1994) recommended that selected cases should reflect characteristics and problems identified from underlying theoretical propositions, and that analytical generalizations are possible from one or more cases. While the results of this study have limited generalizability, the three cases, with many similar characteristics but in different places and contexts,

illuminated phenomena not previously studied and point to aspects of value for further study.

The cross-case analysis method outlined by Stake (2006) moves from the full analysis of each unique case to steps for collecting and charting common themes found in each. As identified themes are reviewed, their prominence within each case is assessed along with an evaluation of the utility of each case for development of the individual themes. A matrix compares characteristics on the vertical axis and cases on the horizontal. Based on the results, Stake (2006) suggested development of tentative findings or assertions. Returning to a triangulation process at this juncture, Stake argued, will “assure that we have the picture as clear and suitably meaningful as we can get it, relatively free of our own biases” (p. 77).

The outcomes of this research manifest primarily in description of the cases drawing conclusions based on how the networks formed, functioned and impacted their respective urban districts. Commonalities and differences were identified and described. Secondly, I identified theoretical concepts that arose and appeared to have broader significance to the field and that call for additional research.

### **Limitations of the Case Study Method**

Criticisms of the case study methodology cite a lack of systematic handling of data (Yin, 1994) and claim that dependence on a single case limits validity in providing a generalizing conclusion (Tellis, 1997). Limited cases also present a danger of overly abstract results (Yin, 1994). While cases proposed for this dissertation provide more applicable results, three is still a small sample.

Others argue that using only qualitative techniques tends to obscure some of the important information that researchers need to uncover (Tellis, 1997). On the other hand, Charmaz (2003) asserted that “excessive reliance on statistical measures strips away context, and hence meaning” (p. 30).

Another limitation of the case study is the potential for investigator subjectivity. Yin (as cited in Tellis, 1997) proposed three remedies: using multiple sources of evidence, establishing a chain of evidence, and having a draft case study reviewed by key informants.

Selection of interview participants can also present a limitation. While 20 participants for each case served as an upper limit, that number constitutes a relatively narrow set of vantage points in a complex urban environment. Each initially identified participant was asked for recommendations for others to interview which provided a check on the credibility of other participants. Names frequently mentioned—whether already interviewed or not—were considered credible while outlying individuals were flagged as possibly lacking in credibility, or whose opinions may likewise be outlying. At the same time, participants representing outlying opinions may not be recommended by others. They may or may not be credible or have valuable opinions. If they had valuable perspectives their exclusion left out important information; if they were not credible and are included, they could limit participation by another participant.



## Chapter IV: Findings From Case Studies

### Case 1: Northeast Minneapolis Arts District—Introduction

An undated brochure introducing and summarizing the 2002 Northeast Arts Action Plan pronounced, “Supporting the arts and building community—at the same time!” The plan led promptly to the formal designation of the arts district by the city. A decade before the plan was commissioned growing ranks of artists in this older industrial section of Minneapolis first organized a signature event to draw visitors to their studios. The artist-led Art-a-Whirl, grew into the signature event for the district and spawned the nonprofit Northeast Minneapolis Arts Association (NEMAA). The 2002 brochure, published by NEMAA ambitiously stated, “Our vision is that one day Northeast will be recognized nationally for being a dynamic center for arts and culture.” Over a dozen years later, the national daily news and general interest publication, *USA Today*, named the Northeast Minneapolis Arts District, its number one choice among its “10Best” arts districts in the country. By 2014, Art-a-Whirl featured well over 500 artists, attracted tens of thousands of visitors, and was supplemented by monthly gallery openings and other annual events. The distinction made by *USA Today* provided cause for a celebration in April 2015 attended by current and former political and arts leaders as well as artists, small business owners, neighbors and others with both long and short tenure in the district. Organizers used the opportunity to initiate an annual award program that recognized a neighborhood activist, a building owner, and a small business leader.

The April celebration was sponsored by the newly formed Northeast Minneapolis Arts District, Inc. (NEMAD). Led by artists with more than 20 years history in the district and owners of local small businesses, among other allies, NEMAD was organized in 2014 to

advocate for a more stable environment for artists as changes in real estate and business conditions accelerated in the district. NEMAD also formed to fill a perceived leadership gap. NEMAA, with limited staff and volunteer capacity, decided in the late 2000s to focus on Art-a-Whirl and its artist members to promote their work and not spread itself too thin by trying to manage other aspects of the district. As such, the district spent at least half a dozen years functioning through an informal horizontal network of proponents including NEMAA, several neighborhood organizations, a local chamber of commerce, a community development corporation, active advocacy from the two city council-members representing parts of the area, local property owners, businesses, individual artists, and others. The growing prominence of the district and an upbeat economy in 2014 and 2015 threatened changes feared by artists, primarily the escalation of real estate costs.

### **Northeast in the History of the City**

Known as an industrial working class part of Minneapolis, Northeast was populated by waves of immigrants beginning in the middle of the 1800s. These new residents quickly made the area their own. Northeast served as the industrial hub of the city with mills and factories scattered along the river and along a network of railroad lines mixed with mostly small, single-family housing stock. The area developed an identity during the middle part of the 20th century for Italian and Polish clubs, Catholic churches, and pierogi festivals at Ukrainian churches. It seemed an unlikely place for a re-colonization by formally trained artists.

Occupying what had been Native Dakota lands for 2,000 years or more, the present city of Minneapolis first formed on the west side of the Mississippi River as a town under state law in 1856. It was centered at the waterfalls at the northern-most navigable point in the river

and later incorporated as a city in 1867, the same year railroad service to Chicago was initiated (Bycitylight.com, 2015). Before this, the township of Saint Anthony was established on the east side of the river in 1855. It occupied the area now known as Northeast, an area secured by the U.S. Army and claimed by White settlers from the eastern U.S. These settlers built the first mill on the river 1841. The west side of the river, where downtown Minneapolis now sits, was held by Dakota people until a treaty in 1852 relocated them and allowed Whites to acquire land and build structures. The waterfalls quickly became the site of numerous mills. Because of its proximity to vast fertile farmlands, the city became the leading producer of flour and grist in the U. S. by 1882, a title it held for several decades. From 1899 to 1905 it was also the leading source of lumber.

In early years, forests in northern Minnesota were the source of a lumber industry that operated seventeen saw mills on power from the waterfall. By 1871, the west river bank had twenty-three businesses including flour mills, woolen mills, iron works, a railroad machine shop, and mills for cotton, paper, sashes, and planing wood. The farmers of the Great Plains grew grain that was shipped by rail to the city's thirty-four flour mills. By 1905 Minneapolis delivered almost 10% of the country's flour and grist. (Bycitylight.com, 2015, para. 2)

The township of Saint Anthony, that comprised Northeast, was annexed by the City of Minneapolis in 1887. Many structures that remained in northeast in 2015 including industrial and residential buildings were built during the booming industrial period from late 1800s to the early 1900s. Workers from Nordic countries including Norway, Finland, Sweden and Denmark arrived in earlier waves. Italian, Slovak, Polish, German, Ukrainian and Russian immigrants came in the early 1900s, and they welcomed another influx after World War II. They worked in the factories and began small retail and service businesses.

Neighborhood building stock in the early 21st century includes many small corner shops, sometimes with residential space attached or above, providing favorable live-work

spaces for artists. Strong social networks grew through the 1900s, reinforced by many neighborhood churches, social clubs, and bars. One artist interviewed for this study, and who set up a studio early in the formation of the arts district, said, “In the 80s you could still hear Polish and Russian spoken on the street”. As part of the strong labor movement across the city in the early 1900s, working people in Northeast organized politically and elected many city leaders.

### **Another Transition Begins**

By the 1980s, with the gradual closure of most of the older industries, Northeast experienced an aging population, people who exemplify what is now known as “Old Northeast”. Many remain stalwarts of neighborhoods within the larger Northeast area. Churches and some social groups continued into the 2000s but with shrinking memberships. What many described as “Old Northeast” culture remained alive and, in fact, was romanticized by some artists and a growing community of young culture-seekers known as hipsters. “Northeast was working stiffs and immigrants who brought their heritage. There are churches and bars on every corner. This fits nicely with the artist lifestyle. Artists are spiritual and love to party,” joked one artist and former leader of NEMAA.

Nearby neighborhoods in a different area of Minneapolis known as the Northside—separated from Northeast by the Mississippi River—were increasingly populated by African American residents since the 1950s. Residents and property owners in Northeast complained that the news media reporting on crime on the Northside failed to distinguish it from Northeast leaving suburbanites and south-siders to consider them as the same. Both areas share a common trait of affordable, working class housing stock.

However, Northeast residents were more tightly bonded and politically influential. They saw the industrial decline around them as well as movement to the suburbs of their offspring. Their part of the city needed a new strategy for reinvestment or change to regain vibrancy and maintain a largely Caucasian population.

A generational change clearly began in Northeast in the 1990s and was mostly welcomed by older residents, although some reported it was not so at first. Some interviewees described mostly White and mostly younger artists as more acceptable to the working class mostly white neighborhoods than African American or immigrants from Latin America, Southeast Asia or East Africa. Neighborhood commercial areas and housing stock reflected several decades of disinvestment and neglect and by 2010 saw significant repair and repurposing. Dozens of long-shuttered corner stores quietly became artist studios. Homes saw new roofs, porches, windows, and landscaping. A robust level of physical regeneration was evident during the research street by street and home by home. Most are small and modest homes. Changes are reflective of individuals maintaining and upgrading property and reinvesting in neighborhoods, a phenomenon little seen during three or more decades—yet far from what would be considered gentrification.

The entirety of Northeast Minneapolis encompasses 7.5 square miles, covering approximately 1,000 city blocks. The arts district, comprises about 200 square blocks and sits within Northeast along the western edge bounded by the Mississippi River. It is roughly a square with a commercial street as the eastern boundary, and through streets that have bridges crossing the river as the north and south perimeters.

After decades of population declines, the four formal city neighborhoods that are all or partly within the arts district began to see population increases between 2000 and 2010.

Bottineau, Holland, Logan Park, and Sheridan comprise most of the population of the area defined as the arts district, a population that topped 11,000 in 2010 reflecting growth rates between 3% and 32%. The larger area of Northeast reported a population of 36,000 in 2010, a 2% decline from 2000, providing indication the population in the arts district stabilized and began to grow in contrast to the larger surrounding quadrant of the city.

Artists are not the only recent “immigrant” group to Northeast. Sizable populations of Latinos, primarily from Mexico and Ecuador, as well as from Somalia and other East African countries—as is the case in many areas of Minneapolis— were attracted to low-cost housing along Central Avenue, the eastern edge of the arts district, a long-time eclectic business corridor. Central Avenue suffered the same disinvestment as many other inner city business corridors since 1960. New immigrants beginning in the 1990s opened new businesses. Public investment in a library, as well as senior and low-income housing, sparked additional change in the real estate and business climate. With small, ethnic businesses filling many long-vacant storefronts, the arts, per se, are not regularly in evidence along Central Avenue. The street does serve as host to an annual street festival and other events but largely serves a population not directly engaged in the flurry over art studios and galleries and represents a population not associated with Old Northeast.

### **They Bring Their Creativity With Them**

What was described as an organic migration of artists to Northeast was recognized as early as the late 1970s. Artists found in Northeast, low-cost industrial spaces “off the radar” of building inspectors as well as affordable worker housing stock. Many artists had made their home in more politically and socially liberal south Minneapolis neighborhoods from the 1960s to the 1980s, although not in any concentrated area and they did not find

highly suitable industrial-scale buildings there. The downtown warehouse district as early as the 1970s increasingly supplied good studio space as well as some illegal residential space and by the 1980s generated a lively concentration of artists. A buzz was created there with galleries and artist-friendly cafes and restaurants into the early 1990s. However, space costs in south Minneapolis neighborhoods and the downtown warehouse district grew out of reach for many artists. In the warehouse district, many artists were evicted outright to make way for major redevelopment in the 1990s, most notably a major sports arena. This created a rapid movement of artists to Northeast.

With a critical mass of artists occupying industrial spaces in Northeast, they organized the first annual open studio event in 1995 to draw visitors and attract attention, they dubbed it *Art-a-Whirl*. The name was in recognition of the movement required to visit artists scattered among a large number of sites across a relatively disjointed district. Participating artists had studios and/or lived in dozens of locations across Northeast. This included many artists outside the area that would later become the designated arts district. One interviewee referred to Art-a-Whirl as “the big bang”. The weekend-long event held annually in May brought a lot of attention to Northeast and grew increasingly successful each year. Sustaining it required formation of the organizational nucleus known as North East Minneapolis Arts Association (NEMAA)—the group that went on to play a pivotal role in creation of the arts district recognized by the City in 2003. “Art-a-Whirl brought external awareness and built an internal network”, said one city official.

Early Art-a-Whirl organizers reported finding support from an unlikely city council member named Walt Dziedzic. He was a tough-talking, former police officer with deep roots in the working-class, industrial area. He saw merit in securing funds to invest in the

first Art-a-Whirl. One artist said he initially thought it foolish to involve city officials for fear that police and building inspectors would soon follow and oust artists for building code or noise violations. Once Dziedzic signed on, the artist reflected, police and inspectors left the artists alone. It surprised some that Dziedzic was an early champion of artists locating in questionably legal spaces in his declining part of the city. But others were not. They suggested that artists, who are mostly White and who bring middle class values, were a preferred alternative to new residents of color. “An arts district is really a White concept,” said one interview participant.

During the formation of the district, multiple leaders came forward. A 2001 white paper issued by NEMAA and penned largely by a local journalist set the stage for district formation. The paper called attention to the phenomenon of serial dislocation of artists and to the importance of stable, affordable working space. Shortly after an Arts District Plan was commissioned by NEMAA with funds raised from local foundations, banks and property owners as well as support of the then-local city council-member, Paul Ostrow. California-based cultural planning consultant, Jerry Allen, was employed to conduct a process with broad-based participation. He completed the Northeast Arts Action Plan in 2002. The plan remained present and active in the minds of participants as a guiding tool through most of its intended 15-year life. However, the process of planning and the impetus for it is not recalled by everyone and some of the key recommendations in the plan have not been acted upon partly because no entity maintained responsibility to do so.

While the district, its activities, and many artists who are part of it have experienced considerable success, no one claims that the decentralized, informal network that evolved is optimal. Nor can this organizational model be called intentional. Most had expected



NEMAA to carry the torch as the Arts Action Plan defined, and as NEMAA did in concept for a few years. Lack of resources for paid staff and the demands of a growing Art-a-Whirl, as well as other events, and needs of their expanding membership, put continual stress on the artist volunteers maintaining NEMAA. They found themselves with little time to devote to the ongoing challenges of making, managing and marketing a district let alone some of the more complex recommendations in the district plan.

The agenda for the district included tax incentives for artist-owned and/or occupied buildings, maintenance of a website and a newsletter in addition to light-pole banners that mark the boundaries of the district. The banners were hung and volunteers manage the website and newsletter. Providing technical support for artists, as in business training or consulting, amending City zoning policies, and ultimately creating long-term stability for artist studio and living space proved elusive. Organizers found the tax issue complicated. Because two major building owners in particular have provided stability for studio space over a substantial time arc, motivation to act on long-term solutions to securing stable artist work space has not materialized. Nonprofit developer, Artspace, however, completed a project in 2014 to build 35 new units of affordable live/work space for artists, a drop in the bucket for an area with an estimated 700 or more professional artists.

Real estate pressures, especially after 2007, did not pose an imminent threat to living or studio space costs in general. An arts district committee functioning within NEMAA and later Northeast Community Development Corporation (NECDC), felt little urgency and even less time and money to propel the full agenda called for in the plan. However, the expectation remained among many that the NEMAA board and organization would provide leadership for the district—or at least serve as a coordinative entity.

In 2009 the NEMAA board made the decision to focus its limited resources on events and developing markets to serve its growing list of artist members—and to leave recommendations in the Arts Action Plan to others. While some artists in particular were dismayed, few dispute the decision given the demands on the small organization and the success of Art-a-Whirl. It is thus by default that the district was operating without formal or centralized leadership, a testament to the broad base of ownership and the potency of the district designation. A self-activated artist-led group calling itself Paris Northeast formed around 2012 by disaffected members of the arts district committee that had been part of NEMAA. Paris Northeast began to actively explore new leadership models and a refreshed vision. Their efforts resulted in formation of NEMAD in late 2014.

### **Organizing in Context**

Understanding the organizational and social networks that propel the Northeast Arts District requires understanding the context: the geographic footprint, the impetus for creating it, and the economic, political and cultural history of the place. This case study does not claim to serve as a definitive history or chronicle of the district formation and evolution. It stands as an analysis of the organizational and social networks that brought the district about and that sustain the effort.

One interview participant who saw some early tensions reflected on artists partying in industrial buildings nested within residential neighborhoods. “Feathers were being ruffled. Old widows were seeing the world changing around them,” recalled one building owner. A city official put this change in perspective. “There’s so much industrial zoned land close to residential, there’s conflict sometimes.” When the factories were operating there was noise and truck traffic but, as they closed, neighbors adjusted to the quiet. While most

artist activity is quiet, events like openings, parties, or the massive traffic of Art-a-Whirl are becoming the new normal, she explained.

Two neighborhood association leaders reflected on the idea of artists as either part of or apart from the neighborhood. One said, “Artists are on boards and committees, some belong to the chamber, they buy houses and have great yards; woodworkers have better birdhouses. They’re just part of the neighborhood.” The other said they can no longer be seen as separate from the neighborhood, “Artists are part of everything; It’s like trying to take the pee out of the pool.”

Another signal of generational and cultural change in Northeast came in the election of a young progressive city council-member in the fall of 2013, representing about half the arts district. He organized heavily in the artist community, who in turn championed his candidacy. He now represents one portion of the district in addition to part of downtown where warehouse conversion and new construction has brought about 10,000 new residents over the past two decades, including some artists and many downtown “creative class” workers. His easy victory was especially noteworthy as he soundly ousted an incumbent whose family and name is deeply linked to “Old Northeast”—her father-in-law a former Mayor. The other portion of the district is represented by a council-member who grew up in Northeast but is also a member of an under-40 generation. He actively worked during his first term to court and champion the artist community and easily won re-election in 2013.

Also of note in the city 2013 elections, a Somali city council candidate on the Southside, where the heaviest concentration of East Africans reside, unseated a popular, three-term gay Native American council-member. A South Asian immigrant gained a

council seat representing the Northside and the first Latina council-member was also elected on the Southside.

Minneapolis city government operates on a weak mayor structure with 13 Ward-based Council-members. The City Coordinator, similar to a city manager, and the Council President, are often considered the most powerful individuals in city affairs. In this case, the Council President, who followed her mother in that role, represents parts of the Northside, across the river from Northeast. The city supports 87 defined neighborhoods most with active boards and some with paid staff. The decentralization of political power and broad-based advocacy are common in the city. The weak mayor structure has often been criticized as ineffective in the context of a large city but also reflects a discomfort with concentrating power, part of the political culture of Minneapolis.

### **An Organic Model**

Everyone interviewed regarding the Northeast case affirmed that a decentralized and often informal network of organizations and individuals sustain the district, its identity and its activities. During the 10-year time since the arts district was formalized through city council recognition, leadership was shared among several organizations. Multiple individuals were acknowledged for key roles at different times. One interview participant described it as an “all hands on deck” environment in which one or more organization or volunteer picks up slack if another is tired or occupied with other issues. “We know each other and will talk if we bump into each other but there’s no coordinated effort”, said one building owner.

Three formal organizations were widely cited as comprising the district leadership with a fourth artist-led effort emerging during this research. In addition, at least three

neighborhood resident organizations played a strong role in the district and claimed significant yet shared ownership of the concept and activity. The City, mostly through Council representation, plays an intermittent and quiet but sometimes pivotal role.

NEMAA served as the founding entity. The group cited 535 artist members in 2013, many of whom live, or have studios in Northeast, along with over 200 supporting members, mostly local businesses. Just over half of the artist members live within the City of Minneapolis and of those, they estimate, about 150 live in Northeast. However, this does not comprise the entire artist population as NEMAA serves primarily visual artists while performing, media and literary artists are also attracted to the district and its affordable housing and studio space. Nor are all visual artists in the district NEMAA members. According to its director, artist membership of NEMAA continues to grow to include artists from the wider Metro area who seek participation in one of the annual events as well as inclusion in the catalogue and the website both designed to help artists sell work.

The NEMAA board long included an arts district committee that, after city designation in 2003, and installation of light pole banners, experienced difficulty gaining traction. Event production and requirements of a growing artist membership demanded priority. Only since January 2011 did NEMAA have resources to pay full-time staff. After the 2009 decision to concentrate on events and build their artist marketing efforts, the NEMAA arts district committee was adopted by the Northeast Community Development Corporation (NECDC), a group that had become an early champion of the district idea.

While NECDC was not named in the Arts Action Plan, the group decided to contribute to the arts district by focusing efforts on an artist live/work building, lending their mission and skills not indigenous to NEMAA. The organization, however, suffered a

setback as it over-reached its capacities and nearly defaulted on the live/work development. This resulted in significant debt on the project and NECDC laying off its staff. In a re-organization, the project and debt were transferred to Artspace, a nationally prominent nonprofit developer of artist housing based in Minneapolis and owner of a studio building at the Grainbelt Brewery complex in the district. Artspace completed the live/work project in the fall of 2013 opening 35 units of affordable artist live/work space called Jackson Flats. The NECDC, all volunteer in 2013, remained committed to the district and served as fiscal sponsor for the arts district committee until the nonprofit, Northeast Arts District, Inc. (NEMAD) formed in 2014.

Another formal organizational player was the Northeast Chamber of Commerce, a group that works to promote the arts identity, attract new business, and build a network among all Northeast businesses, including nonprofits and many artists. The reach of the Chamber, as is the case with the other two formal organizations, includes the entirety of Northeast of which the arts district is only a fractional part.

For the Chamber, the arts district symbolized the thematic center and key attraction for restaurants, retail, and other creative sector enterprises. Given that the arts district designation comes with no financial or policy incentives, tax benefits, or other private or public sector tools to reinforce its underlying economy, there is little reason for the Chamber to guide business to locate within the formal boundaries other than to cluster near other creatives, amenities, or services. However, this seems to provide sufficient incentive according to the Chamber executive director.

The informal group calling itself Paris Northeast initially saw itself as a think tank convening discussion groups around a backyard pizza oven of one of the long-time artist

leaders. Gatherings grew to include over 100 people and discussions were wide ranging. Some interviewees, who put themselves in the category of people who like to get things done, criticized the group, describing it as comprising people who “just like to talk.”

The formal boundaries of the district are simple as seen from the outside but are difficult to describe or to experience. The only discernable center or dominant cluster of commercial activity is at the southwest corner of the district. On the western perimeter is the Mississippi River and on the eastern edge is Central Avenue, an eclectic commercial corridor. Broadway Avenue comprises the southern border and Lowry Avenue the north. Besides Central Avenue, a three-block stretch of 13th Street, in the southwestern corner feels the most like an arts district with a theatre, multiple restaurants, bars and cafes, several galleries and artist enterprises. It terminates on the west at the Grainbelt Brewery complex on the river edge. University Avenue, running north-south through the center of the district has sporadic commercial activity as does Lowry Avenue across the northern edge. Railroad tracks wind through much of the district with more than one active line. Industrial buildings occupied by artists seem almost randomly situated but near railroad tracks or the river.

The formal arts district incorporates all or parts of five city-designated neighborhoods each with a formal organization. These include Bottineau, Holland, Logan Park, and Sheridan all of which have formal organizations and either full or part-time staff. A fifth neighborhood, Marshall Terrace, has only a very small piece within the district. Three of the neighborhood groups are heavily invested in the arts district. Holland, the only neighborhood entirely encompassed inside the district along with Sheridan and Logan Park, neighborhoods conduct their own arts programs as well as participate in district

events, identity, and other concerns. They consider the presence of working artists and cultural attractions as central to their identities. Their boards and committees include many artists. There is some crossover in leadership among NEMAA, NECDC, the Chamber, these neighborhood associations and NEMAD, reinforcing informal networks, communication, and relationships. Describing their complementary working relationships, one neighborhood leader said, “We all have our own bandwidth.”

### **Building Owners: Backbone or Threat?**

Key leaders who fostered both Art-a-Whirl and the formal designation of the district included two owners of major artist-filled industrial buildings. While there are many other buildings and active real estate owners and developers, two stand out for their activism, long-term focus, and sheer size. Three of the largest and most identifiable artist buildings, the California Building, Casket Arts and Northrup King remain under the ownership and active management of two owners, one a married couple. Northrup King, the largest, encompasses 780,000 square feet of space, most of which is occupied by artists but not all of which has been fully reactivated. Nonetheless, it houses the largest cluster of artist studios in the region, if not among the largest in the United States. Together, these two owners control over one million square feet of space available to artists.

These owners recruit artist tenants and accommodate their needs as well as actively support and promote artists and various events designed to attract art buyers. In interviews, both owners spoke about the uncertain future of their buildings and about their own eventual retirements. The responsibility they knowingly bear in relation to the artist community is considerable yet, as of 2014, they had no firm plans in place for long-term ownership—a tough prospect with old industrial structures seeking to maintain costs



affordable to artists. One interview participant familiar with an urban artist district in California expressed surprise with her experience with Northeast owners and developers. “[In Minneapolis] it’s different with building owners who have a different vision—it’s not a get rich quick vision.”

While these owners are consistently acknowledged as providing the physical backbone of the district, one artist leader suggested the area would be little more than a few artists scattered about if not for the concerted efforts and long-term commitment of these owners. Many interviewees mentioned the significance of these key buildings and some acknowledged the fragile nature of their ownership. However, in the absence of an imminent threat or change in ownership, little concern was expressed.

Owners of the California and Casket Arts Buildings and Northrup King complex took it upon themselves to become champions of artists. Their personal commitment and the circumstances surrounding the real estate brought them to focus their assets and personal mission to build a successful community of artists and real estate business at the same time. They have served formally and informally as key leaders and the capacity of the district to provide affordable space for artists.

### **Gentrification: A Complex Word**

One artist leader said, “The rents are going up a little and that’s going to happen. I worry a little.” No one interviewed expressed immediate or major concerns, although one long-time resident said, “Central Avenue didn’t change forever and now in two years it’s changed a lot.” Gentrification as a phenomenon was familiar to most interviewees but it was not considered a threat in Northeast. “Gentrification is a term people abuse,” said one city staff member. “Some people concerned about gentrification also complain about roads

and lighting and crime,” she added, suggesting that some want benefits without paying the costs.

In the 1990s, a building leased primarily to artists, known as the S & M Tire Building, was purchased by a developer active in Northeast. The company determined that the condition of the structure required eviction of the artists and major investment to transform it into a viable business center. According to one artists, this “event” may have served as the second “big bang” for the district especially for artists who anticipated the dislocation phenomenon repeating itself. One artist present during that period referred to the developer as “Satan”, reflecting a demonization of developers or owners profiting from real estate that artists activated from dormancy and gave value. At the same time it was clear that many in the community saw owners of the California, Casket, Northrup King and a few other buildings as important champions. As far as the viability of the arts district as a place where artists can afford to make things, these are the angels.

Earlier in the 1970s and 80s artists occupied spaces in the downtown Minneapolis warehouse district and an area now known as the North Loop. Downtown revitalization experienced a major turning point with construction of a sports arena in 1990. This gave Minneapolis artists their first experience at significant and relatively fast dislocation.

The City took notice and provided relocation assistance to some downtown artists in the 1990s, moving them into a historic and architecturally dramatic building complex known as the Grainbelt Brewery part of which was developed by the nonprofit ArtSpace. Besides this development artists and property owners were left to negotiate spaces and there seemed to be ample space at the time. The modest role of the city probably motivated artists towards self-organization although many now express resentment with

the City, saying it did little. However, Council-member Paul Ostrow, who replaced the retiring Dziedzic and is now retired from office himself, was roundly cited for his leadership in securing funds to commission the Arts Action Plan and hiring of the cultural planning consultant in 2001-2002. Ostrow subsequently moved the designation through city council and gained rights from the electric company for installation of district banners. Ostrow doggedly convened players and navigated city bureaucracies, according to many interviewees. He assisted building owners with zoning and permitting issues and acted as a consistent hub of communication. Ostrow returned to participate in the April 2015 celebration of the district ranking by USA Today and was acknowledged for his early advocacy and support. Some artists expected that the new council-member, Jacob Frey, elected in 2013 would champion artists and coalesce the district in new ways. Later, these same artists expressed disappointment that Frey, who also represents parts of the downtown, was drawn into bigger development issues there and paid little attention to Northeast.

### **People Make Things Here**

The Mississippi River, at its most northern navigable point, along with the railroad built in the late 1800s, provided the power and transportation infrastructure to propel the city as it became a significant center of milling and other industry by 1900. The influx of workers and their ongoing ingenuity and entrepreneurship sustained it.

As of 2013, the Minneapolis-Saint Paul Metropolitan Area was home to some 3.4 million residents and headquarters for 19 locally-originated Fortune 500 companies. The area of Minneapolis known as Northeast served as the early manufacturing hub and home to many of the workers, many of whom started up small entrepreneurial manufacturing,

retail and other service businesses as well as social and civic entities. The arts district boundaries were drawn within Northeast to encompass the major remaining structures serving artists while not claiming such a large area as to lack cohesion. Some visionaries saw it as the new innovation hub for the emerging creative economy. “Historically much of what was made in Minneapolis was made here,” pointed out one city official who grew up in Northeast.

“Northeast is awakening to the production side of the arts”, said a NEMAA board member. Northeast, like many areas of older cities around the globe in the post-industrial era, continues to serve a pivotal economic purpose. In the post-industrial transition, many in traditional economic development and urban planning do not recognize artists as contributors to the economy. Within the arts, a sector that sees itself as part of a consumer economy, artist studio complexes are themselves undervalued. Their purpose as showroom and sales gallery are given higher meaning. Even cities chasing the arts as a vehicle for economic development also fail to recognize the maker economy and the role of artists in it. “They don’t understand people who make things. We’re not entertaining people”, said one building owner. This comment referenced major investments by the City of Minneapolis in several historic theaters in the downtown core beginning in the 1980s and lack of public investment in the production side of the arts. He went on to complain that theaters attract middle and upper class suburbanites and city residents to Broadway touring shows, popular music, comedians, dance, and other performing arts. In contrast, artist studios are for the working class.

A long-time neighborhood group leader pointed out with pride that one building in the district, one not designated for artist use, was once owned by a Thomas Edison

company and light bulbs were made there. Likewise, Medtronic, the now-global heart pacemaker and medical technology company began in a garage in Northeast, she added. One of the larger complexes filled with artists and other creative enterprises, was part of the Grainbelt Brewery, once a major regional beer maker. While that business left the complex more than three decades earlier, one observer working on the city staff marveled that Northeast, long known for making beer, was now seeing the start up of several micro-breweries. "Small start up enterprises are becoming big business and then moving out; we're returning to small breweries that were once a big business in Northeast", said a city staff member. Referring to both young artists and start-up entrepreneurs, one neighborhood leader reflected, "This is a starting place. If you want to get bigger you go elsewhere." Another city official summed up, "The creative economy is really happening here".

Most artists are notoriously awkward when it comes to formal organization and conducting routine business, goes common logic. Evidence in Northeast Minneapolis indicates that artists are well networked and can apply themselves to collective causes when circumstances require. During the 2013 city council election campaign, multiple candidates for a seat representing part of the art district was hosted at the Ritz Theater in the arts district. A standing-room-only crowd was brought together by an entirely artist-led effort using social media.

## **Conclusions**

The informal networked organizational model operating in Northeast appeared to serve the district adequately under circumstances of 2013. NEMAA, with a focus on artist members and events, serves one key role. The Chamber of Commerce serves a business

bonding, promotion, and advocacy role. The NECDC, even in a diminished state, maintained focus on long-term housing and real estate development. Paris Northeast (that became NEMAD) and the cadre of artist activists served as a conscience and as long-term visionaries. Multiple resident associations, that include significant artist involvement, conduct long-range, place-based planning that emphasizes housing, business corridors, social amenities, and quality of life concerns. Artist-focused building owners/developers maintain affordable work space for artists. And, finally, the City plays a role that is generally less visible and episodic, convening, connecting, supplying information, and responding when circumstances dictate.

A productive balance was found among the multiple players both formal and informal. Collectively they address, or have capacity to address most of the recommendations in the 2002 Arts Action Plan that remained relevant and served to keep players in sync. “The Arts Action Plan was like a job description,” said someone associated with NECDC. Change to the current balance is inevitable and the resilience of the arts district will eventually be tested.

NEMAD, the presumptive coordinative body formed in 2014 may be welcome by some, but likely will fit into the current decentralized, “all hands on deck” model. Should the Northrup King building, the largest in the district, go up for sale, for instance, it would be a major shock to the district. Could the network adequately and quickly respond to keep it under supportive ownership or find alternative space? Does it have that capacity? The sale or re-purposing of two or three key buildings that take them out of the reach of artists, could result in a slow death of the arts district at least in its function as a part of the city

where things are made. “The artist community would go bonkers if something horrible happened here,” said one long-term artist leader.

Reflecting on the formation of the arts district, one neighborhood organization leader said, “It is so unique and magical and I watched it and was part of it—but I’m not sure how it happened. I hope the new people coming in will continue it”.

## **Case 2: Leimert Park—Introduction**

The South Los Angeles neighborhood of Leimert Park emerged as a focal point and home of African American artists and cultural activity beginning in the late 1960s.

According to activists, artists, residents, local business owners, city planners, and others, Leimert Park is now considered the most significant and cohesive cultural center for African Americans in Southern California.

One of the earliest master planned communities in Los Angeles, Leimert Park was built as a neighborhood for professionals in the late 1920s and early 1930s. According to City of Los Angeles Community Planner, Reuben Caldwell, “Leimert Park is an incredible example of an intact, complete community” with mixed-income housing, community services and a commercial hub or village center that includes a historic art deco era theater facing an iconic park with a large central fountain known as Leimert Plaza. Along with the now city-owned but partly shuttered theater (as of 2015), the compact vernacular commercial village and the Plaza serve as the real and symbolic center of a larger residential neighborhood and for the African American community of Greater Los Angeles.

Set in an area long used for ranching known as Rancho Cienega O’Paso de la Tijera, the design and development of Leimert Park was led by a sophisticated developer of the era, the Walter H. Leimert Company. The Olmsted and Olmsted firm from New York was

selected to plan the community. Other important architects of the day designed housing and buildings for the village center. Leimert partnered with a Howard Hughes company to build and initially operate the ornate art deco Leimert Theatre. Renamed the Vision Theatre in 1990, it remains a prominent landmark and important asset.

When built, Leimert Park was strategically placed to serve as a White, middle and upper-middle class residential and shopping enclave between downtown and the airport and between Hollywood and the airport in a general area known as South Central Los Angeles. Along with other parts of south and west Los Angeles, Leimert Park included Whites-only clauses in early property deeds. After the United States Supreme Court struck down restrictive covenants in 1948, a growing number of African American professionals sought out Leimert Park as a desirable place to live. Music luminaries Ella Fitzgerald, Ray Charles and others owned homes there. The community began a steady emergence as a hub for Black artists and culture in Los Angeles. Immediately to the west and on higher ground the neighborhoods of Baldwin Hills and View Park are home to wealthier African Americans.

Known as riots in the popular media, the 1965 Watts Rebellion, although a few miles away, but in the wider South Central area, generated fear among remaining white residents and sparked a slow decline in local business. At that point Leimert Park properties began to turn over more quickly in favor of African American owners. According to one life-long resident, it resulted in rapid White flight. "Not a trickle but en masse," he said. "It was like a dam broke."

Now, Leimert Park is considered an organically clustered mix of African American artists, cultural venues, and stable middle class residential area. Just under 80% of the



population was African American in 2012, the third highest percentage of Blacks in any Los Angeles neighborhood behind the adjacent and wealthier View Park-Windsor Hills neighborhoods with 86.5%. The population of Leimert Park, just short of 12,000 includes a large number of those over 65, ranking among the highest percentages of elderly residents in Los Angeles County. Compared with Los Angeles in general, Leimert Park has not experienced rapid rises in real estate costs and has maintained a relatively stable population. Racial politics and marginalization of Black communities kept the community in a form of economic stasis while it grew as a hot bed of African American culture. A journalist, interviewed for this study and with long history and professional involvement in the neighborhood, said, “Leimert Park survived but it didn’t thrive.”

Interviewees who grew up there in the 1950s and 60s related fond memories of a “complete” neighborhood with small restaurants, bakeries, dance studios and other amenities for children and families. Businesses thinned out as the White population left but Leimert Park retained its promise as an up and coming Black neighborhood. Commercial real estate opened up and made possible the location of the Brockman Gallery and other cultural spaces over time. Jazz clubs and other creative spaces followed. The late 1960s and the 1970s saw the opening of galleries, nightclubs, music venues, restaurants and drumming circles—along with shops selling African arts, jewelry, and clothing—grew to become dominant features of Leimert Park. The multitude of performing arts venues, nonprofits, and retail shops, including Los Angeles’ preeminent Black bookstore, make Leimert Park widely known across the city. Still its leaders complain it remains off the beaten path for cultural tourists.

## **A New Center for Culture**

Cultural entrepreneurs and social change activist Alonzo Davis and his brother Dale are widely credited with launching a cultural renaissance in Leimert Park during the height of the Black Arts Movement, according to long-time residents and activists. They moved to the neighborhood and opened the Brockman Gallery in 1967 in the heart of the village. The gallery was named for their great-grandfather, a mixed-race child of a white slave master and black female slave, who married a Cherokee woman (Le Falle-Collins, 2014).

Brockman Gallery operated both as a for-profit business to sell art, and as a nonprofit to secure grants for community and artist programs. Still considered a pivotal force in the transformation of the neighborhood, the gallery attracted and nurtured Black artists, filmmakers, musicians, and others. It closed in 1990 after both Davis brothers left to pursue other interests. Their work with artists and the community set off a cultural movement and enduring identity for Leimert Park.

Another early entrant and perhaps longest-surviving cultural enterprise is the Museum of African American Art formed in 1976 by art historian Dr. Samella Lewis and a group of academic, artistic, business, and community leaders. Their goal was to “increase public awareness of and support for the artistic expression of African Americans and other African descendant people” (Museum of African American Art, n.d., para. 1). The museum continues to operate with activities that include historic and contemporary visual art exhibitions, film screenings, talks, and other community celebrations in spacious quarters made possible through an unusual arrangement. It operates from an upper floor in a retail space occupied by Macy’s Department Store in the Baldwin Hills Mall across Crenshaw Boulevard from Leimert Park. Said to be the first suburban enclosed shopping mall, it

dates to 1947. Current owners, associates of basketball star-turned-entrepreneur, Magic Johnson, support a variety of activities for surrounding neighborhoods and the African American community. These include a farmers market, music events, and activities for youth and seniors.

Through the 1970s and 80s the identity of Leimert Park solidified. Zambezi Bazaar, Gallery Plus, Sika's, KAOS Network, 5th Street Dick's, and World Stage were among enterprises most mentioned. A long-standing organization at the core of Leimert Park is KAOS Network, a media, youth culture and all-around information and activity hub. Ben Caldwell, artist, activist and property owner recalled meeting Alonzo Davis who gave him his first gallery show in the 1970s when he was a young artist and graduate student. In 1984 Caldwell founded KAOS and since trained "generations of African American youth to seize the means of image production and create their own," according to Jan-Christopher Horak, director of the UCLA Film & Television Archive. "Furthermore," Horak (2012) goes on, "by creating an intimate space for film discussions, he has empowered the community to resist the overwhelmingly negative onslaught of images from the mass media." Caldwell personally purchased two adjacent storefronts at a prominent corner next to the historic Vision Theatre. After retiring from teaching filmmaking at California Institute of the Arts, Caldwell turned his full attention to KAOS Network. His role as property owner not only added stability to the organization but also motivated his participation in collaborative neighborhood improvement efforts.

The cultural renaissance continued through the 1980s and 90s as many artists and cultural entrepreneurs were attracted to Leimert Park. World Stage, a renowned jazz and poetry club opened in 1989 under the leadership of internationally known jazz drummer

Billy Higgins. World Stage continues a prominent role bringing music, poetry and workshops for youth and adults. Higgins died in 2001 leaving one of the few enterprises in the neighborhood that survived its founder. Actress Marla Gibbs, best known for TV sit-coms *The Jeffersons* and later *227*, purchased the Leimert Theatre from the Jehovah Witness Church in 1990 and renamed it the Vision Theatre. There, Gibbs formed the Crossroads Arts Academy and operated it as a venue for performing artists until 1997.

Another formative event for Leimert Park was the 1992 Uprising, referred to in the news media as the Rodney King Riots. In the wake of a not-guilty verdict for police officers videotaped beating a Black motorist, civil unrest broke out across South Central Los Angeles and put Leimert Park in the path of violence that left many commercial areas devastated. Stories recounted by many interviewees describe Leimert Park merchants in the streets trying to protect Black-owned businesses from harm. One Leimert activist and long-time resident recalled losing her clothes at a dry cleaner that burned. While adjacent Crenshaw Boulevard and other nearby commercial areas suffered considerable damage, much of Leimert Park remained intact.

Just days before the 1992 uprising, a formerly homeless man, Richard Fulton, opened 5th Street Dick's Coffeehouse and Jazz Emporium. For five days and nights, as riots ensued, the coffeehouse served as a de facto community center for dedicated merchants, artists and residents who stood guard to dissuade rioters from inflicting damage. The coffeehouse became a critical cultural and social hub operating 24 hours a day with music, food, and community conversation until Fulton died in 2000.

Zambezi Bazaar, an arts, crafts, and clothing shop opened in 1991 in space previously occupied by the Brockman Gallery. It held a prominent role in the community

for 22 years until the business was forced to move from its location in the village in early 2014. It re-opened in 2015 in another location about a block away.

A long list of other creative and cultural entrepreneurs also made their mark on Leimert Park. The Lucy Florence Coffee House and Cultural Center opened in 1996 and closed in 2011. Jazz singer Barbara Morrison opened the Barbara Morrison Performing Arts Center in 2010 that remains active at this writing. Performer and long-time music teacher Fernando Pullum established the youth-focused Fernando Pullum Community Arts Center. An event and banquet center known as Regency West is operated by Fred Calloway and his daughter Vanessa Bell Calloway. Sika, an artist and retailer of African and African American arts is active in organizing neighborhood events and operates a long-standing shop called Sika's. Gallery Plus, one of the longest operating African American art and card stores occupies a large storefront on Degnan Boulevard. Landmark Black bookstore Eso Won Books was founded by James Fugate and Tom Hamilton. It began operating in 1990 at Crenshaw and Slauson and moved to Leimert Park in 2006. Filmmaker John Singleton, with ties to the neighborhood, keeps a low-profile office there. National radio and television commentator Tavis Smiley operates a studio in Leimert Park. An art gallery known as Papillion, for proprietor Michelle Papillion opened next to World Stage in early 2014.

In spite of these and other enterprises in Leimert Park Village, many storefronts remained vacant in 2014. Most buildings were in need of repair and updating. When not animated by festivals and other events, the streets and storefronts appeared bleak. Buildings with three prime storefronts were used for storage by a controversial weapons dealer who owns considerable real estate in the Village.

One new investor in Leimert Park property is internationally known visual artist Mark Bradford who grew up nearby. In his youth, he worked in a beauty shop operated by his mother in a building wrapping the east side of the Vision Theatre block. Bradford purchased that property and others along Leimert Boulevard including the former beauty shop for his own sprawling studio. In 2013 he purchased several additional storefronts that border the south and west side of the Theatre. His plans included creating a gallery and youth arts programs under the name *Art + Practice* to serve the high number of foster children living and going to school in the area. In 2014 he turned over his studio and office space to the youth programs.

Leimert Park is also a mecca for festivals and events. These include an annual July 4 Jazz Festival, Juneteenth events, Martin Luther King Day Parade, an annual Book Fair, low-rider car show, Kwanzaa Celebration, the *Taste of Soul* festival and a five-day Labor Day Festival incorporating an African marketplace. A drum circle convenes every Sunday in the Plaza. A monthly Art Walk filling the Plaza is more of a festival that also takes over surrounding sidewalks and attracts significant crowds, performers, exhibitors, and street vendors. Spontaneous drummers and other street musicians are present most days.

### **A Profound Sense of Identity**

Leimert Plaza and the coherent feel of Leimert Park Village serve as the real and symbolic center for the larger neighborhood and for the Black community across Los Angeles. Interview participants described many events of importance at Leimert Plaza. During the anti-apartheid movement that was amplified in Los Angeles by the 1984 Olympics, vigils, protests and significant events consistently took place in the Plaza. The deaths of Michael Jackson and Nelson Mandela, election of Barack Obama, and more recent

Trayvon Martin verdict saw the Plaza serve as the spontaneous gathering place for people from across the city. When the local media seek a comment from the Black person on the street or when a politician makes an announcement of importance to the Black community, mobile TV trucks pull up to Leimert Plaza.

As a commercial hub and residential area, Leimert Park possesses a remarkably strong sense of identity. The significance of Leimert Park as both a place and as a symbol was consistently held among interview participants. The 30-something resident of adjacent View Park, who relocated there recently from New York, as well as the 70-something lifelong resident of South Los Angeles, were among many who expressed a passion for this center of African American culture. Leimert Park was described by various interviewees as:

- “One of the last African American strongholds in the country.”
- “The last bastion of hope for the African American community.”
- “A cultural cauldron of soul, gumbo, music-mixing of the diaspora of Africa.”
- “A place to come to embrace African American culture.”
- “The end of the line for African American cultural experience in Los Angeles . . . there’s no other place like it.”
- “An organic cultural space in LA as the Black population shrinks.”
- “There has to be an African American center, and this is it.”
- “Cultural and creative home for African Americans.”
- “It’s important for there to be a center where these forms can be developed and flourish and available to the world.”

- “A safe space for demonstrations and gatherings. Leimert Park has cachet in the larger Black community.”

The director of a city-wide organization that works with neighborhoods described why she chose Leimert Park as home for her organization. She said she was attracted by the music, poetry, and sense of cohesion. “We had an affinity to what’s happening here.”

As an aspiring poet earlier in her life, one activist said she was attracted by the politics and poetry but said that at first she felt intimidated by the high cultural intellect she saw in Leimert Park. She felt she was not “bright enough or cultural enough,” but over time “I found my tribe here,” she said. “This is the place where I belong.”

A now retired city planner described her exposure to the area in the 1950s and 60s. “My first job was at the May Company in the mall. I walked different streets and noticed the trees and architecture and saw that this was a special place.” She called it “well-planned, a perfect place to be.”

Another retired planner who served as volunteer director of a Leimert Park performance venue for many years reflected on the past 35 years as a time of huge and intensive artist energy in Leimert Park. However, he admitted “it was kind of arcane as far as the general public is concerned.” Leimert Park continues to have profound meaning for many within the Los Angeles African American community but remains off the radar for a wider public, he claimed.

### **The Train Stops Here**

The sense of cohesion experienced during the 1992 ordeal may have precipitated a rejuvenation of community pride and local culture but the commercial center known as Leimert Park Village did not fully recover as of 2014. Vacant storefronts remained and



most building had not seen significant updating for many decades. In 2013, as plans for public sector investment unfolded, this cohesive spirit resurfaced. Construction of a mostly underground light rail line, known as the Crenshaw Line, both threatened the neighborhood and promised economic revival. Efforts to restore the Vision Theatre began years earlier but gained little traction. The Crenshaw Line opened fresh possibilities for putting Leimert Park in a new spotlight and prompted the City to find funds for full renovation of the theater.

The Crenshaw Line includes a station at the Leimert Park Village and Plaza, within sight of and less than two blocks from the Vision Theatre. Resident-led planning and branding efforts kicked into high gear in 2013 in anticipation of change the transit line will bring. Retired city planners and seasoned community activists were among the neighborhood leadership and they knew full well what the light rail station meant for the future of the neighborhood.

City plans for the line did not initially include a station for Leimert Park. Only after local organizing and actions by area elected officials was a station added. Some in the neighborhood felt the transit stop would bring unwanted short-term disruption and long-term development that would upset the stability of real estate values, bring more white people, and push out Blacks and struggling arts venues and small businesses. Those advocating and hoping economic development will benefit the Black community, and those who felt the community needed to attract new people, won out. Construction of the line began in 2014 with operations expected to commence in 2019.

While Leimert Park is in many ways an archetypal bottom-up or natural cultural district (Mommaas, 2004; Stern & Seifert, 2010), imminent changes resulting from

infrastructure development could change the game. In 1999, long before the Crenshaw line was a reality, the City of Los Angeles purchased the boarded but iconic, art-deco Vision Theatre as well as adjacent property in the center of the commercial district that is now used for parking and some outdoor events. Some merchants complained that street closures for events harmed their business and pushed the city to reserve the lot for the many festivals the neighborhood generates. Some speculate that the block will see high-density housing and possible commercial space when the Crenshaw Line opens. City planning over the past couple of decades reflected wishes of the community to remain a culturally identified area with vernacular architecture and a compact village of local and creative businesses. Until the light rail and theater plans solidified, there had been no major public or private investment in business development or housing in Leimert Park since it was built. Recent city investment to restore the façade, lobby, and meeting rooms of the Vision served as both cultural and civic investments while some \$23 million was assembled for renovation of the full theater facility. Small-scale arts activities, classes and neighborhood meetings are held in the limited Vision spaces. Renovations to the Vision were planned to begin in 2015 with re-opening in 2016 or 2017.

In response to these pending developments, Leimert Park leaders launched a neighborhood-driven planning program in 2013 known as Vision 2020. Funded by the City and the local Business Improvement District, Vision 2020 represented an effort to engage community members in dialogue about the future of a neighborhood—a place that is highly regarded by those who value African American culture across the City of Los Angeles. Social bonding, grassroots political organizing, and protecting of cultural space and identity are high on the neighborhood list.

While the uprisings in the 60s and 90s were not predicted, construction of the Crenshaw Line and rehabilitation of the Vision Theatre have been years in the making with impacts that are more calculable and possibly profound. Whether new traffic will come and leave one business standing or force another out is not easily known. However, whether property values change in ways that favor one demographic over another is more predictable. “This could easily become another Larchmont where Black culture is gone,” warned District 10 City Council staffer Sylvia Lacy who went on to describe efforts to retain the character of Leimert Park. Community leaders here are trusting economic development will benefit the African American community and not disrupt the coherence of a cultural and community identity that took decades to establish.

Upward pressures on real estate are already putting a squeeze on artists and small businesses. At the same time, neighborhood planners expressed hope that the light rail brings better conditions for artists, galleries, performance venues and local businesses through more robust commercial activity and tourism. “Some people will be challenged to survive,” acknowledged the director of a neighborhood nonprofit. Among some, “there’s a fear that Westsiders with wine and cheese receptions will change the character,” another observer said.

### **Owning the Change**

Interview participants and a variety of others who volunteered less formal conversation all represented people with a stake in the neighborhood, people actively working to organize and boost the community. Some grew up there, some were attracted to Leimert Park through their work as artists, city planners, journalists, nonprofit administrators, and for other reasons. Everyone shared a story with significant personal

meaning with sentiments that were consistent and passionate. With a few exceptions, all were over 40 and most well over 55. Much of the passion for the meaning of Leimert Park is rooted in civil rights struggles. During their lifetimes older members participated in and experienced significant progress in racial justice from the Jim Crow segregation of the 1950s to the election of an African American President in the 2000s. Discussing the challenge of bringing in a new generation to the work of the neighborhood, one long-time activist offered that “young people don't have the challenges we had.”

As the Black community expanded into larger parts of South Los Angeles after the Watts uprisings, regional and national media cast all of South Central in the frame of “dangerous” Black communities with problematic disinvestment, crime, unrest, and youth gangs. Numerous activists and city staffers pointed out however that Leimert Park has one of the lowest crime rates in all of Los Angeles, a stable middle class, and shared commercial areas with wealthy nearby neighborhoods.

Surrounding Leimert Park to the west and south are some of the most prosperous African American neighborhoods in the United States. Immediately adjacent are Baldwin Hills, View Park and Windsor Hills, neighborhoods with expansive views of downtown to the northeast and the Pacific Ocean to the southwest. These upscale neighborhoods are within a few miles of the Los Angeles International Airport and, as one resident pointed out, where President Obama comes for fundraising house parties. As a planned community almost 100 years earlier, Leimert Park remains a desirable location for people of different incomes, composed of a mix of single family and multi-family homes and buildings. Massive, well-established street trees contribute to a sense of serenity and connection to nature.

While the 1992 uprising mostly spared Leimert Park, one exception was Dobson's grocery, a business in the heart of the Village that was lost, along with a fraternal lodge next door that also burned. This site became the home of a new nonprofit formed in the aftermath called Community Build Inc. Congresswoman Maxine Waters, representing the area, and others launched the organization headed by attorney and area native, Brenda Shockley. Community Build is dedicated to revitalization through investment in youth and commercial economic development. Youth outreach programs prioritize services for at-risk youth, out-of-school youth, foster youth, youth offenders, gang-involved youth, and first-generation college bound youth.

To the east and north, neighborhood conditions change. Nearby schools have among the highest rates of foster children and gangs. Youth programs operated by Community Build or organized by Kaos Network, as well as those launched more recently by artist Mark Bradford, address some of these youth and their challenges. Several interview participants cited downtown development and city policies that have dispersed homeless people across the city with Leimert Plaza as one location that sees an ever-present homeless population. Such urban dynamics press Leimert Park organizers, planners, and activists to focus efforts on "protecting" the culturally rich enclave while not turning their backs on tough community issues.

In discussions around strategies to retain the character of Leimert Park, many interview participants cited Korea Town, Thai Town and other ethnic enclaves that have organized and promoted themselves as cultural and business destinations. While Caribbean and African newcomers are present, Leimert Park is not a center of recent immigration. An active effort by some in the community was underway in 2013 to seek city

approval to rename the Village or the Leimert Park business district as Leimert Park African Village. The naming effort was controversial for a variety of reasons yet the desire to identify and promote the neighborhood as an African American cultural hub was widely shared.

Leimert Park is poised for change in relation to real estate values and commercial activity. Significant investment and development is sure to take place when the train stops there, presenting certain change for the cultural community. The City has not pushed any planning that would change the neighborhood although some expect the Crenshaw Line station and market forces will precipitate housing and commercial development of considerable density.

As an intact planned community, residential areas are virtually untouchable in a development sense. Little neglect is visible among single family homes and multi-family dwellings. The vernacular architecture is worthy of historic designation and the commercial village area is relatively small and comprised mostly of intact vernacular architecture—although most buildings are in need of improvements. The design and small scale of the Village keeps stakeholders in face-to-face connection. According to City Council staffer Lacy, there was a move to have a historic preservation overlay district but the previous representative from Council District 8 was not supportive. Even the Department of Transportation said no to historic signage.

### **Leadership, Connections, and Disconnections**

In 2005, a Business Improvement District (BID) was established to serve Leimert Park Village. BIDs are quasi-governmental mechanisms allowing additional taxes to be levied on property in the designated area to be used exclusively for local improvements

under local control. Improvements often include such things as plantings, banners, streetscape and sidewalk upgrades and ongoing street cleaning, security, and maintenance. BIDs require an affirmative vote of a majority of property owners in the designated area. As the only African American BID in Los Angeles, the Leimert Park Village BID is governed and its expenditures overseen by a committee of the property owners. It is housed within the nonprofit Community Build that serves as its fiscal sponsor.

Retired city planner and Clint Rosemond chairs the BID. He and retired aerospace executive, Johnnie Raines convene a neighborhood meeting each Monday morning that provides both formal and informal management for Leimert Park. Rosemond and Raines provide leadership for the larger stakeholder group to coordinate communications and many local activities and players. The group grew to include 30 to 40 people on a regular basis by 2013 meeting at Community Build and the Vision Theatre. This group crosses artists, community development professionals, nonprofit leaders, neighborhood businesses, residents, volunteers, city staff, police, and most other interests that span Leimert Park. The Monday meeting appeared to represent a diverse and highly horizontal network of stakeholders. Such a group may not have come together voluntarily just a few years earlier, according to leaders. The sense of cohesion fostered by the design of the Village, along with the shared agenda of the BID and the threat and possibilities of the Crenshaw Line, created this moment of relative unity. Some interview participants indicated this sense of collaboration represents a recent phenomenon and by no means does it mean everyone is on the same page.

A merchants association existed for many years and was led for a time by two women who owned Zambezi Bazaar. Along with some other merchants the Zambezi proprietors held

negative opinions about the many festivals and other events the neighborhood proliferates. As activists they were cited as “obstructionist” by several interviewees. One interviewee categorized some merchants as “anti everything.” Others expressed the sentiment that festivals and spontaneous weekend drum circles distract from and disrupt storefront business. Another vocal merchant who agreed to become chair of the merchants association in the early 2010s promptly refused to call meetings. He said he felt meetings are a waste of time and expressed disdain for the way other shopkeepers operate their businesses. The BID and Monday morning meeting fill the gap, although by late 2014 efforts were reportedly underway to revive the merchants group.

Leimert Park is a neighborhood of individual leaders and entrepreneurs from the Davis brothers to Billy Higgins, Richard Fulton, Marla Gibbs, James Fugate, Barbara Morrison, Ben Caldwell and Mark Bradford. Each makes a contribution and each brings their unique personality, interests, and foibles. Some cross boundaries more readily and frequently. Some disrupt and some collaborate. Ben Caldwell was mentioned in interviews as a network builder and reliable source of information more frequently than anyone else. Fulton, the late proprietor of 5th Street Dick’s remains legendary as a connector who tirelessly brought people to Leimert Park and who connected people within the community. Few institutions and businesses in Leimert Park endure beyond their founders. It is a neighborhood dominated by live and present personalities.

Asked about leaders who have influence “inside” the community and those that have more influence “outside”, interviewees consistently named many inside leaders. In fact, most were hard pressed to cite anyone truly considered a vocal and well-known outside leader or spokesperson for Leimert Park—although the first African American Mayor of



Los Angeles, the late Tom Bradley, lived in Leimert Park and his home is still maintained and recognized locally. Politicians elected from the neighborhood were considered as distanced by other issues and no longer “of” the neighborhood. This includes leaders such as former City Councilman and present County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas and City Council President Herb Wesson. Brenda Shockley, Ben Caldwell, and others with extensive networks outside the neighborhood do not position themselves as spokespeople to the larger world.

In Leimert Park the connecting force of culture and active artistic production are evident in every conversation and on the streets. The cultural and creative dimensions of the community and its relative ethnic homogeneity have attracted like-minded people to Leimert Park and connected them with each other for 45 years. The dialogue between those in the arts and those in other forms of community development and real estate appears more nascent. Leaders like Clint Rosemond, Karen Mack, Romerol Malveaux, James Burks, Brenda Schockley, Earnest Dillahay, Sherri Franklin, Ben Caldwell, and others, foster that dialogue—a dialogue that is not easy within most communities.

What keeps alive this spirit of cultural activism and business entrepreneurship and what attracts the next generation? —that is the question. Many have left their mark and gone. An older generation is now contributing at a high level and a few younger leaders are emerging. Relationships are profoundly horizontal with some forces a bit mysterious such as property owners who are not present or known quantities.

### **Politics as Usual**

A phenomenon experienced in many urban communities is the splitting of otherwise cohesive residential or business districts into different politically defined

jurisdictions. Leimert Park has been split for sometime between City Council Districts 8 and 10. This can require twice the work to get attention from city government or it can mean slipping between the cracks. Leimert Park has experienced both. A redistricting subsequent to the 2010 census, placed the commercial core of Leimert Park Village back into District 10, while other parts of the larger neighborhood remain split. District 10 representation is considered more favorable as that council-member demonstrated more affinity and paid more attention to Leimert Park. In addition, as City Council President, he wields greater power within City Hall.

Another political phenomenon that applies in Los Angeles, less common in most large cities, is the weak mayor/strong council system. In these cases, the Mayor is not the chief executive and has limited authority. Council members often exercise greater power over public services and investment within their respective districts. The skill, focus, and resourcefulness of the individual council-member carries great weight in the success of their areas of the city. Also in Los Angeles, entities such as the Department of Water and Power and the Los Angeles World Airports authority, as well as Los Angeles County, operate independently of City Hall and sometimes at cross purposes. This requires activists to maintain relationships across multiple agencies and with many individuals in elected office and civil service.

In 2014, Leimert Park experienced optimism because of the redistricting and active engagement of the council staff in weekly meetings. "When District 10 took over, we found money to complete the theater renovation and started meeting with the stakeholders," said Council staffer Sylvia Lacy.

## **Places of Meeting and Information**

Information among Leimert Park leaders is shared face-to-face, on the streets, in shops, and in meetings. “People live on the streets and they know what’s going on,” said one long-time leader, describing Leimert Park as having a small town atmosphere. One interviewee named three key shopkeepers she routinely visited to catch up on neighborhood news. Another, a journalist who writes frequently on the neighborhood, named the same three plus two others. The Monday morning meeting was mentioned by most, although not everyone participates. This forum appeared to have emerged as a critical coordinative space, as well as a place to air disagreement.

With the wide range of people present at the Monday meetings, both immediate neighbors and outside stakeholders such as public officials, discussion generally rose to a higher, more respectful level. During one of the two meetings observed, two business owners who were considering locating in Leimert Park, attended to gauge support. Ben Caldwell who owns property and operates youth arts programs said he felt it was important for him to represent his activities. On one occasion, a few years earlier, an especially popular hip-hop event at KAOS attracted a considerable and unnecessary police response. This event prompted him to maintain a more active dialogue with other local businesses, resident associations, and nonprofits.

Monday morning meetings function as problem-solving sessions. In the meetings observed, time was spent expressing desires, visions, and individual plans. The dominant conversation was analysis of opportunities and challenges, how to make the most of possibilities, and how to find amicable and workable solutions to obstacles.

Many people are trying to accomplish their individual and collective agendas in Leimert Park. Not all appear at first blush to bring benefit to everyone and disagreements arise. One long time cultural activist said, "It's a challenge with the African American community. The mindset is to fight everything." Another described it like a family. "We bicker and then carry on." Yet, good humor was present at the Monday morning meetings, even in response to some of the toughest scenarios.

Years earlier, the BID and Merchants Association worked to produce and hang a series of banners on light poles in the Village. Each included an image of a well-known African American artist, intellectual, or leader. Owners of Zambezi Bazaar apparently served in a leadership capacity in the merchants group during the banner installation. Upon their 2014 eviction, the merchants took the initiative to remove the banners. This prompted a flurry of responses. As fiscal sponsor for the BID, Community Build demonstrated they had full legal ownership of the banners including the intellectual property and that the merchants acted outside their authority by removing them. Community Build took responsibility for restoring the banners. In spite of clear feelings favorable and unfavorable with regards to the eviction of Zambezi Bazaar and the actions of the proprietors, the dialogue at the meeting was driven by considered questions and responses, good humor, and problem-solving.

The Monday morning meeting was often held at Community Build. As an organization playing an important role in the neighborhood, it was frequently mentioned and described as "an anchor," as "the glue," and acknowledged for providing "neutral space" and "common space." When the size of the attendance grew, the meeting moved to the Vision Theatre lobby and sometimes to a nearby restaurant and jazz club, Maverick Flats.

For its limited size, Leimert Park Village revealed many meeting places. Besides the Monday meeting, no event or location emerged that brought together a wide mix of stakeholders nor was indicated as natural common ground. The websites, [Leimertparkbeat.com](http://Leimertparkbeat.com) and [leimertparkvillage.org](http://leimertparkvillage.org) carry robust content on news and events but were scarcely mentioned in the interviews for this study. The city-sponsored Empowerment Congress–West Area is the recognized City of Los Angeles Neighborhood Council. It serves Baldwin Hills, Baldwin Village, Baldwin Vista, Cameo Woods, Crenshaw Manor, Leimert Park and Village Green. The neighborhood council meeting observed appeared to be an important forum and is linked to city agencies and leadership. Near the Village on Crenshaw, the Department of Water and Power building contains a large space that was mentioned frequently as a formal meeting site and was the location of the Neighborhood Council meetings. Relatively formal and well-attended, these meetings reflected broad-based concerns and substantial citizen engagement. Both City Council Districts provided representatives who made reports.

The Crenshaw Area Chamber of Commerce occupies an office a couple blocks from the Village west of Crenshaw Boulevard. Its director boasted 250 members and said he works to include Leimert Park Village businesses. Most of the nonprofits do not participate. Baldwin Hills Mall offers a community meeting room and hosts neighborhood events. Adassa's Jamaican restaurant on Degnan Boulevard, adjacent to the Community Build offices and the Barbara Morrison Performing Arts Center, provides an informal meeting ground, although it was infrequently cited by interviewees.

Many “horizontal” relationships—relationships across both sectors and interests—formed mostly within the African American community because of the active

arts scene and cohesive cultural identity of the neighborhood. These horizontal relationships fuel the neighborhood's capacity to organize quickly to address economic changes, development threats, or other dynamics that are inevitable and, as in the case of the rail construction, imminent.

While rich with horizontal relationships and the struggles that heavily vested individual personalities bring, there are plenty of "traditional hierarchies" according to a long-time nonprofit leader. For City and County elected officials, public employees, funding agencies, and U.S. Congressional Representative Maxine Waters, the neighborhood has significant connection to these "vertical" institutions.

Community Build provides some glue, yet the multitude of festivals and events in Leimert Park are far from centralized in how they are organized. Each of the annual festivals, or regular events emanate from a different individual and/or sponsoring business or nonprofit yet many in the neighborhood express a sense of collective ownership. The closest thing to a clearinghouse for event coordination is the Monday morning meeting with more recent participation of the police department who authorizes street closures or other permits. The City Department of Cultural Affairs offers festival support and promotion and is often in attendance.

Activities in Leimert Park are of a grassroots nature. The monthly Art Walk was hailed by most as a big success. Some found it problematic because of unlicensed street vending and one merchant called it, "a disaster" because it distracts from storefront business and fills parking spaces. One annual event was labeled as an embarrassment by one cultural leader. Some events have more robust leadership and funding than others. Many have their own audience drawn from different interest groups. The low-rider car show and the Book Fair,

for instance, likely draw different audiences. An ultimate strength of Leimert Park is this decentralized network of organizers who coordinate through weekly face-to-face meetings.

If any of the case study candidates suggest the *vernacular* label (Shorthose, 2004), or the *bottom-up* designation (Mommaas, 2004) or is to be considered *natural* (Stern & Seifert, 2007), Leimert Park is it. Against considerable odds and set-backs, Leimert Park clawed its way to prominence as an enclave of artists, cultural producers, independent cultural venues, and culturally active residents, and it projects a strong arts and culturally based sense of identity.

### **Case 3: Wynwood Arts District—Introduction**

The Wynwood neighborhood sits just over two miles north of downtown Miami. Primarily residential, the northern half of Wynwood retains a history and identity as a working class Puerto Rican community. It remains so but with a more mixed population. The southern half of Wynwood, is mostly industrial and commercial with some residential, and was home to the city's garment and fashion industry since the 1920s. It began an evolution in the 1990s to a district focused on arts and design. The city-designated Wynwood neighborhood encompasses both halves—an area of around 100 square (but uneven) blocks. However, external perception among contemporary arts enthusiasts and other outsiders to the neighborhood consider the lower half as Wynwood.

Native Tuquestas occupied the Miami area for millennia, with significant known settlement along the river where the downtown now sits. Spanish occupation began in 1566 and ended with Spain ceding Florida to the United States in 1819. The government established Fort Dallas on the river in 1836 during its war on the Seminole. The current City of Miami, with a then-population of between 300 and 400 incorporated in 1896, the

same year construction of the railroad led by Standard Oil Vice President and co-founder, Henry Flagler, reached the city (Flagler Museum, n.d.). Flagler was a major developer of real estate up and down the Florida coast as well as Key West. The area that is present-day Wynwood, developed into a residential and light manufacturing area within a quarter century.

The land area that now comprises Wynwood was purchased in 1917 by two entrepreneurs and real estate developers, Josiah Chaille and Hugh Anderson. Chaille, an established retail merchant, became a city council member and in 1920 his plan (known as the Chaille Plan) established the street naming and numbering system for Miami that remains in place (Piket, 2014). The Wynwood area stretched from 20th Street on the south to 36th Street on the north, and from the railroad tracks on the east to NW 7th Avenue on the west. Boundaries were later adjusted with construction of north-south Interstate Highway 95 in the late 1950s, curtailing the western edge along the highway at NW 6th Avenue. On the northern edge it added another block in width to adjust to construction of the east-west Airport Expressway between NW 37th and NW 38th Streets. Chaille and Anderson initially named the area Wyndwood. The City shortly thereafter designated a park in the northern part between NW 34th and NW 35th Streets, and between NW 1st and NW 2nd Avenues. In naming the park, the City dropped the first “d” in Wyndwood. The entire neighborhood then became known as Wynwood Park but was gradually referred to as simply Wynwood (Piket, 2014). Fueled by assertive developers, Miami grew rapidly until the Great Depression. After a slow-down, it took off again during and after World War II as Miami served as an important military training and defensive center.



From its early development Wynwood saw mixed residential and commercial uses and housed middle and working class families. Typically along the Florida coast, after construction of the railroad, areas west or inland of the tracks were developed for lower income people. In most Florida cities prior to the 1960s, African Americans were restricted from living in areas east of the tracks that are closer to the ocean and considered to have greater value.

In 1924, to serve a rapidly growing population, a middle school was built between 31st and 32nd Street named for Confederate General, Robert E. Lee. Coca-Cola opened a bottling plant on 29th Street in 1926 and two years later American Bakeries Company built a baking facility on 32nd Street directly north of and across the street from the school (Piket, 2014). Many warehouses and small manufacturing facilities popped up on the eastern and southern edges of the neighborhood near the railroad. Lack of formal zoning codes in Miami resulted in little separation between residential and manufacturing uses, a pattern still in evidence. However, Wynwood north of 29th Street remains primarily residential, and to the south between 20th and 29th Streets it developed as mostly commercial and industrial. This north-south bifurcation, along with the mix of some residential in the southern half, results in present-day tensions with development of the arts district.

### **The Early 20th Century Identity**

In the 1920s the garment industry took root in Wynwood. Both manufacturing and wholesale trade grew and by the 1960s what became known as the Miami Fashion District reached its peak. According to Feldman (Feldman & Moreno, 2013), the area was named in city planning documents alternately as the Garment District and the Fashion District. The

city claimed the third largest garment industry in the United States with 225 businesses part of the district at that time (Piket, 2014). As Wynwood infrastructure aged and the city expanded rapidly to the north, by the 1970s manufacturing and employment began to decline.

As in most US cities after World War II, rapid suburban development dispersed middle-class residents as well as public and private sector investment. Suburbs grew from the late 1940s and into the 1990s. Also after the War, migration from Puerto Rico to mainland cities including Miami accelerated. Migrants from Puerto Rico began to fill Wynwood with new residents (Garcia, n.d.) and the neighborhood became a cohesive Puerto Rican community known among many as Little San Juan. That name, however, was never formally adopted by the city unlike Little Haiti or Little Havana (Garcia, n.d.). While the Puerto Rican community organized in the 1960s, Cuban and Haitian immigration to South Florida picked up steam and diluted political influence of Puerto Ricans.

Feldman (2011) reported that in the 1970s, 2,577 Puerto Ricans lived in or immediately adjacent to Wynwood. This represented nearly 40 per cent of the Puerto Rican population in the city at the time. In 1974, Wynwood Park was officially renamed Roberto Clemente Park in honor of the Puerto Rican baseball player. Robert E. Lee Middle School closed in 1989 and a new school was built on the same site. It opened in 1999 as Jose de Diego Middle School. Churches, restaurants, bodegas, and other small businesses named for and serving the Latino community also populated Wynwood.

A variety of leaders and community organizers emerged from the neighborhood. Puerto Rican native Maurice Ferré was elected to the Florida House of Representatives in 1967, and later elected mayor of Miami from 1973–1985. Between 1993 and 1996, he

served as Vice-Chairman of the Dade County Board of Commissioners. Other Wynwood activists from the 1960s developed the Borinquen Health Clinic and the still-operating De Hostos Community Center named for Puerto Rican patriot and writer Eugenio Maria de Hostos (Piket, 2014).

Garcia (n.d.) attributed the diminution of Puerto Rican prosperity and influence to the decline in Wynwood-based garment industry jobs and the growing political power of the Cuban community in the 1960s and 70s. As manufacturers moved north, they deliberately hired Cuban workers. Cuban political and business leadership in the city grew dramatically and asserted a dominant identity. Wynwood population also evolved beginning in the 1970s to include Dominicans, African Americans, Haitians, and Colombians.

Relocation of rail yards to the northwest away from downtown, and changes in import/export businesses, also contributed to warehouses lying fallow beginning in the 1970s. The residential area on the northern side of Wynwood was cut off from commercial and residential areas to the west and north by construction of the highways. Wynwood became a neighborhood boxed in by a railroad to the east, freeways to the north and west, and the warehouse area to the south.

According to Piket (2014), by 1977 only one-third of the Wynwood population was Puerto Rican. In the 1980s, it became one of the poorest neighborhoods in Miami and was further devastated in 1990 by a riot in response to the acquittal of six police officers in the beating death of an alleged Puerto Rican drug dealer (Garcia, n.d.). City services and investment, including police protection, further declined, a condition artists and art

galleries encountered when they began to re-locate to the industrial portions of Wynwood in the 1990s.

“One of the interesting things about Wynwood is that it is this sort of gateway immigrant neighborhood,” said Feldman (Feldman & Moreno, 2013, para. 6). Feldman went on to say how this makes “neighborhood politics porous and malleable” (para. 6) thus allowing outside interests, such as real estate developers, to steer the direction. Devalued real estate, in addition to a disenfranchised population and relative proximity to downtown and freeway access, made Wynwood ripe for investor-led transformation.

In spite of the image popular among current area developers and art gallerists, a robust fashion wholesale and retail district continues to operate centered on NW 6th Avenue between 24th and 29th Streets. It is reportedly mostly Korean-owned (Piket, 2014). While there has been some decline from its peak, fashion retailing and shoe wholesaling continues in the warehouse district mixed with galleries and a growing number of creative and technology entrepreneurs and food and beverage establishments.

In 2014, the eastern edge of Wynwood, from NW 20th Street to NW 24th Street was home to several shelters and social service organizations for a growing population of homeless. These include the Miami Rescue Mission and large Salvation Army facilities. In spite of the shelters, homeless men and women were in evidence sleeping on the sidewalks. Also on the eastern edge just to the north at NW 26th Street an enterprise that billed itself as one of the top attractions in Miami is called “Lock and Load.” An indoor firing range, it allows customers “A Machine Gun Experience” discharging rapid-fire assault rifles. Across the street, a block south, sits Johnson Firearms, a weapons retailer that promotes itself as the place for “Guns for the Good Guys.” The combination, within a few blocks, of facilities

for the homeless, weapons dealers, art galleries, working class Latino and Caribbean families, popular hipster bars and restaurants, and entrepreneurial design and technology businesses make for an unusual mix.

The extreme southeast corner of Wynwood is also home to a transfer station for construction and other industrial-scale waste. It generated considerable truck traffic, noise and dust that Wynwood and other neighborhood advocates were organizing to curtail. The waste transfer company applied to the city to double the size of its operation in 2014. Both the nonprofit arts district association and the Wynwood business improvement district reported working with groups in the adjacent historic African American Overtown neighborhood to oppose the expansion. The site sits on NW 20th Street on the Wynwood side and directly across the street from an expanding charter school in Overtown. This issue represented a rare unifying concern that prompted collaboration both within Wynwood and with residential neighbors.

### **A Struggle for a New Identity**

The words *frontier* and *pioneer* are often used in popular culture and media when describing urban areas populated by the poor and people of color (N. Smith, 1996). Mostly White and middle class urban pioneers venture and take up residence to re-colonize and re-define these presumptively empty areas. This common narrative was applied to Wynwood where the creative class reportedly “discovered” the area in the 1990s and 2000s. Garcia (n.d.) observed this narrative at work in Wynwood: “The recurrent words *no one*, *exist*, and *blank* also suggest the repercussions of a history of colonialism, characterized by the negation of history” (para. 10). The *New York Times* also played into the pioneer narrative, placing Wynwood among “the bleakest places” in Miami. The writer

acknowledged a residential community, yet described it as other and something to be feared. She wrote, “trekking to Wynwood, a working-class Puerto Rican neighborhood, was a test in urban fortitude” (Alvarez, 2012, p.A26).

Reader comments following a History-Miami.com blog post by Picket (2014) perpetuated this narrative. The comment by Kate Mora said, “The original art pioneers of that time were Mark Coetzee of Rubell Collection, Marty Margulies, Brook Dorsch of Dorsch Gallery” . . . and another half a dozen other names including the nonprofit Locust Projects. In a follow-up post Brad K wrote, “The true pioneers were in the late 90s early 2000s when there were nightly breakins, crackheads everywhere . . . Please don’t forget the REAL pioneers.” In his attempts to counter this narrative, Feldman was quoted in a *Miami Rail* interview, “And, you know, there are schools and daycares in the neighborhood. As much as there has been an erasure, talk of no one living in the neighborhood, there are 3,000 residents in Wynwood” (Feldman & Moreno, 2013, para. 16).

The north-south bifurcation of Wynwood at NW 29th Street, a major east-west commercial artery, also promoted newcomer perception that Wynwood exists only south of 29th Street. Established residents on both sides of 29th Street see Wynwood as its historic whole. Yet, as Feldman pointed out, in the southern section, “There is not a disappearance of people. They are living there next to the bars, next to Woods Tavern” (Feldman & Moreno, 2013, para. 16). A stroll through the neighborhood on a Friday evening in August of 2014 reflected just that. Loud, outdoor music and noisy crowds at Woods Tavern were within 200 to 300 feet of numerous single-family homes with children playing in the yards. Depending on which side of the literal and figurative fence one sits,

the bar patrons are either pioneers or invaders. Bar visitors were almost all ethnically White, and residents mostly of African and Caribbean descent.

### **Movement of Artists**

According to long-term arts community professionals, in the 1980s White, middle-class artists who had formed a bohemian community in the Coconut Grove area south of downtown Miami, sought out affordable spaces in the face of rapid upscale development there. Some moved to South Beach where real estate was inexpensive at the time. According to one long-time arts professional, homeless people were sleeping in the doorways on Lincoln Road in South Beach, now one of the most expensive retail streets in the country. Artists and arts leaders established several formal arts spaces in Miami in the 1980s, including Art Center/South Florida, a nonprofit that bought adjoining buildings on Lincoln Road for less than \$500,000. In 2014, the Art Center sold part of their real estate holdings there for \$88 million (Brannigan, 2014).

Another group of artists found a bakery facility that had been vacant for four years in the northern section of Wynwood on 32nd Street. The two-story American Bakeries Company building and 2.3-acre footprint in the residential northern part of Wynwood was purchased by a group of artists in the mid-1980s well before other artists were reported to have located in Wynwood. It opened in 1987 as “Florida’s largest working artist’s space” (Piket, 2014, para. 33). Known as the Bakehouse Arts Complex, the nonprofit provides 70 artist studios as well as exhibition spaces, events and educational activities. With almost 30 years in the neighborhood, the organization and many individual artists there formed relationships with neighbors and nearby schools, including the Jose de Diego Middle School directly across the street. A long-term Bakehouse artist reported always feeling

comfortable in the neighborhood. Residents, she said, “are just poor and working class; they aren’t criminals.” Since wealthy patrons began to visit more, she added, “we now have locks and gates.”

The Bakehouse director described a program preparing to launch in early 2015, to operate a green and art market in the Bakehouse parking lot and courtyard. With funding from a South Florida health-related foundation, the market was designed to address the lack of fresh produce available in Wynwood, which qualified as a “food desert,” and to create stronger relationships between neighbors and the arts center. Less than a year in the position at the time, the director spoke of other pending efforts and partnerships designed to engage more actively with the Wynwood community. With Art Basel 2014, Bakehouse partnered with the nonprofit Wynwood Arts District Association (WADA) and others to sponsor an event called Reimagining the Arts in Wynwood to paint interior areas of the Jose de Diego Middle School and raise funds to support school art programs (Veiga, 2014).

“Places like the Bakehouse are excluded from the narrative of the New Wynwood,” (Feldman & Moreno, 2013, para. 9). Because of its longer tenure in the community, nonprofit mission, and leadership, the Bakehouse tells a story different from the more widely recognized arts district. It has developed constructive relationships with neighbors, local schools, youth, and local business.

Another significant arts institution planted itself in Wynwood. Founded in 1964 in New York, the Rubell Family Collection opened in a 45,000 square-foot building on NW 29th Street in 1993. The building was constructed and had been used by the federal Drug Enforcement Administration as a warehouse for confiscated property. The Rubell



Collection operates as a nonprofit much like a museum with curatorial staff and educational and exhibition programs, although is privately funded. A few blocks west and south, the Margulies Collection followed six years later in 1999 opening to the public in a 45,000 square-foot space at NW 27th Street and NW 6th Avenue also as a nonprofit.

Although Bakehouse is located five blocks or more from the warehouse district, and the Rubell and Margulies Collections also sit just outside the core of the district, they attract attention and arts-related traffic to the area. In the 1990s some artists moved into warehouse spaces in the southern half of Wynwood. A couple of early galleries opened including the nonprofit Locust Projects, an organization that has since moved further north to an area known as the Design District.

By the early 2000s Wynwood began to develop a buzz as an arts district. However, according to numerous interviewees, the population of individual artists either living or working (legally or illegally) in Wynwood was never significant in spite of popular perception. The rate of transition from abandoned and underutilized properties to high-end gallery and commercial development propelled by quickly escalating values, allowed little time for formation of a cohesive community of artists, nonprofits, and independent small business.

One New York-based developer, Tony Goldman, active earlier in the SOHO area of Manhattan and the Art Deco area of Miami Beach, acquired multiple properties in Wynwood beginning in the mid-2000s. He offered favorable albeit short-term leases to galleries and other creative businesses. The predominant building type in the warehouse district is one-story, concrete structures with few, if any, windows. The street grid presented a smaller-scale block pattern, although somewhat irregular, with narrow street

widths. Goldman and others recognized this as a form conducive to pedestrian traffic similar to some older parts of Manhattan.

Goldman knew well the cachet artists bring to urban transformation and took advantage of the global movement of graffiti artists seeking walls to paint. Because of the many empty or underutilized concrete-box structures and the lack of lighting and police presence, graffiti artists had already claimed much of the area. By welcoming and curating the artwork—in fact subsidizing work by nationally and internationally well-known graffiti artists—Goldman leveraged a form considered vandalism in some contexts into a major asset and distinguishing characteristic of the neighborhood.

An active Wynwood developer argued that graffiti was a good fit for the arts district. Garment and shoe businesses, he said, identified themselves with brightly colored images painted on their buildings. The single-story concrete building type was conducive to this form, less expensive than free-standing or lighted signage. Latin mural tradition was also aesthetically in sync with this practice. Some shoe warehouses and wholesale businesses in Wynwood still sport paintings of shoes or other attire on their exteriors.

Goldman and other developers promote Wynwood as the largest outdoor museum in the world with nearly 40 blocks of curated mural art. Art connoisseurs from around the globe frequently tour and photograph Wynwood streets. One active developer estimated in 2014 that 50,000 people each month visit Wynwood. In less than a decade, Wynwood transformed and filled with creative enterprises and, more recently, with restaurants, bars and construction of new up-scale residences.

Every interviewee mentioned the same two factors: One was Tony Goldman, who died in 2012 and whose symbolic presence and development company live on. The other

was Art Basel. Established in Switzerland in 1970, this high-profile international art marketplace expanded in 2002 to include a wintertime destination. Miami Beach and its growing international popularity was an obvious choice. This brought throngs of global art dealers, buyers, and aficionados to Miami, a city that understood the value of promoting its image as a destination for people with disposable income and a city increasingly known as the financial and media capital of Latin America. Since the early 2000s, the reputation of Miami as an arts city began to gain international attention, especially in terms of the visual arts. An earlier annual art fair known as Art Miami that formed in 1989 made only a modest splash. With the arrival of Art Basel, Art Miami and a dozen other lesser-known simultaneous fairs coordinated schedules to gain global attention.

The core of Art Basel is focused at the Miami Beach Convention Center with parties to welcome buyers and dealers, as well as off-shoot fairs across the city. By 2002, Wynwood was already home to the Bakehouse, the Rubell and Margulies Collections, as well as the de la Cruz Collection located a few blocks north of Wynwood on NW 41st Street. Nonprofit Locust Projects and a small number of galleries in still rough-and-tumble Wynwood created a nucleus. Within a few short years, the growing local art scene, was given a boost by Art Basel and the entire city of Miami was propelled into a global visual art spotlight. The burgeoning Wynwood arts district provided both elegant parties and the gritty, edgy “frontier” that attracts art “pioneers”. Art Basel directly and indirectly brought many adventurous art lovers to an ambitious and emerging district. Here they could explore local galleries and the alternative art fairs set up in tents on vacant lots—all this while watching world-class graffiti artists literally in the act. With its lingering reputation as an unsafe, abandoned area widely adorned with graffiti art, Wynwood brought that “hint

of danger and grittiness” (Zukin & Braslow, 2011, p. 137) appealing to young and new creative residents and entrepreneurs.

### **Getting Organized in Wynwood**

The rapid emergence of galleries and creative spaces, along with the attention generated by Art Basel, resulted in formation of the Wynwood Arts District Association (WADA) in 2003. Art dealers, artists, small businesses, and curators took the lead. This was prior to the arrival of Goldman and the emergence of other active developers. In its 2012 map and guide the Wynwood Arts District boasted 125 attractions, including galleries, art spaces and incubators, restaurants, bars, cafes and the like. WADA organized monthly art walks and tours along with special events that drew growing crowds. Artist studios, technology incubators, performance art spaces, and music venues scattered among active light industry, warehouses, restaurants, bars, and residential properties.

The social structure of Wynwood appears diverse with a mix of businesses, nonprofits, and public sector actors. Philanthropic supporters, led by the Miami-based Knight Foundation, began to see Wynwood as an up-and-coming hot spot to rival the cachet and global buzz of nearby South Beach. However, while South Beach catered to a transient population of tourists, Wynwood promised to attract people building creative sector enterprises and networks for local business. Goldman Properties played a strong role in leading and leveraging the organizing activity supporting WADA and efforts to form a business improvement district along with events and promotions.

Investors and cultural interests began to see Wynwood as pivotal in the emergence of Miami as a world class cultural producer, marketplace, and entrepreneurial center. Development of the district itself took the form of re-purposing, up-scaling, and eventually

replacing older structures and enterprises with the promise of handsome short- and long-term profits. Unlike its nearby cousin South Beach, Wynwood is not regulated by historic designations. This allows the physical fabric as well as the artists and creative entrepreneurs to be removed and replaced more quickly as market-driven motivations dictate.

Miami filmmaker Camila Alvarez premiered a short documentary about Wynwood at a local festival in 2013. In *The Right to Wynwood* she interviewed developers, artists, gallery owners, and residents (Garcia, n.d.). Alvarez asserted that the Wynwood art scene was “business-plan driven, rather than artist-driven” and that it was not a bohemian neighborhood where artists established themselves and built a sense of community—a phenomenon that generally brings attention and development. Rather, the Wynwood Arts District was built directly from raw ingredients including low-cost real estate, disempowered residents, a creative ambiance in the form of brightly-painted buildings, and a public sector wanting a cool and hip arts-identified district complete with popular coffee shops, bars, restaurants, galleries, and street life. Visionary developer Tony Goldman, with other developers, brought these ingredients together investing heavily to distinguish Wynwood and propel its popularity.

While Goldman was widely cited as the most creative and influential investor, he was not alone. In 2014, Goldman Properties claimed to own 18% of the real estate within the business improvement district, and together with three or four others, to collectively control 50%.

One developer interviewed for this study asserted that “content is king,” adding, “A pretty building without interesting people is just a building.” The notion of curating work

by graffiti artists to create a dynamic visual environment, was extended to finding and attracting the right tenant and business mixes to build a magnetic creative buzz.

This developer did not see tension with Wynwood residents. “It’s not a gentrification story,” he said. “We’re not infringing on the residential sector.” Areas north of NW 29th Street are zoned for single family residential and not considered by some as part of the arts district. Small residential pockets on the eastern side below 29th were attributed those to flaws in the zoning code.

### **Connections Among Artists**

Artist networks in Wynwood are complex, scattered, and some are based on social networks. Others are based on relationships formed through involvement in specific art disciplines. In Miami there is little common ground across visual artists, theatre artists, musicians, and others according to knowledgeable arts administrators. Characterized as a fast-growing small town, many Miami natives maintain friendships from high school and college, yet artists and arts professionals arrive from many other parts of the world.

In spite of a 2013 metropolitan population of over 2.6 million, Miami is considered a young city that developed largely after World War II and grew rapidly since the 1980s. Newcomers are from the northern United States and from multiple Latin American and Caribbean countries, and increasingly from many other parts of the globe. Miami Dade County in particular has invested heavily in parks, schools, and recently cultural institutions. However, given the rapid and multi-cultural, multi-lingual population growth, such community building institutions are thin and young. Miami Dade has also been cited as having the lowest civic engagement among cities in the United States and where political corruption is widespread (Ovalle, 2014) and philanthropy, outside specific communities, a

new phenomenon. This backdrop makes place-based horizontal organizing more difficult and unlikely to gain traction absent decades of concerted effort.

One long-standing arts-focused high school was noted by several interviewees as propelling professional involvement in the arts in Miami. For others, the New World School of the Arts, part of Miami Dade College, was cited as important in artist development and ongoing networks. However, only a few small masters-level academic programs exist in South Florida and none drew the acknowledgement of any interviewees as contributing significantly to the arts community.

Against this backdrop, artists enjoy few formal support services or programs. Several interviewees who were long-time professionals in the nonprofit arts sector, counted the few formal philanthropies and programs supporting artists on one hand. While nominally organized as a community of mutual support, artists are even less engaged politically, they claimed. Asked if there were political or social causes artists and Wynwood proprietors were involved in, one interviewee suggested Everglades preservation but no others offered any suggestions.

One exception in relation to social engagement in Wynwood is in relation to homeless women and a nonprofit called Lotus House located in Overtown, just south of Wynwood. Lotus House was founded in 2004 by Constance Collins-Margulies, an attorney and real estate developer. Around the time of its founding she married Martin Margulies, a very wealthy developer and major art collector whose private collection is housed and open to the public in Wynwood. Fundraising events for Lotus House organized in Wynwood include the annual Wynwood Art Fair, begun in 2009. These dual interests of Collins-Margulies motivated involvement of gallery proprietors and other business people

in Wynwood. Her group, Women of Wynwood is an effort to aid homeless women, and was referenced by several interviewees as a cause to which they and others have contributed. An employment program through the business improvement district hires women from Lotus House to do street cleaning. Many urban business improvement districts across the U.S. form similar partnerships with homeless shelters and other social service programs to put to work people who have great familiarity with local streets.

Martin Margulies, who by 2012 was divorced from Constance, pledged \$20 million to an endowment campaign for Lotus House (Viglucchi, 2012). Constance founded the center and served in a volunteer capacity as director. Her passion for both art and the homeless also led to an artist-in-residence program at Lotus House and a partnership with Florida International University art program placing students at the shelter offering art classes. The deep connections Collins-Margulies maintained in Wynwood resulted in volunteerism, fundraising, and partnerships with the Wynwood community.

### **A Gathering Place for Vertical Networks?**

For many artists Wynwood serves as a hub and crossroads. Observed on multiple occasions at different times of day and evening, both indoor and outdoor areas of Panther Coffee on NW 2nd Avenue at 24th Street, overflow with creative workers and artists in discussions with others and some working alone. While they may work day jobs or have parallel careers as designers, media makers, or software developers, visual artists, media artists, technology-based artists, musicians and some performance artists find reason to spend time in Wynwood. "It's an attractive place. There's a sense that you can have a healthy vibrant dialogue with people of like minds," said one long-time nonprofit arts leader interviewed in this study. She continued, saying that Wynwood reflects the



personality of Tony Goldman: “A willingness to hear every idea and try things.” Similar remarks were made by several other interview participants.

Neither the northern nor southern segments of Wynwood contain residential enclaves of significant artists. New residential buildings constructed in Wynwood during 2014 are priced beyond the reach of most artists. Multiple interviewees most frequently cited several other neighborhoods—Little Haiti, Allapattah, and Little River—as emerging artist areas. However, they asserted that no single part of the city is known for a concentration of artists living and engaging in community life. Coconut Grove was known a generation earlier as a bohemian area and still reflects a creative vibe and an older population of artists. A 33-year-old street art event, the King Mango Strut Parade, observed in late 2014, demonstrated the creative spirit alive in Coconut Grove through imaginative and politically expressive street theater.

Within Wynwood, Panther Coffee, and Gramps Bar were most frequently mentioned as gathering places for artists. Lester’s Coffee Shop, closed in 2012, previously held that position. It offered readings, artist talks, and other activities with more of a community feeling according to multiple interviewees. Wynwood Kitchen and Bar, Joey’s Italian Restaurant, Zak the Baker, and more recently the BID office were mentioned as locations for business and informal connections. Nonprofit performance space Miami Light Project and the nonprofit technology incubator called Lab Miami were mentioned as hosting some organized gatherings.

The neighborhood is attractive and does present opportunities for artists. “It’s easy to walk across the street to Panther for coffee or walk across the street to see your friends and get re-charged because there are so many artists here,” said a filmmaker who shares a studio

space near Panther Coffee. Artists at the Bakehouse spoke of its supportive and nurturing environment, including both organized and informal interaction with other artists, gallery owners, and visitors to Wynwood.

Wynwood is full of entrepreneurs—both business and social. The neighborhood serves as a hub for networking. It would be difficult to describe this networking as horizontal. Rather it appears poly-vertical. In other words, there are many silos forming and operating within a relatively small area with incidental crossover but without development of strong horizontal relationships. A new craft brewery association was formed in 2014 to connect among and advocate for micro-breweries. The Bakehouse hosted a reception to celebrate the association's launch. A Wynwood-based web application developer plays host to a weekly Knight Foundation-funded event called Waffle Wednesdays. At this 8 a.m. networking event, proprietors prepared juice, fruit, coffee, and creatively flavored waffles while invited guests pitched their entrepreneurial ventures. A city-wide networking event called Creative Mornings sometimes meets in Wynwood. A once-active city-wide network called the Miami Art Dealers Association (MADA) went dormant in 2012. Owners of one Wynwood-based gallery decided in 2014 to try to resuscitate MADA. Beginning with their closest gallery colleagues, they brought together a group to revive the association and were preparing for a 2015 re-launch.

An arts professional living in Florida for less than two years offered the observation that to succeed in Miami you need to be endorsed or vouched for by someone established in the city. However, she added, "people with a strong drive can mobilize people and make things happen." Entrepreneurialism is rampant and welcomed in Miami and Wynwood is an especially welcoming place. Cosmopolitan energy is palpable. Interviewees cited the

multiplicity of languages overheard and that business enterprises are oriented to global markets, especially Latin American and European.

In early 2011, Miami Light Project opened a 12,000 square-foot performance and multi-purpose arts space in a Goldman property with an eight-year lease. Goldman actively encouraged and assisted the performing arts organization to establish its home in Wynwood. Another nonprofit, *O Cinema*, operates a screening and gathering space on NW 29th Street. It serves public audiences and as an important networking site for film and media artists. The nonprofit business incubator known as *The Lab Miami*, operates from a facility next to Miami Light on NW 26th Street. It bills itself as “a campus for creative entrepreneurs” and serves first stage start-ups mostly in web-based enterprises. Dozens of creative sector businesses are evident in buildings across the district mixed with galleries, shoe warehouses, food and beverage establishments, and buildings in transition. Several visits made for this study over the course of 2014, uncovered rapid changes, building renovations, and new construction underway.

### **Organizing Wynwood**

The Wynwood Arts District Association (WADA) experienced nearly a decade of success coordinating the interests of galleries, retailers, bars and restaurants, property owners, and nonprofits. WADA provided security, sanitation, advocacy, and event production. As a nonprofit organization it drew on membership fees from galleries and nonprofits and contributions from developers, the city, and foundations.

A grant of \$140,000 from a national funding initiative in 2012 enabled WADA to undertake a research and organizing project leading to formation of a business improvement district (BID). A BID draws on a supplemental property tax levy to fund

ongoing services and/or physical improvements within the designated area. A critical part of the organizing process was to identify the specific area of the BID and assess the willingness of property owners to vote favorably for a tax levy. Given the zoning irregularities and mix of residential and social service properties with commercial properties, the footprint defined for the BID was highly gerrymandered. The designated district includes 47 blocks and 409 owners, according to the BID director. Boundaries wiggle around residential properties.

The BID was approved by 63% of the property owners in 2013. BID authorization under Florida law is for ten years at which point a vote to renew is required. The assessment generated about \$700,000 during its first year to support activities defined in the business plan and by the seven-member board, a body comprised of owners or their representatives. Goldman manager Joe Furst, who was involved in organizing the BID, served as its inaugural chair. Numerous older family-owned businesses involved in the garment and shoe industries with property in Wynwood remained actively involved.

### **Power Shift to BID**

The BID provided an effective network and advocate for property owners. One owner claimed it provided an open environment where there are no secrets. “It’s not about competition, it’s about making a contribution,” he said. As an unanticipated consequence, however, formation of the BID left WADA in an awkward position. While WADA provided the platform for creation of the BID, its largest financial supporters—developers and property owners—diverted their attention and funds to the BID, leaving WADA scant resources to work with. One informant indicated that the BID had promised a portion of its revenue to WADA to carry out its programs but after the launch of the BID, that

commitment was rescinded. WADA lost both income and purpose. At the time of this dissertation's interviews, the transition was in progress and messages were mixed with regard to the BID. Some indicated the BID wanted WADA to combine or merge, and others suggested WADA was planning to focus on event production and represent small business tenants and nonprofits.

Another consequence of the BID formation was that services involving event security, sanitation, banners and other decoration were subsequently limited to the BID area leaving out some businesses, galleries, and nonprofits that had participated in and received such services in the past from WADA. The Bakehouse, with an already awkward relationship to the burgeoning arts district, and sitting several blocks north of the BID district, found itself completely left out. Bakehouse discontinued participation in monthly art openings. Even gallery owners within the BID district expressed a sense of disconnection from the forum and collegial connections WADA offered. The BID further bifurcated Wynwood, separating property owners from small businesses, nonprofits, and others.

### **More Change Afoot**

Early in its existence, WADA put in place a monthly event called Second Saturday Art Walk to draw visitors to Wynwood galleries and related businesses similar to gallery walks common in many arts districts. After a few years, the event took on a life of its own. WADA no longer actively sponsored Second Saturdays but the event drew capacity crowds. WADA and later the BID took responsibility for additional police during events, and for sanitation services following. However, many galleries discontinued participation. They found crowds drinking too much and not interested in the art. Some complained of

damage—or feared damage by unruly visitors. Bars and restaurants in the neighborhood benefitted but art buyers and curators no longer showed up. Gallerists labeled it a barhopping event.

One entrepreneurial gallery owner in 2014 initiated an alternative they called Preview Thursdays. This maintained the monthly pattern but invited patrons to come on the Thursday prior to the Second Saturday event. Owners of the gallery for less than two years, they expressed little confidence in WADA and felt the BID was not designed for their benefit. “We’re taking matters into our own hands,” one owner said. They began with immediate contacts, using email to announce the event with a pledge from participating galleries to promote it through their own networks. The first few months proved productive with widening participation from galleries.

Prior to and during 2014, gallerists who considered themselves representing serious and avant-garde work, claimed some of their colleagues had moved out of Wynwood. Some cited rising rents, others cited the chaotic, barhopping crowds taking over the identity of the neighborhood. One gallery owner who opened in Wynwood in 2007, said “Property developers get it that the culture is what people want but what they do is raise the rents because they’re in business,” adding, “Even among developers there’s a crises of conscience. But I’m not sure there’s a solution. Artists have seen the cycle so many times.” In 2014 Wynwood was increasingly home to high-end decorative arts, home remodeling, design firms, and boutique promotional and media businesses. A professional art critic suggested Wynwood was “passé.”

As of 2014 the BID was entering into a relationship with a well-known international urban design firm to devise a district master plan. A leading Wynwood developer

acknowledged that there was no public space or gathering places besides cafes, restaurants and the quasi-park-like Wynwood Walls, a series of adjacent vacant lots and walls between properties owned by Goldman. These building exteriors were painted by many well-known graffiti artists and the area is treated like an outdoor gallery with Wynwood Kitchen and Bar and its outdoor dining area on one side. The public is invited to wander through Wynwood Walls. Murals are marked with formal brass plaques listing the artist name and date.

The northern part of Wynwood has Roberto Clemente Park and fenced yet active school yards around the Eneida Masses Hartner Elementary School on NW 29th Street. However, given that most art enthusiasts and “cube-dwellers” below 29th Street rarely venture into the northern part of the neighborhood, they readily claimed that Wynwood had no parks. Sidewalks are mostly narrow with little set-back of buildings. In the area below 29th, there are few formal crosswalks. Streetscaping as of 2015 was not pedestrian-friendly in design. It is only because there is little traffic on most of the streets, except during events, that it is easily walkable. Should traffic volume increase, stop-signs, crosswalks, and other amenities such as trash receptacles or benches will be needed. Residential areas in Wynwood have greater set-backs; most homes have yards and fences giving them a distinct residential appearance.

What many interviewees mentioned in relation to the public realm was parking. For decades, Wynwood was wide open to parking, with low traffic volume other than on key arteries such as North Miami Avenue on the eastern edge, NW 20th Street across the south, and NW 29th Street running east-west through the middle. Running north-south through

the center is NW 4th Avenue, a spine for retail and restaurant activity. As well as a city bus line, it carries most local traffic in and out of the arts district.

Parking was rarely a topic of concern until increasing daily traffic claimed many spaces. In 2014 the city imposed parking restrictions for the first time on the interior streets below NW 29th Street. Residents both above and below 29th, experience parking inconveniences during events. During Art Basel events in 2013, some residents were seen holding spaces in front of their homes for use at a fee. In at least one case, a resident used the sidewalk and parking spaces in front of his home to set up an impromptu gallery of his own work for sale.

Many who were interviewed cited parking as an inconvenience for employees in the district, most of whom are not provided parking by employers or building owners. Concern was expressed especially for the safety of bar and restaurant employees who need to walk several blocks to their cars during late evening hours. When asked about social or political causes artists and others in the neighborhood rally around, one interviewee answered: parking.

### **Public and Private Sector Leadership**

With regards to leadership in Miami in the arts and cultural sector, one long-time observer—who is a public employee—stated “the public sector leads here.” While private sector dollars are increasingly entering the picture, she contended that major initiatives and institutional projects in the cultural sector depend on public support. The 2013 opening of the Perez Art Museum and the opening of the Adrienne Arsht Center only a few years earlier, both in downtown Miami, provide the generally-understood model in Miami. Both projects were largely funded by the public sector with private dollars covering a



minority of funding— most notably contributions in exchange for naming rights. This model neglected private initiatives such as the Rubell, Margulies, and de la Cruz Collections, all essentially privately-funded museums. These were operating as nonprofits and established well before the construction of the Perez Art Museum, considered the institutional gem that represents the maturation of Miami as a city with a genuine museum.

The role of the public sector differs in cities at different stages of development. Miami may be at a far younger stage of life as a major urban center but the evolutionary steps are not significantly different. Cities experience robust public and private sector leadership and philanthropic support at different stages in development and in different political climates.

The Miami Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs has led and provided major financial and organizational support across the spectrum of arts nonprofits for 30 years. However, in other areas of urban development, private sector developers are known to lead and the city and county fall short in the planning and broad regulation of development. A decade-long effort to devise and gain acceptance for a comprehensive planning and zoning framework, known as *Miami 21* went into effect in 2010. The new code emphasized building form more so than land uses. Such codes, known as *form-based codes*, are designed to regulate the qualities of the environment, such as walkability, while allowing a mix of uses. Levels of density and building height are appropriate for different types of areas or “transects” but retail, residential, office, and other uses may co-exist in more urban areas. This is unlike conventional zoning codes that typically isolate different spatial uses and rarely address building type or design concerns including pedestrian, street-level interaction.

While Miami 21 was considered by progressive urban thinkers as a step forward—it was awarded the American Planning Association Award of Excellence for Best Practice in 2011—the City of Miami Planning Department was considered under-resourced with fewer than half a dozen professional staff, a fraction of the size of planning departments in cities of its size.

Likewise, few formal neighborhood organizations exist to represent residents. According to a representative of the County Commissioner overseeing the Wynwood, Home Owner Associations are greater in number and more influential. They represent owners within discrete buildings, complexes, or gated communities. Meanwhile, residents in neighborhoods like Wynwood had little representation.

Development in Miami is driven by assertive developers, not by public policy or public sector initiative. Multiple interviewees with business or property interests indicated the City and County had not asserted leadership in Wynwood, and claimed that in some cases, the City presented obstacles. One business owner recited a list of barriers erected by the City to his business including unnecessary raids by inspectors and police. One developer said the City was not an obstacle but was just not proactive. A long-term gallery owner trying to speak diplomatically, said, “I can’t say the city is helping.”

In economic development efforts, as in planning and development, the City deferred to the private sector. A nonprofit supported by both public and private sectors called the Beacon Council fulfills the role of economic development agent on behalf of the City and County. The Beacon Council came to recognize the value of the arts and of the Wynwood Arts District to the economy of the region but did not provide vision or leadership. The Beacon Council takes on the conventional role of business recruitment, seeking to attract

enterprises complementary to the strengths of the region. Fashion, design, media, and technology companies from Europe and Latin America were targets for Beacon Council, some of which they saw as a fit for Wynwood.

“The rate of change is at work against creating community,” said one gallery owner. Rapid, episodic change is the hallmark of Wynwood and Miami. One developer acknowledged “change happens fast and can fall apart fast.” The County Commission staffer talked about the speed at which developers in Wynwood work: “these boys go bing, bing, bing . . . there’s so much money to be made.” Many people interviewed—some of whom were seen as leaders in Wynwood— had histories with the neighborhood of no more than two to five years. They were sometimes unaware of earlier efforts or leaders. Over the course of less than six months of visits to Wynwood, many new construction and renovation projects were in evidence. Some people involved in the nonprofit sector had little knowledge of the for-profit sector. The reverse was probably more true with those in the private sector having little understanding or awareness of nonprofits. Similarly, some in the visual arts knew little of those in performing arts and vice versa.

For a few people who are involved in Wynwood intensively on a day-to-day basis such as Goldman manager Furst or the BID director Tom Curitore, information is critical currency. “The street” was cited often as a primary source of information. Otherwise, information sources were not coherent or consistent but fractured by social or business networks. Community development is long-term work requiring broad and horizontal participation across sectors and interests in communities. This is one thing rapid growth and change in Wynwood has provided little time to develop.

## **Chapter V: Comparative Analysis of Cultural Districts**

### **Introduction**

The above case studies described three cultural districts based on their respective economic, political, and cultural contexts as well as their identity, internal leadership, and agglomeration of creative individuals and entities particular to their environments. Most importantly, research examined the formation of organizational and social networks relevant to the ability of each to maintain its identity and substance as a cultural district. The comparative analysis that follows draws out similarities and distinctions between these cases relevant to the research question: How do horizontal networks form through the process of planning, organizing and/or ongoing management of cultural districts, and what kinds of benefits do those networks generate within their communities?

Within each district, I attempted to understand the social and organizational dynamics—the people—at work in the formation and day-to-day activities of each place. Key leaders interviewed included artists, nonprofits, local business and property owners, residents, civic organizations, journalists and other observers, as well as people within public agencies that had various roles in district formation and advancement.

In this chapter I summarize key findings from each case and review the assumptions made at the outset about the cohort of cultural districts studied. I also describe common and discerning elements among the cases and the relative capacity of each to form and activate horizontal networks.

### **Distinguishing Characteristics From Cases**

In the dissertation proposal, I identified a set of characteristics for selection of the three cases. While the cases were chosen based on these characteristics, some information

at the time of selection was incomplete and not all assumptions proved correct. In some instances, circumstances changed. Characteristics included:

- a strong sense of identity expressed through local marketing activity as well as widely accepted identity within their respective regional communities;
- emergence as a natural or organic district through the clustering of cultural assets or bottom-up organizing;
- sufficient duration of existence in terms of identity and function while individuals involved in the formation remained available for interview;
- recognized leadership through a nonprofit organization or other formal entity;
- composition within a mixed-use neighborhood that includes residents, working artists, and commercial and civic enterprises. (This to assure that a mix of stakeholders are present who could form horizontal networks);
- the mix of cultural activity within each district favoring artistic production such as artist studios rather than primarily consumption such as a theater or gallery district.

Through field research two of these characteristics were found to vary or to require reconsideration. One assumption was that each district had a governance structure or recognized entity that represented a broad range of stakeholders that played a lead role in management of activities, services, and identity marketing. Secondly, it was assumed that the process of cultural production was more prevalent than cultural consumption and that it was possible to discern the difference. Both of these assumptions were significantly challenged with relation to one or more of the districts at the conclusion of field research.

Table 5.1 summarizes the findings from these case studies in terms of the six characteristics.

**Table 5.1**

*Case Study Characteristics Comparison*

CHARACTERISTIC	NORTHEAST	LEIMERT PARK	WYNWOOD
<b>1. IDENTITY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well integrated internally;</li> <li>• Well-known regionally among arts community;</li> <li>• Less known among general public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strongly held internally;</li> <li>• Well-known among LA County African Americans;</li> <li>• Less known among wider public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly aware internally but mixed as to purpose;</li> <li>• Strong externally among arts and wider public</li> </ul>
<b>2. NATURALLY OCCURRING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Originated and continues as bottom-up artist- and community-led</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Originated and continues as bottom-up artist, community, entrepreneur-led</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Originated by artists &amp; gallery owners;</li> <li>• Developers took dominant role</li> </ul>
<b>3. ESTABLISHED WITH FOUNDERS AVAILABLE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informal from 1990;</li> <li>• Formal city recognition 2003;</li> <li>• Consistent leaders present and available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informal from 1970s; BID formed 2003;</li> <li>• Contributors come and go;</li> <li>• Some long-time participants present and available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informal from 1990s, self-designated 2003;</li> <li>• BID formed 2013;</li> <li>• Founders transient, few present</li> </ul>
<b>4. LEADERSHIP ENTITY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NEMAA provided leadership until 2009;</li> <li>• Multiple leadership entities;</li> <li>• Not centralized; informal, horizontal &amp; inclusive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little formal coordination prior to 2010;</li> <li>• Strong &amp; inclusive leadership through BID</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transitioning;</li> <li>• Coordination by WADA 2003–2014;</li> <li>• BID from 2014 but less inclusive</li> </ul>
<b>5. MIXED USE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly mixed—older industry, residential, arts (mixed but mostly visual), institutional commercial</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residential, nonprofit, commercial, arts (traditional, media, performing, visual)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly mixed—older industry, residential, institutional, arts (visual, performing, media)</li> </ul>
<b>6. PRODUCTION / CONSUMPTION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High production – mostly visual art;</li> <li>• Evolving to include retail, restaurant, performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixed consumption &amp; production, retail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixed consumption, galleries &amp; retail;</li> <li>• Production at Bakehouse, media &amp; tech studios</li> </ul>

**Identity.** Each of the three case studies was chosen because it embodied and exhibited a strong sense of identity as a creative or cultural district within its urban region. This sense of identity is critical to the internal cohesiveness among stakeholders and to outside political and economic forces that help maintain the purpose, viability, and standing of the district within the larger urban setting.

The Northeast Arts District demonstrated a well-distributed internal identity, meaning the identity was widely understood and appreciated in different sectors. For artists, businesses, residents and those involved in the district on a daily basis, the identity as a place of art-making, sales, and experiences is strong. Its identity has been significantly internalized by civic organizations, schools, businesses, and many residents. Multiple neighborhood associations, the Northeast Chamber of Commerce, local businesses, and many others advocate on behalf of the arts district, have adopted it, and have found ways to leverage the identity and substance within their own missions and activities.

Visitors to Northeast for various arts events or who seek out artist studios and galleries find the scene to be robust—when they know where to find it. Northeast lacks visual identification to alert the uninitiated. There is little indication that one is entering or leaving the arts district. Banners on light poles serve as the only signifier but blend into the landscape. Hundreds of artist studios are camouflaged within the walls of older industrial buildings. The district contains only one formal, identifiable theater and a few performing arts organizations that draw people and activity regularly. The addition of brewpubs and new restaurants after 2011 began to draw more people on a regular basis, especially the youthful “hipster” crowd. Citywide, however, Northeast remains underappreciated for the

density and productivity of its artist community and for the significance of this sector to the city and its economy and cultural reputation.

The identity transition from an industrial and ethnic European worker district of “Old Northeast” has been slow. This transition also represents a generational change with new residents, enterprises, homeowners, and political leadership entering the picture over the past two to three decades. Nationally, Northeast has gained some notoriety the arts and culture sector. This is partly because of the sheer concentration of artists and levels of activity they generate.

Leimert Park began a transition in the 1950s towards its identity as an African American neighborhood and by the 1980s as an Afro-centric cultural and arts district. The Watts Riots in the 1960s put a media spotlight on the larger South Central Los Angeles area of which Leimert Park is part. During the time since, a generation of residents, local business proprietors, and nonprofit leaders bound through civil rights struggles developed a strong sense of connection and ownership in the cultural and creative identity.

The 1930s urban plan of Leimert Park with compact vernacular architecture of the commercial hub, along with a unique pattern of residential streets, distinguish the area from the larger city grid and facilitate a focused identity of place. Leimert Park is clearly defined to those entering. Street patterns change and the vernacular architecture is recognizable. While marginalized economically and in popular media as part of South Central, residents, artists, small businesses, and those attracted to the cultural offerings of Leimert Park find the neighborhood an affirming and energizing place. Its identity and the sense of ownership shared by stakeholders has been profoundly internalized.



Externally, the wide array of festivals and the ongoing cultural attractions in Leimert Park Village draw attention and affirm its identity as a cultural and creative hub among African Americans in the greater Los Angeles area. Performance venues and culturally based retail shops suggest an active scene. However, the lackluster condition of some of the properties and businesses in the commercial district limit patronage and diminish the image of the district.

Long-time political activism among residents generates awareness among and attention from city leaders. Outside the Black community, however, Leimert Park is less known. It sits off major transportation routes and has found itself excluded from tourism maps. Leimert Park is a deliberate destination, not a place one would happen across. When the Crenshaw light rail line goes into operation this will begin to change. Among aficionados of arts and cultural districts nationally, Leimert Park, like many of the artists active there, has been marginalized. As an African American neighborhood in which there was been little significant investment in recent decades, it is not widely known and is left off national directories of arts and cultural districts.

Wynwood earned an identity rooted in fashion, clothing, and shoe manufacture and wholesaling from the 1930s and began to take on a contemporary visual arts identity in the late 1990s. The Bakehouse Arts Complex was established in the northern and more residential part of Wynwood in the mid-1980s and represents a significant site of visual arts production. However, the presence of the Bakehouse alone did not translate to a broader district identity until a critical mass of galleries opened in the southern portion of Wynwood by 2000. The explosive upsurge in its identity as an arts district came with the arrival of the international art fair, Art Basel in 2002.

The identity of Wynwood is strong externally for its gallery scene, for the hundreds of building walls painted by internationally known graffiti artists, and more recently as a hub of creative enterprises. Internally within the southern part of the neighborhood, there is intensive energy where creative entrepreneurs, artists, and art dealers focus on their daily work. In the northern part of the neighborhood, there is little connection—and little positive association—with the arts identity.

Few artists or creative workers live in Wynwood. For them it is a work, dining, or party destination. A proliferation of bars and restaurants since 2010 attracted widespread attention and growing traffic largely of younger people who only peripherally engage with the galleries. Omnipresent graffiti art throughout most of the 40-square-block industrial area clearly signify the district and its meteoric emergence. This spray-painted identity, however, may be as transient as graffiti art often is.

Most of the approximately 7,000 residents within the larger Wynwood neighborhood have little to do with the art galleries, food and beverage establishments or with creative start-up enterprises housed in former manufacturing and warehouse spaces. The Bakehouse Art Complex, nested in the northern section, provides one exception. During its 30 years in the community artists and the organization have built relationships with neighbors and local schools as well as with visitors to Wynwood.

Within the creative sector in Wynwood, the finer points of its identity are mixed and in flux. Is it (or was it) an artist district, a gallery district, or a place for creative enterprises? Miami Light Project, an active avant-garde performance space, and O Cinema, plus a growing live music scene, suggest more of a general arts or entertainment district. Gallery owners expressed a sense that they exist on ground that is moving. Few own their

buildings. Leases are short-term and prices have risen quickly. Some galleries and artists have moved on to other parts of the city where real estate is more affordable.

As little as a decade earlier, people in Miami saw Wynwood accurately as a low-income neighborhood with an abandoned and declining industrial district, vacant lots, and homeless shelters. While most of those elements remain, that identity has dramatically changed. Whether an arts district will remain ten years from this writing is subject for speculation. The southern portion of Wynwood has already begun another transition to a dense, upscale residential and retail area with hipster restaurants and bars and high-tech, high-design creative sector enterprises. New multi-story, market-rate housing and other developments were under construction in 2014. Retail and restaurant businesses are opening monthly. Less change has taken place in the northern half, where the Bakehouse will almost certainly remain to serve artists and neighborhood residents beyond the next ten years. The private Rubell and Margulies collections draw a modest number of visitors except during Art Basel when they are major hubs of activity. They have the resources to relocate if another part of the Miami area proves more suitable for them. The Wynwood brand may evolve quickly leaving behind a relatively brief period as an arts district that served as a catalyst to massive real estate development.

Each of the three districts is subject to forces that could alter its current identity. Leimert Park faces the impact of the Crenshaw line. The light rail stop and full operation of a city-owned performing arts facility will likely propel new development. Northeast will eventually contend with the transition in ownership and possibly new uses of a handful of major buildings that house hundreds of artist studios. Wynwood is already dealing with rapidly escalating real estate values and development that may radically re-purpose the

district and its identity. Wynwood stakeholders are unlikely to leverage the political clout to maintain a stable real estate climate for the creative sector. Stakeholders within Northeast and Leimert Park, on the other hand, because of formation of strong horizontal networks, possess sufficient political capacity to mobilize and at least mitigate changes to the economic and real estate conditions that could push out artists, nonprofits, creative enterprises, and lower-income residents.

**Bottom-up emergence.** As the artist population grew in Minneapolis in the 1970s and 80s, the search for suitable working space began. A brief period of concentration of artists working and living legally and illegally in the downtown warehouse district ended by the early 1990s as it was redeveloped for sports, nightclubs, hotels, and professional office spaces. Manufacturing and warehousing functions ceased or relocated leaving vacant buildings in Northeast. Those buildings then attracted artists until a critical mass emerged by 1995 when those artists organized the first area-wide open studio, an event they named Art-a-Whirl. Organizational efforts led by artists along with a couple of supportive building owners and some assistance from city officials, produced an arts district plan adopted in 2002 when the district was formally recognized by the city. Slow and small steps brought together the agglomeration of artists, creative enterprises, and small-scale commercial activity in Northeast, building its substance and identity through a bottom-up or natural fashion.

Leimert Park emerged first with an African American population and identity and then as an arts and cultural hub for the local community and for African Americans across Los Angeles County. Performance venues, clubs, and Afro-centric retailers found affordable space and a supportive community. A natural agglomeration and emergence as a cultural

district happened without intention and continues with nominal active marketing.

Retailers, entertainment venues, and the multitude of festivals individually promote their activities. Only with the development of the websites, *www.leimertparkbeat.com* and *www.leimertparkvillage.org*, has coordinated promotion begun.

In Wynwood, active promotion on multiple levels make the district tick. Early gallery owners found suitable and inexpensive space to draw buyers and artists to their gritty and perceived-to-be-dangerous neighborhood. Art Basel events beginning in 2002 shone a bright light on the area and within a few years real estate developers and other speculators bought up large amounts of property. Common interests in promoting the area brought artists, gallerists, and small business and property owners together in joint efforts though WADA. Restaurants, bars, and some upscale retail businesses were launched but suffered from a slow down after 2008. After the Bakehouse Complex opened in 1987, an organic agglomeration brought Wynwood to a state two decades later where developers moved into the drivers seat.

**Established with leaders present.** Northeast already had over 20 years of history as an active artist district by 2013 including more than ten years under city recognition. While its organizational infrastructure was in transition, responsibility for advocacy and coordination was firmly rooted—albeit decentralized, shared, and sometimes informal. Many artists, advocates, observers, neighborhood activists, and others involved in or present during the district formation remained involved.

Leimert Park evolved over a longer period of time. The deeply held, passionate attachment to the neighborhood exhibited by many people illustrated its well-established identity. These same people and various organizations, particularly Community Build, also

assured strong continuity of involvement. Bound by civil rights struggles and the sense of community evidenced during the 1992 Uprising (the Rodney King riots), long-time residents, activists, business owners, and organizational leaders were available and generous with their time. A challenge for Leimert Park will be in replacing the generation of mature leaders active in 2014-2015.

The more recent formation of Wynwood makes it the youngest of the case study districts, although it had origins with the founding of the Bakehouse. Formation of the district was more deliberate after 2002. Some gallery owners, developers, and others had previous experience with neighborhood transition in New York and other parts of Miami such as South Beach. For them, the process of building the identity, activities, and organizational infrastructure of a cultural district was like following a recipe. The area's rapid formation—given local real estate dynamics—also saw the speed-up of development patterns that will likely result in a transition to its next purpose and identity. While some founding players remained present and available, there was less consistency of involvement in Wynwood. Many leaders had no connection with and sometimes little knowledge of the relatively recent formation period. There was little “institutional memory” in Wynwood unlike Leimert Park and Northeast.

**Leadership: Individuals and entities.** In selecting the three districts, the assumption was made that each had a lead organization that carried out a governance or management function within the district. Each district's leadership pattern instead proved more complex. An in-depth look at the three cases raises questions related to the very notion of leadership or centralized management structures and strategies. Viewing these districts as products of, or under the governance of, such entities represents an overly

simplistic appreciation of the social and organizational webs and the political and economic dynamics that drive urban neighborhoods and cultural districts in particular.

My initial understanding was that the Northeast Minneapolis Arts Association (NEMAA) served as a centralized management or coordinative entity. In policy, although nominally in practice, NEMAA did assume such responsibility from 2002 to 2009 at which time the organization decidedly re-focused and took itself out of any active role in district leadership. Nonetheless, Northeast proved to have considerable horizontal networks operating under the surface that picked up the slack. Formation of the nonprofit Northeast Minneapolis Arts District (NEMAD) in late 2014 remains too nascent at this writing to assess whether it can fulfill its mission as a coordinative force in the district. NEMAD is unlikely to displace any of the other organizations or networks, but it will certainly become part of and contribute to established networks as its membership brings existing relationships across sectors.

At the time of the field research, Leimert Park was the only case where a lead entity actively represented and coordinated a wide range of stakeholders. The Leimert Park BID is housed within the nonprofit Community Build and led by a resident who is a retired city planner and who served as a long-time volunteer with a nonprofit music venue in the neighborhood. The BID, over ten-years-old at the time of this research, convenes a weekly meeting of stakeholders from multiple segments of the community and has done so with gradually increasing attendance for many years. It represents an effective horizontal network. This level of cohesion among stakeholders and the efficacy of the BID was a condition that had emerged only since 2010 and partly in response to challenges such as light rail construction and opportunities such as the restoration of the Vision Theatre.

The Wynwood Arts District Association (WADA) began to build part of a horizontal network but was eclipsed in 2014 by the newly formed Wynwood BID, which it ironically helped to birth. WADA represented many stakeholders but did not include residents or businesses in the northern half of the neighborhood other than the Bakehouse. Formation of the BID in 2014 splintered representation further by putting commercial property owners who represent a subset of the neighborhood into a position of increased power. The BID drew funds, leadership, and volunteer efforts away from WADA. The future organizing capacity of WADA is likely to be limited and if changes in the district continue at a rapid clip, it is challenged to maintain relevance to new residents and businesses.

WADA bridged some silos to create relationships in the district. However, the newness of various enterprises there, the speed of change, and demands of maintaining their enterprises, required individual stakeholders to apply their capacities to benefit their professional silos first with little opportunity, incentive, governmental support, or time to expand to cross-sector and neighborhood-wide interests.

Given the backdrop of well-developed systems of neighborhood-level organizing in Los Angeles and Minneapolis, numerous individual leaders in these two districts demonstrated strong capacity to move between business, the arts, government, residents, and other stakeholders. Artists, nonprofit leaders, local business entrepreneurs, and residents in those districts actively engage in a variety of networks, some of which are connected by organizational structure or practice to local government. Many individuals in Northeast and Leimert Park actively contributed to horizontal networks by serving on the boards of arts groups, neighborhood groups, and the Chamber of Commerce while also being active within the artist community and city politics. Those leaders play key roles in



linking and solidifying horizontal networks that enable greater efficacy of the entire district to protect its identity, stability, and role within the regional cultural and economic ecosystem.

The cohesion among stakeholders and strong role of the Leimert Park BID proved greater than that in the other two districts. While this upsurge in cohesion can be partly attributed to an external threat and to organizing around new public investment, the capacity of Leimert Park stakeholders to coalesce and mobilize was already present, the result of years of horizontal network building generated through arts and cultural activities, ongoing community organizing, and a local culture of political involvement. Memories of past threats, including the 1992 riots and the spontaneous community cohesion it generated, were also present. These contributed to horizontal network formation and the capacity of the community to mobilize.

In contrast, the BID in Wynwood, less than one-year-old at the time of this research, was governed by owners and developers who control over half the real estate within the BID area. They employed an aggressive manager, brought in from New York. While they appreciate the importance of the district identity, it is an identity in service of a different goal: generating economic value from their real estate. The Wynwood BID resulted in less transparency and less shared or horizontal leadership across neighborhood stakeholders.

**Mixed use communities.** The physical characteristics of Northeast include a mix of industrial, residential, and commercial uses within a relatively large area. The formal arts district spans over 200 city blocks with no discernable center. It represents the largest geographic footprint of the three districts. Boundaries of the arts district within the larger Northeast Minneapolis area are not defined by natural boundaries (with the exception of

the Mississippi River on the west) nor do boundaries conform to other politically or historically defined geographies. Five city designated neighborhoods sit all or partly within the arts district. Boundaries were chosen to include major artist buildings but to limit the overall footprint. Thus key buildings sit on or near three of the four corners of the district adding to its lack of center. The larger industrial buildings that house most of the artist studios are not immediately adjacent to commercial areas. The widely dispersed mixed uses and layers of existing civic, social, and commercial infrastructure in Northeast likely play a role at helping the arts district become part of multiple networks.

The distinctive urban plan and street patterns of Leimert Park comprise a carefully planned residential, commercial, and civic mix within a 1.2 square-mile area. While some commercial space has been converted to studio workspace, there is no manufacturing or industrial use in Leimert Park, save the warehousing of guns by one property owner. Cultural and art-making space favors performance, social gathering, and spaces for teaching and youth activities. Crenshaw Boulevard, a major commercial street in South Los Angeles, provides a discernable boundary with Baldwin Hills and View Park on higher ground on the west side of Crenshaw. Flat lands to the north towards Hollywood and east towards downtown Los Angeles make those boundaries less discernable but for the demarcation of major arterial streets. Leimert Park is surrounded by residential areas although some industrial lands sit further to the southwest in the form of oil drilling fields and heavy commercial areas to the south towards the airport where there are malls, hotels, and office towers.

Wynwood is slightly smaller in geographic size than Leimert Park but includes a far wider mix from light industry to retail, residential, institutional, and some heavy industrial

in the form of concrete production yards and a construction waste transfer station on the south-east corner. Active railroad tracks to the east support some warehouse and industrial facilities. However, just across the tracks to the east, large-scale developments of mixed residential, retail and office space are growing north from downtown to create a new neighbor to Wynwood branded as Midtown. Freeways box Wynwood on the north and west. The historic African American neighborhood known as Overtown borders on the south. While a relatively small geographic area, the population of Wynwood was estimated as 7,200 in 2010, mostly in the northern half. The southern half includes an active fashion, retail/wholesale area on the west, the arts district and a concentration of homeless shelters, social service facilities, weapons firing ranges, and other mixed retail, service, and restaurant businesses on the east.

**Production versus consumption.** Assumptions that these three districts emphasized cultural production over consumption proved difficult to assess as different art forms and different cultures define production differently in relation to consumption. Each district is at a different state of evolution, continuously changing its balance of production and consumption and varied creative practices that challenge these categories.

The clearest case of a production-focused district was Northeast where several hundred visual artists work in studio spaces to make object-based art (paintings, photographs, sculptures, furniture, weavings, etc.). Due to the increasing success of events such as Art-a-Whirl, monthly gallery openings, and the marketing efforts of NEMAA, many Northeast studios have transformed into galleries for sales of art as much or more than for production. Likewise more retail arts, restaurant, and drinking establishments have opened, upping the consumption side of the equation.

Cultural activity in Leimert Park is more multi-disciplinary. The numbers of visual artists working in studios are few. Musicians, performers, and poets produce work differently. The process of making and consuming art can take place simultaneously. Filmmaking and radio production entities housed in Leimert Park produce work but often in other locations. A multitude of youth programs and artist workshops in dance, media, performing, and visual arts defy either category.

Wynwood, on the other hand, has a reputation as a hub of consumption with scores of galleries, design showrooms, and a handful of performance and film venues. The Bakehouse, with 70 visual artist studios in the northern part of Wynwood, represents significant production activity. At the same time, fast growing technology incubators produce mostly digital products some consider creative or artistic. Film, media, advertising, and design firms make up a growing part of the Wynwood mix.

**Horizontal network formation.**All three districts hold unique and important identities within their larger city regions. Whether the cultural identity and organizational structures in each will continue to contribute to the stability of their immediate communities and maximize their contributions to the vitality of their regions will depend on capacity to organize and act on the collective interests of stakeholders. The more slowly built, broadly based identities of Leimert Park and Northeast portend well for their longevity as ongoing cultural and creative resources.

Northeast exists against a backdrop of a highly evolved system of municipally supported neighborhood-based organizing where residents, businesses, city officials, and institutions with a stake in an area interact regularly. They monitor and manage outside forces including real estate developers or others proposing to enter the community. Los

Angeles has a similar tradition with the neighborhood congress structure and residential organizations linked to political leaders. Local chambers of commerce exist in Northeast and Leimert Park as well as business and merchants associations. Their influence is not out of proportion to that of resident organizations and they are composed largely of small local businesses who share interests in the relative stability of real estate.

The pace of change in Wynwood found during field research was not fully expected. A dormant real estate market between 2008 and 2012 slowed development just as the identity of the district solidified. During this relatively short period, creative activity grew and WADA reached a peak of its powers as an organizing entity. During this same period a small group of developers accumulated significant amounts of real estate and prepared themselves for a coming building boom. That boom was in evidence in 2014–15 and is likely to continue long enough to significantly transform the landscape.

Leimert Park experienced a relatively stable if not slowly declining economy for decades with no major investment in the neighborhood outside of upkeep by individual home or business owners. Re-investment in Northeast after decades of dormancy has been slow and incremental, building-by-building, house-by-house, and business-by-business. A handful of multifamily buildings was constructed after 2010 but these do not represent a scale of change to cause alarm to the district identity. In fact one 35-unit building was developed and is owned by a nonprofit dedicated to live-work space for artists. The slower evolution of these two districts—along with the neighborhood-based political backdrops of Minneapolis and Los Angeles—have enabled grassroots organizing and empowered residents and local businesses alike. They have come to value the identity and role of the neighborhoods in the larger cultural and economic environments. In Leimert Park and

Northeast, organizing is strongly horizontal across residents, businesses, property owners, nonprofits, artists, etc.

In contrast, the relative speed with which Wynwood evolved, and the dearth of grassroots political infrastructure in Miami, has disabled similar organizing in that district. In Miami, in general, large property owners and developers wield inordinate influence in the public policy arena. Residents, nonprofits, and small businesses have little. At the same time, there is no evidence to suggest that the propensity for people in Miami to self-organize is any less than that of people in Los Angeles or Minneapolis. Many groups in Wynwood were observed organizing to advance their sectoral interests. The nature of organizing in Wynwood is vertical or within professional and business silos. The past few years saw a variety of specific groups in Wynwood organizing for mutual benefit including high-tech entrepreneurs, micro-brewery owners, gallery owners, filmmakers, property owners, performing artists, and so on. Horizontal networks connecting these sub-communities were less in evidence, although such networks could arise over time. Interestingly, Wynwood serves as an incubator of sorts of vertical networks but lacks a full spectrum of horizontal relationships. Daily patronage at a central gathering spot in Wynwood, Panther Coffee, is drawn from most of these silos and they naturally interact. However, stability of real estate and enterprises inhabiting it, may not afford sufficient time for functional horizontal networks to form let alone organize around collective place-based interests.

In Miami, commercial property owners and real estate developers maintain strong ties with elected officials. Property owners include homeowner associations that represent residents of discrete towers or complexes but not larger geographically defined

neighborhoods, especially where there is economic diversity. Wynwood residents successfully organized around a Puerto Rican identity from the 1950s and made many strides for the neighborhood. Their cohesion and efficacy has waned. The identity of the larger city-defined neighborhood known as Wynwood, that is inclusive of both the residential and former industrial areas, is likely to bend to market speculators who work in concert to maximize real estate values.

## Chapter VI: Conclusions and Implications

The goal of this research was to contribute to the literature on cultural district formation, governance, and leadership through examination of horizontal organizational and social networks within cultural districts and the impacts and efficacy of those networks. In two of the three case study districts, culture and the arts connected people horizontally across sectors and to some degree across other differences. When horizontal networks were in evidence, stakeholders were more invested in maintaining the identity of the district and more aware of potential threats to their substantive cultural assets. In these cases, leaders were better equipped to address challenges.

While scant literature exists specific to governance and management of cultural districts (Ashley, 2014), this research found these organizational forms vary widely. In cases studied for this dissertation, governance structures grew spontaneously reflecting their respective communities and patterns of organizing in the broader urban environments surrounding them. The more resilient and effective organizational structures tended to mirror creative and cultural forms within the districts that are often “dispersed, idiosyncratic, and entrepreneurial” (Markusen, 2014, p. 8). The more hierarchical and silo-based industrial command-and-control structures and strategies (Brafman & Beckstrom, 2006) within these districts failed to build the social capital that helps protect the integrity of the districts as centers that support local cultural production and experience.



## **The Activator Effect**

The concept of collective impact was championed by Kania and Kramer (2011) as the best means of addressing challenges within complex urban systems. Social change in complex systems, they wrote, “requires broad cross-sector coordination, yet the social sector remains focused on the isolated intervention of individual organizations” (p. 36). This dissertation explored whether horizontal organizational and social networks that enable such cross-sector coordination can be generated through the activator effect of culture (Sacco & Tavano-Blessi, 2007), and whether these networks provide leaders a means to respond to the array of challenges their communities encounter.

The activator effect was strongly in evidence in the Leimert Park case and to a moderate degree in Northeast. While the populations of both Leimert Park and Northeast are fairly homogeneous in terms of ethnicity, cultural and artistic practices and activities in those districts appeared to foster and facilitate connections across interests, professional groups, residents, for-profit, nonprofit, and public sectors. In Leimert Park horizontal relationships were built as result of shared connection to African American identity and as a result of active organizing that built upon the civil rights movement as well as shared affinity to foods, music, aesthetics, and cultural celebrations. The residential population was relatively stable and active in local civic, business, and religious organizations, all of which contribute to horizontal network building.

In Northeast the arts built horizontal social bridges, although some generational divide was in evidence. In an area with a predominantly White population, artists were considered by long-term residents as odd at first, but proved themselves not a threat to safety or property values. Instead they proved to be a boon. Based on its cultural and

creative content, the art itself did not build connections as it did in Leimert Park. In Northeast the economic and social activity generated by the artistic activity did. A commitment to place and to productive work fostered relationships between old and new residents and entrepreneurs. Long-term stakeholders valued new investment next door and welcomed young white neighbors. New uses of old factories and commercial buildings put life back into the community.

In the Wynwood case, creative energy and inexpensive space drew together like-minded artists, gallery owners, and other entrepreneurs to fill out a highly energized arts district that offered fitting physical structures available at low cost. A strong focus on vertical network building was seen in Wynwood. Vertical networks do not directly foster capacity building that enables collective action to help stabilize the identity and creative assets of the district. There was evidence in Wynwood that people of mixed ethnicities under 40 with similar economic and educational backgrounds were brought together around contemporary visual, film, and performance arts based on its creative content and resulting economic activity. However, culture and the arts as practiced by relatively diverse newcomer artists did not build bridges with existing residents or older business enterprises such as shoe and clothing wholesalers. The majority residential population, mostly of Puerto Rican and Dominican descent and mostly working class, did not show any affinity to the contemporary art. At the same time, artists did not demonstrate interest in the local population, with some exceptions among those at the Bakehouse and some gallery owners' charity for homeless women. Neither did the economic and social activity generated by the creative sector serve the interests of residents. In fact, activities of the

creative sector were disruptive and threatening to the local social and economic fabric that had been created in the neighborhood since the 1950s.

The activator effect of culture built horizontal networks where artists, residents, and other stakeholders shared similar socio-economic and demographic characteristics. While culture and the arts are widely understood to possess bridge-building capacities across race and class, such results were not demonstrated in Wynwood because sustained bridging work was not deliberately undertaken.

### **Context Matters**

This research illustrates the importance of context in the formation of cultural districts. With the exception of some engineered or planned districts, such as those described by Kong (2009a), most grow from the local cultural assets (Stern & Seifert, 2007). Thus, the human history and built infrastructure of the surrounding communities, along with their established cultural, social, and civic organization (or locally unique ways of getting things done), exert considerable impact on how people and organizations within the district function and whether they maintain their purpose and sense of identity. The longer historical arc of the area encompassed by the district itself, as well as the broader economic and political environment of the urban setting, are sometimes not well understood or appreciated by present-day leaders within cultural districts. The context in which they function has more to do with the trajectory and success of each place than they commonly accept.

The symbolic meaning of Leimert Park, for instance, carries more weight in political terms than in economic significance. The historic built environment, the cluster of cultural activities particularly meaningful to the wider African American community, and the

established identity of Leimert Park as an ethnic gathering place represent enormous assets of this relatively small, middle-class residential and commercial neighborhood. Leaders in Leimert Park hold a strong grasp on both the history of place and the historical position of African American communities within the larger socio-political environment. They also maintain nuanced understanding of the immediate political environment and have good relationships with key political leaders. Not that this means they are in control of the fate of their neighborhood but they have a realistic appreciation for what is possible and understand the obstacles and the kinds of actions needed to assert a collective voice. District leaders in Leimert Park have spent years deliberately building a horizontal network of stakeholders and a shared vision while engaging in collective action to improve the condition of the community and to protect what they have already built.

Organizational leaders in Northeast operate knowingly within a complex socio-political environment in which they maintain considerable relationships with local policymakers. The political and social environment of Northeast and the city as a whole support horizontal networking to the point that such networks formed without concerted efforts to do so. Horizontal networking was needed to get things done and it is the way things get done in Minneapolis neighborhoods. The geographic area of the Northeast Arts District is much larger than Leimert Park, yet the overall land area and population of Minneapolis are far smaller than those of Los Angeles. Social and political organizing, as well as small business entrepreneurship, have been part of the fabric of Northeast for at least a century. As odd as it seemed to some, the activities of artists and the arts district fit squarely into this fabric.

Two city council members, whose wards include parts of the Northeast district, are frequently present and accessible. Multiple neighborhood and business organizations as well as artists and arts organizations are highly active and well networked. Since the mid-1990s these organizations and many leaders across the city have progressively grown to understand that the expanding artist population and related cultural activities in Northeast serve as a replacement for the industries of an earlier era. Some also appreciate that the district contributes significantly to the reputation of the city at-large as an important center of arts and culture in the United States. While not without longer-term challenges to its integrity as a creative hub, Northeast is not imminently faced with significant change as is Leimert Park by construction of new transit infrastructure. Nonetheless, Northeast is well positioned and has demonstrated effective self-advocacy should such a challenge face the district.

In contrast, Wynwood stands at a precipice of transition over which its creative sector has little control. A small group of property owners exert inordinate influence over its identity and future. While their current interests are served by the presence of the arts and creative sector, maximizing the value of the real estate is the primary determinant of the future of the neighborhood. The fashion manufacturing and wholesaling history of the past century suggests a continuity of purpose understood by some in policymaking roles. However, this history appears less relevant on the street among artists, bars, restaurants, retail businesses, and software developers who consider the remaining fashion industry a fading remnant of a past era. Vertical networks of gallery owners, craft beer makers, filmmakers, technology innovators, and others in Wynwood have little affinity to the geographic place outside its tenuous and rapidly changing affordability.

Political leaders and institutions in the city of Miami at-large operate to support real estate development more than to protect the needs of low-income residents, artists, or small local businesses. The creative community in Wynwood has not adequately organized to assert its collective interests in relation to place. Sector-specific sub-groups that are organized seem as or more likely to assist their members in out-migration than to protect the identity, purpose, and meaning of this place-based community. Newman and Smith (2000) argued that “building up the image of a cultural quarter may itself encourage high-value uses and thus operate against small-firm [in-migration] and start-ups” (p. 22). This has become common knowledge among real estate developers and city planners who sometimes exploit the lure of the creative sector to boost property values and local tax revenues to the detriment of nurturing a creative sector (Zukin & Braslow, 2011).

Without active support from the larger socio-political environment in which they are acting, and without deliberate horizontal network building, Wynwood residents and arts advocates will be unprepared and under-equipped to devise and implement strategies to maintain stability and identity of their district. Mould and Comunian (2014) describe this as precariousness that results in what they call “the cycle of nomadism” (p. 9).

### **Implications for Urban Planning Practice**

To combat this precariousness, and to advance the goal of building a robust creative and cultural milieu, cultural district leaders need to coalesce stakeholders horizontally through some form of organization and/or network that builds collective capacity so as, “to do something rather than to just hope or plan” (Ashley, 2014, p. 4). Ashley describes such capacity as “the harnessing of internal and external resources to meet intended outcomes or adapt to changing circumstances” (p. 4).

While this dissertation could not directly compare or assess the merits of different place-based governance or management models, it found that horizontal social networks connecting various groups and organizations expanded the capacity of organizations and leaders within cultural districts to achieve greater impact in their quest to build and sustain the identity and substantive cultural and creative assets of their district. Horizontal or cross-sector networks and decentralized leadership models serve Leimert Park and Northeast well. The absence of some these in Wynwood has created a lopsided environment with less certainty among most creative sector stakeholders and continued, if not heightened, division between those stakeholders and most residents. Escalation of real estate costs, rapid development, property speculation, and ownership concentration, as well as lack of cohesion in the social fabric, are conditions that are alive and well in Wynwood. In contrast, Leimert Park and Northeast leaders and stakeholders have organized to avoid these threats.

The three districts studied here have much in common with hundreds of counterparts in the United States and with many more around the globe. While there are variations in context, many economic and political dynamics are also shared. Districts hoping to grow and maintain their creative and cultural assets benefit from deliberate horizontal network building strategies. These will take different forms in the context of different place characteristics, existing relationships, and political backdrops. However, district leaders prepared with community planning and organizing skills, like those in Leimert Park, have advantages. Likewise, districts existing within cities with well-developed residential and local business networks like Minneapolis and Los Angeles will also fare better.

To better serve their communities district organizers, leaders, and advocates need to sharpen their awareness of the historical functions and positions of their neighborhood within the larger economic, social, and civic environment.

A robust creative and cultural sector is a critical asset for a city to maintain a globally competitive position, something that Minneapolis, Los Angeles, and Miami all need to do. Cultural district leaders have much more to offer the economy of their cities than they generally appreciate.

A maturing generation of cultural districts have come to recognize patterns deleterious to their success (Markusen, 2014; Mould & Comunian, 2014; Zukin & Braslow, 2011), yet they continue to operate with little articulation of achievable goals and with little appreciation of horizontal network building. Scholars, led by Zukin (1989), have recognized these deleterious patterns for decades yet solutions remain elusive. Neighborhoods and districts need useful tools to set goals and to forecast and measure change related to optimal conditions such as sustaining and nurturing the creative sector and adding to the quality of life for all residents and stakeholders.

One tool to battle the cycle of nomadism is having a focused, participatory planning process, such as the one conducted in Liemert Park in 2013-14, and in Northeast in 2002. Planning activities can elevate awareness of district-wide, multi-sector interests and their interconnectedness. When such efforts are inclusive and foster cross-sector relationship building during the planning process itself (Borrupt, 2014b; Healey, 2006; Sandercock, 2004) they can play a pivotal role in horizontal network and capacity building. When planning activities borrow heavily from community organizing methods, they can set in motion new consortia and collaborative efforts.



Measurable outcomes established as shared goals are another important tool and they can be a product of periodic planning. Standard metrics to assess the identity, capacities, and cultural assets of places have not been established to make comparison from place to place possible. Markusen (2013) argued that communities would benefit most if they set their own goals and metrics specific to their visions, conditions, and needs. Stakeholders thus own these goals, feeling a sense of shared investment in their achievement. However, as pointed out by Friedmann (1971), decentralized planning tends to lack commitment to social justice issues and to the needs and rights of others who may be outside their geographical area. Local districts or municipal sub-units focus on their own needs and concerns. Thus, efforts to arrive at shared measures across national or even international levels remain important.

Participatory and facilitative practices developed within the planning profession hold some promise for the leadership vocabulary for cultural districts. Especially appropriate are practices that engage relatively large and diverse groups of people in consideration of complex urban issues. These come from a progressive wing of city planning and from the newer field of cultural planning. These fields have employed creative techniques and artists in facilitation, re-interpretation of issues, and inclusion of an unusually wide mix of ethnic and cultural groups (Bianchini, 2004; Borrup, 2006; Hume, 2009; Sarkissian & Hurford, 2010).

Devising a more democratic and culturally inclusive model draws on different, and potentially creative ideas and perspectives, as well as provides a way to develop a sensibility able to discern which ways are most useful in what circumstances. Sandercock (2004) called for expanding the creative capacities of planners, and advocated working

with artists as a way of bringing groups who have previously been excluded into the urban planning conversation. Their involvement also introduces new forms of expression, new ways of thinking, and more emphasis on equity into planning processes.

### **Implications for Leadership**

Challenges facing cultural districts and post-industrial cities generally are not addressed well by 20th century models of leadership. Dugan (2006) observed that these models largely followed the pattern set by industrial era understandings of organizations engaged in mass production and distribution of goods, services, and knowledge. They assumed an authoritarian individual as leader and were based on binary relationships between worker and owner or leader and follower. Dugan found them “promoting command and control models, power and authority, rational and analytical thinking, and strong managerial influences” (p. 217). Instead, cultural districts and creative organizations strive to nurture creativity, attract creative people, engage people of diverse cultures, and invest participants in entrepreneurial enterprises.

Leadership styles and theories have struggled to adapt to the industrial/post-industrial transition within municipal governance as well. “Empowered people and organizations are stressing out today’s leaders, challenging traditional command and control styles” (Li, 2010, p. xvi). Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) found that top-down hierarchical models, effective for an economy premised on physical production, are not well-suited to a more knowledge-oriented or creative economy. “Despite the needs of the Knowledge Era, much leadership theory remains largely grounded in a bureaucratic framework more appropriate for the Industrial Age” (p. 301).

Shifting leadership paradigms and the increasingly complex make-up and needs of urban districts require more adaptive and creative leaders with a heightened ability to apply creativity to problem solving and to learn and adapt more quickly. Chrislip and Larson (1994) observed that traditional forms of civic and political leadership have grown increasingly unable to cope with complex challenges facing cities. “Authority, responsibility, and the ability to act have become so diffuse that no one person or group can successfully address difficult issues”, they wrote (p. 19).

The post-industrial or post-fordist era demands leadership skills and styles that recognize and support individuality, creativity, and horizontal, collaborative approaches (Dugan, 2006; Parker & Behnaud, 2004; Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Post-industrial leadership paradigms, suggested Dugan, contrast sharply with their industrial counterparts. They are grounded in human relations and characterized by shared goals. The post-industrial perspective is process-oriented, transformative, value-centered, non-coercive, collaborative, inclusive, and decentralized.

This dissertation reveals six challenges important for cultural district leaders:

- build trust in diverse environments;
- identify and mobilize under-recognized assets within people and places;
- cross and interconnect silos of expertise;
- facilitate broad and diverse participation in governance;
- devise and adhere to long term solutions; and
- encourage creative problem solving .

**Building trust.** Scholars examining the long-term success of economies and nations across the globe have pointed trust as a core factor (Fukuyama, 1995; Harrison &

Huntington, 2000). Similarly, Putnam (1998) identified the significance of bridging social capital in addressing many social concerns. Putnam described the capacity of people to form multiple supportive relationships across differences such as race, class, and ethnicity. It is this bridging capacity that is of even greater value in what Sandercock (2004), labeled *mongrel cities* of the 21st century, places where people previously unaccustomed to living side by side are expected to function together in civic and social arenas. Leaders must build trust not only with followers but, perhaps more importantly, among and between followers to foster what Fukuyama (1995) called spontaneous sociability.

Successful leaders who form trusting relationships and environments and who lead collaborative processes are decidedly visionary, say Chrislip and Larson (1994), not necessarily about a particular issue or solution, but about the belief that people can work together constructively and that people have the capacity to create their own visions and solve their own problems. Taking time in the process for the sharing of stories helps people develop trust. This way, they can then acknowledge and act on their responsibility to the broader community and recognize their interdependence.

They trust each other because they know each other's stories; and since they trust each other, they can be of mutual help. They have practices—rituals, ways of working together, and so on—that allow them to engage successfully around issues of shared concern. These practices create history and define the culture of the community. Successful collaboration, as we have understood it, creates these necessary elements (Chrislip & Larson, 1994, p. 163).

**Identifying and mobilizing assets.** Political leaders as well as planners have traditionally approached their work using a deficit-based model, focusing on problems and

deficiencies. McKnight and Kretzmann (1993), illustrated that conventional needs-based, or deficit-based approaches have fostered leaders who, in fact, denigrate their own communities. Such deficit-based leadership attracts institutional resources—public or private grants or allocations—by documenting and amplifying the severity of problems. The more dire circumstances, the more likely municipal, philanthropic, or nonprofit service organization would provide economic rewards (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003).

Asset-based community development (ABCD) theory, as described by McKnight and Kretzmann (1993), encourages individuals and communities to become more aware of their own resources and power, to have confidence in their own capacities, and to take charge of solving their own problems (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003). Asset-based leadership takes inventory of community assets, purposefully engages multiple stakeholders in the asset identification process, and looks to all corners of their communities for strengths and capacities that a city or neighborhood can build on and put to work. To motivate followers, build capacity, and expand appreciation for the value in each of the professional or expertise-based silos, cultural district leaders are more effective practicing and promoting asset-based thinking that builds strategies rooted the unique qualities and strengths of their community.

**Crossing silos.** Bradford (2004) observed:

Governing in conditions of diversity requires bridging cultural differences, remedying social inequalities and a discursive re-framing to merge economic and environmental goals. . . . [these provide] sweeping challenges to established policy routines and planning practices still based on rigid functional specializations and categorical programming, with little cooperation and learning across different departments, specializations and sectors. (p. 5)

Leaders and organizational practices that respond to the challenges of creative environments must reach across sectors, professions, and knowledge silos. In urban

planning and design, both the physical manifestations and management forms often lack holistic thinking and problem-solving capacities (Talen & Ellis, 2004). Bradford (2004) called for new forms of leadership, planning, and collaboration among municipal departments that cross levels of government as well as collaboration among levels of government and the private sector and community organizations. “New modes of thought and new practices are needed to shift what was once considered as natural, some of the outmoded assumptions embedded in the culture of Western planning”, wrote Sandercock (2004, p. 140). City institutions are still “largely based on rigid functional specializations, without sufficient sharing and cooperation between different departments, disciplines and sectors”, asserted Landry and Bianchini (1995, p. 22). This kind of compartmentalization, they said, stifles creativity.

Focusing attention on holistic connections and capacity of people to weave together assets within their communities, is typically outside the purview or skill set of many in positions of elected leadership. Stewardship and servant leader models are common in the public sector and have served to build and maintain institutions, governmental units, and some business enterprises (B. Smith, Montagno, & Kusmenko, 2004). However, they tend to look inward and protect the organizations and individuals within them. The intellectual curiosity and stimulation needed to transcend existing boundaries, and create more holistic thinkers, are better served by transformational and creative leadership (Brown & Trevino 2006).

Bradford (2004) described *creative decision-making*, a process that requires people from different expertise, backgrounds, and walks of life to talk and listen to one another. In so doing, they generate new perspectives and problem-solving capacities. He called for a

shift from sectoral or silo thinking to more comprehensive and flexible strategies that strengthen linkages across the disciplines for holistic community-based revitalization.

Facilitating broad participation. Most organizations still base their structures on hierarchies predicated on the idea that someone at the top is in control and has the answers (Hall, 2001). At the same time, many urban challenges fit what Heifetz (1994) described as the most difficult problems, those for which there is no easy diagnosis or easy answer. These are also problems that no one person or institution alone can solve or address. Such challenges require active engagement or an interdisciplinary group within a shared or collaborative leadership model.

Chrislip and Larson (1994) described collaborative leadership in which the motivation of the leader is to achieve resolution through a participatory process, bringing divergent parties together in the generation of innovative solutions to complex challenges. Parker and Behnaud (2004) quote and paraphrase Warren Bennis and his description of leadership:

“the energetic process of getting other people fully and willingly committed to a course of action and to meeting commonly agreed objectives.” He further states that leadership is about “understanding people” and connecting with potential followers, as well as “having a unique vision, making strategic choices, and designating and enabling an organization to get the job done.” (p. 3)

While these descriptions may remain accurate in terms of activities, the process of arriving at visions and strategies, and deciding who is involved in each step, plays out differently. In the collaborative model a broad mix of stakeholders are involved in learning, deliberation, and often the resulting action steps (Chrislip & Larson, 1994). This approach to leadership places an emphasis on leading others to lead themselves, developing capacity in others and challenging the leader-follower dyad (Jackson & Parry, 2008). Similarly, the

theory of open leadership advanced by Li (2010) calls on leaders to serve as catalysts and provide “inspiration for people to pull together and accomplish things together” (p. 197). Transformational leaders emphasize vision, values and intellectual stimulation (Brown & Trevino, 2006) and collaborative leaders do the same, but by engaging participants in the process of identifying and clarifying values and generating a vision. Collaborative structures link both leaders and followers together, not in hierarchies, but in what Kotter (1990) called “thick, informal networks.” (p. 89) What is needed, he said, “are good working relationships among many people in order to establish direction, align people, and inspire them to act” (p. 91).

**Thinking long term.** Falk (2007) offered a reminder that cities outlive politicians and plans. “Politicians tend to go for big projects and small ideas” (p. 3). Elected leaders serve relatively short terms of office and have difficulty advocating long-term solutions. Under pressure to take quick and bold action, they approach economic development like a slot machine, hoping their investment will pay off quickly, but not really knowing what each spin will yield (Evans, 2009b). Sandercock (2004) concurred, stating that for politicians involved in urban governance, the greatest risk they can take is to think beyond the short term. The second greatest risk for political leaders, she pointed out, is to actually involve the public in decision making, as opposed to mere consultation. This involves surrendering some control, something people in positions of power are not often predisposed to. Building better cities, Sandercock said, depends on long-term thinking and broad-based inclusion in planning and governance.

The fundamental belief of collaborative leaders is that something can be done as the result of people working together—a process that often requires more time (Chrislip &



Larson, 1994). Long-term thinking and adhering to plans that unfold over time is often better handled through stewardship or servant leader models that stand in contrast to the openness and creativity required for many leadership roles (B. Smith et al., 2004).

**Fostering creativity.** Sustainable cultural districts require the exercise of creativity on nearly every level. Leaders need to recognize and nurture creativity, and exercise their own creative thinking. In the post-industrial environment, the parameters of success have changed from process control to innovation, claimed Li (2010). While many municipal or community-based organizations have benefitted from servant leader and stewardship models the emergence of new circumstances and opportunities within urban environments require different approaches.

The servant leader has been appropriate and important in the maintenance of group philosophy and the personal growth of followers. B. Smith et al. (2004) concluded that this approach results in followers who can be passive to the external environment. Servant leadership does not generate intellectual stimulation as does transformational leadership. Servant leadership works better when there is a more stable external environment, something rarely seen in an urban context. In a stable situation servant leadership serves an evolutionary development purpose. Transformational leadership, on the other hand, can be more useful for organizations and communities facing intense external pressures, where creative thinking, innovation, and significant change are necessary for survival (B. Smith et al., 2004).

It is perhaps the intellectual stimulation provided by transformational leadership that is especially fitting in urban cultural districts (Brown & Trevino, 2006). B. Smith et al.

(2004) added that a transformational leader strives to create new learning opportunities and innovative thinking, essential ingredients in sustaining a healthy community.

In the business arena, M. Mumford et al. (2003) noted that leaders of creative enterprises have to devote as much effort to managing the context surrounding the work as to managing the work itself. In urban planning practice, Sandercock (2004) similarly observed that a leader acknowledges creativity and gives it space to flourish, creates an environment in which exposure to new ideas and experimentation is rewarded, and demonstrates by example.

### **Summary**

General leadership theories increasingly lean toward horizontal models—leadership styles that emphasize collaboration and teamwork (Parker & Behnaud, 2004). Gardner (1990) suggested that all individuals must be prepared to assume leadership roles and tasks as situations dictate. Collaborative models, as well as cultural planning practices discussed in this dissertation have contributed both to the emergence of new practices and to engagement of more and more diverse people in leadership roles and activities. Many and varied leadership styles and practices rooted in community organizing, participatory planning, and management of creative enterprises have efficacy for district leaders who strive to harness the creativity within their communities and to bring more equitable benefits to their residents.

### **The Future of Creative City Leadership**

The era of the creative city and the proliferation of cultural districts increasingly calls upon leaders to assess changing circumstances and to equip themselves with a broad vocabulary of leadership models that address the six leadership concerns cited above.

Leaders need to be increasingly conversant in situational and adaptive leadership, blending styles and skills to include charismatic and transactional approaches including servant leadership and, at times, taking on the role of stewards. And, while leaders are generally considered at their best when demonstrating ethical and authentic leadership, some situations, call on them to also employ collaborative leadership and facilitative skills. If their roles include significant management responsibility, they need to bridge silos and sectors, and practice open, collaborative, and distributive leadership. They must develop a capacity to blend or integrate approaches as needed.

The future of cultural districts and cities in general as hubs of creativity and as producers of knowledge and wealth—consistent with their role throughout history—requires new and more nuanced leadership models and leaders who can respond to radically changing environments, cultural diversity, creative entrepreneurs, and issues around economic and social equity. Continued use of industrial age leadership models will result in failure to address these increasingly important issues. Globalization, the changing nature of urban economies, new technologies, the growing diversity of residents, workers, and visitors—along with the changing nature of relationships between leaders and followers—are demanding a constantly expanding vocabulary of leadership tools from district and city leaders.

If urban leaders, planners, and policymakers expect to realize the economic and social potentials of the creative sector and bring about equitable, resilient communities, they must actively contribute to building the capacity for organizing and forming horizontal networks. Modernist land use planning not only separates uses but often separates people and interests. Whether or not such separations are intended

consequences, the practice of separation in the process of planning, development, and ongoing place management must be reversed. Planners, local policy makers, and other community leaders need to bring people together across sectors, professions, and stakeholder groups to identify shared interests, assets, and challenges. Only then can communities co-create a vision, find collaborative solutions, and navigate emerging challenges.

Leaders within cultural districts, as well as city leaders concerned primarily with success, often fail to appreciate the value horizontal networks bring to the process of building capacity of districts to conduct effective self advocacy. They thus fail to protect the long-term individual and collective interests of the stakeholders within their district. The cycle of nomadism (Mould & Comunian, 2014) advances the interests of real estate developers while it negatively impacts the cultural, social, and local economic development within urban districts. An emphasis on sector-specific or vertical organizing, such as that in evidence in Wynwood, can contribute to negative impacts if not balanced with cross-sectoral or horizontal network building such as seen in Leimert Park and Northeast. Artists, small business owners, nonprofits, entrepreneurs, and others who organize to advance the interests of their individual industry sector but who fail to participate in cross-sectoral network building may, in fact, not be protecting their own long-term interests. At the same time, functional vertical networks can potentially facilitate horizontal networking. If leaders of the vertical networks are able to effectively form coalitions with a wide range of others outside their silos and sectors in their place-based community, they can quickly become a potent force.

## **Limitations of the Research**

The choice of three case studies for this dissertation enabled some variety in the physical, political, and creative aspects of cultural districts. Adding to the number and variety of cases would likely bring more nuance and depth to the findings but was outside the limits of this undertaking. On the one hand, the three case studies provided insights not available through a single case study. On the other hand, three geographically dispersed cases presented logistical and time constraints that limited the depth of engagement and research that a single case study may have provided. Just under 20 formal interviews were conducted in each city where limited historical and socio-economic data were compiled. More detailed, longitudinal demographic trends and data relative to populations and property ownership might yield additional findings but were also beyond the limits of this research.

An alternative or supplemental method considered for this research project involved formal network mapping to trace individual and organizational relationships and to identify meaningful patterns and intersections. The qualitative multiple case study method was chosen to bring texture and meaning to the phenomenon of horizontal networks within cultural districts. Limitations in time and resource for the research precluded a mixed methods project. Quantitative network mapping process in combination would add depth and potentially greater meaning to these qualitative examinations. Patterns that might be revealed through mapping were thus not available to enrich this study.

Field research was carried out over an 18-month period between mid-2013 and late 2014. Results found each district in some stage of change with significant new

developments pending either in the physical or economic landscape or related to organizations and individuals in leadership. The nature of this research provides a snapshot in time. In the context of centuries-long development and growth of cities and social systems, these districts sprouted up overnight. These districts proved to be places of change with a shifting mix of actors and organizational dynamics. The even shorter evolution of formal organizational structures observed in each district are difficult to evaluate through a snapshot. Both Northeast and Wynwood were in the midst of potentially pivotal organizational transitions. This makes speculation on the trajectory of organizations and networks and their impacts on the community difficult. Northeast had the most stable cast of characters from the 1990s to the date of this research while Wynwood saw only a handful of long-term players. Many different actors appeared and left within a few short years. Observations over a longer period of time would provide more substantive findings related to the patterns of network formation and the efficacy of those networks within their broader political environs.

While this research points out some merits of rich horizontal organization within cultural districts and the stability of place identity, it is not possible to cite a cause-and-effect relationship. Whether horizontal networks within Leimert Park and Northeast formed because there was a greater time of social and economic stability, or whether there was greater stability because there were horizontal networks, cannot be determined within this research. Evidence indicates that horizontal networks have efficacy in maintaining the stability, but not that horizontal networks caused stability.

Within the fields of cultural district development and urban placemaking research, there remain a lack of solid indicators and established benchmarks of success. Calls for

social equity, inclusion, and political empowerment are common in progressive academic circles (Mould & Comunian, 2014). However, metrics to measure such conditions in urban districts and neighborhoods are scarce, if they exist at all. On the other side of the coin, cultural district leaders looking to fend off dislocation through adverse economic or cultural dynamics lack tools to measure whether their efforts are effective. None of the districts studied had established goals related to things as measurable as population density, level of local ownership of commercial and retail enterprises, income levels for working artists, and the like. The research and planning communities have not provided neighborhoods and districts useful tools to quantify their goals and to set measurable targets—especially related to fostering and maintaining a healthy creative sector or cultural environment. Such measures are not easy to develop and some scholars in this field have challenged the validity of one-size-fits-all indicators (Markusen, 2013).

### **Future Research Opportunities**

Patterns that are deleterious to cultural districts such as concentration of real estate ownership or rapid escalation of costs for residents, artists, and small businesses need further delineation and articulation, and they need to be quantifiable. While not every district can be said to be in a deleterious pattern based on the same metrics, quantified accounts of conditions will nonetheless have value to district leaders. In other words, a similar percentage change in population density or property value in Oakland, Tulsa, Philadelphia, or Brooklyn will have different meaning. A similar direction and rate of change might be considered positive in one place but negative in another. Identifying a relative direction and rate of change for each place, however, would provide a useful tool

for leaders to assess whether their efforts are impacting change. Determining whether that change represents positive or negative progress is often open to debate.

Researchers in many parts of the globe have used different terminology to describe the characteristics of districts such as bottom-up and top-down. Others have used natural, organic, vernacular, and informal as similar terms for bottom-up districts, and they have used engineered, formal, planned, and other terms for top-down districts. These definitions are vague if not arbitrarily applied. In a commissioned white paper in 2014, I described six U.S. cultural districts, including Northeast and Leimert Park, on a spectrum from bottom-up to top-down (Borrup, 2014b). The white paper supported findings by Mommaas (2004), Sacco and Tavano-Blessi (2007), and other authors, that some districts may begin as bottom-up and over time transition to be considered top-down by virtue of economic and/or political forces that enter the picture and take control of development and branding. Wynwood might be such an example.

No measurable or even observable criteria exist in the literature for categorizing a top-down or bottom-up district. Mould and Comunian (2014) criticized these terms: “Such a simplistic binary, however, can obfuscate the often complex and institutionally varied process of [cultural district] formation” (p. 3). Future research could provide a nuanced typology or set of factors to better ascertain qualities or characteristics of districts so as to categorize them as one or the other, or somewhere in between. Many scholars assert that bottom-up districts provide greater benefits to artists, residents, and others. If such assertions are to be verified, district leaders and stakeholders will better serve their communities by setting measurable goals and implementing strategies so as to build and



maintain bottom-up characteristics. Researchers need firmer ground on which to make assertions about the merits of different forms of organizing and managing districts.

Quantifiable research over a decade or longer to track and assess the relative strength and efficacy of social and organizational networks in cultural districts would contribute to the field by identifying the patterns of the most effective networks and enable another lens through which such networks can be understood, fortified, and if needed, repaired. Such longitudinal research in multiple districts would test findings made in this dissertation that stronger horizontal networks empower stakeholders to fend off unwanted change and/or to advance the interests of the creative sector through stabilization of real estate and protection of space for creative and cultural expression in communities.

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