Gentrification, Displacement & Creative Placemaking: Evaluation Methods for Nonprofit Arts and Cultural Organizations
by
Grace Komarek-Meyer
gekomarekmeyer@usfca.edu

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Abstract

Gentrification, Displacement & Creative Placemaking: Evaluation Methods for Nonprofit Arts and Cultural Organizations focuses on the cultural strategies of creative placemaking projects, the role of the nonprofit organization in combating gentrification and displacement, and the task of evaluation and measurement program impact of creative placemaking projects. The first section of this report contains a literature review that is divided into two main focuses: (1) the history, context, and research of gentrification and displacement, and (2) Creative Placemaking and cultural strategies to support community development and resist the negative effects of gentrification and displacement for community members, neighbors, and key stakeholder groups. The second section of this report contains primary data collected in the form of three expert interviews with nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and one urban planning professional. The final component of this report consists of a set of recommendations for nonprofit arts and cultural organizations to take into consideration when carrying out various creative placemaking projects.
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Section 1. Introduction

The nonprofit sector and much of philanthropic work are dependent on the access and availability of funding and support. In order to procure the necessary funding needed for organizations, projects, and initiatives to acquire this much-needed support in a highly competitive market, it is necessary for nonprofit leaders and fundraisers to know how to best tell the stories of their program success through evaluation and reporting mechanisms. However, this is where the issues lie for many nonprofits, and in particular nonprofit arts and cultural organizations. Most of these organizations exist for the sole purpose of providing a creative outlet for communities to come together in creative expression. However, what happens when communities served are being dismantled and uprooted by gentrification, displacement, and dis-investment? How can nonprofit leaders work to best serve their communities, when they are being priced out of their own spaces? A concept and cultural strategy that could effectively assist in these nonprofits to tell their success stories through effective evaluation practices could present in the form of creative placemaking projects. The purpose of the following research is to delve into how the effects of gentrification and displacement on communities, neighborhoods, local economies, families, and the nonprofit sector. The first section of this report contains a literature review that is divided into two main focuses: (1) the history, context, and research of gentrification and displacement, and (2) Creative Placemaking and cultural strategies to support community development and resist the negative effects of gentrification and displacement for community members, neighbors, and key stakeholder groups. The second section of this report contains primary data collected in the form of three expert interviews with nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and one urban planning professional. The final component of this report consists of a set of recommendations for nonprofit arts and cultural organizations to take into consideration when carrying out various creative placemaking projects.

Section 2: Literature Review

Defining Gentrification

In 1964 British-German sociologist Ruth Glass coined the term “gentrification”. At the time the term was used under the context of the changes that Glass was seeing in the social structures and changing housing market in London. Glass observed that:

One by one, many of the working-class quarters of London have been invaded by the middle class --upper and lower. Once this process of
‘gentrification’ starts in a district it goes on rapidly until all of most of the original working-class occupiers are displaced and the whole social character of the district is changed. (Glass, 1964, p. #)

This concept of gentrification was directly informed by her observations of the new housing being built in the Notting Hill and Islington neighborhoods, and how this new development was affecting the working-class families as affluent young ‘bohemian’ couples were able to afford the costs to refurbish the older buildings. At this time, this research was a revolutionary exploration into the experiences of Caribbean migrants into urban hubs. In her work Newcomers: The West Indians in London, Glass gave a voice to the racial discrimination and growing tensions between the newcomers and the existing tenants in these neighborhoods experiencing gentrification. This initial study of the gentrification movement and its impacts on social, physical, and economic changes in communities has had an impact on the current study and research around the topic. While the historical context underlying her work and observations is rooted in what was happening in London in the 1960s, the sentiment of neighborhood displacement could be applied to current movements and trends of gentrification in many major urban hubs across the country.

When it comes to defining the term “gentrification”, this is where many scholars, urban planners, and public policymakers have differing perspectives. In Gentrification and Displacement: A Review of Approaches and Findings, the authors defined gentrification as “the in-migration of affluent households to poorer and lower value areas of the city” (Attkinson & Wulff, 2009). Slater defined gentrification as “the transformation of a working-class or vacant area of the city into middle-class residential and/or commercial use” in his work Missing Marcuse: On Gentrification and Displacement (Slater, 2009). And yet another work defines gentrification as, “the reinvestment of real estate capital into declining, inner-city neighborhoods to create a new residential infrastructure for middle and high-income inhabitants” (Patch & Brenner, 2007).

There are many different definitions for gentrification because the concept is complex, and there are different conditions and contexts that must be understood first. The Urban Displacement Project choose to define gentrification as “a process of neighborhood change that includes economic change in a historically disinvested neighborhood -- by means of real estate investment and new higher-income residents moving in -- as well as demographic change -- not only in terms of income level, but also in terms of changes in the education level or racial make-up of residents” (UDP, 2019). The concept of gentrification is one that will forever be adapting and changing with the times just as neighborhoods and communities change and adapt. This definition of gentrification is one that encompasses the changes and movement patterns that are currently being experienced across the country in many major cities including the San Francisco Bay Area. It is important to understand the specific social contexts that underpin gentrification
and displacement in specific neighborhoods. There are three main things to consider when examining gentrification: (1) Historical Conditions, (2) Investment and Policy Decisions, and (3) Community Impacts.

**Historical Conditions**

**Redlining.** It is important to examine the historical conditions of any given gentrification movement. One such condition that comes up often when examining the trend of gentrification is the concept of redlining. Redlining is a practice that started in the 1930s and went through the late 1960s, which followed a set of standards issued by the federal government that was then put into action by banks. Through this process, different neighborhoods that housed mainly people of color were subsequently labeled as “risky” or “unfit for investment” (Zuk & Chappel, 2015). This essentially meant that people of color were denied access to loans that would allow them to purchase property or refurbish their homes in their neighborhoods. Even though this form of racial discrimination in the form of mortgage lending was banned 50 years ago, it is still affecting minorities today and the demographic patterns of wealth in America. A study published in 2018 by the National Community Reinvestment Coalition, showed that 3 out of 4 neighborhoods redlined on government maps 80 years ago are continuing to struggle economically (Mitchell & Franco, 2018). The study showed that there is a greater significant chance of economic inequality in these cities that were marked as “hazardous” or “high risk”, and that these neighborhoods are currently minority neighborhoods. This pattern of racial profiling and redlining has had a significant impact on the composition of these neighborhoods where minority groups were denied the ability to mortgage their homes and reinvest in their communities. The study also found that gentrification is often related to patterns of economic change in neighborhoods that were graded “highest-risk” or “hazardous” and had higher levels of interactions between black and white residents. (Mitchell & Franco, 2018). The authors surmised from the study:

> Residential racial and ethnic segregation is rooted in widespread racial and ethnic prejudice of whites. The absence of legal protections for minorities allowed for the construction of a complex system of segregation, including restrictive covenants, local policies, and informal practices among lenders, the real estate profession, and developers. (Mitchell & Franco, 2018, p.18)

These historical prejudices that have been passed down through generations are seen and reflected in the neighborhoods and districts that historically have been given limited access to lending and economic investment. This can be seen in the redlining maps, *Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America* published by the University of Richmond Digital Scholarship Lab.
The White Flight. This white flight phenomenon is the next historical condition to examined as it pertains to today’s patterns of gentrification. This movement was fueled by the growth of the mostly-white suburbs, and the movement out of urban hubs, particularly those with significant minority populations. A major historical example of the white flight was in the form of the G.I. Bill, which was a government program that guaranteed low mortgage loans for soldiers returning home from WWII. Originally established to help veterans return to civilian life, established hospitals, and make low-income interest mortgages and stipends to cover the cost of tuition, the G.I. Bill was limited by discrimination against black veterans making it even more difficult to purchase homes in the growing white-dominated suburbs. (Oshinsky, 2017).

Urban Renewal. The next major historical context was through the urban renewal movement. This movement was characterized by the major expansion of highway systems across America, which largely impacted low-income households and communities of color. The urban renewal movement resulted in a mass de-urbanization of major American cities, loss of money, loss of social organizations, and psychological trauma (Fullilove, 2001). Under the Urban Renewal Act of 1949, programs were established across the country to clear out large urban hubs of “slum” housing, in order for new redevelopment schemes. Urban renewal projects were portrayed to be a vehicle for improving the nation's industries, reinforce labor, and community groups. In 1961, antiurban renewal scholar Jane Jacob’s argued in her work The Death and Life of Great American Cities, that these social and esthetic revitalization projects caused more harm than they did effect good systematic and policy changes. In fact, urban renewal projects only further contributed to the segregation of American cities, with African American communities being forced out of their neighborhoods and homes to make way for redevelopment. This resulted in the overcrowding of projects and public housing built to accommodate the wave of displaced communities, and “intensified segregation by destroying integrated communities and creating segregated ones” (Thomas, 1997, p.74). The urban renewal movement set the stage for a long history of extensive disinvestment in neighborhood institutions, communities, coalitions, and left behind the voices and needs of low-income households and communities of color.

The Foreclosure Crisis. The next historical context to look to was the foreclosure crisis in our more recent history. This period of history was marked by a decline in housing prices starting in early 2007, contributing to making specific neighborhoods and communities more susceptible to gentrification. This was especially prevalent in low-income communities of color. “Of the foreclosures completed in 2007-2009, there were 790 foreclosures for African-Americans, 769 foreclosures for Latinos, and 452 for Non-Hispanic Whites per 10,000 loans” (Bocian, Li, & Ernst, 2010 pp.2-9).
There were high levels of subprime lending as a result of the massive foreclosures specifically in those low-income communities of color, which left these communities vulnerable to greedy investors banking of their misfortune and purchasing their homes out from under them with the intention of flipping the properties to resell at a much higher price.

Investment and Policy Decisions. The next major historical context revolves around the various investment and policy decisions and the patterns of investment and disinvestment in central cities. This has arisen from the massive return of both people and capital back into major cities and neighborhoods that have a long history of disinvestment. A major reason behind this comes from the major demand for affordable housing in many major U.S. cities. With this high demand, came a surge in rent pricing, with many long term residents being priced out of their existing neighborhoods and homes. According to data collected by the popular online real estate database company Zillow, in San Francisco, the average rent for a standard 2BR apartment skyrocketed up by 70% between 2011 and 2017 (Zillow, 2019). For many who can afford this high cost of living, there is a draw to these major cities for various reasons including historic housing stock, close proximity to jobs, restaurants, and art spaces, and revitalization movements of in-demand neighborhoods.

The Creative Class

In *The Rise of the Creative Class*, urban theorist Richard Florida (2002) defined the concept of the “creative class” as one that has transformed the way that our cities and neighborhoods
function from the ways that we work to our everyday interactions. Florida argued that the creative class was a major driving force for economic growth and that this new group of people had become the dominant class in American society. This group of individuals is drawn to cities that can provide authenticity of experience, and tend to fall into the three T’s category of technology, talent, and tolerance. Florida claimed that cities that have shown higher concentrations of these three indicators were most likely to have creative community growth, and the potential for economic and social benefits. In this argument, the creative class is made up of talented and educated professionals that work in specific knowledge-based sectors such as business, finance, medicine, law, and technology. While the movement and dominance of the creative class have historically brought new money and revitalization into major cities, the drawback with this movement was the sheer size of young professionals moving into “desirable” neighborhoods with little to no understanding of the communities they are entering into.

As a follow up to his original thesis in 2003, Richard Florida published his newest work *The New Urban Crisis: How Our Cities Are Increasing Inequality, Deepening Segregation, and Failing the Middle Class, And What We Can Do About It,* and argued that the high-value that has been placed on the creative class and knowledge-based economies has favored “superstar cities” while leaving behind others resulting in a society of “winner-take-all urbanism” (Florida, 2017, pp 32-40). It this second publication, it seemed as though the author had revoked some of his original ideas around the creative class. Whereas his previous work *The Rise of the Creative Class,* asserted that this influx of artists, hipsters, and tech workers were being drawn to places like the Bay Area, Austin, New York, and Toronto, for their “authenticity” and opportunity, he now has changed his stance on the opportunities and benefits he once say the creative class to bring into these high demand cities. In this follow up work, Florida essentially apologized for the formula he had previously created that lead to the displacement and patterns of gentrification for those neighbors on the low-income bracket, and especially minorities and people of color. Florida claimed that this high cost of living standards set within these “superstar cities” only further contributes to the economic inequalities we are seeing across the country as the wealth gap continues to grow. Florida called this the “New Urban Crisis”, as many metropolitan areas are not adequately prepared to accommodate for the displacement of many working-class and low-income communities that have been outpriced from major cities. The data in this research suggested that gentrification is not as widespread as many might believe and that this movement is mainly being found in large urban hubs across the country. Florida also proposed seven policy strategies to address the current climate of gentrification and “re-colonization” of the creative class (Florida, 2017, p. 321):

1. Encourage urban growth without creative class clustering
2. Invest in infrastructure that supports greater density and growth
3. Build more affordable housing to adapt to the current economy
4. Turn low-wage service jobs into middle-class jobs
5. Seriously take on poverty by investing in people and places
6. Use the American example as a global template
7. Bring political power back to the local level

Cultural Strategies and Gentrification

There has been a wide array of research on different cultural strategies across the country. Many cities have seen a need to stand out in order to compete with other urban hubs through the use of innovative design, and through the use of cultural initiatives and institutions to provide that competitive advantage (Zukin, 1995). These cultural strategies are a wide range including festivals, marketplaces, entertainment districts, sports arenas, convention centers, and office buildings and businesses. All of these strategies have played a major role in the identities and development of cities and affected their economic prosperity. All of these cultural strategies are once again reflected in Florida’s theories of the creative class (Florida, 2003). Some critics have argued that the concept of the cultural economy contributes to the redevelopment of cities towards more commercial spaces that instead only attract tourism (Zukin, 2005). Zukin stated that “culture is a powerful means of controlling cities” (Zukin, 1995, p. 1), referring to the notion that control of cities rests in the hands of those from a place of privilege, which can result in increased poverty, gentrification, displacement, and removal of character and authenticity from the neighborhood.

The concept of spatial commodification also contributes to patterns of gentrification and can result in the cultural tourism of many cultural districts and neighborhoods. When there are such high demands for cultural offerings like galleries, ethnic restaurants and retail, these spaces become opportunities for gentrification from “newcomers” and visiting middle-class suburbanites to spend their disposable incomes. “Even when the change is ostensibly organic, as in emergent arts districts, planners are often working in tandem with artists and others to create economic development. Cultural strategies can transform places, creating new economic value but at the same time displacing existing meanings” (Zuk, Bierbaum, Chapple, Gorska, Loukaitou-Sideris, Ong, & Thomas, 2017, p.17).

Creative Placemaking

The concept of creative placemaking is not a new idea, it is steamed out of a movement from urban planning professionals. The term first came into use during the 1950s and 1960s, when the movement of urban renewal was prompting social changes and boosting the ‘revitalization’ and image of cities across the country. Creative placemaking has often made the connection between arts and cultural experiences and urban development. Examples of creative placemaking during
this time were the Lincoln Center in New York, and the Los Angeles’ Music Center (Grodach and Loukaito-Sideris, 2007).

More recently, creative placemaking initiatives have been more focused on public-private redevelopment projects, rather than on urban renewal. The focus has shifted to the artist's role in building community and establishing a cohesive character of the city, neighborhood, and community space. In the 2010 White paper on creative placemaking initiatives published by the National Endowment for the Arts, creative placemaking is defined:

In creative placemaking, public, private, not-for-profit, and community sectors partner to strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, tribe, city, or region around arts and cultural activities. Creative placemaking animates public, and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired. (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010 p.3)

In this paper, Markusen and Gadwa see the artist as one of the primary sources for cultivating entrepreneurship and cultural identity within communities. The authors surmise that this, in turn, would result in bringing in more jobs, income, and services to communities. In this new wave of creative placemaking, there was no longer the idealized need for a single performing arts venue or gallery, but instead a shift towards a “decentralized portfolio of spaces acting as creative crucibles” (p.5). The connotations of this contemporary creative placemaking ideology were that no one project is responsible for social change, it takes a village of like minded people, artists, businesses, and policymakers to effect change and instill change. Creative placemaking projects do not have a fixed structure or methodology due to the nature of these projects being intrinsically linked to the specific characteristics of each location, neighborhood, or community.

Common characteristics of placemaking projects include organizing around the talents or vision of one or more collaborating initiators, cross-sector collaboration, mobilizing the public around their vision, the support of the areas' arts and cultural community, and diversification of funding. (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010, p.4)

The 2010 white paper outlines the benefits of creative placemaking, as well as the challenges these projects face. One of the biggest payoffs of these projects is increased “livability”, diversity, jobs, and incomes. The authors state that creative placemaking has the ability to drive economic development through the use of:
The paper delves into four different case studies of effective creative placemaking including Portland, Oregon’s new transit stations that incorporated the specific character and perspective of the neighborhoods of each station with the artwork, which in turn, boosted ridership. One of the key takeaways from this case study was that in creating a new public transit line that took into consideration the needs and cultural perspectives of the community it existed to serve, turned challengers of the new line into supporters and partners. Another take away was that more transit planners need to appeal to the Federal Department of Transportation for funding that supports the cultural needs and values for community engagement. In the case of the TriMet funded interstate MAX public art program, a large percentage of this funding from the FDT came because of the importance placed of the art program and policy, and because of this attention to community relevant art, the TriMet earned the trust of its partnering organizations. This creative design solution to potential push back resulted in a stronger tie to the transit lines stakeholders, and increased not only ridership but also worked to strengthen community identity and address historic inequalities (pp.37-38).

One other case study from this paper, was the transformation of a vacant automobile manufacturing plant in Buffalo, New York, into artists studio spaces and affordable housing. This form of creative placemaking was able to infuse the community with new and creative economic prosperity. In this case, the mayor of Buffalo and the governor of New York took a major risk in supporting the building of the Artspace Buffalo Lofts, that paid off. The creative placemaking project to build new workspace also functioned to dismantle a history of social divides, and reinvigorate the local economy in one of Buffalo’s most challenged neighborhoods. One of the key takeaways from this was that in a key policymaker choosing to start a conversation on the use of a vacant property, 60 low-income artists families were given affordable housing. This led to a nonprofit developer of artist housing to bring together the resources and partnerships necessary to make this project viable. Another key takeaway from this case study was that through the support of artists, arts organizations, neighborhood community groups, the project was able to be completed in only three years, a record low. The final takeaway was that through creating the Artspace Buffalo Lofts, the former Main Street that had once divided the neighborhood was erased, allowing more money to come into the once struggling Buffalo neighborhood (p. 40). All of the case studies on different creative placemaking projects across the country in this white paper, highlight the essential role that arts
and culture play in developing neighborhood vitality through both physical and economic returns.

Another example of effective creative placemaking can be seen in the case study found in the article published in the *Cities* journal, Ashley asserts that property-led arts development (PAD) is crucial to urban policy and planning. This study looks into how nonprofit arts organizations act as entrepreneurial groups in terms of property development, how they can reshape their urban landscapes through partnerships, how they responded to the 2008 economic crash, and how PAD promotes these partnerships. Specifically, the paper examines the failed relationship between the Seattle Art Museum and Washington Mutual. The main reason for this failure was the lack of attention placed on the idea of urban redevelopment. The authors recommend that arts organizations must start thinking of themselves as more entrepreneurial and innovative anchor institutions of creative placemaking within their communities. This paper focuses on the single case study of the Seattle Art Museum’s downtown portfolio and its PAD capacities. Ashley collected data from fieldwork, interviews, media coverage, project reports, and government documents. Between 2009 and 2001, 25 semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders including museum administrators, development partners, advocacy groups, political officials, redevelopment and planning officials, foundations, artists, and city planning and economic development staff. This case study gives interesting insights into the capability for arts organizations to create a narrative of expansion. SAM was able to extend its organizational identity beyond most museums tradition frameworks by extending its downtown footprint. This was made possible by the use of traditional fundraising, but even more through a series of non-traditional partnerships. This is a sign of the continued dialogue across the country in terms of balancing the expectations and capacity of the nonprofit arts sector. But it is also important to pay attention to the fact that organizational innovation does not necessarily lead to project/organizational success. SAM was successful because it had already experienced the troubles of property development.

In *Arts and Culture Institutions as Urban Anchors*, the authors Birch, Griffin, Johnson, and Stover (2013) used a series of eight case studies in urban development from Miami, Washington D.C, Chicago, Atlanta, Philadelphia, San Jose, and Los Angeles to argue the idea that many successful cities arise from the establishment of arts and cultural organizations as their defining anchor institutions. The authors use these specific case studies to illustrate how these institutions serve as agents for the urban renaissance movement and often drive economic development, civic pride, and attract knowledge-industry workers and suburban spenders. The case studies were structured by first examining each programs history and the historical context of the different cities and communities. Next, each study compares the program’s financials, mission, and values with its regional geography, population, economic and social standing to determine its effectiveness. This paper makes a contrary argument to the NEA white paper (Markusen &
Gadwa, 2010), that successful arts and cultural organizations help bring in tourism, while the latter argues that successful placemaking arts organizations do not tend to focus their efforts on “tourism building” to support the organization. Overall, this series of eight case studies will be a useful resource for me when I am looking to design my own case study for the capstone project, particularly the Arena Stage at the Mead Center case study as it looked to find a balance between the needs of the community and an interest in national recognition.

Creative placemaking projects are not always met without challenges and criticism. The main challenges for creative placemaking, outlined by Markusen and Gadwa (2010 pp.5-7), were:

- Foreign partnerships
- Countering community skepticism
- Assembling necessary financing
- Regulatory barriers
- Maintenance and sustainability
- Avoiding displacement and gentrification
- Developing metrics of performance

In fact, some of these challenges reflect on some of the main critiques of creative placemaking. While creative placemaking is meant to address economic inequalities and patterns of displacement, these projects can also inadvertently contribute to continued gentrification and displacement of community stakeholders.

Creative Placekeeping

In his follow up a critique of the creative placemaking model, activist and author Roberto Bedoya asserts the need for more creative placemaking projects. Bedoya coined the term to mean address the gaps in creative placemaking that do not address fulling the needs of the community, and the community members a sense of belonging. Under this definition, Bedoya saw the need for creative placemaking to be about

Not just preserving the facade of the building but also keeping the cultural memories associated with locale alive… it is a call to hold on to the stories told on the streets by the locals, and to keep the sounds ringing out in the neighborhood populated by musicians who perform at the corner bar or social hall” (Mantallana, 2010, p.12)

This approach of creative placekeeping was a direct response to different placemaking strategies that inadvertently or purposefully supported gentrification, racism, and real estate speculation, in
favor of urban revitalization. Creative placekeeping supports the active awareness and attention placed on maintaining existing community place and space above neighborhood revitalization and beautification. In one of the citizen artist salons hosted by the U.S. Department of Art and Culture, *Creative Placemaking, Placekeeping, and Cultural Strategies to Resist Displacement*, Bedoya talked about his work and theories of placekeeping stating,

> Before you can have places of belonging, which creative placemaking seems to privilege, you need to have a sense that you belong. So that sense of belonging becomes the framework for talking about placemaking as it relates to belonging. (USDAC, 2017)

Bedoya went on to stress that creative placekeeping comes down to keeping alive memories and the authenticity of a locale. The purpose of this distinction between “making” and “keeping”, while seemingly semantic, for Bedoya and his colleagues is the difference between keeping a persons’ agency or threatening it. Through this framework, he found it important to stress that people live their lives through metaphors, which allows them to visualize what they are capable of and what they can achieve. This framework is especially important for minorities, people of color, and low-income folks. Bedoya also stresses that the framework of creative placekeeping was not made with the intentions of demonizing the work of creative placemaking agencies or initiative, but rather to offer up a new perspective in order to deal with some of the politics of dis-belonging. Creative placekeeping projects are meant to reframe the argument of neighborhood preservation and heritage protections to encompass an entire neighborhood or community, instead of just one building or historical landmark.

**Measuring Impact of Art and Culture**

The next focus of this literature review is around measuring the impact of art and cultural initiatives, organizations, and creative placemaking projects. “While artists, designers, and culture-bearers have emerged in creative placemaking activities for decades, the impact of such activities is not easy to measure or quantify” (NEA, 2019 p.3).

**Framework for Measurement.** While the field and work of measuring impact are complicated, different scholars have offered up various frameworks, models, and strategies to address this problem. In *Art and Culture in Communities: A Framework for Measurement*, authors Jackson, Herranz, and Green provided a substantial and detailed framework for capturing the values of arts and culture informed by four guiding principles (Jackson, Herranz, & Green, 2003 pp. 2-6):
1. Definitions of art, culture, and creativity depend on cultural values, preferences, and realities of residents and stakeholders in any given community
2. Participation includes a wide array of ways in which people engage in arts, culture, and creative expression
3. Arts, culture, and creative expression are infused with multiple meanings and purposes simultaneously
4. Opportunities for participation in arts, culture, and creative endeavor often rely on both arts-specific and non-arts specific resources.

The authors used these four guiding principles to identify different ways that neighborhood creative and cultural initiatives function and to develop their framework for impact measurement. These four guiding principles aligned with the authors four “domains of inquiry and dimensions of measurement”:

1. Presence
2. Participation
3. Impacts
4. Systems of Support

The authors suggested that analysts and researchers must first recognize the needs of the community, and the implications that their work and data collection. Practitioners must recognize that the process of collecting their data must be rooted in theory in order to continue future research and policy. Lastly, the authors stated that policymakers must incorporate this methodological approach when deciding on grant and program guidelines in order to support data collection and development.

**The Our Town Grant for Creative Placemaking.** The practice of creative placemaking is constantly evolving. One of the major contributors for the growth and widespread use of creative placemaking is through the work and support of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the creation of the Our Town grant in 2011 for nonprofit organizations taking on creative placemaking projects. Since its inception, the NEA has focused a considerable about of research and 2M of funding into the task of evaluation and measurement of the impact of creative placemaking projects (NEA, 2019). One of the biggest concerns that the agency tackles us the difficulty of measuring or quantifying creative placemaking activities. In creating the Our Town grant, one of the biggest proven successes of creative placemaking was found to be the use of these projects as tools for addressing community challenges, and affect the way that arts, culture, and design strategies are viewed as agents for change in systems thinking, urban planning and policymaking.
In establishing the guidelines for this grant process, the NEA also acknowledged that creative placemaking projects are constantly evolving and developing as tools and strategy for community building and development. Therefore, the process of creating creative placemaking projects are unique to the individual nonprofit organization and locale. Due to the transformative nature of these projects and initiatives, every organization must adhere to its own specific logic model and theory of change. Part of this process involves an ongoing survey of the current and past Our Town grant recipients, and the follow up of additional research and knowledge gained from these examples of creative placemaking in practice across the country.

**Our Town Theory of Change.** This theory offers a more conceptual framework that focuses on systems change and the use of arts, design, and cultural strategies of the Our Town grantee projects.

**Figure 2: Our Town Theory of Change**

![Theory of Change Diagram](source)

Source: *Our Town: A Theory of Change and Logic Model for the Arts’ Creative Placemaking Program*, 2019

The Theory of Change at its core addresses the key problem statement:

American communities everywhere face a distinct set of local economic, physical, and/or social challenges. And yet, community leaders are often unaware of solutions that can arise from the successful adoption and integration of arts, design, and cultural strategies into their community development activities. Through the Our Town program, partners from...
public, private, nonprofit, and community sectors turn to art, culture, and design activities to address local challenges.

As outlined in the Theory of Change model, the end goal of these projects should be to advance sustain creative placemaking activities through community development and diverse cross-sector partnerships on the local and national levels. Under this model, the NEA and Our Town grants acknowledged the need for coalitions and partnerships with other funders, leaders outside of the arts community to use shared knowledge to build strong leadership and grassroots support.

Our Town Logic Model. The NEA has created a logic model and theory of change model as a loose structure to serve as a tool for creative placemaking projects that are working to “transform” communities into “lively, beautiful, and resilient places”, stating that successful Our Town projects ultimately “lay the groundwork for systemic changes that sustain integration of the arts, culture, and design into strategies for strengthening communities” (NEA, 2019). The Our Town Theory of Change model was designed to analyze the details of a creative placemaking project, how it was designed to function, and the work that the grantees do on the local level.

Figure 3: Our Town Logic Model

Source: Our Town: A Theory of Change and Logic Model for the Arts’ Creative Placemaking Program, 2019
When the NEA created the Our Town Logic Model as an expansion off of the Theory of Change model above, it sought to take a closer look into the specific characteristics of creative placemaking projects. The authors of this model outline the four key project inputs, (1) leadership, (2) cross-sector partnerships, (3) financial resources, and (4) community buy in, as a structured outline for the requirements of Our Town recipients. Due to the nature of creative placemaking, each project has its own unique set of characteristics, requirements, and needs. The project activities and outcomes outlined in the logic model, serve as indicators and examples of ways that creative placemaking strategies can function to strengthen communities at the local level. Most creative placemaking projects focus on improving physical, social, and economic outcomes specific to the stakeholder group being served. The outcomes outlined in the model are therefore dependent on (1) community type, (2) social and human capital, (3) existing policies, (4) local assets, and (5) other community development activities. The Our Town report provides an extensive resource of the different and varied tactics and indicators for creative placemaking strategies than range from arts engagement, cultural planning, design, and artist and industry support (pp. 11-15).

Creative Placemaking projects that are chosen to receive the Our Town grant, with the goal of putting program activities into action to inform systems changes and outcomes that will contribute to the “sustained support and recognition of art, cultural, and design strategies as integral to every phase of community planning and development across the United States” (pp.17).

**VALI Reporting.** The report on Validating Arts and Livability Indicators (VALI) report was published and funded by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and presents the findings conducted by the Urban Institute. The authors and the NEA hypothesis that successful creative placemaking projects will have greater positive effects on aspects of “livability” in their communities. The authors divide the dimensions of livability into four categories (Community attachment, quality of life, arts and cultural activity, and economic conditions). In this report, the NEA developed a system of indicating trends of successful projects to better help communities understand the need and importance of placemaking projects. This report aims to function as a “user’s guide” for the NEA, and the authors also provide next step recommendations for the NEA to continue on with this work.

The study was carried out using qualitative data collected between 2006 and 2010, including visiting 6 “Our Town” grant recipients, hosting “one-day convening” with different representatives from these organizations, and conducting expert focus groups with experts outside of the NEA’s placemaking efforts. Indicators for each community are examined alongside geographical data collected from census tracts, zip code tabulation areas (ZCTA), and county zoning. One of the key findings from this study was that both urban and rural participants reported similar indicators, and often had similar perceptions to these indicators. I was less
surprised that these two ground had different perceived “community attachment”. It was also
interesting that one of the common takeaways from the focus groups was that a lot of civic
engagement happens outside of the institution, particularly on social networks and through
entertainment activities. This suggests that organizations should utilize more informal avenues
for enacting creative placemaking. Also, out of all four categories of indicators, the arts and
cultural activity dimension were reported as mostly favorable by participants. However, the
biggest concerns raised in this dimension were the types of organizations included in the study
and their corresponding payroll and employment indicators.

Figure 4: VALI Creative Placemaking Evaluation Model

Source: The Validating Arts and Livability Indicators (VALI) Study: Results and
Recommendations, 2014

Section 3: Methods and Approaches

Positionality and Perspective

It is necessary at this point to disclose my personal connection to this topic comes from my work
and experiences in the performing arts and nonprofit arts and cultural organizations. I also
believe that it is important not to separate the researcher from the research, and both will inform
one another. I identify as a white, female, who was raised from a place of privilege. I was born
and raised in the Bay Area, and while I have had the privilege to live in a diverse city and state, I
must also acknowledge that I am focused on my research on a topic that has affected my greater
spheres of influence, but not life directly. While I see my neighbors in the Mission District being
outpriced and forced to leave communities that they have always called home due to the effects
of gentrification, displacement, and disinvestment, I have not personally been affected by these
movements. I think it is very important when conducting any form of research for the researcher or the practitioner to first establish their own positionality, privilege, and biases before entering into the study, research, and data collection process. It is important for us all to accept the roles we play in gentrification, and the need for expanding our conversations of white privilege, agency, solidarity, and the abilities of those coming from places of privilege to express ourselves creatively without push back based on the color of our skin, the language we speak, the country we were born in, our sexual orientations or political and ideological beliefs. The conversation of gentrification does hit close to home for me, and is worth noting as this has probably played a role in my interpretation of the literature review, the case studies I was drawn to, and the methodology behind my primary data collection process. I have unfortunately had friends, community members, colleagues, and customers that have had to deal with wrongful evictions and displacement as a result of the technology industry boom in the San Francisco Bay Area, subsequently turning the Mission District into a bedroom community for Silicon Valley workers.

Expert Interviews

All interviews for this project were conducted with a semi-structured format. I met with three different professionals in the nonprofit arts and cultural sector, and one from the urban planning sector. Three of the interviews were conducted in person and we convened in the interviewee's place of work. The time, place, and subject of the interviews were agreed upon in advance via email. A standard set of interview questions were emailed out ahead of time to ensure that the interviewees were prepared for the meeting as well. While there was a standard set of questions, each specific semi-structured interview had a series of specific follow up questions that pertain to each individual's background, sector experiences, and specific organization or institution that they worked for. All four interviews were recorded with verbal consent, and notes were taken during the interview, and a formal transcription was made after the interview was conducted. The four participants were:

- Kristen Acosta | Programs Coordinator | The Women’s Building
- Anna Cash | Associate Director | Urban Displacement Project
- Louise Carroll | Nonprofit Executive, Board Member, and Teaching Associate | University of San Francisco
- Elena Serrano | Program Director | EastSide Arts Alliance & Cultural Center

Expert Interview Questions

All four interviews focused on the role of nonprofit arts and cultural organizations in combating gentrification and displacement, strategies for creative placemaking, and different evaluation methods for reporting and analyzing program impact on the community being served. Each
The interview was organized around three main topics, with specific questions chosen to address the interviewee’s title, the sector that they work in, and their experiences with creative placemaking, gentrification, and displacement. For the semi-structured interview question (see Appendix B for a detailed interview guide and questions), each interview was organized around these three focuses:

1. The role of the nonprofit arts and cultural sector in combating gentrification and displacement
2. Best cultural strategies and creative placemaking practices
3. Impact reporting and evaluation methodologies

Section 4. Data Analysis

Kristen Acosta: Programs Coordinator, The Women’s Building

The conversation that arose from the semi-structured interview with Programs Coordinator Kristen Acosta from the Women’s Building, centered around ideas of mission impact and programming driven by community need. Founded in 1971, The Women’s Building is a women-led nonprofit arts and cultural community center location in San Francisco’s Mission District. The organization takes on many concerns that face its community, and advocates for self-determination, gender equality and social justice. Each year the organization serves over 25,000 women and their families by connecting them with services, community involvement opportunities, the arts, wellness and educational events (The Women’s Building, 2019).

When asked about the Women’s Buildings work with participating nonprofit organizations and coalitions, Acosta stressed the importance of mission alignment, “We make sure that all of our partnering organizations have a shared mission and vision. So all of them are women based, and human rights-related” (Acosta, personal communication, 2019). She went on to describe the work that The Women’s Building does to focus on growth and change in the community that it serves, and the organizations and artists it partners with. Because the focus and mission of the organization are around women’s issues and women’s rights, the programs that are focused are used to foster and enable these policy and societal changes.

A common thread that came up in all four interviews was the increased cost of living throughout the Bay Area. Acosta agreed, “it's crazy the prices here, and a lot of nonprofits are actually moving to Oakland because space is cheaper there” (Acosta, personal communication, 2019). Consistent in all of the interviews conducted, was the sense of urgency and need for sustainable funding, in order for nonprofit arts and cultural organizations to not be priced out of the neighborhoods that house the community they were designed to serve and advocate for.
When asked about the pressure to best served her community and provide relevant services, Acosta responded “we all have a lot on our plate, but we are so passionate about what we do, and about the building, and fostering that growth, and keeping up with the community. So it’s exciting!” While some of the conversation taken out of context could be interpreted reflect on the many complications and challenges that nonprofits face in the Bay Area, this was the feeling I had speaking with Kristen. She was hopeful, excited, and ready to meet these challenges head-on. Her perspective was enlightening and her commitment to her community was inspiring. When asked about the role that nonprofits should be playing in combating gentrification and displacement, Acosta noted the importance that The Women’s Building places on advocacy. “Nonprofits should always be advocating for the communities that they serve, and they stand for policies that are important to our clients” (Acosta, personal communication, 2019).

We talked about how evaluation, and data collecting and reporting was obviously very important, but she also mentioned that she is concerned that far too many nonprofits get bogged down with the numbers and the data, and forget about the personal connection, the people behind the numbers, and the stories of the individual clients. We also discussed the power of language, and how the word “client” can be limiting as well because these people are not just clients, they are members of the community as well.

When asked about evaluation and impact reporting, Acosta brought attention to the importance of surveys and one-on-one meetings with community members to ensure that their needs were being met. “Things like demographics are very important, it’s important to have markers for community change, and evolution, in order to best evaluate program needs and community impact. This process should always be programs focused” (Acosta, personal communication). Again and again, Kristen stressed the importance of community feedback to ensure that the needs of their constituents were being addressed. We discussed potential markers and indicators for program success, and some of the practices at the Women’s Building were very straightforward and practical. For example, reaching out my personal communication to community members after they received a specific service, and following through to make sure they did not have any questions, or that their session was successful.

Another easy marker for program success was measuring attendee turn out for specific events or programs. “For example, we can look at a specific program that we are offering, and assess why the turn out might be low, is it because it's being held at a specific time? Okay, so we change that. Is it because it’s only offered on a specific day that does not allow for clients to attend, we talk to them, and figure out what might work better for them, and we adjust. And if the turn out still isn’t as high, then we can re-evaluate, do we need this program? Is this something that our clients are wanting/needing?” (Acosta, personal communication, 2019).
When asked about working for a nonprofit organization that serves the Mission District neighborhood, with constant community changes due to gentrification bringing in new neighbors, she replied that there had not been much push back or resistance from newcomers. She responded that “it mostly boils down to these newcomers moving into this neighborhood, and not really knowing what they are getting themselves into” (Acosta, personal communication, 2019). What she experienced more was a lack of education about the community that they were moving into and the impact that their presence would and could have on the existing long term neighbors. She stressed that the best thing to do to combat gentrification, isolation, and segregation in their community was to encourage participation and education between old and new residents in the Mission District.

**Anna Cash: Associate Director, Urban Displacement Project**

It was important for this research to get the perspective of an urban planning professional, as well as from the insights of experts in the nonprofit sector. I had the opportunity to speak with Anna Cash, who is the Associate Director of the Urban Displacement Project. UDP is a research initiative of the University of California Berkeley, that conducts community-centered, data-driven, and applied research with a focus on understanding the nature of gentrification and displacement. The goal of UDP is to produce research and build tools that can empower advocates and policymakers and inspire the next generation of leaders towards creating solutions for equitable urban development. Part of this work focuses on the interactive displacement maps that are available for public use, and highlight the current state of gentrification and displacement in the Bay Area, Los Angeles, and Portland areas.

**Figure 5: Interactive Urban Displacement Mapping of the San Francisco Bay Area**

Source: *Urban Displacement Project, 2019*
My conversation with Cash opened up with learning a bit more about the work of UDP. Cash stated that “the Bay Area is like ground zero for those issues, and where the focus very much on a lot of social programs right now is ‘what can we do about displacement and gentrification?’ Because people are being pushed from their communities, and their support systems, and their social services” (Cash, personal communication, 2019). She went on to talk about the importance of studying gentrification and displacement, and best understand the nature and consequences of those phenomena and also potential ways to address them and move cities towards more equitable development. “Then we also have research we’ve done on the impacts of households, and public health consequences, as well as at the regional level on resegregation and the rise of housing costs and displacement. Right now we are engaged in a bunch of multi-year studies on the effectiveness of various anti-displacement strategies as well as trying to in the meantime while those studies are being carried out, providing some assistance to the cities and organizations to think about anti-displacement strategies” (Cash, personal communication, 2019).

With a small team of researchers, UDP is taking on a daunting task. When asked about the process of the mapping tool and how these indicators for displacement and gentrification potential risk factors were measured, Cash explained, “most of that is census data, almost all of it. We also engaged in a community engagement process around that. All of our research is a community engaged in some way, and with the gentrification and displacement typology maps, we partnered with nine community-based organizations in the Bay Area and worked with them to ground truth in the maps”(Cash, personal communication, 2019). Cash described the UDP methodological approach as one of constant trial and error and re-evaluation. She stressed the importance of making sure that the research always aligns with the lived experiences of the practitioners and the partnering organizations. This is illustrated in a series of nine case studies that help give a face and story to the quantitative data in order to make meaning from the reporting and data.

When asked about the role of the nonprofit organization in combating gentrification and displacement, she said that they were many different ways to go about answering that question, and the first was to address the fact that many nonprofits are dealing with a crisis of gentrification and displacement themselves. “There are a few reports of nonprofit displacement because they can’t afford the rents in some cases. So foundations, and philanthropy organizations folks with more resources should really be thinking about that to help nonprofits to stay in place” (Cash, personal communication, 2019). Cash mentioned that a major challenge with urban displacement and gentrification is when people are displaced away from culturally relevant social services, whether it’s in terms of language or some sort of demographic situation. Similar to the conversation with Kristen Acosta on meeting community member’s needs with programs and services, Cash mentioned the need for nonprofits to think this way. “We need to be looking
at is the mismatch of where people are living, especially immigrants, and social service providers that have language services, and maybe provide services after working hours” (Cash, personal communication, 2019).

Cash talked about how nonprofits need to be thinking about how does their reach and strategy change, especially if the constituents that they serve are being pushed out further away from the highly sought after neighborhood like the Mission District in San Francisco, or now Downtown Oakland in the East Bay. In terms of combating gentrification and displacement, organizing was really critical for Cash in terms of making sure that anti-displacement policies are passed, and to make sure that nonprofits can get involved and make sure that there is room for more anti-displacement strategies, and work with the communities they serve, and organizing to support policies that support the people that they serve is really critical.

Cash echoed the ideas of Roberto Bedoya’s Creative Placekeeping model by asserting “I think another thing, is that there is a phenomenon of a loss of sense of belonging even amongst people who aren’t displaced, it’s either the neighborhood changing around them, or no longer seeing people who look like them, a lot of their friends and family have already been pushed out, and I think nonprofits can probably play a role in providing a space for community cohesion, and maybe facilitating third spaces for older and newer residents to come together, but really celebrating the culture of the folks who have been there for a long time, and I don't know exactly what that looks like” (Cash, personal communication, 2019).

Cash also touched on two major connecting themes between all four interviews, which was the importance of safe spaces and cultivation of the next generation of activists, artists, and advocates. “I really like the idea of providing a safe space for young people, and space for expression, I think especially when there is a loss of sense of belonging, just giving people a place to come together and sort of celebrate what their community means to them, and put that out there into the community, so that newcomers know that this is not a blank space that they are moving into and that there is a whole history and getting them involved in tenants rights organizing, and stuff like that is important.”

We finished up the interview by talking about the direction UDP is moving toward and some of the goals for future research. “We are really moving in that direction of strategies to prevent gentrification and displacement, and respond to displacement. So the more we can do policy evaluation the more that we can look at the intersection of climate and displacement, the more that we can understand how climate mitigation investments can sometimes lead to displacement so we are creating a predictive tool for looking at how you can create climate mitigation investments, like urban regreening projects, bike paths, etc., in ways that also mitigate displacement pressure. So I think really just understanding anti-displacement strategies and
putting in research into designing investment without displacement” (Cash, personal communication, 2019).

**Louise Carroll, USF, SFO**

Louise Carroll is currently a graduate professor at the University of San Francisco’s School of Management. Carroll is an experienced nonprofit executive and board member. Carroll served as Executive Director of Tax-Aid, as Director of the Palo Alto Art Center Foundation, and was contracted by the San Francisco Opera to produce the “Opera in the Park” series and the first-ever dual simulcast production to San Francisco’s Civic Center and Stanford’s Frost Amphitheater. This semi-structured interview was informed by Carroll’s experiences with the San Francisco Opera, her current continued education program and focus on cultural competencies necessary in teachers today, and her experience running a student organization during her time at UCLA.

We opened up the conversation by first defining creative placemaking. When asked about an experience she had had with creative placemaking, Carroll first thought of her time running the simulcast production with the San Francisco Opera. “What we were trying to do was to take a public space, space where people could be a member of the audience and we reach more people, where it could be a free experience for them” (Carroll, personal communication, 2019). In this form of creative placemaking, the opera was using a pre-existing space, and bringing a new social space within the confines of public space, in this case, San Francisco’s Civic Center. She commented on the implications of bringing a simulcast of an opera into a public space, and that it was important to note that while some might have enjoyed the viewing, space was still in constant use and that this might have been an unwanted addition to those spending time in the open plaza. Carroll commented that it was really no surprise when the simulcast moved to AT&T Park later that year. This meant that only those who wanted to experience the operas would make the intentional trip down to the stadium, thus listening to the community members and adjusting the programming to fit the needs and wants of the community.

When asked if she thought that institutions like the San Francisco Opera, Ballet, or Symphony were contributing further to gentrification, Carroll did not agree. “These institutions are so old. They’re dinosaurs. They’re not newly gentrifying anything. In fact, I think gentrification is leaving them behind, and I think it’s a generational issue. The symphony is dying, SF Symphony is actually dying, the SF Opera is not doing much better either, and at a certain point, if their audience is 65 and over, there is no future in those institutions. And they have really tried everything that they can in the last 20 years to really become relevant to engage younger audiences” (Carroll, personal communication, 2019). We discussed the issues of gentrification in the Bay Area, and she did not agree that necessarily the symphony and the opera were part of
that. “I think if anything, they are sort of dying on the vine, and I’m not sure if they are going to have to almost end up merging? Because I just don’t see them being able to sustain themselves. And I just don’t think that there is substantial interesting in upcoming generations to sustain them, and then you have to ask yourself. Why are you sustaining them? If it's not relevant or important to people anymore, why are we fighting to keep it?” (Carroll, personal communication, 2019). This brings back on the main theme of the importance of addressing the needs of the community firs and the necessity of listening to your constituents.

We discussed other nonprofit arts and cultural organizations that are effectively changing with the times and addressing a change in community needs. Carroll mentioned the San Francisco MoMA and the de Young Museum and how these two are effectively re-strategizing and thinking strategically with sustainability in mind. “You see all kinds of ages and all kinds of people that they are reaching and engaging with, and you just don’t see that at the opera” Carroll remarked, “And all kinds of ways they are taking something that is a visual art, and turning it into a making art experience, almost like dance parties and kids, you know it's just much more family-oriented and reaches a broader part of the community, and I think in a lot of ways I see museums doing a much better job of being community resources organizations, and I think performing arts and the classical performing arts areas are not doing that at all. And I haven’t seen anything that would encourage me that that is going to change”(Carroll, personal communication, 2019). Carroll reiterated that arts and cultural organizations need to be more realistic with their use of philanthropy. She pointed out that it’s important for any organization to reflect and constantly re-evaluate mission, purpose, and vision expectations against the reality of the needs of the community. With such small spheres of influence in some of the older institutions like the opera, symphony, and ballet, Carroll commented, “there are just the same people coming to these performances, and they are all part of the same groups you know, similar races and they are all part of the same age group, and ethnicities” (Carroll, personal communication, 2019).

We came back to the idea of addressing the needs of the community, and Carroll shared an experience she had while she was working with a team of students at UCLA charged with putting on a campus film department event. Their task was to choose the films that would be shown on a weekly basis to students in a movie theater for a nominal fee of $1. She was on a team of mostly Asian American students, and she was the only white student, and the rest of her team suggested a movie that she had never heard of. She ended up being, and they playing a movie which ended up being the only screening that completely sold out that year. She reflected, “my distance from the Asian community was clearly apparent because I had no idea what was popular, you know what was being talked about. It was like my mouth was just hanging open you know? I had no clue, but I think that that changed what I thought about when I have to be thinking about, you know I’m in arts programming, because clearly, this was a huge portion of the population of students at UCLA that I had no sense of what they were interested in, then it’s
on be to bridge that gap” (Carroll, personal communication, 2019). In thinking back to this informative time and experience in her career, Carroll stated, “First you have to look at what the community needs first. And where you are finding your community representatives is really important. And if you are not starting from there, you are going to make some really big mistakes. You have to take a risk, and be willing to be wrong if you aren’t certain how popular something is going to be” (Carroll, personal communication, 2019).

Louise also shared with me an experience she had with filling out a “cultural competency” worksheet from the John Hopkins courses on education she is currently enrolled in. We discussed the importance of assessing one’s personal cultural competencies, especially in the field of education. Even though this worksheet (see Appendix B for examples of the Cultural Competency Framework Worksheets) was designed for educators, the implications of this type of self-reflection can be brought over to the work of the nonprofit sector, and especially with nonprofits professionals whose work focuses on serving diverse populations and communities. “The framework is really useful in looking at who you are as a person,” Carroll said, “and how you are showing up and how you are dealing with different groups of people and different perspectives” (Carroll, personal communication, 2019).

**Elena Serrano, EastSide Arts Alliance & Cultural Center**

Elena Serrano is the current Program Director at EastSide Arts Alliance & Cultural Center located in East Oakland, that provides free youth art classes, cultural planning, public arts projects, ongoing gallery exhibitions, community town halls, and the annual Malcolm X Jazz Arts Festival. My conversation with Serrano was informative and inspiring as we discussed strategies for fighting back against the displacement of East Oakland, the so called “opportunity zone” that has marked specific areas of the neighborhood as desirable for real estate redevelopment, the creative placemaking work that East Side Arts Alliance is currently taking part in, her experiences as an Our Town Grant Recipient, and ideas of space, authenticity, community needs, and shared knowledge, history, and culture.

“The idea of cultural workers is that it takes all of these people to build and to be workers.” Serrano commented on the metaphors and idea of what it takes to be a “cultural worker”. She commented that organizations and artists need to work hand in hand, and use every talent, skill, and knowledge they possess in order to ensure that the next generation of advocates, artists, and activists use their talents to build their communities up, and not tear them down. We talked about the purpose of intention, and mentorship, and how both of these are vital to teaching the next generation how to work for social and policy change, and advocate for themselves and their neighborhoods. “What we try to do with the young people here that we bring up, is to get them to
get that, you is that you have this talent is much better to use it to build up your community than to write some stupid shit on the wall.” (Serrano, personal communication, 2019).

This interview was conducted in EastSide’s lofted office space which houses the Community Archival Resource Project. It seemed fitting that we were meeting in a space full of such history and culture, and that I was given the opportunity to share and learn knowledge from an expert in the field. Before the interview was conducted, I was also given a guided tour of the entire building, community space, neighboring organizations, the newly installed library, and the open lot next door that Serrano explained was being turned into a series of affordable housing units in partnership with EastSide and Oakland Land Trust. Another cultural strategy that Serrano discussed was the bookstore “experiment” that they were trying out on the main floor. I was shocked to hear that this was now the only existing bookstore in East Oakland. Serrano described the function of the bookstore as a “cultural literacy center”, where young people from the community can come into a safe and accepting space and educate themselves. When asked about the future plans and sustainability of the bookstore, Serrano responded, “I don’t really know what the fiscal plan for it is. What we always go back to, is public support, instead of supporting on the local level.”

We discussed her experiences with being an NEA Our Town Grant recipient in 2014. Serrano said, “I’m looking forward to the NEA Our Town Survey for previous grantees. I would like to know what questions they are asking. One thing around Art Place America, and around creative placemaking and the NEA, is that when they first launched it, the criteria that they were looking for were just things that looked like they were aiding and abetting gentrification and displacement. You know, it was like there was no consideration, like what are you bringing to this place that you discovered? And then they re-grouped and they fixed it, and they came back and really talked about not a group of artists coming in, but what came out of it, and what connections you make and you are making with people that are already there? I think that’s what’s happening more. People are saying, we want to start this project, we want to come in and have these community meetings. That’s one way. It’s better when it comes up out of that neighborhood” (Serrano, personal communication, 2019).

We discussed the importance of keeping the narrative work of creative placemaking alive through the importance placed on mentorship and education of our young people. “You need to go into a neighborhood and tell folks that don’t even think that they are artists, that they can be an artist. That they can dream, and it can be something real. And that doesn’t have to be so out of reach” (Serrano, personal communication, 2019).

We next discussed the importance of strategic partnerships and coalition building, which for EastSide can be seen in the Black Cultural Zone and Hub Center plans for East Oakland. Serrano
describes what it feels like to be the only cultural organization seated at the table for importance meetings on urban policy, planning, and investing. The Hub was designed to be a “one stop shop” anti-displacement center where community members could go in if they were in need of legal help around evictions, or function as a co-op if you needed to buy something, or just go have all of your housing needs to be addressed in one space. We discussed all of the creative ideas and solutions that Serrano, her team, and contemporaries in the neighborhood and sector came up with to meet the financial needs of establishing a place like this. “That is typical in the way of the arts you know?” Serrano stated, “There is not a designated source of income for the arts.”

When asked about strategies for re-investing in East Oakland businesses owners of color and minorities, artists, and youth, Serrano brought up the opportunity zone designation. She laughed when recalling that when this concept was first being introduced, and making the rounds in conversations, she had to google it to figure out “what they heck they were talking about...and more importantly what would that look like?”. The zone in question and the interactive opportunity zone mapping systems were advising investors on where to invest, and the number one locations across the nation was surrounding the Oakland Coliseum. “However, all of the surrounding neighborhood they were saying, and this is so sad, they were saying that the only thing that would be profitable in those surrounding neighborhoods are storage facilities and trailer parks. I know that it is hard for a capitalist to make money in a poor neighborhood, but what that was basically saying, is that in a poor neighborhood the only way that you can make money, because people aren’t going to be able to come and spend money at a fancy restaurant or buy fancy things, unless they’re not poor anymore. If they are still poor, then the storage facilities are prime investments for capitalists, because these people are probably going to be evicted, and need somewhere to put their stuff, and then move into trailer home” (Serrano, personal communication, 2019). And this is the challenge, how do you come up with creative and inventive ideas that can bring money back into East Oakland, but not contribute further to the displacement of existing residents, businesses, and organizations? “It’s going to be those crazy out their no-one-has-thought-of-it-yet ideas that will bring the economy back to poor neighborhoods, not trailer parks and storage facilities” (Serrano, personal communication, 2019).

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<tr>
<th>Shared Values</th>
<th>Practices and Topics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Addressing the needs of the community</td>
<td>Surveys, one-on-one communication, demographic considerations when creating programming, turn out rates, language</td>
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Intergenerational learning and sharing of knowledge

Mentorship programs, family-oriented programming, hands-on learning, cross-sector partnerships, learning from mistakes, facilitation of community and neighborhood learning opportunities, passing on the knowledge of community and neighborhood history and skills, cataloging information, art, and performances

Safe Spaces that address the needs of the community

Safe spaces for creative expression, the resistance of community member isolation, combating gentrification, live art installations, services that provide legal aid and assistance, emotional and legal counsel,

Cross-Sector partnerships and coalitions

The importance of knowledge sharing, merging, government partnerships, business and enterprise partnerships, advocacy and policy influencing, funding, lack of resources,

Source: Author’s creation, 2019

The table above shows the four main areas of shared values that came across in all four expert interviews. They are ordered from the most occurrences first, and on the right side of the table are some examples of ideas, conversations, strategies, and implications for each shared value that came up during the four interviews

Section 5: Implications and Recommendations

One of the implications that came out of this report was the creation of a logic model that reflected the insights gained from the literature review, and the semi-structured interviews. The Logic model was built to address the specific needs unique to communities and respond to the existing social and human capital, policies, local assets, and community development activities. This logic model outlines the outcomes of creative placemaking projects at both the local community change level, and the ability to affect innovation/systems change outcomes.
Another implication of this report, was through the idea to create a creative placemaking certification process, similar to the standards of practices and reporting of the B-corporation model, I have outlined a potential triple bottom line standard for creative placemaking projects, to ensure that they are meeting the criteria and not further contributing to patterns of gentrification and displacement. In the figure below are outlined the three main areas for creative placemaking projects to address the community needs and design programs that fulfill these requirements of the suggested triple bottom line of: (1) Economic Change, (2) Social Change, and (3) Physical Change. These three requirements of creative placemaking projects will then also exist to serve a larger scale level of systems change, which is the desired outcome of many creative placemaking projects, to influence not only at the local level of policy change, but in the greater conversation of cross-sector partnerships and program sustainability.
In order to explain how this certification model would look in practice, below I have used the context of the creative placemaking projects from EastSideArts Alliance & Cultural Center from my conversations with Program Director Elena Serrano:

1. **Economic Change** creation of jobs through the bookstore, the internship program for young artists from East Oakland, and the creation of turning unused space on the property into affordable housing)

2. **Social Change** the cultural center provides the community with a safe space for creative expression, knowledge sharing, and community cohesion. With the use of programs like the free produce food stands out front, EastSide aims to directly serve and engage within its community. And the fact that the new edition of the library, and it is currently the only bookstore in East Oakland

3. **Physical Change**: the presence of the building and the access to arts programming reflects on the character of the neighborhood, though beautiful art installations, live graffiti painting, and the performance space for poetry, spoken word, dance, music,
theater. Also, once again, the creation of new affordable housing spaces in a neighborhood that has been constantly overlooking and disinvested in.

Recommendations

Based on the literature review, case studies, and a series of expert interviews here are my recommendations for nonprofit arts and cultural organizations that are seeking to build creative placemaking projects and programs, and seek to not have the programs further contribute to the movement of gentrification and displacement.

1. Consult with the Urban Displacement interactive mapping system of gentrification & displacement to identify areas and neighborhoods of high risk, and best meet the needs of the community and stakeholder groups.
2. Work in Cross-sector partnerships and coalitions to create sustainable programs and cultural strategies to combat gentrification and displacement, and advocate for policy and systems change.
3. Conduct annual combination of surveys and personal communication with community stakeholders, clients, and populations served for program evaluation.
4. Hall all staff, volunteers, board members, and executive team complete a cultural competency assessment annually.
5. Design programs and activities with the guidance of the Creative Placemaking Logic Model and Creative Placemaking Certification Criteria outlined in this report.

Section 6: Conclusions

Gentrification and displacement are rooted in a deep history of disinvestment in minorities and low-income populations. It is the role of the nonprofit sector to ensure that the needs of the communities served, and the neighborhoods and families that are most at risk of being displaced, are provided with the services and programs they need to advocate for housing rights, legal aid, neighborhood and cultural protections, and access to resources for creative expression of identity and heritage. This is where the cultural strategies of creative placemaking can play a pivotal role in either combating or contributing further to patterns of gentrification, displacement, and isolation. As human beings, we all long for a sense of purpose and belonging in our communities. Nonprofit arts and cultural organizations have the opportunity to effect real policy and systems change, and advance the conversations that we have around place, identity, privilege, and agency. Moving forward, these organizations must take concrete steps to ensure that creative placemaking projects are really meeting their communities where they are, and addressing the needs of their constituents.
List of References


Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Questions for Semi-Structured Interview (Kristen Acosta, The Women’s Building)

1. Can you tell me a bit more about your role at The Women’s Building, and your experiences working for community coalition building institution in the Mission District?
2. Do you have any experiences with creative placemaking projects? And what are your thoughts on creative placemaking initiatives?
3. Can you tell me a bit more about the function of the nonprofit hub, and some of the partnerships with the various nonprofits that you work with like ICWC, Dolores Street Community Services, Girls on the Run, etc. ? What were some of the motivations and history behind these collaborative partnerships?
4. Do you think that cultural strategies for community building and development can successfully combat gentrification, displacement, and isolation? I would be interested in learning more about the Women’s Building’s advocacy work for affordable housing and the mission strategy coalition.
5. What role do you think that nonprofit arts and cultural organizations can and should play in combating gentrification and displacement?
6. If there was a standardized evaluation/measurement process for reporting on creative placemaking projects, to ensure that they did not further contribute to the issue of gentrifying neighborhoods and displacing neighbors, what would be some of the indicators and criteria you would want to take into consideration?
7. How would you personally define program success in terms of cultural strategies to build community spaces that provide their communities with an outlet for creative expression?
8. The impact of creative placemaking and cultural strategies is not always easy to measure or quantify. What do you think could be the most effective way to measure the impact of these strategies?
9. I have been contemplating the idea of a certification process for creative placemaking that would mimic that of a B-corp certification. If this certification existed, what would some of the necessary indicators or qualifications for these creative placemaking projects?

Questions for Semi-Structured Interviews (Elena, EastSide Arts Alliance & Cultural Center)

1. Can you tell me a bit more about your role at EastSide, and your experiences working for community coalition building institution in East Oakland?
2. Do you have any experiences with creative placemaking projects? And what are your thoughts on creative placemaking initiatives?
3. Can you tell me a bit more about EastSide’s strategies to combat gentrification, displacement, and exclusion?
4. Can you tell me a bit more about EastSide’s partnership with the Black Cultural Zone and the proposed BCZ Hub Space?
5. What role do you think that nonprofit arts and cultural organizations can and should play in combating gentrification and displacement?
6. In the East Bay, and East Oakland in particular, how can nonprofits best work to invest in communities of color, and bring investment and economic development to support these communities, local business owners and artists without further contributing to the displacement and gentrification of these neighborhoods?
7. If there was a standardized evaluation/measurement process for reporting on creative placemaking projects that do not contribute even further to the issue of gentrifying neighborhoods and displacing neighbors, what would be some of the criteria that you would take into consideration?
8. How would you personally define program success in terms of cultural strategies to build community spaces that provide their communities with an outlet for creative expression?
   a. Follow up question from the direction of the conversation: How do you measure the effectiveness of these strategies?
9. Do you think that it would be possible to have these elements added to some sort of certification process or reporting process? Similar to sustainability reporting standards of the B-corporation certification?

Questions for Semi-Structured Interviews (Louise Carroll, USF, Palo Alto Arts Center Foundation, and San Francisco Opera)

1. Have you had experiences with creative placemaking projects during your time with the Palo Alto Arts Center Foundation of the San Francisco Opera?
   a. Follow up question from the direction of the conversation: A critique of many “high arts” or “fine arts” organizations, from Opera, Symphony, and Ballet companies, is that they can further contribute to gentrification and displacement. What are your thoughts on this critique?
   b. Follow up question from the direction of the conversation: Coming back to that idea, I was speaking to someone the other day about the “gentrification of the nonprofits”, in that many are no longer able to sustain themselves and afford the high cost of space here in the Bay Area. Would you agree with that?
2. Do you think that cultural strategies for community planning and development can successfully combat gentrification, displacement, and isolation?
3. What role do you think that nonprofit arts and cultural organizations can and should play in combating gentrification and displacement?
4. If there was a standardized evaluation/measurement process for reporting on creative placemaking projects that do not contribute further to the issue of gentrifying neighborhoods and displacing neighbors, what would be some of the criteria that you would take into consideration?

5. How would you personally define success in terms of cultural strategies to build community spaces that provide their communities with an outlet for creative expression?

6. The impact of creative placemaking and cultural strategies is not always easy to measure or quantify. What do you think could be the most effective way to measure the success of these strategies?

7. Do you think that it would be possible to have a set of creative placemaking indicators added to a certification process or reporting process? Similar to sustainability reporting standards of the B-corporation certification process?

Questions for Semi-Structured Interviews (Anna Cash, Urban Displacement Project)

1. Can you tell me a bit more about your role in the Urban Displacement Project, and how you became involved with the project?

2. Can you tell me a bit more about how the regional data was collected from census records on housing, income, and other demographics to inform the interactive mapping of displacement and gentrification in the Bay Area?
   
   a. *Follow up question from the conversation:* I was looking over the different case studies you mentioned, and I was wondering if there were any specific findings that you brought back to these partnerships that they were either surprised by or not surprised by?

3. When creating the mapping system, what were some impacts/implications you envisioned this tool having both in the research of urban displacement, and in the policy, planning, and organizing to stabilize neighborhoods in the Bay Area?

4. What role do you think the nonprofit sector should play in combating gentrification and displacement?

5. Do you think there is evidence that cultural strategies can be used successfully to combat gentrification and displacement?

6. Part of my project is concerned with looking into the evaluation process of creative placemaking and placekeeping projects. Based on your work with UDP, what do you see as the key indicators that an arts organization, coalition, or project is using effective strategies to combat gentrification and displacement?

7. What would you recommend for a nonprofit organization who wants to use and interpret the findings from the interactive maps, research, and case studies? (For instance, would the data set available to the public be helpful? Or does it function more as an internal analysis methodology for UDP?)
8. Can you tell me what you are hoping the future of the UDP is? Where are you hoping the research will take you, and what are some of the lasting implications you hope to see come from this work?

Appendix B: Cultural Competency Framework

Table 8.1: Four Tools of Cultural Proficiency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>On our Cultural Proficiency journey, this Tool</th>
<th>Helps us to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barriers to Cultural Proficiency</td>
<td>Identify and describe what gets in the way of our progress by showing us the impediments to Cultural Proficiency that are nested within behaviors, beliefs, and values. We must remove, dismantle, or overcome the barriers in order to develop a healthy worldview and effective behaviors, practices, and policies within culturally diverse democracy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency</td>
<td>Have a compass to direct our progress by providing us a moral philosophical framework. We use the Principles to identify and describe the core values and beliefs that inform a healthy worldview supportive of effective behaviors, practices, and policies within culturally diverse democracy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Proficiency Continuum</td>
<td>Navigate our environment by supplying descriptive language for our values, behaviors, practices, and policies. We use the continuum to identify and describe six distinct ways of perceiving and responding to diversity. These span a range from unhealthy (undesirable and ineffective) to healthy (desirable and effective).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essential Elements of Cultural Competence</td>
<td>Move forward and conduct course corrections as necessary by offering standards. We use the essential elements as benchmarks for developing, implementing, and improving, and for measuring the effectiveness of behaviors, practices, and policies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted with permission from Lindsey, Nuri-Robins, and Terrell (2009).
Table 8.2  Barriers to Cultural Proficiency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unawareness of the need to adapt</td>
<td>Not recognizing the need to make personal and organizational changes to better serve people within your organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance to change</td>
<td>Opposing or struggling with modifications or transformations that alter the status quo in the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems of privilege and oppression</td>
<td>Institutionalized practices and policies that produce inequities by awarding unearned benefits (privilege) and undeserved penalties (oppression)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A sense of entitlement</td>
<td>Belief that one’s achievements and benefits are deserved because they were fairly earned and awarded</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted with permission from Lindsey, Nuri-Robins, and Terrell (2009).

Table 8.4  The Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency

1. Culture is a predominant force in people’s and schools’ lives.
2. People are served in varying degrees by the dominant culture.
3. People have group identities and individual identities.
4. Diversity within cultures is vast and significant.
5. Each cultural group has unique cultural needs.
6. The best of both worlds enhances the capacity of all.
7. The family, as defined by each culture, is the primary system of support in the education of children.
8. School systems must recognize that through necessity marginalized populations have to be at least bicultural and that this status creates a unique set of issues to which the system must be equipped to respond.
9. Inherent in cross-cultural interactions are dynamics that educators must acknowledge, adjust to, and accept.

Source: Lindsey, Kearney, Estrada, Terrell, and Lindsey (2015).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Destructiveness</th>
<th>Cultural Incapacity</th>
<th>Cultural Reductionism</th>
<th>Cultural Precompetence</th>
<th>Cultural Competence</th>
<th>Cultural Proficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eliminate Differences</td>
<td>Demean Differences</td>
<td>Dismiss Differences</td>
<td>Respond Inadequately to Differences</td>
<td>Effectively Engage with and Respond to Differences</td>
<td>Learn about Culture and How to Effectively Engage and Respond to Differences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Unhealthy Paradigm**  
Shaped by the barriers  
- Focus is on “them”  
- Tolerate diversity  
- Orientation is blame  
- Mind-set is scarcity  
- Conversations limit possibility

**Healthy Paradigm**  
Shaped by the guiding principles  
- Focus is on “our practice”  
- Value diversity  
- Orientation is responsibility  
- Mind-set is abundance  
- Conversations open limitless possibilities

**Motivations**  
Self-assertion, anger, craving, fear, anguish, apathy, guilt/shame, and depersonalization

**Motivations**  
Exploration, cooperation, power-within, mastery, generativity, higher service, world soul, and enlightenment

*Source: Adapted from Lindsey, Nuri-Robins, and Terrell (2009).*
Author’s Bio

Grace Komarek-Meyer is a San Francisco Bay Area native currently pursuing a Master of Nonprofit Administration from the University of San Francisco. In 2013, she graduated from Willamette University with a dual bachelors degree in Cultural Anthropology and Music. Grace completed the degree requirements with a senior thesis on the cultural dynamics of power and space in the third wave coffee movement in the Pacific Northwest. While living in Oregon, Grace was part of different nonprofit organizations and programs, including starting a female a cappella group on campus in collaboration with the Mid-Valley Women’s Crisis Center and working as the Assistant Stage Manager for the Salem Chamber Orchestra.

Grace has over ten years of experience working in the specialty coffee industry, and in 2016 she worked to open and manage a new location of Bernie’s Coffee shops in San Francisco. Grace attended and participated in the local Castro Merchants Association to ensure that the coffee shop was serving the local community and its customers to the best of its abilities. During this time Grace received the mentorship, guidance, experiences of running a small business from the perspective of the local female entrepreneur and business owner, Bernadette Hanifin.

In 2017, Grace began working at the Social Media Manager for Astrid’s Rabat Shoes, a legacy business in San Francisco established in 1977. During this transitionary period, Grace worked with the store manager and owner to establish a brand persona, increase customer interactions across different social media platforms, create a new website design and layout, and run the store’s customer email listserver.

Grace is currently a candidate for the Masters of Nonprofit Administration from the University of San Francisco’s School of Management, where she is working to broaden her understanding of the nonprofit sector, and apply this academic and practical knowledge to her work in with nonprofit arts organizations and programs in the Bay Area.