



Urban cultural policy and creative city making



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1. Introduction

Creative city policy has been in circulation for two decades. Far from a fad, the creative city concept has been taken up in a diverse range of cities despite seemingly fatal academic critique, a vague policy target, and questionable policy outcomes (e.g. Markusen, 2006; Peck, 2005; Pratt & Hutton, 2013; Scott, 2006, 2014). Local and state governments have nonetheless latched onto the concept in the belief that creative activity, broadly defined, can be harnessed as an urban economic resource. In the process, the creative city policy field has become an emblematic form of policy transfer (Pratt, 2009) evolving into multiple models that have been adapted in myriad ways (Grodach, 2013). Yet creative city programs appear to hide rather than reduce urban inequalities and reproduce similar problems across different places (Gerhard, Hoelscher, & Wilson, 2016). At the same time, new movements are emerging that may take the creative city field in new directions.

The purpose of this paper is to revisit the history behind the creative city and critically engage with these emerging movements. In so doing, our aim is to provide a deeper understanding of creative city policy formation and determine if these new movements represent a more progressive direction for policy. In the following section, we draw on academic literature and archival research to discuss the formative narratives and public discourse that positioned cultural policy as an instrument of urban development underpinning the rise of creative city policies.ⁱ Next, we delineate the key modes of urban cultural policy and the subsequent formation of the creative city policy field. We demonstrate that while discourse has evolved, creative city policy is largely a selective repackaging of 1980s policies with an expanded set of actors and interests. The result is a fragmented and contested policy field. Reflecting on this context, the following section explores two emerging movements around the concept of “making” - creative placemaking and the urban manufacturing/maker movement. We attempt to show how

these “making” movements reshape prior creative city concepts to produce a more progressive policy *discourse* around cultural production and community development. However, proponents must address significant challenges if they are to achieve the outcomes they aspire to.

2. The narratives of urban cultural policy

Creative city policy derives in large part from the urbanization of cultural policy. Urban cultural policy developed in the 1980s as local governments in North America, Europe, and Australia grappled with 1) economic restructuring and urban decline, 2) neoliberal governance, and 3) changing demographic and social trends.ⁱⁱ By the 1980s, many cities faced declining urban conditions and an insufficient tax base due to the loss of manufacturing related employment. Concurrently, urban economies were restructuring around high wage finance and business services, including design and other creative industries, and lower wage jobs in retail, tourism, and hospitality. Many cities pinned their hopes of recovery on these growth industries guided by the neoliberalism of the Reagan-Thatcher era. Their program of fiscal austerity and privatization encouraged local governments to concentrate on facilitating development over regulating growth (Brenner & Theodore, 2002). This included a focus on place image through attention to cultural amenities, urban design, and consumption (Zukin, 1996). Urban strategies also attempted to capitalize on changing demographics to sell an urban lifestyle and generate redevelopment. Declining household size and an increase in non-family households coupled with longer commute times led to claims of a “back to the city” movement (Laska & Spain, 1980).ⁱⁱⁱ This concept merged with attention to “loft living” (Zukin, 1982) and was reinforced by growing critiques of suburbia as not only bland and homogenous, but environmentally harmful (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, & Speck, 2001).

Within this context, three interwoven narratives encouraged local governments to approach arts and culture as a development asset.^{iv} First, governments approached the arts as an amenity to boost consumption,

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ⁱ Archival sources include newspapers, magazines, and trade journals from Factiva and ProQuest 1975–2000. While we focus on urban cultural policy, we recognize that there are other formulations that focus more on creative knowledge industries or a cognitive-cultural economy (c.f. Musterd & Murie, 2010; Scott, 2014).

ⁱⁱ There are of course variations across different places in terms of the scope and impact of these trends as others discuss in more detail (Grodach & Silver, 2013; Hutton, 2009; Scott, 2000; Zukin, 1996).

ⁱⁱⁱ In the US, households with children declined from about 50% in 1970 to 30% in 2007 (Birch, 2009). Though the reality of middle and upper income suburbanites moving to central city neighborhoods is contested, the idea has shaped policies to remake center cities (Hyra, 2015).

^{iv} In focusing on these three narratives, we emphasize certain aspects of urban cultural policy and may omit certain directions and tensions in the formation of policy. See Adams & Goldbard, 2005; Ashley (2015), Evans (2002), and Wyszomirski (2004) for alternative accounts.

fuel property development, and enhance the city image. Second, cultural industry work was increasingly considered vital to a “post-industrial economy” and as a “replacement” for the loss of manufacturing activity. Third, stemming from these narratives, the idea of the arts as a force for gentrification crystalized in popular media and urban policymaking.

2.1. Narrative 1: staging the city for consumption

In perhaps the dominate narrative of the time, the arts became a vehicle for consumption and place branding. As a prominent arts advocate told city leaders, “You must make your downtown a stage. Not through a public relations agency, but through museums and culture and performing arts centers” (Robert McNulty in [Hartley, 1989](#)). Prior to the 1980s, only a few cities with established reputations as cultural capitals built arts complexes expressly to improve the city image and generate area reinvestment (e.g. New York/Lincoln Center, Paris/Centre Pompidou). By 1985, as one art museum director quipped, “any American city of 10,000 people or more must now have a going museum or two, and also one on the drawing board, preferably by a fancy architect” (quoted in [Glueck, 1985](#)). Art became a “new fuel for urban growth machines” as local governments and developers partnered with large cultural institutions to redevelop vacant land ([Ashley, 2014](#); [Whitt, 1987](#), p. 17).

Common strategies to stage the new downtown included land write-downs, tax credits, amenity bonuses, and other incentives to encourage the construction of iconic buildings and renovate industrial properties for cultural uses ([Grodach, 2010](#); [Strom, 2002](#)). These cultural facilities were part of the program to attract tourists and provide amenities for new mixed-use developments. Countless cities also set up their own percent for public art programs to lend aesthetic value to redevelopment projects ([Miles, 1997](#)). By the 1990s, over 90 US cities had designated arts districts to encourage the rehabilitation of vacant industrial spaces ([Frost-Kumpf, 1998](#)) and many attempted to achieve their own “Bilbao effect” with a high concept cultural building to brand the city ([González, 2011](#)). These moves around the “economics of amenity” began to make central cities more attractive to tourists, property development, and a growing service economy workforce ([Green, 1983](#); [McNulty, Jacobson, & Penne, 1985](#)). Many creative city policies and branding efforts are essentially an extension of this mode of urban cultural policy focused on developing spaces of consumption and aestheticizing the city to attract the creative class.

2.2. Narrative 2: post-industrial cities and cultural intermediaries

The second narrative emerged under the fiscal austerity of neoliberalism to frame arts and cultural work as emblematic of a post-industrial economy. In the US, urban and cultural policymakers began to talk about the arts as an industry important to urban restructuring rather than as a non-profit sector ([Perloff, 1979](#)). UNESCO and the Greater London Council became interested in cultural industries, which united performing and visual arts with media-based industries and focused on “the relation between cultural development, economic growth and technological development” ([Garnham, 2005](#); [O'Connor, 2010](#); [UNESCO, 1982](#), p. 12). Others emphasized the role of “cultural intermediaries” ([Bourdieu, 1984](#); [Featherstone, 1990](#); [O'Connor, 1998](#)). In the context of expanding consumption and the globalization of business services trading in specialized knowledge, artists and those in media, design, and advertising assumed increasing importance. They gained economic value as tastemakers “who have the capacity to ransack various traditions and cultures in order to produce new symbolic goods, and in addition provide the necessary interpretations on their use” ([Featherstone, 1990](#), p. 11).

However, policymakers did not immediately understand how to implement policy around this narrative. Although arts and cultural industries

were held up as a replacement for manufacturing, in the US, the “cultural industry” was still largely synonymous with “arts institutions and the performing arts” ([Perloff, 1979](#); [Hendon, Shanahan, & MacDonald, 1980](#), p. 300–301). In the UK, place-based programs emerged in deindustrialized cities such as Sheffield's Cultural Industries Quarter and Manchester's Northern Quarter ([Brown, O'Connor, & Cohen, 2000](#); [Moss, 2002](#)). In Liverpool, city leaders conducted a £100 million plan to “transform a run-down part of Liverpool city centre into a mecca for ‘creative industries’” ([Freeman, 1989](#)). By the early 1990s, scholars were able to document numerous European examples where cities had followed similar paths ([Bianchini & Parkinson, 1993](#)). However, these programs often focused on property redevelopment and attempted to capitalize on the presence of cultural intermediaries rather than directly support them.

2.3. Narrative 3: gentrification

This helps explain the rise of a third narrative around artists as catalysts of gentrification. The mid-1980s marks the beginning of a steady progression in news coverage on the role of artists in gentrification and defined “a larger unified narrative about artists and housing in the city” ([Makagon, 2010](#), p. 31). Artists emerged as capable of “changing land use patterns” ([Cole, 1987](#), p. 391; [Zukin, 1982](#)) and assisting cities in waging a “war of position against an impoverished and increasingly isolated local population” ([Deutsche & Ryan, 1984](#), p. 93) while simultaneously becoming the “victims” of the process they purportedly engendered ([Makagon, 2010](#)).

Property developers and urban policymakers alike drew on the arts-gentrification narrative. In New York, city-owned buildings were slated for renovation by and for artists in 1982 with opponents calling the program “a front for gentrification.” They charged that “this is making gentrification public policy, and it will inevitably displace people who live here” ([Bennetts, 1982](#)). In 1986, Boston saw the “unlikely union of bankers and artists” partner to develop “the nation's largest artist-owned real estate venture” ([Diesenhaus, 1988](#)) and a “Midwest savings and loan corporation” was attending arts conferences on the lookout “for artists that want space and are willing to offer sweat equity to renovate these places” ([Christiano, 1981](#)).

Together, these narratives worked to urbanize cultural policy, broadening the field beyond the traditional public patronage model and setting in motion the development of the creative city concept. Growth-oriented local governing coalitions established programs that positioned culture as an urban development resource. This opened up the field of actors involved in cultural policy and ensured that the arts and cultural sectors would become a mainstay of urban policy.

3. The policy strata: foundational policy modes in the 1980s

These three narratives have framed urban cultural policy over the last 35 years. Although cultural policy has continued in the vein of public patronage, it expanded in approach and objective as it became an urban policy concern. Alongside the traditional model, three modes of urban cultural policy unfolded in the 1980s and continue today: 1) the economic impact of cultural amenities, 2) cultural planning, and 3) cultural industries ([Table 1](#)).

Each of these forms of urban cultural policy departs from the traditional justification for funding the arts on grounds of artistic excellence and enhancing access. Instead, they tend to emphasize an economic rationale and assume a broader definition of culture beyond the fine arts to encompass commercial, community, and popular culture ([Oakley & O'Connor, 2015](#); [Pratt, 2010](#); [Wyszomirski, 2008](#)). It is important to recognize that these approaches do not represent succession in policy practice. Rather, each approach forms a stratum of the urban cultural policy system with variations across different policy systems, patterns of development, and historical legacies.

Table 1
Four modes of urban cultural policy, 1980s–present.

Policy mode	Objectives	Approach	Primary actors
Public patronage	Support artistic excellence Enhance access to the arts Promote national identity	Art grants Cultural facilities Heritage preservation	Arts organizations Federal, state, and local governments
Economic impact of cultural amenities	Increase arts funding Arts in growth coalition Attract city center investment	Cultural facilities, events, and urban design in redevelopment Economic impact studies	Arts organizations Local governments Various development interests
Cultural planning	Community development and participation Support local cultural expression Neighborhood economic development	Community cultural engagement Integrate arts in urban planning process Support neighborhood cultural projects	Arts organizations Community organizations and residents Local governments
Cultural industries	Engage marginalized communities Recognition of cultural industries beyond “the arts” Urban economic development	Cultural industries in redevelopment Rehab industrial districts Study cultural production and agglomerations	Cultural firms and intermediaries Local government Redevelopment interests

3.1. Public patronage

The traditional arts funding system consists of two forms of public patronage. First, in countries such as the US, policy has been linked to market failure arguments and the provision of equal access to the arts within welfare state policies. Second, in countries like France, cultural policy may serve as a nation building tool and a means to assert cultural authority (Wyszomirski, 2004; Zimmer & Toepler, 1999). Under both directions, the policy focus is on state and city-run cultural facilities, grants to artists and arts organizations, and funding for the preservation and dissemination of cultural heritage. Although arguments for cultural policy have multiplied since the 1980s, the emphasis on artistic merit, public value, and cultural patrimony remains a dominant justification for cultural policy at the urban level.

3.2. The economic impact of cultural amenities

Within the context of neoliberalism and changing urban economies, cultural policymakers and arts advocates began to pursue new approaches, arguing for the “economics of amenity” in which cultural resources took on direct and indirect roles in generating economic development and “liveability” (Green, 1983; McNulty, 1988; McNulty et al., 1985; Perloff, 1979). Project for Livable Places, the National Endowment for the Arts, and others claimed that the arts and urban design served as amenities that were crucial in urban redevelopment because they could generate spending, attract “high-tech investment,” and alter the image of struggling post-industrial cities (McNulty et al., 1985, p. 55). Preceding creative city discourse, Robert McNulty argued, that:

“The era of chasing the smoke-stacks is over; it's now a matter of chasing the innovative entrepreneurs to invest in your particular community. The people who had seen [the arts] as irrelevant began to see that we could attract or market their communities to these investors”

(McNulty, 1988, p. 616).

Indeed, by the 1990s, cities were eagerly aiming to be the next Barcelona, Bilbao, or Glasgow, attempting to replicate their success in creating new consumption spaces and branding campaigns around major cultural events and iconic architecture (García, 2004; González, 2011).

In the 1980s, arts advocates across the US, UK, and Australia also began to commission studies focused on the economic impact of the arts (Myerscough, 1988; New York-New Jersey Port Authority, 1983; Perloff, 1979; Throsby & Withers, 1979). These early studies served primarily as advocacy tools and focused on how non-profit arts organizations and their audiences produce jobs, local spending, and tax revenue (Wyszomirski, 2008). Despite criticism that they were merely promotional vehicles and contributed little to a better understanding of

artistic impacts (Cwi, 1987; Seaman, 1987), these studies helped to cement the argument that the arts create economic development.

3.3. Cultural planning

Cultural planning emerged as a distinct mode of urban cultural policy that rejected the idea that the arts are a welfare-dependent sector and the overemphasis on economic rationales. Advocates instead argued for an approach that blended community engagement with economic development. They aimed to integrate the idea of culture as a way of life into the entire system of planning, arguing that cultural industries, craft, local heritage, and other “cultural resources” functioned as a catalyst for development (Dreeszen, 1998; Evans, 2002; Grogan, Mercer, & Engwicht, 1995; Mercer, 1991; Stevenson, 2014). Cultural planning was particularly strong in Australia where numerous government councils implemented cultural development plans in the early 1990s. By 2004, the state of New South Wales required all local governments to produce a cultural plan (Stevenson, 2014). According to Stevenson (2014), local and state arts ministries embraced cultural planning because it provided a means of “nurturing local (place-based) cultural expression” and because it provided higher level governments with a means to offload responsibility to local government and the community sector. As in many other areas of public policy under neoliberalism, governments could exploit the rhetoric of inclusion to outsource responsibility and promote models of self-help and capacity-building.

3.4. Cultural industries

Simultaneously, cultural policy took shape around the concept of the cultural industries. Like cultural planning, cultural industries policy broke with the arts-centric focus and blended social and economic objectives, but did so through an emphasis on commercial cultural industries (e.g. music, publishing, film, TV). While UNESCO initiated the conversation at the international level, urban level policy emerged first through the Greater London Council (GLC) whose influential but short-lived role has been widely discussed (Garnham, 2005; O'Connor, 2000, 2010; Hesmondhalgh, 2007). Until its elimination under the Thatcher government in 1986, GLC policy stressed the economic importance of commercial cultural sectors, but also took on a “revisionist community arts focus” (Stevenson, 2014, p. 57). They argued that people consume “culture” primarily through popular or commercial outlets and that policy should support audience demand particularly among marginalized communities.

In the 1990s, cultural industry research and policy discussions focused more on the cultural production system. On the one hand, scholars sought to better understand the field as exemplary of urban restructuring defined by flexible, specialized production in highly agglomerative urban industries (Scott, 1997, 2000; Pratt, 1997). On the

Table 2
Creative cities policy.

Policy mode	Objectives	Approach	Primary actors
Creative city strategy	Attract high skilled labor and investment Economic growth Public participation	Quality of life amenities for redevelopment Inter-agency collaboration Public-private partnerships	Local government agencies Varied urban interest groups
Creative industries	Attract high skilled labor and investment Economic growth	Promote R & D, intellectual property development	State and local government Entrepreneurs ICT, entertainment and media industries
Creative class	Attract high skilled labor and investment Economic growth	Quality of life amenities Urban branding and consumption	Local government agencies Varied urban interest groups

other, research focused on small businesses and entrepreneurs and the unique blending of cultural, social, and economic values that define cultural production (Leadbeater & Oakley, 1999; O'Connor, 2000). However, perhaps because of the more progressive economic agenda, cultural industries policy never really took hold, and instead boiled down to adapting industrial spaces to service post-industrial consumption as the cultural industries quarter programs of Liverpool, Sheffield, and Manchester demonstrate.

4. Variations on the creative city

The creative cities field is cobbled out of prior visions of urban cultural and economic development policy and marks the contested territory of this policy arena today. Three versions of creative cities policy— the creative city strategy, creative industries, and creative class—emerged directly and indirectly out of 1980s urban cultural policy (Table 2). While there are certainly variations in implementation between places, these concepts have redefined the policy targets, actors, and strategies of urban cultural policy through the 1990s and 2000s. They also initiated a tug of war between understandings of creative cities policy as stemming from arts and cultural activity or more broadly around innovation and knowledge-based industries.

4.1. Creative cities in the 1980s

Most look to Landry and Bianchini (1995), Landry (2008), UK's Labour Government (DCMS, 1998), or Florida (2002) as foundational texts in the creative cities discourse. The concept in fact slowly emerged out of the “post-industrial” restructuring of the 1970s, primarily outside of urban and cultural policy circles.^v Here, the creative city discourse only appeared in the late 1980s when Australia's Council for the Arts sponsored a “Creative City Seminar” with Melbourne City Council and the State of Victoria. The event brought together arts and urban policymakers to discuss “how arts and cultural concerns could be better integrated into the planning process for city development” (Meanjin, 1988, p. 595). Although the seminar did not veer far from the cultural amenities and cultural planning modes, the meeting began a conversation about “exploring the creative possibilities of interdisciplinary

^v *Business Week*, 1978 was concerned with “managing people in the so-called creative industries (moviemaking, recording, mass-market publishing, etc.)” and “[k]eeping creative talent productive, but in line with corporate goals.” By 1990, a marketing communications professional could claim that “creativity has become one of the most fashionable words and one of the most fashionable concepts in the UK society” (Fletcher, 1990). In the US, the City of West Hollywood created a business attraction and marketing campaign around the slogans “West Hollywood, The Creative City” and “West Hollywood: Where Creativity Gets Down to Business” (Citron, 1988; Howard, 1987). Also by 1990, the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce was using the term “creative industries” in its economic forecasting to capture work in film, tv, and fashion (*Business Wire*, 1990). The earliest arts-related use of the creativity concept is by the Creative Industries Development Council (led by cultural planner Craig Dreeszen) formed in the mid-1980s to represent Massachusetts craft artists. They presciently avoided references to arts and crafts, “shunning an image of ‘little old ladies painting ceramic Christmas trees’” (Blau, 1985).

collaboration” (Meanjin, 1988, p. 596). Charles Landry would pick up this theme a few years later.

4.2. The creative city strategy

Charles Landry first articulated his creative city strategy in work for Glasgow in 1991 (Comedia, 1991) and developed the idea over the next decade (Landry & Bianchini, 1995; Landry, 2008). At its core, the creative city strategy gained currency by applying a new discourse to reframe the cultural amenities and cultural planning approaches as a response to urban crisis. Landry emphasized the need for municipal bureaucracies to embrace a more collaborative, open, and experimental culture. It is a recognition that cultural affairs, community and economic development offices, and planning departments must work together to facilitate urban redevelopment solutions. At the same time, “culture” should be approached as central to urban development and planning rather than an unnecessary extra (Landry, 2008). Based on this positioning, the strategy reframes the concept of cultural planning from place-based community development to a means of urban restructuring through cultural resources. As Landry (2008, p. 7) claims: Cultural resources are the raw materials of the city...replacing coal, steel or gold. Creativity is the method of exploiting these resources and helping them grow. But, rather than focusing solely on community development, the creative city strategy likewise aims to exploit cultural resources “to attract the highly skilled and flexible labor force that the Creative City needs” (Landry, 2008, p. xxiii).

4.3. Creative industries

As the creative city strategy reformulated the cultural planning agenda, the concept of creative industries redirected cultural industries policy. Creative industries thinking strategically positions the cultural sectors alongside ICT as a collection of related sectors defined by knowledge and innovation. The creative industries label attempts to emphasize the economic importance of these sectors, particularly around intellectual property, rather than cultural production, consumption, or community development (Garnham, 2005; Howkins, 2002). This has been a particularly powerful discourse in the UK as part of the broader national economic agenda around knowledge and innovation (Hesmondhalgh, 2007; O'Connor, 2010; Flew, 2013). Under the 1998 Creative Industries Taskforce, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (formerly the Department of National Heritage) defined 13 creative industries sectors “which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have the potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property” (DCMS, 1998). The claims around economic growth helped cultural policy advocates garner the legitimacy they sought, but also set off major new challenges. While there is certainly global variation (Cunningham, 2009), creative industries policy tends to prioritize commercial activities over those considered subsidy dependent including visual and performing arts (O'Connor, 2009). Moreover, the focus around innovation pulls energy away from urban

revitalization agendas and direct support for artistic work and cultural production.

4.4. Creative class

In the early 2000s, Richard Florida (2002) introduced the concept of the creative class and it quickly garnered high praise and passionate criticism from popular media, government, and academia alike. With the groundwork laid by urban cultural policy and creative cities strategies, Florida was able to insert an alluring new concept into public dialog that responded to economic restructuring and an apparently mobile and flexible workforce. The concept, however, emerged outside discussions in cultural policy. Florida was seemingly unaware of Landry, McNulty, DCMS, and others: “As far as I can tell *Business Week* first introduced the concept of a ‘Creative Economy’ in August 2000” (Florida, 2002, p. 46). Rather, in the late 1990s, Florida (2000, p. 9) began to study how amenities figure in the location decisions of “knowledge workers” and how “leading high technology regions” employ amenities in their economic development strategies. The creative class concept was born out of this work. Florida refocused the creative industries discussion on cities and the preferences of a broad workforce defined by their education, specialized knowledge, and mobility. This includes those in ICT, but also artists, designers and media workers. Instead of targeting and developing the creative industries, policy prioritizes quality of life amenities and consumption opportunities to attract the creative class. As with creative industries policy, the creative class concept gave cultural policymakers and arts advocates the esteem they desired, but not without its costs.

4.5. The upshot

Many urban cultural policymakers adopted the language of creativity hoping to seize an opportunity to garner new support for the arts (Grodach, 2013). Amsterdam, Baltimore, Berlin, Milwaukee, Toronto, Turin, and many more cities have adopted creative city economic development programs and branded themselves as home to the creative class (Colomb, 2012; D’Ovidio, 2016; Dörry, Rosol, & Thissen, 2016; Okano & Samson, 2010; Peck, 2012; Vanolo, 2008; Zimmerman, 2008). Many have reframed their cultural plans around creativity, moved cultural offices under the umbrella of economic development, and engaged in redevelopment programs drawing on an amalgamation of creative city concepts (Atkinson & Easthope, 2009; Grodach, 2012, 2013; Ponzini & Rossi, 2010; Goldberg-Müller, 2015; Sasaki, 2010; Sasajima, 2013; Trip & Romein, 2014).

Some creative city programs have resulted in additional arts funding, enhanced understanding of cultural industry needs, and created new amenities for public benefit. However, as the literature above demonstrates, municipal agencies often adopt the discourse simply as a policy label with little new support for creative activity. Instead, the creative city program has been indicted for working “quietly with the grain of extant ‘neoliberal’ development agendas” geared toward gentrification and up-scale consumption (Peck, 2005, p. 740). This program biases forms of creativity that are more easily commercialized, disregards the intrinsic value of the arts, and fails to support creative development (Markusen, 2006, 2014; Oakley & O’Connor, 2015). In fact, the focus on a creative economy defined foremost by knowledge industries can paradoxically harm the creative environments that policy is meant to foster (Pratt, 2011; Shaw, 2013). Others argue that creative city policies misunderstand cultural agglomeration dynamics and creative class location decisions, and instead import “off the shelf” policy (Bontje, Musterd, Kovács, & Murie, 2011; Clifton, Comunian, & Chapain, 2015; Lawton, Murphy, & Redmond, 2013; Martin-Brelot, Grossetti, Eckert, Gritsai, & Kovacs, 2010).

In sum, despite the varying combination of models and strategies across different places, creative city policies tend to serve as neoliberal urban growth strategies rather than policy geared toward supporting artistic and creative activity. But, the creative city story continues to

evolve and mine the strata of urban cultural policy in new ways.

5. Making a new creative city?

Over the last few years there has been a quiet turn in the creative city discourse. The global financial crisis of 2007 and the subsequent recession prompted the formation of movements that reacted to multinational corporate influence, urban austerity, and the commodification of urban space through hands-on, community-based activities, independent cultural production, and the occupation of public space (Anderson, 2012; Levine & Heimerl, 2008; Mayer, 2013). This has opened up two nascent directions that reroute creative city policy around the concept of “making.” First, creative placemaking appropriates the creative city language with the intent of redirecting creative city policy toward arts-led, place-based community development (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010). Spearheaded by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), this US-based movement has been avidly supported by cultural policy and community development interests alike (Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, 2014). Second, small urban manufacturing concentrated on local cultural production and the associated growth of a “maker movement” around independent craft activity represents a largely overlooked direction for urban cultural policy. While not specifically recognized as urban cultural policy, this approach holds potential to address many of the issues in the creative city field.

Below, we explore these new movements to determine if they represent a new direction for creative city policy. In theory, a new narrative around “creative city making” holds *potential* to move policy from the focus on consumption and knowledge industries toward re-connecting with cultural production and community development. It can move from validating art and culture in primarily economic terms toward a broader consideration of social, human, and place-specific values. As such, the making narrative represents a potentially maturing frame for urban cultural policy, but also is at risk of being appropriated to serve a neoliberal creative city agenda.

5.1. Creative placemaking

Creative placemaking focuses on arts-led, place-based development through multisector partnerships (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010; Redaelli, 2016). What is particularly interesting about creative placemaking is not that it has spearheaded a new form of urban cultural policy- it has not. Rather, it is significant for beginning to move the discourse in the US away from attracting the creative class to questions around community development and local benefit. In theory, the movement revives positive aspects and concerns of the cultural planning and cultural industries models, but in practice, the program faces complex challenges that must be addressed if it is to effectively reframe the creative city discourse.

The concept of creative placemaking materialized out of NEA’s Our Town grant program in 2010 and has funded a range of projects from public art and cultural facilities to creative entrepreneurship programs and artist live/work spaces. Our Town has sponsored 389 projects, 2011–2016 (National Endowment for the Arts, 2016). ArtPlace, a consortium of 13 foundations and six banks, has funded 227 creative placemaking projects in 152 communities (Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, 2014). Creative placemaking programs have been adopted by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, numerous philanthropic foundations (Ford, Kresge, LISC), and state and local government. As such, it has significantly increased the number of actors and partnerships at different levels involved in funding and supporting arts activities in a wide set of communities.

The creative placemaking vision continues on the path away from the public patronage model to the creative city. It reflects Landry’s emphasis on creative collaboration, but the impetus is due to the Obama administration’s focus on cross-agency partnerships and an attempt by the NEA to tap into new sources of funding for the arts

(Markusen & Gadwa, 2015). Like cultural planning, creative placemaking seeks to go beyond purely economic motivations and pursue multidimensional outcomes ranging from the economic to bringing “diverse people together to celebrate, inspire and be inspired” (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010, 3). Creative placemaking also coincides with a rediscovery of the broader concept of “placemaking,” rooted in the work of urban planning luminaries like Jane Jacobs, William Whyte, and Jan Gehl who promote people-centered and community-driven urban design.

Conceptually creative placemaking contrasts with recent creative class inspired policy and the amenity-based approach of the 1980s, which aim to invest in cultural amenities for central city development and to upscale urban areas. First, creative placemaking differs because it aspires to be more directly community-oriented and art-based. NEA Our Town grants require leadership from at least one non-profit organization and one local government entity, and one of these must be a cultural organization. Creative city policies can exclude arts organizations and are often more entrepreneurial than community-based (Ponzini & Rossi, 2010; Zimmerman, 2008). Second, creative placemaking responds to a different context. In contrast to the focus on center city redevelopment of the “economics of amenity” and creative class models, the program aims to support urban, suburban and rural projects. The discourse responds to the neoliberal context of fiscal austerity by engaging the arts and artists in “placemaking,” but not by intentionally exploiting them as amenities for property upscaling and attracting the creative class. Instead, much like classic cultural planning, projects seek to provide “creative approaches to addressing community challenges or priorities” and “should represent the distinct character and quality of their communities” (National Endowment for the Arts, n.d.-a). In this way, creative placemaking theoretically offers a new direction for creative city policy even if the strategies are not new.

In reality, the approach and outcomes are more complex. Our Town and other creative placemaking programs fund an eclectic variety of activities in a variety of contexts and with varied partners. While general arts programming and public art projects are the most numerous project type funded by Our Town, artist spaces receive the largest amount of funding relative to project cost. Further, although most projects work with a variety of partner types, commercial partners are the most common.^{vi}

Two projects illustrate the potential and limitations of the arts-led, place-based creative placemaking agenda. The Memphis Music Magnet (MMM) in the Soulsville, USA neighborhood of Memphis, TN is led by community, arts, and university partners and draws on local heritage to serve residents in a disinvested neighborhood. The program has received creative placemaking funding from Artplace, NEA, and the Kresge Foundation to use music and art to promote “neighborhood revitalization through physical and cultural renovation,” “cross-cultural” community engagement, and artistic development (Memphis Music Magnet Plan, 2016). MMM builds from an African-American neighborhood’s ties to soul music to provide art and music industry training and support, building renovations for music and art spaces, and community arts programming. The program initially began in 2008 prior to creative placemaking discourse. However, the program was in part a reaction to creative class inspired programs to attract outside human capital and would not have been possible without creative placemaking funding (Santo, 2017). The project claims success in assisting underserved musicians and artists in the community, but wrestles with neighborhood revitalization in the face of poverty and abandonment. Although the project rehabilitated the former home of legendary blues musician Memphis Slim, as an MMM leader explains, it has contributed more toward artistic development than community development due to neighborhood market conditions (Santo, 2017).

^{vi} Based on Our Town grant data 2011–2015 (<https://www.arts.gov/national/our-town>).

Further, “cross-cultural” community engagement relies on attracting Memphis residents to MMM events but has not connected Soulsville residents to regional opportunity.

Other projects like those in the Station North Arts District in Baltimore seem more like creative city branding efforts that do not align with the creative placemaking agenda. In this case, the creative placemaking projects followed on larger, pre-existing efforts. Since the mid-1990s, public and private interests applied a more traditional incentive-based approach (e.g. tax abatements on property purchase and rehab) to attract investment. They also sought to capitalize on the area’s artistic presence through arts district designation in 2002 (Rich & Tsitsos, 2016; Ponzini & Rossi, 2010). The District received funding from the NEA and ArtPlace in 2011, 2013, and 2016 for public art installations and events (including the Open Walls street art festival). The program aims are to attract commuters to stay in the area, engage local artists, and serve area residents. Proponents claim these projects “resulted in material improvements to the community” and that “they were also part of a public process that allowed artists and community members to interact with each other” (National Endowment for the Arts, n.d.-b). Others report that this program served more to further upscale the area and that residents feel left out of a process that did little to include them (Rich & Tsitsos, 2016).

This example points toward a key concern that creative placemaking must address: the arts may catalyze positive change, but have long been linked to gentrification and displacement. While research has yet to determine the extent to which gentrification and displacement are associated with creative placemaking projects specifically, studies show that the arts are more likely to play a role in gentrification where such processes are already underway than where they are not (Grodach, Foster, & Murdoch, 2016). In other words, creative placemaking projects are more likely to contribute to gentrification in a place like Station North than in a neighborhood like Soulsville, Memphis. This means that creative placemaking needs more attention to its funding geography. With closer attention to the location of projects, creative placemaking will be more likely to deliver community benefits rather than harm.

Finally, the Baltimore example illustrates that creative placemaking programs may need more attention to the type of art projects and partnerships they fund. As some argue, the focus on “making” place prioritizes physical improvement projects (e.g. public art and artist spaces) over attention to community and social dynamics (Bedoya, 2013). This in turn increases the likelihood for real estate speculation and the exclusion of existing communities under the guise of revitalization. Indeed, a recent creative placemaking project sponsored by ArtPlace with funding from private developers and donors in Lawrence, KS is facing opposition from residents. They want project leaders to address a “lack of transparency, inequity of representation, and obstructions to the neighborhood’s ability to shape its own story” (East 9th St. Placekeepers, n.d.). These and other projects are at risk of being driven by outside interests that instrumentalize culture for development and exclude neighborhood stakeholders from the development process. Creative placemaking must take the challenges of community participation seriously and build projects that account for power imbalances and tap into local involvement and capacities (Ferilli, Sacco, & Blessi, 2016).

5.2. Urban manufacturing and the maker movement

Another form of creative city making revolves around independent craft activity and the small-scale manufacture of cultural products. The concept stems in part from the “maker movement,” which combines DIY and artisan practices with digital production technologies. It is also rooted in the growing attention to urban manufacturing (Ferm & Jones, 2016; Gibson, Carr, & Warren, 2015; Mistry & Byron, 2011). While makers have become a target for urban policy, small urban manufacturing is receiving special zoning consideration and incubator

treatment in numerous cities (National League of Cities, 2016). Federal governments in the US and other countries encourage small manufacturing through competitive grants and programs like the Mayors Maker Challenge, which seeks to enhance “access to the tools, technologies, and education to spur Making and manufacturing innovation” (Kalil, 2014). Museums, libraries, and schools have opened makerspaces where people can gain access to tools and materials for a variety of creative projects. Importantly, the making discourse involves more than community and artisan-oriented makerspaces. It also includes commercial activity, largely in cultural industries—custom woodworkers that contract to interior design firms, metal-workers that produce specialized building components, and skilled sewers and sign makers that produce for specialized industrial operations.

The rediscovery of manufacturing and “making things” encourages urban and cultural policymakers to take a new approach to the creative city. In countries like Australia, Canada, UK, and the US, manufacturing is now largely defined by small and flexible firms, many of which are located in urban areas working in cultural and craft-based industries (Ferm & Jones, 2016; Gibson et al., 2015; Hatch, 2013; Mistry & Byron, 2011). In fact, 79% of manufacturing firms in Australia, 72% in Canada, and 70% in the US employ fewer than 20 people and this percentage is upwards of 90% in some large urban areas. Two-thirds or more of all manufacturers make cultural products in each country (ABS, 2011; Statistics Canada, 2014; US Census, 2014).^{vii} It is bespoke apparel, jewelry, furniture, and food manufacture that defines today's manufacturing not steel and autos. This work concentrates on custom and often place-specific rather than standardized designs. Production is motivated not simply by profit, but by personal and cultural values (Gibson et al., 2015). While not a replacement for “traditional” manufacturing, collectively, these operations may contribute to skilled and semi-skilled employment and diversify regional economies.

However, small urban manufacturing is not on the cultural policy radar. Attention has instead focused on the maker movement and “advanced manufacturing” as a new route to boosting the innovation economy. This misses the fact that much of this work actually revolves around craft and cultural production. Research is beginning to rethink the cultural economy in relation to manufacturing (Gibson et al., 2015; Grodach, O'Connor, & Gibson, 2017), but urban cultural policy is impaired by years of thinking about cultural-creative industries as defined by ideas or consumption amenities not the production of actual things. As a result, the field has failed to grasp making and manufacturing as an opportunity to stay relevant in urban policy while potentially addressing conflicts in existing creative city policy.

Given the characteristics of small manufacturing, there is an opportunity for urban cultural policy to join the creative industries focus on ideas and design with concerns of cultural production and artistic work. This aligns with the creative city strategy around creative partnerships, but would be redirected toward enhancing cultural production rather than consumption and property development. It recovers the cultural industries emphasis on production systems and the consideration of social and economic objectives, but emphasis is on cultural industries that perform or require manufacturing roles.

Taking on a manufacturing and making agenda would create a much needed overhaul of creative city policy practice, but this would come with a set of major challenges. Policymakers would have to move away from decades of treating the arts as amenities and make room for issues around material cultural production. This requires attention toward broader urban development issues like land use, zoning, and gentrification alongside business and workforce development. It also demands consideration of new geographies for creative city policy, going beyond urban centers and toward considering diverse

communities and workforces.

Approaching policy for making and manufacturing challenges policymakers to rethink place-based cultural policy and consider the wider set of building and zoning requirements for cultural production. However, the ignorance toward property speculation and conversion of industrial land under consumption-oriented creative city policy is a serious impediment. Researchers have documented how local governments in the US, UK, and Australia upzone center city areas for residential and mixed use projects, arguing they are planning for post-industrial cities. This disrupts the agglomeration of cultural industry activity by pricing out many manufactures and cultural producers and by removing suitable buildings for small-scale production (Curran, 2010; Ferm & Jones, 2016). There are new development models that provide affordable workshop space for furniture makers, metal workers, and other cultural manufacturing enterprises like the Greenpoint Manufacturing and Design Center (New York), PlaceMade (San Francisco), Adelaide's Jam Factory, and the Renew Australia's Jack's Reloaded project. However, while such projects assist small businesses and individual “makers,” they may also serve to symbolically revalue industrial spaces for real estate investment and contribute to gentrification in places where production activity may otherwise occur (Savini & Dembski, 2016).

As a result, policymakers need to go beyond individual projects and rethink “post-industrial” zoning. A handful of cities are recognizing that their economies actually benefit from the presence of smaller-scale manufacturing. In the US, New York, San Francisco, Austin, TX, and Portland, OR are experimenting with new zoning codes in areas that are dealing with industrial gentrification pressures. For example, San Francisco recently passed a ballot initiative requiring developers in certain areas to replace any manufacturing or arts spaces they demolish (Ballotpedia, 2017), while New York is considering a new ‘creative economy district’ designation that combines manufacturing, office, and residential space (New York City Council, 2014).

Although business and workforce development is not traditionally a cultural policy priority, it represents an opportunity to support cultural production. It opens up possibilities to explore new, creative partnerships and collaborative forms of business development in small-scale enterprises rather than the property and consumption-led approach of creative city strategies. Support organizations like SF Made, Made in NYC, and the Urban Manufacturing Alliance already exist but they do not engage with cultural policy experts. The latter bring knowledge and perspective of local cultural sectors that can inform the business and workforce strategies of these organizations and local economic development offices. Such partnerships have not been tested but they offer potential to shift the creative city discourse through new forms of cross-industry engagement that incubate cultural production.

Finally, a further challenge involves broadening the maker discourse to integrate traditional manufacturing industries and workforces. Creative city policy is critiqued for suggesting that those outside the creative class are “uncreative” and can be replaced by importing talent (Wilson & Keil, 2008). In contrast, culture-led manufacturing represents an opportunity to tap into industrial legacies and build local skills while addressing industrial gentrification (Gibson et al., 2015). For example, the Steel Yard “serve[s] under-employed Rhode Islanders living at or below the federal poverty line with access to education, training and facilities to practice the industrial arts” (Steel Yard, 2016). The industrial arts center provides courses in welding, blacksmithing, jewelry, and ceramics. Its workforce program Weld to Work, offers on-the-job training while engaging locals in community work like the construction of new fencing and public trashcan housing. Projects like this tap into artistic-industrial skills and crossover into the territory of creative placemaking, illustrating the potential of a larger making discourse. Yet, again, we need to build knowledge of such programs that redefine the meaning of a “creative” workforce.

^{vii} Cultural product manufacture includes food and beverage, apparel, leather, wood, fabricated metal, nonmetallic mineral products (e.g. glass, ceramics) printing, furniture, toys, and jewelry.

6. Urban cultural policy challenges in the new creative city

This paper reviews the formative years behind creative city policy and, on that basis, introduces two new creative city movements built on the concept of “making.” Since the 1980s, urban cultural policy has been on a steady path that positions arts and culture as a lure for consumption, property development, and knowledge industries. The creative city policy field is the culmination of this path. It was born out of a need for cities to address urban decline and economic restructuring and respond to social change under neoliberalism. After governments awakened to the urban development potential of arts and culture in the 1980s, the creative city concept provided a new policy language and justification to incorporate cultural policy into many urban policy agendas. Although creative city policy has taken on different forms in different places, the language has been crucial in situating cultural policy as an integral form of urban development policy.

Today, as in the 1980s, there are major changes afoot that may reshape the creative city policy path. The global financial crisis and recession have opened a window for policy to react to rather than support gentrification and the commodification of culture and urban space. The focus on creative industries and the innovation economy continues in many parts of the world, but alternative approaches are emerging around the making discourse. The rise of creative placemaking represents an opportunity to steer creative city policy toward community-based activity. Similarly, the urban manufacturing-maker movement creates an opportunity for urban cultural policy to approach the knowledge and innovation economy discourse in new ways that emphasize creative producers and go beyond purely economic policy rationales. While neither are total solutions to problems of displacement, unemployment, and social exclusion, they can make a contribution to larger efforts to address urban inequality.

However, while there is reason to be optimistic about these “making” movements, there are serious challenges. Creative placemaking illustrates the power of policy discourse, but as a cultural policy movement, its projects struggle with engendering revitalization in disadvantaged places, supporting artistic development alongside community development, and may be exploited to spur property-based development schemes. Urban manufacturing offers a powerful discourse as well, but urban cultural policymakers have yet to recognize the shared connections and potential partnerships between cultural production and urban manufacturing.

Additionally, there is little to no empirical research on the community and economic development impacts of creative placemaking beyond a few isolated case studies, nor is there detailed research on cultural manufacturing activity. The evaluation above, points toward important areas for future research, but policymakers will need to consider context. For example, places with established industrial legacies facing economic challenges will need different approaches to cultural manufacturing than those with a strong knowledge economy. Similarly, creative placemaking projects in “shrinking cities” will need different foci than those where strong development pressures exist. Such knowledge is essential to push the making discourse forward and positively shape new creative city policy.

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