

Culture and social wellbeing in New York City: Concepts and methods

Mark J. Stern

University of Pennsylvania

Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP)

September 2017

<http://repository.upenn.edu/siap/>.

Central claim: Culture's contribution to social wellbeing

The arts and culture have the capacity to make a significant contribution to the wellbeing of urban communities, but this capacity has been undermined by increased inequality both within the cultural sector and within the broader society.

What motivates us?

- The challenge to public funding for the arts after the “cultural wars” of the 1990s:
“The arts contribute to quality of life and economic growth—by making America’s communities more livable and prosperous, and by increasing the nation’s prosperity at home and abroad.”
American Assembly (1997), *Art and the Public Purpose*.
- Understanding social welfare in the 21st century:
What role can culture & the arts play to broaden the notion of individual & social wellbeing?
- The explosion of social inequality
Does the cultural sector **contribute to or reduce** economic and social disparities?
- And historians love the challenge of drawing conclusions from bad and fragmentary data.



The NEA Four (From the



What America Was and What It Is Becoming

MICHAEL B. KATZ and MARK J. STERN

Conceptual orientation

- **Neighborhood cultural ecosystem:** the concentration of cultural assets in a neighborhood generates spillover effects on the cultural sector and on the broader neighborhood.
 - **Social wellbeing:** culture is both one dimension of “a life one has reason to value” and has an impact on other dimensions of wellbeing.
 - **Civic engagement** is the mechanism connecting cultural activity and its broader social effects.
-

1. Neighborhood cultural ecology

- Community culture must be conceptualized as an *ecosystem* rather than a collection of individuals and organizations.
- Culture's capacity for building social networks both within and across neighborhoods is the major explanation of the link between culture, revitalization & wellbeing.
- A community-based approach incorporates economic development and social inclusion.

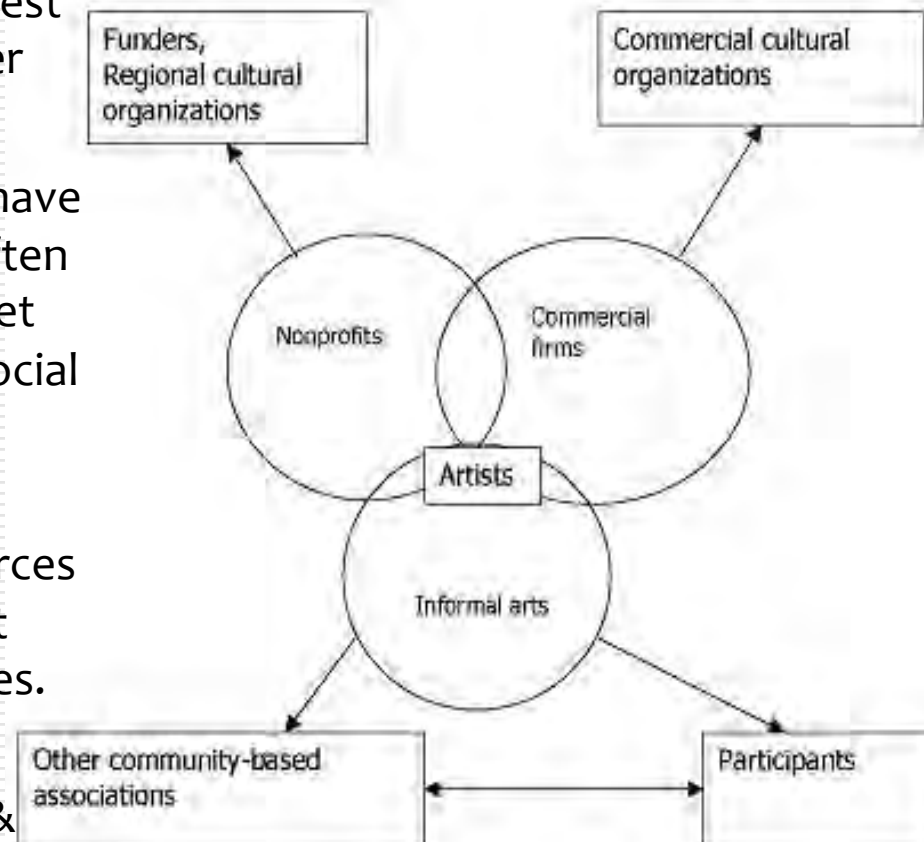


"I'm telling you, Manhattan is over."

CN
COLLECTION

Cultural ecology as concept and method

- Within the cultural sector, there's an interest in locating near and networking with other organizations, artists, and enterprises.
- Concentrations of cultural resources can have spillover effects on the neighborhood. Often the negative effects (like gentrification) get attention, but culture can also promote social connection and voice.
- Although low- and moderate-income neighborhoods have fewer cultural resources than more affluent ones, they may benefit more from the presence of these resources.
- Our focus is on using spatial analysis to analyze the ecological impact of the arts & culture on social wellbeing.



2. Social wellbeing

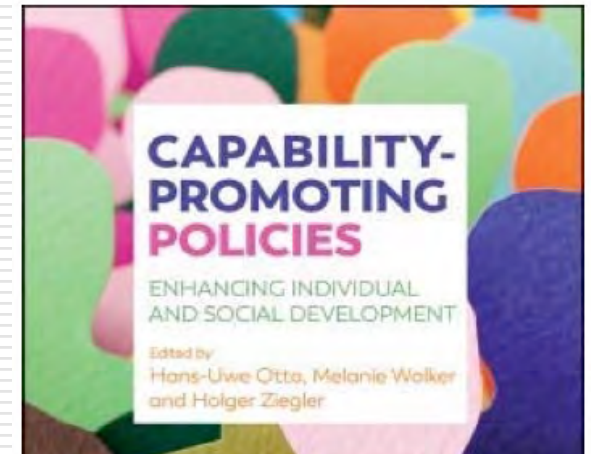
- Starting point: Sen's and Nussbaum's articulation of the *capability approach*.
 - Social justice is a function of people's ability to live a life they have reason to value.
 - Capabilities are the dimensions of life that must be guaranteed to assure social justice.
 - A little dispute between Sen and Nussbaum over whether one should generate a list of these capabilities.
- | | |
|--|---|
| | Nussbaum's list <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Life• Bodily health• Bodily integrity• Senses, imagination & thought• Emotions• Practical reason• Affiliation• Other species• Play• Control over one's environment |
|--|---|

Dimensions of wellbeing

- Capabilities scholarship has gone in two directions: theoretical work on how capabilities connect to existing social realities and efforts to define and measure them.
- A lot of international work comparing nations on different dimensions.
- We used the Stiglitz and Sen report to the French president in 2009 as our starting point.

Social Justice in the OECD –
How Do the Member States
Compare?

Sustainable Governance Indicators 2011



**Report by the Commission on the
Measurement of Economic
Performance and Social Progress**

Social wellbeing and neighborhood ecology

Our contribution:

- Focus on *neighborhood geography*—people's immediate context often limits or enhances their actual capabilities. Variation within nations or cities is as great as those between nations
- Cultural opportunities are an *intrinsic* dimension of social wellbeing and also influence other dimensions including health, security, and school outcomes.



3. Civic engagement as the mechanism through which culture influences social wellbeing

Three possible mechanisms

- Didactic: the arts' capacity for persuasion
- Discursive: enhancing the public sphere
- Ecological: the spillover effect of cultural engagement on other aspects of community life

Ecological perspective doesn't require *intention* to have a particular civic impact.

Theories of action: didactic

- Using expressive skills to instruct and persuade
- “Civic pageants” and other efforts to “Americanize” immigrants during Progressive era
- Shift toward use of art to manipulate population
- New social movements use arts to dramatize issue



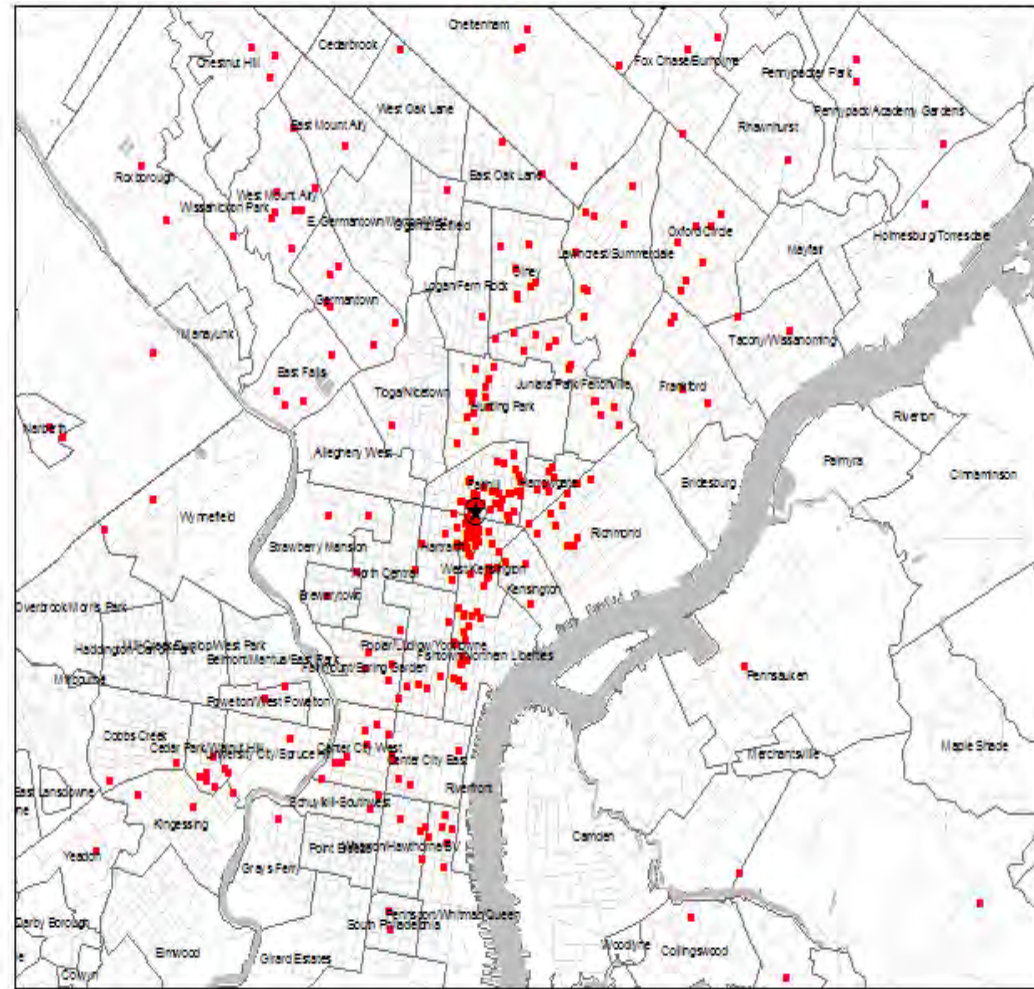
Theories of action: discursive

- Culture as means of furthering civic dialogue
- Art as provocateur
- Civic ritual and the construction of community
- Public art and place-making: animating space
- Art as a social inclusion strategy—immigrants



Theories of action: ecological

- Unintended impact of cultural engagement
- Cultural engagement strengthens other community ties
- Cultural participation patterns create links both within and across neighborhoods



Eighty percent of community cultural participants come from outside the neighborhood.



Culture and social justice

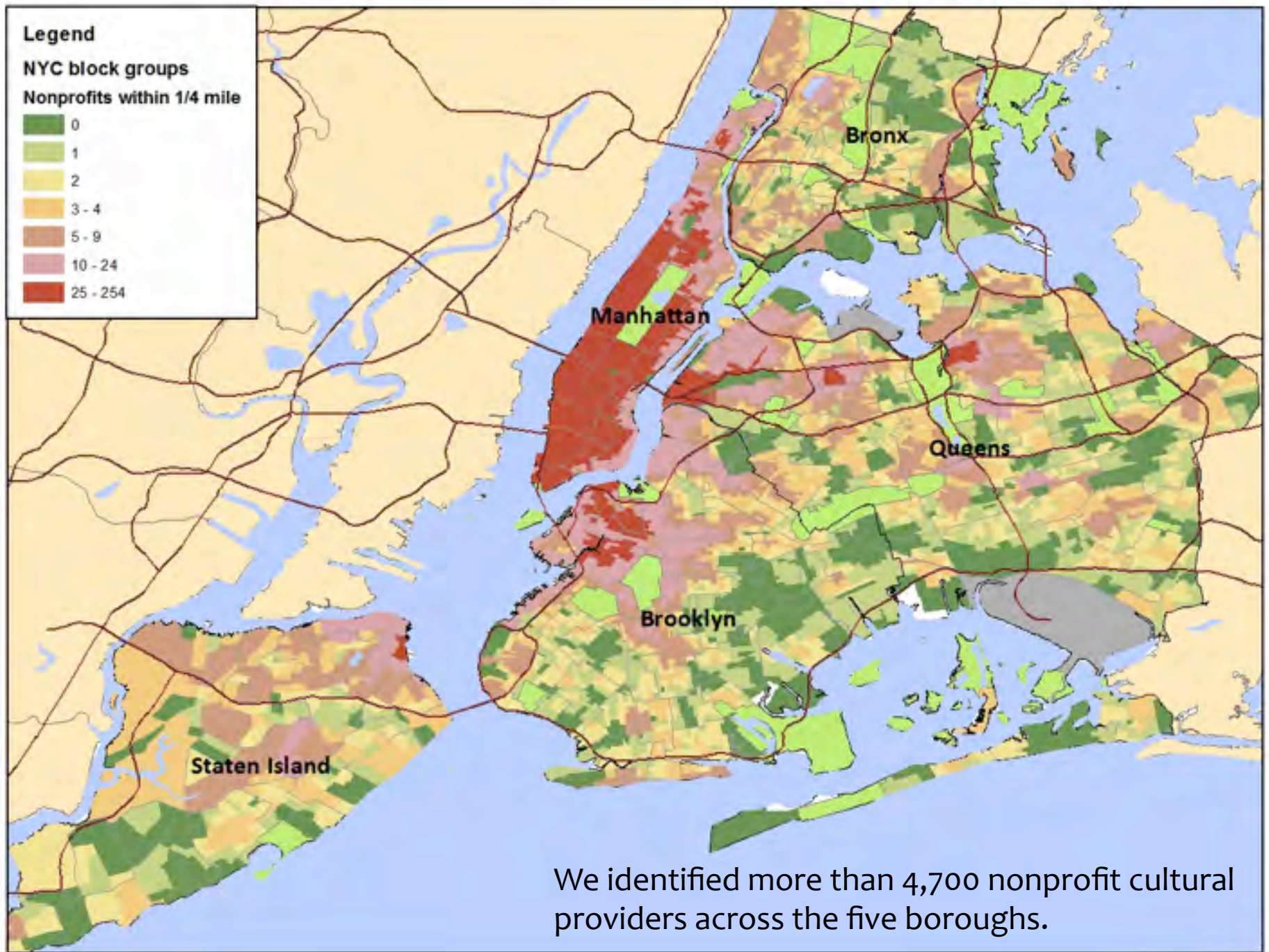
Combining the **capabilities approach to social justice**, which focuses on the opportunities of individuals to live a life they have reason to value, with an **ecological approach to civic engagement** gives us a way to study **culture and social justice** that both encompasses a broad range of cultural practices and provides a concrete method to study their connection.

What we did in NYC

- Developed a database of four types of cultural assets:
 - Nonprofit cultural organizations
 - For-profit cultural firms
 - Employed artists
 - Cultural participation.
 - Constructed a multi-dimensional model of social wellbeing in New York City at the neighborhood level.
 - Conducted interviews with cultural and community practitioners to add depth to the study.
-

How SIAP measures cultural assets

- Measures:
 - **Nonprofit cultural resources:** We combine data from a variety of sources: IRS, Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) grantees, borough arts councils, foundation grantees, fiscal sponsors.
 - **For-profit cultural firms**—from galleries and design to music, books, and crafts
 - **Resident artists** as percent of the labor force
 - **Cultural participants**—1.9 million records from pilot study in collaboration with more than 50 cultural organizations across the five boroughs
 - Data are **geocoded** by address and **aggregated** to census geographies & Neighborhood Tabulation Areas.
 - A single **Cultural Asset Index** is computed using all four measures.
 - Interviews in neighborhoods complement quantitative data.
-

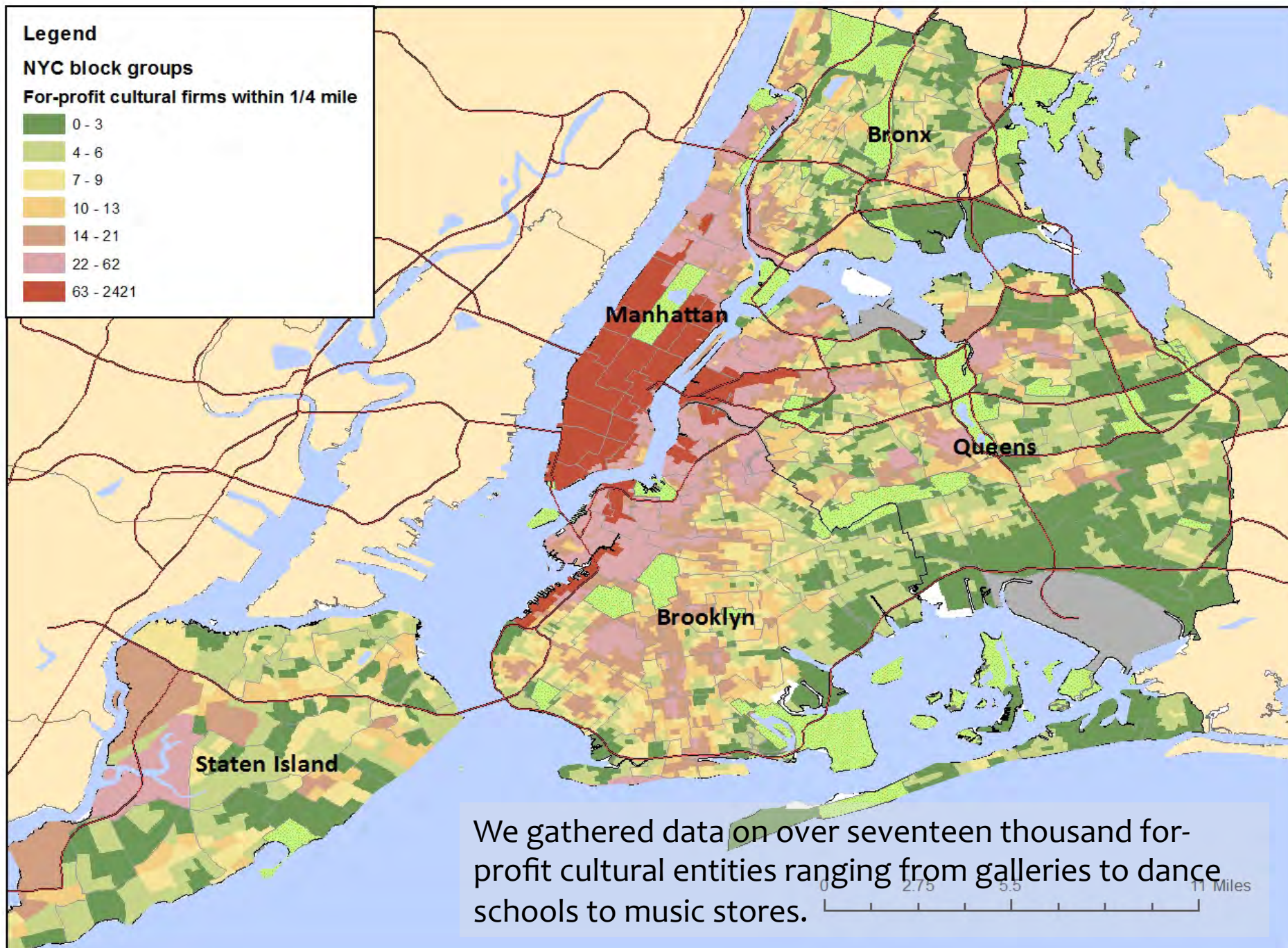


We identified more than 4,700 nonprofit cultural providers across the five boroughs.

Legend

NYC block groups

For-profit cultural firms within 1/4 mile



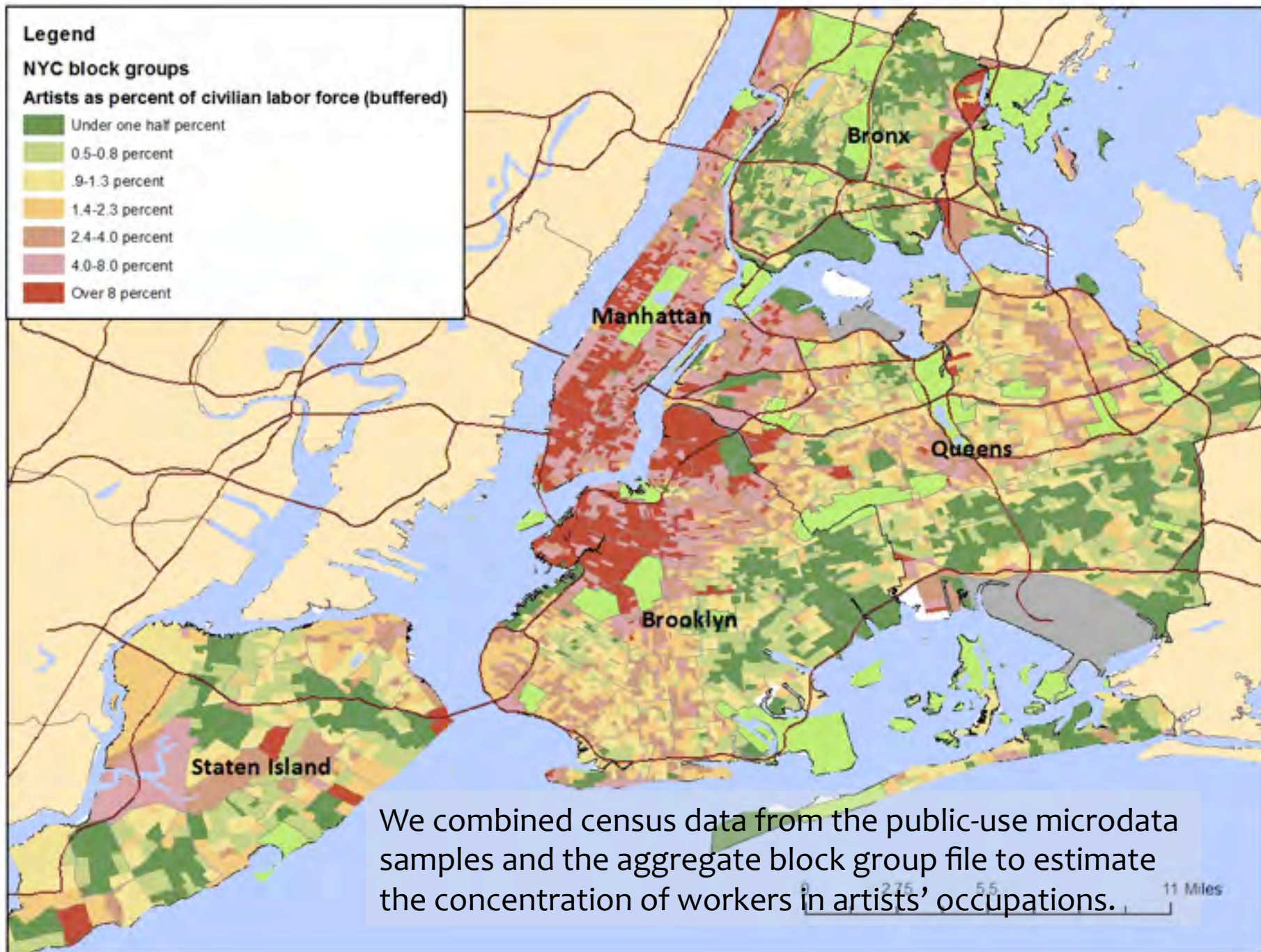
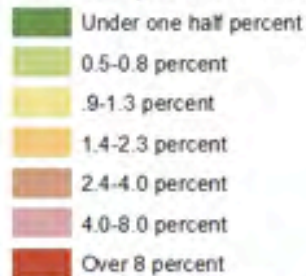
We gathered data on over seventeen thousand for-profit cultural entities ranging from galleries to dance schools to music stores.

0 2.75 5.5 11 Miles

Legend

NYC block groups

Artists as percent of civilian labor force (buffered)

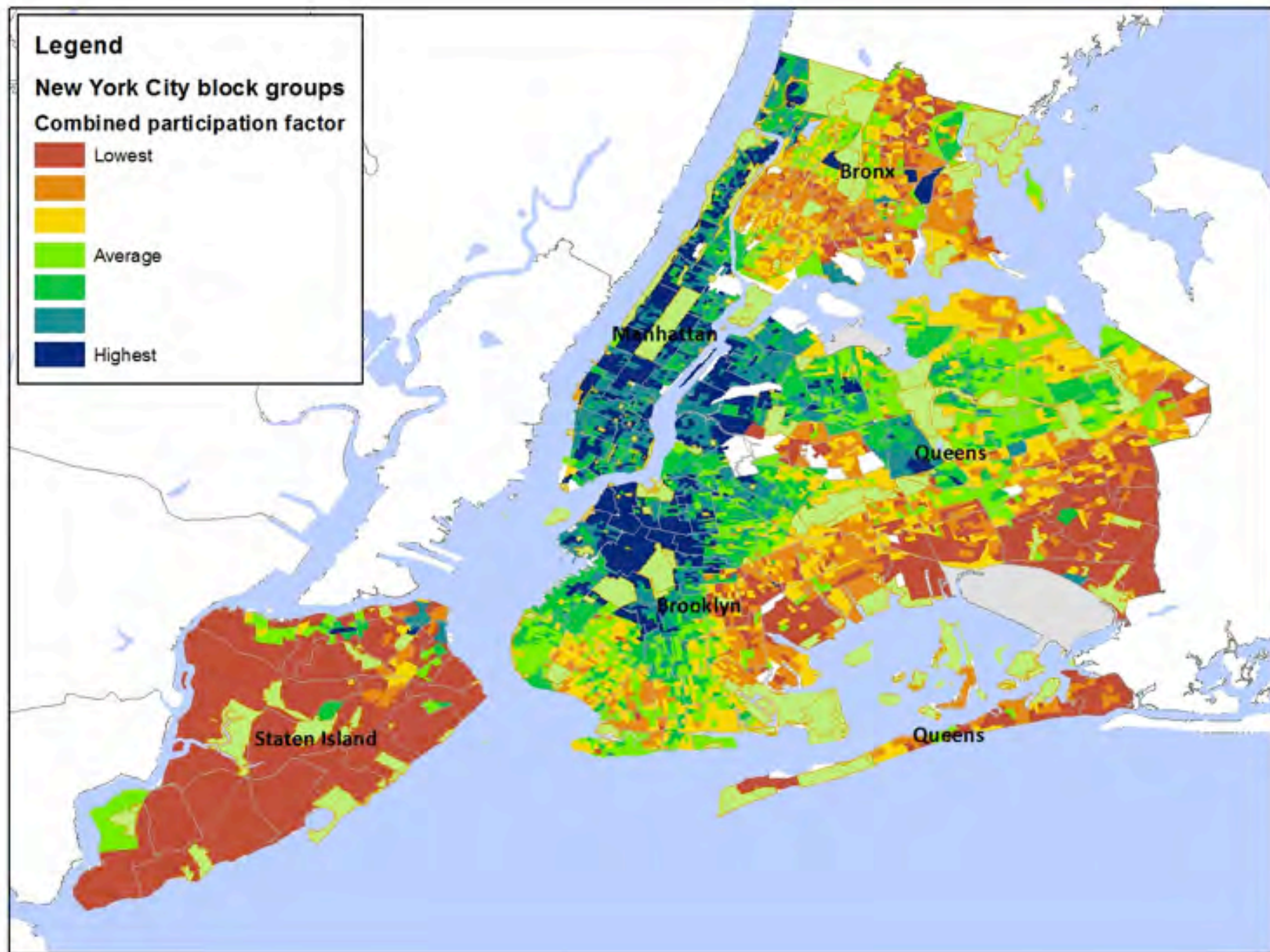


We combined census data from the public-use microdata samples and the aggregate block group file to estimate the concentration of workers in artists' occupations.

Legend

New York City block groups

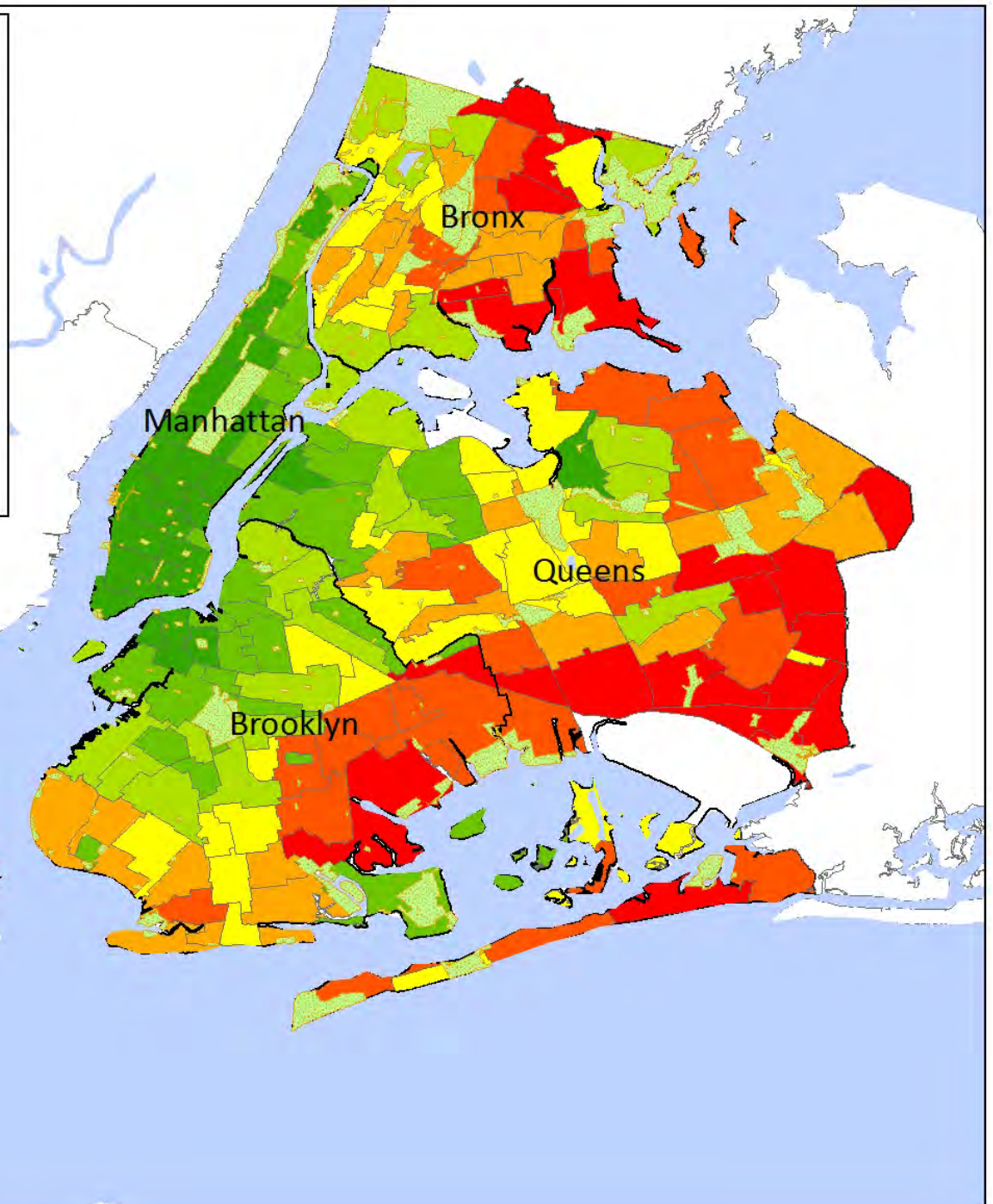
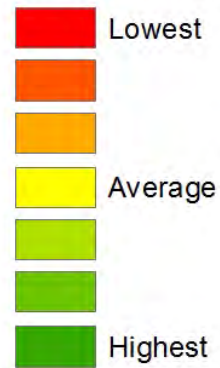
Combined participation factor



Legend

NYC Neighborhood Tabulation Areas

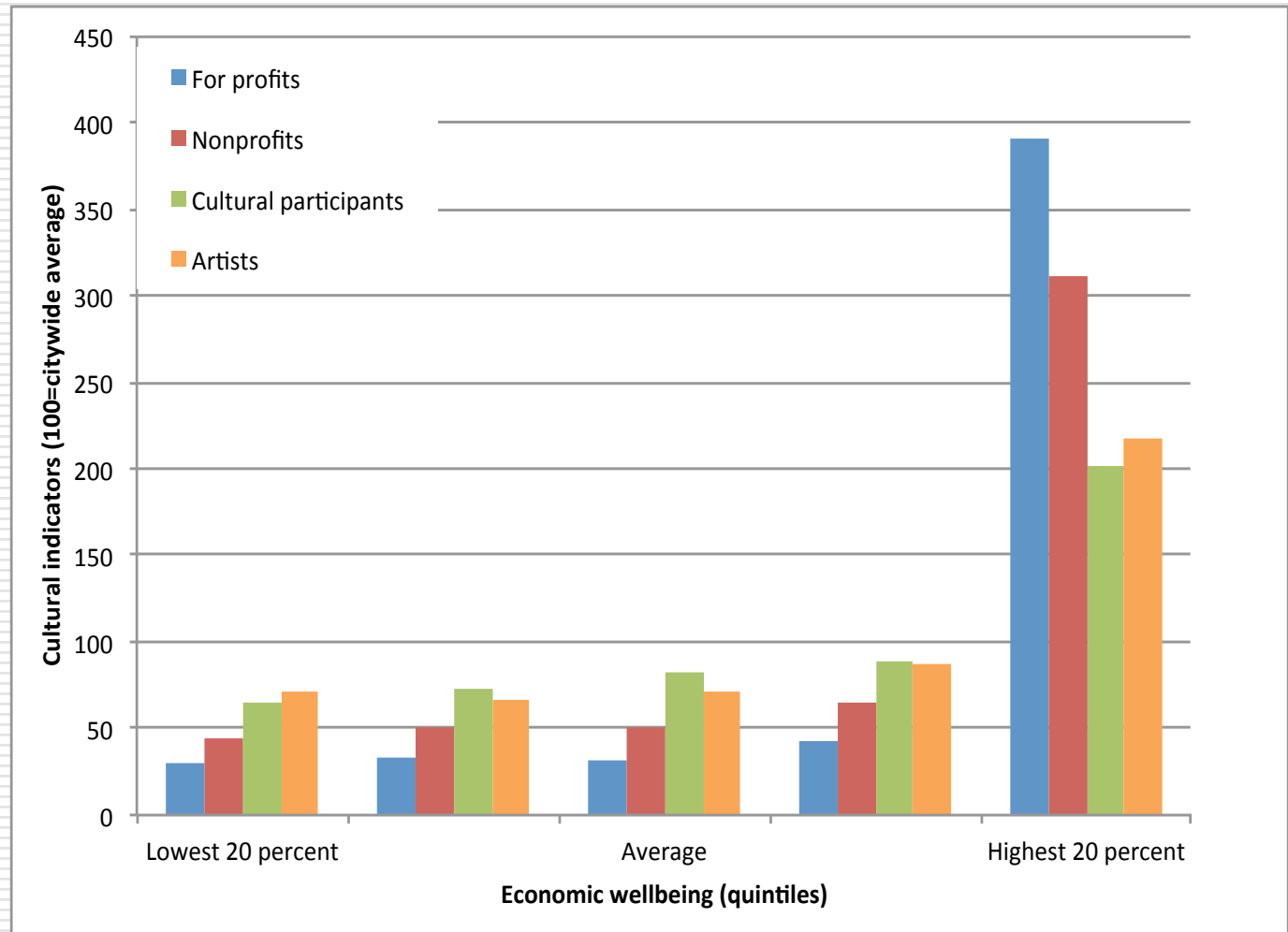
Cultural asset index



Inequality and cultural resources

Cultural assets are unequally distributed across the city, with affluent neighborhoods having far greater access to cultural resources.

In Philadelphia, we found that the correlation of cultural assets and income increased dramatically between 1997 and the 2010's.

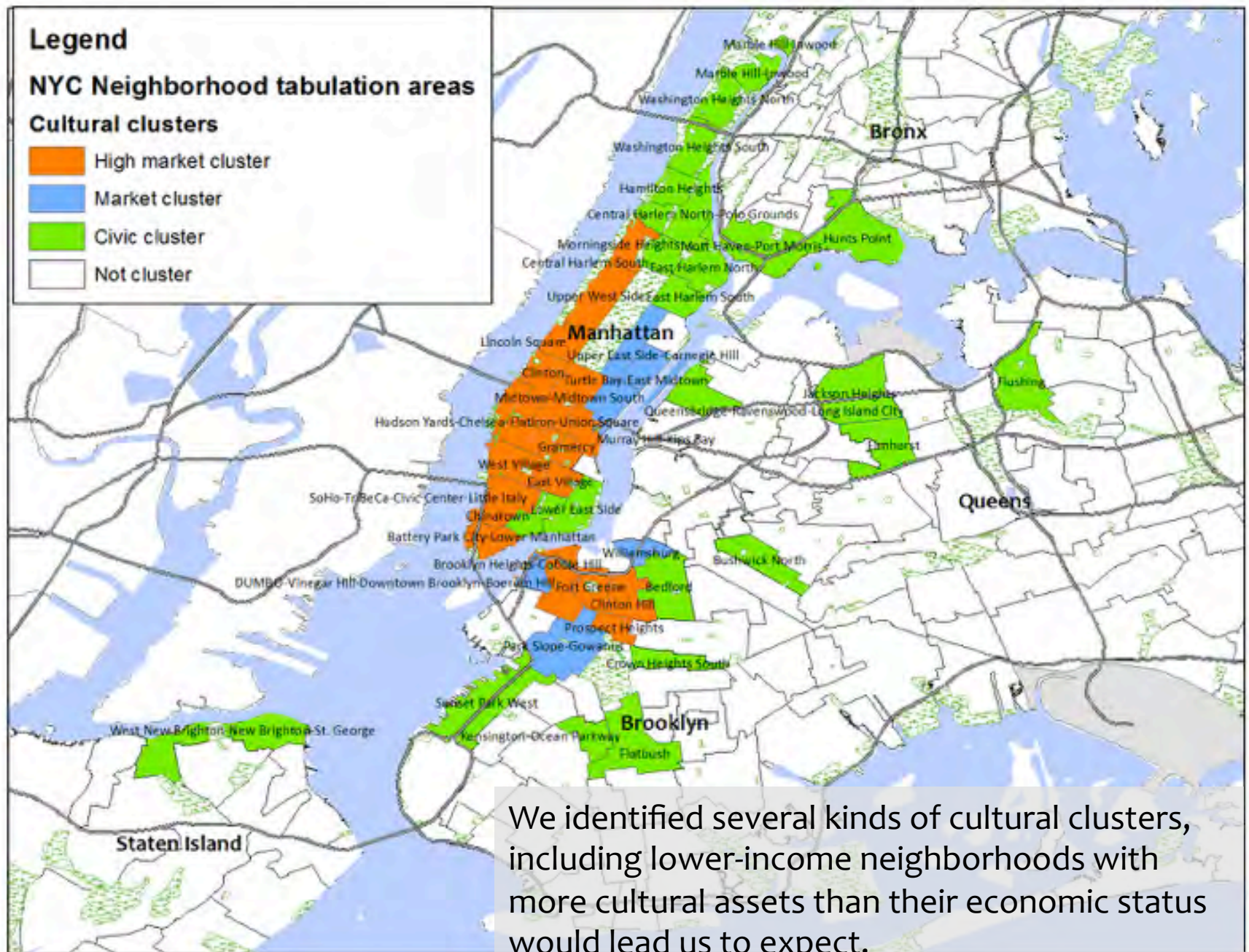


Legend

NYC Neighborhood tabulation areas

Cultural clusters

- High market cluster
- Market cluster
- Civic cluster
- Not cluster



We identified several kinds of cultural clusters, including lower-income neighborhoods with more cultural assets than their economic status would lead us to expect.

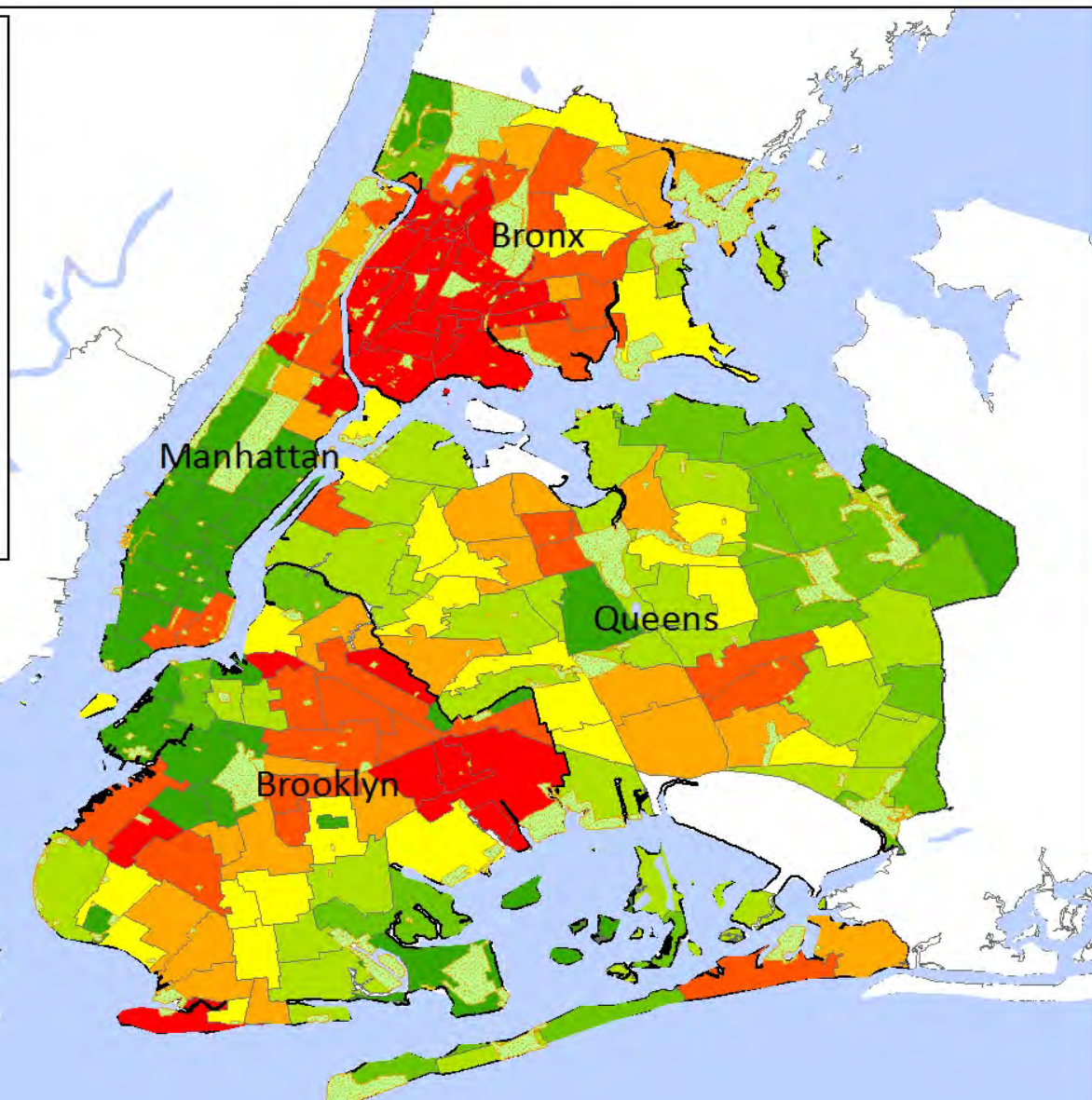
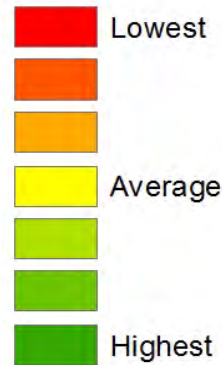
Dimensions of social wellbeing in NYC

Dimension	Indicators
Economic wellbeing	Income, labor force, educational attainment
Housing burden	Percent of income for housing, overcrowding
Ethnic and economic diversity	Income and ethnic segregation & integration
Health access	Health insurance rates
Health	Birth outcomes, child abuse/neglect, morbidity
School effectiveness	Test scores, school environment
Security	Major crime rates
Environmental amenities	Parks, land use, summer heat
Social connection	Selected nonprofits
Cultural assets	Organizations, artists, cultural participants

Legend

NYC Neighborhood Tabulation Areas

Economic wellbeing

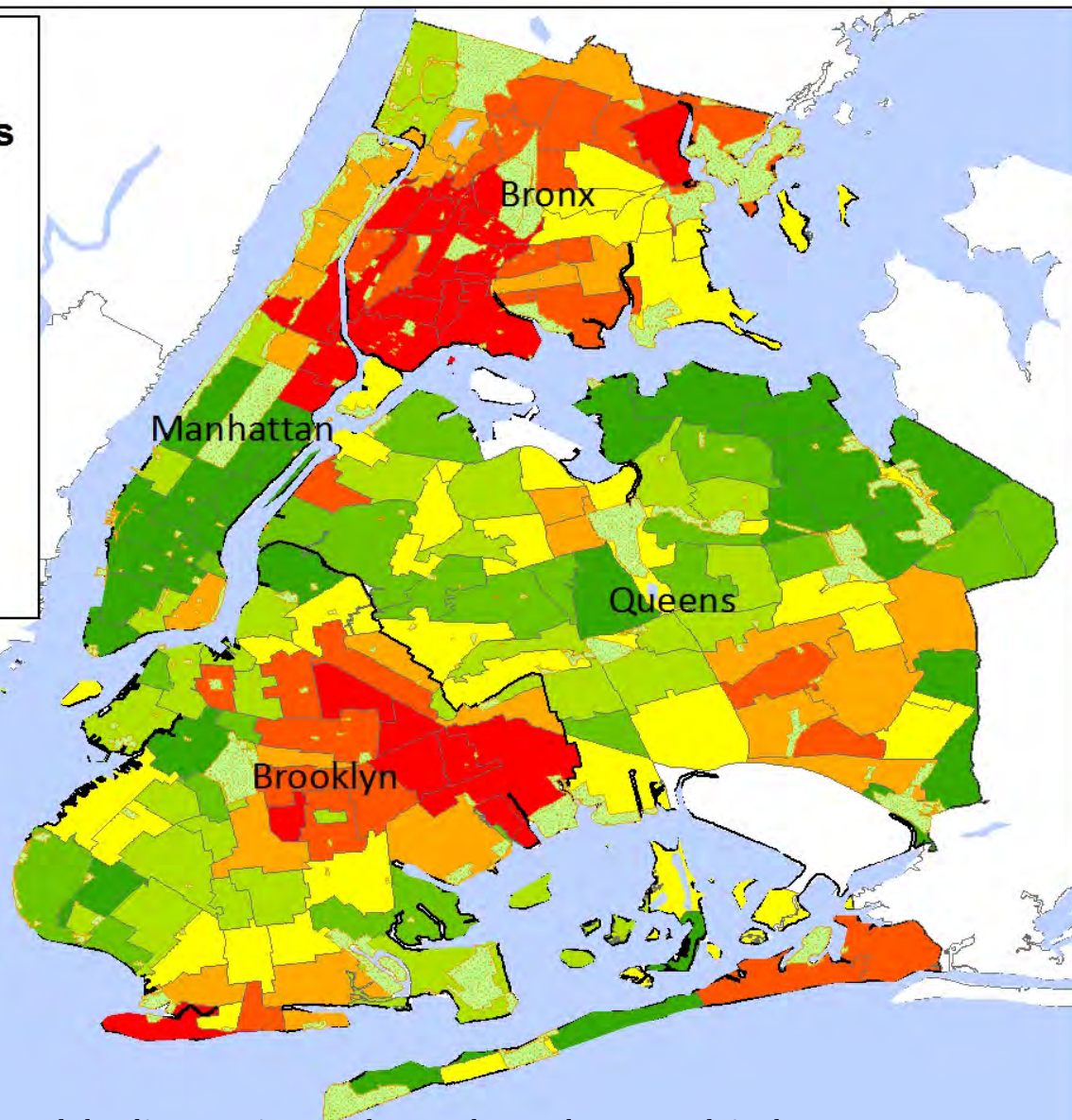
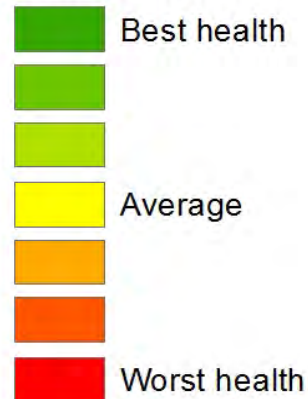


Economic wellbeing identifies neighborhoods with high incomes, educational attainment, and labor force participation.

Legend

NYC Neighborhood Tabulation Areas

Health index

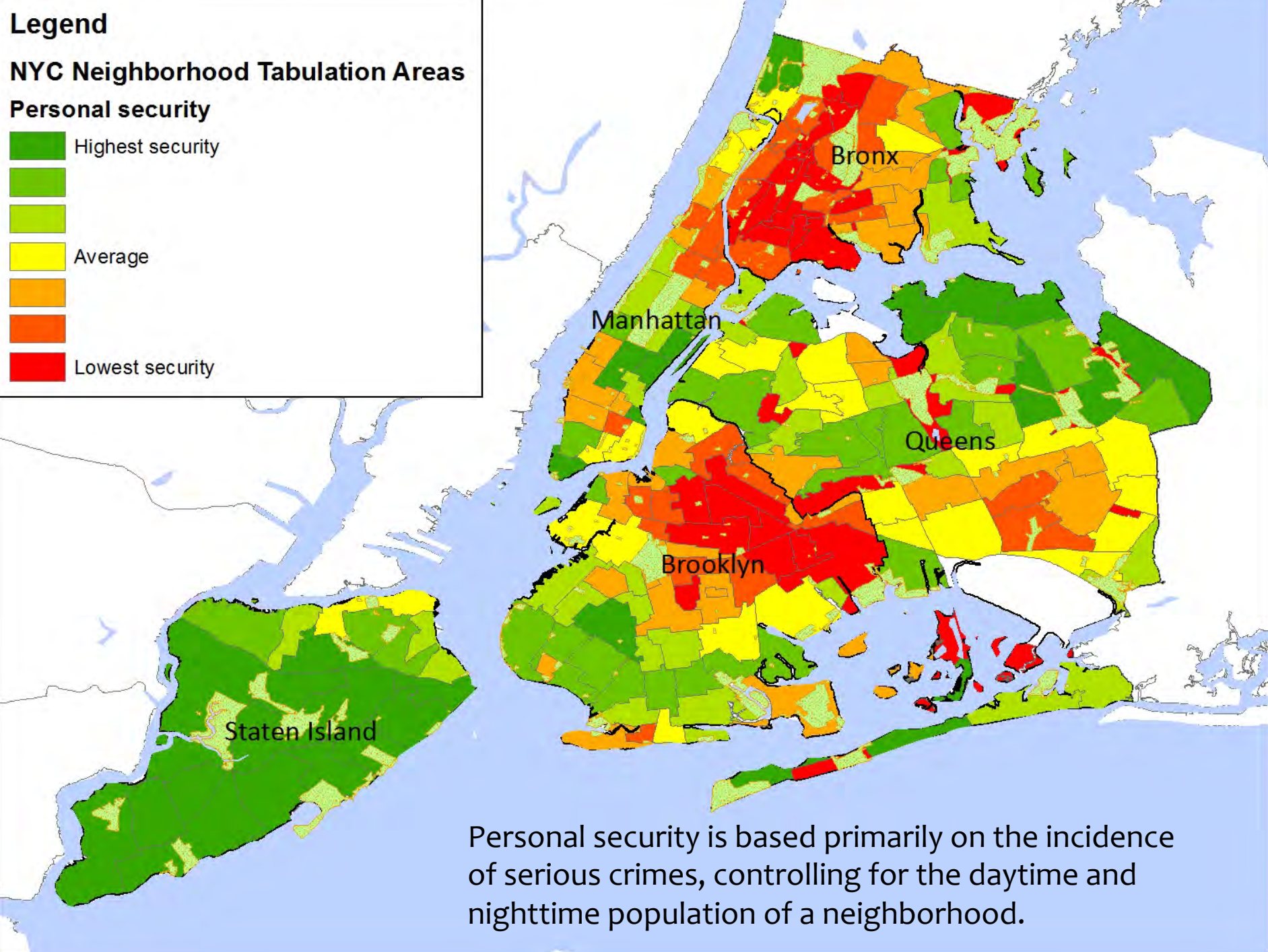
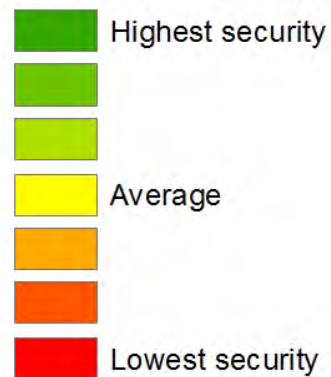


The health dimension is based on data on birth outcomes, indicated investigations of child abuse & neglect, and personal health indicators, like diabetes and high blood pressure.

Legend

NYC Neighborhood Tabulation Areas

Personal security

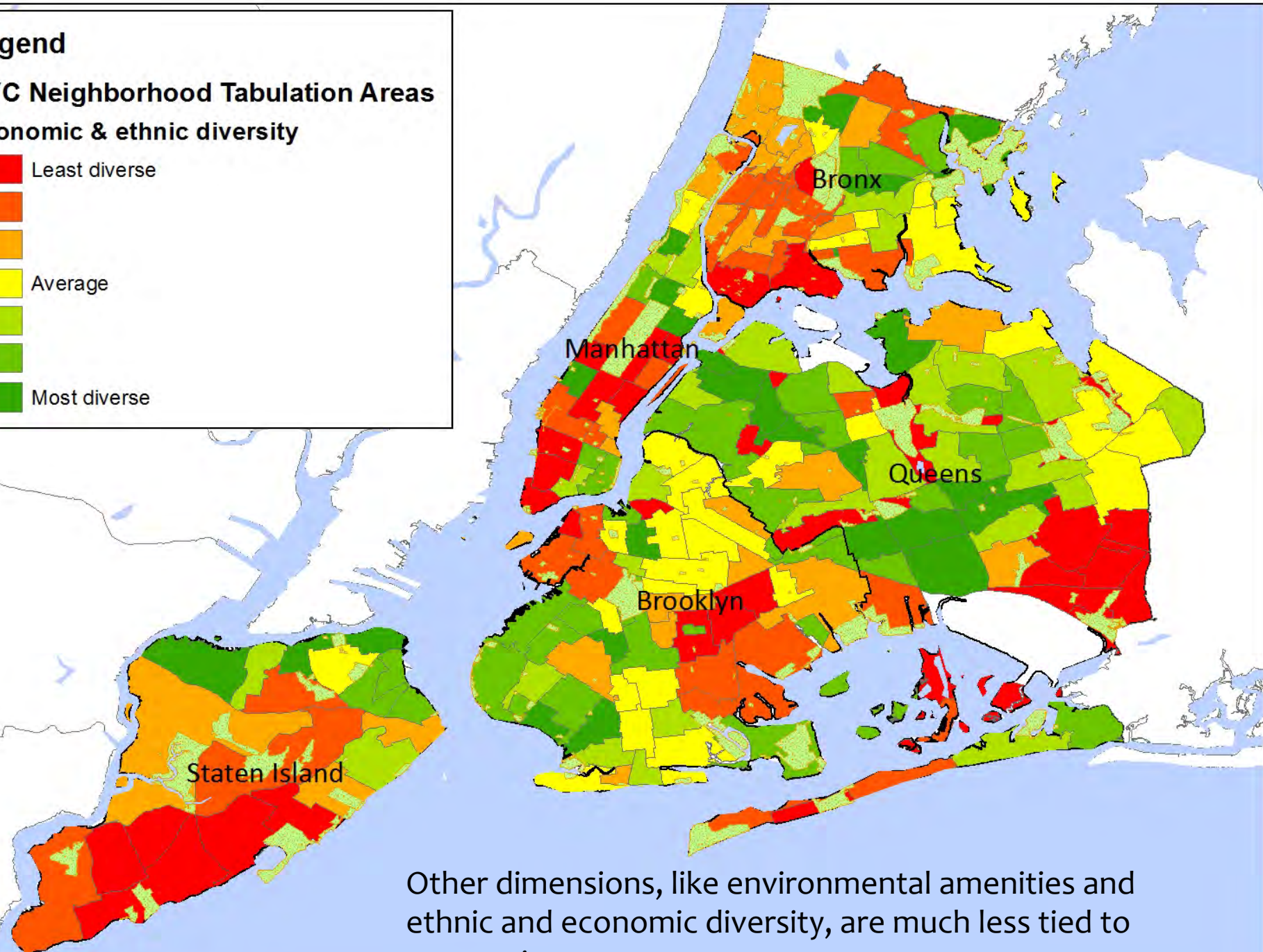
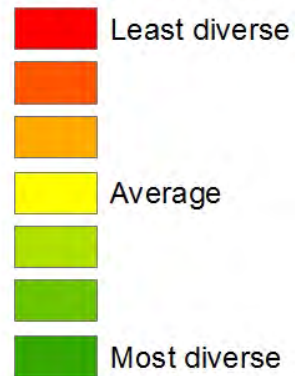


Personal security is based primarily on the incidence of serious crimes, controlling for the daytime and nighttime population of a neighborhood.

Legend

NYC Neighborhood Tabulation Areas

Economic & ethnic diversity

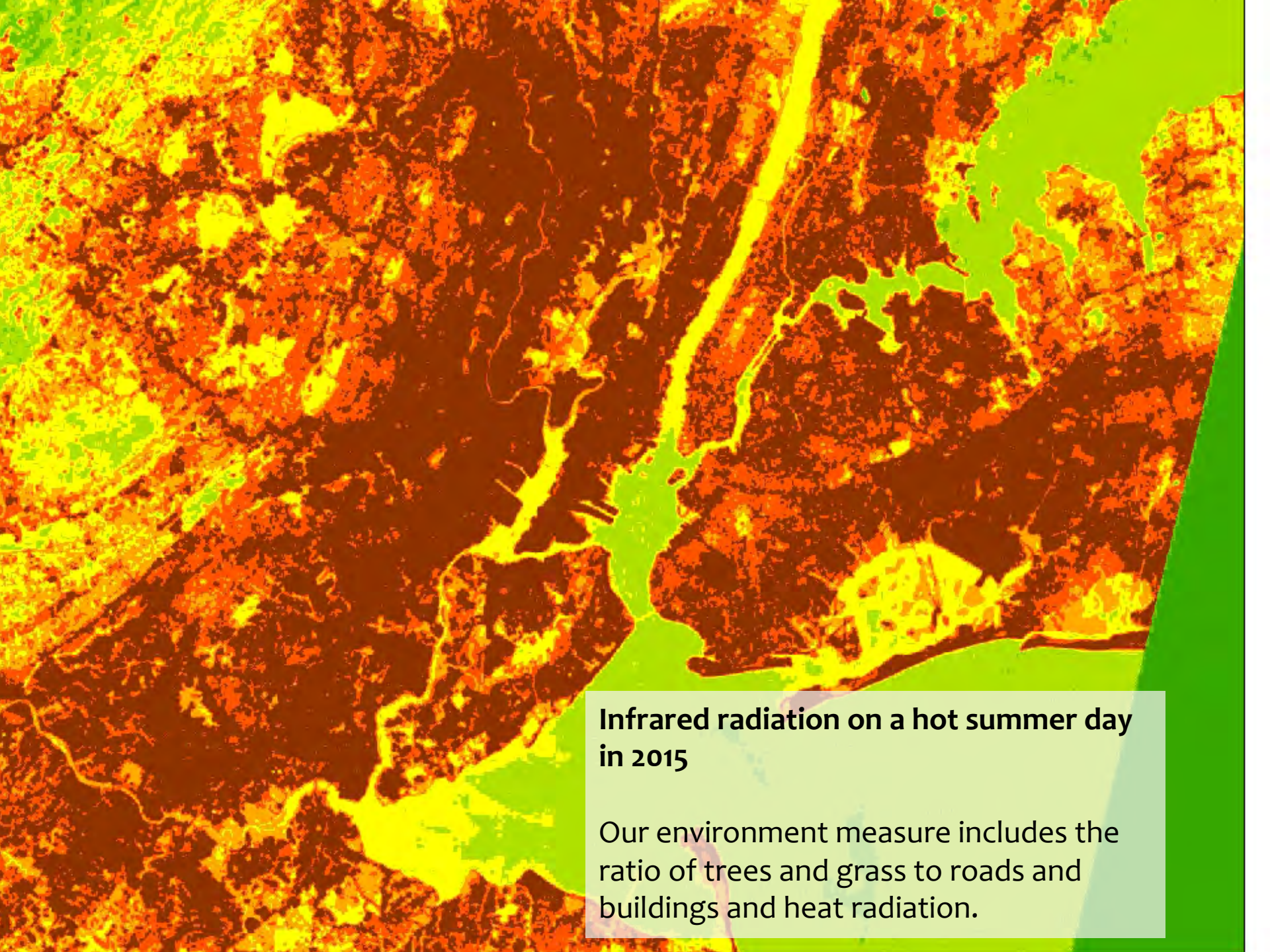


Other dimensions, like environmental amenities and ethnic and economic diversity, are much less tied to economic status.

Environmental amenities

We used satellite photos of land use to measure the presence of trees and grass across the city.





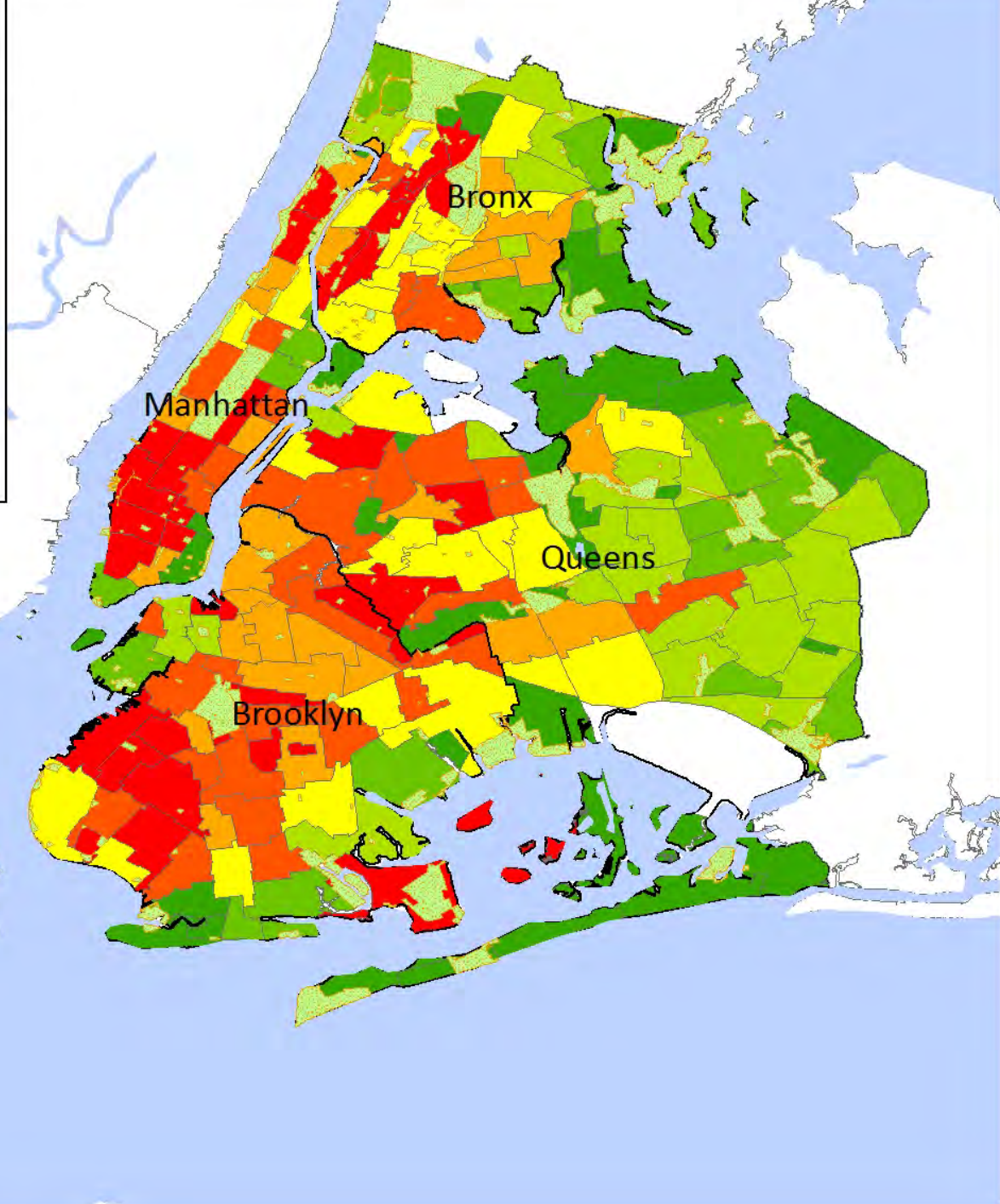
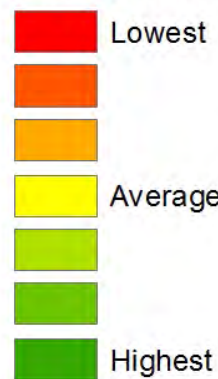
**Infrared radiation on a hot summer day
in 2015**

Our environment measure includes the
ratio of trees and grass to roads and
buildings and heat radiation.

Legend

NYC Neighborhood Tabulation Areas





Environmental amenities

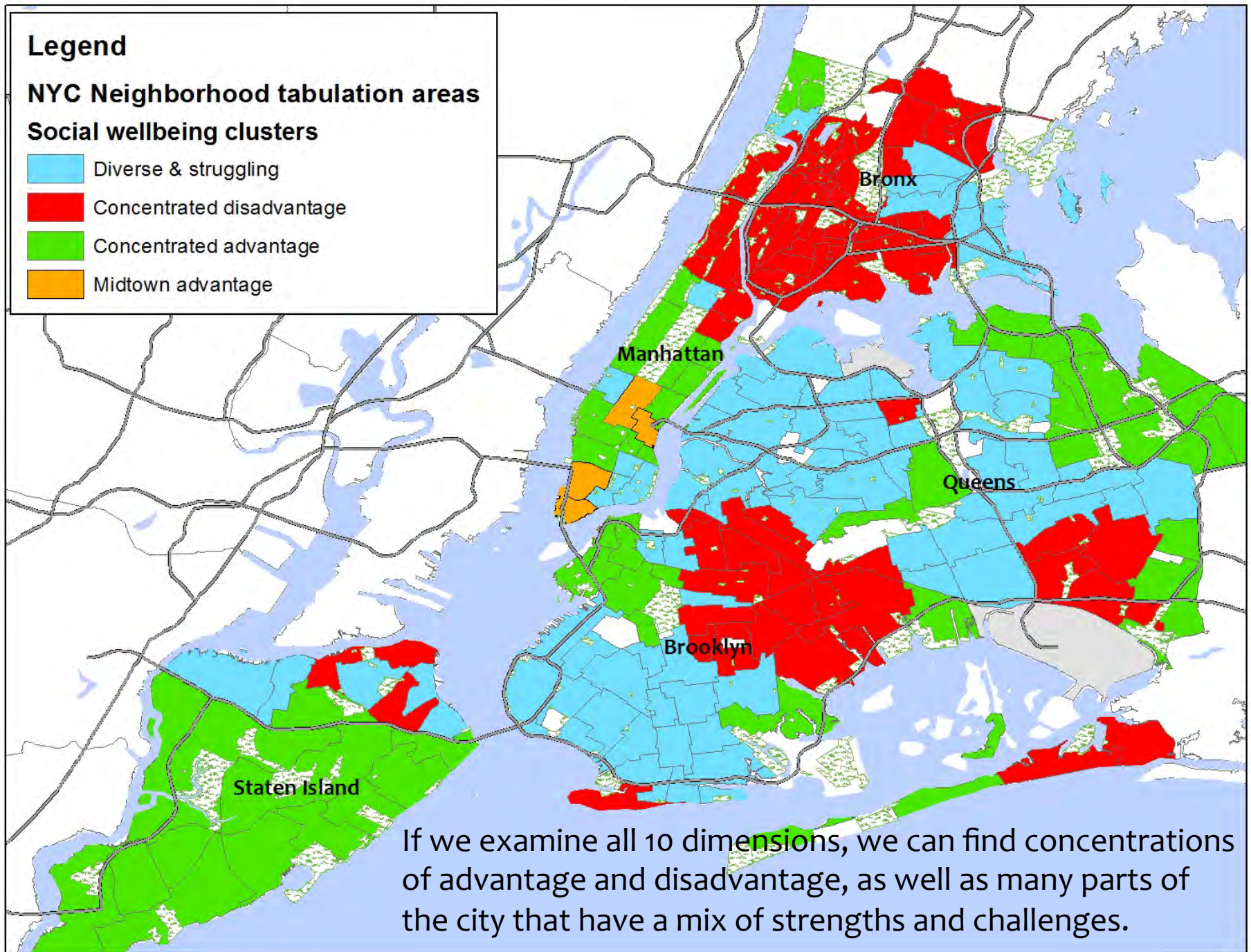


Legend

NYC Neighborhood tabulation areas

Social wellbeing clusters

-  Diverse & struggling
-  Concentrated disadvantage
-  Concentrated advantage
-  Midtown advantage



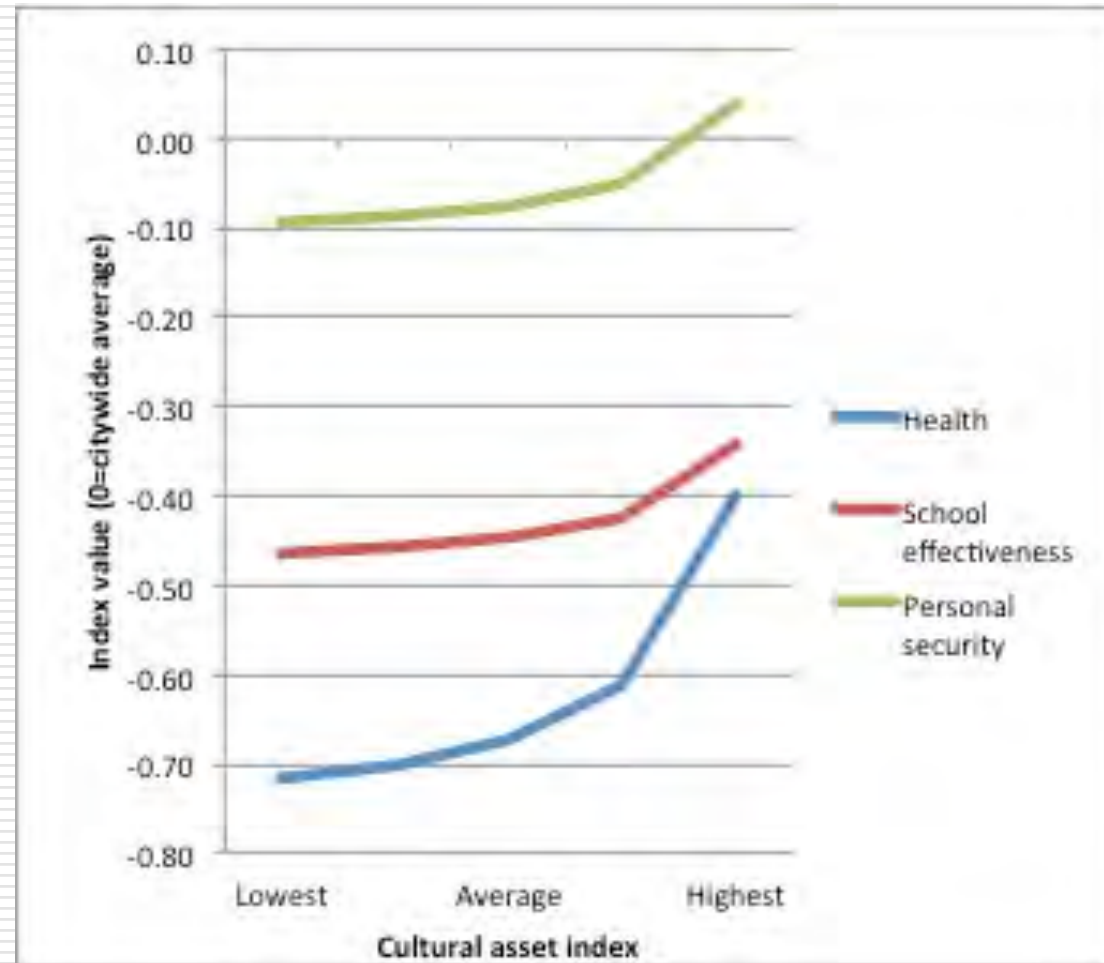
If we examine all 10 dimensions, we can find concentrations of advantage and disadvantage, as well as many parts of the city that have a mix of strengths and challenges.

A new urban reality: diverse & economically-challenged neighborhoods

Variable	Diverse and challenged	Concentrated disadvantage	Concentrated advantage	Midtown advantage
Economic wellbeing	-0.14	-0.68	0.85	1.88
Health	0.26	-0.90	0.78	0.97
Cultural assets	-0.07	-0.22	-0.03	5.29
School outcomes	0.24	-0.81	0.69	1.07
Crime	-0.25	0.52	-0.41	-0.61
Housing burden	0.46	0.59	-0.41	-0.58
Health insurance	17.01	15.80	7.10	7.19
Ec & eth diversity	0.60	-0.16	-0.37	-0.47
Environmental amenities	-0.36	-0.12	0.61	-0.88
Institutional connections	-0.20	-0.25	0.02	6.65
N tracts	790	732	546	43

Culture has a measurable effect on social well-being in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods

The concentration of cultural assets in low & moderate-income neighborhoods has a statistically significant effect on measures of health, school outcomes, and security when we correct for the influence of economic wellbeing, race, and ethnicity.



Factor score by cultural asset index, low and moderate income block groups (bottom 40th percentile of per capita income), controlling for economic wellbeing, race & ethnicity

Community perspectives: Social Connection

- *Cultural production*
- *Institutional connections*
- *Community building and rebuilding*
- *Inclusion and civic engagement*



BRIC has institutionalized community engagement with dedicated staff and an engagement plan developed in partnership with program directors and community members. The focus is on the near neighborhoods, in particular, the black and Latino communities that have been affected by downtown Brooklyn redevelopment.

Community perspectives: Political and Cultural Voice

- *The Puerto Rican experience*
- *Other African Diaspora experience*
- *Activism and social movements*

The current focus of Queens Museum's public program and community engagement staff is Corona, a predominantly new immigrant neighborhood bordering the Museum, where they look for opportunities to integrate social development goals (related to schools, transportation, immigration) with cultural activity (ranging from dance to murals to protest signs).



Community perspectives: Public Environment, Public Sphere

- *Cultural space and streetscape*
- *Parks and open space*



Observers with long memories of Fort Greene Park suggest that a key element of the neighborhood—the mix of peoples, classes, and races—is losing ground. “I could see what the community was trying to become,” an interviewee reflected. “That’s continued ... but it has been dwarfed by the current gentrification. For example, on Washington Park [Avenue], the million dollar brownstone owners have no understanding of Soul Summit or Fort Greene.”



Three strategies:

Focus public investment
on neighborhoods with
few cultural resources.



Legend

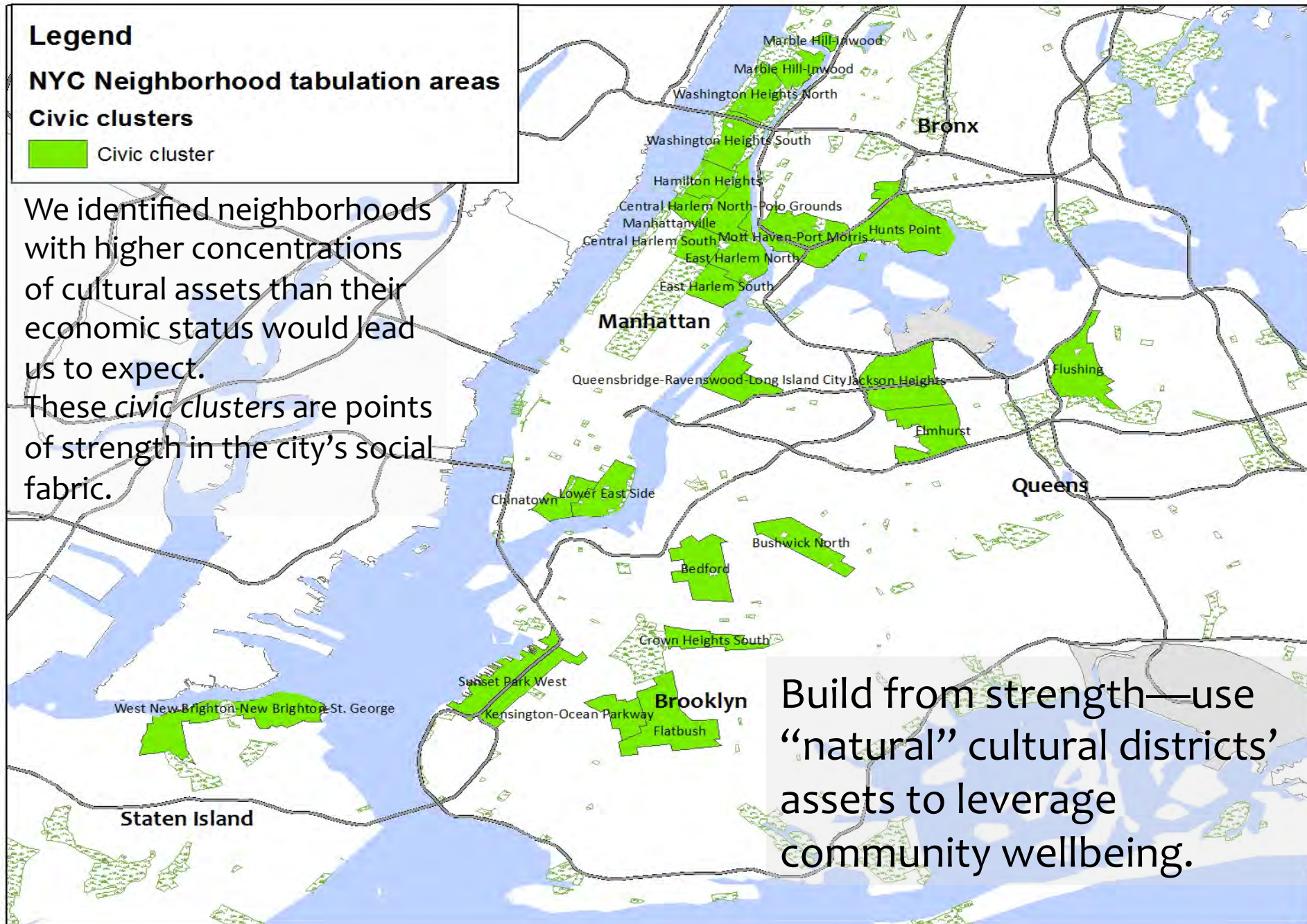
NYC Neighborhood tabulation areas

Civic clusters

 Civic cluster

We identified neighborhoods with higher concentrations of cultural assets than their economic status would lead us to expect.

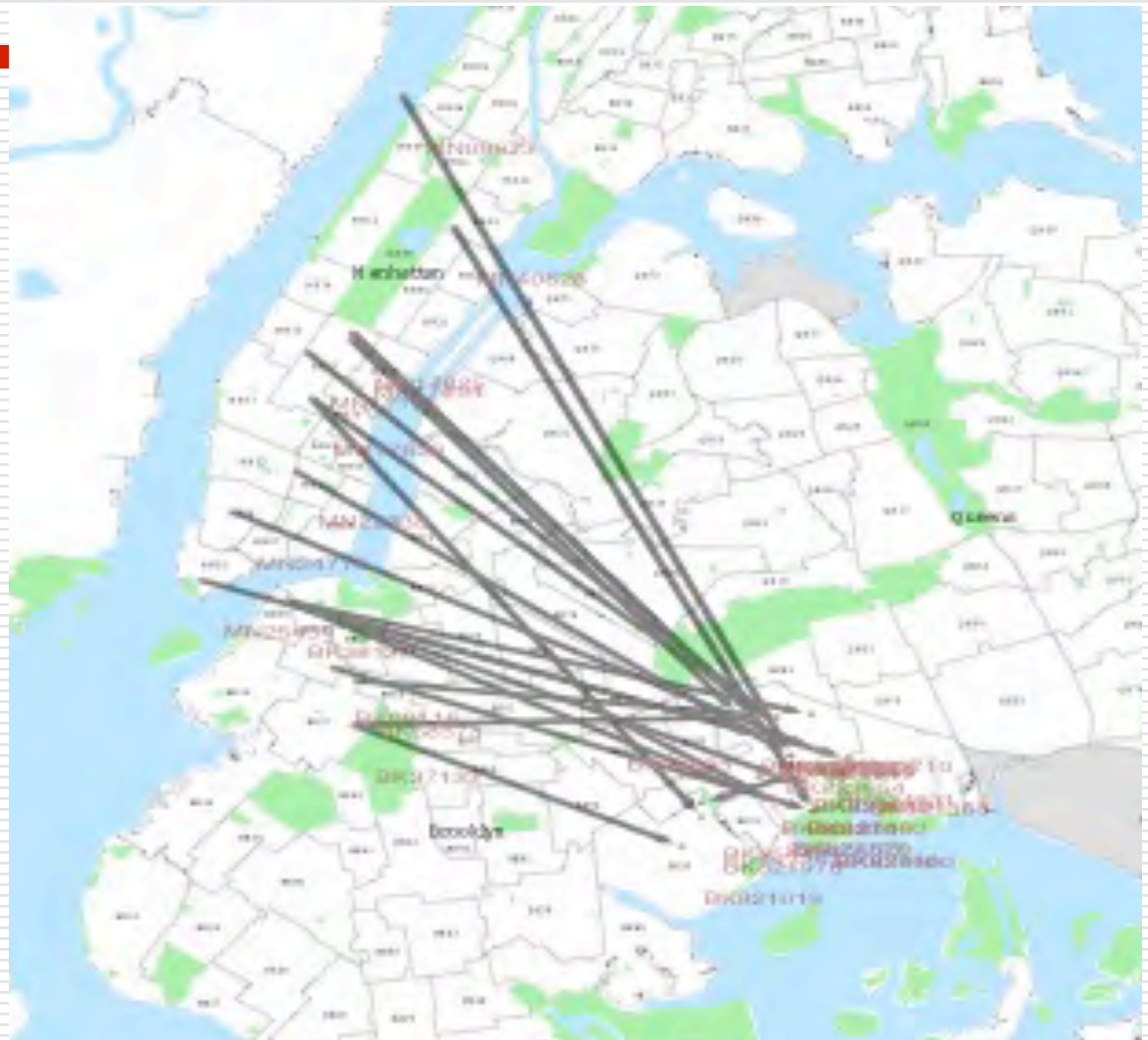
These *civic clusters* are points of strength in the city's social fabric.



Build from strength—use “natural” cultural districts’ assets to leverage community wellbeing.

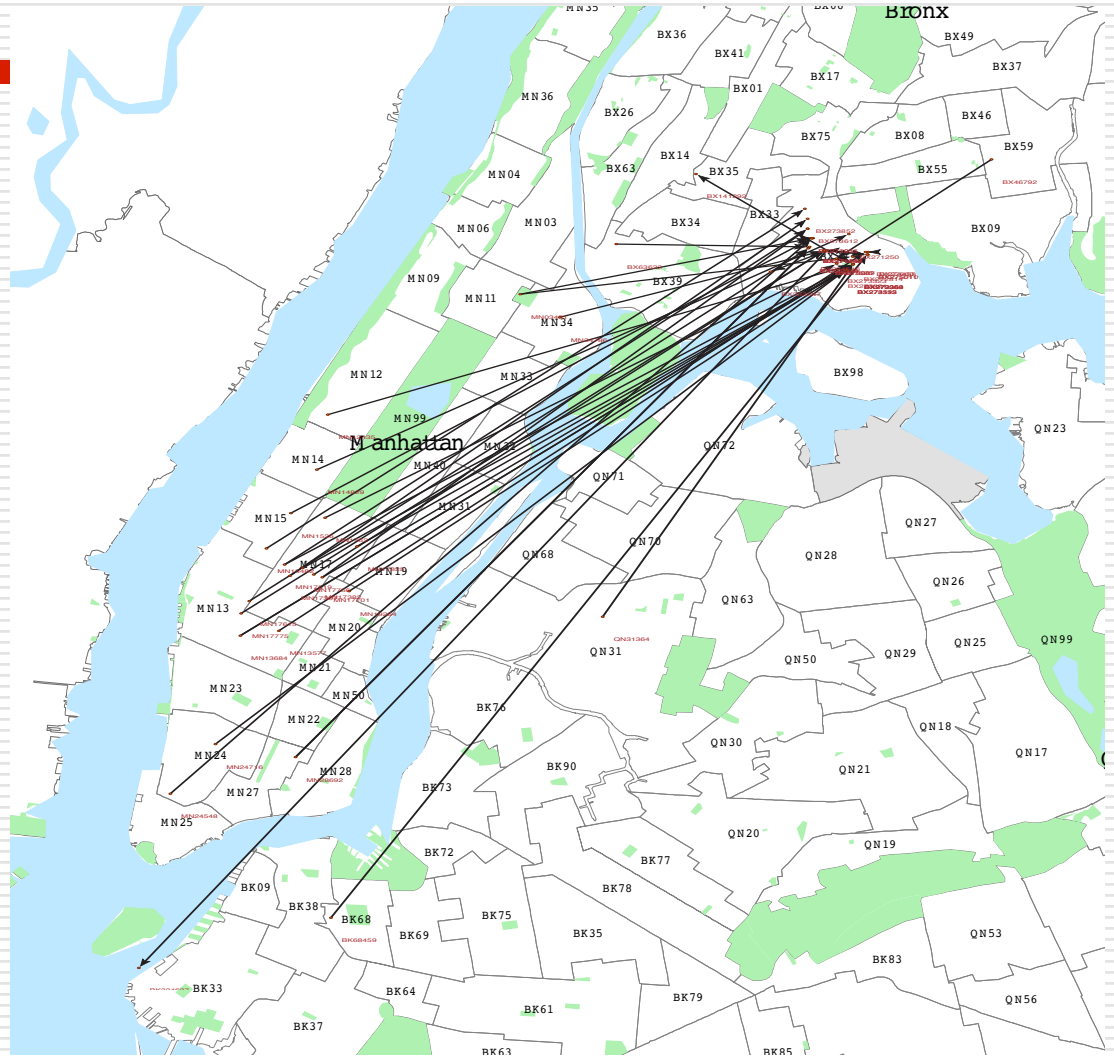
Strengthen networks within and between neighborhoods

Low-income neighborhoods with fewer cultural resources tend to be characterized by what might be called an *imbalanced pattern of institutional connections*. They have relatively few DCLA grantees, so their networks consist of a small number of links, typically between non-cultural program sites like schools and senior centers and cultural organizations in high-income neighborhoods.



Civic clusters as network nodes

In contrast, *civic clusters* report a larger number of DCLA grantees, program sites, and linkages. What is more, the nature of those links is more varied. A higher proportion of linkages are within the neighborhood and more likely to be to another cultural organization. In other words, in contrast to the non-civic cluster neighborhoods, civic clusters display a balance of bridging and bonding connections.



Policy impacts: OneNYC progress report

Mayor's Office of Operations

City Makes Progress with Building Support for Culture in Low-Income Neighborhoods and New Research Illustrates the Linkages Between Culture and Social Wellbeing in New York City

The University of Pennsylvania's Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP) released a report that indicates that the presence of cultural assets in low-income communities correlates strongly with positive social impacts in those neighborhoods. Some of these impacts include the decline of poor health indicators and crime, an increase in child welfare, and student test scores. Additionally, SIAP's research found that although cultural organizations have strong ties with the City's political and administrative infrastructure, they could better strengthen their communities' social wellbeing with strengthened intra-community networks.

The agency had begun to address these issues through the Building Community Capacity (BCC) program before the completion of the SIAP report. The program was designed to strengthen intra-community networks between cultural organizations, other community-based organizations, small businesses, libraries, and other City agencies. We are pleased to find that SIAP's recommendations align with the design of BCC and that we anticipated the value of this kind of work in advance. Working in northern Manhattan, the south Bronx, east Brooklyn and southeast Queens, the BCC program has started to develop a common agenda for community collaboration and space for arts and cultural activity, mapped cultural assets, developed an artist registry, and conducted surveys and held interviews with community members about their cultural interests.

Policy impacts: NYC cultural plan (July 2017)



MEREDITH PHILLIPS ALMEIDA

Executive Director
Myrtle Avenue Brooklyn Partnership

Like arts and cultural organizations, small businesses are very important to our communities. When I think about a corridor like Myrtle Avenue in Fort Greene and Clinton Hill, I think about the independently owned businesses that occupy 85% of the commercial space on the avenue.

There is an enormous opportunity to establish and grow relationships between cultural organizations and these small businesses. **Innovative partnerships could bring new audiences to local businesses, and businesses could provide opportunities for everyday shoppers to experience arts and culture.**

This could happen by decentralizing programming that normally takes place at cultural organizations and having it take place within surrounding communities at small businesses, community centers, or public spaces, like this Akihiro Ito sculpture we brought to Fort Greene Park on Myrtle Avenue together with the New York City Parks Department.

Or, by lowering the barriers to entry in advertising, cultural organizations could serve as promotional ambassadors for their surrounding communities, highlighting the rich local culture and unique offerings of

RESEARCH AND DISCOVERY

CREATE NYC | 43

SOCIAL IMPACT OF THE ARTS

OVERVIEW

Engagement in arts and culture has been linked by scholars and advocates to higher academic achievement, civic engagement, and economic activity. New research conducted in New York City found that culture's impact on health, safety, and wellbeing of the City's neighborhoods is also critical.

The Social Impact of the Arts Project's (SIAP) groundbreaking two-year study was conducted by a team at the University of Pennsylvania led by Mark J. Stern and Susan C. Seifert. The report, entitled *The Social Wellbeing of New York City's Neighborhoods: The Contribution of Culture and the Arts*, explored the interconnected relationship between arts and culture and social wellbeing. The report outlines the integral role of arts and culture in creating healthy, thriving communities at a neighborhood level.

This research provides an in-depth exploration of how access to arts and culture can dramatically improve the lives of everyday New Yorkers, particularly those who live in moderate- and low-income neighborhoods. The study was funded by the New York City Cultural Agenda Fund in The New York Community Trust and the Surdna Foundation. The findings lay an important foundation for the recommendations highlighted in CreateNYC.

FINDINGS

The SIAP research process found 4,700 nonprofit cultural programs and over 17,000 for-profit cultural businesses. When considered alongside the artists who live and work here and millions of cultural participants, the report found a cultural ecosystem of unparalleled breadth, diversity, and dynamism.

However, the SIAP study found that cultural assets are unequally distributed throughout the city's neighborhoods. While all communities have culture, significantly fewer cultural resources are located in low-income communities and communities of color.

The study states that "cultural resources in the city are extremely unequally distributed. Manhattan below 125th Street and neighborhoods near downtown Brooklyn have extraordinarily high levels of cultural resources, while many neighborhoods in all boroughs have far fewer. If we break the city's neighborhoods into five strata based on their overall economic status, we find that the wealthiest have many times more cultural resources than other parts of the city."

SIAP used data from over 50 cultural organizations and citywide ID data sets to estimate cultural participation. The methodology was focused on identifying relative differences in participation across the city's neighborhoods, and not on generating an estimate of the percentage of residents who are cultural participants per se. The cultural participation research revealed that across the board, cultural participation correlates with improved health, personal security, and school effectiveness, demonstrating the relationship between arts and culture and healthy community ecologies. Intriguingly, while low-income communities might have fewer cultural resources, these resources lead to greater measurable impact in social wellbeing. The unequal

"Art se yon form d'expression
e li te permet zanset nou yo
comminike."

"Art is a form of expression
that has allowed our
ancestors to communicate."

— JENNIFER & PERLE, CARIBBEAN CULTURAL
PRODUCERS, BROOKLYN

Neighborhoods are like a **big stew**, a complex mix of diverse ingredients. A two-year study that aims to give a citywide perspective can provide only suggestive findings about how culture contributes to that stew. Knowing whether culture is a main ingredient (like meat, beans, or rice) or rather a distinctive herb or seasoning like **cumin** would take considerably more analysis.
