10-2013

CultureBlocks: Bringing Arts & Culture into the Urban Policy Mix

Mark J. Stern
University of Pennsylvania, stern@sp2.upenn.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://repository.upenn.edu/siap_cultureblocks

Part of the Arts and Humanities Commons, Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons, and the Urban Studies and Planning Commons


This presentation was prepared for the Grantmakers in the Arts 2013 conference, called "The New Creative Community," held from October 6 to 9 in Philadelphia, PA.

This paper is posted at ScholarlyCommons. http://repository.upenn.edu/siap_cultureblocks/5
For more information, please contact repository@pobox.upenn.edu.
CultureBlocks: Bringing Arts & Culture into the Urban Policy Mix

Abstract
This presentation was prepared by Mark Stern for a panel discussion on CultureBlocks with Moira Baylson, Philadelphia Office of Arts Culture and the Creative Economy, at the October 2013 Grantmakers in the Arts conference in Philadelphia. The talk focused on use of CultureBlocks as a data tool, a research tool, and a policy tool—as ways to integrate the arts and culture into urban policy-making. SIAP used versions of its CultureBlocks presentation in other forums, notably:

- Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts (NOCD-NY) researcher convening, New York City, September 12, 2013, called “Valuing the intersection between arts, culture, and community: An exchange of research and practice.”

- Social Theory, Politics & the Arts conference, Seattle, October 26, 2013, on a Philadelphia panel called “Creativity and culture in community-based research” with a research team from Drexel University, Westphal College of Media Arts & Design.

Disciplines
Arts and Humanities | Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration | Urban Studies and Planning

Comments
This presentation was prepared for the Grantmakers in the Arts 2013 conference, called "The New Creative Community," held from October 6 to 9 in Philadelphia, PA.

This presentation is available at ScholarlyCommons: http://repository.upenn.edu/siap_cultureblocks/5
CultureBlocks: Bringing Arts & Culture into the Urban Policy Mix

Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP)

October 2013
Connecting the arts to urban public policy

- Data: detailed evidence & change over time
- Placing the arts in space & place
- How does the urban context influence the arts & culture
- How do the arts & culture influence other dimensions of urban life

CultureBlocks widens the circle of individuals & organizations who can address these issues.
Data: detailed evidence & change over time

CultureBlocks is driven by a set of databases that SIAP has developed over the past two decades:

- Nonprofit, including informal & emerging groups
- Commercial cultural firms
- Resident artists
- Cultural participants
Measuring change over time in the cultural ecosystem

SIAP was able to link arts organizations between 1997 and 2011 to calculate a “mortality” rate. Cultural nonprofits disappeared at much higher rates in parts of West and North Philadelphia than in neighborhoods around Center City.
The cultural sector is not just individuals & organizations. The clustering of cultural resources—what we call its cultural ecology—has a strong influence on the internal structure of art worlds & their impact on neighborhoods & regions. “Natural” cultural districts are critical to the arts’ social impact.
Urban context influences the arts & culture:

Social diversity provides fertile soil in which the arts & culture can flourish.

Our cities are becoming more economically, ethnically, & household diverse
Urban context influences the arts & culture

The explosion of economic inequality is reinforcing the image of the arts as an elite sector.

Socio-economic status’ correlation with cultural indicators nearly doubled between 1997 & 2011
Districts can be differentiated by their cultural vitality in light of the economic & location advantages they enjoy.

We’re particularly interested in civic cluster that overcome these barriers in fostering cultural engagement.
We’ve discovered that these civic clusters in low-income neighborhoods tended to decline in significance between 1997 & 2011, a result of neglect by funders & internal developments within the cultural sector.
Impacts: the capabilities approach

- Assumption: Well-being is the opportunity to live a life that one has reason to value
- Key: Wellbeing = freedom to choose how you live + the concrete opportunities to make choices.
- Can we measure this at the census tract level?
Impacts: Dimensions of social wellbeing

- **Economic wellbeing**: income, educational attainment, labor force engagement
- **Economic diversity**: income differences within tract
- **Institutional connection**: presence of nonprofits, community gardens
- **Face-to-face connection**: sense of belonging, trust, participation in neighborhood organizations
- **Housing**: housing cost burden, foreclosures, violations
- **Effective schools**: school performance measures
- **Security**: crime, ethnic & racial harassment
- **Environmental amenities**: parks, heat vulnerability
- **Morbidity**: chronic illness, hypertension, obesity
- **Health care access**: insurance, ER utilization
- **Birth outcomes/homicide**: prenatal care, low weight at birth, death by homicide, child welfare cases
- **Political voice**: voting

Economic wellbeing often dictates other dimensions of wellbeing.
Two dimensions of well-being: economic resources & social connection

Social connections & culture can be seen as *mediating influences*, important resources in neighborhoods with high poverty & low income.

Yet, many African American & Latino neighborhoods in Philadelphia have *concentrated disadvantage* because they are weak on both dimensions.
We’re working on measuring “heat vulnerability” using socio-economic & satellite imagery.

This map uses block-level readings from Landsat V to measure thermal radiation on a really hot day.
Morbidity uses health survey data on chronic conditions, diabetes, obesity, & hypertension to estimate health risks.
Using cluster analysis, we’ve identified concentrations of advantage & disadvantage, as well as sections of the city that have both strengths & weaknesses.
Three lessons for policy:

#1—Good data means policy can be guided by both values & evidence.
#2. Take space & place into consideration in making funding decisions

The increasing *marketization* of nonprofits has led many funders to stress organizational strength & to ignore the significant hurdles that community arts programs must overcome.

As a result some civic clusters are being starved to death.
#3—We are all policymakers

- Top-down models of policymaking no longer describe cities’ realities.

- This is bad news to the extent that government no longer has the fiscal capacity to call the shots, but . . .

- This is good news in that it reduces the gap between policy & practice.

- Practitioners—artists, community activists, and funders—need to better understand how their decisions can influence how policy & funding decisions are implemented.