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Seeing Like a State Cultural Agency: Creative Place-Making Transcripts of Local and State Actors

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Seeing Like a State Cultural Agency: Creative Place-Making Transcripts of Local and
State Actors

A Thesis Presented

by

JENNIFER ABRAMS

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
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State Actors

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ABSTRACT

SEEING LIKE A STATE CULTURAL AGENCY: CREATIVE PLACE-MAKING

TRANSCRIPTS OF LOCAL AND STATE ACTORS

FEBRUARY 2020

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Extralocal organizations and agencies have increasingly entered into the business of creative place-making—a strategy they use to encourage economic development. One such cultural development strategy is formal cultural district programs implemented by state agencies in cities and towns. While the use of art and culture as a tool for generating revenue is well-documented, less is known about the perspective of local actors—how they understand cultural district programs as a strategy to shape their place and what ways they negotiate the logics and strategies imposed on them from extralocal organizations. The Massachusetts Cultural District Program supports communities in their efforts to attract artists and cultural enterprises, encourage business and job development, establish tourist destinations, and enhance property values. In two Massachusetts cultural districts, I explore the “public” and “hidden transcripts” of state and local actors as pertains to their use of art and culture for fashioning locales as destinations and economic engines, on the one hand, and as places that respond to the wants and needs of the community on the other. Analysis of field notes from participant observations and in-depth interviews indicates a mismatch between the local and state logics that govern cultural districts—particularly around definitions of culture, place, and

success. To cope with these mismatching cultural development logics, local actors find ways to harmonize with, modify, and circumvent extralocal logics to meet their own community goals. While these findings show that locales are not simply at the mercy of extralocal actors implementing their programs, they also expose opportunities for local actors to lead the policy conversation with their own logics and strategies.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I walked into the gallery hosting Northriver’s annual literary arts festival. Crammed into the 2,000 square foot space, were 33 visual and literary artists with three or four attendees at each of their folding tables. I later found out that the not-for-profit gallery hosting the event was founded by a longtime promoter of the arts in this town—a person who reportedly believed that creativity is part of what makes healthy communities and, as such, made it his personal mission to preserve affordable spaces for creative work to happen. The festival was run by volunteers, sponsored by the local arts council, produced by a local artist collaborative, and supported by the local bakery and locally grown food co-op. Two attendees approached the table where I was looking at a book made by a literary artist, a collection of provocative things she read on Twitter. We got to talking about the festival and other cultural events in Northriver that each of us had attended. I then asked, “I’m curious why you go to these events.” Kalliope¹, a literary artist herself, said,

“It feels very simple. I just have to go. It feeds me. I feel like I just need to see art otherwise...it's not ok. It's so good for my soul. I feel inspired. I feel uplifted. I feel connected to myself and to other people or [to] the piece of art. It's just like I couldn't not see art.”

Shelly, a musician, followed up about her experience at a poetry reading:

“That was my first time going to something like that and it just filled my head with a whole new experience. It feels good to just dive into something that, whether you like it or not, it's challenging you and you’re just thinking in new ways that take you out of your day. Like you're being really present, but it's taking you outside of the norm that drives us mad. You know? That's what art really does.”

¹ I ensured complete confidentiality to key informants in the field and interview respondents. I refer to participants and the cultural districts in the findings section using pseudonyms.

Reflecting on Kalliope and Shelly’s remarks on the way home, I was struck by their narrative of art and culture as sustenance—so different from the rationales I had seen from other actors in the field of art and culture. The tension between this local discourse of creativity as necessary for personal and community health and the extralocal cultural development discourse that stresses creative economies, prompted curiosity about how actors in the arts and cultural field at different levels with different relationships to the local think about the role of creativity in communities. How, for example, does this sense of “being fed,” of engaging artists and community members fit in the local and extralocal logics that govern the creative making of places and communities?

As “place-making” has become the go-to language used by the state, national nonprofits, and foundations to shape the local in their own image, the use of art and culture has become an increasingly established means of economic development for these extralocal actors. While outside actors like the state, for example, design creative place-making programs to be implemented in the local that account for the specificity of places, the reality is that these programs establish channels for outsider logics to seep into local cultural programming. With relatively high stakes and significant capital at offer, this process leaves little choice for locales—especially non-urban ones—that increasingly feel the need to justify their efforts through monetary returns on investment and to search for funds and technical assistance to complete projects aimed at boosting community well-being.

The focus of this paper is on the strategies that extralocal actors use to embed their logics in the local in order to vie for resources. While some of these strategies are

symbolic—aimed at rebranding places—they have economic, cultural, and social consequences. The avenue through which I examine these dynamics in the cultural development field is state cultural district programs. The experts define a cultural district as "a well-recognized, labeled, mixed-use area of a city in which a high concentration of cultural facilities serves as the anchor of attraction" (Markusen & Gadwa 2010: 386; Frost-Kumpf 1998). As of 2015, fifteen states across the country had implemented a cultural district policy that allowed cultural agencies—usually a state arts council, but sometimes an economic development department—to officially designate over 300 districts across the country (National Assembly of State Arts Agencies 2015). In most cases, local actors are required to submit an application to the agency; cultivate partnerships between municipal governments, local nonprofits, and businesses; accept some form of technical assistance provided by support agencies; and evaluate their progress.

As a tool that is increasingly relied upon by state agencies to generate revenue, cultural districts are becoming a force that is shaping communities—big and small, rural and urban alike—across the country. For this reason, it is important for sociologists to understand the nature of these kinds of place-making programs—how extralocal and local actors think about them, and how locales work within (and sometimes outside) extralocal creative place-making logics. To that end, I selected Massachusetts as a case to study how extralocal and local actors think about this form of cultural development and its role in making places, as well as how local actors find ways to realize their own community's cultural goals in the face of state logics. The Massachusetts Cultural District Program is one of the most robust with 46 officially designated districts that span

thirteen of Massachusetts' fourteen counties. Additionally, they are among the top four states whose state cultural agencies provide the most comprehensive technical assistance to locales (National Assembly of State Arts Agencies N.d.)—indicating a high level of extralocal involvement in creative place-making in cities and towns.

Through interviews with respondents at all levels of the creative place-making process, I uncover the public and hidden transcripts of local and extralocal actors and identify ways that local actors harmonize with and circumvent state creative place-making logics. In doing so, I examine local and extralocal actors' understanding and negotiation of each other's actions and motivations. In sum, this paper investigates the, at times, competing and, at times, coordinating agendas of two different levels of administrative cultural landscaping. To analyze these dynamics, I conducted 30 hours of fieldwork in two Massachusetts cultural districts and conducted 26 formal, semi-structured interviews with local, state, and national actors. These conversations occurred over the course of one year from February 2018 to February 2019. The two cultural districts that I selected are located in the western half of the state. They are small cities (< 30,000) that are relatively similar in their demographic makeups. One significant difference between the two places is that one of them has an established cultural scene while the other has an emerging cultural scene.

We know that state agencies—not just those concerned with art and culture—dictate a great deal of local life. The arts, however, are somewhat unique in their ability to coordinate and often subvert those formal logics of extralocal actors. To study the local strategies of harmonizing with, modifying, and sometimes even circumventing extralocal logics identifies opportunities for local actors to reclaim the development in their

communities. Additionally, this work not only allows us to understand more about how state policy meets the local, but also the extent to which the returns on investments in the art field are difficult to quantify.

In the first section, I review the theoretical framework and literatures that inform the creative place-making field and the relationship between local and extralocal actors. Following the review of the literature, I discuss the methods, data, and sample of interview respondents. The bulk of the paper then documents two sets of findings. The first set of findings explores differences in how extralocal and local actors think about culture, place, and success. The second set of findings documents how local actors harmonize with state logics, but also how they modify and circumvent them in order to meet their own goals. An analysis of these aspects of top-down creative place-making highlights the importance of ensuring a grassroots process for community development that reflects the local culture, needs, and values.

CHAPTER II
BACKGROUND

A. Contested Place-making: State vs. Local

Public and private actors at all levels—national, state, and local—have their hands in shaping the material form and local culture of place. As “place-making” has become a popular language in the public and private spheres, their actors use wider state goals like housing, tourism, education, and food security to justify the existence of place-specific initiatives. Several scholars pre-dating the place-making discourse have theorized the role of outside actors in shaping the local and the local’s compliance with or resistance to outsider logics. In *Seeing Like a State*, Scott (1998) addresses the highly standardized and simplified logic of the state that allows it to operate more efficiently and increase its capacity to implement federal or state programs at the local level. The unintended consequence of this system, Scott suggests, is that the local knowledge and context of place is completely disregarded. As a result of excluding “the fund of valuable knowledge embodied in local practices,” “schematic, authoritarian solutions to production and social order inevitably fail” (Scott 1998: 6). Therefore, because the state standardizes and simplifies information, they use an incomplete understanding of place that necessarily means their efforts will fail leading to a series of negative outcomes like displacement, declining industry, etc. that impact the lives of real people living in the places targeted (Scott 1998).

While not exclusively focusing on the role of the state, Logan and Molotch (2007) frame the power dynamic of place-making in terms of the power of politicians, speculators, and real estate operators, who develop locales as “growth machines.” Power

to cultivate local culture in the growth machine is often given to those elites and entrepreneurs who are willing and able to sustain growth while ignoring the most pressing social problems. The goal of the modern growth machine is to “reinforce the link between growth goals and better lives for the majority...the growth machine coalition mobilizes these cultural motivations, legitimizes them, and channels them into activities that are consistent with growth goals” (Logan and Molotch 2007: 62). In this modern version, powerful actors tap into local culture and knowledge and use it to develop and grow places often in ways that show little interest in *directly* serving community members. As Logan and Molotch suggest, this strategy that growth machine organizations use disguises itself by connecting growth to well-being logics. Similar to Scott’s assertion about how state actors think and operate, Logan and Molotch state that the modern growth machine “acknowledges that longer-term growth can be facilitated by overt government planning and by programs that pacify, co-opt, and placate oppositions” (2007: 67-68).

Scott, in *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, gives us tools to understand the power dynamics between the state and local actors involved in the growth machine, or as Scott refers to them, “unpopular government schemes and programs” (Scott 1985: 31). Rather than engaging in overt and explicit forms of resistance, Scott suggests that local acts of resistance can be categorized as “ordinary weapons” or “petty acts of insubordination” that are informal and designed to establish barriers against domination (Scott 1985: 29-31). While Scott wrote specifically about the peasantry as a subordinate class, similar patterns of resistance (and compliance) can be found in the context of state and local relations, specifically in place-making efforts. As

we will see, local actors often use their own logics and strategies of everyday resistance targeting a state program aimed at making their place. It is not my intention to compare relatively privileged respondents to the highly marginalized population that is the subject of Scott's research. Rather, I hope to show that similar sorts of dynamics of resistance unfold in the context of a relative power differential in the creative place-making field between the state and the local. While local actors in cultural districts are hardly committing theft and sabotage, as were the population in Sedaka, they do find avenues to assert their own logics.

One way, according to Scott (1990), that local actors swept up into cycles of state programs resist is by developing their own "public and hidden transcripts." These transcripts are characterized by both public performance of subordination to state logics and covert forms of resistance to state logics. The resistance discourse "is found in elementary forms of disguise (rumor, gossip, euphemism, grumbling), as well as in more elaborate forms of popular culture (ritual, dance, folktales, carnivals, theater, etc.)" (Scott 1990: 14, 18, 191). These acts of resistance collectively form what Scott (1990) terms the "infrapolitics of the powerless," or the development of a social space where the powerless share "alternative ideologies" and a "dissident subculture" (Scott 1990: 183-184, 198). Collectively performing the "public transcript," on the other hand, creates more space for the powerless to act out their own hidden schemas. Similar to the powerless, the powerful also have a hidden transcript. They present a certain narrative to their subjects in efforts to mask their true logics and goals (Scott 1990: 28). To reiterate, artists, business-owners, and leadership of local cultural institutions are hardly in a comparable position as the population in Sedaka.

It is, however, hardly the case that state-run funding agencies are hegemonic machines, bearing down upon tiny village arts programs with a heavy imprint. They are, in fact, quite flexible. State agencies and national nonprofits like Department of Housing and Urban Development (Choice Neighborhoods), Department of Education (Promise Neighborhoods), and ArtPlace America (Community Development Investments) have been moving toward programming that asks local municipalities and nonprofits to vie for funding through an application process that asks locales to fit their goals into their framework. While these processes do include choice to some extent, there are implicit and explicit ways that local actors are encouraged to fit their ends into national funding organizations' logics.

Culture has rapidly become one of the tools that the state and other growth machine actors use as a vehicle to meet economic and community development goals. As we will see throughout the paper, the logics of state actors have permeated the local and forced local actors to harmonize with, modify, or circumvent the logics of extralocal organizations interested in making places in their own image.

B. The Responsibility of Arts & Culture in the Making of Place

Extralocal organizations, like the state, foundations, and national nonprofits increasingly rely on culture to solve society's most pressing social problems. This trend has come to fruition through formal creative place-making initiatives most of which are implemented by states and established in locales. In 2012, the National Governors' Association released a report that identified five roles for arts, culture, and design in places across the U.S.: "provide a fast-growth, dynamic industry cluster; help mature industries become more competitive; provide the critical ingredients for innovative

places; catalyze community revitalization; and deliver a better-prepared workforce” (Sparks & Waits 2012). The case is being made at the state and national level for the arts to have a greater role in the everyday functioning of communities across the country.

Complimentary to the state’s push for cultural development, scholars in a variety of disciplines have explored the contribution of arts and culture to communities—including cultivating ethnic pride, community unity, holistic education, revitalization, and strong economies (Perloff 1979; Strom 2002; Evans 2009; Markusen & Gadwa 2010; Metzger 2011). Some see arts and culture in terms of gains in local and regional economies and artists as “social entrepreneurs” (Markusen & Schrock 2006; Stern and Seifert 2007). Markusen and Schrock (2006), for example, frame the impact of cultural work on cities using the “artistic dividend”—the regional returns on investment in artists in the form of income streams and revitalizing neighborhoods. As arts and culture increasingly becomes responsible for promoting high quality of life, a unique local culture, and economic health, more cities use these development strategies to compete with their peers seeking to brand themselves and attract human capital, tourists, and consumers. While economists often frame arts and culture as a social good that stabilizes neighborhoods, they also see it as a resource to control in the competition for economic capital.

In an economy that has transitioned from an orientation of production to consumption, scale to scope, and is increasingly divided and privatized, others see arts and culture as gradually becoming the industry that community leaders turn to for solutions (Greenberg 2000). In response to this reality, some scholars characterize arts and culture as participatory, interconnected with other fields, and valued dually for its

intrinsic aesthetic properties and also for its public impact (Jackson 2008). State cultural development policies and programs usher the field of arts and culture into the business of solving community problems. Such policies invest in arts and culture in hopes of developing local production systems, a labor force, as well as cultural programming to create vibrant places (Scott 2006). Ironically, these policies often seek to concentrate cultural assets in downtown areas of cities or towns, as opposed to neighborhoods in distress, with the goal of rebranding or recreating the identity of place and attracting new residents and visitors (Greenberg 2000; Rosenstein 2011). Cultural programming can include development of mixed-use spaces and transit, supporting bikeable and walkable communities, and ensuring clean air and water (Markusen & Gadwa 2010). Artists, as the key players around which the arts and culture field is built, are concerned not only with the authenticity, interpretation, and the reputation of their art, but also the extent to which they are making meaningful contributions to community and meeting the interests of other institutional fields such as the state and the economy (Becker 1982).

In addition to addressing social problems, those with the power to shape the cultural policy of a place also have the power to shape a community's identity (Mulcahy 2008). Artists, business leaders, politicians, community developers, entrepreneurs, philanthropists, real estate developers, non-arts businesses, and community activists are just among the few stakeholders influencing cultural development projects at different levels and scales. Yet, only those with an abundance of political, economic, and cultural capital may have the power to determine the direction of the city (Greenberg 2000; Stewart 2008; Logan and Molotch 2007; Suttles 1972; Ponzini and Rossi 2010). Business-owners and politicians, for example, see arts and culture as good business for

the community, a key part of marketing place to attract outsiders, and an opportunity to leverage other revitalization efforts.

Community arts institutions have a vested interest in making communities attractive as they depend on people—audiences, trustees, tourists, volunteers, and philanthropists—to stay solvent. Stakeholders of the art world are given increasing access to various state, nonprofit, and foundation funding streams associated with improving the economic health of place (Strom 2002). Positioning the art world in this space opens key players in business, government, and the arts up to increased public and private investment setting local arts and culture fields in a competition with each other for resources (Peck 2005). As a result of the diverse interests served in this field, there are significant tensions, for example, between national and city policy, and local and regional authorities (Evans 2009).

C. Creativity and Cultural Development in Big and Small Places

Most of the research that explores the dynamics of cultural development in places has focused on large cities like New York and Los Angeles (Scott 2010; Markusen and Schrock 2006; Currid and Williams 2010) and mid-sized cities like Baltimore, San Diego, and Atlanta (Ponzini and Rossi 2010; Markusen and Schrock 2006). Using a relational approach, scholars have studied artists, support institutions, community, and the environment and how all of these players work together to shape their city's culture and economy. As early as 1979, Perloff built his case to use the arts to improve *cities* on an economic rationale. The arts, he suggested, would not only employ workers, but would also make the city more attractive and therefore more economically viable (Perloff 1979). Since then, scholars have studied both the economic impact and the way that

cultural development happens in large cities. Allen Scott (2010) maps the creative field of large and mid-sized cities characterized by socio-spatial relationships between artists and support institutions. New York and Los Angeles, for example, boast of specialized industrial districts (e.g. fashion district) and ecosystems of artists. This is contrary to mid-sized cities that often integrate cultural elements into their character as tourist centers, convention and resort hubs, music agglomerations, or heritage places. Cities—their knowledge, traditions, memories, and images—shape the creativity of their artists and artists, in turn, make and remake their city (Scott 2010).

Other scholars have shown how artists cluster in urban places. Markusen and Schrock (2006) showed how variations in size, demand for creativity, amenities, clusters of creative work, and other city industries determine whether or not a city can attract artists to make the artistic dividend (Markusen and Schrock 2006). For example, “The Big Three” cities—New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco—attract all subgroups of artists because they are places that meet these criteria. Mid-sized cities like Miami, San Diego, and Atlanta, however, specialize in one or two different subgroups of artists. The success of “The Big Three” is in large part due to the rise in tourist activity (Markusen and Schrock 2006). Currid and Williams (2010), on the other hand, find clusters of artists and creativity as the driving force that defines their distinction, attracts human capital, and boosts quality of life. Linkages between creative industries like design and art, music and film, and performing arts and music occurs in cities as colocation makes exchange more efficient (Currid and Williams 2010).

Other scholars have approached art and culture in the city through an in-depth analysis of the logics and strategies of local state agencies and quasi-public support

organizations using culture to solve city problems. Ponzini and Rossi (2010), for example, use Baltimore as a case to illustrate the logics of those most intimately involved with creative place-making initiatives. They found that cultural development in Baltimore had been put in the hands of quasi-public actors with the support of city government. The Creative Baltimore Initiative is a community development grant program that aims to make Baltimore “vibrant.” Baltimore has also designated Station North a cultural district as a hub for creative industry and activity. While these sorts of cultural development efforts have made the city more attractive to outsiders and activated the real estate sector, they have not incited social cohesion or inclusion or addressed the needs of the people who live there (Ponzini and Rossi 2010).

Very little research has been done to understand the quality of cultural development in smaller places. Some scholars have explored the factors pulling artists to more rural, suburban, or exurban places such as lower cost of living, technology allowing for sales and networking from remote locations, or small-town amenities (Markusen and Schrock 2006). Similarly, Wojan, Lambert, and McGranahan (2007) explore the shared characteristics of counties that attract artists and in which “rural artistic havens” develop. They find that these havens are mostly located in more mountainous areas with a substantial college-going population, and a robust lodging and restaurant sector. In addition to natural amenities, many of these rural artistic havens are located near major metropolitan areas (Wojan et al. 2007: 68). They find that those rural places that are unable to retain highly educated workers are less likely to attract the number of artists it takes to form a rural artistic haven (Wojan et al. 2007: 69).

The National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) has commissioned several reports to understand more about the quality of rural arts in the U.S. Rural areas have an abundance of museums, theater companies, and nature parks. They found that the majority of businesses (67%) in rural areas report that arts and entertainment are either “somewhat” or “very important as a community feature in attracting workers. Those businesses that indicate supporting the arts are also more likely to report that there is an expanding market for their products and services and also report being more innovative (National Endowment for the Arts 2017a). NEA found that museums and theaters are equally distributed across urban and rural counties and that rural arts organizations draw higher rates of non-local audiences than their urban counterparts (NEA 2017b). Lastly, they found that the number of innovative and/or design-integrated businesses increases with the presence of performing arts organizations (NEA 2017c)

Few have explored the role of arts and culture in the place-making of smaller, less densely populated places qualitatively—examining how the various key players at different levels and with different relations to the local think about it and the logics that guide their actions. Henshall (2012), for example, shows how new meets old in Clarksdale, MS where grassroots actors revitalize the town using its historically distinctive blues music and Delta culture to attract tourists. While this is one example of bottom-up cultural development organizing, few studies have examined the ways that non-local actors intervene to make places.

D. Research Questions

This paper details the dynamics between local and state actors responsible for cultural development initiatives to identify the tensions between these social actors and

the ways that local communities negotiate competing logics. To do this, I have selected two cultural districts participating in the Massachusetts Cultural District Program—a program implemented in cities and towns in thirteen of the fourteen counties in the state. For the purposes of this paper, I show how local and extralocal actors responsible for creating, implementing, and supporting formal cultural district programs negotiate each other’s logics and strategies in the making of places. To that end, this study answers the following research questions:

- 1. What are the logics of the local and extralocal actors in the business of cultural development and place-making?*
- 2. How do local actors harmonize with, modify, and circumvent state cultural-place-making logics? What are the “public” and “hidden transcripts” of local actors?*

CHAPTER III

METHODS

A. Data

The data for this study were produced from fieldwork in two cultural districts in Massachusetts and formal interviews with both key actors responsible for cultural development work in the two districts, as well as respondents from state and national agencies. Starting in October of 2017, I began attending cultural events in two districts in Massachusetts. Over the course of the next several months, I conducted ten site visits across the two districts, spending a total of thirty hours in the field. The cultural events that I attended included: fairs and festivals, outdoor movies, and monthly promotional events. I sampled events using a purposive sampling method—selecting events that varied in terms of venue, artistic media, host organization, and behavioral expectations in order to get a fuller picture of the kinds of cultural experiences supported in the cultural districts. I selected this sampling method to sample sites as it ensured considerable variation reflected in the population of events (Singleton and Straits 2010). I used theoretical sampling to select individuals with whom to connect who are positioned differently in terms of the event—mostly consumers, organizers, and artists. This sampling method allowed me to use my theoretical framework to select categories of actors in the field (Marshall and Rossman 2011). While the public nature of these events did not require formal entrée to the setting, I did reveal my role as a researcher when engaging extensively with individuals in the field.

During site visits, I noted information distributed by event organizers and artists, art forms presented and performed, and characteristics about the physical structure and

decor of the venues. I observed conversations between individuals, their spatial distributions, and other patterns of behavior. I engaged with artists presenting their work, watched outdoor movies with community members, and spoke with individuals working events. During field interviews, I spoke with artists about their art-making process and their inspiration and connected with workers and event administrators about why they do this work. As suggested by Singleton and Straits (2010: 367), field interviews are not only a helpful data collection strategy to ask about feelings, motives, and interpretations, but also serve as an important “validity check” for researchers collecting data using other methods. I paid close attention to my fellow audience members and consumers: who they spoke to, what they spoke about, their expressions, and how they described the art.

Informed from my jottings in the field, I systematically recorded detailed narratives of the events including individual and group behaviors, informal conversations with individuals, and objects that I observed in the field. In my fieldnotes, I specifically honed in on the words and actions of the people I observed to get a comprehensive description of the event (Singleton and Straits 2010; Marshall and Rossman 2011).

Data gleaned from fieldwork proved helpful in ensuring that what respondents reported during formal in-depth interviews matched the reality of social action in cultural districts. As Jerolmack and Khan (2014: 189) suggest, relying solely on interview data assumes that what respondents say translates into action. To counteract this assumption, they stress conducting fieldwork to determine the extent to which what respondents report in interviews is put into action in the field (Jerolmack and Khan 2014: 191). In my observations of key actors’ behavior in the field, I found that they were consistent with interview respondents’ accounts of activity in cultural districts and ways of thinking

about this kind of cultural development. I conducted 26 semi-structured formal interviews² with both individuals responsible for the cultural health of their locale, as well as higher level state and national actors over the course of one year from February 2018 to March 2018 (Rubin and Rubin 2011). Local respondents included those actively working on culture-oriented community projects, local cultural councilmembers, artists, and people who own or work at businesses within the cultural district. At the state level, I spoke with individuals who work at state agencies responsible for developing and implementing state-wide cultural development programs, as well as those in a supportive role—i.e. providing technical assistance, lobbying, etc. At the national level, I primarily spoke to individuals who work for organizations in an advocacy, research, networking, and/or technical assistance role. The majority of individuals were sampled using a purposive sampling method—seeking perspectives of people intimately involved in the cultural districting process. Some respondents were recruited through a respondent-driven sampling method. Interviews with local actors took place in locations of the respondents’ choosing (i.e., homes, offices, and local cafes) and those with individuals at the state and national levels were conducted over the phone or via video conference. Interviews ranged from 29 to 81 minutes with an average of 51 minutes.

Prepared with an interview guide (see Appendix A), I touched on some of the broad themes that I had identified as a result of my fieldwork, but also allowed respondents the flexibility to pursue various other relevant directions. I asked open-ended questions and probes that elicited examples, experiences, narratives, and stories. I used a responsive interviewing method in which I built trust through reciprocity, used a tone of

² I ensured complete confidentiality to key informants in the field and interview respondents. I refer to participants and the cultural districts in the findings section using pseudonyms.

gentle curiosity, and approached each interview with flexibility in my interview guide—all strategies that gleaned both depth and detail (Rubin and Rubin 2011). As suggested by Small (2009), I have ascribed to a sequential interviewing methodology in which each interview respondent produces a set of findings that, in turn, inform the next interview. Each interview refocused and advanced my understanding of local and state perspectives on formal cultural district programs. I reached a point of saturation when very little new information surfaced in the interviews (Small 2009; Yin 2002; Rubin and Rubin 2011).

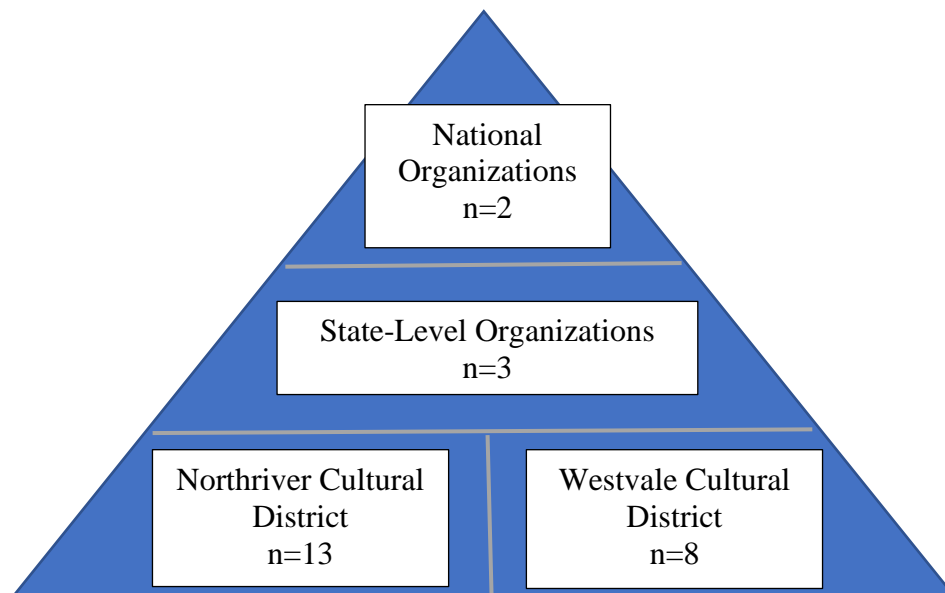


Figure 1: Categories of Respondents

B. Method of Analysis

To analyze the data gleaned from formal interviews and fieldwork, I used a grounded theory method. I conducted several rounds of coding using an open coding method—approaching the data with the intent to allow any themes to emerge, not just relying on my own expectations. I used the qualitative data analysis software NVivo to code and organize my data. From my initial rounds of coding, I constructed a set of coding categories, revising them in subsequent rounds of coding the data. In this iterative

process, I completed three rounds of coding to verify the most salient themes relative to my research questions (Rubin and Rubin 2011).

C. Massachusetts Cultural Districts as Research Sites

In 2010, the Massachusetts State Legislature, like other state legislatures in the country, passed an ordinance allowing the Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC) to develop a cultural district program that supports communities in their effort to attract artists and cultural enterprises, encourage business and job development, establish the district as a tourist destination, preserve and reuse historic buildings, enhance property values, and foster local cultural development (Massachusetts State Legislature 2010). While these districts range in terms of their density and location in the state, those managing the cultural district are charged by the MCC with 1) supporting cultural organizations in their work to benefit families, 2) making the district an attractive place for visitors in order to gain “tourist dollars and tax revenue,” and 3) appealing to the creative class to “enhance property values” and make “communities more attractive” (Massachusetts Cultural Council 2017).

While the program has similar overarching goals when compared to other programs initiated by the MCC, it differs in that the majority of the benefits to communities are indirect. That is, rather than new buildings or funding streams, arguably more tangible benefits, the locale receives a symbolic benefit of the state’s cultural endorsement (see Appendix B for designation guidelines). The case to maintain funding for cultural programming like the district program is largely built on the state’s fiscal return on arts and culture investment measured by local spending, employment, and tax revenue. In Massachusetts, the nonprofit arts industry is estimated to have generated \$2.2

billion in organization and audience spending. It is estimated that the arts industry generated over 73,000 jobs and \$1.4 billion in resident household income, close to \$63 million in local government revenue, and \$96 million in state government revenue (Americans for the Arts 2017).

In order to understand how smaller and less dense places outside of the suburban ring of a major city integrate this type of formal cultural development into their communities, I selected two of the 46 officially designated cultural districts in Massachusetts. While we know a significant amount about cultural development in big, highly dense places, it is important to study the role arts and culture plays in smaller places. This is partially because states are increasingly encouraging the development of cultural havens in suburban, exurban, and rural places and we know little about the quality of their work. Additionally, these smaller places are increasingly finding themselves in the position of needing art and culture to compete for residents moving out of cities (Ocejo 2019) and tourists looking for cultural experiences.

The two selected districts have had a cultural district designation for at least five years, giving its administrators and the communities enough time to understand the role that this program plays in making their place. They are both located in the western half of the state and, as such, are relatively disconnected from the Boston cultural scene, i.e. respondents in neither of these towns consider themselves in reference to Boston. One of the districts has had a long established cultural scene while the other has an emerging cultural scene. To ensure confidentiality for my participants, I will use the following pseudonyms when referring to the places: Northriver and Westvale.

1. The Established Case: Northriver Cultural District

Officially designated a cultural district in 2014, the 14-square block district has provided the canvas for a thriving arts and culture scene. Administrators of this district boast of its 19th-century architecture, galleries, music stores, artisan and antique shops, concert venues, restaurants, cultural organizations and institutions, and festivals. In addition to advertising the amenities and accolades of place, cultural district administrators state that Northriver “possesses the high volume and eclectic mix of cultural assets, as well as a very cool vibe, envied by any successful arts district.” Northriver has had a long established creative community—dancers, visual artists, and musicians—with lots of “cultural outposts” and opportunities for artists to create.

Respondents readily described the artist heyday of the 1970s when “artists could live downtown, they could have a studio downtown, and there were some very funky venues for performance and for exhibition.” Others described the “artsy alternative vibe” of the city or the “fizz and pop of the street culture” in the late 1990s. Since then, respondents indicated that the town has gone through the “arc of gentrification.” Most respondents in this locale spoke about the transition from a town centered on “art and creativity to something that's more commerce and entertainment oriented.” As is typical with places that have gentrified, every respondent indicated a substantial hike in rents and overall cost of living that makes the place unaffordable for many people, but artists in particular.

2. The Emerging Case: Westvale Cultural District

One of the first districts recognized by the MCC, a portion of Westvale was officially designated in 2013. Those local administrators involved in the district

application process market the natural amenities, “eclectic array of quaint shops,” galleries, “bustling night-life,” “diverse arts scene,” and “down-to-earth funkiness.” In addition to publicizing the local farmer’s market, bookshop, and music store, visitors are encouraged to check out the pond, monthly promotional events, and annual festivals.

Westvale was described by most respondents as an old industrial and “solidly working class town” where life was oriented around the factories (now repurposed for studios, live-work spaces, and cultural retail). Distinct from Northriver, most respondents pinpoint the emergence of a cultural scene around ten years ago, not long after the establishment of a municipal arts program. Respondents identified local cultural programming like festivals, bi-annual arts promotional events, and new art-oriented businesses that started to take root in the town around the mid-2000s. Since then, the cultural scene has continued to emerge as new administrators have brought their vision to the local arts agency and the agency has continued to find new cultural development opportunities.

3. Demographics

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, both Northriver and Westvale are located in a metro county, i.e. a county in metro areas of 250,000 to 1 million population. While it is conceivable that these cities are influenced by the state’s largest cities—Boston, Worcester, and Springfield—these are two of the smallest cities in the state with population sizes of 28,534 and 16,042 respectively (see Appendix C for demographics).

Both cultural districts are overwhelmingly white and highly educated. The median household income and cost of housing in both places is lower than the average in the

state. The vast majority of residents work in management, business, science, and arts occupations. Educational services, health care, and social assistance are the primary industries of both cities. Westvale continues to have a prominent manufacturing industry while the second most popular industry in Northriver is professional, scientific, management, administrative and waste management services. It is important to note that the arts, entertainment, and recreation industry is the fourth most popular industry in Northriver and the fifth most popular industry in Westvale.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

A. Seeing Like a State Cultural Agency vs. Thinking Local: Three Points of Tension

According to Scott (1998), there are four elements of state-local relations that lead to disaster: the administrative ordering of nature and state simplification, high-modernism, an authoritarian state to bring high modernism to the local, and a local that lacks the capacity to resist the state's plans. Part of the state's simplification process is to develop standardized programs to be implemented in the local. While this simplification and standardization helps states function efficiently, it completely disregards the local knowledge that is critical for solving a community's public problems. What this means for state-initiated creative place-making programs is that there is potential for local knowledge and sentiments to be neglected in the making of 46 cultural districts across the state of Massachusetts.

In this findings section, I will present what I call three "Interpretive Frame"³ tensions that inform the struggles between extralocal and local entities and individuals to illustrate the mismatch between the state's standardized notions of creative place-making and local knowledge and logics. These three primary struggles between state and local actors expose differences in how they define *culture*, *place* and *place-making*, and *success*. A few examples can demonstrate the disconnect. For example, while the state narrowly defines culture as art and architecture, local actors have a broader perspective

³ The term "interpretive frame" comes from Fligstein and McAdam's *A Theory of Fields* (2012). They define the term as something that "individual and collective strategic actors bring to make sense of what others within the strategic action field are doing" (Fligstein and McAdam 2012: 89). Additionally, several scholars in a variety of fields have used comparable language to describe how internal cognitive schema shape thinking and behavior (Lakoff 2014; Sharot, 2017; Frameworks Institute 2009).

on what culture encompasses—namely their community identity, values, and the seemingly mundane activities of the everyday life of the place. While state actors push for creative place-making that promotes and sustains a creative economy, local actors understand it as a necessarily grassroots endeavor that generates inclusive spaces to build community without the profit motive. They also define success differently. While the state considers building an economic engine and elevating the recognition of the arts as successful outcomes, local actors understand success as relationship-building, increased opportunities for artists, positive local sensibilities, and boosts in community well-being.

The local interpretive frames were universal across the two cases. In other words, respondents in both towns spoke about culture, place and place-making, and success in similar ways despite the fact that Northriver is a place with a long *established* cultural scene and Westvale is a place with an *emerging* cultural scene. Ultimately, these tensions force the local to harmonize with, modify, and circumvent extralocal logics but also, as I will conclude, offer avenues for local actors to meet local goals.

Table 1: Frame Tensions Between the State and the Local

Frame Tension	State	Local
Culture and Its Impact	Visual and performing art; architecture	Community identity; way of life
	Creative businesses and festivals	Sensibility of the city
	Assets; marketing scheme	Brining community together; improves the morale
Place and Place-Making	Canvas for re-branding and economic development	Building community
	Element of a growth strategy	Organic
	Context for network-building	Grassroots
Success	Generate economic engines	Build relationships; unify
	Increasing the recognition of the arts	Opportunities for people to make art

		Improve the sensibility of the place
		Boost community well-being

1. Frame Tension #1: Interpreting Culture and Its Impact

During discussions with local respondents in cultural districts, it became clear that they could easily distinguish between what extralocal actors meant by “culture” and what local actors meant. When asked about the purpose of the cultural district and its impact, local respondents repeatedly pointed to artisan shops and bakeries, galleries, arts nonprofits, art studios, breweries, food trucks, and live music—all cultural attractions that are considered “assets” in cultural district applications to the MCC. Respondents often framed their discussions of art, entertainment, and food using the MCC’s language of “cultural assets” that make up a “vibrant street.” Respondents also routinely spoke about monthly or seasonal promotional events aimed at getting people out to enjoy art, and presumably spending at the city’s local restaurants, shops, and parking meters.

Local actors’ perceptions of the state’s logics were reinforced in my conversations with individuals working for public and quasi-public organizations supporting cultural development in Massachusetts and nationally. In conversation, these extralocal actors referenced bookstores, restaurants, festivals, musicians and concerts, visual art and artists, ceramics, jewelry, woodwork, public art, museums, local theater, and dance performances as examples of cultural activities. Consistent with local actors’ descriptions of culture in the cultural district, extralocal respondents framed culture as a collection of “cultural assets” in a place that stimulate the “creative economy” and “economic revitalization.” Eric, an administrator at a national nonprofit responsible for supporting agencies like the MCC, spoke with me about their understanding of what these sorts of

creative experiences in cultural districts do for communities, “So I think part of it is a strategy to market communities as having this activity.” Cultural impact, for most of these extralocal actors, was characterized as a marketing scheme to draw in new people and new investment.

Emergent culture, for local actors, is a driving force of place-making and incorporates not only art, entertainment, and architecture, but also reflects their way of life—their values, ideas, and behaviors. Nancy, an executive director of a cultural institution in Northriver talked with me about culture as integrally linked to our humanity, “it’s who we are; the documentation of who we are.” Respondents also talked about the more mundane cultural experiences that perhaps the MCC would not accept in an application to become a cultural district. Frank, a business owner in the Westvale cultural district said,

“It’s hard to say what it is and isn’t cultural. Laundromats are cultural. The Family Dollar is a cultural experience... When people are talking about a cultural district, for some reason...it seems like most people are focused more on artistic businesses and old architecturally interesting buildings. But for me, AutoZone is American culture. 100% American culture.”

For locals, cultural experiences are everywhere—not confined to businesses and community spaces with art and “old architecturally interesting buildings.” As illustrated in this quote, culture—as defined by the MCC for the purposes of the cultural district program—tends to be limited to amenities that attract people to main streets.

Respondents did talk about the impacts of the quintessential cultural forms that the extralocal organizations advocate for, but when they did, it was mostly about how those cultural forms connect people in the community. In response to my question about what culture does for a place and the people in it, Frank responded: “Music still can be

somewhat of a glue that holds the community together” and that visual art “give[s] us more to ponder and appreciate in our daily surroundings” and “improves the overall morale.” As Frank suggests, local actors primarily think about culture in terms of the sensibility of the city and the difficult-to-quantify impact on the daily lives of the people who live there.

As a result of this tension, local actors often initially include blocks in their district application map that they feel are culturally rich, but the MCC feels differently. Kelly, a former committee member involved in the Westvale cultural district application process, spoke about their district site visit—a requirement of the process where representatives from the MCC tour the district. Originally, the committee working on the district application had intended to propose the entire Westvale downtown as their cultural district as there are a few different streets that are “rich in cultural assets.” The committee was stopped short by the MCC during the site visit, “When the MCC came and visited...they were like ‘You know this whole city isn’t a cultural district yet. It’s not yet.’ It really opened my eyes to be like ‘Oh right! We need to do a lot of work on [a couple of the streets] before that happens.’” The inability for this potential district to create a coherent cultural space was a problem that needed to be solved for the designation process to continue. Which, eventually, it did. There was, however, some pause on the part of the MCC whose standard ideas of what the place should look like did not match what locals were presenting. In these situations where discrepancies between two definitions of culture collide, more often than not, these blocks are removed from the map in order to get the official designation. Therefore, this tension in the definition of culture—local community identity vs. art and architecture—has real implications for the

kinds of places that are valued in the fabric of local communities. I now turn to the ways that local and extralocal actors characterize place and place-making

2. Frame Tension #2: Interpreting Place and Place-Making

A second tension between the narratives of local and extralocal actors had to do with how each group thinks about place and place-making. For the state, the aim of creative place-making is to use place as a canvas upon which a coherent and cohesive brand can be created to market a locale to attract tourists and new residents. For local actors, creative place-making is synonymous with community-building. They stress an organic and grassroots process that reflects local culture and serves residents.

Extralocal actors emphasize the cultural district program, and cultural development more broadly, both as a “growth strategy” and one that incites a “shift in the perception about place.” Several of these respondents spoke about the role that arts and culture can play in the “re-storytelling” of places. Margot, an administrator at a Massachusetts cultural agency, spoke with me about the purpose of the cultural district program, “From an economic development point of view, this is non-traditional work. Most economic development projects manifest in terms of physical development within communities. And that was not what we were doing. What we were doing was reimagining and re-describing place.” Similarly, Eric, an administrator at a national cultural agency, shared with me his perception of how developers latch onto the cultural district brand,

“I actually live within a state cultural district. And I would say there's not a lot of awareness in the community around what a state cultural district means or what that function is... You have developers, like calling their condo buildings and retail locations, branding those things around the art in some way.”

For these administrators integrally involved in the development of cultural district programs as well as others who provided technical assistance to districts, drawing a set of boundaries around an area rich in cultural assets is a strategy that aims to re-envision the symbolic elements of places—their reputations and narratives—in hopes of attracting new investment.

In addition to the symbolic characteristics of places, state and national actors also spoke with me about the more material elements of place that are used and shaped in the midst of cultural development. Eric, for example, talked about where the district program meets place in terms of network-building and incentives. He spoke about the cultural district program in the context of the shift toward place-based initiatives, referencing enterprise zones and empowerment zones, suggesting that the cultural district program falls in line with these sorts of “economic development techniques.” He stated that the cultural district program is a “place-based strategy where we can draw a line around a particular area and then allow for some particular advantages or incentives to drive development in those places. And so, for states to be able to identify where there are areas that can be developed, it can be driven by culture.” For this group of respondents, the program is more about identifying and highlighting those places that are ripe for new development and investment, using art and culture as the identifier and “uplifter.”

The other tangible place outcome is some “connective tissue” between the organizations in a place. These networks, Margot asserted, “get the art sector and the community development sector and economic development sector to speak with each other and to organize around similar goals, and to have arts programming infused into that development, which sort of enlivens communities.” Throughout the discussions with

these individuals, it is clear that the intersection of place and culture provides a sort of concrete entry point for the arts sector to show impact that funding organizations will understand. Their focus on re-describing place, incentives to develop place, and generating partnerships in place all point to place as a vehicle through which these actors can make a case to the state legislature about the importance of supporting art and culture in Massachusetts.

Sometimes, however, extralocal actors acknowledged places that did not provide the canvas for the kind of cultural development that they hoped for. Bonnie, one administrator at an organization that provides technical assistance to districts, stated, “There’s some communities that there just isn’t anything there. I mean, like I work with [city] and you’ll say, so what is your thing? And they’re trying to develop more culture. And they’ll be the first to tell you...there’s nothing there.” Sheila, another state-level administrator who works for an organization that provides districts with technical assistance stated, “In places that...don’t have a sort of historical experience of being tourist destinations or places that people go...there wasn’t a lot of easy wins. So that was that was an uphill battle.” From their accounts, one can see that, to higher level administrators, places are things that have (or don’t) symbolic and material cultural resources to be tapped in efforts to attract investment. When “there just isn’t anything there,” state and national actors reported difficulty meeting their development goals.

Consistent with the narrative of extralocal actors, local respondents articulated the MCC’s logic of using place to sell Massachusetts to tourists, new business, and new residents. Kelly, involved in the cultural district application process for Westvale, walked

me through the MCC's thinking about the utility of place in creative place-making projects—specifically the annual festival that the MCC requires districts to host:

“Say, for example, there's a person that came to [the city] and they had ice cream at [the local ice cream shop] on the day of [the annual cultural district festival]. And it was his best day of selling ever... And then that person is like ‘This is such a cool place! I saw this circus school perform and then there was some hip hop artists and there was this gallery here.’ And [he] thinks about moving here...”

For the state, the fruits of the cultural district festival are all of the potential investment it could attract to the locale, but also to the state. The cultural district designation, therefore, provides a sort of structure for packaging place and local culture in a way that appeals to the target audience—tourists and new residents. Several respondents used this sort of place branding rhetoric to describe the utility of the district.

In line with extralocal actors' narrative, local respondents used the “putting us on the map” narrative in their discussion of the state cultural agencies' goals. They often spoke about this logic in terms of the “cultural or historic value” a place brings to the state and the MCC as a gatekeeper for ultimately determining where there is value. In discussing his reaction to the possibility of applying to become an “officially designated” cultural district, Carl, a longtime resident of Northriver and member of the local cultural council explicitly pointed out the MCC's gatekeeping role and their orientation to promoting Massachusetts towns and cities to outsiders:

“My response was who needs it? We don't need no stinkin' cultural district. We already got one. We have all of these other events. It's like you're going to put another thing on our plate? Ask us to set up a cultural district... And the state says, 'We'll put you on the map because you have a cultural district.' I was not interested in being actively involved in all that stuff.”

Carl not only sees the MCC “putting you on the map” logic at work, but also sees how conforming to the state’s system has the potential to detract resources from cultural projects that align with community goals.

Several local respondents discussed this conception of place supported by the MCC—one that both sets a locale in relation to others in the state, but also intends to help visitors find places to visit. Harold, another longtime resident of Northriver and leader of cultural development initiatives, articulated the thought process of extralocal actors well when he said, “Why do you make a map? You make a map so that people who don't know where they are will have an idea of where they are. So obviously, the cultural district is not for internal consumption it's for external consumption.” While respondents often acknowledged that there was no money that came along with the official designation, many used this “putting us on the map” narrative as an example of how the MCC sees themselves supporting locales by bringing in outside investment. Most respondents referenced the MCC using the cultural district program to “put places on the map” in order to develop an “economic engine” driven by art and culture that attracts new business, new residents, and visitors.

For local actors, place and its making are necessarily oriented around organic and grassroots strategies that build both place *and* community. Helen, a businessowner in the center of the Westvale cultural district shared with me her concern about the cultural district program and her vision for how place-making should work, “I don't know we're just evolving towards [a] much more structured sense of building community. And I...worry about that a little bit. I like the more inspired or less formal stuff.” Helen, and others, indicated discomfort with the more formal systems that govern the way art and

creativity relate to place. Additionally, like Helen, most local respondents spoke about creative place-making in terms of community rather than place—an important distinction when examining their logics.

In addition to advocating for organic and grassroots place-making strategies, respondents spoke of the importance of using art as a space where people can “cut loose” and “celebrate”—behaviors that build communities, rather than entertainment machines. In doing so, local actors expressed how important the local culture and sensibility of the place is in the lives of the people who live there and cultural work that is happening there. Shelly, an artist living and working in Northriver, spoke about what it is like to make art in the city. She spoke about this place as providing “safety” for artists and “channels for people to dig deeper and be more risky and more messy.” She spoke about the intentions of artists she knows in the area and how they approach their work, “They're just like I want to play and experiment. And this is serving me and feeding my soul, but it's not about you know like hob-knobbing with the right people, you know? And schmoozing.” Shelly understands this place as one that nurtures artists in their own right and sees this as developing her as an artist and as a person.

Helen similarly referred to the character of Westvale when discussing the use of art and culture in building community. She referred to her city as “funky, blue collar, and nitty gritty.” She asserted that the reason nothing is “plain vanilla” in the town is because it “[grew] organically” through “the history of the town and the industrial agricultural roots. The fact that there were so many immigrants—very very solid, cohesive groups of immigrants...” Local respondents often pointed to the local culture and specificity of place in explaining the cultural work that happens in their communities.

Veronica, in a leadership position for the Westvale cultural district, similarly addressed the organic and grassroots nature of creative place-making when she spoke with me about the very distinct needs of the different regions of the town despite the fact that it is one city. She stated,

“If we [had] all of the money in the world to make [this city] the most robust, strongest, healthiest [city] it could ever be, what that would look like for [one street], what that would look like for [another street], what that would look like for [this building], what that would look like for [this other part of town]... I think they're different things... I think that that necessarily makes the growth that is happening here very organic and really like we're becoming our own animal rather than we're ascribing to become like another town. We've got our own thing going on. We're a little funky and we're definitely grassroots and we believe in hard work.”

Even in one city, she suggests, the cultures and needs of different parts of town are very distinct. The cultural health of a community is determined by hyper-local factors of place. Local actors make decisions—cultural, and otherwise—about their place using information about the sensibilities of the city and its streets and blocks, rather than subscribing to a standard idea of what a culturally vibrant place should look like.

The tension between state and local actors in terms of how they think about and use place came through in most of my interviews. State actors and local actors report the MCC's interest in using place to attract outsiders and generate revenue. This is opposed to local actors who stress the use of place for building a sense of community among residents and using organic and grassroots means by which to achieve this goal. I now turn to the distinct ways in which local and state actors define success.

3. Frame Tension #3: Interpreting Success

Local and extralocal actors have different definitions of success when it comes to the relationship between culture and place. Extralocal actors define success as using the

arts to generate economic engines and increasing the recognition of the arts. When talking about extralocal actors' definition of success, local respondents reported their primary goal as being able to make a case to the state legislature to increase funding for the arts—a goal that, importantly, both local and state actors see as in their interest. Most often, local actors contest this definition of success with their own that stresses using creativity to build relationships, provide opportunities for artists to make art, improve the sensibility of place, and boost community well-being. While this local definition of success is oriented around the wants and needs of the local, it is difficult to use these indicators as a barometer of success when making a case to the state legislature for increased funding for the arts.

In addressing the ways that extralocal actors measure success of creative place-making initiatives like the cultural district program, Harold, a Northriver resident involved in several local cultural development initiatives spoke with me about the program as the “economic manifestation of the ‘creative economy’” and distinguished their own wants for the community from that of the state:

“It's there not for artists or creative types. It's there for people who are interested in boosting tourism... Like why would you make this thing? I mean, some painter isn't gonna go 'I wonder where I should look... Oh! [This place] has a cultural district! That's where I have to go.' Right? It's not for that. I appreciate the thought that went into it and the people who are pushing it. It's like yeah, you want people to come to your town. So, it's an overlay you make up and slap down on top of it... It's interesting, art and creativity it's like you have the economic part which governments understand really well. And then this other part that I don't understand that is just like making memories.”

Harold distinguishes the orientation of extralocal actors from that of local actors like himself. Interested in attracting visitors and revenue to the state, the MCC is interested in implementing programs that market their places to an outside audience. Harold sees this

as contradicting the community's own logics and orientation to art and its relationship to place—memory-making being one of the outcomes of this relationship for locals. Other local respondents similarly juxtaposed positive creative economy outcomes with their own ideas about what constitutes a positive outcome—often things that are difficult to quantify.

Carl spoke to me about the importance of “solidifying” and “enhancing” the reputation of the arts as a part of the fabric of cities and towns:

“When you have something that has been designated as a cultural district, what you've done is you've said ‘Ok. Let us take stock of everything in that area that could be called a ‘cultural outpost.’ Is it a gallery, is it a performance space, is it a rehearsal space...’ And so, you identify those spaces. You have them on the map. You publicize them. And I think the idea...elevate the recognition and awareness with an eye towards preserving them and sort of declaring that they are a cultural resource.”

Carl touches on a second goal of the MCC in implementing the cultural district program: boosting the reputation of the arts in our society and ensuring the preservation of those cultural institutions in cities and towns. Therefore, the hopeful outcome of the publicity from the cultural district program is preserving the arts. While local and state actors both consider this endgame crucial, they do so through different means.

In addition to using the arts to stimulate the economy, extralocal actors spoke about success as using cultural development and districts to make a case to the state for elevating the position of the arts in society and increased investment. Several respondents working for state and national agencies spoke about the “capacity of the [cultural] sector” to do things for cities and towns. Margot, for example, spoke with me about the thinking behind taking data about cultural districts to the “public realm” and using them to make a “persuasive case” about the importance of art and culture in communities and to

“leverage more support.” Extralocal respondents also discussed visibility and tourism as markers of success. Margot spoke about cultural districts “uncover[ing] what’s hidden in plain sight” and several respondents spoke of an “if you build it, they will come” mentality.

For the state cultural agency, they preserve art and culture in the state by using the cultural district program to “sell” art and culture as a viable place-making strategy. In framing the cultural district program as a tool that generates revenue, they are able to elevate the role of art and culture in society. This dynamic came out in several of the interviews, as one respondent put it: “There's a business focus to [the cultural district program] too. I mean that's kind of the selling point to the state legislature for funding these things is it supports local business which supports taxes.” In other words, the MCC uses the revenue generated by cultural districts to show the state legislature that arts and culture is worth the investment.

Local actors are motivated by a very different understanding of success in terms of cultural development. They, for example, see building relationships as one of the desired outcomes of creative place-making. Some cultural experiences cultivate relationships between community members while others build bridges between community members and artists. In either case, respondents stress that these relationships develop organically through cultural events hosted in their respective places. Cathy, the director of a cultural nonprofit in Northriver, spoke to me about this type of connection: “There is an interaction and interactivity between the community and the artist. So, I think that is something really important... I love art in the street and people being able to be involved in interactive activities.” She continued talking about interactivity that she

witnessed at the city's Ice Art Festival, "There's artists who are there with chainsaws and chisels on the street creating things from blocks of ice... They'll say they love talking to the people on the street about their art and about what they're doing." Respondents described this connection between artists and community members not in terms of network through which artists (and places) can profit, but in terms of positive interactions, inspiration, and learning about the creative process that can boost a community's well-being and lead to personal development.

In terms of well-being, local actors frame the impact of arts and culture primarily as something that allows community members to separate themselves from their hectic lives and "cut loose." Helen, a Westvale cultural district business owner, shared with me her motivation for doing the hard work that she does to keep her business doors open:

"It's hard to describe what [artists] give to a community, but it's pretty critical. On a beautiful summer evening while I've got musicians in here and I can leave the door open and people are walking back and forth getting dinner or just going for a stroll with their kids. Man, it just doesn't get any better. It injects a feeling of beauty and peace into lives that are often not beautiful or peaceful. Just kind of like a little bit of an escape. Almost nourishing."

For her, it is rewarding to be part of creating the scene where community members come to escape from their daily lives to be with the people they care about and absorb the culture around them. When you provide a community with these types of experiences, local actors suggest, the well-being of its members is elevated, and people feel a greater sense of community. While surely a piece of the MCC's mission, it comes secondary to getting a return on investment in place.

Others talked about the unifying aspects of experiencing art in community and the necessity of it for survival. Shelly, a musician living in one of the districts introduced

earlier, articulated this sentiment well when she shared with me an experience she had at a concert she attended:

“I’ve seen some of my favorite bands and I’ve seen 20,000 people shouting lyrics together. Hugging, embracing, you know? You get so high off of that experience. Like just knowing that literally when somebody says ‘Love your brother. Love your sister. We’re all brothers and sisters,’ that’s when you actually have hope that that’s true, and you actually see it in action. You’re just like ‘Hell yeah!’ because you actually feel unity. Versus, I don’t know, something that might be more meaningful to a community like passing out like coats to the homeless in the winter. Like obviously this is like a very important thing and everybody is feeling the love and there’s gratitude. But it’s very like almost like a necessity.”

For this respondent, and others I spoke with, a world without art and culture would deprive her of a means of survival. The necessity of art and culture is experienced not in terms of revenue generation, but a mechanism by which people celebrate, become deeply connected to others, realize faith in the goodness of humanity, and nourish their souls.

And so, we’ve learned that local and extralocal actors working together to implement a creative place-making initiative come to the table with fundamental differences in how they define key aspects of the process—culture, place and place-making, and success. The state’s definitions of these three elements of the creative place-making process are tinged with their overarching goal of generating revenue for the state and using that as proof to the state legislature that the cultural enterprise is worth investment. This means that, for them, culture is reduced to artistic forms that are consumable. Place is a thing to be developed for exchange value and place-making is the process that makes that potential a reality. For them, success is the development of an economic engine.

Local actors understand these elements differently, in part, because rather than oriented around making a case to the state legislature, they are, first and foremost,

committed to serving the people who live and work there. This orientation means that local actors define culture as their community identity, values, and the seemingly mundane activities of the everyday life of the place. They understand place as community and place-making as a necessarily organic and grassroots process. They measure success in terms of the relationships cultivated, positive local sensibility and the extent to which community members are served—all difficult things to quantify for the purposes of building a case to the state to vie for funding. In the next section, I will discuss the ways that local actors harmonize with, modify, and circumvent state definitions of these elements of creative place-making.

Indeed, Scott (1998) addresses the local's capacity to resist the state's development schemes. The case of cultural districting is one that shows how the local is not simply powerless to respond to the state's efforts to bring high modernism to the local. Local actors, in fact, have their own logics that govern their action and are capable of negotiating those of the state to solve community problems and improve community well-being. Faced with some foreign and some familiar logics, I find that local actors assert their own logics, strategies, and art forms through hidden transcripts and minor acts of resistance. In the next section, I will show how local actors maneuver their own logics and those of extralocal organizations in order to achieve their own ambitions for their place, community, and local culture.

B. Weapons of the Weekend: Local Forms of Harmonization, Modification, and Circumvention

In *Weapons of the Weak*, Scott (1985: 31-35, 241) asserts that everyday acts of resistance amount to a covert or “quiet struggle” in which the peasantry defend their

interests in response to “unpopular government schemes” that appropriate land, labor, taxes, rents, etc. The peasantry, engage in acts like foot-dragging, dissimulation, and false compliance that require little coordination, represent a form of “self-help,” and resemble compliance to the state (Scott 1985: 29-34, 241). The aim of peasants’ resistance is to create a sort of “barrier reef” blocking state appropriation in order to meet their own needs and assert their own “vision of justice” (Scott 1985: 37). Again, it is not my intention to suggest that my relatively privileged local respondents—artists, business owners, and leadership of local cultural organizations—are in comparable positions to the highly marginalized population Scott was studying. Rather, I wish to convey what I did hear from my local respondents—the similar ways that they resist in the face of powerful extralocal organizations interested in making places in their own image. As people in relatively privileged positions, the local actors are effectively able to engage in several modes of adaptation in the face of a power differential between them and the state.

While local actors organizing around the state’s cultural district program do not resist extralocal organizations and their push for cultural districts, there are ways that they harmonize with, modify, and circumvent state logics. Much of this negotiation of logics by local actors is driven by their aim to protect their place and the people in it. Locales, for example, limit time and energy on facets of the cultural district program that serve tourists in order to focus on initiatives that serve community members. They may conform to the requirements of the cultural district program, but also assert their own visions of affordability and inclusivity through their own local programming independent of the cultural district program. In this section, I will discuss the everyday forms of harmonization, modification, and circumvention of extralocal cultural logics in the local.

The quality of their negotiations of these competing logics was place-dependent. In Northriver, a place with a long *established* cultural scene, respondents more often highlighted ways that they modify and circumvent state logics. In Westvale, a place with an *emerging* cultural scene, respondents more often cited examples of all three strategies. However, regardless of the stage in the life cycle of the cultural scene, local actors found ways to assert their own “vision[s] of justice” in the face of extralocal-imposed logics.

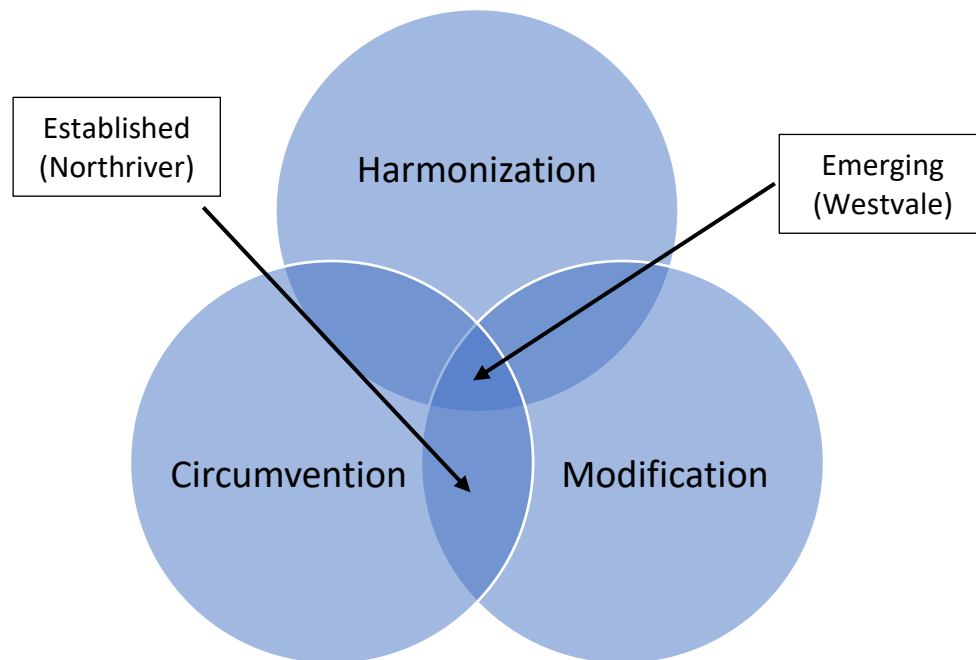


Figure 2: Modes of Adaptation for Established vs. Emerging Cultural Scenes

1. Mode of Adaptation #1: Harmonization

Respondents in Westvale, the city with an *emerging* cultural scene, more clearly integrated some of the MCC logics into their own schema. More often than not, these respondents were more easily able to reconcile the goal of elevating the arts as worthy of investment with their own local logics. Despite some harmony between their actions and the MCC logics, local actors often complied to meet their own ends having little to do with those of the state. For the most part, these points of harmonization generally had to

do with using the cultural district to cultivate strong partnerships between small businesses in the area. Additionally, some respondents had adopted a “space activation” narrative that advocates for making parts of town that lack “cultural assets” like galleries, restaurants, music shops, etc. rich in those amenities.

Several Westvale respondents spoke positively about the cultural district as a structure that encourages small businessowners to develop networks of support. Respondents spoke about their relationships with the other businessowners on their street and said that the cultural district creates opportunities for “getting to know each other,” “shar[ing] best practices,” “building relationships,” and “being able to call on each other.” This sort of “camaraderie” resulting from the cultural district was clear from Helen’s story about getting some help from one of the businessowners just up the street from her shop in the Westvale cultural district:

“I said ‘Oh, I know my fire thing was going on.’ It kept beeping. It was driving me nuts... I said ‘Stan, I can't get it to stop.’ He says ‘Alright. Let me look at it.’ So, he comes up and he looks at it and he says ‘Yeah. It's this this this and this.’ I said ‘That's great! What do I owe you?’ He said ‘Oh. Give me fifty bucks.’ I mean he was here for an hour... I love knowing people and being able to call them up and if they can help you, they will.”

This sort of collegial dynamic echoed throughout the Westvale interviews and many respondents attributed it to the formation of the cultural district. Some respondents also referenced monthly meetings with businessowners in the cultural district as the impetus for these relationships. While building networks of small businesses, artists, local government, and nonprofit organizations is central to the state’s strategy, they require these sorts of partnerships to meet program goals—attracting cultural enterprises, encouraging business growth, and establishing tourist destinations. Local actors

harmonize their actions with the partnership logic in order to break down silos and gain support in a challenging and often thankless position.

Activating spaces was another point of harmonization between state and local actors in Westvale, but again, a point that was motivated by different endgames. Respondents spoke positively about the conversion of town spaces lacking cultural assets to ones rich in art and culture. Oftentimes, this conversion included an increase in aesthetically pleasing public spaces, more venues with open mics, “unique businesses” that combine different services, and new restaurants. In the minds of local actors, all of this sort of “space activation” improves the lives of the people who live there, rather than establishing destinations. One respondent, a member of the Westvale cultural district planning committee, addressed the “power” of the cultural district in “multiply[ing] the success” of the place:

“Thanks to there being more small businesses offering interesting things, thanks to there being a cultural district, thanks to their being [the city arts organization] ... there's more to do here and so it keeps people in town. It keeps them loyal to what [the city] has to offer and then, in turn, just elevates the experience of living here.”

While these narratives do harmonize with the MCC’s desire for the “activation of space” through art and culture, local actors spoke about these goals and benefits in ways that show their desire to serve the people who live and work there—keeping people in town rather than bringing people to town.

Respondents in Westvale regularly brought up in conversation one street that they consider to be a “cultural gap” that needs to be addressed in order to pursue an expansion of the cultural district. They refer to the street as a part of the city that is not “culturally inviting.” In fact, one respondent shared that when the MCC visited the district and

walked on this particular street they said, “We’re not feeling it.” In response to this urge to eliminate the street from the cultural district map, several respondents mentioned strategies to “revitalize” the street. The pressure to make streets “culturally inviting” is palpable in Westvale.

While the state encourages this form of cultural development to bring dollars back to Main Street, most respondents, especially small business owners, expressed their compliance with the MCC’s logic for other reasons. Hank, a local tattoo artist and shop owner in Northriver, spoke to me about why he decided to participate in the district’s monthly promotional event designed to bring people to Main Street,

“I gave half of my shop to [the city’s monthly promotional event]. It cost me a hundred bucks a month. I take no commission from anybody. I want to do it for the art. I do it to promote the local artists and the art in general and for people. I don’t ever really have a lot of people come back and say, ‘I was here at [the monthly promotional event] and now I want to have work done.’”

For Hank, and others, they do participate in satisfying the requirements of the cultural district program, but do so to highlight artists and their work, as well as providing a space for people to congregate. Therefore, harmonizing their behaviors to extralocal strategies is not driven by generating revenue for businesses or the city, but rather serving the interests of the community. I now turn to ways that local actors modify state logics.

2. Mode of Adaptation #2: Modification

Respondents in both cultural districts conveyed ways that they adapt in the face of extralocal cultural development logics by modifying those logics to fit their own local logics. In some cases, this meant reframing their own local projects in ways that harmonize with the state logics while in others it meant delicately balancing extralocal logics and their own. Several respondents, for example, pointed to the pressure of having

to conform their own projects and goals for the community into a narrative that fits with what extralocal funders, like the MCC, want in order to compete for funding. Harold, a longtime resident of Northriver and leader of an initiative to ensure affordable space for artists said along these lines:

“When MassDevelopment and the Barr Foundation [are] like ‘Oh man! We are mad for makerspaces; we're pumping out grant proposals that say the [affordable space for artists project] is essentially creating a gigantic makerspace for artists because what artists need is space... If people are dangling money, the narrative is the frame...the context we are going to write it for that money.’”

It is easy to see in this approach to cultural development how grassroots initiatives that reflect the wants and needs of local stakeholders can quickly become projects that reflect the logics and goals of higher level state agencies through grant applications, state-wide convenings, and technical assistance activities. Locales that apply for a cultural district designation regularly face similar barriers. Grassroots teams have ideas and plan for projects that are important to them for their community, but need support in order to implement them. Turning to the state and foundations, grassroots teams are faced with established systems and programs that ask them to fit their project into the criteria that reflect their market-driven logics.

In terms of local grantmaking to artists, several local actors involved in cultural grant decision-making spoke to me about how they make decisions between several applications for cultural projects. Veronica, a member of the Westvale grants committee stated:

“We want to elevate opportunities for artists themselves, but at the same time...do we have programming that appeals to children? Is it accessible for all? It's not just for gallery-goers. Is there stuff for people of all abilities and interests? Are there things that really appeal more to seniors?”

Local actors making decisions about the cultural life of their city frequently think about populations that are often overlooked in the implementation of extralocal cultural programs at the local level. What Veronica points out here is one mechanism by which local actors can allocate funds from the state in way that is consistent with their own local logics. Therefore, local grantmaking committees spend their funds on things that are consistent with the MCC's logics, but also on projects that match their own community goals—in this case, making the community more inclusive. Betty, another member of the Westvale grants committee spoke similarly about the distribution of cultural council grants:

“We make it a stipulation in our cultural council priorities that they really have to benefit the people of [the city]... Sure, we want to attract people from out of town to come to [the city], but our primary goal is to entertain and provide cultural opportunities for people in [the city] and that involves knowing who's here and knowing what they want.”

Here, Betty explicitly sets extralocal and local goals and logics as opposed to each other, suggesting that the committee aims to balance both. Contrary to the goals of the state, local actors make it their mission to serve locals first. Ultimately, this makes for a local mentality that understands the importance of attracting tourists and new residents, but also modifies extralocal cultural development logics and strategies to serve community members first and foremost.

Julie, a member of Northriver's local cultural council, spoke glowingly of the restoration of the local park—a cultural project that began shortly after the city's cultural district was designated. She cited it as an “open space for anyone from any walk of life, any age can congregate and just enjoy this beautiful town.” The cultural events that happen there, like film festivals and concerts, she states “inject some life into the

downtown. Just getting folks walking...and it's unrelated to buying stuff. Just like being together.” Julie suggests that the cultural district events hosted in this space bring the community together to occupy common space. She juxtaposes this local logic with the more market-driven cultural development scheme often asserted by extralocal actors. In this way, local actors take cultural projects supported by the state and use them to meet their own community needs—in this case, space to provide opportunities for the community to come together.

Cathy, the director of another cultural organization in Northriver echoed this sentiment when she spoke about a local festival where artists carve sculptures out of ice. Stating that the city *loses* money from this event (apparently “ice is expensive”), she says that the most important thing is the “attempt to bring people together.” These events that provide a space for community members to join together, several respondents state, make the community more welcoming and its people friendlier. Ultimately, respondents agreed that these events give people the opportunity to feel a sense of community. Therefore, while hosting festivals is technically part of the cultural district program’s requirements, locales are using it for their own means as opposed to creating spaces that generate income. I now turn to ways that local actors circumvent extralocal cultural development logics.

3. Mode of Adaptation #3: Circumvention

Respondents in both cities overwhelmingly described their motivation for planning cultural projects and activities in the community (e.g. festivals) as promoting the well-being of community members and bringing community members together. There are times when these motivations lead to circumvention of those of the extralocal

organizations. For some respondents, this was articulated in a way that resists any sort of cultural project initiated by top-down processes, like the cultural district program. Harold, for example, stated “Ultimately it's the folks at the very bottom who are going to make it happen. They can be helped by money... But if you don't have the starting spark in those people you're not going to go anywhere.” This emphasis on the creative place-making process as necessarily grassroots was echoed by almost all of the respondents with whom I spoke. A few even went so far as to indicate their reluctance in having non-locals involved in what happens in their community. As Jamie, the director of a Northriver community improvement organization suggested, “I think the businesses right on Main Street or the people who live in [and] work right on Main Street know better what really goes on there and what changes would be beneficial or harmful.” The notion that no one knows better what the community needs than the people who live and work there motivated much of the resistance to non-local actors having a hand in shaping the local.

Motivated by this sort of rhetoric, local resistance of state logics took the form of advocating for affordability for artists and reaching underserved populations—goals that locals saw in conflict with those of extralocal organizations. Local actors in the Northriver cultural district indicated resistance to the state’s place-marketing scheme in their deep commitment to affordability for artists. Respondents from this city frequently pointed to a long legacy of local actors championing the mission of ensuring “the possibility of people working creatively without the profit motive being there.”

Respondents repeatedly point to one such Northriver champion who reserved the third floor of his newly purchased shopping complex for an art studio that housed dance and theater companies, an art gallery, and a children’s art space. Respondents

overwhelmingly report that because of this individual’s commitment to creativity in its own right, “he resisted the pressure to commercialize the space” and, as a result, “[the] space was a huge incubation space.” This is a local value that, while not part of the MCC’s logic, is deeply ingrained in the logic of grassroots actors. Driven by the logic that artists and access to creative experiences for all are part of what make healthy communities, the director of a Northriver nonprofit gallery, said:

“We don't want to lose our artists here. We don't want to drive them out, so we have to keep pushing back against the forces...of gentrification the forces of rising rents and all of that. I think we just have to keep pushing back and saying that is not what makes a healthy community. It's like with food. Why commodify food? I mean we have a really thriving wonderful small farmers market for small farmers living in the area. So, it should be the same for the Arts. There should be a lot of small affordable spaces for artists to work.”

For respondents in Northriver, their guiding logic for cultural development is whether or not a policy, program, or project will help or hinder the affordability of the place for artists to live and work. As we know, attracting investment to a place, explicitly written as a primary goal of the cultural district program, prices longtime residents out of their own communities. These local actors consistently shared with me their desire to not have their work and the work of community artists driven by the profit motive, but rather providing a social good that boosts community well-being.

Current resistance to the extralocal organizations’ profit-driven logic aligns with this city’s commitment to ensuring affordability for artists—a goal in direct and indirect conflict with those of the MCC. The city has committed to a project—modeled after a land trust system—that takes a piece of property off of the market in order to use it solely for creative purposes. The idea, according to Harold, the project’s director, was to:

“preserve a space in the heart of [the city] for the arts used in perpetuity and to create a space that would be as affordable as possible... We do that by buying it

and restricting it so that the way it's owned it cannot easily, if ever, revert to anything that would be private. The point is it's off the market... It's never going to be developed into something else and the so that means you take it away from real estate pressures.”

The community members who came together to work on this project reported to me their perspective that the community was slipping toward one solely interested in investments in places for the purpose of generating revenue. Counter to the cultural district program logics, this project aims to reassert this place’s “vision of justice” characterized by a commitment to affordability, and in turn, reassert the role of art and culture in elevating artists’ well-being and, by extension, the well-being of the members of the community.

Respondents in Westvale spoke about a deep commitment to reaching underserved populations through cultural development work. In doing so, local arts and culture leaders use local knowledge to gauge the needs of its community members. This is in contrast to extralocal respondents who rarely spoke about cultural opportunities for marginalized or otherwise underserved communities. One example of how this logic is put into practice in Westvale is through an intergenerational arts project where teenagers and senior citizens of the community worked on a photography project together. They took pictures of their favorite places in the city and wrote hand-written love letters to those places. These images and letters were on display at the annual festival that takes place in the cultural district.

Veronica, the person who spearheaded the project, sees this project as one that was motivated by a perceived need in the community and using art and culture as an effective means by which to fulfill that need. From her perspective, the project is one that “engage[s], unifi[es], and strengthen[s] community.” She shared with me her feeling that senior citizens are one of those populations that are underserved and can be reached using

arts and culture as this very reliable means of weaving those populations back into the fabric of the community. In addition to having a desire to learn from community groups, she shared with me that her policy is to stay “as sensitive and receptive as possible.” At the forefront of her mind, as the director of the most prominent arts organization in the city, is “How can we create strong, dynamic arts and cultural programming that is really directly reaching the groups and populations that we might not be reaching right now?” This logic is juxtaposed by that of those extralocal organizations that are most interested in tapping into tourist populations with enough economic capital to reinvest into local economies.

With clear distinctions between how local and extralocal actors think about critical elements of the creative place-making process, local actors are forced to harmonize with, modify, and circumvent those logics and strategies in various ways. I now turn to a discussion of what these findings teach us about the capacity of locales, as well as potential opportunities to push states to think in terms of local knowledge and logics.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION: FLIPPING THE TRANSCRIPT

Extralocal actors are locally rooted in the creative place-making process though their programs and policies aimed at investing in art and culture to make places that cater to tourists and new residents. Several scholars have theorized about and documented the plethora of ways that a variety of extralocal actors settle in locales with the aim of making places that serve their own interests. Some have identified the assortment of actors involved in place growth schemes that are implemented purely for return on investment (Logan and Molotch 2007). Others have pointed to the incompatibility of the state's logics and strategies with those of the local, as well as the ways that the local resists (Scott 1998, 1985). As arts and culture have become a primary vehicle for renewal, extralocal actors have absorbed creative logics and strategies into their own development schemes. As I have found in conversation with these actors, their interest in the cultural enterprise is economic in nature. They aim to brand places and market place identity to attract investment in the form of tourism, development, and new residents.

In interviews conducted with individuals from locales and extralocal organizations, I found that they each see the role of art and culture in place and community differently. Extralocal interest is primarily in using art and culture to generate revenue for the state of Massachusetts and its cities and towns. One way that they do this is by formally designating and marketing places across the state that are rich in "cultural assets"—the standard of which is visual, literary, and performing arts. The state and other extralocal actors see the opportunity for increased profit resulting from investment in art and culture. As such, they have designed programming that uses culture to develop places

with the goal of generating revenue. Local actors, however, are interested in organic, grassroots, and collaborative means by which to develop a thriving community, not just a place. Culture, for them, incorporates not only art and architecture, but also reflects their way of life—their values, ideas, and behaviors. Most importantly, local actors stress using art and creativity to cultivate an active and thriving community that nurtures its artists and residents. They prefer to implement grassroots creative place-making initiatives that support their goals of ensuring affordability, encouraging participation and memory-making, and providing cultural opportunities that enrich the lives of the people who live there.

These findings point to a critical mismatch in how local and extralocal actors—both having a hand in making places and communities—think about how to do this work. Are there, then, opportunities for these groups with different logics, strategies, and relations to the local to get on the same page about the role of art and culture in community? In answering this question, I now turn to two important implications that come from these findings—one theoretical and the other practical; one about the local and the other about the extralocal.

First, these findings suggest that locales are not simply cogs in the state machine. Through harmonization, modification, and circumvention, locales are able to nurture their own local logics and work to make sure that they meet the community's cultural goals. In part, this requires local champions to work tirelessly to spearhead these efforts.

Second, one explanation for the gaps in understanding of culture, place, and success is that state-level cultural agencies are in a difficult middle ground, stuck between local groups who struggle to piece together the funding and space for cultural initiatives

that serve community members and a state legislature that is keen on funding initiatives that attract investment to the state. Organizations like the MCC have to answer to the state legislature for their funding, which means they have to use the state legislature's language and logics to build a case for the legitimacy of the role of arts and culture in cities and towns in Massachusetts. Most often, this means showing that the cultural sector generates state and local revenue—storefronts are occupied, jobs are created, and people are visiting and moving to the state's cities and towns.

It is this sort of dynamic that gives locales an illusion of choice. Extralocal actors responsible for implementing the program report that they want places to become “whatever [local folks] want them to be.” Extralocal organizations develop a framework for their creative place-making programs that gives choice in how locales design, plan, and orient their cultural district. However, through their application guidelines, communication on site visits, state-wide convenings, and technical assistance, they require locales to do the cultural development the way that they say locales should do it. Districts boundaries should include and exclude certain things, partnerships should include certain kinds of organizations, branding should look a certain way, and the district should include only certain cultural forms—all elements of districts that have tremendous impacts on their quality. Essentially, locales are given the latitude to incorporate elements of their local culture, however, they must be packaged in a way that fits with the particular extralocal logics of the cultural district program—to attract investment.

There is, however, an opportunity to “flip the transcript.” There were a couple of times in interviews with extralocal respondents where they interrupted their own

discussion of their organizational logic and spoke from a personal perspective—one that aligned much more closely with that of the local. Margot interrupted herself during a discussion of the importance of partnerships between the cultural organizations, local government, and businesses of a place. She stated:

“When you think about what happens when there are crises, I mean, that sort of the effect...the psyche of people. They turn to the arts. So aside from that, you know, the arts organizations attach themselves to youth development, economic development, they attach themselves to social justice issues, you know, they can provide a place of respite, of joy or of personal development. So, you know, their presence in communities is very deep and rich and not always understood.”

There are, indeed, people who work in organizations somewhat removed from the cultural work happening on the ground whose personal understanding of culture, place, and success do actually match that of local actors. In order for these sorts of local logics to dominate decision-making at high levels, there needs to be some change in the kinds of outcomes that the state legislature values. Cultural agencies must be able to build their case to support communities through the arts on the agenda of providing places of respite, joy, personal development, and yes—smiles. If the state legislature took this case seriously, perhaps state-level arts agencies could develop programming less oriented around profit, value, and growth, and more around meeting the basic needs of the people who live in the state’s cities and towns.

While this paper does provide some important findings about how those at all levels rallying around culture, community, and place think about this work and navigate each other’s logics, there are questions that go unanswered. All of the respondents who participated in this study are people deeply involved in cultural work. Researchers interested in answering questions about how everyday people integrate cultural development into their own cognitive maps of their community and how they participate

in their community's creative work should talk to residents of communities with cultural districts who are not integrally involved in the creative work of the place.

These findings call to extralocal organizations and agencies to ensure that their programs are structured in a way that is responsive to and values the logics, strategies, and needs of the local. If there is anything to be learned by this investigation, it is that cultural development, or any kind of place-making effort, must incorporate local knowledge and sentiments. In the case of state-supported cultural development, this means the state needs to have a broader understanding of culture, privileging all sorts of cultural experiences, considering places as living, breathing, communities and measuring success in terms of the enrichment of the lives of the people who live there.

APPENDIX A INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. State and National Level

Tell me how you arrived in the position that you're in.

What is your professional background?

How did you get involved in this work?

What role does arts and culture play in community?

Can you describe a bit about the work that you do at _____?

How would you characterize _____'s role in the arts and culture field?

Is there work that you do specifically for cultural districts? Where? What is the nature of that work?

What do you consider to be characteristics of a healthy community?

Cultural Development:

What reasons do states/locales give in their decision to [insert appropriate cultural development initiative]?

What makes for success?

Characteristics of locales that are not as successful?

What kind of support or resources do you provide to locales?

Common challenges you see locales face?

Cultural Districts:

What makes for a successful cultural district?

Characteristics of communities that are not as successful?

Strategies that communities use that make for success or not?

Challenges you see districts face?

What kind of support or resources do you provide to cultural districts? Other things that other organizations have done? What have been some of the most helpful technical assistance materials?

Can you walk me through how your team makes decisions about what kind of policies or programs to advocate for?

What kinds of initiatives are discussed and dismissed?

Impact:

So, a cultural initiative is implemented by a locale. What happens after?

What does your team hope will happen?

What changes actually do tend to occur in locales/states?

Final question:

Is there anything I did not ask about that you would like to share?

2. State Level

What kinds of things do you pay attention to when you conduct site visits for places applying to become a cultural district?
Are there certain kinds of cultural district applications that are discussed and dismissed? What is the rationale for their dismissal?
What makes cultural districting the best way to achieve success?
What changes tend to occur in communities that are designated?

3. Local Level

Tell me how you arrived in the position that you're in?
What is your professional background? What is your relationship to the community?
What made you choose [town]? What kept you here?
What is your role in the district? How did you get involved?
What about your experience helps you contribute to this initiative?
What do you consider to be characteristics of a healthy community?
Can you describe the local culture of this place?
What is the experience of everyday life like here?
How do you see the cultural district in relation to local culture? Sustaining? Building on? Changing? Hindering? Redefining?
How do you see your work fitting into the fabric of [the city]?
How would you compare this place to the surrounding communities?
What's your sense of how the cultural district came about?
Why was this strategy used? Were others discussed and dismissed?
How would you characterize the goal(s) of the cultural district?
Do you feel that it serves you? Who does it serve? And how?
How did key stakeholders plan for the cultural district? Who is involved? What kind of systems are in place to do the planning work?
What are challenges that those planning for the cultural district face? What resources does the team tap for support?
What is the role of non-local agencies and organizations?
Do state-level agencies have a role? What is their role?
Do you feel like state-level agencies impact the work you do on the ground locally? How?
What is the impact of the cultural district?
What do you see as the impact of the cultural district? Have there been changes to the community? What are they?
Do you personally think that the cultural district is meeting its goals?

Final question:

Is there anything I did not ask about that you would like to share?

APPENDIX B MASSACHUSETTS CULTURAL DISTRICT DESIGNATION GUIDELINES⁴

What is a Cultural District?

A cultural district is a specific area in a city or town. It has a number of cultural facilities, activities, and assets. It is a walkable, compact area. It is easy for visitors and residents to recognize. It is a hub of cultural, artistic and economic activity. The Mass Cultural Council knows that each community is unique. No two cultural districts will be alike.

Who Can Apply?

Any city or town in Mass can apply for cultural district designation. The city or town is the applicant for a cultural district designation. The city or town must identify a specific area in their city or town. The city or town must establish a partnership. The partnership includes organizations and stakeholders in the district. A city or town may apply for more than one cultural district designation. Each designation requires a separate application.

Cultural Districts Goals

The goals of the cultural districts, described in the legislative statute, are:

- Attract artists and cultural enterprises
 - Encourage business and job development
 - Establish the district as a tourist destination
 - Preserve and reuse historic buildings
 - Enhance property values
 - Foster local cultural development
- See the legislation for the Mass Cultural Districts Initiative.

Length of Designation

A cultural district designation will be in effect for five years. An Annual Progress Report is required each year. A designation is renewable for an additional five years. The district partnership must have maintained compliance with reporting requirements. The city or town must recommit to its cultural district's work.

Cultural District Partnerships and Management

The applicant must be a city or town. The application is submitted by the city or town's chief elected official. A city or town municipal department is the contact for the district. Before submitting an application a city or town must form a cultural district partnership. The partnership must be a diverse mix of organizations and businesses. The partnership must represent the shared interests of the district. The majority must be in the district. Organizations and individuals involved in the management of the district on an ongoing basis are:

- City or town
- Local Cultural Council
- Cultural organization/s

⁴ These guidelines were written and published by the Massachusetts Cultural Council and were pulled directly from their website: <https://massculturalcouncil.org/communities/cultural-districts/application-process/>

At least 2 artists that live and/or work in the proposed district

Organization/s that represents artists

For profit creative business i.e. gallery, dance school

Local business and/or chamber of commerce

A city or town may elect to include additional entities. This depends on the assets in the cultural district, and the district's goals. They can be:

Tourism

Historic preservation

Leisure industry, including hotels and similar businesses

Education institutions

Define the partners roles and duties. Decide on a meeting schedule, terms of office and other expectations. The partnership is responsible for developing a management plan. The plan must include agreed upon objectives. This includes: tasks, resources, timelines and milestones. It should include ways to measure success. Success relates to the goals set out in the application for designation. The partnership will convene on a regular basis. The partnership may form advisory committees, working groups, and sub-committees. This is to support the district's goals.

Third party arrangement:

As the applicant, the city or town may give the day to day management to a cultural district partner. The third party will act as the city or town's agent. The partner must be in good financial standing. The partner must have the capacity to lead the partnership. However, the city or town must be in the partnership.

A written agreement is necessary if the day to day management is given to a third party. The agreement between the city or town and the third partner outlines the tasks. The agreement must include an exit plan for either party. Fiscal arrangements, reporting and so on must be included. The agreement should be in line with local municipal regulations. The agreement should be reviewed by the city or town's legal counsel before submitting an application.

The partnership may include cultural for-profit or not-for-profit organizations that are outside the geographic boundaries of the district. Those organizations must produce cultural programming within the district. The cultural district may promote them in cultural district materials.

For advice, contact Mass Cultural Council staff.

Resolution by the City/Town

Any city or town applying for a state-designated cultural district must hold at least one community input meeting. This is so that people can learn about the cultural district map and goals.

Following the community input meeting(s), the city or town must pass a resolution. This is a commitment to the state-designated cultural district.

Eligibility for Designation

The applicant must be a city or town of the Commonwealth of Mass.

The cultural district must have defined boundaries.

The cultural district must be walkable and accessible.

The cultural district must have cultural facilities and assets.

The city or town must hold at least one community meeting. There must be adequate notice for public input. The city or town must pass a resolution. This is to commit to supporting a state designated cultural district. (See Sample Resolution.) .

The city or town must establish a cultural district partnership. This is prior to applying for designation. The partnership will provide oversight and management of the district.

The cultural district partnership must develop:

Goals and objectives

A management plan

A marketing plan

Assessment measures for the district

The city or town must participate in the state cultural districts signage program. Required purchase is four (4) signs. This will incur some costs. Each sign costs \$145.

APPENDIX C
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS: TWO MASSACHUSETTS CITIES, 2012-2016⁵

	City of Northriver	City of Westvale	State of Massachusetts
POPULATION	28,534	16,042	6,742,143
RACE⁶			
<i>White</i>	86.8%	92.8%	79.3%
<i>Black</i>	2.8%	2.0%	7.3%
<i>Asian</i>	5.6%	1.4%	6.1%
<i>Identifies as two or more races</i>	3.1%	2.2%	3.0%
HISPANIC OR LATINO			
<i>Hispanic or Latino</i>	8.4%	7.0%	10.9%
<i>Not Hispanic or Latino</i>	91.6%	93.0%	89.1%
MEDIAN AGE	38.7	44.9	39.4
OCCUPATION			
<i>Management, business, science, and arts occupations</i>	57.5%	43.2%	44.7%
<i>Service occupations</i>	14.8%	13.5%	17.7%
<i>Sales and office occupations</i>	17.2%	27.6%	22.2%
<i>Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations</i>	4.7%	6.9%	6.8%
<i>Production, transportation, and material moving occupations</i>	5.8%	8.9%	8.7%
INDUSTRY⁷			
<i>Manufacturing</i>	5.7%	11.1%	9.1%
<i>Retail Trade</i>	9.3%	10.5%	10.6%
<i>Finance and insurance, real estate</i>	4.9%	7.8%	7.5%
<i>Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services</i>	10.7%	8.0%	13.4%
<i>Educational services, and health care and social assistance</i>	45.0%	37.5%	28.1%
<i>Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services</i>	8.4%	7.0%	8.8%
INCOME			
<i>Median Household Income</i>	\$61,813	\$58,552	\$70,954

⁵ Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

⁶ Estimates for the first four categories of race include individuals who identify as one race.

⁷ The industries listed are the top six industries in both cities. The most well-represented industries of these two cities are consistent with those of the state of Massachusetts overall.

<i>Percentage of families whose income in the past 12 months is below the poverty level</i>	8.7%	5.6%	8.0%
HOUSING			
<i>Median Home Value</i>	\$313,200	\$242,200	\$341,000
<i>Median Gross Rent</i>	\$984	\$909	\$1,129
EDUCATION			
<i>Less than 9th grade</i>	2.0%	1.5%	4.7%
<i>9th to 12th grade, no diploma</i>	3.0%	3.8%	5.3%
<i>High school graduate (includes equivalency)</i>	17.9%	32.0%	25.1%
<i>Some college, no degree</i>	12.3%	17.1%	16.0%
<i>Associate's degree</i>	7.2%	11.6%	7.7%
<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	24.7%	22.4%	23.1%
<i>Graduate or professional degree</i>	32.9%	11.6%	18.2%

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