CREATIVE PLACEMAKING: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Creative placemaking refers to efforts to use the arts for means exceeding their intrinsic value as beautiful, innovative, critical, and inspiring...
placemaking to be gentrification: the replacement of a working class population with a wealthier cadre of urbanites (Markusen 2014). Grodach, Foster and Murdoch (2014) recently investigated the relationship of two different kinds of arts activities – the fine arts and commercial arts – with indicators of gentrification (entailing neighborhood turnover) and revitalization (entailing more shared improvements). The authors found that fine arts activities, including museums, galleries, and theaters, correlate negatively with gentrification factors but positively with neighborhood revitalization factors such as rising income levels. Commercial arts on the other hand have significant association with gentrification factors of neighborhood upscaling and neighborhood build-out. These findings suggest that arts-driven gentrification is, at least in part, a myth, and remind planners of the varied potential of creative placemaking.

A third area of critique focuses on the ramifications of smaller venues for lower income neighborhoods, venues that have historically been “marginalized” by creative placemaking’s dominant entrepreneurial mode (Markusen 2014, 572). Markusen (2014) has recently pointed out that arts-based organization embedded within local communities can foster activism on diverse neighborhood issues, including health, crime and immigration. Grodach (2009) conducted a survey of Dallas area artist cooperatives, arts incubators offering technical help to artists, art centers specific to ethnic minorities, and art centers intended for community use. Grodach found a story of diverse successes, and limitations – some artists avoid engaging with community-oriented venues due to the perceived lower quality of their activities. But Grodach found an array of tools for planners interested in promoting revitalization through creative placemaking, and beckoned planners to move beyond their focus on consumer-oriented strategies.

This issue of Carolina Planning should be read with this literature and its critiques in mind. There are a number of contributions in this issue focusing on creative placemaking in rural settings and small towns, while others focus on new developments in diverse, big city settings. Other contributions consider the role of art in public space and creative storytelling about public space as means of taking on issues of identity and division in the urban setting. Altogether, the various contributions highlight creative placemaking as an area of planning practice consisting of far more than the conventional consumer-oriented approaches. The contributions tell a hopeful story of a variety of ways in which creative placemaking is revitalizing a great diversity of communities.

Works Cited


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