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Arts and Social Justice: The Role of Art Organizations in Building Community

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The Role of Art Organizations in Building Community

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ABSTRACT

ARTS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE: THE ROLE OF ART ORGANIZATIONS IN BUILDING COMMUNITY

HANNAH ROMIG

This research paper will examine how art can be used as a tool for community development and social change, using a community arts program in one city's multi-cultural district as a case study. Research will be conducted using a variety of methods, including quantitative data analysis and qualitative data collection. Interviews with key informants and organizations will be a primary source of qualitative data. Observations and census data will be used to supplement information gathered from interviews. This particular community arts program employs principles of organizational sustainability, placemaking, and collaboration in its art-based development practices. Because art-based community development is not issue-based work, the art-based movement for creating social change challenges traditional activism and organizing-based models. This paper will argue that because of these characteristics, art-based community building and cultural programs have the capacity to create sustainable kinship, friendship and trust-based networks, which empower residents and strengthen the capacity of the community to imagine and implement solutions to meet the intimacies and complexities of community needs.

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Introduction

"Our feelings, and the honest exploration of them [through art], become sanctuaries and fortresses and spawning grounds for the most radical and daring of ideas, the house of difference so necessary to change and the conceptualization of any meaningful action." – Audre Lorde

Alongside educational benefits, arts interventions are increasingly credited with enhancing social capital (Williams, 1997), a process which establishes networks, mutual trust and co-operation within communities for the benefit of all (Kay, 2000; Kay and Watt, 2000). Through a study of art-based community development models and organizations, this research paper will attempt to understand art as a process and tool for community development, and investigate the role of artistic practice and creativity in facilitating social change.

This paper will draw upon a broad definition of the arts that encompasses all performing, visual, literary, and media arts, and will employ the term community to refer to "groups of people with common interest as defined by place, tradition, intention, or spirit" (Cleveland, 2005). Community-based will refer to those "activities created and produced by and with community members that combine significant elements of community access, ownership, authorship, participation, and accountability" (Burnham, 2010), and development will be defined as a process of collective economic, social, cultural or environmental action. This research paper will

draw upon and utilize these definitions to both clarify its realm of study and to identify shared assumptions within arts-based cultural organizations.

Art-based community development, a movement formalized and institutionalized only in the last two decades, draws upon the notion of artistic practice as a historically significant factor in the development of culture, ritual, and community. This paper will examine the formalized art-based development methodology practiced by art, cultural and development organizations, and the ways in which formalized art-based development programs enact social change. Arts-based methodologies often take a bottom-up approach to community development, emphasizing the strengths and assets of local community structures over external constructions of power (Burnham, 2010).

This research paper will use a community-based arts program, referred to in this paper as the Creative Existence program, as a primary case study to investigate art-based community development. Creative Existence is a Limited Liability Company based in a multicultural district in a U.S City, designated here as the International District in Rainbow City. This art program has attempted to facilitate significant community development and social change through arts-based workshops and projects since 2009. It's stated objectives include "long-term creative collaboration," the "harnessing of capacity" and "community-led development initiatives" (Creative Existence, 2017).

The International District's social and economic characteristics will be examined in order to contextualize the Creative Existence program and it's social,

economic, and political impacts on the community. The impacts of Creative Existence will be measured through interviews with key informants and organizations. Interviews will be supplemented with observations. Organizational sustainability, placemaking, and collaboration are three primary objectives of the Creative Existence program. These three themes will therefore structure the following literature review and data collection.

Findings will highlight unique aspects of Creative Existence's project structure. It's involvement with other projects and organizations in the International District indicate a strong ability to evolve and change with an evolving community, to engage and partner with resident-led projects, and to create sustainable relationship and trust networks within the community. Findings will also differentiate art-based models of community development from issue-based organizing, and discuss the potential drawbacks of creating social change through art-based methodologies.

Conceptual Framework

This research paper will first map out a history of the modern arts-based community development movement, and the ways in which an art-based community development framework has only recently become formalized into a field of development practice, practiced by organizations and institutions. It will then draw upon literature that reflects art-based community development strategies of organizational sustainability, placemaking, and collaboration. This literature will draw heavily on theories of placemaking and collaboration as methodologies for social

change, and elaborate on how art-based practice fits into these strategies. Finally, this paper will expound upon methods of quantifying and measuring art-based programs and their effects. It will wrestle with the drawbacks of collecting data on art and culturally based organizations and their outcomes, as these outcomes often cannot be measured through quantitative means.

History of Arts and Culture Based Community Development

The community arts concept is "a modern iteration of perhaps the oldest 'field,' with a lineage that stretches back to humankind's most essential pre-historic community-making/community-defining practices" (Cleveland, 2005). For example, humans, animals, tools and weapons, maps, and symbols are common motifs found on old artifacts and in ancient dwellings. These symbols have developed and evolved along with cultural, social and technological change. Symbols, along with forms of expression such as song, dance, food and performance are the foundation of the expression of localized culture, ritual, and history. Artistic practices therefore carry narratives, tell stories, and constantly evolve to inform the cultural present; art is a world building practice.

The notion of art as a process and tool for community building is therefore not modern at all, but based in historical precedent. Art and performance based rituals inform social development, culture and community. This paper will examine how art can be intentionally used by cultural organizations as a tool for building community.

William Cleveland, director of the Center for the Study of Art and Community, has coined the term "Art-based Community Development" to describe a modern, institutionalized movement that aims to use art as a tool for sustainable social and community development. Art-based Community Development strategies primarily divide their activities into three focused phases:

- Phase 1 is *Relationships & Partnerships*, in which artists meet with residents one on one.

- Phase 2 is *Arts-Based Community Engagement*, in which teams of artists work for many months with large groups of residents towards collaborative art making, storytelling, and production of significant works of art.

- Phase 3 is *Community-Led Development Initiatives* in which teams of residents envision, design, and implement community programs.

Art-based Community Development initiatives have experienced the most success by focusing on the "empowering qualities of the creative process, and not on the diagnosis or treatment of what is 'wrong'" (Cleveland, 2005). An arts-based approach draws on *Asset-Based Community Development*, a methodology that focuses on the strengths and potentials of a local community. The art-based model centers local resources and local creative capacity to imagine and create desirable futures for the community. Kester (1999) indicates that this bottom up approach is essential to the success of community development, due to weaknesses found in community based arts

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activities that take a "top down approach of sponsoring agencies, with artists parachuting in and out, and little attention given to long term engagement."

Sustainability

Resources allocated to the field of arts-based community development are generally lacking, making it difficult for art-based models to have a sustained impact in communities. Lack of sustained impact is one of the biggest problems cited by communities impacted by art-based community development initiatives (Burnham, 2010).

Although resources and funding methods are generally lacking for arts-based methods, there is risk in accepting donations from large and powerful funding resources (Burnham, 201). Because accountability to the local community is a primary goal of art-based methodology, foundation funding and the involvement of large and powerful entities in art-based development programs and organizations may have adverse affects on locally generated needs and goals and their intended outcomes.

Local ownership of community development projects is therefore key to the art-based community development process, as residents have the most intimate and well-informed notions of the nuances and dynamics of their own space, and the futures they hope to create. Centering community agency is also essential to the sustainability of development initiatives, ensuring that community development, both physical and

organizational, is designed to meet present community needs without compromising the development of future generations.

       Cross-Sector community development is also essential to the sustainability of projects. Cross-sector development is a holistic and multi-sector approach to community development that also allows for the development of a multi-faceted approach to addressing community needs. Art-based development projects have a responsibility to the social ecology (or the social, political, and economic aspects) of the environment in which the arts-based program is working (Bookchin, 1987)**.**

Placemaking Strategy

       The Project for Public Spaces (PPS) has described the placemaking approach as a "process for connecting people to the place in which they live and inspiring them to steward and improve it" (2015). David Harvey has understood placemaking as the active, dialectical process of "place production" and "place formation" (1996).

       "As a methodology, placemaking seeks to break through siloed, institutionalized approaches to community redevelopment by putting people and places at the center of any project" (Snyder et al., 2015). Creative Existence programs and workshops facilitate this through a focus on the dialectical and creative process of storytelling and world building by residents of the district. Art-based methodologies for placemaking focus on world making through the retelling and creating of the collective histories and narratives of a community.

Norman Denzin (2000) and Dolores Hayden (1995) both embrace art as a tool for cultural enhancement and community making. Hayden (1995) approaches placemaking through the histories of the marginalized: the poor, ethnic minorities, women, and workers. She indicates that these histories are not necessarily recorded through historical writing – more often, these important histories of place are told orally or through cultural and artistic production, and is therefore an art-based method of social change. Urban cultural heritage making and reclaiming must be realized through a broad range of methods, with emphasis on alternative methods of storytelling, artistic and cultural practices (as opposed to written scholarship).

Placemaking is therefore a particular strategy for community development, in that it can be a method of empowering, or centering, narratives of communities that have been especially marginalized. Cultural stories, art, and rituals can be a vehicle and method of placemaking.

Hayden's (1995) discussion of community-based placemaking and narrative making takes a "dialogic" approach to history that desires "shared authority." Denzin's (2000) notion of anchoring "narratives in an ongoing moral dialogue with members of the local community" echoes Hayden as well as phases one, two and three of art-based community development strategies (stated above). Art-based development strategies emphasize one-on-one relationship and partnership building within a community, sustained community engagement, and organizational accountability to community-led

initiatives. An emphasis on placemaking and history-making grounded and sourced from the local community is essential to placemaking strategy.

Collaboration and Relationship Building

Research indicates that successful community arts programs have been identified as those programs that develop a relationship and practice of consent with their communities (Cleveland, 2005). Terms like "participatory democracy" and "accountability to the community" are two primary goals stated by arts-based development programs across the country.

One of the difficulties for the art-based community development movement is that art is often defined as a therapeutic or remedial methodology (Cleveland, 2005). This obscures some of the intent behind art-based community development practices, the theory of which focuses on the potential of art to be a powerful tool for social change, community empowerment, and collaborative relationship building.

Denzin (2003) argues that marginalized realities and narratives can be realized through artistic inquiry. He understands art as a method of articulating "social and cultural agency," a way for the individual to locate themselves in the historical, the political, and the cultural, as a co-performer and co-creator of reality. He argues that reality, narratives, histories, and the present are creative and most importantly collaborative.

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Paulo Freire's work in *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* echoes the inspiration Denzin finds in locating reality in collaborative practice. Freire looks to the liberatory potential of an education and pedagogy developed in co-ownership *with* the oppressed. Freire (2000) asks how the oppressed can "participate in developing the pedagogy of their [own] liberation." Reclaiming local power is therefore an essential idea that runs through liberatory pedagogical text.

Kester (1999) locates liberatory possibility in collaborative art practice, in the "very process of communication that the artwork catalyzes." For Kester, the essential aspects of liberatory art practice lie in "the moment of indeterminateness" in the collaborative practice. He therefore identifies the process as the artistic objective, instead of locating the objective within a final product.

Artworks that resist becoming a product for exchange hold liberatory potential in that they remain "economically unviable within the traditional art market and auction houses" (Kester, 1999). Community art projects, characterized by multiple authorships and ownerships, embody many of these qualities in that they often refuse the traditional market value system and instead are the embodiment of multifaceted social relations.

Assessing Impact of Art-Based Community Development

Kay (2000) finds that the role of the arts in a community can be multifaceted, in that arts-based development can impact individual confidence and motivation, assist in social development and friendship making, improve community image, and have health

benefits. Quantifying these impacts "in terms of *social gain* presents considerable difficulties…these problems are not just methodological. They also raise the question of the extent to which creative processes can – or should – be managed and controlled" (Newman et al., 2001). Art programs are also particularly challenging to assess due to the "multiplicity of possible outcomes" (Landry et al., 1995). Given that the primary impacts of arts-based programs are difficult to quantify, quantitative data collection necessarily is insufficient to capture the entirety of the effects of a program.

Kay (2000) therefore suggests a system of evaluation that would base its assessment on objectives put forth by the project itself. The Department of Culture, Media and the Arts (1999) also recommends ensuring that the "criteria against which success will be judged are clearly established, and derived directly from the expressed needs and aims of those participating."

This paper will therefore primarily collect qualitative data in the form of observations and interviews. Data will be used to identify crucial characteristics of the goals, forms of governance and organizational structures of Creative Existence, and the ways in which the Creative Existence program might be unique due to it's geographical location and engagement in the International District. Data will be evaluated based on the explicit goals stated by Creative Existence, which include engaging "artists in long-term creative collaboration," generating "meaningful community relationships, leadership, and working teams," "harnessing capacity" and channeling it "into community-led development initiatives" (Creative Existence, 2017). Data collected

concerning Creative Existence and art-based development practices will also be understood from the lens of organizational sustainability, placemaking strategy, and collaborative relationship making.

Methodology

In an effort to maintain anonymity and confidentiality, this research paper has replaced all names with pseudonyms. The city, district, organization, and key informants mentioned in this paper will be designated consistently by these pseudonyms. Efforts will be made to describe the structure of the organization studied, and the complexity of context and location in which it has been implemented.

This paper will examine art-based community development models and practices using Creative Existence, a Limited Liability Company located in Rainbow City's International District, as a case study. The International District is a neighborhood comprised of two-square miles in the center of Rainbow City. The Historic Route 66 runs directly through this area. Although this was once a vibrant corridor, today the International District is one of the most economically disadvantaged and crime ridden areas in Rainbow City, with crime at three times the national average (Creative Existence, 2017). It has also been designated a refugee resettlement area, and is therefore one of the most diverse neighborhoods in Rainbow City. Asian American, Middle Eastern, Latin American, Mexican-American, and Cuban immigrant and refugee families live in the International District.

Social and economic characteristics of the International District will provide essential context for the Creative Existence project structure and art-based community development model. Because Creative Existence practices are highly informed and reflected by the context of the International District, this research paper will investigate the highly local nature of Creative Existence programs, and use this program as a model for successful community-based and art-based development.

Census data will be used to assess the social and economic characteristics of the International District. This data will provide a framework for understanding the residents of the district, a lens through which current features of the Creative Existence program can be understood.

An investigation of Creative Existence programming and organizational structure is conducted through a qualitative framework that centers interviews and observations. Interviews were conducted with Creative Existence Founding Director Veronica, Art in Public Places Director and Artist Maria, the City Director of Cultural Services Cindy, and the Global Local project, a collaborative partner with Creative Existence. Key informants Veronica, Maria, and Cindy were chosen based on their affiliation with Creative Existence. They were also chosen based on their personal knowledge and professional involvement with art-based community development work in Rainbow City. Interviews will also be conducted with the Global Local project, due to its partnership with Creative Existence and the deep roots of this partnership in the

local community. The perspective of Global Local will provide an outside perspective on the Creative Existence community development model.

Each interviewee was interviewed in a conversational style, over the phone or in person. Handwritten notes were taken during interviews to record specific comments of those being interviewed.

Observations include a description of a community youth workshop run by Creative Existence in the International District. This workshop was run by Creative Existence to facilitate the beginnings of a youth artist team ages 14-18. Observations were taken in the form of handwritten notes. Observations include a description of team building exercises used to facilitate dialogue and communication between workshop participants. These observations are supplemented with explanations from the Founding Director of Creative Existence, Veronica. These workshops are important because they employ similar techniques to the first community artist workshops run by Creative Existence in the International District in 2009. Workshop observations will therefore be used to provide insights into Creative Existence collaborative art practices and philosophy as practiced in the International District.

In combination, census, interview, and observational data will be used to analyze the context of the Creative Existence project, it's implementation and practices, and it's impacts within the International District. Findings will draw upon both the conceptual framework and the following data collection to determine the successes and outcomes of art-based community development practice in the International District.

Case Study Analysis

The following chapter will elaborate on the history of the International District, the art-based model employed by Creative Existence, and the impacts of Creative Existence on the local community. Data indicates that the Creative Existence's art-based model places particular emphasis on organizational sustainability and capacity building, placemaking strategy, and collaborative relationship building. The following data will therefore elaborate on each of these themes individually.

History of the International District

The history of the International District in Rainbow City stretches back to post-Civil War restructuring in the 1870's. A large population of previously enslaved African Americans from the South moved and settled on the undeveloped land that is now the southeast quadrant of Rainbow City. Other big changes came after World War II, when the Rainbow City Airforce Base was established south of the International District. The base became a large employer of Rainbow City residents, and housing complexes for military families were built in the five neighborhoods that today comprise the International District.

Route 66 was a vibrant corridor at this time – it ran directly through the district, bringing a significant amount of traffic, movement and tourism with it. Rainbow City grew up around this hub of economic activity. By the 1970's, the economic activity brought by Route 66 dwindled significantly due to the development of an extensive

network of interstate highways across the United States. Today, Route 66 still runs directly through the city, but it has been memorialized, and the name has been changed to Central Street.

In 1972, military family housing was also moved inside of the Airforce Base boundaries, leaving housing complexes in the International District empty. Eventually, these empty homes would be designated a refugee resettlement area by the U.S. Department of State. Five hundred Vietnamese and Laotian refugees displaced by the Vietnam War were the first to be relocated to this area, and since 1980 refugees from El Salvador, Burundi, Congo and South Africa have moved in as well (Keller, 2014).

In 1990, the Airforce Base downsized, and many residents of Southeast Rainbow City (what is now the International District) moved to the west side of the city. Base shutdowns and downsizes are often accompanied by rising unemployment rates and declining housing prices, retail, school enrollment and population rates (Dardia et al., 1996). These changes happened in Rainbow City, and coupled with the national recession and urban drug epidemic, resulted in a distressed economic and social situation in the district. Reports of economic distress, poverty, and a reputation of violence came to define the area in the media. The media labeled the district "The War Zone," and the War Zone became a moniker that came to define both external and internal perceptions of place and community in the district. Community members reported stories of police presence, shootings, drugs, and experiences of crime (City of

Rainbow City, 2013). Cultural memory since the 1980's was often defined and limited by these negative stereotypes.

In the early 2000's, in response to rising crime rates and increasing negative attention, community members began to organize amongst themselves to confront the stigma of "The War Zone" (McKay, 2009). Organizing included marches, protests, acknowledgment and confrontation of the drug problems in the community. Throughout the early 2000's, community members began campaigning for an official renaming of the district. Residents held community forums and town hall meetings at the local Community Center to pick a name that would more accurately describe their community, and in 2009 the County officially recognized the area as the "International District" (Keller, 2014).

The International District encompasses five different neighborhoods, and what was previously Route 66 still runs directly through the district. The street is still one of the liveliest in the city. Small locally owned restaurants and businesses line the street. Residents of the district can be seen frequenting the shops and walking the once famous corridor. Residents of the district speak more than 47 different languages. The neighborhood is comprised of Native, African-American, Asian American, Middle Eastern, Latin American, Mexican-American and Cuban residents (Creative Existence, 2017).

Census data for Rainbow City indicates that most residents in the International District identify as Hispanic/Latino, and that the district has a higher than state average

foreign-born population, most residents of the district indicate that they do not speak English as a first language. Residents of the International District also experience high rates of unemployment. Median household income falls below 20,000 per year, and therefore many households are living below the poverty level.

A number of failed economic development initiatives in the International District eventually lead the District Representative to the Founding Director of Creative Existence, Veronica. Veronica has previously been a member of Tinyglobe, an art-based community development program with headquarters located an hour outside Rainbow City. The District Representative approached Veronica because he had identified a "lack of social cohesion" in the International District, due to language barriers, high poverty and crime rates (Veronica, personal communication, December 2017). In a 2009 initiative lead by Veronica, a Tinyglobe team of three artists began to explore the District Representatives claim and the context and characteristics of the International District. To do this the team began by meeting with local community members and organizations one on one.

The team closely followed community member initiatives to rebrand "The War Zone" the International District. After two years, the team was able to create a general understanding of community networks, organizations and influential members. The team of three was asked by various community networks to come in to the district and run creative workshops.

This project, lead by Veronica, would therefore break off from Tinyglobe and rebrand itself Creative Existence The following data will reflect how this was an intentional method used by Creative Existence to better serve the needs of the International District community.

Governance and Organizational Structure

Creative Existence is registered as a Domestic Limited Liability Company (LLC). The LLC business structure allows for more flexible management (fewer regulations implemented on an LLC than a traditional corporation) and provides limited liability for its members. Veronica is the registered agent and single member of the Creative Existence, LLC, and the Founding Director of Creative Existence.

The Creative Existence governance structure is made up of the Founding Director, an Administrative/Coordination Staff member, and an International District Program Coordinator. Although this is the primary management team, Creative Existence partners with artists and community facilitators to implement projects and workshops. Artists and community facilitators are tasked with supervising and guiding the process of project visioning and implementation. Artists and community facilitators have included various members of the International District itself, visual/musical/performance artists from elsewhere in the city, and community organizations with art-making focuses.

Creative Existence is funded by everything from the National Endowment for the Arts, charitable foundations and city funding, to small funders and individual donations. Funding is used towards the acquisition of sites for art installation, development and production of large-scale art projects, compensation for the artist team and project directors, and for providing stipends to community member participants.

Observations and Interviews

The philosophy of Tinyglobe, like the contemporary Creative Existence philosophy, adheres to the idea of being invited into the community, by the community (Veronica, personal communication, December 2017). The initial artist project team therefore held individual, one-on-one meetings with community members for two years to determine what services, if any, were needed and desired by the community. Funding for these initial conversations was minimal, and meetings were therefore mostly held on a volunteer basis. The artist team was connected to hundreds of community members, organizations and local businesses. Most of the ensuing conversations occurred in "living rooms," and focused on the concerns, needs, and lifestyles of individual community members (Veronica, personal communication, December 2017). Creative Existence moved from these one-on-ones to establishing a more formal presence in the neighborhood with their first workshop series and project, "Stories of Route 66: The International District" (hereby referred to as Stories of Route 66).

Stories of Route 66 started in 2014, when Creative Existence sent an open invitation to residents of the district to participate in workshops every week, with compensation of ten to twelve dollar per hour stipends (a wage well over Rainbow City's minimum wage at the time of $7.60/hour). Over 130 community members, ages 5 to 75, participated in workshops every weekend for seven months. Participants, termed "collaborative artists" by Creative Existence, were from eight different countries, including Somalia, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Congo, Mexico, Vietnam and the US, and spoke at least eight different languages (Creative Existence, 2017). The first few weeks of workshops consisted of small-scale trust and relationship building exercises, and were lead by a team of six trained artists, two of who lived and grew up in the International District themselves. This was intentional – Creative Existence requires at least two members of the trained artist teams to be from the community it is working in (Veronica, personal communication, December 2017). These exercises and workshops are essential to Creative Existence's art-based community development model.

A current Creative Existence project (2017-2018), which is building a community youth team ages 14-18, is utilizing many of the same exercises and techniques developed by the Stories of Route 66 workshops in 2014. Youth team workshops therefore provide valuable insight on the ways in which Creative Existence facilitates art-based and relationship-based community development. Youth team workshops were observed as part of this research in late December 2017.

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Many creative, collaborative trust building exercises were simple games. One exercise required all participants (the designated artist team *and* participating collaborative artists) to make two circles, one inside the other. Then each participant moves person-to-person, spending a few minutes communicating or interacting with each individual. This exercise requires each participant to meet and interact with every other participant in the room. During the initial Stories of Route 66 workshops in 2014, this exercise had a particularly important purpose, given that there was a range of language and age barriers among participants. The exercise required each individual to meet the other individual wherever they were, requiring creativity and ingenuity to communicate (Veronica, personal communication, December 2017). Creativity and ingenuity was also observed in youth team workshops, in response to overcoming language barriers. Participants used hand signals, props, and body language to engage with one another in what generally became a playful interaction.

Another exercise split all participants (artists and collaborative artists) into groups. Each group was given an image – of an animal, or easily recognizable object. Participants had to work collaboratively to perform this image, to recreate this image with their bodies. The exercise therefore did not necessarily require speaking the same language, but it did require engagement with one another's body language and a significant amount of teamwork. A quality of these exercises is that they were made to have flexible outcomes (Veronica, personal communication, December 2017). The

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creative form – gestures, small art projects, and relational activities – therefore became the mediator of difference between participants.

In 2014, workshops occurred every week for seven months, and progressed from these small-scale collaborative projects – such as team building games, name games, and basic relationship building games – into more focused large-scale art projects. To inspire large-scale creations, the team of six artists showed slideshows of all different kinds of art, including murals, plays, videos, posters, theatre, and sculpture (Veronica, personal communication, December 2017). Participants voted on their top choices and were then split into six different working groups with others who shared their interests. A series of art projects now exist as finalized products of the workshopping process. "Stories of Route 66: The International District" final projects were displayed in 2014 at a community festival.

Organizational Sustainability

Interviews with key informants Veronica, Cindy, and Maria reflect a shared organizational focus on organizational sustainability. Creative Existence's initial transition from Tinyglobe into it's own Limited Liability Company reflects an intentional move towards making a sustained impact on the International District itself. The diversity of languages, needs, and experiences of residents in the district made it necessary for the Creative Existence organization to form directly in response to the needs of the community (Veronica, personal communication, December 2017).

Although Creative Existence became it's own organization to focus on the needs of the International District, a unique aspect of the Creative Existence project is its lack of official headquarters. There is no geographical location, or central headquarters, for the project. This is intentional. It allows the project to remain flexible and extend its reach into the community. Instead of doing maintenance on a headquarters, the program instead puts its limited funding directly into the community itself and into finding skilled collaborative partners to help facilitate workshops (Veronica, personal communication, December 2017). Creative Existence is therefore made up of three full time management staff members, partnerships with individual artists and other organizations (employment varies in length, but the relationship is generally intended to last) and relationships with community member participants. The organization acts as a resource, a partner, and facilitator of relationships – and more tangibly is a facilitator of art projects, celebrations, and events in the International District.

Creative Existence's transition from Tinyglobe was also a method of making the organization more financially stable. All of its resources could be more directly allocated into the International District and Rainbow City itself. Because of this focused spending, Creative Existence has received large funding amounts from the city itself, large foundations that fund arts projects in Rainbow City, and many individual donors located within the International District. These funding sources have been relatively stable throughout the life of Creative Existence due to the organizations ability to focus all its resources into Rainbow City Continuous supporters and donors were essential for

the successful implementation of a project on such a large scale as "Stories of Route 66" (Cindy, personal communication, November 2017).

Pulling funding on a project that's already begun can be to the detriment of a community, uprooting networks that have only just begun to form and disrupt projects (Maria, personal communication, February 2018). For example, an initiative by Tinyglobe in the early 2000's, which attempted an art-based development project in a city almost 100 miles outside of its previous scope. The project ran out of money after one year. This lack of funding should have been foreseen and avoided (Veronica, personal communication, December 2017). When Tinyglobe withdrew from the community, residents attempted to sustain relationships and project initiatives. However, this was difficult without project funding, and relationships were disrupted and project momentum stopped as a result. In this case, withdrawal did more harm than good to the community as the failure of the project left residents with a sense of failure and disruption (Veronica, personal communication, December 2017).

Tinyglobe's work in a city almost 100 miles from its headquarters is also an example of ineffective placemaking and insufficient dedication, due to Tinyglobe's base location. It was impossible for leaders and artists to effectively do work in a community they had limited experience and knowledge of (Veronica, personal communication, December 2017). Effective community building comes from trust networks and insider knowledge of a community and space that can only be built by living and residing within that community. Because of this, Creative Existence exists separately from

Tinyglobe, and has situated its organizational structure and capacity building efforts within the limits of Rainbow City. From the perspective of Creative Existence, this focused geographical location will allow the team to more sustainably interpret and meet the needs of the local community.

Capacity Building

Founding Director Veronica defines capacity as "the ability of neighborhood groups to problem solve, work together, and build improvement projects that they collectively envision." The Stories of Route 66 project most exemplifies Creative Existence's work to intentionally build capacity in the International District. Workshops facilitated relationships, built tangible skills and improved communication and neighborhood capacity to work together. Expanded capacity is most evident in current resident-led initiatives that blossomed due to Stories of Route 66 workshops in 2014. Community members initially involved in Stories of Route 66 have created a Refugee Mentoring Project, a Migration Experience film and discussion series, the Global Local organization, a mural, an annual Health Fair, and are currently working to implement a Mobile Urban Forest (Creative Existence, 2017).

Although Creative Existence is involved in many of these projects, the organization is often involved peripherally. For example, Creative Existence functions as a partner to the Refugee Rights Organization, a local refugee-led organization that has been working on a new Refugee Mentoring Project meant to provide refugees and

immigrants with services they need. In 2015, Creative Existence provided the project with grant-writing resources and skill trainings that have since allowed the Refugee Mentoring Project to build its organizational capacity and learn the skills necessary to obtain its own independent funding sources (Veronica, personal communication, 2017). Creative Existence prioritizes partnerships like this, which from the perspective of Creative Existence, build capacity in the International District by empowering local community lead projects. Funding and management for the Refugee Mentoring Project is now carried out solely through community initiative.

In 2016 the Global Local, initially a project of the Asian Family Center in the International District, invited Creative Existence to become a member and partner of the Global Local project. Global Local works to create networks and systems of support between immigrants and refugees. They center immigrant and refugee voices and organizations in the International District, in order to bring an intentionally collaborative resource and capacity building strategy to the most marginalized communities in Rainbow City. Creative Existence's model of capacity building and intentional relationship building has been a valuable resource for the Global Local model for coalition and capacity building (Global Local, personal communication, February 2018). Creative Existence has been intricately intertwined with Global Local since it's beginning and has acted as a valuable system of community building, support and collaboration for building of the Global Local initiative.

The Creative Existence Model has in many ways become a flexible initiative, informed by residents themselves. Creative Existence's role in the International District takes many different forms – often, as indicated by the Refugee Mentoring Project and Global Local, Creative Existence acts as a supporting member or partner of various community-led initiatives, and continues to practice being asked into the district (Veronica, personal communication, December 2017). Instead of assuming a powerful and central position in the International District, the Creative Existence model is built with a flexibility that allows the program to act also as a useful tool and resource for community members and organizations building their own initiatives.

Placemaking Strategy

Although "there are still a lot of social problems," part of the Creative Existence project has been a concerted effort to rebrand the "War Zone" the International District (Veronica, personal communication, December 2017). As an organization, Creative Existence has conceptualized the Stories of Route 66 project as a placemaking project.

Stories of Route 66 included a video series in which residents spoke about themselves, how they grew up, their neighborhood and their relationship with it. The videos include both oral storytelling and cultural and artistic modes of storytelling. Videos feature dancing and music, and often reflect the cultural backgrounds of residents. The 2018 Migration Experience film projects, currently funded by Creative Existence, do something similar, in which residents recount their own personal

histories, comment on, and add to the individual identities that make up the International District. These films are a form of placemaking and narrative making. They work to reshape a sense of identity and belonging within the International District (Veronica, personal communication, December 2017).

Creative Existence's model was an attempt to create pieces that were "sourced" from the community (Maria, personal communication, February 2018). In many ways, video projects by Stories of Route 66 were a method of sourcing from the community, and functioned to reclaim and retell the fullness and diversity of the histories of the community. Each video orally tells the story of an individual or group of individuals currently living in the community. Although the films do not address the stigma of the "War Zone" directly, they address community issues and diversity from the personal perspective. Making refugees and immigrants visible and heard is one method of confronting and subverting the social, economic and cultural marginalization of the community (Maria, personal communication, February 2018). The films also individualize, as oppose to homogenize, the community members living in the International District. They provide alternative narratives to the negative stigma of the "The War Zone."

Collaboration

The Creative Existence program does not take an explicitly issue-based approach to development, and instead embraces the liberatory possibility of creativity

and collaboration in art praxis. "Art has a spaciousness and invitation" that invites innovation and holds "transformational capacity" (Cindy, personal communication, November 2017). However, the foundations for Creative Existence's practices are not neutral. They lie in political principles of social justice, and are performed by a program of collective praxis (Veronica, personal communication, November 2017).

The Creative Existence program structure attempts to "catalyze [people's] capacity to align and identify inherent wisdoms," as personal and collective expressivity is key to social change (Maria, personal communication, February 2018). The exercises used in Stories of Route 66 workshops exemplify the program's emphasis on relationship and trust building through creative activity. The open-ended workshop structure, used to determine project outcomes, also exemplifies a focus on a collaborative and democratic process of decision-making. Program structure therefore centers the "self-determination" of a community to fulfill their own vision. In this process art becomes a tool for social change, due to its focus on co-creating, collaboration, and intense focus on community-defined outcomes (Maria, personal communication, February 2018).

Creative Existence's practices also lie in the context of the political, social, and economic marginalization of residents of the International District, with specific attention to "trauma spaces," such as experiences of economic and racial exclusion of immigrants of color from the larger Rainbow City community. The safety of the community therefore becomes fundamental to Creative Existence's project structure.

Holding the "safety of the cultural collective" becomes a moral imperative when working within vulnerable communities (Maria personal communication, February 2018).

Accountability is therefore a huge theme in the art-based community development work practiced by Creative Existence. Creative activity, practiced collectively, relies on trust building among participants and artists and directors. Each interviewee has indicated that building trust within the community is a fragile and delicate project, but imperative to building community successfully. Creative Existence artists, workshop facilitators, and management practices attempt to build trust and accountability to the local community through open dialogue inside and outside of workshops, interpersonal honesty and relationship building, and small group trust building exercises.

Assessing Community Impact

Potential funders often assess project success through the amount of money invested in a community. Creative Existence quantifies their monetary investment in the community at "over half a million" (Veronica, personal communication, December 2017). This investment (from city, foundation, and individual funders mentioned previously) has been in the form of stipends to local participants, artist teams and workshop facilitators. Money has also been invested in final art projects themselves: in the form of art installation and site acquisition.

Tangible art projects resulting from Stories of Route 66 are also an essential method of quantifying community impact and success. The initial Stories of Route 66 project resulted in an Art Parklet (an empty lot transformed into a parklet, featuring a bottle tree and flowers in the sacred geometry design), a series of films, a series of portraits, and a piece of art entitled "Morning Glory" which functions also as a shade structure.

Less measurable impacts of Creative Existence include the relationships and collaborative networks that have resulted from community workshops and projects. The Global Local and Refugee Mentoring Project, both projects inspired by and reliant upon Creative Existence's support, exemplify some of the relationships that have been built through Creative Existence. Other community impacts include increased social cohesiveness and cultural understanding among neighbors, and enhanced awareness of services and resources for immigrants and refugees (Global Local, personal communication, February 2018).

Creative Existence measures enhanced awareness of services and resources for immigrants and refugees and increased social and cultural understanding in the International District by turning to the many different organizational initiatives founded or joined by previous participants of Creative Existence. Participants in Creative Existence workshops are now members of Global Local and refugee mentoring initiatives. These organizations were established to serve the economic and social needs

of marginalized community members. Creative Existence cites these examples as evidence of increased social awareness and capacity in the International District.

Creative Existence's art-based model for community development is therefore heavily focused on using art as a tool to enhance community capacity, build a sense of place, and develop relationships among community members for the purpose of social change. The following chapters will elaborate on the outcomes and effectiveness of this art-based model community development model.

Findings

The following will elaborate on the strengths and outcomes of Creative Existence's art-based community development model, and will attempt to determine the effectiveness of an art-based model for creating social change. This paper will draw upon three essential characteristics of Creative Existence's art-based community development model to determine strengths and outcomes of its work in the International District. Essential characteristics of the model include organizational flexibility, relationship-centered placemaking, and an art-based (as opposed to issue-based) approach to social change. These characteristics and practices are multifaceted, and will therefore be discussed in terms of their strengths and weaknesses as well as in terms of their replicability.

Flexibility in Organizational Structure and Project Outcomes

One of Creative Existence's strengths is the flexibility of its organizational structure. Creative Existence primarily exists in sets of relationships and networks, completed or ongoing art projects, service projects, partnerships, and annual festivals and events. Lack of physical headquarters allows Creative Existence to redirect its limited funding resources from renting, staffing and maintaining a space, to the actual maintenance of Creative Existence projects and workshops. Limited monetary resources go to the community itself in the form of stipends. In many ways, this has allowed Creative Existence to extend its reach and influence, and be flexible in terms of project form.

However, Creative Existence's lack of physical location has drawbacks. A central headquarters can be an essential resource for community members, especially those residents who experience problems with, or have inquiries about a project. No central headquarters can leave residents without institutional support or easy access to the institution that is exerting influence over their lives. This may impact organizational accountability to the local community that they are serving. While Creative Existence strives to be accountable, available, and embedded within the community, the organization still functions according to a management hierarchy (Founding Director, Artist Collaborators, etc.). This does not necessarily effectively give control over the outcomes of the art-based projects or workshops to community members.

Creative Existence also does not have a board of directors. Direct accountability to the community is not formalized, but rather attempted by management teams, artist collaborators, and workshops facilitators A formalized process for community evaluation of project implementation and success will be necessary to ensure accountability to the local community's needs.

Because the Creative Existence program was built specifically in the International District community, and continued by resident-led initiatives, the realities of the district have been built into the evolution of Creative Existence. This is another primary strength of the Creative Existence model, and can most clearly be seen in the flexibility of the Stories of Route 66 project outcomes. Final art projects were left open ended – there was "no explicit goal" – and they were left up to the discretion and need analysis of residents (Veronica, personal communication, December 2017). Although this makes acquisition of funding difficult (funders often want a tangible and previously identified project outcome), this methodology allows projects to be built, to some extent, to meet the interests and needs of residents involved in workshops and planning processes (Veronica, personal communication, December 2018).

Another strength of the Creative Existence model is in the ability of the organization to become a partner, and exist as a set of supportive relationships to, other projects in the International District. After Stories of Route 66, Creative Existence has had to reorient its goals to the new demands and needs of the community. Many of the resulting projects, such as Global Local and the Refugee Mentoring Project, require

Creative Existence support in the form of partnership. Creative Existence has provided assistance in the form of skills trainings and resource sharing.

The evolving structure and organizational form of Creative Existence is important to the work it has continued to do in the International District. The organization can only remain viable as it grows with community needs.

Relationship Centered Placemaking and Community Building

Art in all its forms (oral storytelling, performance, dance, music) is fundamental to culture and history. The art-based methodology used by Creative Existence utilizes art as a tool to center a diversity of cultural backgrounds and personal narratives. This is most clearly seen in the Stories of Route 66 video project and migration series, which features individual voices from the community and creates an alternative narrative for the International District.

Creative Existence's video making project, for example, was essentially a placemaking project. "As a methodology, placemaking seeks to break through siloed, institutionalized approaches to community redevelopment by putting people and places at the center of any project" (Snyder et al., 2015). Creative Existence attempts to build a sense of place by tapping into cultural and creative expressions. Cultural activity is one of the most essential activities for placemaking, as it empowers and enhances the agency of the community. It allows them to access a place of personal expression.

Creative Existence holds festivals to celebrate community expression. This is one of the most successful aspects of the program's placemaking agenda. Celebratory events are important in that they allow an internal celebration of diversity and creativity. Events also invite others into the community, essentially strengthening the idea of the International District as a neighborhood and community.

The process of collaboration through art and creativity, used as a tool for community building and development, therefore holds potentials and possibilities for deep local engagement, relationship building and rebuilding a sense of place and community in the International District.

Art-Based Social Change

Although Creative Existence does not explicitly adhere to any political affiliations or positions, the organization's art-based community development model is a methodology for creating social change. Social change in the International District has particularly come in the form of an increase in capacity of the community to maintain and provide support services that meet the needs of marginalized and underserved residents. The organization's art-based practices therefore use a non-issue based methodology for social organizing, challenging traditional activism and organizing-based models for creating social change.

Creative Existence's non-issue based methodology is particularly important in a community like the International District, with a diverse body of residents and therefore

a diverse set of needs, desires, religions, and political affiliations. The non-issue based nature of Creative Existence has the capacity to bring people together through difference. Creative Existence holds the position that this is a particularly effective approach to take to organizing in the International District.

In many ways, organizing through relationship and trust building has allowed people to interact and create personal bonds through political and cultural differences. Creative Existence does not go to great lengths to educate participants or share political messages or affiliations with them. Instead, the program holds space for difference and facilitates conversation and creativity through it.

This is an essential strength of the program, in that it facilitates a more inclusive space. People from many religions, backgrounds, and political affiliations are able to enter the organization. However, it obscures the social justice orientation of the programming. Although there is no official education or promotion of political materials, the entire Creative Existence program is based around the notion of combatting and recognizing oppression and marginalization in the International District. Since the arrival of Creative Existence, most of the work done by residents of the International District has been specifically built around the stories and needs of immigrants and refugees living in the district. In some ways, therefore, Creative Existence's self-presentation as non-issue based and non-political is contrary to their true function, which intentionally builds the capacity of the community to challenge social marginalization.

While Creative Existence's practices are not based around specific political affiliations or issue-based organizing, the art-based methodology of Creative Existence has been extremely successful in building the political capacities and power of the district. This is not necessarily a stated intention of the project, and certainly most participants are not affiliated with the same political or religious parties. However, the art-based methodology has proven a powerful means of bringing community members together in community-based development projects.

Conclusion

Community work based in artistic practice and sustained, creative, local collaboration can have a significant impact on involved communities. In the case of the International District, organizational sustainability, placemaking, and collaboration were fundamental to a project of increased social cohesiveness and resident empowerment. Creative Existence the organizational structure is highly localized, and has been built by the complexities and nuances of the International District itself.

While Creative Existence does not explicitly advocate for resistance work, the organization uses art as a tool to collectively empower and build community in the International District. One of the most essential aspects of this art-based practice is its non-issue based orientation. Instead of organizing community power over a specific political issue, Creative Existence attempts to build empowerment through

strengthening community communication, relationships and networks of support. In this way, art functions as a tool in the process of relationship and community building.

Community-led initiatives resulting from initial Creative Existence projects tend to be a product and reflection of internal community needs. The Global Local and refugee mentoring programs run by residents of the International District address daily service necessities for immigrants and refugees in Rainbow City, such as translation, tutoring, and educational projects. The success of these initiatives in partnership with Creative Existence indicates the success of a primary Creative Existence goal of promoting "community-led development initiatives" (Creative Existence, 2017).

The Creative Existence program employs principles of organizational sustainability, placemaking, and collaboration to create sustainable friendship, trust, and kinship networks. Because art-based community development practices by Creative Existence are not issue-based, the art-based movement for creating social change challenges traditional activism and organizing-based models. These characteristics allow for the empowerment of residents and the strengthening of community capacity to identify, imagine and implement solutions to community needs. The process of art and creativity, used as a tool for community building and development therefore holds potentials and possibilities for deep local engagement and immense social change.

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