Impacts of Public Art Projects on Underutilized Urban Spaces in NYC

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ABSTRACT

As more people move to cities and become urban population, active and dynamic urban spaces will become more desirable. Public art has the ability to bring beauty, attention, stir up discussion and involve various parties. All the above contributed to a dynamic and inviting urban space. But often times, there are doubts about the value of public art its contribution to urban spaces and urban life. As a result, for my thesis, I want to explore the impacts public art could have on underutilized urban spaces throughout NYC. The approach adopted for this study is a comparative case study method. I have selected three underutilized locations around New York City with public art work installations. I will compare the impact public art has created or failed to create in these three different spaces. Overall, public art installations encourage us to reflect on our physical and cultural surroundings, and our place within this complex landscape.
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1. INTRODUCTION
Historically, public art usually signifies a static marble statue commissioned by the Pope finished by Bernini placed on a fountain in Piazza Navona, Rome. As time progresses, contemporary public art have moved beyond permanence and solidity, now it is seeking to engage the community and bring them to life as a part of the community. It has become more than an aesthetic aspect of the landscape. Nowadays, public art can be huge or small: it can tower fifty feet high or call attention to the paving beneath your feet. Its shape can be abstract or realistic and it may be cast, carved, built, assembled, or painted. It can be site-specific or stand in contrast to its surroundings. It is a norm to see public art projects in major cities in the US. Thus, public art in urban spaces are an essential public amenity in this world as it has existed throughout history in popular cities. As more people move to cities and become urban population, active and dynamic urban spaces will become more desirable. Public art has the ability to bring beauty, attention, stir up discussion and involve various parties. All the above contribute to a dynamic and inviting urban space. But often times, there are doubts about the value of public art its contribution to urban spaces and urban life.

As a result, for my thesis, I want to explore the impacts public art could have on underutilized urban spaces throughout NYC. I chose to focus on underutilized urban spaces because it is very difficult to determine the effect of public art in well known spaces such as the High Line Park. You cannot determine whether the fame of the space contributed to public art installations or public art brought more exposures to those spaces. I do not confine the spaces to public spaces because public art has been commissioned in vacant storefronts and private spaces in recent years. So I am going to define the sites I chose as urban spaces located in a city. These urban spaces will be places that is part of an assemblage in a city, meaning these spaces belong in a network and have interactions with humans and other non-human objects. These spaces may be in various conditions and might or might not attract pedestrians, but it is still part of the city. The types of public art I will be focusing on is sculptures, murals and installations combining sculptures, paintings and murals ; both permanent and temporary installation. Public art projects can enhance community character, increase community engagement and foot traffic in an area. This might translate into attracting visitors, increasing the length of time and money they spend, which will contribute to the revitalization of an underutilized space. As a result, I think it would be necessary to assess the impact public art has in these revitalization efforts.

For my study, I want to document the many types of public art projects in local communities to see if their presence is related to bringing attention and increased foot traffic to the space. Then, I could compare the before and after effect of public art on the underutilized spaces with public to further analysis the impact public art has on revitalization. My study will take place in New York City because there are an abundant of public art projects and public art programs. Many of these programs have a long history of producing public art works throughout the city and this would be
helpful for my study. The evidence I might need would include: arts and cultural activity (arts related establishments/1000 population, proportion of employees working in arts related establishments, etc) in specific neighborhoods, the economic conditions (income, unemployment rate, etc) of the area, the amount of visitors the public art project is able to attract, the amount of the funds used to create the public art project and many others which I will explain my research design section.

2. BACKGROUND
Public art has existed for a long time. Think of all the statues of the pharaohs of ancient Egypt. The four colossal-seated sculptures of Ramesses II hewn out of the sandstone facade of his rock temple at Abu Simbel in southern Egypt were designed with a very specific public in mind – his Nubian enemies. It is a blunt display of imperial power, this is art that makes the public viewer feel submission to the pharaoh. Millennia later, Michelangelo’s marble statue of David offered another example of the symbiotic relationship between art, the urban space and the public. Its position outside in the Piazza della Signoria made it became a public symbol of the independence of the Florentine Republic.

In the 20th century, public art really came into being on its own. Traditional bronze statues commemorating dignitaries and worthies had become commonplace and overlooked. Modern artists wanted to produce more memorable works of art for public spaces. In the 1930s, public art started to be regulated by long-term national programs with propaganda goals (Federal Art Project, United States). Programs like President Roosevelt's New Deal facilitated the development of public art during the Great Depression but it was with propaganda goals in mind. New Deal art support programs intended to develop national pride in American culture while avoiding addressing the faltering economy that said culture was built upon. Although problematic, New Deal programs such as FAP altered the relationship between the artist and society by making art accessible to all people. The New Deal program Art-in-Architecture (A-i-A) developed percent for art programs, a structure for funding public art still very popular today. This program gave one half of one percent (the percentage might have changed in recent years) of total construction costs of all government buildings to purchase contemporary American art for that structure. These early public art programs set the foundation for current public art development. In Barbara Goldstein’s guide for public artists, Public Art by the Book, she says that “Government began to see art as a means of building community, and artist turned their thinking toward actually creating the public realm rather than simply placing their artworks in it.” For the first time, public art is viewed as a tool that could be used for community development. Art was recognized for its extra-aesthetic contribution to society.

Public art practice radically changed during the 1970s following the civil rights movement. In this context, public art acquires a status which goes beyond mere decoration and visualization of
national history in public space. Therefore, it gained autonomy as a form of site construction and intervention in the realm of public interests. Public art became much more about the public. This change of perspective is also present in the reinforcement of urban cultural policies in these same years, for example the establishment of New York-based Public Art Fund (1977) and several urban regional Percent for Art programs in the United States and Europe. Moreover, public art shifted its discourse from a national to a local level. In the 1990s, public art developed into the “new genre public art”, which is defined by Suzanne Lacy as “socially engaged, interactive art for diverse audiences with connections to identity politics and social activism”. Rather than metaphorically representing social issues with art works, public art of the “new genre” wanted to explicitly empower marginalized groups while maintaining aesthetic appeal. Curator Mary Jane Jacob of "Sculpture Chicago” curated a show, “Culture in Action”, in summer 1993 that used principles of new genre public art. The show intended to investigate social systems through audience participation, engaging with audiences that typically didn’t participate in traditional art museums. Culture in Action introduced new models for community participation and interventionist public art that reaching beyond the “new genre”.

2.1 Public Art in the Context of NYC

That was the history of public art in the larger context. NYC passed the law for the “Percent for Art” later compared to some other major cities in the US. NYC’s Percent for Art law was passed in 1982 and the program officially began the year afterwards. As a result, there was a surge of new public art in NYC in the 1980s due to the percent for art program as well as the increase in building developments in New York City. This also corresponded to the city’s bonus policy, the government gave FAR bonuses to developers if they provided public plazas in their development. As a result, there was an abundant of new public plazas in NYC, which provided sites for public art. Furthermore This was part of the city government acknowledging art’s positive impact on the general public; Mayor Koch ( who was in office from 1978 to 1989) was famous for saying, “once again, public art has become a priority.” This statement was made in the midst of the re-assignment of public art’s perception in the city government’s eyes; it was now “art plus function.” It functioned as a beautifier of city streets, but also communicated a New York City that was competent, clean, and civilized. Koch devoted government funds to support this ‘new public art,’ characterized by a focus on functionality and use value, uses such as community building and portraying the image of a well organized city. Artists collaborated with urban planners and architects, becoming fully aware of situating their art in space. Public art has continuously been used for community development and representing the city’s image.

However, the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation had a longer history with public art projects. For the first time in NYC, a contemporary sculpture was put on display temporarily at Bryant Park in 1967. Since then, NYC department of Parks and Recreation has been working
closely with artists to bring about public art projects to all the parks throughout NYC. This year marks the 50th anniversary of public art in the parks. After 50 years, NYC Parks & Recreation has presented more than 1000 public artworks and an average citizen is likely to have encountered at least one of the works. NYC Department of Transportation is the other city agency that also have their own public art program. DOT’s art program is much younger compared to the Percent for Art and the Park’s Department’s program. DOT started their art program in 2008. DOT Art has partnered with many community based organizations and artists to bring public art projects to DOT owned properties. There are also many non-profit agencies and civil societies that are also creating public art projects throughout the city. One of the biggest agencies is Public Art Fund. Public Art Fund is an independent non-profit organization that brings public artworks to various public spaces throughout NYC. The organization was founded in 1977 by Doris C. Freedman, who was also the first director of NYC Department of Cultural Affairs. Mrs. Freedman also served as the president to Municipal Art Society. Since the founding of Public Art Fund, the organization has worked with many world renowned artists such as Jeff Koons, Anish Kapoor, Jeppe Hein and many others to bring very ambitious projects to various parks and public spaces in NYC. In recent years, many Business Improvement Districts in NYC have adopted public art projects and public art master plans. Also, after the 2009 recession, public art has been adopted as a tool to revitalize underutilized urban spaces from public plazas to vacant storefronts.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW
The role of arts and culture has always been present in planning practices. American Planning Association (APA) conducted a collaborative project with RMC Research Corporation and Rockefeller Foundation to illustrate how planners could work with partners in the arts and culture section to achieve economic, social, environmental and community goals. The APA has identified the contribution arts and culture could make to community revitalization and indicated other potential contribution such as engaging participation in civic life, preserve and invent community identity and others. Then, the APA used a variety of cases studies and examples to illustrate how arts and culture contributed to the following four elements: community heritage and culture, community character and sense of plane, community engagement and economic vitality.

Therefore, arts and culture is a commonly used tool by planners to engage in community development and revitalization. Now, I will move on to analyze the theories and practices behind using public art as the tool. As defined by APA, “The arts and culture field encompasses the performing, visual, and fine arts, as well as applied arts including architecture and graphic design; crafts; film, digital media and video; humanities and historic preservation; literature; folklife; and other creative activities. The arts alone can be classified into 13 categories: acting, announcing, architecture, fine art, directing, animation, dancing and choreography, design,
entertainment and performance, music and singing, photography, production, and writing (Gaquin 2008), public art is only one category of the arts and culture field. In the book by Fleming, Ronald Lee, *The Art of Placemaking: Interpreting Community Through Public Art and Urban Design*, the author uses many site-specific public art projects to demonstrates how the integration of approachable art with local landscape, architecture and urban design can facilitate identification with locale. Lots of case studies throughout the United States are examined and the author also features examples of failures and major controversies, and strategies for the future. This book provided insight into public art especially interactive art works at the local level. Interactive artworks would allow local population to engage with the art and possibly foster a sense of identity of the community. But it is very tricky process because the artists and patrons of the project have to be aware of how they interpret the identity of the place. If their identification have discrepancies with that of local population, the public art installation might result in negative effects.

In the book by *Dialogues in Public Art* by Tom Finkelpearl and Vito Acconci, the authors conducted interviews with the people who create and experience public art: from an artist who mounted three bronze sculptures in the South Bronx to the bureaucrat who led the fight to have them removed and others. The author uses these conversations to explore how public art can create event to alter social dynamics of a site and bring about community change. This book showcased the direct effect of specific public art works on the various parties involved in the project. It was very interesting to learn how a young women was able to turn her life around while living in one of the converted houses that was a public art project.

Tim Hall and Ian Robertson’s *Public Art and Urban Regeneration: advocacy, claims and critical debates*, is dedicated to evaluating whether Public Art contributes to enhancing identity of a site, addressing community needs and tackle social problems such as exclusion. The authors begin with questioning the advantages of public art voiced by planners and advocates. Then they began to evaluate the claims using different art projects. *Just Art for a Just City: Public Art and Social Inclusion in Urban Regeneration* is another article tackling the same issue of urban regeneration but focuses mot on the policy side of public art. In this article, it is shown how cultural policy, especially public art, intersects with the processes of urban restructuring and how it is a contributor, but also an antidote to the conflict that surrounds the restructuring of urban space. The focus of the paper is on investigating how public art can be inclusionary/exclusionary as part of the wider project of urban regeneration.

National Endowment for Arts also published a study on *validating arts and livability indicators*. The study was done in cooperation with Urban Institute. The purpose of the study is to validate a set of candidate indicators for creative placemaking initiatives. The NEA hypothesizes that successful creative placemaking interventions will have positive effects on residents attachment
to communities; quality of life; local economic conditions and arts and cultural activity. As a result, NEA have identified several indicators within each of the four categories used to test if creative placemaking had any positive effects. The study was one of the very few that attempted to quantify the effects of creative placemaking. However, the study approached the subject in a very broad manner and considered all types of creative placemaking mechanisms (music, performance, arts, theater and others) instead of focusing on just one aspects. Furthermore, some of the indicators such as “length of residence”, “median commute time” aren’t specific to creative placemaking. By specific, I mean the indicator could be easily affected by other regulatory policies in the city. As a result, this study is a good start but needs to be narrowed down and focus on one type of creative placemaking mechanism and choose indicators that are more related to the mechanism.

There are also many short articles discussing the validity public art from the view of local citizens. Although the article, *Some Reflections on Urban Public Art Today*, was written by a planning professor in Penn Design School, he takes on the view of a citizen rather than a planner. The author discuss about whether public art really fits the the public “good” criteria. The author argues that public art is often used as a tool by planners because of the good outcomes it could generate to community. But in reality, certain public art projects falls short to the “good” criteria promoted by planners. He used the example of the Gateway Arch of St. Louis and and Cloud Gate in Millennium Park, Chicago to discuss the problem of public art falling short of social reality. *Art, Space and the City: Public Art and Urban Futures* is a book that examines the practice of art for urban public spaces by seeing public art from an outsider’s point of view. It takes the positions outside those of the art world to ask how it might contribute to possible urban futures. It explores the diversity of urban politics, the functions of public space and its relation to the structures of power, the roles of professionals and users in the construction of the city. *Art In Public Spaces* is a short Sunday review piece in New York Times discussing the impact of two controversial public art projects in Manhattan. It addresses the public’s opinion and comments on the two piece of artworks.

The literature on public art generally focuses on the place identity aspect, community aspect or the public aspect. The economic aspect of public art is not analyzed as much. The approach to these studies are also very much qualitative using interviews and observations as the main method. As a result, I plan to bring the economic aspect of public art into my study because both the APA and the NEA claimed that arts sector could contribute to economic vitality of places and communities. When the place identity aspect is being analyzed in the literatures, the authors rarely provide any quantitative analysis. Without data, it is hard to argue that public art has contributed to revitalizing sites because the artwork could just be erected with no viewers. Therefore, I think it would be helpful if I could provide some foot traffic data and social media location check ins on the public art site to have a sense of how public art has contributed to
gathering attention. I define attention as whether the public artwork was able to attract more viewers (foot traffic data) and inspire further actions such as posting pictures on social media and location check-ins on social media. The above actions will allow more people to pay attention to urban places that was rather unnoticed by both the government and the public. I will include both the community and place identity aspect of public art analysis rather than focusing solely on economic aspect because these two areas are critical to public art projects. This is evident in the literatures since almost all of it addresses the community and place identity aspect of public art. Moreover, public art projects are site specific, it would be reasonable to analyze all the three aspects to provide more holistic results since the sites I chose will differ greatly from the ones in the studies I have read.

4. METHODOLOGY
Revitalizing an underutilized/vacant space is a long term project that will require lots of effort besides installing public art works. It would require funding and cooperation between the government, the private sector and the local community. Therefore, Public art works probably wouldn’t produce life changing outcomes for these spaces, but it might be able to bring in some degree of impact in the short run. Such impacts could stem from various sources and not just caused by public art works but it is a starting point for more rigorous evaluation of public art work in the future.

The approach adopted for this study is a comparative case study method. I have selected three underutilized locations around New York City with public art work installations. I will compare the impact public art has created or failed to create in these three different spaces. Using the comparative case study method, I will be able to find similarities, differences and the possibility of patterns across them. I believe the results would strengthen the external validity of my findings. I will approach the three cases through applying an evaluation framework I have established based on various studies the APA and National Endowment for the Arts have completed. The evaluation frameworks will examine the public art works through three aspects: community and place identity, economic vitality and community engagement. These are all the impacts public art could have on a site according to the APA and NEA. I will compare the before and after condition of the site to determine whether there are positive impacts, negative impacts or no impact in all three aspects. Afterwards, I will compare the between the three different cases.

4.1 Evaluation Framework

Community and Place Identity
According to the study conducted by APA, art works and an art master plan could help reveal and enhance the identity (unique meaning, value and character) of a community. Planners could
use public art works to explore community context, embrace diversity and build upon celebrated community character. As a result, I want to examine if the public art works at my chosen case studies were able to achieve some of the above goals. I will approach this aspect through the following methods:

1. Examine the purpose and the meaning of the artwork and whether it is in agreement with the existing community identity.
2. Examine the existence of a public art master plan in the community and whether the specific artwork was part of the master plan to establish a shared vision for a community's identity.
3. Conduct site visits to questioners to understand how public art work might have changed the way people interact with the space.

**Questionnaire**
The survey will be conducted at the three selected sites for my thesis. I will not ask the respondent to identify their age, gender and any other personal information because it is not required for my study. I will simply ask four opened ended questions derived from a previous study a Columbia Undergraduate student have completed for her thesis on Public Art. Below, the respondent could choose to fill in the questionnaire by themselves or I could record the answers. I visited the three sites multiple times throughout the month of January and February to conduct my surveys

1. What brings you to this site today?

1. What are your first impressions of the artwork?

1. What message of you think the artist were trying to convey?

1. Does the fact that this piece of artwork is located on the site impact your interaction with site?

* Due to the winter weather condition in NYC from December to February; and 2 of the 3 sites being located outside without any covers, I couldn’t collect enough questionnaire for analysis purpose. As a result, I have decided to not use the questionnaire as part of the evaluation framework.*

**Economic Vitality**
The APA study has found that communities with flourishing art actives are important for the recruitment and retention of skilled and educated workforce in a city and region. Also, the presence of arts in a specific location may increase attention and foot traffic, which in turn may
bring in more visitors and attract more development projects. As a result, I will examine whether the public art works have contributed to increase in funding and foot traffic for the site using various quantitative data. I will approach this aspect through the following methods:

1. Examining foot traffic data to the site and location check-in data on social media apps (With a focus mainly on Instagram location check-ins because it is the platform most suited for posting pictures of art works) to determine whether the public art work had an effect on attracting more pedestrians. I will only account for the pictures that include the artworks with the location check-in tag because this could prove that the pedestrian was attracted to the site by the artwork and they are not just passing by.

2. Fundings for the space before and after the installation of artwork. This will allow me to examine if the public art project was able to bring in additional funding to a space that was otherwise neglected by the government and local organizations.

3. Examine whether the public art project able to generate jobs for locals in the community. (i.e: commissioning local artists, hiring local exhibition installation crew)

Instagram does not provide an accurate account of foot traffic data of the site because not everyone uses this social media app and not everyone may chose to upload a photo onto instagram when they visit the artwork. As a result, Instagram measure only functions as a representation of whether the artworks was able to attract visitors. No photos of the artwork with the location check-in on Instagram doe not represent that the public artwork had no viewers. But it certainly reflects that the artwork probably did not raise as much awareness for the underutilized site compared to the artworks that did produce posts on instagram.

Community Engagement
Community engagement is a process that would foster relationships with local residents and communities. A higher level of community engagement in planning could strengthen the level of public commitment and more perspectives will be available during the planning process. There already exists traditional tools of community engagement such as town halls, public opinion surveys and others. Public Art and creative place-making are becoming new ways to engage the community. I will approach this aspect through the following methods:

1. Examine the organizations involved in bringing the public artwork to the space and if they belonged to the local community

2. Examine if there was a public hearing and the presence of public participation in the process of planning and making of the art work.

4.2 Site Selection
In order to conduct my research I need to apply my evaluation framework to existing public art projects in New York City. I will also go to the following sites and observe how public art have impacted the space. I picked three sites in New York City that are underutilized. By
underutilized, I meant the spaces are not constantly occupied by people or people tend to avoid these locations. Moreover, people do not go, occupy or use these spaces for their intended purposes. This means that the space might not be in a physically dilapidated condition, it doesn’t produce enough interaction with humans and it doesn’t belong in an urban network. Furthermore, some of these sites received little to no attention from the government, the media and the community prior to the public art project. The three sites are also quite similar in function. All three sites function as a passageway or walkway for pedestrians to walk through. Two of the three sites have benches around for people to sit as well. The third criteria for picking these three sites is that all the public art projects are completed on or after 2015. This is a criteria because I have to rely on using Instagram location check-in function for foot traffic data. As a result, I had to find works that are completed after Instagram launched their named location tagging in 2014. This way, I would be able to obtain a clear comparison of the location check-in data before and after the artwork has been installed. Picking a site with artwork completed prior to 2014 will not provide me with foot traffic data. The last criteria for these project is that they artworks are temporary in nature. I decided to pick temporary public artworks instead of permanent artworks because many permanent public art projects are not installed at underutilized sites. Moreover, some of the permanent public art projects at underutilized spaces are completed prior to 2014, which doesn’t fit my third criteria. As a result, the following three sites are the ones that fit all four of my criteria.

1. 191st Street Tunnel in Harlem
This is a tunnel in Harlem that connects Broadway to the 191st Street subway station. It used to be a little creepy with rats running around in it. It is the entrance that most commuters would avoid using because it is dark, unwelcoming and seems unsafe. But the passage is a different place today after it is given a new look by artists. The DOT along with Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance have commissioned five different artists last year to paint the walls of the tunnel so it would make it more vibrant and “pop” to the people walking through the tunnel. This case study would be ideal for me to examine because the tunnel didn’t have any other renovations or upgrades done to it prior to the public art installation. So, this would allow me to study the direct effect public art has on an underutilized space.

![Source: Google Map](image_url)
The dilapidated condition of the tunnel prior to the public art project.

2. 116th street section of the East River Esplanade, East Harlem
This part of the esplanade often do not attract as much pedestrians as the sections around midtown area due to its location. There are no attraction sites or much retail nearby this section of the esplanade. Moreover, the design of the esplanade in this section is very plain and boring with standard benches, trees and street lamps. Also, the noise coming from the east side highway also reduces the attractiveness of the esplanade. Furthermore, this part of the esplanade is not on the government’s agenda for improvement projects. Only the esplanade near Battery Park area are getting consistent funding from the government with a plan for another park.

Source: Google Map
The rather boring and plain section of the East River Esplanade

3. O’Neill Triangle, South Bronx
This triangle is an underutilized space in Morrisania neighborhood in Bronx. This triangle also functions as a walkway that connects to the entrance of Boricua College. The triangle is not a very pleasant public space because there are constructions and vehicular traffic noise very close to the triangle. As a result, people don’t find the triangle a very attractive public place for leisure. Also, the design of the square is fairly plain with just benches and lamps.

Source: Google Map
4.3 Data Collection and Analysis
Data for the study were collected from academic papers, news reports, publications from related institutions, personal observations, social media (Instagram, Facebook and Twitter) location check-ins and hashtags. The analysis of the case studies will be completed according to the evaluation framework I have established. I will use both quantitative and qualitative data to complete my analysis. Most of my quantitative data (such as amount of funding, the people hired to install the project) will come from research, information provided by the organizations responsible for the public art work, government data and Census data.

5. CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

5.1 191st Street Tunnel Beautification Project
This public art project is a wall mural completed in the 191st street tunnel by five artists commissioned by the NYCDOT in 2015. Each artist were assigned two wall segments, each measuring 200 feet by 8 feet. The 191st Street is a station on the IRT Broadway-Seventh Avenue Line of the New York City subway. The station is located at the intersection of St.Nicholas Avenue and 191st Street in Manhattan. The station serves the 1 train at all times. There are two
entrances/exists for this station. The public art was completed for the entrance/exit at 190th Street and Broadway. This entrance is located on a hillside and it has a 900-foot-long passageway (passing under Wadsworth Terrace and Avenue) to connect the entrance/exit with the station itself. Prior to the Public Artwork in the 2015s, the tunnel was seen by many as unwelcoming and unsafe because it was dimly lit and covered with graffiti. These graffiti were not the aesthetically pleasing kind, they were simply tagging or roughly spray painted words. There were no proper signages in the tunnel and cyclists often ride their bikes illegally inside the passageway. There was an attempt to bring in public art at this tunnel in 2008. At that time DOT partnered with Groundswell and the Office of the Mayor to create a wall mural at the entrance of the tunnel called “New York City is a Rollercoaster”. This wall mural depicted local cityscape in bright green, blue, yellow and orange. However, these murals didn’t last for a long time before it became badly vandalized and marked up. In September 2014, the DOT installed new LED lightings and painted the wall of tunnel beige after years of complaints filed by local residents. But this didn’t improve the condition of the tunnel either. There were still markings on the walls, garbages on the ground with rats running around from time to time. As a result, this tunnel is often times avoided by pedestrians because they felt unsafe while walking in it and would rather use the other entrance/exit in the station.

DOT’s main objective for this art project was to make the tunnel less depressing aesthetically and greatly enhance the pedestrian experience while walking through this tunnel. It is their way of communicating to the public that they care about the public realm and they are consistently finding ways to make the public realm better. DOT also has partnered with a local agency NoMAA to select the five artist for the wall mural project instead of selecting the artists by themselves. As a result, DOT’s intention for the public art project isn’t about bringing monetary fundings or even increasing foot traffic. But rather, they simply want to aesthetically improve a once very depressing looking DOT property and change people’s perception of a scary place. Also, the public art project functions as a bridge to help foster communication between local organizations and DOT.
Community and Place Identity
For the tunnel beautification commission, each artist were assigned two wall segments of the tunnel to paint. Artist Andrea Von Bujdoss were tasked with painting the entrance and the two segments near the entrance. Her work was called “Prismatic Power Phrases” and it mainly contained uplifting phrases painted in very bright and eye catching colors against brightly colored background. The phrases contained: “Live Your Dreams”; Bright Lights Big City”; “Seize the Day” and others. The next two segments were painted by Nick Kuszyk. This work is called “Warp Zone” and it features psychedelia. Mr.Kuszyk’s work features many colorful squares with distortion to produce a “trippy” effect. Then the artists team Jessi Unterhalter and Katey Truhn, filled the walls with colorful geometric work called “Caterpillar Time Travel. The fourth segment is by artist Nelson Rivas called “ It’s Like a Jungle Sometime” with colorful plants and flowers. The last segment was painted by artists Fernando Carlo Jr. (or also known as Cope 2). He named his segment “Art is Life”. The style of his segment was similar to that painted by Andrea. It contained lots of large words in bright colors against popping backgrounds. But Mr. Carlo adopted a more old-school styled graffiti that mimics those done in the subways during the 1970s &1980s. All the artworks were colorful and popping, it certainly made the tunnel look much better than before. This has helped enhance the pedestrian’s experience while walking through the tunnel. This beautification project definitely achieved the goal in upgrading the tunnel aesthetically.
However, none of the artworks reflected the community character of Washington Heights or is in agreement with the community identity. All the artworks reflected the artist’s stylistic preferences but those murals could exist in just any other tunnel in NYC. The paintings didn’t tell a story or reflect the characteristics about Washington Heights & InWood community. This community had experienced some really interesting events during the civil rights movement era and was affected by the urban renewal projects in NYC. But none of these local histories and stories were presented in the artworks. Moreover, the paintings didn’t carry deep meaning in itself either. As a result, the artworks only achieved aesthetic goals but failed to bring out the community character.
Work by Jessi Unterhalter & Katey Truhn - Catepillar Time Travel

Work by Nelson Rivas - It’s like a Jungle Sometime
There are no existing public art master plan in the community. Most of the public art works in the community were commissioned by different government agencies, civil societies or non-profit organizations. A local non-profit group called Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance exists in the community to cultivate, support and promote the works of artists and arts in northern Manhattan. But NoMAA holds their own exhibitions and art festivals to promote local artists and their works. As a result, The 191st street tunnel beautification project certainly upgraded the aesthetics of the tunnel, but the artworks didn’t have any impact on emphasizing nor enhancing the identity of the community.

**Economic Vitality**
Prior to the tunnel beautification project, the tunnel received almost no attention in the media. There were very limited posts from DNAinfo and curbedNY regarding the dilapidated condition of the tunnel. But when the beautification project and the artists were announced, many major news agency reported about this project including the New York Times. There were 24 news articles published about the wall murals in the tunnel after its completion in May 2015. The tunnel had little visibility on social media prior to the artworks as well. There was no picture with the location check-in for the 191st street tunnel on Instagram before the artworks were completed in May 2015. After the wall mural was painted, there were 86 pictures of art works with the location check-in on Instagram in 2015, 202 pictures in 2016 and 71 pictures as of March 20th in 2017. A famous Instagram account (845,000 followers) documenting New York cityscape posted a picture of the tunnel with the artworks in 2017 and received 14,401 likes. Also, a video posted of the tunnel in 2016 received almost 10,000 views on Instagram. The location check-in data on Instagram doesn’t represent an accurate foot traffic data, but it
certainly reflects how the artworks was able to significantly increase the amount of attention from both the media and the public after the artwork was completed in the tunnel.

NYCDOT paid $15,000 per artists commissioned for the artworks. As a result, the public art works cost $75,000 in total to be installed. This is the largest one time funding the government has ever invested in for the 191st street tunnel. Prior to this project, the only fee for the tunnel was a paid staff to work 3 days a week to keep the tunnel sanitized. DOT also spent a small sum of money on installing new LED lights in 2014. As a result, the public art works was able to bring large amount of one time funding from the government. Currently, there are no new fundings for the tunnel as of 2016 and 2017. The project wasn’t able to generate any employment for the locals because there was no installation crew needed for the wall murals. In sum, the public art works was able to generate a very positive impact on increasing funding, media attention and foot traffic to the once underutilized tunnel. However, if produced little local impact for employment because no jobs were produced from this project.

Community Engagement
The public art project was commissioned by NYCDOT. NYCDOT started an Art Program in 2008 and has installed many art works throughout New York City. For the 191st Tunnel Beautification project, DOT partnered with a local non-profit organization NoMAA. The Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance (NoMAA) is a non-profit arts service organization launched in 2007 with the support of the Hispanic Federation and the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone. NoMAA’s mission is to cultivate, support, and promote the works of artists and arts organizations in Northern Manhattan. Since its inception, NoMAA has implemented programs designed to strengthen the professional capacity of individual artists and community arts organizations in Washington Heights and InWood. NoMAA has successfully partnered with local businesses and institutions to promote collaboration with artists and arts organizations in an effort to revitalize the cultural life and effect change in our communities uptown.

NYCDOT held an open call for artists to participate in this project. The artist selected out of the 158 applicants were Andrea von Bujdoss (Queen Andrea), Fernando Carlo Jr. (Cope 2), Nick Kuszyk, Nelson Rivas and artistic duo Jessie Unterhalter & Katey Truhn. Andrea is a New York City based fine artist, typographer, graffiti artist and graphic designer. She is one of the most skilled and notable female graffiti artists in the world, possessing a highly creative and advanced style, and has also developed a reputation for her oversized typography message murals. Andrea has been featured in major art shows, solo shows, magazines, books, and brand collaborations. Also born in NYC, artist Fernando Carlo Jr (Cope 2) had many solo and group exhibitions in galleries and museums throughout the United States and internationally. He is one of New York City’s most prolific graffiti artists and he began tagging his name in the South Bronx in 1978. Since 1999, Nick Kuszyk has been creating context informed performative interventions
combining multiple disciplines including: sculpture, painting, public works, costume design, performative physical actions, behavioral studies, etc. In more recent years, Kuszyk has expanded the scope of his studio practices through avenues that range from geometric abstract painting, narrative representational painting, and interactive sound and sculptural installations. Nelson Rivas, or “Cekis,” is a self-taught painter who was born in Santiago, Chile in 1976. He became one of a handful of young artists whose work was able to transcend local communities and ignite a massive street art and graffiti culture movement in Chile in the mid 90’s. He moved to NYC in the summer of 2004. Artist Duo, Jessie Unterhalter and Katey Truhn are a Baltimore based artist team striving to transform public spaces into playful and vibrant experiences. They have been collaborating on large-scale murals since 2012. Their work explores themes of movement and symmetry.

Both the artists and the organizing entity were not from the local community. NYCDOT is a government agency and their art program spans all five boroughs. There are three artists based in New York but none of them were born in Washington Heights nor do they reside in the community. The only local entity involved in this project was the NoMAA and Manhattan Community Board 12. But both groups played a rather small role in this project. The NoMAA was only involved in the artist selection process alongside DOT. It was unclear to how much power they had in selecting the artists. DOT presented this project to Community Board 12 but there was no public hearing held nor was the public invited to share their opinion on this project. It was a simple informational meeting about the beautification of the tunnel and how DOT will approach this project. As a result, the artwork brought minimum impact on community engagement.

Results
The 191st Tunnel Beautification project had the most positive impacts on the economic vitality of the space. The public art was able to bring in a large sum of funding that wasn’t available for the tunnel before. The art works also attracted significant attention from the media with a full length article published by New York Times. The location check-in data generated on Instagram increased significantly after the wall murals were painted and the has increased every year since 2015. Although the location check-in data does not translate directly to foot traffic data, it does show that people are more aware of this space and are more willing to post pictures to showcase the artworks. The impact generated for the community engagement was very minimal because only one local community group was involved with project. Moreover, the role the local community entity played in the project was relatively small as well. As for the community and place identity aspect, the public art project didn’t have much impact on enforcing and enhancing community identities. All the artworks showcased the artist's’ best works but none of the works had anything related to Washington Heights. As a result, the public art work only created impact on the economic vitality aspect in the process of transforming the underutilized tunnel.
5.2 NEVERENDINGGOGO & TotemOH

This is a temporary public art project installed on the East River Esplanade from June 2016 to June 2017. The public artwork is located at 116th street on the East River Esplanade in Harlem. There is a totem painted on an idea brick column and a banner spanning over 50 feet installed adjacent to the column. This vibrant mural by internationally renowned artist Kenny Scharf. The East River Esplanade is an approximately 9.44 mile-long public walkway along the east river intended for walking, cycling and rollerblading. The esplanade runs from Battery Park and ends at 125th street in East Harlem. The public artwork is located in the East Harlem section (from 90th street to 125th street) of the esplanade. This section of the esplanade has very limited amenities with no recreational facilities. It only contains the basic greenery, benches and lamps. This portion of the esplanade is poorly maintained with little open space. This part of the esplanade often do not attract as much pedestrians as the sections around Battery Park area due to its location. There are no attraction sites or retail nearby, so only people living in the East Harlem community would likely use this portion of the esplanade. As a result, this section of the esplanade receives little attention from the public and the government. The City of New York hired SHoP architects to complete a four phase renovation project for the esplanade starting in 2009 but this project only includes 2 mile of esplanade in lower Manhattan.

The main objective of this public art project commissioned by Friends of the East River Esplanade was to raise attention for the space. The founder, Jennifer Ratner, of the Friends of the East River Esplanade said “We are using public art to bring attention to the deteriorating waterfront that has not been cared for. It’s been very hard to bring attention to the fact that the waterfront in East Harlem should really get the same attention that water fronts not just in Manhattan but all over the city are getting.” in an interview with DNAinfo. The purpose for the public art projects is that “Friends was committed to a creative way of drawing attention of the powers that be and larger public to the decades-long neglect of what should be a world class community asset”. This attention could be translated to more media exposure, more photos posted of the site on social media app, increased foot traffic and more funding from the government.
Community and Place Identity
The commissioned artist is internationally renowned graffiti artists, Kenny Scharf. The public art work contained two separate pieces of work: a banner and a painted column. The banner is 50 feet long and it features mainly spheres and some cartoon faced shapes painted in black and white in varying sizes to create a sense of dynamic movement. The background of the banner are wide stripes painted in bright green, yellow and magenta to further emphasize the movement aspect of the painting. The column was covered with colorful cartoon faces in square shape which the artist is widely known for. Kenny Scharf have painted these cartoon faces on larger walls around NYC. Both art works do not reflect the neighborhood’s unique character because you wouldn’t think of East Harlem nor the East river Esplanade when you see those colorful cartoon faces and geometric shapes. Also, similar works by the artists have been exhibited in other locations such as SoHo and in famous museums around the world. So, the artworks are not unique to the location nor does it illustrate the community’s identity. But the banner was certainly interesting because it conveys a sense of movement and it is related to the movements (walking, running, cycling) occurring on the esplanade.
The Friends of the East River Esplanade have started a public art program in 2015 in hopes to use creative works to raise awareness and attention for the underutilized portion of the esplanade. This current project belongs to the master plan devised by the group. There is also the West Harlem Art Fund in the community. The West Harlem Art Fund offers opportunities for artists and creative professionals in public spaces in Northern Manhattan. The Friends of the East River Esplanade have collaborated with WHAF in their first ever public art project in 2015. That project showcased a banner of the Esplanade during night time but that banner was heavily vandalized during its time on display.
The public art project didn’t reflect or build upon the existing community identity because it simply showcased the artist’s best work with no consideration of the context and the location. But this art work belonged to a long term public art master plan established by a local conservancy. This could lead to establishing a shared vision for a community's identity but would require more public art projects to be commissioned in the future. As a result, this public art project had no impact on the community and place identity aspect.

**Economic Vitality**

Prior to the installation of the public art work, there was no mention of the East Harlem section of the East River Esplanade in the media within the last two years. Only articles and studies related to the renovation of the East River Esplanade in Lower Manhattan was available in the media. After the public artwork was commissioned and installed, there were 4 articles published in June 2016 by ArtNet News, Art News, Timed Out NYC, and Untapped Cities about the work. All those articles claimed the project to be one of the most anticipated public art works in NYC for summer 2016. A very unfortunate event took place and the banner was stolen three days after it was installed in June, 2016. The Friends of the East River Esplanade spent extra money to print another one to replace the stolen banner. However, the new banner did not last for long either, it was stolen again in August. This time, the event received a lot of attention from the media. There were 18 articles written about the public art project and the stolen banner in August. Many major news agencies such as NBC New York and CBS New York have all reported on this matter. But the conservancy decided not to replace the banner again due to the cost. After that incident in August 2016, there were no follow up articles regarding the artwork and the Esplanade. Since the artwork has been installed, there was no pictures of the artwork with the location check-in posted on Instagram. All the pictures with the East River Esplanade location “check-in” were sceneries of the lower Manhattan portion of the Esplanade. Only the artists and the Friends of the East River posted photos of the artworks on their Instagram account.

The Friends of the East River Esplanade used previously received fundings to commission this public art project since no new fundings was provided. The commission of this project costed roughly $7000 for the project. The conservancy had to pay an extra $2000 for a new banner to replace the stolen one. The conservancy didn’t print a third banner when the second one was stolen because they didn’t want to waste any more money on this issue. Prior to the Public Art project, the Friends of the East River have received fundings from various sources and they host benefits to fundraise for the Esplanade. Starting in 2017, the Rockefeller University will be renovating the Esplanade from East 64th Street to East 68th Street (pedestrian and bike path, landscaping and seating), the stretch of Esplanade near the school. The Rockefeller University will also establish a $1 million endowment to maintain the upgrades, and will give Friends of the
East River $150,000 of donation. It was unclear to whether the public art work and the incident have caused this grant to be donated.

The public artworks have brought more media exposure to the East Harlem Section of the Esplanade. But all this attention was generated through two very negative events. Furthermore, the artworks did not result in much response from the social media. There were no pictures posted of the artworks with the location check-in since the artwork was put up last June. Although the data from Instagram is not an accurate representation of foot traffic data resulted from the artwork, it certainly reflects that the NEVERENDINGGOGO & TotemOH was not as successful as I imagined it would be. Furthermore, the conservancy had to use their own money to fund the project with no additional funding from other sources.

Community Engagement
The public art project was commissioned by Friends of the East River Esplanade in partnership with NYC department of Parks and Recreation. The Friends is a local conservancy with a mission to restore and reinvent the section of the esplanade from 60th to 120th street. The Friends of the East River Esplanade was established about eight years ago by local resident Jennifer Ratner. The board of the Friends consist of 8 local residents enthusiastic about the Esplanade and wants to make it a better place. The conservancy have sponsored many concerts and dance performances on the esplanade before. They have also fixed sinkholes and secured grants for the esplanade. NYC Parks & Recreation is a government agency in charge of the parks and many open spaces including the esplanades within the city. The Parks acted as a partner to the Friends in the project. It is the very reasonable for the conservancy to partner with the city agency in charge of the esplanade to commission a public art work. The local community board was also involved with the project. The Friends of the East River Esplanade presented the project at the community board meetings and have received positive feedbacks from local residents. The artist commissioned for the project was internationally renowned Kenny Scharf. The artist was born in LA and received his degree from SVA in NYC. He became famous for his graffiti works in East Village during the 1980s. Afterwards, his works had been selected for the Whitney Biennial and he had exhibitions at the Queens Museum of Art, Miami Center for the Fine Arts and many other galleries and museums.

As a result, this project has a positive impact in the community engagement aspect because it was advocated for by a local conservancy. It would have been better if there were more local organizations and community residents involved in this project. But it is certainly positive to see a local organization commissioning the project compared to one commissioned by city agencies or other famous non-local art organizations.

Results
Overall, this public art project was able to attract more media attention for the site. But that was due to the negative events that took place at the esplanade. But the artwork didn’t translate into increased foot traffic for the location because there were no posts of the artwork with location check-in on Instagram. The project didn’t bring in any new fundings and the Friends of the East River Esplanade had to use their available fundings to install the artwork. No local employment was generated as well since the project was completed by the artist himself.

5.3 Boogie Down Booth
This is the third Boogie Down Booth, designed by artist Chat Travieso and it is located at O’Neill Triangle. The first booth was installed at Southern Boulevard and Freeman Street, underneath the 2/5 line subway in 2014; and the second booth was installed in Seabury Park in 2015. This colorful new public art installation brings music, solar–powered lights, seating, and community art to an underutilized space to Morrisania, Bronx. This community is located in the southwestern region of Bronx. In the 1970s, this community has experienced significant decay. Starting in late 1990s and 2000s, there has been investment from the government, the private sector and local organizations in the effort to revitalize the community. WHEDco is a community organization with the mission to provide better access to resources in the South Bronx. WHEDco has collaborated with DesignTrust, NYCDOT and NYC Department of Parks and Recreation to bring the first two Boogie Down Booth to South Bronx. This celebrates the rich musical and art heritage of the borough and masks construction and vehicular traffic noise on the 161st Street corridor. The installation also provides much–needed picnic–style seating and solar–powered lighting to the public space, which is located close to a bus stop, Boricua College, and 1,000+ units of housing.

The objective for the Boogie Down Booth was to reimagine and rethink the uses for public spaces. WHEDco wants to make the plain and basic public space more interactive. The Boogie Down Booth was intended to bring alternative activities to the triangle compared to the usual sitting and walking. The interactive features of the booth could help enhance people’s enjoyment for the space. Furthermore, the music playing from the Boogie Down Booth could make the space more dynamic and fun. As a result, the intention for the booth wasn’t about bringing attention, increasing foot traffic or obtain further funding but rather to reimagine the use of an underutilized public space.

Community and Place Identity
This Boogie Down Booth is a brightly colored interactive sculpture installation that features lights, seatings and music. The booth is painted in neon green, orange and yellow. These three colors makes the booth very welcoming and eye-catching. It certainly made the greyish looking O’Neill Triangle more visually attractive. The booth has a shed that provides some coverage for the seatings. There are solar-powered lights installed in the shed so the booth would have
lighting at night. The Bronx Music Heritage Center has curated a playlist of music by local
Bronx musicians. Music will play when people sits down in the booth. There are also colorful
boards with the information of the music listed above so people would know what they are
listening to. Next to the information about playlists, there is a white bulletin board where
community organizations gets to post any events and news happening in South Bronx. The artist
also invited local students and volunteers to collaborate with him and paint Bronx related words,
pictures and patterns on the base of the booth. By doing this, the artists hopes that the booth
would create a visual story about the South Bronx from the residents point of view. As a result,
the Boogie Down Booth made a positive impact on enhancing the community and place identity
because this work of art are completed in cooperation with the local residents to illustrate the
story of the Bronx.
The Boogie Down Booth belongs to a public art master plan devised by WHEDco when they started the project back in 2014. The previous booth had been installed first underneath the 2&5 subway line from 2014 - 2015, then the installation went to Seabury park from 2015-2016. All three locations are places where WHEDco hopes to improve in the Bronx. WHEDco have carefully selected the sites for the Booth because they hope to bring public attention to these places that are in need of improvement projects. So, the booth was part of the master plan to establish a shared vision for a community's identity.

**Economic Vitality**
Prior to the installation of the Boogie Down Booth, the O’Neill Triangle didn’t have much media coverage in the last 10 years. Since the project was installed last june, there were 6 articles written by local news agencies on the project. Although this is a significant decrease from the news coverage the first Boogie Down Booth had received in 2014 (20 articles in July 2014 with NYTimes and WSJ both reporting), it is the most the triangle has received in recent years. There are 9 pictures of the artwork posted on Instagram with the location check-in since June 2016. There are also 30 pictures of the artwork posted on Instagram since June 2016 with the #BoogieDownBooth but no location check-in. The Boogie Down Booth received the most location check-in of 20 during its first installation underneath the subway tracks in 2015.
WHEDco has received a grant of $100,000 for the series of Boogie Down Booth projects in 2014 when they commissioned the first one underneath the elevated subway line. This grant had been used to commission all three of the Boogie Down Booth. Each booth costs roughly about $18,000 in total to install. Prior to the project, the last time O’Neill Triangle received funding ($52,000) was in the early 2000s for a renovation project. That renovation was funded by former mayor Giuliani under the Greenstreets Program. Since then, not much attention has been paid to the triangle. As for job generation, volunteers were hired from the community for the installation and painting of the booth but they were unpaid.

Community Engagement
This project is commissioned by Women’s Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDco). WHEDco is a community development organization with a mission to give South Bronx access to all the resources that create a thriving neighborhood. WHEDco is involved with providing Affordable Green homes, educational programs, family support and sponsoring arts & cultural activities. WHEDco has partnered with NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, Boricua College, Bronx Community Board 3, Bronx Music Heritage Center and BronxWorks to bring the public art project to O’Neill Triangle. Out of all the partnership agencies, Boricua College, Bronx Community Board 3, Bronx Music Heritage Center and BronxWorks are all local organizations working in the community. The Bronx Music Heritage Center was in charge with curating the music playlists for the booth. They have chosen works completed by local Bronx musicians. Alongside the playlists, the BMHC have written a short description for every piece so people would be informed about the artists. Furthermore, the BMHC held live performances next to the installation during warmer weather, they invited the local Bronx musicians to play next to the booth. The BronxWorks was also involved in the project by hiring local volunteers to help the artist install and paint the booth. Furthermore, the artist collaborated with BronxWorks to find volunteers to help him paint lovely images on the booth as well. There were public hearings held at the Community Board 3 to inform the community of this public art installation. At the hearing, this project was met with very positive feedbacks from the residents since the last two Boogie Down Booth was liked by all the locals. The Community Board was also provided with a bulletin board on the booth so they could post events and news. Boricua College was located next to the square and some students also worked with the artist to paint words and images on the booth. The artist, Chat Travieso, is a Brooklyn based artists that focuses on creating art works that build or reinforces social bonds in public spaces. He likes to work closely with local residents, businesses, and community groups in various stages of his projects. His works consider ways cities can be more open to communities that are often excluded from dominant systems of urban development by offering uplifting and visually striking responses to people’s everyday needs. As a result, the Boogie Down Booth was a very successful public art project in engaging the community. The project was commissioned by a local development organization
and many other local agencies participated in the making of the artwork. This is truly a community effort.

Results
The Boogie Down Booth was extremely successful in creating a positive impact at engaging the local community. The Booth was not only the effort of WHEDco and the artists, it included many other organizations and residents of the South Bronx. This project shows how public art work can be used to bring the community together. Due to the large amount of community engagement in this project, the Boogie Down Booth also created a relatively positive impact in enhancing the community identity because the artwork shed-light on the both local music and art. The art installation was able to build upon celebrated community characteristics. The project received a large amount of funding from the government and it is received some attention from the media (not as much as the first Boogie Down Booth). However, the amount of posts with location check-in generated was very small.

6. COMPARISON STUDY

6.1 Comparison of Case Studies
Community Identity

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<th>191st Street Tunnel Project</th>
<th>NEVERENDINGGOGO &amp; TotemOH</th>
<th>Boogie Down Booth</th>
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<tr>
<td>Enhance Community Identity</td>
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<td>Belong to a Public Art Master Plan</td>
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Using public art to create an impact in community identity can be tricky and difficult. Out of the three projects, only the Boogie Down Booth was able to showcase celebrated community characteristics and create a unique piece of work that belongs to the South Bronx. Only the Boogie Down Booth incorporated elements of local community characters into the artwork to tell a story about the South Bronx. The artworks from the other two projects are not unique to their location and can exist in other parts of NYC. The Tunnel Beautification project and the East River Esplanade project both hired more famous artist compared to the artists of the Boogie
Down Booth. The famous artists showcased their best work for the commission using their signature style recognized by others. By doing this, the artworks had no connection with the community characteristics and it certainly didn’t paint a picture to celebrate the community. Both the artist and the organization in charge have to be mindful of the content of the artwork and its relationship to the community. If no careful consideration is put into the content and context of the work, only a beautiful piece of work will be put on display while lacking in meaning. As a result, public art does not produce a direct positive impact on enhancing community and place identity.

As for local art master plans, WHEDco and Friends of the East River both had one and that was the reason why they commissioned the artworks. Both local organizations hoped to use public art to improve the condition and gain more attention for the underutilized spaces. So both organizations have started art programs in hope to achieve that goal. WHEDco started the program in 2014 and planned for a series of Boogie Down Booth to be installed every year at a different location. The Friends of the East River’s art program is dedicated in bringing artworks to the East Harlem portion of the Esplanade every year. Both art master plans are specific to the local community. On the other hand, the 191st Tunnel Beautification Project didn’t belong to a community art master plan because it was commissioned by a government agency. NYCDOT has its own public art program but it applies to citywide underutilized locations under the jurisdiction of the DOT. As a result, local organizations usually have a local art master plan in place before they commission the public artworks.

Economic Vitality

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From the three case studies above, we can see some similar patterns across the types of impact public art projects has on revitalizing underutilized urban spaces. The first similarity is that public art projects has the ability to bring in fundings to the sites. In all three cases, the agencies had to spend quite a large sum of the money for the artworks. Both the 191st Street Tunnel Beautification and Boogie Down Booth were able to receive a generous amount of grant from the government for the public art project. Without the art projects, those sites probably would not be able to receive such fundings for basic improvement projects.
But the funding received by the 191st Street Tunnel project was a one time fee just for the commission of the artworks. There were no news of the tunnel receiving additional fundings to further improve the space in 2016 and 2017. The East River Esplanade did received a large sum of funding from the Rockefeller University in 2017, but there is no correlation between the artwork and funding. Rockefeller University has a upgrade plan to improve parts of the Esplanade from 64th street to 68th street (located in proximity to the university). So the funding given to the East River Esplanade might be part of Rockefeller University’s renovation project and not out of awareness raised by the public artworks. The Boogie Down Booth also received a large one time fee when WHEDco commissioned the first booth in 2014. Instead of spending all the money on one booth, WHEDco planned for two other booths to be commissioned at two other locations in 2015 and 2016. But there are no new fundings received by WHEDco as of 2017 to upgrade any of the underutilized spaces. This one time funding for the art commission is not the same as funding invested to improve the conditions of the underutilized spaces. As a result, all three public art projects had very limited ability to generate additional fundings into the community to further improve these spaces.

Moreover, all the art projects were able to raise the attention of the sites in the media. Without the artworks, all three sites were under the radar with barely any news reports. But with the installation of the art works, the news media were able to notice these once ignored underutilized urban spaces in NYC. Some works (Boogie Down Booth and 191st Street Tunnel Beautification Project) were even able to catch the attention of major news agencies such as New York Times and Wall Street Journal.

On the other hand, raising foot traffic is a little more difficult compared to gaining news media attention. Although Instagram check-in data does not provide an accurate account of foot traffic...
data, it does reflect whether people were attracted to the sites by the artworks. Out of all 3 projects, 191st Street Tunnel saw a significant increase in location check-in on Instagram after the wall murals were completed. The amount of check-in also increased in 2016 compared to that in 2015 and it is very possible the 2017 numbers will surpass last years. But the Boogie Down Booth only received 9 posts with location check-ins and the NEVERENDINGGOGO & TotemOh received none. A possible reason to explain this is that the 191st Street Tunnel is connected directly to subway line 1 while the other two locations were not located as close to public transportation. Both O’Neill Triangle and 116th street section of East River Esplanade don’t have any subway stations located nearby. O’Neill triangle does have a bus stop serving BX6 and BX13 buses. So, the location’s proximity to public transportation might have constrained the number of people coming to visit the artworks. Furthermore, the 191st Street Tunnel Beautification project is the largest (in size) work out of the three featuring 5 different artists including two very recognized graffiti artists. Kenny Scharf who was commissioned for East River Esplanade was also very famous but the public art installation only featured his work. The artists, Chat Travieso, commissioned for the Boogie Down Booth was the least famous compared to the artists for the other two projects. As a result, the fame and the amount of artists featured might have also affected the amount of people. Public art have only limited amount of impact on increasing foot traffic as illustrate through the three case studies, other factors such as fame of the artists, site’s proximity to public transportation can also greatly affect the amount of foot traffic.

It seems that using public artwork to increase employment opportunities for local community is very unrealistic. Through all three case studies, none of the projects hired local workers. All the artists for the projects were not local residents and all of artworks didn’t require a large installation crew. This can be contributed to the size and the complexity of the projects. All three projects were rather simple and two of them could be completed just by the artists themselves. As a result, it is unrealistic to think that public art projects could have an impact on local employment.

Community Engagement
The same issue is experienced with creating positive community engagement by commissioning public art at underutilized locations. From the three case studies, only Boogie Down Booth was able to engage more than one community organization in the process of creating the work. The 191st Street Tunnel Beautification project was commissioned by a city agency with only one local organization, NoMAA, involved and NoMAA played a relatively small role in the project. A local community organization was in charge of the East River Esplanade project but they didn’t partner with other local groups in the making of the work. If the art project was commissioned by a local organization, there might be higher chance that more local groups will be involved in the project because local organizations have a smaller capacity and might require
help from other agencies. Moreover, local organizations are more familiar and better connected with other existing local organizations. So, it might be easier for them to reach out and start a partnership. The government agency have a larger capacity and better resources compared to local organizations, but they might not be well connected with local organizations. Lastly, the Boogie Down Booth was the only project that had earlier precedents, so WHEDco might have learned from their previous experiences on how to work with other local organizations to create the project. As a result, it takes effort for the organizations to partner up with many other local organizations. So a one time public art project might have no impact on engaging the community.

Overall, public art projects have the most direct impact on money spent on a previously underfunded space. Most of the time, the money comes as a one time fee paid for the project to be installed. Further monetary investment into the underutilized space after the public art project is unlikely as seen from the three cases. Also, the public art project have the ability to attract the media’s attention. Raising foot traffic is also possible but that relies on other factor such as the location of the site. Enhancing community identity and increasing community engagement is more difficult. In order to achieve positive impact in these two categories, the main organization have to draft a well thought-out plan to incorporate various community entities and facilitate interactions between the artists and the local residents.

6.2 COMPARISON TO PREVIOUS SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC ART PROJECT
In recent years, NYC has seen many public artworks commissioned in various public spaces. One of the most popular commissions was “Please Touch the Art” by Jeppe Hein brought by Public Art Fund on view from May 2015 to March 2016. This project consist of 16 modified benches, a mirror labyrinth and a water fountain work installed in Brooklyn Bridge Park. The famous Danish artist, Jeppe Hein, produced various red, eye-catching and intriguingly shaped benches for the park. The visitors could sit, climb or lay down on those benches. There were also a mirror labyrinth which invites the visitors to walk through. Lastly, there was a water fountain called “appearing room”, in which the water jets rise and fall from the ground create the illusion of rooms. The visitors could also run or walk in between the water jets. The artworks were very interactive and it assimilated very well in environment. Park visitors really enjoyed having well designed benches and water fountain in the park as seen from their pictures on Instagram. This public art project certainly helped enhanced the visitors experiences at Brooklyn Bridge park but the artworks did not reflect Dumbo’s identity.
This large scale project immediately caught the eyes of news media when it was installed in Brooklyn Bridge Park. There were 37 articles written about this artwork in May and June 2015. New York Times even wrote two article about this project; one was a formal art critique and another article with a video on how to enjoy the artworks. This project was well received on Instagram as well. There were approximately 5400 pictures posted of the artwork with the location check-in when the project was on view. There were 4802 photos of the artwork under the unique hashtag #pleasetouchtheart associated with the project. As a result, this project had a very positive impact on raising both the media and the public’s awareness on the space. But it is very hard to determine whether the public artworks brought the foot traffic or there were already this much foot traffic at Brooklyn Bridge Park. The amount of funding Public Art Fund received for this project was unclear, but it certainly cannot be a small amount because most of Jeppe Hein’s work auction above $10,000 a piece. Major support for the exhibition is provided by the Perelman Family Foundation, with generous additional support from the AB Foundation, The Marc Haas Foundation, Stavros Niarchos Foundation, Oliver's Realty Group/RAL Development Services, and The Silverweed Foundation.

Public Art Fund is a NYC based non-project agency that brings very ambitious public art projects to public spaces in the City. The agency mostly commissions renowned artists and choose
well known parks or public spaces for the project to be installed. Public Art Fund has partnered with Bloomberg Philanthropist, Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy, NYC Parks & Recreation and NYC Department of Cultural Affairs for this project. There was no local community organizations involved in the process of this project nor was any local workers hired to install the project. Public Art Fund has its own exhibition installation department.

Although the this project was one of the more well known public artworks commissioned in recent years, there was no significant impact on improving community engagement and enhancing community identity. As a result, it is very difficult for a public art project to produce positive impacts in all three categories (Community Identity, Economic Vitality and Community Engagement).

7. LIMITATIONS & CHALLENGES
This study has proven that public art work can create impact on both the underutilized spaces and the community. But two of these projects (Boogie Down Booth and East River Esplanade project) are only temporary installations for a year. It is very difficult to the measure the long term impact the works could have on these locations because they are taken down before one could do that. Furthermore, with the project only on view for a short period of time, some potential impacts the artworks could’ve had don’t have enough time to manifest and become apparent.

One of the key challenges this study faced was the lack of interviews done with visitors at the artworks. Without the questionnaires, it is very difficult to get a grasp on how the artworks have impacted the visitor’s experience and understanding of these spaces. I had a very short data collection period from December 2016 to February 2017 and during this period, it was very cold in NYC for people to visit the three locations with two of them located outdoors. Most of these outdoor public artworks face the problem of tough winter in NYC. During the winter time, it is extremely hard to attract any visitors to these locations unless it is a well known tourist destination. It would be a significant improvement if I could have conducted questionnaires during warmer weather and compiled the results to form an understanding of how public artworks could’ve impacted visitors.

The second challenge for this study is the collection of the foot traffic data using a social media app. It was impossible for me to go the locations on a daily basis to count the amount of people going there to see the artworks. I had to rely on a the data recorded by Instagram to gain an understanding of the amount of visitors the artworks were able to attract. I chose Instagram over Facebook and Twitter because Instagram is the main social media app for pictorial posts and most people would show an artwork by posting a picture. Moreover, if people were attracted by the artwork to go to a certain location, they would likely post a picture of the artwork with the
location check-in function. But Instagram is certainly not an accurate account of the foot traffic data because only 30% of all mobile phone users are active users of the app and most of the users are from younger population. As a result, choosing this method to track foot traffic data certainly have excluded a large population and it only functions as a reflection of whether the artworks were able to attract visitors.

Another major limitation of this study is the choice of temporary public art projects. Two of my case studies are public art projects that will be on display for only one year. The 191st tunnel beautification project is also not as permanent of an artwork as sculptures or statues because the wall mural is subject to vandalism, which in turn might cause the murals to be repainted within a few years (this has happened to the previous wall mural in the 191st Street tunnel). The choice of temporary public art projects will have a great impact on the amount of data I could collect. The time span of these projects will limit my analysis of the case studies. Moreover, the temporal characteristic of these three public art projects will limit my understanding of public art project’s long term impact on urban spaces.

The last challenge for my study was finding three identical underutilized public spaces with public art installations completed on or after 2015. Due to the usage of Instagram location check-in data, I had to find works completed after the geotag function was put to use in 2014. So, it was very difficult to find three almost identical underutilized urban spaces with public art installations. I did find three spaces that same similar functions to each other. But this could impact the comparison analysis because the slightly different nature of these spaces could alter the impact of public art projects.

8. CONCLUSION AND PLANNING IMPLICATIONS
As New York City Department of Parks and Recreation celebrates 50 years of commitment to public art and as Public Art Fund (the city’s biggest public art organization) celebrates its 40th anniversary in 2017; it is a good time to reflect upon the value of public art and their impact on public spaces in NYC. In a sunday review piece published by NY Times in June 2015 on “Art in Public Spaces”, several readers made very interesting comments about public artworks. One reader said “the increased reach of public art can increase understanding.” because not everyone goes to museums and galleries (comment by Thomas Starr). On the other hand, another reader said “Keep public parks public. Erect memorials, statues and fountains. The belief among a restricted community that the public needs some form of “enlightenment” is an insufficient rationale. Please let me enjoy a park as a park and not a vehicle for promoting someone else’s version of beauty” (comment by Richard M. Frauenglass). It is obvious that both planners and visitors of public spaces have conflicted views on public art. I, myself, like public artworks because they make some rather bland and plain public spaces more interesting and more memorable.
Public artworks are certainly pretty to look at and it makes underutilized spaces “pop” out. Most of the artworks were able to give the dullish looking spaces a “facelift”. But the artworks are certainly not a solution that could solve the problems these spaces are facing. Many planning agencies have written reports about the “good” public art could bring to underutilized spaces, but in reality, only limited amount of positive impacts were generated by public art. The most positive impact public artworks have on these spaces are bringing in funding to those previously underfunded locations because art installations are quite expensive to erect. But oftentimes, these fundings don’t translate into future fundings for the improvements of these spaces, it might just be a one time fee for the artworks. Moreover, the impact public art have on increasing foot traffic is severely affected by other factors such as the location of the sites, the fame of the artists and others. As a result, planner should consider carefully when they want to use public art as a tool for transforming underutilized places. Here are some implications planners should keep in mind while planning for the public art project:

1. Location is Key: the amount of impact public art projects have on increasing foot traffic depends on the location as well. If the location is like the East Harlem portion of the East River Esplanade, then the artwork might not attract many visitors even if you paid a large sum of money to commission a famous artists. If the underutilized spaces are not located in proximity to public transportation or any retail sites, the planner might have to consider other ways to improve the space instead of using public art.

2. Content and Context Matter: planners should be extremely mindful when they commission the artists because the artists will likely want to showcase their best work. But the “best work” doesn’t mean the art will have anything to do with the community identity at all. It could end up being a piece of beautiful artwork that you could find in just any other neighborhood in the city.

3. Local Involvement is Difficult: often times the artwork will not generate any local employment opportunities because the artwork could be installed by the artists themselves. Also, not all artists are like Chat Travieso, most of them prefers to have the work completed alone without the involvement of local community members. So, it is very important for the planner in charge to act as a bridge between the artist and the local community in order to generate a partnership.

4. Temporary Artworks need Maintenance: Often times, the commissioning agencies don’t maintain the artworks after it is completed. But most of the artworks require high maintenance because they are subjected to vandalism. The 191st Street Tunnel have already been marked up severely even though it is done by some of the highly regarded graffiti artists. The Base of the Boogie Down Booth are marked up as well even when the community members were involved in painting the artwork. The East River Esplanade banner were stolen twice before the installation period even ended. As a result, even temporary public art project is not a one time thing, it requires maintenance.
5. Public Artworks Doesn’t Guarantee Future Fundings: all three cases have demonstrated that fundings mostly come in the form of a one time fee dedicated to the specific project. Further investments into the underutilized space after the art project is unlikely. So, planners shouldn’t rely on public art project to bring in additional fundings other than the initial amount granted for this project.

Public art certainly has the ability to bring beauty, attention, stir up discussion and involve various parties. All the above contribute to a dynamic and inviting urban space. APA and NEA were not wrong in claiming the benefits of public art. But often times, public art can only achieve minimum impact in transforming underutilized spaces as the three case studies have illustrated. Planners should not rely on public art to fix the problems underutilized urban spaces are facing because public art relies on many other elements in order to create positive impacts. The most viewed and well-maintained and well-funded public artworks in NYC are often located at famous attraction sites. The underutilized spaces in a community cannot compete with these famous sites in attracting foot traffic and fundings. As a result, planners should be careful when they employ public art as a tool to revitalize underutilized spaces. Planners should consider why those places have become underutilized in the first place instead of relying on public art to create drastic results.

Although public art works isn’t a solution to the problem of underutilized urban spaces, it certainly holds a place in planning. The large amount of public art projects going up in NYC every year reflects how public art certainly has its function in a city scape. In the 40 Year of Public Art in Parks publication, the NYC Parks department said “Temporary public art continues to assert a strong presence in a city of virtually limitless visual competition, and at its best holds the power to surprise, stir debate, and cause the occasional scandal. And whether we stop to stare or accept them as part of our daily rounds, these public artistic expressions encourage us to rethink our physical and cultural surroundings, and our place within this complex landscape.” I think this is a very accurate description of how public art fits in the larger planning vision. It is a tool planners could certainly use to reimagine public spaces and change the dynamics of a space beyond the artwork’s aesthetic pleasures. Public artworks can also foster communication between the people and the planners. It is probably easier for planners to engage local residents and communities over commissioning public artworks compared to a transportation project. Moreover, it is a way to make people more aware of their urban surroundings. As a result, I think public art is an alternative communications tool between planners and the public.
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