Exploring Creative Community Engagement

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by

Julie S. Burros

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Abstract

Exploring Creative Community Engagement examines the role of artists in a planning process by researching the intentions of planners when they engage an artist to carry out a community engagement process, how the techniques of artists doing “creative community engagement” differ from those employed in more traditional participatory planning processes, explores if there is something about the creative process of being an artist that influences how they design public engagement methods, and seeks to understand what are the characteristics of an artist-led community engagement process that can spark creative problem solving. The research design involves a comparison case study method focused on the public engagement process of the CreateNYC cultural plan and the Boston Creates cultural plan. Key findings are that intentions of planners for the inclusion of artists in public engagement should be clear and that the optimal role for an artist to play in a planning process is in the design of the public process as well as the execution of it. Recommendations include the expansion of artist residencies in planning agencies, launching an artist/planner fellowship program at the American Planning Association, conducting additional research and creating joint planning/arts degrees with universities and colleges in partnership with the Alliance for the Arts in Research Universities.
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Chapter One: Introduction and Background

Despite so many new ways to reach people to garner their participation in a planning process, it is still difficult to reach specific, diverse populations, and create truly inclusive, equitable plans. This is especially true for populations who would not ordinarily attend public meetings or answer online surveys. In addition, when doing a plan in a community with a diverse population, or carrying out a plan meant to address a specific issue or a specialized user population (such as immigrants, youth or the elderly) it might be even more difficult to engage that specific population to participate in the plan process.

Approaches to community engagement carried out by artists have gained much higher visibility in the last ten years as those in the planning field have begun to recognize and embrace creative placemaking. There are many examples within the breadth of projects that comprise creative placemaking that seem to demonstrate that artists can be effective at reaching diverse populations by employing inventive public engagement techniques as part of participatory planning or community development efforts. These techniques appear not only to reach diverse populations to share information and gather their input, but also seem to employ methods that can foster other positive public goods such as ongoing civic engagement, enhanced community capacity and stewardship, as well as to spark creative problem solving during the planning process. It is rather rare that artists are engaged to assist with planning or community development projects that aren’t directly related to arts and culture. (The GoBoston 2030 Transportation plan and The Fargo Project plan for storm water management are notable exceptions.) I chose to focus this research on cultural plans and cultural planning because they typically have very extensive public engagement processes that employ creative techniques. I hoped that by
focusing on plans that are about the arts and cultural realm, I would be able to examine several different innovative approaches to artist-designed and artist-led creative engagement that might be applicable or relevant to other planning contexts.

This research fits within the context of the growing intersection of the arts and planning. I will explore this context in the background section and literature review, tracing a set of conditions in both planning and the arts that have led to the growing recognition of the value of incorporating artists into planning processes. I will then dive more deeply into how two different cultural planning efforts were carried out to compare their engagement approaches.

By exploring the following questions I will aim to prove or disprove my hypothesis that artists who carry out community engagement can help to reach populations that might not participate in a planning process and in addition can help to identify new solutions to complex challenges. I will begin by exploring the obstacles to participation, the intentions that planners have when they carry out engagement, and the intentions a planner might have when they partner with an artist to carry out community engagement. Next I will research what comprises the specific creative engagement techniques that artists are using in participatory planning and how they differ from other more traditional engagement techniques. I will examine how these techniques are related to the creative practice of the artists and will also investigate if the artist has a history of doing community art or participatory art and if that led to the development of their creative public engagement techniques. I will be exploring if there is some relationship between an artist’s creative process and how they go about devising creative approaches to public engagement. Finally I will be exploring if there are specific characteristics of creative engagement techniques
that might achieve gains for community development that goes beyond achieving participation by a broader, more representative, inclusive group of community residents. I will look for evidence that the creative engagement carried out by the artist had ongoing impact on the community or the agency who sponsored the plan and perhaps contributed to other positive impacts such as ongoing community engagement and creative problem solving as part of the planning process.

In summary the research questions are:

1. What intentions do planners have when they engage an artist to carry out a community engagement process?

2. How do the techniques of artists doing “creative community engagement” differ from those employed in more traditional participatory planning processes?

3. Is there something about the creative process of being an artist that influences how they design public engagement methods?

4. What are the characteristics of an artist-led community engagement process that can spark creative problem solving?

A Personal Journey

My own career and evolution as a planner in many ways mirrors the evolution of artist/planner collaboration that I will explore in this thesis. After planning school, I worked at Economics Research Associates. Our work focused on economic and market feasibility studies for projects early in their development stages, our work almost never involved community input or public engagement.
I next worked as a planner for the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) in Chicago. I oversaw the creation of plans for State Street, the East Loop, and for the North Loop Theater District, for which we did very little community engagement. There were very few residents living downtown, and the primary planning stakeholders comprised a committee of business people and developers. At the time, Chicago had no formal process or infrastructure for community participation in planning such as the local planning boards in New York City. When we did a plan for the near west side, the area was beginning to transition from low scale wholesale and industrial to residential uses, and yet the only community meetings we organized were in response to negative community sentiments regarding one very large new development that sought a new zoning designation.

From Planning to Cultural Planning

Next I worked at the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs. As director of cultural planning, my brief was to leverage the tools of planning to help the cultural organizations and artists in Chicago to be more sustainable. I found it to be rare that my fellow planners ever valued the presence of arts and culture in a community and was often struck by how little they understood how non-profits or artists do their work. Conversely, I found the cultural organizations and artists uninformed as to the existence of zoning or licenses or the need to secure permission from city government for doing work on public property. I became an advocate for the inclusion of arts in plans, and a very adept translator between the two fields.

In 2011 Mayor Rahm Emanuel called for the creation of a new cultural plan for Chicago and public participation and engagement was at the forefront. While the process
for the cultural plan was very much inspired by the process followed in the early 1980’s, the intentions were markedly different. In the early 80’s public engagement was not so much about producing ideas for the content of the cultural plan. Plan director Michael Dorf thought that a team of experts could have sat in a room and come up with all the same recommendations and ideas for the cultural plan. Rather than generate ideas for the plan, the intent of the public process was political. The Washington administration intentionally used the plan process as a tool to unite a fractured political body. Dorf also noted that the hope was that with broad public and political buy-in there would be support for the nascent department of cultural affairs for implementation programs, and that the plan would have enough support to survive beyond a change in political administrations. (Dorf 2011.)

I was named director of the 2012 cultural plan project and given a mandate to create a plan with an extensive public process inspired by the 1986 plan. The intention of the public process was multifaceted. We did want to gather up ideas and generate new ones, as well as to use the process to connect isolated arts organizations and artists, and model the kind of collaboration that would be needed to make the plan a reality. Orit Sarfaty, lead project staff with Lord Cultural Resources noted repeatedly, “The process itself has value.” (Author’s own recollection.) We did not have the resources, or the time to collaborate with an artist as part of the plan process, but did incorporate a performance or arts experience before nearly every one of the 35 public meetings. Only at this point in my planning career did I truly experience what an extensive public participation process could bring to a plan. The public engagement for the Chicago Cultural Plan 2012 is summarized in Figure 1.1
Discovering Creative Community Engagement

I next became the Chief of Arts and Culture for the City of Boston and headed up the creation of a cultural plan: Boston Creates. The public process was multi-faceted and complex, the heart of which were community-based volunteer teams. For each team, a pair of co-leaders were trained and supported by staff and consultants, but were otherwise allowed to determine how best to reach local residents.

Figure 1.1: Chicago Cultural Plan 2012 Public Process Illustration

THE CITY IS LISTENING

This PLAN was created by visionary thinkers – YOU, the citizens of Chicago. In February of 2012, we asked you to share with us your ideas for shaping a cultural vision for Chicago.

Source: Chicago Cultural Plan 2012

We also worked with an artist collective who helped to train the community team leaders to use creative meeting facilitation techniques, connect the neighborhood teams to
each other, and activate the audience at the town hall meetings. The collective also recruited three additional artist-ethnographers to further help design creative engagement activities, to create artwork that documented the planning process, and create work that further commented on and reflected on the citywide cultural planning engagement process.

I recount this journey by way of introduction to this topic and to give a real world context to this research. I was a planner who worked on many plans produced with little public participation. Some were effective in spite of that fact, others were irrelevant from the moment the print was dry. I’ve experienced how the process itself can mobilize people behind an idea and that same public support can translate into political will to achieve real change. I’ve also witnessed how artists can immediately change the dialogue in a crowd, build public trust, think about old problems in new ways, and break through “planning fatigue.” The need for genuine public participation in planning processes is real. Badly done plans undermine the field and breed distrust of government and professional planners. Inventive, creative community engagement can be an effective tool to overcome these challenges. Exploring how this has worked, and has not will be the journey we undertake on these following pages.
Chapter Two: Literature Review
From Public Participation to Artist-Led Creative Engagement

Perhaps it is the very public failures of earlier eras of planning such as urban renewal, demolished public housing developments, and the displacement that comes with gentrification that led to the need for participatory planning. Perhaps also it’s the result of successful advocacy and organizing efforts that we can thank for the rise of participatory planning. The slogan “nothing about us without us” first became a popular motto for disability rights activists. (Charlton, 1998) In my own planning experience in Boston, I heard this slogan regularly used by community activists who demanded a role in the planning processes that were happening in their communities.

The inclusion of marginalized populations in planning processes is a sharing of power. Sharing power with poor people can be very threatening to those who hold power. In “A Ladder of Citizen Participation,” (Arnstein 1969) a hierarchy of participation is compared to the rungs on a ladder, starting with exclusion, and stretching all the way up to citizen control. (See Figure 2.1) Informing and consultation, which are typical methods of citizen participation in many planning processes, are classified as “degrees of tokenism.” (Arnstein 1969) “There is a critical difference between going through the empty ritual of participation and having the real power needed to affect the outcome of the process.” (Arnstein 1969) The gradation of participation is an important concept, not all participation in planning process is equal. Participation that does not move beyond tokenism denies the ability to truly reap the benefit of involvement in planning processes.
Valuing Public Participation

Robert Blair’s examination of a specific citizen-planner driven initiative in Nebraska found that “people participate in the execution of plans they help create” and that “public input in local development planning projects results in an emphasis on community development and local capacity building strategies.” (Blair 2014) Public engagement matters to public servants, and its value goes beyond urban planning, it’s relevant to nearly
every different government process. The National League of Cities (NLC) published a survey of public and elected officials’ views on public engagement in 2010. Written by Barnes and Mann, “Making Local Democracy Work: Municipal Officials’ Views About Public Engagement” employed a rigorous survey and sampling methodology. The NLC clearly values engagement, and the introduction notes their intention in fielding the study: “when municipal officials engage the public in decision making, it develops a stronger sense of community and leads to better policy outcomes.” Seventy six percent of survey respondents noted that they were very likely or likely to use a “deliberative public engagement process” for neighborhood planning. In a more disappointing light, only 23% noted they would do so for “immigrant integration and/or race relations.” Responses to questions about what is useful about public engagement show a very high value on information sharing and much less value on problem solving.

In Cilliers and Timmermans’ 2014 article, “The Importance of Creative Participatory Planning,” a strong rationale for the value and logic of participatory planning is presented, especially for social public spaces. They argue that “the value of participatory planning is that the process will help identify issues that would not be identified by a traditional planning process because the people who are right in the community are the most expert on specific social dynamics, especially in public social spaces.” And then further argue “the creative approach enhances the willingness of the stakeholders to take part in the process.” Their argument is illustrated with several examples and mention of “case studies” but offers little rigorous research or evidence to support their conclusions. Several methods of creative participatory processes are discussed, and shown in Table 2.2 below including: the workbench method, guerilla gardening, extreme experiences, and
‘meet my street.’ Only one method appears to be artist-led, the ‘meet my street’ approach, which involves a filmmaker instructing community residents and youth who then document the aspects of their community they value.

Table 2.2 Creative Participatory Planning Tools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Benefits of using the tool in place-making processes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strengths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workbench method</td>
<td>comprehensive participation approach; identifies actual user values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guerrilla gardening</td>
<td>creative participation approach; creativity invites local residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme experience</td>
<td>creativity invites local residents; stimulates different perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Meet my street’</td>
<td>creative interaction point; creativity invites local residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative techniques</td>
<td>fast and effective quick-scan method; creativity invites local residents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Cilliers and Timmermans 2014

Participation Obstacles

In the National League of Cities (NLC) June 2007 State of America’s Cities survey, 58% of elected city officials said the lack of trust and degree of disengagement between residents and government is a big problem in the nation generally.” (Barnes and Mann 2011) One troubling finding from the NLC survey was that “almost half of municipal officials believe that they, their peers and their constituents lack the capacity to conduct effective deliberative public engagement.” The authors offer that perhaps city officials fear taking on contentious issues or feel ill equipped to do so, preferring to let non-profit organizations do so in their stead. The same study quotes a respondent noting: “It seems
we get to a core group of individuals for comments and are not getting members from the entire city involved." (Barnes and Mann 2011) In the Table 2.3 below are the results in response a question regarding the obstacles to public engagement. The difficulty in reaching specific segments of the population "youth and specific segments are hard to reach" earns the third highest score (36%) supporting the suggestion that creative methods that are effective in reaching specific populations could be a valuable strategy in overcoming this challenge to inclusive public engagement.

Table 2.3: Obstacles to and Risks of Greater Levels of Public Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBSTACLES OR RISKS</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Makes people too powerful in relation to government officials</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was elected to lead, not follow</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language barriers are too troublesome and/or translation is too costly</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff are not supportive</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elected leaders are not supportive</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders of powerful groups outside City Hall are opposed to getting more people more directly involved</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse populations are hard to communicate with</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal or state rules and restrictions</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is uncomfortable/takes public officials and municipal staff out of their comfort zone</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of clear results makes it not worthwhile</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot know who actually represents the community</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of experience, skills, know-how</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adds too much time to the decision making process</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs are too high in money and staff time</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth and other segments of the community are hard to reach</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media not paying attention and/or is not fair and balanced</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public apathy and/or ambivalence</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Barnes and Mann 2011

Traditional Engagement Methods

The approach to public engagement both from the perspective of the intention and the methods employed vary widely by the type of planning being done. Through this research I have generally found that planning processes focused on social issues (such as
housing, youth or public health) were more likely to acknowledge the role of participatory or creative engagement methods. Conversely, the more technical the planning, the less likely there is to be creative engagement. For example the Environmental Protection Agency web site notes that tools for engagement in planning processes are organized by the intention of engagement ranging from informing the public about the plans or planning process, to generating and obtaining input or feedback, or to achieve consensus building and agreement-seeking. (Epa.gov 2019) Missing from this specific paradigm is problem solving, which is perhaps not surprising given how technical and complex environmental analysis can be.

The afore mentioned NLC study respondents identified engagement methods as shown in Table 2.4 below.

Table 2.4: Tools Regularly Used to Support and Encourage Public Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tools Regularly Used to Support and Encourage Public Engagement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessible city hall website, including email addresses for all city officials</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council agendas and proposed executive actions published online well in advance and comments invited</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special deliberative processes, for example “town hall” meetings, used to involve large numbers of people on critical issues</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff and funding assigned for facilitating public engagement</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood structures in place for community engagement</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A specific plan for public engagement in your city</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive online forums</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Barnes and Mann 2011

In the NLC study there is no particular mention of experts or consultants for engagement, and no mention of artists or creative engagement techniques whatsoever. Only a very small percentage noted that they had a plan in place for guiding public engagement (most likely those Metropolitan Planning Organizations with Public Participation Plans.)
Federally funded transportation plans mandate public participation, and the development of a formal Public Participation Plan (PPP). A State of Pennsylvania PPP noted that “PennDOT provides extensive opportunities for public involvement in the development and design of specific transportation projects” and yet the techniques mentioned are rather minimal and noted as “public review and comment at key decision points.” (PennDOT 2010) The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (BRMPO) Transportation Equity program publishes public information in six languages in addition to English, reflecting the demographics of the region covered by the plan. That is an admirable level of language access.

The same 2014 PPP states that updated guidelines were created based on research into “innovative and effective” public engagement methods in use in other places. One new guideline allows the PPP to “embrace, as feasible, new technologies with which to engage the public in an interactive way.” (BRMPO PPP 2014, 2017) An entire appendix to this PPP is devoted to research conducted by the MPO staff on how to improve public engagement, acknowledging that the traditional format of PPP’s have become outdated in the digital era. They conducted a survey and reviewed practices from several other cities, and the use of creative engagement techniques led by artists was not cited, however survey respondents made the following suggestions for improvement that could result in a creative engagement in the MPO’s future work, “Work or partner with other organizations to disseminate information and solicit involvement, increase and target outreach to community groups and community leaders, use more graphics to communicate ideas.” (BRMPO PPP 2014, 2017)
Perhaps inspired by that research, the City of Boston engaged in a transportation planning process, Go Boston 2030, with some highly creative engagement methodologies. The public process explicitly focused on soliciting new ideas, via a question campaign in part carried out via a colorful question truck. Kate Balug, co-founder of the Department of Play, the same artist collective who were later part of the Boston Creates Plan, were part of the engagement team, as were the Interaction Institute for Social Change and the Design Studio for Social Intervention (DS4SI.) During the two-day Visioning Lab event, participants were invited to “draw, make, write, or collage their future of transportation” at a “Creation Station.” The plan document shows children at this station, implying that people with families who wanted to attend part of the Lab, which was held over a weekend, could attend without having to secure child care or pay for a babysitter, thereby extending access to a wider demographic. “Music, dancing, and visual arts were incorporated into the event to encourage people to open up to new ideas, to think creatively, to have fun, and to work together in a positive way.” (Boston Transportation Department 2017)

The Barr Foundation supported the GoBoston 2030 plan and also funded (in part) the Boston Creates Plan. The Barr Foundation is one of the funders of ArtPlace, and is also the main source of support for the expansion of the Arts and Planning Division at the Metropolitan Area Planning Council in Massachusetts (MAPC.) In a later section there is more information about how the transportation planning field is beginning to more fully embrace and promote the role of the arts.
Arts and Planning: The American Planning Association

The American Planning Association (APA) published four arts and culture briefing papers in 2011. They were likely a reaction to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Creative Placemaking study published in 2009, and the NEA Our Town grant program and the ArtPlace America grant program that were launched in 2010. The APA series aims to address the role of the arts in planning and covers topics such as cultural values, history and heritage, urban design and sense of place, economic vitality, and community engagement and participation. Figure 2.5 shows how APA summarizes these approaches. The briefing on creative engagement gets more specific as to the why and the what as follows by noting that: “Creative tools can strengthen the understanding and exploration of community values, Creative tools increase stakeholder involvement; and Creative tools can better engage the public in community and urban design projects.” (Hodgson 2011) In comparison to how the arts world has so deeply explored the role of the arts in communities and the role of artists in planning processes, the APA briefing papers are a rather paltry attempt to address this issue.

In 2015 APA received an NEA Our Town Knowledge Building grant to collaborate with Forecast Public Art to produce a public art and placemaking ‘learning tool.’ The tool includes online courses, webinars and a fact sheet. In 2017 and 2018 five cities participated in a beta test in which they took the courses and then implemented a project that made use of the arts or an artist to address a community issue through public art. Beginning in April 2019 the courses were available both to members and non-members at the APA web site.
Table 2.5: Connection of Planning Goals to Arts, Culture, and Creativity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Planning Goals</th>
<th>Sample Activities</th>
<th>Actors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>• Preserve the historic and cultural heritage of a place</td>
<td>• Engage community residents in a PhotoVoice or storytelling exercise to identify shared needs and values</td>
<td>• Planners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide a better understanding and an appreciation for a community’s cultural diversity</td>
<td>• Create and unveil a community mural or other form of public artwork to validate or celebrate the past</td>
<td>• Nonprofit organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Facilitate connections among or reduce barriers between diverse groups (e.g., age cohorts, ethnic groups, socioeconomic classes)</td>
<td>• Organize a community festival to celebrate local cultural diversity</td>
<td>• Neighborhood groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide arts and cultural education programs, such as workshops, interactive classes, and performances, to encourage an understanding and awareness of a community’s historical and cultural context</td>
<td>• Artists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Use cultural and noncultural venues to facilitate participation from different parts of the community</td>
<td>• Individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Funders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Policy makers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>• Develop and expand upon local economic opportunities for members of the community</td>
<td>• Create and provide maps, signs, and other products to educate consumers about locally owned and operated community businesses</td>
<td>• Planners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ensure quality affordable housing for all members of the community</td>
<td>• Use public art within streetscape improvements to increase traffic to underutilized corridors</td>
<td>• Economic developers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Attract businesses, new residents, and visitors</td>
<td>• Provide cultural assets in new affordable-housing developments</td>
<td>• Engineers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide or facilitate public transportation</td>
<td>• Encourage use of public transit, including ensuring safety</td>
<td>• Business investment districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Create live/work spaces</td>
<td>• Nonprofit organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Create incubator spaces for individual entrepreneurs, including artists</td>
<td>• Artists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Financial institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Policy makers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Visitors and tourists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td>• Preserve and enhance a place’s local identity and character</td>
<td>• Integrate public art in transportation, parks and open space, water, and sewer infrastructure</td>
<td>• Planners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Preserve and protect the community’s parks and open space</td>
<td>• Engage the community in a multidisciplinary exploration of environmental degradation and preservation through community performances and festivals</td>
<td>• Nonprofit organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Restore, protect, and preserve the community’s waterways</td>
<td>• Inventory, assess, and map a community’s artistic and cultural characteristics</td>
<td>• Design professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Implement sustainable practices</td>
<td>• Encourage zero-waste practices at festivals, public venues, restaurants, hotels, etc.</td>
<td>• Artists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Encourage healthy practices, including bike/ped-friendly travel, outdoor activities, etc.</td>
<td>• Locate or develop performance spaces and public gathering places on public transportation routes</td>
<td>• Environmental planners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Include sustainable practices incentives in site-review regulations</td>
<td>• Developers and builders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Creatively reuse and preserve historic structures</td>
<td>• Policy makers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>• Engage the public in transparent planning processes to assess the current and future needs of the community</td>
<td>• Use interactive, online community forums</td>
<td>• Planners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Promote community pride and stewardship of place</td>
<td>• Empower and engage racially and ethnically diverse groups of youths and adults to participate in planning decisions through innovative tools such as drawing, sculpting, modeling, and painting</td>
<td>• Nonprofit organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Engage artists to provide or help develop a vision</td>
<td>• Local businesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Neighborhood groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Artists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Individuals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: APA, Hodgson 2011.

The Arts and Planning Interest Group (APIG) of the APA was formed in 2016. Co-founder Jennifer Sien Erickson is a planner at the Boston Metropolitan Area Planning Commission (MAPC) and a practicing artist. Erickson has organized APIG gatherings and programs at the last few APA national conventions, including a panel on the CreateNYC and
Boston Creates cultural plans at the APA National convention in New York in 2017. At that same convention, I spoke on a panel about the Cultural Plan process and implementation, and Katarzyna (Kate) Balug of Department of Plan spoke a different panel about artist-led creative engagement work. APIG is now going through the formal stages to become a full APA division, and has organized arts-specific sessions at every national APA convention, and several regional conventions since its launch.

Erickson is also the force behind the creation of the arts and culture planning practice housed within MAPC that was launched in 2016. It has since earned the status of a full division within the planning agency, with three full time planners on staff and an artist in residence within the agency. Erickson launched a series of creative placemaking workshops for planners in Boston, and an online planning tool kit of best practices, case studies and resources aimed at helping planners to better understand how to incorporate arts and culture into their community. The MAPC Technical Assistance Program offers support for a variety of cultural planning work to regional municipalities such as for cultural districts.

Arts and Planning: Arts Sector Leadership

While planning practice might be late to the game, the arts sector has a deeper history of supporting the role of arts in community development, and specifically the role that artists can play in community engagement. The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), ArtPlace America, and Americans for the Arts have all launched expansive programs that fund, expand, explore, promote and advocate for the role of the arts in planning,
community development, civic engagement and aligned areas such as social cohesion, well-being, and public safety, just to name a few.

The NEA Our Town program embraces the role of the arts in community, “Our Town was founded on the belief that the arts have a unique ability to create a distinct sense of place, jumpstart local economies, and increase creative activity, making them a key ingredient for vibrant, resilient communities.” (NEA web site, 2019) Using a key word search for ‘planning’ of all the 466 Our Town grant awards, 43 noted a community planning process led by artists or featuring a creative engagement technique such as Playback Theater. Since this text is from the grant application, it does not capture what actually happened, but rather states the intention of the applicant.

The Exploring Our Town web site has an archive profiling seventy-eight completed projects and synthesized lessons learned that are organized by project process, setting and type. Within process the categories are: understanding community, envisioning the project, making it happen, and measuring project results. The project types include: asset mapping, community arts engagement, community design, creative economy, cultural district planning, cultural facilities, festivals and performances, public art, and public space. There are 23 project profiles in the community arts engagement category and many featured created community engagement methods. Several examples are noted below:

• In 2011 the City of Flint collaborated with the local arts council to incorporate arts and culture into the Imagine Flint Master Plan as well as to have artists help to carry out public engagement for the plan: “nine artists were hired to perform residencies in Flint’s nine separate wards, where they worked to engage in creative activities as
part of their work to gather ideas and data on the community’s aspirations for the future.” (NEA 2019)

• In the City of Minneapolis a planning process for the Hennepin Avenue Cultural Corridor “put artists out front ... by having them lead exercises for the community, thus bringing insights from music, movement, and story telling to the process of urban planning. (NEA 2019)

• In the City of Portland, Maine, artist Marty Pottenger organized a series of community-driven art projects called Meet Place specifically to “address [the] lack of diversity within neighborhood leadership, the lack of involvement in city decision-making processes at the neighborhood level, and the chance for residents to envision opportunities that would enhance their lives, strengthen their ties with each other, and increase community resiliency.” (NEA 2019)

• In the City of Burlington, Vermont, a plan to redesign City Hall Park was led by local cultural organization, Burlington City Arts, featuring “a four-month engagement plan that used activities facilitated by artists.” (Exploring Our Town web site, 2019)

• In the Willowbrook section of unincorporated Los Angeles County, the Los Angeles County Arts Commission (LACAC) engaged artist Rosten Woo, a co-founder of the Center for Urban Pedagogy, to carry out an in-depth community input process that “was aimed precisely at the idea of having the community voice its own identity” (NEA 2019) and that led to the creation of a new arts-related asset map and visioning document for the area.

In addition funding place-based Our Town projects, the NEA is supporting training, capacity building; peer learning networks, workshops, fellowships, and toolkits, which they
call knowledge building. The intention is to “facilitate the adoption of creative placemaking practices and strategies by artists, arts organizations, urban planners, rural economic planners, public park managers, local civic leaders, community development practitioners, and downtown managers.” (NEA 2019) There is no web-based catalogue or archive of the Our Town Knowledge Building resources as of yet, but this would make an excellent resource for planners.

As mentioned earlier, the forthcoming APA and Forecast Public Art training series was funded from this program. Another planning-oriented Knowledge Building grant was made to Transportation For America “to lead trainings to teach transportation professionals to engage with artists and arts organizations and vice versa, equipping them with the requisite skills to complete creative placemaking projects.” (NEA 2019)

ArtPlace America

ArtPlace is ten-year (2011 – 2020) philanthropic collaborative that was launched on the heels of the NEA’s Our Town, and indeed many projects do receive funding from both programs. The program focus is to address the belief that “traditional community planning and development has not always led to communities being as equitable, healthy and sustainable as they could be. We believe that the arts and culture sector has necessary tools, knowledge, and skills that can be deployed in partnership with the community planning and development sectors to improve community outcomes.” (ArtPlace 2019) Their signature program is the National Creative Placemaking Fund. “which invested $86.4 million in 279 creative placemaking projects across the United States from 2011-2017.” (ArtPlace 2019) Online project profiles are tagged within categories as follows: dance, music, theater, agriculture and food, economic development, environment and energy,
health, housing, public safety, transportation, education and youth, and urban.” (ArtPlace 2019) Within the project archive, a keyword search of the term ‘planning’ yielded 58 projects. This archive does not include detailed project information so no individual project examples are profiled in this review.

While the omission of the word planning or community development from the project description categories is surprising, there is another ArtPlace program that was launched in 2015, Community Development Investments (CDI) that specifically focused on planning and community development: “This one-time program provides $3 million to each of six community planning and development organizations” which include two housing authorities, a park conservancy, a native American youth development agency, and two community development corporations. (ArtPlace 2019) There is formal research and documentation of the CDI program underway led by PolicyLink, a national non-profit research institute focused on equity. Notably, “PolicyLink has also chosen to bring an artist into the CDI Research and Documentation process to enhance their findings. Photographer and videographer Chris Johnson is conducting a complementary creative inquiry with participants in each CDI community to surface themes related to the personal meaning of this work.” (ArtPlace 2019) The research framework document identifies area of investigation as: organizational evolution, collaborative practice, and community development outcomes. Many of the research questions are directly relevant to this thesis; however, the research is still underway and therefore not yet published. Another aspect of the CDI research is focused on “translating outcomes” (ArtPlace 2019) via cross sector investigations on the role of the arts. They are focused on five sectors: environment and energy, housing, public safety, transportation and health; and aim to identify:
• Key goals or needs in that sector that arts and culture might address
• A typology or framework for understanding the ways that arts and culture has and might partner with that sector
• Barriers to integrating arts and culture within that sector
• Strategies or tactics to advance collaborations with arts and culture in that sector

(ArtPlace 2019)

Four of the five scans are completed and were informed by working groups of experts and the research was carried out by field leaders, professional researchers, and national intermediary organizations such as Helicon Collaborative, the Urban Institute, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), Transportation for America (T4A), the US Water Alliance, and the Center for Arts in Medicine. Each field scan follows a unique methodology however they all have case studies drawn from the ArtPlace Creative Placemaking grantee projects from which practices and outcomes are drawn.

I chose to more closely examine the transportation planning field scan as I deemed it to be most closely relevant to this research. T4A has an arts and culture team, which I mark as evidence of support for the role of the arts in the sector. Cross sector collaborations are powerful and have the potential to reach audiences who might not be familiar with the role of the arts within their sector. T4A is part of SmartGrowth America, which could provide an even larger platform and eventual audience for this work. In The Role of Arts and Culture in Transportation Planning seven arts-related solutions to transportation challenges are depicted in Table 2.6 below.
Table 2.6: Transportation 4 America Challenges and Solutions

SEVEN CHALLENGES, SEVEN SOLUTIONS
THE ROLE OF ARTS & CULTURE IN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

This field scan explores seven of the most pressing challenges facing the transportation sector today, and identifies how arts and culture contribute to solutions:

1. Generative creative solutions for entrenched transportation problems. Arts and culture can help develop better projects that attract greater community support by imagining bold transportation solutions that are unconstrained by traditional processes.

2. Making streets safer for all users. Arts and culture can make streets safer for pedestrians and cyclists by using creative methods to help transportation professionals empathize with all users.

3. Organizing transportation advocates. Arts and culture can help equip communities to organize and advocate for more equitably distributed transportation investments.

4. Engaging multiple stakeholders for an inclusive process. Arts and culture can help shepherd transportation projects through the community input process more quickly and smoothly by facilitating meaningful participation early and often in the planning process.

5. Fostering local ownership. Arts and culture can help accomplish local goals including improving health, encouraging walking and biking, or increasing transit ridership by incorporating community-sourced artistic and design elements into transportation projects to foster local stewardship and use.

6. Alleviating the disruptive effects of construction. Arts and culture can help overcome the disruption of construction and mitigate the impact on businesses, residents, and visitors by using artistic interventions to create a more accessible and inviting environment.

7. Healing wounds and divisions. Arts and culture can help remedy the divisions created by urban highways and other detrimental transportation infrastructure by physically and culturally reconnecting communities.

Source: T4A, Stone 2017
Americans For The Arts (AFTA)

AFTA is a national arts advocacy non-profit organization that also engages in research. They have several programs that support and build networks of practitioners, artists and organizations in areas such as arts policy, public art, arts education, grant making, cultural districts, community development, and social change. Much of their national work reinforces advocacy for the arts. Their public opinion work regarding support for the arts, and the impact of the creative industries is highly respected and widely quoted.

AFTA’s Social Impact Explorer was launched in 2018 and “draws together top-line research, example projects, core research papers, and service/partner organizations about 26 different sectors.” (AFTA 2018) Color-coded categories with related sub-topics are arrayed in a pinwheel, and categories range from health and wellness, social justice and infrastructure. Click on a topic and the wheel spins to reveal a capsule description and a link to a detailed fact sheet. (See Figure 2.7)
The planning fact sheet lists examples of best practices, research resources, and leading organizations in the field (such as APA, ArtPlace, MAPC). The ability for the arts to “provide creative tools to help planning and urban design professionals engage with communities affected by their projects” (AFTA 2018) is specifically noted. Also listed are impact points that summarize how the arts intersect with the field such as:

- The arts make people more aware of their rights and their community

Source: AFTA 2018
Community engaged design creates increased ownership

Arts and culture breaks down barriers

Arts participation unites generations, reduces fear, and empowers citizens

The arts foster public private partnerships to strengthen infrastructure

Art empowers communities to creatively imagine their infrastructure (AFTA 2018)

The Animating Democracy Initiative (ADI) of AFTA was born from a study commission by the Ford Foundation and published in 1999. ADI “works to inspire, inform, promote, and connect arts as a contributor to community, civic, and social change.” (ADI 2017) Animating Democracy: The Artistic Imagination as a Force in Civic Dialogue is an examination of “current activity and best practices among artists and cultural organizations whose work engages the public in dialogue on key civic issues.” (Bacon et al. 1999) This is not a scholarly work; rather it is an overview of trends and a summary of observations from case studies of arts-based civic dialogue work. The focus is not on how a planning process might engage an artist to help carry out engagement, rather it is about “artists and arts and cultural organizations whose work, through its aesthetics and processes, engages the public in dialogue on key civic issues as a conscious, purposeful act of artistic creation and presentation.” (Bacon et al. 1999) Although in doing arts-based civic dialogue work, it is entirely possible that an artist might engage the public in planning and community development issues. The difference is in the intention of the creative work. Many examples of arts-based civic dialogue work are profiled in the study, in several different arts disciplines. Famous and recognizable examples are The AIDS Memorial Quilt, the
documentary/devised theater work of Anna Deavere Smith, and the dance works of Liz Lerman. Noted in the study are “common practices for achieving quality civic dialogue:

- Neutral and “safe” space in which people feel comfortable enough to engage in difficult discussion.
- “Engaging people in dialogue about issues and ideas can be made easier and the quality of dialogue made deeper when people are involved in the art-making process.
- Meaningful dialogue depends on effective facilitation.” (Bacon et al. 1999)

It can be difficult to judge the value and impact of an arts process that does not deliver a traditional cultural ‘product.’ Although the 1999 study notes that there are not yet well developed standards and criteria for critical evaluation, the authors observe that arts-based civic dialogue “fosters innovation in the creation of new work, opens the opportunity to engage many different publics in civic dialogue” and required “a recognition of process as well as product as an aesthetic dimension of the work.” (Bacon et al. 1999) Further they note that: “current aesthetic criteria and definitions for civically engaged art are inadequate for effectively communicating the multidimensional nature of the work.” (Bacon et al. 1999) Only recently has Animating Democracy developed these criteria, published in 2017 in *Aesthetic Perspectives: Attributes of Excellence in Arts for Change*. In this work, the term ‘arts for change’ and ‘socially engaged work’ and ‘social justice artwork’ and ‘artistic work with social justice intentions’ are interchangeably used to refer to ‘arts-based civic dialogue work.’ Others call this ‘social practice’ or ‘civic practice.’ (CPCP 2012) By and large, the same artists who engage in social practice art are the artists with the skill set and interest
in doing creative community engagement work as part of a planning an community
development process.

The use of the word ‘aesthetics’ in the context of this work refers to “how creative
eexpression stimulates our senses, moves us, and makes meaning in the world” (Borstel and
Korza 2017) not the vernacular use referring to beauty or artistic value. In an attempt to
develop criteria by which to judge if the artistic work (or process) is effective, or indeed,
‘good art’ they developed a complex formal framework for evaluation. The framework is
intentionally flexible since socially engaged work can be in any artistic genre and can vary
so widely in its setting and intention. This flexibility is described in Table 2.8 below.

Table 2.8: Aspects of Aesthetic Perspectives Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Framework is best thought of as...</th>
<th>Rather than</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A pallet of possibilities</td>
<td>A checklist of requirements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A guide for description</td>
<td>A scorecard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspiration for shaping programs, projects and guidelines</td>
<td>A prescription of required elements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A tool to guide inquiry</td>
<td>A definer of success or failure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A spectrum or continuum</td>
<td>A hierarchical ranking system</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Borstel and Korza 2017
Eleven attributes such as risk taking and openness are described and then case studies demonstrate how those attributes might be applied to a specific art for change project. The attributes are in Figure 2.9 below.

Figure 2.9: Aesthetic Perspectives Framework Attributes

**The Aesthetic Attributes**

- **Commitment**: Creative processes and products embody conviction to the cause espoused through the work.
- **Risk-taking**: The creative work assumes risk by subverting dominant norms, values, narratives, standards, or aesthetics.
- **Communal Meaning**: The creative work facilitates collective meaning that transcends individual perspective and experience.
- **Openness**: The creative work deepens impact by remaining open, fluid, transparent, subject to influence, and able to hold contradiction.
- **Disruption**: Art challenges what is by exposing what has been hidden, posing new ways of being, and modeling new forms of action.
- **Resourcefulness**: Imaginative use of available resources drives artistic innovation and demonstrates responsible social and environmental practice.
- **Cultural Integrity**: The creative work demonstrates integrity and ethical use of material with specific cultural origins and context.
- **Coherence**: Strong ideas expressed with clarity advance both artistic and social purposes.
- **Emotional Experience**: Arts for Change facilitates a productive movement between "heart space"—the emotional experience that art evokes—and the "head space" of civic or social issues.
- **Stickiness**: The creative work achieves sustained resonance, impact, or value.
- **Sensory Experience**: Vivid sensations deepen the experience of the creative work and heighten the power of its messages and the potential for change.

Source: Borstel and Korza, AFTA 2017

What is so helpful about the attributes and the descriptions in Figure 2.9 is that they can be used to describe what might actually be happening when the artist engages with the community. In theory, the more attributes from the framework that one can attribute to the work then the work can be judged to be more excellent and/or more effective. The authors acknowledge that socially engaged artwork "sometimes suffers from the assumption that
artistic quality is compromised by social intent.” (Borstel and Korza 2017) Socially engaged work that is judged solely on the output, such as an art object or performance, misses the point, the intention of the work and its entire process must be considered as a whole, and it should be judged by these eleven attributes not just on visual or technical criteria.

In addition to the full framework, and an abridged ‘short take’ there are also audience-specific user guides for artists, educators, curators, funders and professional evaluators. Given the proliferation of artist-residencies within government settings focused on social and civic practice, and the growing desire to incorporate the arts and artists into planning processes, a user guide for planners might be a very useful addition to the series.

Creative Practice

Understanding what artists do when they engage the public, that is different from how planners engage is central to understanding the rationale for incorporating them in a planning process. It could be that creative engagement is simply more galvanizing: “the potency of creative expression to embody and motivate change” (Borstel and Korza 2017) It could also be that the toolkit is so multi-faceted as to better equip an artists to achieve engagement that can “raise awareness, challenge current circumstances, empower individuals, reinforce individual and/or group identity, inspire people to action, build communal strength and capacity for action, critique dominant social and historical narratives, enable people to hear and understand different perspectives, propose new possibilities, create a focus and/or process for the exchange of ideas and perspectives.” (Borstel and Korza 2017)
Use or Ornament? The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts is a rigorous study based on case studies, interviews and a survey all examining the social impact of participatory arts programs with a focus on arts initiatives that address social problems. The results of benefits of participating in the arts are summarized as: “personal development, social cohesion, community empowerment and self-determination, local image and identity, imagination and vision, health and well-being.” (Matarasso 1997) Very specific measures from survey participants show that 40% feel more positive about where they live, and 63% have become keen to help local projects, 73% have been happier since being involved. The study offers a compelling conclusion that “participatory arts projects are essential components of successful social policy” because they “open critical dialogue between service users and providers, and avert costly mistakes, they involve people missed by other initiatives and introduce creativity, means and communication into the equation.” (Matarasso 1997) (See Appendix 2 for a full list of benefits from the study.)

In Tom Borrup’s article, “Artists and Creativity in Urban Placemaking,” a case is made that “creative methods employed by artists can engage people of more diverse backgrounds and draw them more deeply into the analytical and visioning work of city planning” (Borrup 2013) The study uses a planning process for a cultural district in downtown Minneapolis that was lead by artists in a variety of disciplines who carried out a number of creative planning activities. The district stakeholders varied widely from suburban families seeing the Lion King, to LBGT nightclubbers, to sports fans going to the arena, to local teens making the scene. Borrup notes that the process was not easy and took longer than expected and that “Meetings were lively and challenging. Artists brought
different ideas to accepted ways of conducting planning, thus this process demanded re-articulation and re-thinking and exactly what the project set out to do.” (Borrup 2013)

In *Participatory Art-Making and Civic Engagement* (Lewis 2013) three case studies explore how active art making can result in a variety of positive community outcomes. “They can build social networks, encourage new leaders, increase the quality of community life, enhance the lives of individuals, and engage citizens in new and profound ways.” (Lewis 2013) This is not a scholarly work, but rather is a descriptive retelling of these three programs and a checklist focused on program development. The definition of art-making is broad, in one instance includes Cambodian traditional cooking, storytelling and photography. The focus is not on government or on planning processes, but rather is a way to “illustrate how active art-making gives voice and expression to a community, leverages a community’s assets, and creatively reimagines the use of public spaces.” (Lewis 2013)

In the article “Strange spaces: A rationale for bringing art and artists into the planning process,” author Jonathan Metzger posits that the artist can more easily take a point of view that is outside the typical frame of reference for planning processes, it is an “artistic license” that sets the stage for “creating a radical potential for planning in a way that can be very difficult for planners to achieve on their own.” (Metzger 2010)
Chapter Three: Case Studies

There is a growing body of research on cultural plans (Borrup 2018) and on the role of the arts in planning (APA 2011.) However there is no definitive set of data regarding how often and to what extent planners partner with artists to design or carry out community engagement. Two major surveys of cultural planning, Dreeszen 1994 and Borrup 2018, yield a wealth of data about a number of aspects of cultural plans and yet neglected to ask if the engagement process was carried out in partnership with an artist or artists. I chose to focus my research on cultural planning in part because they typically have very extensive community processes (Dreeszen, 1994.) I also expected that since cultural plans do typically address the needs of artists and the cultural sector, that they might yield several different examples of innovative and creative engagement techniques within a single plan or planning process. The expectation was that cultural plans could yield more instances of engagement that were designed by and/or led by artists than plans that did not focus on arts and culture.

Research Methodology

Examining just one cultural planning process that featured artists carrying out community engagement might yield an isolated or idiosyncratic set of information. However, the method of comparing and analyzing two different cultural plan processes that both made use of creative engagement techniques or worked with artists to help carry out community engagement will supply a more rich and interesting set of information upon which I can test my hypothesis. The ideal candidate plans would both have been completed long enough ago that those who were involved could reflect on the process, but not so long
ago that there would no longer be available research subjects or adequate documentation.

It would be useful if both plans were carried out within a few years of each other, so that both could have taken advantage of contemporaneous practices in the field. In addition, factors of geography and proximity were also considered, and the likely availability of interview candidates. Table 3.1 below offers a summary of the key aspects of both plans.

Table 3.1: Boston Creates and CreateNYC Cultural Plans Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boston Creates</th>
<th>CreateNYC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date Initiated</td>
<td>January 2015</td>
<td>August 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration of Public Process</td>
<td>5 months (June – October 2015)</td>
<td>4 months (October 2016 – March 2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date Completed</td>
<td>June 2016</td>
<td>July 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency Lead</td>
<td>Mayor’s Office of Arts and Culture</td>
<td>Department of Cultural Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting Team Lead</td>
<td>Cultural Planning Group</td>
<td>Hester Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding Sources</td>
<td>Barr Foundation, Klarman Family Fund</td>
<td>City of NY, NY Community Foundation Cultural Agenda Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Features of Public Engagement Process</td>
<td>Town hall meetings, Community meetings, Neighborhood teams, Pop-ups at events, Focus groups, Interviews, Survey, DIY Meeting Guide</td>
<td>Borough-wide meetings, Community meetings, Office hours with the Commissioner, Focus groups, Interviews, Surveys, DIY Meeting Toolkit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example of Creative Engagement Methods</td>
<td>Bread Making Sessions</td>
<td>Ping-Pong with the Commissioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genres of Engagement Artists</td>
<td>Performance Art, Photography, Music</td>
<td>Theater</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both plans were the first cultural plan created for their respective cities, so there was no local precedent to follow or expectations to uphold, which was the situation for the Chicago Cultural Plan. Both plans were created with extensive, multi-faceted public
engagement processes, which lasted for several months, employed creative engagement techniques, and both plans engaged artists in some manner during their public process. Although there are only a few firms nationally that specialize in cultural planning (Borrup 2018) neither plan had any overlap in consultants involved in the planning process. Given their seeming similarities, and that they were carried out fairly recently, and within about a year of each other, I decided to examine the CreateNYC cultural planning process and the Boston Creates cultural planning process as they emerged as the ideal comparison case study candidates to explore further in this research.

Research materials included the plan documents and web sites, supplemental documentation of the public process, contemporary press stories, and interviews with those who were directly involved in both plans. A primary focus for the interviews were the artists who carried out creative community engagement. While one could explore and compare many different aspects of the plans, such as the issues addressed and the recommendations developed as a result of the process, for the purposes of this investigation, the focus will be on aspects of the public participatory processes that were used to create the plans.
The CreateNYC Plan

By many accounts the idea for New York City to do its first-ever cultural plan was the brainchild of City Council majority leader and chair of the Cultural Affairs Committee, Jimmy Van Bramer. Van Bramer was the co-sponsor of Local Law 46 enacted in May of 2015 amending the New York City Charter to require the creation of a cultural plan by July of 2017. The law required that a citizens advisory committee be established to guide plan development and that the plan should address a number of specific issues and that there should be “feedback from a robust community outreach process.” Law 46 also stipulated that the plan should address “how cultural activities can be incorporated into community development, economic development and land use planning processes and policies.” (NYC 2015)

Before the law was finally adopted, how to best do a cultural plan in New York City was debated in the city council. Testimony given by cultural leaders at a council hearing in September 2014 expressed support for the plan, support for an inclusive process and argued that a sufficient amount of time should be granted to carry out an equitable and iterative process. The original legislation called for the plan to be completed by July of 2015 allocating six months to create the plan, rather than the two years in the final legislation. For those who testified it was of critical importance to allow enough time for an inclusive participatory process. Caron Atlas, Director of Arts and Democracy Project and of Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts-New York testified, “We urge the city to take the time needed for a process that is truly participatory, transparent, inclusive and equitable – and to avoid the many cookie cutter planning approaches that would counter these values.” (NYC 2015) Several who testified expressed support for the incorporation of the arts into planning and
community development efforts and hoped that the NYC Economic Development Corporation would be a partner in the effort. Others, such as Paul Parkhill of Spaceworks, expressed an even more expansive vision to address the space needs of the arts, “Development-oriented agencies can encourage community-based cultural development...they can prioritize cultural uses in RFP’s...provisions that mandate creative uses in new development and can work to prioritize community based cultural organizations in the public land disposition process.” (NYC 2015)

The Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued on December 7, 2015 and the scope of work closely followed the language in Local Law 46 mandating a public process and that the role of the arts in community development be considered as a key issue to be addressed. There is very little detail in the RFP regarding how much public engagement and participation in the planning process would be expected, only that the selected firm would design the public process, facilitate and document engagement, analyze and synthesize the results of public engagement, carry out research and write the plan. Respondents were asked to submit their proposed approach to public engagement. No mention of creative engagement or artists being involved in the planning process is mentioned in the RFP.

Hester Street (HST) a design, planning and development non-profit organization known for their community-driven and participatory planning work, was the firm chosen to head up the plan. Other members of the planning team included: BJH Advisors, LLC (BJH), HOUSEOFCAKES Design, James Lima Planning + Development (JLP+D), Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts-New York (NOCD-NY), and Pratt Institute’s Spatial Analysis and Visualization Initiative (SAVI.)
The engagement process began in October 2016 and ran throughout the end of March 2017. The process was summarized in terms of three calls to action ‘show up, speak up, step up’ as pictured below in Figure 3.2. Many traditional engagement methods were used such as focus groups, workshops, events, and surveys. A question of the week campaign, and play Ping-Pong with the commissioner, are two of the more inventive techniques employed by the team. Later in the process there was more engagement carried out to share research findings, ask for feedback, and to prioritize issues via an online survey and in person events. The final document notes that the “CreateNYC team reached more than 188,000 New Yorkers in person and online.” (DCLA 2017)

The final plan describes the engagement process as comprising three categories: CreateNYC events that were planned and carried out by either the consulting team or DCLA staff; partner dialogues that were independently organized (and at times) attended by either a member of the planning team or DCLA staff; and community events already happening that were leveraged as an opportunity to promote awareness of and participation in the plan. There were six large borough-wide workshops; 115 meetings, interviews and presentations; 55 focus groups; 40 research events; 40 neighborhood workshops; 35 partner events; 32 feedback displays in six languages; a ‘tabling’ presence at 80 other events; 22 Ping-Pong sessions with the commissioner; and 10 DCLA office hour sessions. Several surveys were fielded reaching tens of thousands of respondents. Plan staff and the document boast that the engagement process reached people in 99% of NYC zip codes. (HST interview, DCLA 2017) The plan team supported self-organized meetings
Figure 3.2: CreateNYC Engagement Process Illustration

From October 2016 to the end of March 2017, CreateNYC engaged more than 188,000 New Yorkers in person and online. Residents, artists, teachers, researchers, students, parents, experts in the field, leaders of arts and cultural organizations of all sizes, cultural workers, and union members were engaged through large public meetings, in small focus groups and one-on-one interviews, at open office hours, over games of ping pong, at barber shops and nail salons, online, and via social media.

Source: CreateNYC 2017
by creating a downloadable meeting toolkit (See Appendix 3) to help structure a meeting, gather data and submit notes and findings for inclusion in the data and research that was synthesized by the planning team. The process was well documented and the plan website has an exhaustive archive of information about the engagement process, all the information that was collected and submitted, and all the research that was conducted.

NOCD-NY was the main partner on the team focused on community engagement. “NOCD-NY is a citywide alliance of cultural networks, community leaders, and artists that have joined together to revitalize New York City from the neighborhood up.” (NOCD-NY 2019) HST especially valued that NOCD-NY is structured as an alliance of groups with relationships in the arts communities of all five boroughs because the arts was not especially in HST’s wheelhouse, and they knew the network could be leveraged to reach diverse voices. (HST interview)

In addition to the NOCD-NY’s efforts, eleven organizations received funding, support and training by HST and NOCD-NY to carry out engagement in their communities to expand the both the geographic and demographic reach of the process into communities of color and to those who might not be otherwise represented in the plan. The funding was from the New York Cultural Agenda Fund of the New York Community Trust. This collaborative fund was launched in 2014 and funded a number of initiatives related to cultural policy, cultural equity and the CreateNYC plan such as the Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP) by Mark Stern. The grantee cohort included the following organizations: AMERINDA, Asian American Arts Alliance, BRIC, Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute, the Center for Arts Education, King Manor Museum, Loisaida, Martin E. Segal Theater Center, New York Foundation for the Arts, and Staten Island Arts. The support not only went to the
organizations, but also funded HST, NOCD-NY, and ArtEquity to train the cohort in facilitation techniques and community organizing. (NY Community Foundation web site 2019)

It is clear from the law requiring the plan, the RFP to engage a team, to the process undertaken by the plan team and its partner, to the final plan and all the supporting materials that were published, that extensive public engagement was a hallmark of the CreateNYC plan. An equitable and inclusive process is repeatedly mentioned as the only way to produce a cultural plan that will address the needs of all New Yorkers, and team members noted that they tracked in real time the zip codes on GIS maps of plan participants and deliberately would re-direct their efforts to ensure participation from every corner of the five boroughs. (HST interview) Although certain issues to be addressed in the plan were identified as early as the establishing law, as stated in the final plan document, the intention of the engagement process was to “identify and solve problems.” The plan also states that the goal of public engagement was to “collect data and public input to inform the plan…and develop a clear picture of the experiences, values, and cultural priorities of New Yorkers from all walks of life.” (DCLA 2017) Later in the process, additional public engagement sought feedback and prioritization of the initial proposals that were developed as a result of the earlier research and engagement work. DCLA Commissioner Tom Finkelpearl described the engagement process in the forward of the plan document as an “intensive listening process” to “identify and solve problems.” Elsewhere in the plan it’s noted that the design of engagement process was intended to reflect a very broad array of participants and viewpoints. “The rich engagement process
was designed to ensure a plan that expands opportunities for all New Yorkers to access, participate in, and create the city's rich cultural life.” (DCLA 2017)

One of the more unusual engagement techniques employed by the DCLA as part of the official plan process was Ping-Pong with the Commissioner. Finkelparl is a devotee of the game, and had set up a table in the lobby of the Queens Museum where he was President and Executive Director prior to being named Commissioner of DCLA. To play a game of Ping-Pong with the leader of a city agency with over a $100 million budget is to upend the expected power dynamic and very humanizing. Finkelparl noted that they never played real games or kept score. As soon it was about points, you could not have a conversation. If he kept it casual, people would open up. He further noted that the technique was largely symbolic of their genuine commitment to open access to cultural leadership as part of the plan process. (TF interview 3/22/19)

While there were no artists on the planning team charged with devising creative community engagement, there were instances of creative engagement. The Asian American Arts alliance was one of the New York Cultural Agenda Fund grantees. Rather than use any of the CreateNYC toolkit materials, they worked with an artist-facilitator to create a workshop format specific to the needs of their audience. The artist also trained event note takers and volunteers.

The Theater of the Oppressed NYC (TONYC) organized a CreateNYC partner event where they made use of a creative engagement technique for which the intention was indeed to spark creative problem solving. Legislative Theater is designed to help develop new approaches to issues and challenges so that they have less of a negative impact on marginalized populations, aka 'the oppressed.' In the room are legislators, policy makers,
actors and facilitators who are called ‘jokers.’ Community members act out a story to illustrate the issue at hand. Policy makers brainstorm approaches, the audience discusses and votes on the alternatives, and the legislators in the room commit to following up with practical solutions and actions based on the results of the session. On May 10, 2016, TONYC held a Legislative Theater event related to one of the issue areas of the CreateNYC plan: “give New Yorkers equal access to arts and increase cultural equity.” (TONYC 2016) TONYC submitted a summary of the session that was published in one of the CreateNYC appendices, which notes that 136 people attended, including Commissioner Finkelpearl, representatives from several City of New York agencies and City Council member Stephen Levin.

People’s Cultural Plan

Despite the depth of the public engagement process for the CreateNYC plan, there was a group of artists and activists who were very critical that the process as not sufficiently inclusive of people of color, artists and LGBT people. In May of 2017, before the final CreateNYC plan was issued, they released their own People’s Cultural Plan (PCP). Alicia Grullón, Jenny Dubnau and Shellyne Rodriguez initiated the PCP. They attended CreateNYC meetings but were dissatisfied with the content of the meetings. The activists also took great issue with what they portrayed as ‘real estate developers’ on the board of directors of HST and who they claimed were part of the cultural plan team. This created a sense that the cultural plan process could be used as an instrument of gentrification and displacement, and fueled their efforts to ensure that the plan accurately represented their concerns and recommendations. The group grew to encompass more than 40 other artists,
activists, organizations and academics. The 17-page People’s Plan is a policy document focused on equity with respect to housing, land development and cultural spaces; labor policy and funding policies. The PCP was not produced via public engagement; rather it was the product of consultation with those artists, activities and cultural organizations were involved in the PCP effort. Rather than reflective of ‘the people’ the PCP appears to be more reflective of the needs of working artists and small arts organizations. Those who were involved with both the CreateNYC planning process and the People’s Plan noted that the PCP made significant use of the policy documents developed by the New York Cultural Agenda fund grantees.
The Boston Creates Plan

The discussion around creating a cultural plan for Boston began during the mayoral primary election in the fall of 2013. The statewide arts advocacy organization, MassCreative, organized a ‘Create the Vote’ candidate forum on September 9th where nine candidates discussed their various positions regarding the arts in front of a capacity audience of over 600 attendees. More than one candidate mentioned the need for a cultural plan or arts strategy. After the primary race, two more forums were held in October with each of the run-off candidates. Both Marty Walsh and John Connelly pledged to support the arts and published policy statements with detailed aspirations covering a wide array of issues from housing for artists to the permitting of events. In mid-November, a week after Walsh was elected, a public forum on cultural planning was held at the Institute of Contemporary Art. I was one of the speakers that day, and provided an overview of the Chicago Cultural Plan process and the first year of plan implementation.

The Walsh administration named an arts and culture working group as part of its 2014 transition committee. The working group published a report on April 16, 2014, and one of the recommendations was “Embark on an inclusive and comprehensive process to create and deliver a cultural plan ... within eighteen months.” (Pyne 2014) Another promise made by Walsh during the campaign, and again stated in the arts transition report was to name a cabinet-level Chief of Arts and Culture to head up the newly formed Mayor’s Office of Arts and Culture (MOAC) and lead the cultural plan process. I was named Chief in late September and began the role on December 15, 2014.

A Request for Proposals to engage a team to create a cultural plan was issued on October 3, 2014 with the charge that an innovative and inclusive process be carried out to
gather information and also to provide feedback on draft plan recommendations. The RFP noted that the process should be made accessible to those for whom English is a second language. Although several specific methods of engagement are mentioned, the inclusion of artists in the process was not mentioned in the RFP. A team led by the Cultural Planning Group (CPG) was selected in late 2014, other firms on the team included: WolfBrown, Archipelago Strategies Group (ASG), and Callanan and Klein Communications. The City engaged Technical Development Corporation (TDC) and Minnelli Inc. prior to the issuance of the RFP.

ASG was the sub-consultant charged with heading up community engagement. The engagement process ran from June to October of 2015 and is summarized in the graphic from the final plan in Figure 3.3. In addition to the traditional methods of engagement such as town hall meetings, focus groups, surveys, and stakeholder interviews, there were neighborhood-based engagement teams. The idea was that a pair or trio of locally-based influencers would be trained and supported, but otherwise allowed to determine how to best reach their respective communities. It was thought that this could help to ensure broad and representative participation in the plan process.

The final plan document articulates three goals for undertaking a cultural planning process including creating a roadmap for coordinating investment and support for the arts sector, expanding the public conversation about the role of the arts in the city, and to “break down barriers, foster collaboration, empower artists and grassroots cultural leaders, and mobilize the cultural community for collective action.” (Penrice 2016)
Figure 3.3: Boston Creates Engagement Process Graphic

The community speaks

Boston Creates undertook an extensive community engagement process that opened with a town hall meeting on June 2, 2015 and ended on October 15, 2015 with the close of a citywide online survey.

The mixed-method research process included:

- 3 town hall meetings;
- 118 community conversations;
- 35 stakeholder focus groups and 50 one-on-one interviews;
- a creative engagement participation survey in 4 languages; and
- an online, crowd-sourced map of cultural assets.

To ensure the widest possible range of responses, the engagement process included advertising in culturally specific news outlets for the general public in addition to traditional outlets for arts and culture sector-specific news and events. We designed the process to be accessible and welcoming to a broad cross-section of residents and visitors, sector participants, and stakeholders, including:

Source: City of Boston 2016

Sixteen neighborhood areas were designated based on a vernacular understanding of neighborhood boundaries. Although anyone could participate in the plan process and many
segments of the arts community are located just outside of Boston proper, such as in Cambridge or Somerville, the designated geography for the plan was co-terminus with the official boundaries of the City of Boston.

The City of Boston formed an ad-hoc 'Community Engagement Taskforce' comprising liaisons and engagement staff from several departments (including arts) such as aging, disabilities, economic development education, health and human services, immigrant advancement, and youth services. This group identified and vetted candidates for the role of Community Team Co-chairs. Criteria for selection included the strength of their personal and professional networks, community organizing experience, fluency in a language spoken in their community, and their relationship to the arts. A great number of the city liaisons were veterans of the Walsh mayoral campaign, as well as many of those chosen to lead a community team. In the spring of 2015, volunteer team members were recruited to join the teams and materials were produced in several languages as shown in Figure 3.4

The community teams were instructed to conduct at least one meeting per month, but could meet more often. In Roslindale, the Saturday farmer's market is THE community gathering place, so the community team set up a tent, table and flip charts and talked about the role of arts and culture in the community every weekend throughout the engagement season. The planning team had hoped that youth would attend each of the neighborhood-based teams, but in the end, youth expressed a preference to meet and talk amongst themselves, so a youth team was formed and added to the mix. There was an online meeting toolkit so that those who could not attend a scheduled meeting or didn’t identify...
Figure 3.4: Community Team Recruitment Fliers

Source: City of Boston 2015
with one of the geographically based teams, could organize their own meeting, follow designated prompts, submit notes, and have their input included in the plan research.

Artists were a late addition to the Boston Creates engagement process. The CPG team began work in February of 2015, the community teams were formed in April, and the artist collective, the Department of Play (DoP) were engaged to join the team in May. DoP are Kate Balug, a performance artist and a Harvard Graduate School of Design (GSD) trained planner and Maria Vidart-Delgado, who has a doctorate in anthropology. Their charge was multi-faceted. They should infuse creativity in the planning process, and be a creative resource to the larger planning team. They helped to train the community team co-chairs and volunteer break out group leaders at the town hall meetings in creative facilitation techniques (see Appendix 4.) They should also try to connect the community teams to one another and to devise creative activations at various cultural plan engagement events. DoP describe themselves as a ‘lost city department’ and use play in public spaces, in the form of foam interlocking blocks, to help participants build and envision the future. The technique is used to gather input in a planning process, which was especially effective with youth.

DoP were also tasked with hiring additional ‘artist-ethnographers’ to participate in the planning process and devise methods to engage hard-to-reach populations; document the plan process and the cultural vitality of the city; and create artwork that would reflect on the cultural plan process. Three were selected via an open call: Shaw Pong Liu, a classically trained violinist and social practice artist, Leonardo March, a photographer, and Heather Kapplow, a conceptual artist. All five of the artists together formed a mutually supportive cohort to figure out how to approach what both Liu and Kapplow described as a
very open-ended mandate. They would spread out like field workers, attend Boston Creates meetings and events, and then reconnect to further develop their creative approaches and avoid a duplication of efforts.

DoP adapted their prior work with foam interlocking blocks and public play spaces and applied it to the very popular Boston Creates notched B logo. The B-Blocks were then used to activate events where Boston Creates had a presence to promote awareness of the cultural plan survey and community meetings. They were also used to engage youth in conversations about how they participate in creative activities and their desires for culture in their community as shown in Figure 3.5. The technique recognizes that that youth are unlikely to sit still for a serious public meeting, but will more readily open up about their thoughts while engaged in something fun.

DoP also leveraged the Boston Creates crowd-sourced asset-mapping platform by asking participants to map something creative that they wished to see in a specific location. The artists believe that when you ask someone about the future they are really telling you about their present. On a weekly basis, DoP would hang a selection of framed submissions on the actual place where it was suggested on the digital asset map. They did this as a public performance piece dressed as ‘curators from the future” in outlandish wigs, masks and dresses in Boston Creates-themed colors. The performances garnered attention, engaged passers-by and garnered many hash-tagged ‘selfie-moments’ as illustrated in Figure 3.6. People asked questions and got involved with ongoing asset mapping.
Figure 3.5: Youth Engagement B-Block Construction

Source: Department of Play.

Figure 3.6: Department of Play Performance Still

Photo by Leonardo March
Classically trained violinist and social practice artist Shaw Pong Liu attended several Boston Creates community conversations and grew concerned that just the ‘usual suspects’ where showing up, arts administrators, activists, and those already involved in arts organizations, but few individual artists were participating. She organized a series of bread making parties, dubbed What You Knead (see poster in Figure 3.7.) where artists could gather, make bread and talk about their needs so that they could be incorporated in the cultural plan. Liu found that artists were skeptical of the official process but eager to connect. The tactile aspects of mixing, kneading, baking helped to create a safe space where people could truly open up about their need for support, funding, and housing.

Liu was so struck by the pervasive need for affordable housing voiced at community meetings that she created an installation for the final Boston Creates Town Hall meeting in November of 2015. The installation is pictured in Figure 3.8. Small paper houses were constructed from fliers, flipcharts and other ephemera from the planning process and placed in such a manner that one had to pass through the structure in order to enter the town hall meeting, forcing participants to confront a symbol of one of the most acute issues that was discussed in the planning process.
Figure 3.7: Poster for What You Knead Sessions

Source: Shaw Pong Liu 2015

Figure 3.8: Home Installation at Boston Creates Town Hall Meeting

Photo by Shaw Pong Liu
Heather Kapplow, who has a MA in anthropology, was very drawn to the call for
artists because of the term “artist ethnographer.” She attended many Boston Creates
community meetings, always barefoot, as a performance technique. Her intention was to
break the rules of typical engagement in a small way, and generate curiosity about her
presence. Being barefoot also served to ground her physical presence at the meeting in a
manner that made her cautious about every step she took. It put her in a vulnerable
position, which put others at ease, and helped them to feel comfortable taking a risk and
sharing their thoughts at the meeting. Kapplow originally audio recorded several meetings
intending to create a sound installation based on the tones of the conversations, but
abandoned that creative direction when a participant asked her if anyone back at City Hall
was really going to hear their words and their concerns. That comment inspired a new
project, Driving Culture. Kapplow gathered flip chart sheets and post-it notes from many of
the cultural plan meetings, and created a graphic wrap for a City of Boston fleet vehicle, as
pictured in Figure 3.9.

This particular pool vehicle was parked on City Hall Plaza and served as a rolling
billboard for the Boston Creates Plan every time a city employee (including me) drove it to
attend meetings and events. Kapplow delighted in the fact that even those who weren’t
involved in the arts or the plan itself would be complicit in spreading the (literal) word(s)
of the cultural plan throughout the city. (HK interview 3/9/19)
As the ethnographer-photographer, Leonardo March was charged with documenting the Boston Creates process and the cultural life of the city. Ultimately his work became a big part of the visual identity for the plan itself. March attended 62 events all over the city, 15 of which were cultural plan community conversations. His aim was to show a less well-known side of Boston, one that reflected the true ethnic diversity of its population and highlighted less well known cultural celebrations, rituals and traditions. His work is NOT the picture post card portrait of white colonial-era historic Boston that so pervades the image of the city.
Comparison of the Plans

In comparing both plans I will analyze how various factors such as scale, duration, context and relevant precedents might have influenced how each city carried out public engagement and incorporated creative techniques and artists into their planning process. I will look for factors that either led to or prevented each city from the adoption of creative techniques or collaborating with artists.

Duration and Scale of Process

The differences in size and scale between New York and Boston cannot be ignored as a factor for how they approached and carried out their respective cultural planning processes. New York has over 8 million people in five boroughs, covering over 300 square miles, whereas Boston has a population of 680,000 and covers 90 square miles. Given the extreme differences in scale, it would be logical to think that more time would be allowed to carry out a process in the larger city, but that was not the case. The public process for CreateNYC was four months and the public process for Boston Creates was five months in duration. There is no standard regarding how much time is long enough to carry out an inclusive public engagement process for a cultural plan. The Chicago Cultural Plan 2012 carried out public engagement over five months. In 1986, Chicago’s (pre-digital era) engagement process lasted for eighteen months. The average duration of a cultural plan process is growing shorter, from 12 months in 1994 to 10 months in 2017. (Borrup 2018 and Dreeszen 1994) The data refers to how long survey respondents noted the entire plan took to create, not just the public process. This seems to be long enough, as only 12% of survey respondents in 2017 noted that their process was “abbreviated.” (Borrup 2018)
As mentioned earlier, Local Law 46 mandated the New York cultural plan be completed by a specified date. When the law was first introduced and debated, many argued that the law should be amended to allow for a longer process so that it could be inclusive and thorough. While no such legal mandate was driving the delivery date for the Boston Creates Plan, an eighteen-month process was stated in the Walsh Administration Arts Transition Team Report. There was another time-sensitive imperative driving the planning process duration in Boston. The City was due to host the Americans for the Arts (AFTA) National Convention for the first time ever in June of 2016. From the beginning of the process, the idea was that Boston’s cultural plan would be unveiled at the AFTA conference.

Commissioner Finkelpearl noted that as soon as the CreateNYC public process began, they realized the enormity of the task ahead of them: engaging so many different stakeholders over such a large city. As much as was already planned for the public process, it was clear they would need to add to their efforts. (Interview TF 3/22/19) One of the added engagement series was the aforementioned ‘Office Hours with the Commissioner.’ These issue-specific listening sessions proved so popular and effective, they are one of the few public engagement methods from the process that DCLA has continued to make use of since publication of the plan.

Both planning teams developed engagement approaches that were decentralized and featured an ‘open source’ aspect. By creating and making available a variety of online meeting toolkits and guides, they allowed for, indeed encouraged, additional self-organized meetings to occur and expand the reach of the official engagement process. Despite the availability of the CreateNYC online toolkits and guides, many small cultural organizations
did not have the resources or expertise to self-organize and carry out their own cultural planning process. The New York Cultural Agenda Fund grants were a direct response to this circumstance. (Interview CA 3/21/19) Funding was not only provided to eleven organizations, but also to HST and NOCD-NY to help carry out training and to support the efforts of the grantees. Staff involved with both the CreateNYC and Boston Creates plans noted how difficult it was to create a report back template or form that would fully capture the wide variety of self-organized creative engagement activities so that they could be incorporated and fully reflected in the plan.

Both plans offer numeric tallies of their public engagement processes. (See Figure 3.3) The CreateNYC plan notes in more than one place that 188,000 people engaged with the planning process. However, it is perhaps more accurate to say that there were 188,000 instances of engagement during the planning process. One person might have attended more than one meeting or engaged via a number of methods such as attending a meeting, filling out a survey, tweeting, and downloading a toolkit. The final Boston Creates plan places the total engagement number at more than 5,000 people. Because it’s not clear what exactly is included in both numbers, I don’t think it would be accurate to compare the respective reach compared to the population of each city.

Expectations and Existing Municipal Arts Support

Both New York and Boston were doing a cultural plan for the first time, but with a very different history when it comes to municipal support for the arts. The DCLA has existed since 1975, whereas the MOAC was a newly formed agency in 2014 in a city that had not had an arts commissioner in over 20 years. DCLA’s predecessor agencies date back
as far as 1869. The New York Art Commission (now called the Public Design Commission) was established in 1898. The bulk of DCLA’s support (73% in FY 2015) went to the 33 organizations in the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG.) Members of the CIG are located in all five boroughs of New York. Some are very large institutions with a global reputation such as the Metropolitan Museum (7.3 million annual visitors) and Lincoln Center (6 million annual visitors.) Others in the CIG are much smaller, are located in the outer boroughs, and serve a more local clientele, such as the Queens Museum and the Staten Island Children’s Museum (each host 200,000 annual visitors.)

As a new agency, the MOAC in Boston had little history, reputation or track record and the City had no such legacy of providing public subsidies to large cultural organizations. In 2014 the total arts grant-making budget was $150,000, and no single grant was more than a few thousand dollars. Both plans mention the existing levels of public support for the non-profit arts and the contrast is striking: the tone in CreateNYC is very much about how much the City is already doing to support the cultural sector. The Boston Creates plan notes that the City has among the lowest rates of public support for the arts per capita among the top 15 US metro areas. Being the ‘first ever cultural plan’ set the expectation in both cities that things might change. In New York, this was perceived as a threat to many of the city’s most powerful cultural leaders. In a New York Times story written just before the final plan was published, Robin Pogrebin wrote, “The prospect of a new approach, with an emphasis on greater equity, has some major arts organizations fearful they will end up with less of the municipal-funding pie, while more marginalized groups are hopeful about finally receiving more.” (Pogrebin 2017)
This could be why as part of its engagement process New York chose to do a statistically significant randomized phone survey of residents to measure support for the arts. Without any increase in resources, any changes to DCLA’s funding model to more equitable distribution of funds to high poverty areas, could have led to cuts in funding for existing grantees or programs. Since NYC is already the most generous funder of the arts in the city, demonstrating the need for more, and the public support for that expansion, could be used to justify growth in resources that would be needed to implement the CreateNYC plan.

In Boston, the situation was very different because municipal support was so low and the agency was new, there were likely only gains to be realized for the arts sector from a new cultural plan. The survey fielded in Boston was focused on how individuals engage in creative activities, and was not focused on their opinions regarding public support for the arts. The public's support was already well demonstrated at large public forums during the mayoral primary race and in post-election transition committee public meetings.

Policy Context

The policy context in each city also should be considered as perhaps influencing how they carried out their cultural planning processes and likely accounts for both plans placing a great deal of focus on equity, inclusion and access to the arts. In New York, the De Blasio administration issued One New York: the Plan for a Strong and Just City (OneNYC) in 2015. There is an emphasis on equity and participation from citizens in the plan, but only a few recommendations for the arts, and no mention of the need for a cultural plan. The OneNYC plan features preliminary data for New York City from the Social Impact of the
Arts Project (SIAP) research by Mark Stern. The report includes a map of the city showing high poverty areas overlaid with DCLA grantees as shown in Figure 3.10. The only arts-related indicator in the plan is, “Increase number of public cultural and civic events in community districts with the highest rates of poverty and lowest rates of public cultural and civic programming.” (OneNYC 2015)

Also in 2015 the DCLA made waves in the cultural community when it asked all grantees to collect and submit to them demographic data on their workforce and boards of directors. The survey aimed to determine if the cultural workforce is similar in composition to the population of the city. This survey immediately sparked concerns that organizations that weren’t sufficiently diverse would lose their city funding. DCLA published the survey results in early 2016 and findings were that the workforce was 62% white non Hispanic and 36% people of color, the inverse of the overall population for the city, which is roughly 33% white non-Hispanic and 67% people of color. (DCLA 2016) Leadership ranks are less diverse than those at the junior and mid-level, curatorial and professional staffs and boards were far less diverse than other job categories, and the larger organizations were less diverse than smaller ones. The largest of the CIG’s feared that efforts to diversify their boards could potentially alienate donors or negatively impact fundraising efforts.

The CIG’s are now required to report on their demographics annually and to show progress on achieving greater diversity among their various categories of human resources. This has proven to be challenging for some genres or institutions that have not traditionally attracted or recruited people of color, or for job categories that will take decades to realize the impact of diverse young talent reaching the leadership level. In other
Figure 3.10: Map of DCLA Grantees and High Poverty Community Areas

Source: OneNYC Plan 2015
instances it is becoming increasingly evident that some disciplines have in the past operated within highly segregated and discriminatory environments that have resulted in systemic impediments to achieving a more diverse workforce. DCLA’s programmatic response to the survey results was to fund paid internships for young talent of color from City University of New York and to fund other diversity-focused cultural workforce pipeline development programs. The larger New York City policy focus on diversity and equity, and the resulting desire for an inclusive process as expressed in both the OneNYC plan, as well as the findings of workforce survey, were highly influential for the CreateNYC plan and the approach to engagement that was developed.

The aspiration for Boston’s cultural plan to address issues of cultural equity, diversity and access to the arts was strongly informed by the public dialogue during the election and the transition process and was further reinforced when Boston was invited to join the Rockefeller Foundation 100 Resilient Cities Network (100RC) in late 2014. Boston’s approach to resilience not only focused on climate and acts of terror, but also encompassed social resilience and Boston’s painful history of systemic and entrenched racism. The resilience planning process was concurrent with the Boston Creates process and involved leadership from every City agency, including the MOAC. A stated goal of the resilience planning effort was to ensure that issues of racial equity and social justice were reflected in the other planning processes in Boston.

As mentioned earlier, the need for a cultural plan in Boston arose during the mayoral primary and again was stated as a first year priority in the Walsh administration Arts Transition plan. Several large public forums during and immediately after the election were held and greatly informed the transition plan, which in turn greatly informed the
approach for the cultural plan. The transition document identified a number of issues and recommended solutions that ultimately were part of the Boston Creates plan. In particular issues that were already the subject of prior arts sector organizing efforts such as those of the Massachusetts Artists Leadership Coalition (MALC) were very strongly represented. MALC is an all-volunteer advocacy and policy coalition that is the successor of the (now defunct) Artists Foundation. Due to MALC’s prior organizing and policy work focused on the needs and rights of individual practicing artists, and their key role in the transition committee, there is a strong emphasis on artists in the document. I suspect that this is one of the factors that led the Boston Creates plan organizers to want to incorporate artists in the planning process.

Influential Precedents

The presence of influential cultural planning and artistic precedents likely played a role in shaping both the New York and Boston cultural planning processes and their respective approaches to creative engagement. In April of 2015 HST and the New York City Cultural Agenda Fund collaborated on the Arts and Culture Blueprint, a series of workshops for a group of 40 cultural organizations on cultural planning techniques focused on incorporating the arts into community development. The work is very similar to the eventual toolkit that was developed for the CreateNYC planning process. This directly relevant prior work, could indeed be a reason why the HST was chosen to carry out CreateNYC.

In Boston, DoP and Shaw Pong Liu were part of the Expressing Boston Fellows program in 2014. The fellowship supported public art installations and social practice
creative engagement along the Fairmont rail corridor running through the neighborhoods of Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan. The project was part of an ArtPlace-funded creative placemaking program in the Uphams Corner section of Dorchester. A major partner in the work was the social practice collective Design Studio for Social Intervention (DS4SI.) In Boston another important creative engagement precedent was the aforementioned GoBoston 2030 transportation planning process. Part of the creative engagement for GoBoston 2030 happened in February of 2015, just as the Boston Creates consulting team was beginning their work. The MOAC could not let the transportation plan engagement process be more creative than the cultural plan public process. I believe that but for these very relevant and timely precedents, as well as the readily available experienced local talent, it’s unlikely that artists would have been part of the Boston Creates cultural plan to carry out creative community engagement.

Role of Artists in the Process

We don’t have data on how often artists are part of a planning team. Of any plan that might involve artists, one would think they would most typically be part of a cultural plan. But only 38% of respondents to the cultural plan survey noted that the process was creative. (Borrup 2018)

It’s clear that there were many artists involved in the CreateNYC cultural plan, but not as consulting team members designing and carrying out public engagement. HST staff noted that they would have liked to work with artists as part of their team, but didn’t have the time to do so. (NB interview 3/15/19.) Others noted that a number of DCLA staffers supporting the plan were artists in their own right, in addition to their day jobs, and
brought a creative approach to the work. Artists carried out some of the CreateNYC partner-led sessions; and creativity was often central to their approach to engagement. (CA interview 3/21/19.) The lead staffer for the plan at DCLA had an architectural design background, and systems design skills, which were integral to the CreateNYC approach to engagement. The engagement materials and toolkits allowed for a broad array of creative expression in response to planning prompts, one could draw, record, or send in photos in addition to written submissions of information. Large DCLA-led events always featured a performance as part of the proceedings. (NE interview 3/20/19) Others noted that for larger borough events they supplied and trained break out session facilitators, many of who were artists. (CA interview 3/21/19.) And finally, the People’s Cultural Plan was led by artists who were concerned that issues relevant to practicing creatives weren’t adequately represented in the more formal CreateNYC planning process.

As mentioned earlier, there were artists who were part of the official Boston Creates team, but they were a late addition. DoP were engaged just a week before the first town hall meeting in early June. The Request for Qualifications (see Appendix 5) for artist-ethnographers was not released until late June. Kate Balug felt that their efforts to train the town hall facilitators in creative engagement techniques felt like an add-on, and fell flat because the effort was so rushed. Later actions conceived of and led by DoP felt more effective and authentic because they had time to participate in the plan process and then devise engagement methods in keeping with what Boston Creates was trying to achieve, and in response to what seemed to be missing. (KB Interview 3/22/19) One of the artists felt as though they were working alongside the official process and had to play catch up.
(SLP interview 3/9/19.) Both Liu and Kaplow felt a great responsibility to the process because they were ‘official’ and representing city government in the process.

The role of artists in the call was specifically described as ethnographic in nature allowing for exploration within the official process. It was hoped that artists would infuse the process with creativity, help to reach a broad array of participants, connect the community teams, and also reflect back on the process and in some way express the ethos of *Boston Creates*: that a city not known as an arts capital could be celebrated as a place where everyday people are deeply engaged in creative expression. Kaplow mentioned that there were multiple layers of intentionality, the artists were there not as a policy setter and not a community member, and were allowed to navigate the different spaces without being tied to the specific engagement formats of the plan process. The artists understood their role as supporting the official process, and reaching those were not being reached, but also very open ended with an expectation that they would produce a creative product of some sort that was reflective of the Boston Creates Process. (HK interview 3/10/19)
Chapter Four: Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The discussion of findings below will tie the case study research back to the original four questions I set out to investigate: What intentions do planners have when they engage an artist to carry out a community engagement process? How do the techniques of artists doing creative community engagement differ from those techniques employed in more traditional participatory planning processes? Is there something about the creative process of being an artist that influences how they design public engagement methods? What are the characteristics of an artist-led community engagement process that can lead to creative problem solving? I will then draw conclusions based on those findings, and finally I will make recommendations focused on how the planning field can help to foster collaborations with artists and incorporate creative community engagement techniques into participatory planning processes.

Findings

Both the CreateNYC and Boston Creates plan aimed to create an inclusive and equitable public engagement process that involved a broad array of stakeholders. There were a variety of types of creative community engagement that occurred as part of both the CreateNYC plan and the Boston Creates plan, and both planning processes involved many artists. But the organizers of the plans had different intentions when it came to the role of artists. For the CreateNYC plan, the involvement of artists was expected and implicit because the subject matter the plan was exploring was about the arts. While there were many artists involved, and many of the approaches to public engagement were inventive, the involvement of artists was more about being participants in the planning process
rather than designing or carrying out the engagement process. Despite that, artist-led creative engagement did occur as a result of events organized in addition to the official engagement events carried by DCLA and the HST/NOCD-NY team. The open-source aspect of the process allowed for this broader array of engagement activities to occur within the framework of the planning process. The process allowed for information from other engagement activities to be submitted to the planning team and was mentioned in the final cultural plan document. Perhaps because the density of artists and arts organization in New York City is so great, it was a fair assumption that any cultural plan for the city would attract the participation of artists and inspire creative engagement and public dialogue. Indeed, while the cultural plan was being considered by city council, many arts organizations advocated for the plan and began to organize in anticipation of the eventual cultural plan process.

The addition of artists to the planning team in Boston was intentional, and the role of the artists was multi-faceted. One intention was for the artists to help devise ways to reach those who would not ordinarily participate in a planning process, including artists themselves. Another role was to help gather information from participants that the planning team was missing, such as adding a future visions tab to the crowd-sourced asset map. Yet another intention was to devise creative ways to engage participants such as youth who would not likely be able to follow or participate meaningfully in a more traditional public engagement session. Finally, there was an explicit expectation that the artists who were part of the process would create a work of art that would reflect on and express something about the cultural life of the city or the cultural plan process. The artists appeared to have fulfilled the various intentions of the planning team. Boston also had an
aspect to its planning process that was open-source, and built into the process were other ways for the community-led engagement teams to incorporate creative techniques to engage their community in the planning process. There is little evidence that other independently organized creative engagement events occurred as part of the planning process.

The Difference

There are many ways that an artist can be involved in public engagement. At one end of the spectrum an artist could have an intensive role where they initiate, design and lead a community engagement process. A planning process could be co-designed by an artist in partnership with an official government-led or community-driven process. It could be that planners design the public engagement, and then it is carried out with the assistance of an artist or other creative partner. On the other end of the spectrum, it could be that engagement is designed by and carried out by planners, and artists happen to be participants in the process.

In the case studies I noted several factors that differentiates creative engagement methods from more traditional approaches such as being multi-modal, interactive, and embodied. By multi-modal I am referring to more than one thing happening at a time such as acting in a skit, voting on options, and brainstorming solutions that happens during legislative theater. By interactive, I am referring to the two-way exchange of action and information, such as when one gets up and plays Ping-Pong, rather than sitting in an audience listening to a presentation. By embodied I am referring to physical action such as kneading dough, in addition to engaging your mind in ideas and conversation. This kind of
multi-modal, interactive, embodied creative engagement can have a variety of positive impacts on a planning process. These impacts are similar to the kinds of benefits that one can experience from participation in an arts activity. (See Appendix 2.) The creative engagement techniques can make a planning process more accessible to those with a limited understanding of the topic at hand such as youth or non-English speakers. The interactivity can make the process more appealing, engaging and fun, and even rewarding for participants. More than one interview subject noted how they tried to make public engagement process feel less transactional and extractive for participants by adopting a more creative interactive approach. Athena Laines of ASG noted that the turn out for community-team organized meetings in Boston often grew once the word got out that the meetings were much more fun than typical community meetings. (AL interview 3/7/19) Creative engagement is one way to help participants feel as though they benefited from the engagement process in ways that go beyond providing gathering data, and submitting their opinions and feedback into the planning process. And finally, the embodied aspect of some forms of creative engagement could serve to enhance the learning and ideation that happens during the engagement sessions. There is a growing body of research demonstrating the mind-body connection focused on incorporating movement into classrooms to enhance childhood education outcomes. (Ford 2016)

The Creative Process

The engagement techniques that an artist might use could be informed by the specific discipline of their creative practice, or if they have developed a formal engagement technique that they deploy on a more regular basis. This was the case for Theater of the
Oppressed who have a very structured approach to engagement through storytelling and theatrical skits. DoP made use of foam blocks to build constructions in public space with youth, which was perhaps informed by Kate Balug’s training as an urban planner. It was a technique DoP had used in the past, but customized for Boston Creates. The idea to engage artist-ethnographers and a photographer-ethnographer was born of DoP co-director Maria Vidart-Delgado’s background as an anthropologist. Kapplow noted that she was drawn to the original call for artists specifically because the terminology of ethnographer resonated with her training in anthropology. She also noted how she approached the planning process from an oblique angle, and was able to experience and then interpret the process from this outsider perspective of not being a policy maker and not being a community member. (HK interview 3/10/19) Leo March was engaged as a photographer-ethnographer, intentionally making use of his visual art and photography skill set to document the planning process and explore and lift up the less-seen aspects of cultural celebrations in the city. As an immigrant to Boston with Puerto-Rican heritage, he was drawn to the more underground, ethnic, typically unseen side of Boston’s cultural life. Aside from their formal creative training they are also making use of their point of view and perspective as an artist.

Not all of the Boston Creates artists made use of their traditional creative training in such a direct manner. What is so unique about the role of artists in this planning process is that the mandate was very open ended, and they were given several months to investigate and develop their engagement approach. Shaw Pong Liu, the violinist, ended up organizing bread-making parties and creating a visual art installation, where music played a very minor role. Kapplow originally thought that a sound installation would be her artistic
response, and ended up creative a visual installation on a city fleet vehicle. Their creative process was incubated within the larger public engagement process for the plan, and then they created engagement activities that reflected their point of view regarding the subject matter discussed in the process. The bread-making parties were a novel and effective way to get artists to show up and then talk about their needs. But the sessions were also symbolic of what Liu was hearing in the process. She was hearing that there was no support in Boston for individual artists; they need to be paid for their work, they need to eat, they need sustenance to survive. They kneaded bread. They need bread.

Several of the approaches to creative engagement that occurred during the CreateNYC and the Boston Creates plan made use of the intentional disruption of expectations as a way to prompt a reaction or begin a conversation. The DCLA Commissioner inviting you to play Ping-Pong, or artist Heather Kapplow attending meetings barefoot are both examples. Another example would a city fleet vehicle entirely covered with drawings, messages and aspirations from public meeting flip charts. The actual ‘disruption’ might invite conversation, or prompt an action, by perhaps adjusting the typical power dynamic in a situation, or by disarming a cautious or suspicious participant. The disruption might also be so compelling that it draws in a participant who might otherwise sit in the back of a crowded meeting and say nothing during a more traditional session. The disruption forces one to consider what is the expected norm in this situation and what is my reaction to the norm not being followed. If the disruption is too subtle, it won’t be noticed and won’t be effective. If the disruption is too severe, it’s off-putting and also ineffective.
Creative Problem Solving

One of the hopes for the CreateNYC plan was stated in Commissioner Finkelparl’s forward in the final document “we were seeking to identify and solve problems.” (CreateNYC 2017) Indeed there was creative problem solving that did occur during the process, in some cases by design, and in some cases it was unexpected. DCLA continues to carry out engagement with stakeholders via the ‘Office Hours with the Commissioner’ sessions precisely because it helped to achieve such productive issue-specific problem solving for the agency. The Legislative Theater session carried out by TO-NYC made use of a structured approach to theatrical performance and legislative development that aimed to produce creative problem solving by doing so. The session produced three policy ideas: one focused on removing penalties for unlicensed vendors, another regarding the need for an artist-rights hotline, and the third focused on funding borough arts councils. Several other policies discussed within the play also were included in the CreateNYC plan. (Golfman 2018)

Boston also hoped to achieve creative problem solving through the arts and the plan states the aspiration as the “active use of the arts and creative enterprises to animate and problem-solve in all aspects of public life.” (Penrice 2016) Although there were artists involved in the public engagement process, there is little evidence that the process in Boston achieved the level of creative problem solving that would manifest in the final plan document. When asked if the process achieved creative problem solving, Kapplow noted that she felt she achieved creative problem solving with respect to her own role in the plan and her own creative project, but didn’t feel privy to the larger planning process. (HK interview 3/10/19) None of the other artists felt that their role as an artist or the
engagement they carried out led to creative problem solving, nor was it their intention to do so. Perhaps the intention as stated in the plan refers to the ultimate outcome and impact of creating a cultural plan and supporting the arts sector rather than the plan itself.

The occurrence of creative problem solving as part of the engagement process happened when it was both planned for and when it was not. It happened as a result of an artist-led creative exercise, but also did not happen when other artists were leading creative engagement. Given this array of outcomes, and the few data points in this study, it is difficult to attribute creative engagement as being able to foster creative problem solving unless it is specifically structured to produce that result.
Conclusions

The specific intention of the participatory planning process does matter when it comes to the design of that process. The intention of the planner will guide what are the most appropriate engagement methods to use, and who might be the right partners to help a planner design and carry out that process. The policy context, relevant precedents and available time and talent are also important factors that influence how a planner might design an engagement process. Some artists, especially those who are skilled in facilitation and working with the public, often have developed methods of inquiry that might be particularly well suited to designing and carrying out public engagement that is creative and effective. These methods can be especially effective when it comes to reaching populations that are otherwise difficult to engage in a participatory planning process.

Despite the difference in intentions with respect to the role of artists and the difference in their approaches to creative engagement; what both CreateNYC and Boston Creates did do to maximize the efficacy of the participatory planning process was maintain a level of openness and flexibility that allowed for experimentation, and indeed allowed for creative engagement and creative problem solving to occur during their planning processes. Both planning teams created a downloadable toolkit and encouraged independently organized meetings. This allowed for and encouraged creative expression as part of the engagement process. Both planning teams also exhibited a high degree of adaptability. At the beginning of the process, what the artists in Boston would do or create was unknown, and the planning team had to accommodate and support the projects they devised. The team in New York dynamically monitored zip code data and would seek out
partner agencies and events in underrepresented parts of the city. Several members of the DCLA and CreateNYC plan team attended the TO-NY legislative theater event.

Cultural plans are different from other kinds of plans. Of course they do share many core approaches and methodologies with other plans; but perhaps because so many of the stakeholders are artists, arts organizations and creative people, the process for a cultural plan should be different from other kinds of plans. The openness to experimentation, the flexibility and adaptability that is a marker of both our subject plans is much like an artists’ creative process. Because of their extensive engagement process and concern with the needs of artists and the cultural sector, cultural planning processes are an ideal area of planning practice area where creative engagement techniques can be developed, refined, and studied for adaptation and application to other planning settings.

In the course of this research I asked several interview subjects to reflect on what they thought was ‘the artists’ skill set.’ Their answers included that they are pragmatic problem solvers, they are outsiders, they can build empathy, they understand non-verbal learners, they are not linear thinkers, they are asset-focused (as opposed to deficit focused), they are fluid intermediaries, they can make excellent use of metaphor, they can translate things into regular language, they can serve as intermediaries, they are good at triangulation, they are often teachers, they are iterative.

The Impact of Creative Engagement

The Create NYC planning process impacted DCLA prior to the completion of the plan. The agency continues to hold ‘Office Hours’ and increased its capacity to address issues that were raised by the disability community. The PAIR program continues to place
artists within government agencies to explore ongoing creative engagement and to develop innovative approaches to their work. DCLA’s budget has grown from $188.1 million in FY 2018 to $198.4 million in FY 2019, in part to implement programs that further the goals of the plan including the CreateNYC Leadership Accelerator, the CUNY Cultural Corps, the Disability Forward Fund, and the Mayor’s Grant for Cultural Impact. Early in 2018 the City of New York allowed the Metropolitan Museum to change its admission policy. This change resulted in a boost in earned revenue, which in turn allowed the Met to reduce the amount of funds it received from the City. This reduction in its subsidy from the CIG funds, in turn allowed the City to relocate millions of dollars to smaller museums in keeping with the goals of CreateNYC to more equitably fund culture in more underserved, high need portions of the city.

In Boston, one impact of the Boston Creates process was the subsequent incorporation of creative engagement in the Uphams’ Corner Arts Innovation District planning process. The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) and the Design Studio for Social Intervention (DS4SI) are both located within this district and are partners with the City in designing and carrying out the public engagement effort, which made use of several different creative engagement techniques. Long-time planners at the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA, formerly the Boston Redevelopment Authority, BRA) noted that this kind of co-design and power-sharing would never have happened prior to Boston Creates. The Boston Creates process resulted in a willingness on the part of the planning agency to partner with artists and cultural non-profits in the co-design and leadership of a neighborhood planning process. Another impact of the Boston Creates
cultural plan was the expansion of public funding for the MOAC. The budget for the agency grew from $1.6 million in FY 2016, to $2.7 million in FY 2017, to $4 million in FY 2018.

Planning is a creative enterprise that doesn’t particularly have the reputation for being creative. The professional practice of planning has become so complex and technical that the average literate and well informed resident could find it difficult to understand the value of their participation in a planning process. Community engagement and participatory planning processes aim to involve the public in a planning process with the implicit understanding that if the public are involved and their needs are reflected, that the plan will be a better one because of their involvement. Creative community engagement aims to combat how off-putting the participatory process can be for many different kinds of participants, and to reach those who might not naturally participate in a planning process.

The possibility of planners partnering with artists is an exciting one, however the intention for doing so should be clear from the beginning so that the partnerships can yield the best possible results. The ideal approach to artist planner collaborations focused on creative community engagement is one where the artist has a role in the design of the process so that the most effective techniques can be used to overcome specific barriers to participation. Beyond who participates in the process, there might be other goals for engagement such as specialized data gathering or identifying creative solutions to complex, persistent problems in the community. If creative problem solving is one of the goals of public engagement, then the design of the artist-planner collaboration should be intentional and create the kinds of conditions and engagement opportunities that would foster creative problem solving.
Recommendations

There are some very real obstacles that prevent planners from more regularly partnering with artists to carry out creative community engagement. One obstacle is a lack of awareness of innovative engagement approaches that can be achieved by partnering with artists. There is also a lack of familiarity among many planners as to the essential role the arts plays in the health, well-being and vitality of a community. Residencies, fellowships and research are three recommended actions that might begin to address this circumstance.

Government Artist Residencies

In addition to carrying out a cultural planning process at similar times, both New York and Boston have carried out pilot programs for incorporating artists in city government, with the express intention of achieving creative problem solving. Public Artists In Residence (PAIR) started in the fall of 2015 (before CreateNYC) and was inspired by the work of Mierle Laderman Ukeles, the artist in residence with the New York City Sanitation Department since 1977. While led by DCLA, the residency is focused on helping to solve a problem rooted within a partner agency such as the Administration for Children’s Services (ASCO), the Department of Veteran’s Services (DVS), and the Department of Probation (DOP). Boston Artists In Residence (BostonAIR) started in the fall of 2015 just after the public engagement phase of Boston Creates ended, but was in development since late 2014. Shaw Pong Liu immediately went from being involved in Boston Creates to being selected for the first cohort of BostonAIR. The first round of the program was open-ended and allowed artists to shadow staff in a number of city agencies and develop a social
practice or civic practice project related to the department. Liu developed a collaboration with the Police Department focused on gun violence called Code Listen.

The artist residencies within government agencies, including planning, is one way to expose more disciples and professions to creative and innovative approaches that artists can bring to their work. It is also a way to expand how artists can innovate within a variety of fields or policy areas that are related to planning, but not necessarily within the planning agency, such as climate adaptation or helping to accommodate new immigrants into a community.

APA Artist/Planner Fellows

It’s heartening that the APA is adding to their arts and culture resources and tools for planners by partnering with Forecast Public Art, but their efforts are not nearly substantial enough. A training program about public art is a good start, but others are already much farther ahead in terms of supporting public art practice, such as the Public Art Network with AFTA.

Rather, the APA should enhance the contributions to the field being made by planners who are also artists. They should build on existing momentum begun by people like Theaster Gates and Candy Chang by creating an artist fellowship program that places planners who are also artists (and artists) within planning agencies on a more regular basis, and then feature their work at national, statewide, and regional level planning conferences. This type of hybrid professional is growing in number and could be uniquely well positioned to further pioneer the integration of arts and culture into planning practice.
There is a great tradition of artist fellows and residencies in unexpected industries focused on innovation or bringing a fresh perspective to a discipline or field, and the planning field is ripe for just this kind of innovative program. For decades the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) hosted artist residencies to help the agency and its scientists make sense of the vastness of space. Bathroom fixture manufacturer Kohler has hosted artists and potters who work along side labors on the shop floor to help develop innovative designs and materials. The creative community fellows program from National Arts Strategies (NAS), A Blade of Grass, and foundations such as Kresge are naming and funding dozens of artist fellowships focused on social practice, social justice and community development every year and yet there is no formal relationship to the planning field or to APA. This truly is a lost opportunity to partner with established entities and propel the field in a more innovative direction.

Research

There is a need for more rigorous scholarly research regarding the role of artists in a planning process with specific emphasis on how they can positively impact the design of a participatory engagement process. There is a wealth of information about creative placemaking and creative community development projects being produced by practitioners in the arts field. Most of this written work focuses on one or two case studies and does not go into the kind of deep analysis that would be needed to better understand how participatory planning can best be enhanced by adopting creative engagement techniques and partnerships with artists.
One suggested area of investigation would be to research the difference in outcomes between a creative engagement process that is designed by artists as compared to a process designed by planners. Another suggested topic would be to identify which creative engagement techniques are most effective for specific kinds of challenging situations or populations. Yet another topic would be to examine the artistic background of the artist/planners who are now working in the field to better understand the relationship between their creative process as an artists and their approach to urban planning. Both Theaster Gates and Jennifer Erickson are ceramicists/potters which could lead one to think there might be something about molding clay and building pots that is highly correlated with an interest in wanting to shape a city via urban planning.

Joint Degree Programs

This last line of inquiry focused on the relationship between planning and the arts could lead to the development of joint arts/planning degrees that could build a pipeline of creative talent and foster innovation in the field. The Alliance for the Arts in Research Universities (a2ru) would be an excellent place to being organizing this effort. Among their partner universities they cultivate “support for arts-integrative research, curricula, programs and creative practice between the arts, sciences, and other disciplines.” (a2ru 2019) In the past they have convened webinars on creative placemaking, the impact of arts-integrative and interdisciplinary practices on research universities.

These recommendations are but a few suggestions on how to build on the growing body of evidence that artists can play a role in designing and carrying out highly inventive and effective creative community engagement as part of a planning process.
Appendix 1: Definitions

Because the language of the planning world and the arts world is so different a few terms that might be unfamiliar are defined below:

**Arts for Change** — projects at the intersection of artistic creation and civic engagement, community development, and justice (ADI 2017)

**Civic Art**: Broadly referring to any artwork, ornamental or decorative feature or element of design in the build environment or public commissioned public realm.

**Civic Engagement**: here I am referring to the extent to which people engage with or participate regularly with public or civic life such as voting, volunteering, serving on a board or committee, being part of an amateur pursuit such as singing in a choir or belonging to a gardening group.

**Civic Practice** (also referred to as Civic Practice Art): this refers to artists with a creative practice focused on projects that are co-designed with community members or municipal agencies self-defined needs.” (As compared to Studio Practice: Artists make their own work and engage with neighbors and residents as audience.”) (Adapted from Center for PCP)

**Community Art**: rights-based practice that emerged in the cultural revolution that transformed Western society in the 1960s. ([Matarasso 2019](#))

**Community Engagement**: refers to a broad series of actions taken to connect a community or in a plan or with a project or an area, can be for a variety of purposes, such as to share information, to solicit input, to garner feedback, engage in problem solving.

**Community Outreach**: I am referring to deliberate efforts to reach an audience not ordinarily engaged, has a connotation of being patriarchal and transactional.
Creative Community Engagement: here I am referring to community engagement that is conceived of and carried out by an artist, artist collective or team of creative collaborators.

Participatory Art: Participatory art “...practice that connects professional and non professional artists in an act of co-creation.” (Matarasso 2019)

Social Practice or Social Practice Art: “artists work with neighbors and residents on an artist-led vision in ways that may include research, process, and/or content creation with an intention of social impact outside traditional audience experience. (As compared to Studio Practice: Artists make their own work and engage with neighbors and residents as audience.”) (CPCP 2012)
Appendix 2: Benefits of Participation in the Arts

Source: Use or Ornament, Matarasso 1997.
Appendix 3: CreateNYC Toolkit Item: Ambassador Flier

BE A CREATENYCN AMBASSADOR

Start a CreateNYC conversation in your community.
You can represent your neighborhood in the cultural plan process and make sure your voice is heard by:

- Talking to your neighbors, friends, parents, youth group
- Organizing a conversation with your PTA
- Interviewing your fellow classmates

Host your own community conversation using a Cultural Plan Toolkit or start with these four questions.
Click here to request a toolkit.


2. Thinking about arts and culture throughout New York City, how might you finish the following sentences?
   - In my neighborhood, I am concerned about...
   - In my neighborhood, I am excited about...
   - I imagine arts and culture can address my concerns by...
   - I imagine arts and culture can contribute to my excitement by...

3. In 10 words or less, how would you describe the current state of arts and culture in your community? And your ideal state of arts and culture in your community?
   - How can these ideas incorporate the arts into this part of the neighborhood and in the future of our community?
   - How might we prepare local residents to create their own public art or cultural events for the neighborhood?

4. If you were in charge of the budget for arts and culture in NYC, what is the one thing you would spend money on?

Source: CreateNYC Plan 2017
Sample Activities:
Making the Familiar Strange

GOAL: These exercises aim to elicit what creativity, arts and culture mean in your neighborhood. You will probably find many, even conflicting meanings that sometimes do not surface in conversations.

You can use these exercises as conversation startlers, as inspiration to come up with your own games, or as a framework that you can tweak as you need.

Activity Option #1: Thinking of my community, who are we?

Ask people to choose either 1) an emblematic arts and culture building in your community, or a 2) piece of artwork in your neighborhood, or a 3) well known person in the neighborhood, and have them write/draw/represent the history of that building/artwork/person. Then everyone shares. If they don’t know the history, they have to make it up.

Ask people specific questions, for example:
- What was the building used for and what is it used for now? / When was the artwork produced and why? / What’s the person’s life history?
- Why is that person/artwork/person emblematic of the neighborhood?
- Why does the building/artwork/person represent arts and culture in the neighborhood?
- How does this building/artwork/person represent Boston as a whole?

Tip: Pay attention to how people talk about what’s unique in their neighborhood, and how their neighborhood contributes to Boston at large.

Activity Option #2: What does creativity mean in our community?

Creative charades. Divide participants into two teams (A and B). Both teams read out loud a guessing prompt (some suggestions here below). Then Team A as a whole will think of an object that answers the guessing prompt without letting Team B know their answer. Team B will choose a participant. Team B’s chosen participant will draw or act out Team A’s answer. Team B then will have to guess what the participant is drawing or acting.

Ideas for guessing prompts:

1. In 150 years, what will our neighborhood be known for?
2. If our neighborhood were a piece of art, what would it be?
3. What do neighbors do best?
4. How would you describe the neighborhood’s vibe/beat in terms of music?
5. What’s the neighborhood’s secret recipe?
6. What's the neighborhood’s style of clothing?

**Tip:** This game will help you understand how residents view artistic production and creativity in their neighborhood. What kinds of answers are teams coming up with? What are teams guessing? What guesses are out of place? Which ones are possible? Why are some guesses possible and some others are not? What does this say about how residents think about creativity in their neighborhood?

**Activity Option #3: Expressing creativity in our community:**

Choose a specific public space or well-known festival in your neighborhood. As a team, you will imagine how this public space/festival will look in 200 years. After finishing your vision, the team will think collectively what in the neighborhood today will contribute to making the vision possible.

**Tip:** Focus the conversation on what capacities exist in the neighborhood today — is it infrastructure? Is it a particular know how? Is it a certain group of people? Is it an emerging economy in the area? Is it an organization? Is it something else? Who has access to these capacities? Who organizes it?

**II. Observation guide (an example) — Please record the answers in the discussion guide:**

1. Who played the game? (Number of participants, ages, occupation, where do they live?)
2. Pay attention to how people talk about what kinds of arts and culture are representative of their neighborhood. Is it dancing, theater, culinary schools, storytelling tradition, etc.?
3. Did people disagree at some point? What was the source of disagreement? What were the arguments?
4. Did people laugh at some point? What was funny and why was it funny?
5. Are the observations different from what people said in the surveys/discussion questions? How so?
6. Did you learn something new/unexpected about your neighborhood?

Source: Mayor's Office Of Arts and Culture, City of Boston 2015
Appendix 5: Boston Creates Call to Artists

Call to Artists
Request for Qualifications

Boston Creates is the City of Boston’s cultural planning effort. Its goal is to build a shared vision for Boston’s creative future through deep resident and institutional engagement citywide.

Through September, the planning team is in an intensive listening phase, working with resident-and organization-led teams to capture the pulse of the City’s creative and cultural elements: its strengths, needs, opportunities, and ideas.

Boston Creates seeks qualifications from artists or artist collectives interested in joining the planning team as artist-ethnographers. Two artists or artist collectives will be commissioned to work as artist-ethnographers throughout the public engagement process from July through September. Selected artists will report to Department of Play, one of the project consultants, and work in collaboration with the Mayor’s Office of Arts and Culture. Their work will contribute to a thorough understanding of Boston’s cultural present and desired future.

Submission deadline: July 8

Budget: $8,400 per artist/collective, as well as up to $1,000 reimbursement for materials. Artists are expected to budget their time to the equivalent of 10 hours per week at $70 per hour.

Eligibility: The RFP is open to artists working in all media and of all cultural backgrounds, ages, and experiences who live, work, or play in Boston. Artists must have demonstrated experience in engaging a diverse audience.

Project Description
Artists will participate in the ongoing public engagement effort, including meetings and events with stakeholders; examine raw data collected to date through a survey, community team meetings, leadership council, and steering committee meetings; and reflect on their own experience as Boston-based artists. They will identify points of particular relevance, whether tensions, connections, or opportunities, and develop creative encounters for further public conversation around those points. These encounters will be up to each artist to define: they may be a series of temporary artworks, installations, performances, happenings, or another format that will creatively facilitate dialogue about the city’s cultural future among diverse sectors, populations, and geographies.
To inform their project design, artists will attend meetings with stakeholders and access raw data about the City’s art and cultural life. Their artworks will engage residents in a critical reflection about Boston’s cultural present and future.

The Site and the Public
Artists’ projects will focus particularly on inspiring dialogue in between established geographic areas and/or socially defined groups, especially involving people and places often underrepresented in civic engagement. These might be adjacent or distant neighborhoods, diverse populations, interests, or intergenerational groups, or other instances where cross-pollination would be fruitful. Projects will take place in public space, as identified by the artist. Projects may have a web component.

Scope of Work
The artists will be expected to:
- participate in meetings, including some community conversations taking place citywide, throughout the summer
- review data collected from the public to date
- develop ideas and a timeline for an artwork or a series of artworks
- produce the artwork or series of artworks that will take place either independently in public space or in connection with public festivals in Boston this summer.
- work with the communications team to announce the artwork(s)

The artist-ethnographers will work directly with Department of Play to define the work.

Artist selection process
Artists will submit a zipped folder no larger than 20MB with the following:
- 10-15 images of past work, maximum file size of 1MB per image, or links for up to 5 video samples, up to 3 minutes long each (note: please don’t email videos, just links)
- a numbered image/video list including title, date, media, dimensions, site, and brief description of each file
- current resume or CV
- 3 professional references (name, email, phone number, position)
- artist statement, including 1. a description of your practice, 2. why you are interested in this project, 3. what relevant past experience you have, specifically in art that engages the public 4. how you would approach this commission. 2 pages max.
- one paragraph from a hypothetical point of view that announces the state of Boston after Boston Creates has been fully implemented in a future year. Can be illustrated.
How to submit
Please email submissions to hello@deptofplay.com.

Timeline
June 26 RFP opens
July 8 Submissions due
July 10 Artists selected
Week of July 13 Selected artists begin commission

We recognize that this is a tight timeline; however we are at the beginning of a responsive planning process and we seek artists who can dive right in.

Questions related to this RFP may be directed to hello@deptofplay.com.
Appendix 6: List of Interview Subjects

Caron Atlas, Co-Director, Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts – New York, 3/21/19

Nisha Bagalia, Director of Participatory Planning, Hester Street, 3/15/19

Katarzyna Balug, Co-Founder, Department of Play, 3/22/19

Ted Berger, (former) Executive Director, New York Foundation for the Arts, 3/19/19

Nadia Elokdah, (former), Cultural Plan Coordinator, New York Department of Cultural Affairs, 3/20/19

Tom Finkelpearl, Commissioner, New York Department of Cultural Affairs, 3/22/19

Heather Kapplow, Artist, 3/10/2019

Athena Laines, (former) Director of Community Engagement, Archipelago Strategies Group, 3/7/19

Shaw Pong Liu, Artist, 3/9/2019

Lori Lobenstine, Co-Founder, Design Studio for Social Intervention, 3/9/19

Diane Matarazza, Arts Consultant, 3/21/19

Danya Sherman, (former) Director of Public Programs, Education and Community Engagement, the High Line, 3/11/19

Eddie Torres, (former) Deputy Commissioner, New York Department of Cultural Affairs, 3/27/2019
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