Civic Tinkering & Marginal Inclusion: Lessons from the Small Cities Movement

Scott Tate, Ph. D
Extension Specialist, Virginia Cooperative Extension
Affiliated Faculty, Department of Urban Affairs and Planning
Research Associate, Virginia Tech Institute for Policy and Governance
“Resurgent” Small Cities

Belfast, Northern Ireland  Roanoke, Virginia
“The Culture Story”
Ethnographic Case Study Approach

- Interviewed Key Informants
- Observed activities
- Analyzed Public and Private Documents

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A & C Plan

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What does it mean to construct and promote a city as a place for arts and culture? Are marginal groups included, or their concerns considered, in such processes?
Implications

- Complicate Arts, Culture, & Creativity (Challenge the Narrative)
- Engage the Margins (Build Bridges)
- Promote Experimentation (Tinker Around)
#1: Complicating Arts, Culture, & Creativity

Instrumental

Intrinsic
# Arts and Culture-based Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Positive</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic Impacts more Mixed than the Rhetoric</td>
<td>Revitalize city centers</td>
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<td>Increase Inequalities and Social Distancing</td>
<td>Some economic impacts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Threaten Cultural Health of Neighborhoods</td>
<td>Create urban amenities</td>
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<td>Contribute to quality of life/sense of place</td>
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Challenge the “Hipsters will save us” Mindset
Roanoke, Virginia
Explosion of Investment in Cultural Facilities
Historical and Contemporary Context
Belfast Today

Post-Conflict City?  City of Walls?
New Belfast?
“Ambitious, vibrant and creative city”

- Frommer’s Top 12 World Tourism Destination
- £451 Million Annual Tourism Impact
- 10,000 Tourism-related Jobs
- City Center Development
- “Dark Tourism”
City of Walls?
Interface Areas: Epicenters for Direct Violence

- Interface areas – spaces where primarily Catholic (mostly nationalist, republican) communities adjoin Protestant (mostly unionist, loyalist) areas

- Often separated by walls or “peace-lines”

- 88 such formal barriers in 2010, many more informal

- 70% of deaths from sectarian violence within 500 meters of interface boundary (1969-2004)

As well as for …..
Ethnosectarian Segregation

Catholic Areas
- Catholic
- Protestant & Other

Protestant Areas
- Catholic & Other
- Protestant
2006 survey of 9,000 residents found residents avoided areas with heavy concentrations of the “other” group

Parallel use of space, rather than shared space

Impediment in everyday life

Costs of segregation at £1.5 billon every year
#2: Marginal Inclusion
FIVE YEARS OF MARGINAL ARTS FESTIVAL

COMMUNITY HIGH
School of Arts & Academics
Create a spectacle:
30 events,
200+ artists,
6 days
Build a community of artists from around the world
Question “Art”
Encourage community to ask “Who are we?”
INCLUSION
BUILDING BLOCKS

Livable Communities – Engaged Neighborhoods

People, Education, Lifelong Learning

Vibrant Region – Healthy Economy
Art and culture should be visible and accessible in neighborhoods.

- Bring art into neighborhood & neighborhood into the arts
- Attract and retain artists
- Support neighborhood art and culture
# 3: Civic Tinkering
Draw down the walls
North Belfast
“Creating the conditions to imagine a city without barriers”
Arts-based Approaches
Spur Community Dialogue
Challenge the Conventional

In a recent poll, 80% of people indicated that they would be in favour of interface walls coming down, when the time is right ...

WHEN WILL THE TIME BE RIGHT?
visit http://drawdownthewalls.blogspot.com to register your vote
POLL CLOSES 15.03.2010

DRAW DOWN THE WALLS
Civic Tinkering:

any informal, unsanctioned, impermanent effort that aims to influence positively some part of a city’s identity
Material Change
Closing

- Complicate Arts, Creativity, and Culture (*Share Stories*)
- Explore the Margins (*Build Bridges*)
- Encourage Civic Innovation (*Tinker Around*)