

ARTISTS ON DISPLAY:
OPEN STUDIOS AND THE SEARCH FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

by

Gena M. Peditto

A. B. Art History with concentration in the Visual Arts
Barnard College, Columbia University, 2000

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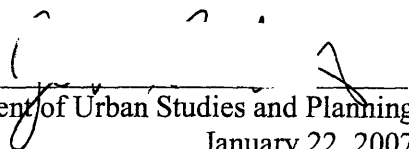
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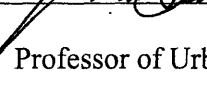
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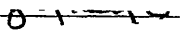
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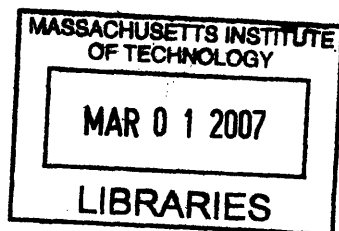

Department of Urban Studies and Planning
January 22, 2007

Certified by: _____


J. Mark Schuster
Professor of Urban Cultural Policy
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by: _____


Langley Keyes
Ford Professor of City and Regional Planning
Chair, MCP Committee



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by Gena Peditto

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ABSTRACT

The much publicized and mythologized transformation of cities such as Barcelona and urban neighborhoods like SoHo in New York City, have led to broader ideas about the “Creative City,” the “Creative Economy,” and the “Creative Class.” In an attempt to reap the promised riches of wealth, job creation, and prestige, some cities have developed strategies to promote their “livable” neighborhoods and attract “creative” workers and cultural tourism, but these ideas support a specific conception of what art and creativity is and what the role of artists should be in revitalization. The overall message that is conveyed is that consumption-oriented arts and entertainment ventures are more highly valued than noncommercial arts incubators and venues. Much like an ecological system, the success of commercial arts ventures is dependent on the success of the noncommercial arts venues. By focusing solely on commercial exchange, a city may fail to sustain all the parts necessary for a healthy arts community. Likewise, the arts community’s embrace of commercial opportunities, in combination with the lack of a unified voice that calls for nurturing the arts community’s unique and rich diversity, sends a signal back to the city that the disruption of their “arts ecology” is acceptable.

This thesis investigates a portion of that ecology: Open Studio events. It considers nine neighborhood-wide Open Studio events in Boston, Massachusetts, from the perspectives of the organizers (the neighborhoods and the city) and the participants (individual artists), and asks why these events are being created. What purpose do they serve? Beginning with a review of the larger trends that influence Boston’s arts communities and its Open Studios, it traces the evolution of underlying motivations in organizing Open Studios – from politics to artist community building to neighborhood economic development and revitalization. It then analyzes the participating artists’ complex range of motivations, going well beyond the casual assumption that artists participate to sell their work.

This analysis leads to the conclusion that the nature of Open Studios has shifted away from its focus on art and artists. This shift can be nicely explained with Pierre Bourdieu’s “Forms of Capital” theory. Born out of a criticism of classical economics, this theory explains the structure and function of society through the relationships between economic, social, and cultural capitals.

Finally, the question of what to do with Open Studios is raised. Should they be repositioned away from their current commercial form? Or should Open Studios remain unchanged, thereby requiring the city, developers, and arts community to reconsider how they value noncommercial venues, nurture creativity and innovative ideas, and promote diverse conceptions of art?

Thesis Supervisor: J. Mark Schuster
Title: Professor of Urban Cultural Policy

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CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

Each weekend, from mid-September until early-December, Boston's neighborhood artists open their doors and invite the public to enter the privacy of their homes and studios. My interest in these events was sparked by a chance visit to the South End Open Studios, in 2005. As a new resident of Boston, I understood the neighborhood to be under intense development pressure. At first, the event seemed like a new twist on an open house; however, its receipt of intense public scrutiny coupled with the artists' willingness to make themselves highly visible and accessible to the public, suggested that the event had another agenda. I wondered if the event was a political act. It seemed that the neighborhood was indeed gentrifying, and perhaps this event was the artists' last attempt at declaring "we are here and we are not moving."

In this thesis, I examine the motivations that create and sustain the Open Studios of Boston, Massachusetts. Before beginning this study, my original hypothesis and expected answer was that Open Studios were the result of artists' need to empower themselves politically; however, as my study progressed, I uncovered a more complex story.

While these events are very personal, they also reflect the larger issues that influence Boston's arts community. Open Studios also reveal how, in the interest of improving the city's economic competitiveness, Boston's arts policies have been shaped more by Richard Florida's recommendations on attracting the "Creative Class" and embodying a specific urban lifestyle ideal where revitalized, "livable" places are peppered with creative people. Boston's various policies combine to prioritize commercial arts and entertainment exchanges over noncommercial and independent arts ventures.

The New England Council's 2000 report, "The Creative Economy Initiative," laid the foundation for Boston's arts policies and programs. Prompted by the realization that non-profit organizations and attractions made significant contributions to the region's economy, both in terms of jobs supported and revenue generated, the Initiative was the first step towards an action plan to leverage the region's arts and culture industries. Prior to this report, the region had considered cultural production to be the domain solely of non-profit cultural institutions; this report, in contrast, built a definition of cultural industries to include commercial arts-related activities as well as self-employed artists, effectively mixing "what the United States has traditionally considered two separate sectors [non-profit and for-profit] (New England Council, 2000: 7)."

While Boston does not have a comprehensive plan comparable to the New England Council's, it has developed a series of policies and services that clearly promote the philosophy of using the arts to bolster the city's economic growth, vibrancy, and continued transformation. These programs are administered through the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA), the city's planning and economic development agency, and the Mayor's Office of Arts, Tourism, and Special Events (MOATSE). The BRA's Department of Economic Development manages the Artist Space Initiative and Create Boston; the Artist Space Initiative focuses on the development of artist live/work and work-only housing, while Create Boston provides the city's "creative" businesses with four services – financing (loans, bonds and tax credits), finding employees, navigating city bureaucracy in the acquisition of real estate, and business development. MOATSE manages numerous programs that range from promoting the city's cultural offerings to supporting the city's arts communities. The Open Studios Coalition, the organizing body that

encompasses all of the city's Open Studios events, was a non-profit organization originally. Today it is organized as a visual arts program within MOATSE.

Open Studios exists within this framework as an opportunity for business, urban redevelopment, and cultural tourism; they are advertised by the City of Boston as such:

Talk to and buy art directly from the artist, see demonstrations, listen to music, sample area restaurants and peruse off-the-beaten path retail shops in Boston's historic neighborhoods!
(http://www.cityofboston.gov/arts/visual/06_openstud.asp)

This promotion of Open Studios underscores the city's position towards its artist population. Although Boston has all the makings of a creative city, the city's choice to value lifestyle and commercial exchange in its policies and programs undermines the ability of noncommercial artists to live and work within city limits and is at odds with the creative process.

The New England region has been mythologized in American culture as the place of intellectualism and innovation. Boston in particular has a reputation for being the "Athens of America," and Cambridge the "Berkeley of the East Coast" (Doderer, 2004). Part of this impression can be attributed to its numerous academic institutions, but it is also due to its various artist communities, arts institutions, large venues, small venues, and alternative arts venues.

These alternative arts venues are artist-run, supporting noncommercial, experimental, even unfinished, works of art in any form – interactive media installations, silent film screenings, conceptual performance pieces, indy-rock, or a simultaneous combination of all four. Although these venues tend to attract audiences composed largely of artists, they are fully open to the public, and some have a storefront presence.¹

¹ For example, the Zeitgeist Gallery in Inman Square, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Since 1998, however, Boston has lost most of its noncommercial arts venues as a result of both gentrification and zoning and permitting issues. Camille Dodero, a Boston-based author, summarizes the anger of the arts community in a local alternative newspaper:

[T]here aren't any such places around town. After all, we live in Boston, a city where gentrification killed the art-school star, where culture and art are largely considered commodities. A place where nearly all alternative art spaces have evaporated due to escalating rents, unrelenting gentrification, permitting problems, zoning ordinances, and a regional attitude that classes these unclassifiable venues with crack dens and brothels. A place where artists who want to work had better be ready to relocate to a place that actually wants them — somewhere like Lowell, North Adams, Providence, or Baltimore. (Dodero, 2004)

Although urban development plays a large role in making the city unaffordable for artists, so do nationally, publicized events that play upon people's fears.

Many of Boston's noncommercial arts venues have at some point received a visit from the city's Inspectional Services Department (ISD), particularly after tragic events like the Station nightclub fire in Providence, Rhode Island (2003), and the Catholic social club fire in Fall River, Massachusetts (2006). These events directly led to crackdowns by ISD in the interest of public safety, and resulted in the loss of several well-known venues such as the Oni Gallery, the Mobius Artist Group, and the Revolving Museum. The lack of mediated compromise between the needs of the arts community and the requirements of public safety suggest that the city does not recognize how truly important these noncommercial venues are. In combination with the institutional support of more commercial mainstream arts venues this contributes to shaping the Boston arts scene. Open Studios, as a venue, exist within this context. The events' increasingly commercial nature of these events reflects the value that the city places in its approach to the "Creative Economy."

In examining the motivations that create and sustain the Open Studios of Boston, this thesis builds upon the shift in values from noncommercial to commercial exchanges. Before beginning, I first define the types of Open Studios studied in this thesis and then explain the methodology behind the study.

What are Open Studios?

An “open studio” might be defined as any occasion when an artist invites people to her studio – the place where she works, and might also live – to show her creations. An open studio can be either public or private. Private open studios are more often referred to as “studio visits” and are exclusive invitations to very small groups of people: gallery dealers, museum curators, patrons, journalists, critics, and other artists. In this text, I use the capitalized term, “Open Studios,” to refer to the neighborhood-wide art events that are advertised and open to the general public. An Open Studio event mirrors the studio visit, but on a massive scale; any member of the public is welcome to enter the artist’s studio for free during the event. My study focuses on public Open Studios.

Methodology

My original hypothesis was that Open Studios are motivated by an artist community’s need to empower itself politically, turning the artists into a highly visible and mobilized group. To test this proposition, I have focused on Boston, where these events have proliferated.

Originally, I cast a wide net and looked into Open Studio events both within the Greater Boston region (Cambridge, North Cambridge, Somerville, and Newton) as well as across the country (New Haven, New York City, Philadelphia, and the San Francisco Bay Area). Ultimately, I chose Boston because I wanted to learn what role the oversight body, the Boston Open Studios

Coalition (the Coalition), plays in event initiation and continuation. Although originally a non-profit organization, the Coalition was absorbed into the Mayor's Office of Arts, Tourism, and Special Events in 2005. At the initial stages of my research, I thought the existence of the Coalition and its connection to city government, particularly the Mayor, would be a powerful incentive that encouraged neighborhoods to organize events. In other cities, Open Studio events that grouped several different neighborhoods together did not have the same kind of city-administrated oversight body, and I was interested in what this structure revealed about Boston's arts policies.² An additional reason was because I am located in Boston, I would be able to attend all of the Open Studios.

After narrowing my scope to Boston, I explored the events of all eleven neighborhoods that are part of the Boston Open Studios Coalition. Optimally, I would have preferred to investigate all of the events, but I narrowed my focus to nine due to time constraints and, in some cases, difficulty in contacting interviewees, as well as locating relevant printed materials. I ultimately opted to focus on nine of the eleven Open Studios that are part of the Boston Open Studios Coalition: Allston/Brighton, Dorchester, Fenway, Fort Point, Hyde Park, Jamaica Plain, Roslindale, Roxbury, and South End. I also reviewed a large number of case studies in Boston and elsewhere in order to learn whether Open Studios evolve as a product of an internal process that repeats itself each time a neighborhood adopts the event format, or as the product of external influences, which would further my argument.

² Both New Haven's and San Francisco's Open Studios are organized by non-profit, 501(c)(3) organizations. New Haven's City-Wide Open Studios is organized by Artspace, and "artist- and volunteer-run contemporary arts non-profit whose mission is to: catalyze artist's efforts; connect artists, audiences and resources; and redefine 'art spaces' (Website of <http://www.artspacenh.org/>)." San Francisco Open Studios is organized by ArtSpan, which is "dedicated to building connections within San Francisco's visual arts community and between artists and the general public (Website of <http://www.artspan.org/>)."

My research methods included formal interviews, informal conversations, a review of various media, as well as participant observation. I have relied primarily on open-ended, semistructured interviews, conducted both in person and over the telephone. The formal interviews were initially focused on organizers of the events; for five out of nine events, I was able to interview a founder. For the events that had the most participants – Fort Point, Jamaica Plain, and South End – I was also able to interview members of their Boards of Directors.

The basic questions I asked were:

- What motivated this neighborhood's original Open Studios event?
- Why continue having Open Studios?

In addition to the organizers of the events, I attempted to interview City of Boston representatives. I was able to make contact with the Director of the Boston Open Studios Coalition. My requests to interview both the Director of Create Boston as well as the Arts & Culture Specialist for the City of Boston's Office of Business Development went unanswered; certainly, the voice of more city representatives in this study would have been preferable, but I do not believe that their absence negatively affects my findings.

After I completed what I thought would be the majority of my formal interviews, I began to see that while I was not completely off the mark with my original hypothesis, there were other motivations at work that my method up to that point had not elucidated. For this reason, I returned to the field to interview artists who participated in the events (Chapter 4).

Chapter Summary

The following chapters will build an argument that Open Studios reflect commercially oriented city policies. In Chapter 2, I review several literatures that help explain the theoretical, social, economic, and political context in which Open Studios exist. In Chapter 3, I present and analyze the motivations behind the founding of each of the nine case studies. In Chapter 4, I present and analyze additional motivations. In Chapter 5, I conclude with a theoretical analysis of the events, and consider their economic and noneconomic attributes.

CHAPTER 2 : TRENDS IN LITERATURE

The literature that focuses directly on the subject of Open Studios – a literature that can be found in newspapers, specialized magazines, the Internet, ephemera produced by the organizers of the events, and, arguably, books – does not critically analyze these events; rather, it tends to advertise and describe the event to the general public, or teach artists how to “work” the business of the event and market themselves. This literature is invaluable for providing information on event details, different groups of participants, and, in the case of Open Studios outside of Boston, a basis for comparison; however, other bodies of literature provide the framework that exposes the larger trends influencing Boston’s arts community and Open Studios events.

These trends can be addressed through three bodies of literature. The first is the literature that defines and critiques the “creative city” and the “creative economy.” The second body of literature consists of academic explorations of the role of the artist in urban redevelopment. The third body of literature consists of the Massachusetts and Boston government and non-profit publications defining and summarizing the role of arts and culture in local and regional growth.

Pursuit of the Creative City or the Creative Economy

The ideas of the “creative city” and the “creative economy” emerged in the mid-1990s as explanations how some cities – Barcelona, Spain, being the most famous example – successfully transformed themselves from obsolete, industrial-era ghosts into vibrant, cosmopolitan symbols of the twenty-first century. While the concept of the creative city emphasizes both the creative thinking of civic leaders and the use of culture in revitalization, the creative economy focuses instead on using the art, culture, and new media industries as economic generators.

The creative city is more difficult to realize than an economy based on arts and culture industries, however it is the source of positive transformation for cities (Landry, 2000; Kunzmann, 2004; Sandercock, 2005). Perhaps sensing that dialog on the creative city was shifting more towards developing the economy through cultural industries, Landry wrote *The Creative City: a Toolkit for Urban Innovators* (2000) to “provide readers with a more integrated and holistic approach to thinking about and analyzing cities. In the longer run this will change the way decision makers consider the assets and potential of cities as well as how cities might be organized and managed” (xvi). Kunzmann continues this line of thought:

Creative cities need creative governments, if they wish to explore new grounds for city futures. In times of public sector deregulation and dwindling local budgets, it is highly controversial whether affluent or poor local governments are more creative. In the end there is creativity at both ends. Hence creative leadership is the key to combat bureaucracy, the lack of ideas and apathy. (Kunzmann, 2004)

Landry’s main argument is predicated on fostering governments that can nimbly respond to socio-cultural and economic changes. The most successful cities that Landry researched valued culture as a resource and a product of all citizens; he suggested that “[a]n appreciation of cultural issues, expressing values and identity, was key to the ability to respond to change – especially organizational culture (Landry, 2000: 3).” In Landry’s framework, artists play a major role in catalyzing the processes of forming an identity, organizing celebrations, marketing the city’s image, etc.

As there is no single formula for building a creative city, it is tempting to focus on arts and culture as an untouched economic resource. The creative economy is about culture benefiting the economy and creating jobs, and the best-marketed figure in this dialogue is Richard Florida, and his book: *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002). His contributions have largely focused on

creating a business plan for cities and regions wishing to attract large amounts of economic capital (Kunzmann, 2004). In Florida's framework, cities must attract a new class of worker – the “creative class” – in order to stay competitive. These “creative” workers are attracted to cities that have amenities (such as nightlife and outdoor athletic activities) in order to support their choice of lifestyle (Florida, 2002).

Although many cities might say they distinguish their creative economy from Florida's by limiting their definitions of arts and culture, the influence of Florida's idea of the “cool” is visible as cities focus on building great commercial nightlife. Florida's class of workers is placed in very loosely defined “creative” industries, including physicians, lawyers, engineers, as well as other service and technical industries; what these occupations generally have in common is that they tend to fall into the middle to upper-middle class income range.

However, there is more to the creative economy than commercial exchange. Artists, and their creative thinking, are now seen as being important for the political well-being of the city (Sandercock, 2005; Markusen, 2006). Markusen argues that spatial and organizational infrastructure is essential for artists to develop their communities, creativity, and careers, as well as to develop “an independent political voice (Markusen, 2006: 18).” To this end, Markusen states that the three most important spaces are artists' clubhouses, artists' live/work studio buildings, and smaller scale performing arts venues. Markusen defines clubhouses as literary centers, local art institutes, art education centers, etc: places where artists can teach or further their training, connect with important actors in their fields, as well as access facilities and opportunities like grants, residencies, and mentorships. Open Studios and other temporal events are not included in her brief examination, and there appears to be little specific research on the economic contributions of Open Studios events.

While Landry's, Florida's and Markusen's work provides the theoretical underpinnings of the creative city, the creative economy, and creative governance, a second body of work specifically examines the artists' role in urban growth and development.

The Role of Artists in Urban Redevelopment

The second body of literature consists of academic explorations of the role of the artist in urban redevelopment. Several writers including Sharon Zukin, Jamie Peck, Richard Florida, Ann Markusen, and Tom Borrup, explore the links between a sizeable artist community, urban development, and economic growth. Each author describes these links in different ways: artists are the pawns of neoliberal patricians as agents of gentrification (Zukin, 1982; Peck, 2005); artists belong to a newly empowered class that is a major attractor of capital (Florida, 2002); or artists communities are assets for local economic development (Markusen, 2006; Borrup, 2006). These perspectives help to shed light on the possible motivations of different actors in the creation and proliferation of open studios. This body of literature provides a useful structure for reviewing the economic impacts of Open Studios by showing that its impacts can be divided into national/global capital flows and local/regional capital flows.

Zukin developed the concept of the Artistic Mode of Production in order to explain her theory that artists are unwitting agents of gentrification. She had witnessed the rapid transformation of the SoHo district of New York City – from postindustrial wasteland, to artist community, to yuppie community. Stemming from these observations, Zukin stated that although superficially the district's redevelopment appeared to be the product of organized and motivated artists, the changes seen were actually an “attempt by large-scale investors in the built environment to ride out and to control a particular investment climate (Zukin, 1982: 176).” Zukin's main point is

that large real estate interests, not artists, are the clear winners in urban redevelopment because they define the new markets that they develop. Zukin's perspective is occasionally applicable to my study of Open Studios. The two neighborhoods whose identities are largely defined by their artist populations – Fort Point and South End – have seen developers market the existing artist population to new residents. In addition, the Fort Point neighborhood artist community is currently experiencing a very real threat to their continued presence because of the intentions of real estate developers to create a high-end residential neighborhood; this threat is in stark contrast to the artists' entry to the neighborhood in the mid-1970s and 1980s when landlords welcomed them. It is debatable whether the South End neighborhood artist community, who, like Fort Point, largely rent their spaces, will have an experience akin to Fort Point.

Markusen's research, in contrast to Zukin's, explores the local economic benefits created by the arts economy. Markusen draws a clear connection between the arts and urban growth: "if locally-generated wealth is recycled in the region through high visibility contributions to arts infrastructure and foundation arts portfolios, an urban growth increment ensues (Markusen, 2006: 17)." Her research demonstrates that when arts patronage is a local consumption and investment activity, it "operate[s] as a source of secular growth by substituting for imports" (Markusen, 2006: 16). Clearly, that is a benefit for cities that can lure their citizens away from shopping in suburban shopping malls and redirect consumption towards locally-produced goods. Furthermore, if artists operating at this level are highly visible, as they are bound to be through their participation in Open Studios, "the more the population will alter spending patterns to patronize artists and art events (Markusen, 2006: 16)."

As many of the event organizers will attest, this is the economics of Open Studios. In this light, Open Studios might serve to regenerate interest in the local production and consumption of art

and crafts, possibly acting as a substitute for mass-produced goods made elsewhere. The local/regional capital flows engendered by Open Studios could also result in, “higher multiplier effects within the region, especially since artists show high propensities to re-spend their income on tickets to performances and purchases of art and literature (Markusen, 2006: 16).” This means that spending on the arts “helps counter the leakage of incomes and savings out of the region (Markusen, 2006: 17).”

Florida’s research looks less at artists and focuses more on the contributions of the broader creative class to urban growth and development. As these contributions are the result of a city’s creative class exporting their goods and services to national/global markets, the creative class commands more money than a producer operating on a local/regional level. This justifies the tailoring of many city services and amenities to the needs of the creative class. As Peck points out, urban redevelopment that attracts and sustains the creative class is an easy and dependable investment for city government:

[f]or the average mayor, there are few downsides to making the city safe for the creative class — a creativity strategy can quite easily be bolted on to business-as-usual urban-development policies... [C]ity leaders... are embracing creativity strategies not as alternatives to extant market-, consumption- and property-led development strategies, but as low-cost, feel-good complements to them. Creativity plans do not disrupt these established approaches to urban entrepreneurialism and consumption-oriented place promotion, they extend them. (Peck, 2005: 764)

Nevertheless, those who choose to adopt even parts of Florida’s ideology should be aware of some of the inherent problems. First, the capital flow envisioned by Florida is unattainable for all but the largest cities (Zukin, 1982; Markusen, 2006). Second, it runs the risk of institutionalizing inequities (Zukin, 1982; Maher, 1999; Peck, 2005).

From Zukin's perspective, the urban revitalization engendered will eventually make it impossible for the middle class to maintain its presence in the city, as it simply will not be able to afford the high cost of living. From Maher's perspective, those urban residents who are already underserved and poor, stand to gain little benefit directly from these investments; Peck pushes this further stating that these residents are endangered of becoming disenfranchised. These are the potential hazard that any city potentially faces when adopting the philosophy of Richard Florida's conception of the creative economy to urban development.

In summary, Zukin's, Markusen's, Florida's, and Peck's work provides a framework for understanding artists' role in growth and development. The third, and final, body of work outlines Boston's and New England's strategies for pursuing a creative economy agenda.

New England's and Boston's Competitive Advantage

I have also surveyed publications and websites produced by city, state, and regional governments and non-profits; this includes The New England Council's Creative Economy Initiative, the Boston Redevelopment Authority, the Mayor's Office, and a new state initiative, ArtistLink. The work of these organizations provides the political and institutional backdrop for Boston Open Studios by interpreting and promoting their unique versions of the creative city and the creative economy.

The New England Council is a coalition of public and private businesses, organizations, and institutions throughout New England. Its mission is to foster the region's economic growth and high quality of life. In 2000, the Council produced a report, *The Creative Economy Initiative: the Role of the Arts and Culture in New England's Economic Competitiveness*, which explored the potential of the creative economy to build the New England economy. This report defines

the creative economy as art and culture producers working in both the non-profit and commercial sectors; a previous study had presented the contributions that non-profit cultural organizations made to the New England economy (New England Foundation for the Arts, 1996). The aim of both reports was to highlight the untapped potential of the arts and culture industries on the region's economy, with the aim of strengthening New England's competitiveness in the future.

The Boston Redevelopment Authority, focuses more on those activities which have a potential for wealth and job creation, including:

- any direct activity in which individual creativity and skill is brought to bear, and which is characterized by innovation and originality and leads to the creation of intellectual property in the form of copyright;
- any activity (upstream or downstream) which directly contributes to creative activities such that the product would not exist in the same form without it;
- the self-employed (writers, artists, etc.) because the creative industry encompasses many freelance workers. (BRA/RD, 2005; 5-6)

These definitions are derived from a presentation given to Create Boston, and, to some extent, this explains that initiative's intense focus on wealth and job creation. However, no other programs exist to support noncommercial enterprises. The BRA does run the Artist Space Initiative; the definition of "space," however, supports only the construction of live/work use. Permanent housing for artists is tremendously important, but so are permanent, artist-run, noncommercial venues exhibition spaces, which do not appear to be acknowledged in the language used by the city.

In a letter prefacing a city-wide study of the live/work and work-only spatial needs of artists, the language used by Mayor Menino additionally highlights the city's perspective on artists (Artspace & BRA, 2003). In terms of how artists can catalyze urban redevelopment:

Artists make Boston a more liveable city. Artists help transform marginal neighborhoods into dynamic communities. Galleries, small performance spaces and related retail spring up in these same areas. Artists generate a vibrant street life and dramatically enhance the quality of neighborhoods for the people who live here and Boston's many visitors.

In terms of artists' contributions to the creative economy (particularly Open Studios' contributions to the economy):

As entrepreneurs and small businesses, artists generate direct economic activity. Each weekend throughout the fall, Boston's successful Open Studios program attracts visitors to the neighborhoods throughout the city. Open Studios Weekend makes for good business and a better city.

This is how Boston has interpreted the creative cities model: as a strategy for real estate and economic development. The city is taking a very practical and market based approach to the arts, at the expense of noncommercial opportunities.

The State of Massachusetts's approach to the creative economy is broader than that of the City of Boston. A new initiative, ArtistLink, has been tasked to foster the development of permanent space where artists create their work (meaning private spaces for living, working, and practicing; but not performing or exhibiting). This initiative facilitates the development of space both by advising the construction of projects as well as by advocating policy that responds to artists' spatial needs. As ArtistLink is very new, it will be interesting to see if its conception of space eventually broadens to include noncommercial, artist-run arts venues.

The three bodies of literature described in this review help to advance the argument that Open Studios are shaped by city arts policies that prioritize commercial arts exchanges over noncommercial and independent arts ventures. In summary, the first body of literature presented and critiqued the theories and practices of the creative city and the creative economy; the second body explored the role of the artist in urban redevelopment; and the third body set up a comparison between Massachusetts's and Boston's approach to the role of arts and culture in

local and regional growth. This work provides the context for approaching Boston organizational culture and analyzing Boston Open Studio Events.

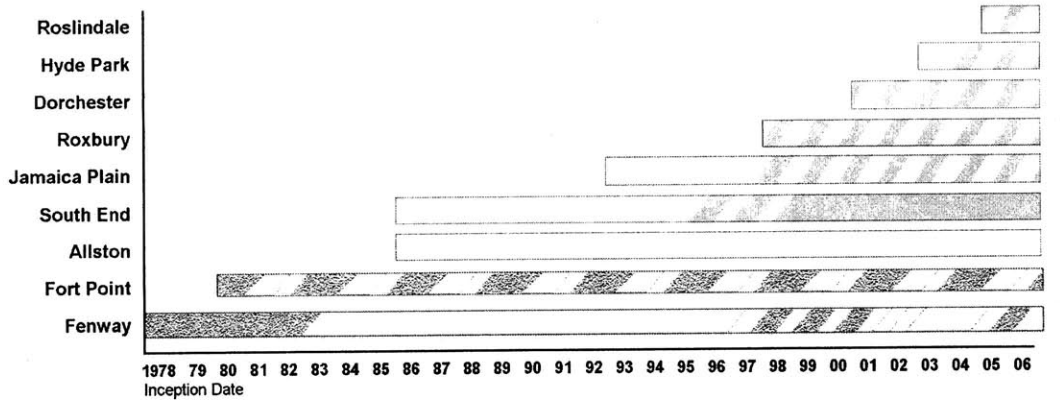
CHAPTER 3 : FOUNDER & ORGANIZER MOTIVATIONS

The hypothesis tested in this study is that Open Studios are motivated by politics, more specifically by a need for artists to empower themselves by becoming a highly visible group. But to the casual observer, these events might appear to be a service that arts organizations provide to member artists in order to help the artists market and sell their work. Although several event organizers do cite this motivation, my findings indicate that organizers' motivations are more complex and address other issues faced by the artist communities. Thus, my hypothesis was borne out, although incomplete.

The Creation of Boston's Open Studios in Three Waves

The nine cases that I have looked at began at different times. As I looked more closely, it became clear that they have been organized in waves (Figure 1). The first two events, the First Wave, confirm my original hypothesis that Open Studios can be motivated by an artist community's need to empower themselves politically. In the act of becoming politically organized, the artists who participated in the First Wave mobilized from small groups of individuals into larger artist communities. After six years, artists in other neighborhoods saw value in building their artist communities as well as in building their relationships with the surrounding neighborhood, and so they modeled themselves on the existing events' forms. Community building as a primary motivation marks the Second Wave, and although this motivation arguably continues today (at least one Open Studios event in recent years was principally motivated to develop a community), the late 1990s saw the addition of a new motivation not seen in the origination of earlier events – neighborhood economic development and revitalization, the primary motivation that defines the Third Wave.

Waves of Motivation in Organizing Open Studio Events



Key:

- Existence of Open Studios
- Second Wave : Artist Community Building (yellow)
- First Wave : Politics (textured grey)
- Third Wave : Neighborhood Economic Development and Revitalization (green)

Notes: This figure was created through the author's interpretation of a combination of media (including newspaper articles, ephemera) Slanted lines are meant to signify approximate dates.

FIGURE 1

The Fenway and Fort Point Open Studios, the oldest ones, are the only events created solely to build a network of political support for their neighborhood's artists. At the time of the inception of these events, the artists in both neighborhoods had potential evictions hanging over their heads. Although there is evidence of one other neighborhood group mobilizing internal and external support around a single issue – the revitalization of Roxbury, in the Third Wave – Fenway and Fort Point are unique because when these events were originally conceived, the organizers' goal was to entrench the presence of artists in their respective neighborhoods. Artists' personal finances certainly affect which neighborhood an artist can live in, but the organizers of the First Wave were ultimately motivated to build public favor as they have found

themselves in competition with real estate developers whose economic advantage is significant.

By virtue of organizing politically, the leaders of the First Wave additionally built strong, vocal, and active artist communities. Although events of the Second Wave were modeled after the forms of the First Wave, the Second Wave is distinct because it was predominantly motivated to build artist communities and to create bonds between the artist community and the surrounding neighborhood. The results of their relationships were mutual benefits for artists, businesses and residents and set the stage for the Third Wave of Open Studios.

The Third Wave continued the theme of community building but added neighborhood economic development and revitalization. Artists still initiated the events – the exception being Roxbury Open Studios, which a local community development corporation established – however, private developers, public officials, and neighborhood community groups were all active participants.

Today, Boston neighborhoods like the South End and Jamaica Plain are known for their vibrancy and rich cultural offerings; however, in the not too distant past, these neighborhoods were undervalued and in some parts dangerous. As appreciation of these neighborhoods took time, early developers, and even the organizers of Open Studios needed a combination of vision and steadfast belief about what the neighborhood could become. This helped maintain inspiration and focus, but it also rallied investors, particularly as the neighborhoods changed. For this reason, Open Studios can be used to market a new image for the neighborhood. Thus, in seeming to create a safe, hip, “livable” neighborhood, Open Studios encourage development (both a benefit and a detriment to artists and other low income communities).

With respect to these motivations, each wave builds off the previous ones – within each of these waves there may be multiple motivations, but the predominant motivation has changed over time.

First Wave : Politics

- Building Political Capital

Second Wave : Community Building

- Finding Artists
- Bridging Communities

Third Wave : Neighborhood Economic Development and Revitalization

- Branding an Identity
- Revitalizing Neighborhoods

I will now look at each of the three waves, detailing their respective events, in order to explore why such events have proliferated, at least in Boston.

First Wave: Open Studios in the Service of Building Political Capital

The artists of Fenway Studios and the Fort Point Arts Community are Boston’s Open Studio pioneers. By and large, Fenway and Fort Point were motivated to organize Open Studios because intense development pressure had a direct impact on their neighborhood and threatened the existence of their artist communities. In this section, I argue that Open Studios can be a loudspeaker through which artists come together and say, “we are here,” a position very much in keeping with my original hypothesis. This declaration acts as a friendly reminder that artists exist in the neighborhood as well as an assertion of their place in their community.

The cycle of development pressure that has led to increased real estate value and has priced artists out of their homes and studios is well documented. Zukin’s analysis of loft conversion in the SoHo area of New York City during the 1960s and 1970s chronicled artists’ entry into that

area and set the stage for their being ultimately priced out (Zukin, 1982). The first Open Studios in Boston were initiated as part of a strategy for rejecting displacement; by allowing the general public into their intimate spaces, artists created a means for the public to empathize with them.

These artist communities used Open Studios similarly, as a method to protect their places in their respective neighborhoods, although the development pressure Fenway Studios experienced has been periodically acute, while the pressure Fort Point experienced has been relatively consistent.

Fenway Studios

The story of Fenway Studios is a battle between the flows of capital and the identity and longevity of a community. The Fenway Studios event is unique among Boston's other Open Studios because it takes place inside a single studio building. It is one of the smallest Open Studios, a maximum of forty-six artists can participate, and as such the event is about the building's artist community and not about the neighborhood's artist community. Initially motivated in 1978 by the potential sale and conversion of their building into high-end residential condominiums, the artists of Fenway Studios organized themselves into Artists for the Preservation of Fenway Studios (APFS) and created Boston's first public Open Studios (Fenway Studios Landmark Application Committee [FSLAC], 1998: 11).³

With financial assistance from several investors, the artists were able to purchase an option to buy Fenway Studios; however, the artists had to raise equity for a mortgage. Despite this promising start, the artists had to inspire the confidence of the banks in order to qualify for the mortgage as "the legal and financial structure of a tenant-owned cooperative was still a relatively

³ Although the concept of collectively opening studios for tours and exhibitions of artwork was not new to this studio building, the event's use as a political platform, giving the artists a voice, was innovative.

recent innovation in Boston, and potential investors were particularly wary of artists” (FSLAC, 1998: 12).

For this reason, Fenway Studios Open Studios was designed to accomplish two interlocking goals. According to the event’s current organizer, Teri Malo, a building tenant since 1984, the primary motivation for organizing the first public event was to increase this artist community’s visibility in Boston, particularly to highlight the building’s importance to Boston’s arts ecology (personal communication, 9/30/2006). The second motivation was to promote the preservation of the form and function of the building, garnering support for Fenway Studios’ inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. This two-fold strategy was developed because the artists’ attempts to raise money by means of art auctions and donations did not return enough money to afford the purchase of Fenway Studios (FSLAC, 1998: 33).

In my opinion, it appears that during this time American culture and society placed more value on the historic qualities of the building than on the artists or their contributions to the economy. APFS applied for a tax-exempt bond from the Massachusetts Industrial Finance Agency (MIFA), but the state-agency rejected the application, as the creation of art did not fit the criteria used by the MIFA. Hope for the artists’ cause came in the person of then Massachusetts State Representative Barney Frank who empathized with these artists: “we forget people who produce art have the same economic problems we do. They need help and encouragement” (as cited in FSLAC, 1998: 34). As a result, he pushed for state legislation that added “the making of works of art by self-employed artists” to MIFA’s criteria, which Governor Edward J. King signed into law by 1980 (as cited in FSLAC, 1998: 34). According to Malo, “even with the change in the law, APFS was unable to secure a mortgage from a local bank. APFS did finally qualify for a mortgage from the National Consumer Cooperative Bank in Washington, which was developed

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by the Carter Administration in 1981.” Thus, by 1981, the artists of Fenway Studios had secured a mortgage and were in control of their building.

After the dust of the “first crisis”⁴ settled, the Open Studios continued, but with less energy and intensity. Then, nearly twenty years later, in response to a proposed mega-project to be built directly in front of the studios, Fenway again turned to Open Studios to capture public attention and generate political support.

The “second crisis”⁵ had six major players: Fenway Studios and the Citizens for Reasonable Turnpike Development who both wanted to stop the adjacent development of Massachusetts Turnpike air-rights; Millennium Partners, the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority and the Boston Redevelopment Authority, who supported the development; and the Mayor’s Office of the City of Boston, which wanted both to protect the artists and to reap the benefits of the substantial development project.

By contemporary urban planning and design standards, Millennium Partners’ proposal had many merits. The \$300 million mixed-use entertainment and residential complex would create jobs, improve the tax base, and give the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority money it needed to continue the Big Dig. In addition, the complex would “heal the scar”⁶ that was created by the Central Artery crevice, removing the physical barrier that separated the Fenway from the Back Bay, and create a new gateway to Downtown Boston. However, neither the developer, nor the Turnpike Authority could capture the public’s imagination like the artists of Fenway Studios.

⁴ Term from Fenway Studios Landmark Application Committee, 1998: 32.

⁵ Term from Fenway Studios Landmark Application Committee, 1998: 39.

⁶ In a personal communication, 1/4/2007, Malo wrote, “[i]t is important to remember that the Turnpike Authority promulgated the expression that the proposed project would “heal the scar”. Actually, the Massachusetts Turnpike Extension in front of Fenway Studios is at grade as it bridges over the Muddy River. Any building large enough to span over the highway would, by necessity, create enormous chasms to the north and south and remove not just light but all sightlines to the sky.”

The artists argued that they could not continue in Fenway Studios were Millennium Place built because it would block their access to north light, thereby ruining the function of the studio building. The coup de grace was an Open Studios event themed “See the Light” event. The artists invited the entire city to visit them and learn about the effects of the proposed development. According to Malo, public support followed, and curiosity about the event was so strong that the building was filled well beyond capacity.

That both sides – the developers and the artists – had such strong support necessitated a deal that would satisfy everyone. Mayor Menino offered an olive branch by brokering a deal that would satisfy the artists of Fenway Studios and keep Millennium Partners in Boston; he offered the developer a parcel in Downtown Crossing.⁷

Interest in having Open Studios at Fenway Studios has ebbed and flowed with the artists’ need for public support. When the building was under development pressure, the artists became community activists and forcefully intervened in the development of their neighborhood. When there was no development pressure, the artists concentrated on their art. The artists of Fenway Studios used Open Studios as a way to connect themselves to the surrounding neighborhood and to Boston. To this end, the artists inspired empathy and cultivated a shared identity with the Boston public, which in turn fostered their greatest source of support.

Fort Point

Fort Point’s Open Studios event is organized differently from Fenway’s. Amongst artists – established and unestablished – Fort Point is the heart and soul of the City of Boston’s artist

⁷ Ironically, Fenway Studios’ fending off Millenium to Downtown Crossing accelerated the displacement of the Oni Gallery, an important venue within the alternative arts scene. Oni Gallery was displaced from its original location at 84 Kingston Street in the vicinity of Chinatown and Downtown Crossing in 1998 when the building was demolished to make room from a luxury residential development.

community. It is the home of the visual arts talent of Boston; however, for nearly thirty years the community has gone through an uphill battle to maintain its presence in the neighborhood.

Artists were attracted to Fort Point in the mid-1970s because the area had, in my opinion, the potential to be a neighborhood all their own; first, the nature of the industrial neighborhood was changing as its two primary businesses, wool and shipping, were in rapid decline, and second, the artists were the first people to live in Fort Point, fostering a hope that they could do whatever they felt necessary to re-make the neighborhood according to their needs. Much like Virginia Woolf's seminal essay, "A Room of One's Own," the principle that fueled the artists' immigration was their need for stable and affordable space where they could potentially produce quality work. Today, Fort Point has two kinds of artists: the minority who reside in one of the three permanent, artist-owned buildings, and the majority who rent in a wide variety of buildings. If the forces of progress from both developers and the City of Boston continue unchecked, in a few years' time this mix will probably no longer be true, and the only kind of artist in Fort Point will be the small fraction of its formerly vibrant artist population lucky enough to have secured a place in artist-owned buildings.⁸

The first Fort Point Open Studios event was organized in 1980, roughly two years before the official incorporation of the Fort Point Arts Community (FPAC). According to Rebecca Dwyer, a former Assistant Director of FPAC, Inc. (1983-1985) and current member of the FPAC Board of Directors, the event was spurred by a growing sense of urgency to make the artist community publicly visible (personal communication, 10/20/2006). Beginning in 1976, a handful of artists

⁸ As property values and property taxes rise with the development of Fort Point, the stability of artist-owned buildings is secured through a special tax rate for limited-equity cooperatives with a permanent zoning variance. According to Rebecca Dwyer, the variance applies to artists' live/work spaces that meet specific dimensions: two-thirds work (commercial) space and one-third live (residential) space. This special tax rate is lower than the residential tax rate.

moved into some of Fort Point's formerly industrial buildings, and by 1980 more than one hundred artists were living in the neighborhood. Although these artists did not feel the same development pressure as they do today, Fort Point artists were well aware of SoHo's development during the 1960s and 1970s. They knew that as their numbers increased, real estate developers would take interest in the neighborhood's growing artistic identity and its wealth of former industrial buildings. Throughout this history, Open Studios have become a means for Fort Point artists to promote their existence and their need for support. Unlike Fenway Studios, which is nestled on the edges of two residential neighborhoods, Fort Point artists did not have a single building to defend nor were they embedded within a residential community to turn to in times of need; however, as Fort Point is located at the edge of South Boston, the artists were able to turn to that residential community and its elected officials for support. Thus, it was of utmost importance for Fort Point artists to demonstrate a connection between themselves and all of Boston. Despite this difference in scale, artists in Fort Point have, as in Fenway, used Open Studios as a tool to build support, recognition, and above all, political clout.

FPAC is the predominant voice of artists in Fort Point.⁹ Since its inception, FPAC has strived to maintain the presence of artists in the neighborhood by both advocating for artists and increasing their visibility. For many years, FPAC negotiated lease agreements with the major landowner, the Boston Wharf Company, while also playing a significant role in the acquisition of the three artist-owned studio buildings. FPAC also participated in countless community meetings relevant to Fort Point development that were organized by the Boston Redevelopment Authority. In keeping with the major component of FPAC's strategy since the organization's inception, artist visibility, FPAC owns and operates a gallery space for its members as well as organizes events

⁹ Other groups in Fort Point are the Seaport Alliance for a Neighborhood Design (SAND) and the Fort Point Neighborhood Association, predominantly consisting of recently arrived condominium owners.

such as the annual Fort Point Open Studios in September, the Holiday Sale in December, and the Art Walk in May.

The major force consistently acting on Fort Point and its artists is the real estate market. Artists were able to move into the area both because of a down-cycle in Boston's industrial economy and because zoning required separation of uses; as one Fort Point artist remarked, "permanent space is really important, and artists are probably the only people in the world who want the real estate economy to go soft" (personal communication, 2006). However, Downtown Boston has been expanding eastward towards South Boston. Major public works projects planned in the 1980s were implemented in the 1990s, namely, the construction of the Convention Center, and the Central Artery's underground connection to Logan Airport. Today, the largely undeveloped waterfront district, directly to the north of Fort Point, is rapidly transforming from vacant industrial wasteland to prime real estate.

For at least thirty years, and arguably for the past one hundred years when the waterfront was expanded to support the doomed maritime industry, Fort Point and the waterfront district have been Boston's epicenter of speculative real estate development. Most recently, in the summer of 2006, the Goldman-Sachs Archon Group purchased all of the Boston Wharf Company's remaining buildings, viewing Fort Point as a "Goldman opportunity" that will soon blossom into another SoHo (Palmer, 6/30/2006).¹⁰ In December 2006, the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) opened its new, Starchitect-designed facility, sited on an isolated parcel of land abutting the harbor, a parcel that in 1999 was given to the museum for free. Around the time of the ICA's

¹⁰ John M. Matteson, regional director of acquisitions and management for Archon Group. Qtd in Palmer, Thomas C. 6/30/2006. Archon/Goldman is a real estate division of the financial firm Goldman Sachs Group. This New York based development firm is credited with the development of SoHo in New York City, particularly for its fostering "outdoor mall" qualities.

anticipated opening, Mayor Menino proposed selling the existing City Hall building in Downtown Boston and relocating to the waterfront district: “I want to push the redevelopment of the waterfront past the tipping point” (Palmer, 12/13/2006). Although City Hall’s move is unlikely, the Mayor’s ambitious claim put the waterfront and Fort Point in the spotlight once again. Clearly, Fort Point artists who have not yet secured residence in an artist-owned building may well be squeezed out of the neighborhood soon.

Fort Point is “up and coming.” The fear among artists is that Goldman has no incentive to create new artist housing, particularly housing that is structured creatively to provide live/work space on both an affordable ownership and rental basis. One artist went so far as to express concern that Fort Point will become a “museum of artists” (as cited in Stone, 2006: 14).

Like APFS, the leadership of FPAC is politically savvy. They understand the capacity for Open Studios to build connections with a larger community and to build political support beyond the artist community. According to Gabrielle Schaffner, the current organizer of Fort Point Open Studios, the event has now four purposes: to demystify Fort Point’s artists and make them approachable to the general public; to stimulate an understanding between the public and artists with the hope of making art more pervasive in Boston life; to foster the image of Fort Point as the place of artists in the City of Boston; and to provide artists with a sales opportunity where they do not have to share the income with a gallery or other representative (personal communication, 8/16/2006). The event is also a way to keep former members of the community connected to Fort Point, as artists who no longer have studios in Fort Point use one of the group spaces to display their work on Open Studio weekends.

Thus, the First Wave of Open Studios had political motivation and was largely developed to

protect existing artist communities from development and gentrification by positioning the artist community as an integral part of the neighborhood and by building community and political support. The Second and Third Waves of Open Studios have built themselves on the First Wave, but serve fundamentally different purposes.

In the next section, I look at the community building that occurred during the Second Wave of Open Studios and explore how this set the stage for the Third Wave.

Second Wave: Open Studios in the Service of Community Building

In this section, I argue that Open Studios can also build communities. In neighborhoods that are less urban and where artists are more dispersed, like Jamaica Plain and Hyde Park, Open Studios can be used as a means to build an artist community where one did not exist before. In contrast, established artist communities, like Allston, can use Open Studios to build relationships between themselves and the surrounding neighborhood.

Jamaica Plain

The first Jamaica Plain Open Studios (JPOS) was held in 1993. According to Penny Pimentel, the founder of the event, it was organized to create the foundation for an artist community; prior to 1986, most artists had been working in isolation, although there were some pockets of collaborative activity (personal communication, 9/21/2006). While the organizers sent out a call to artists to participate, the structure of JPOS was created with help and advice from the Fort Point Artist Community. For Pimentel, this demonstrated the lack of competition between the artists of the two neighborhoods.

The physical design of the two events was quite different. While FPOS was a dense collection of

studios carved out of former industrial buildings, the design of JPOS consisted of many home studios connected by a few anchor points, such as outdoor tents and spaces donated by local non-profits.

Initially, the event was a volunteer operation, including Pimentel's work as coordinator.

Participation fees collected from every artist funded the event. As there was little money to spend on advertising, the event was promoted by positive press reviews, and over time JPOS saw a steady increase in both participation and attendance. Pimentel's measure of success for the event was formed while

...Walking down the streets of Jamaica Plain, crowded with people talking and laughing. The event helped to knit together communities. I could feel it in the air on the weekends of the event and feel the energy transmitted as people walked around seeing artwork in studios. The event changed the neighborhood on those days. These were places that were otherwise ignored or people just didn't know existed. It also helped the non-profits who, by supplying the use of their space, had an opportunity to promote their facilities and their programs. Everyone won by participating in the event.

Ten years after Jamaica Plain's event began, Hyde Park Open Studios was conceived with similar goals, both as a way to create an artist community where one did not exist before and to counter the phenomenon of artists working in isolation.

Hyde Park

Although artists had started to move to the neighborhood by 2000 when they were priced out of other Boston neighborhoods, the mainstream had little knowledge of Hyde Park's professional artist presence prior to Hyde Park Open Studios' (HPOS) start in 2003. The idea for HPOS was born in a freshly rehabilitated industrial park that was retrofitted with artists' studios: 65 Sprague Street. Similar to Jamaica Plain in the early 1990s, the dynamics of this building was such that most people kept their doors closed, limiting interaction and creating an environment that

prevented people from getting to know one another. Fay Grajower and two other artists in the building agreed that they “would organize our own Open Studios together, network as best as we could, and really reach out to make it a Hyde Park Open Studios event. If that didn’t happen, then we three would still have our own Open Studios” (personal communication, 9/22/2006). In the end, their outreach campaign was successful; numerous artists from 65 Sprague joined the original three, as well as artists located within and between Hyde Park’s two commercial districts, Cleary Square and Wolcott Square.

Although HPOS is open to any artist living and/or working within the neighborhood, my research in Hyde Park found that the desired creation of an artist community works best in the largest studio building, 65 Sprague. During an Open Studios weekend, these artists travel to each other’s studios to meet with and catch up on their peers’ work. The event supports interaction between these artists; however, the artists find that there little time to travel to the studios of other artists in the neighborhood. Thus, despite the Open Studios, Hyde Park’s artist communities remain separate.

Nevertheless, the event continues for another reason. The presence of artists in Hyde Park — be they professional, amateur, established and/or unestablished — has given the neighborhood a new identity that has fostered community building between artists and local residents, largely because of pride in the artists and the new significance artists bring to the neighborhood. “When it was just us three talking,” said Grajower, “I think the spirit was, ‘we’ve got these great studios, let’s bring everyone in, and let them know that we exist.’ Our impact on the city wasn’t really in the front of our minds when we started. We just designated a weekend for people to come to our studios to see our work.”

The first event held particular importance for Grajower when she discovered that members of the community were overjoyed and moved to tears by the building's rehabilitation. There is something about appreciation that can build a relationship. According to Grajower, the event "mushroomed into something more than we could have anticipated that day when we began organizing it," as more artists became involved.

The organizers of the event have reciprocated with appreciation of Hyde Park by becoming more invested in the wellbeing of local businesses. The organizers feel that the success of the first HPOS gave residents the push they needed to create the Hyde Park Arts Initiative, and are proud of the contribution they feel they have made to the community. From Grajower's perspective, Hyde Park residents "saw that beyond doing a little bit here and a little bit there, they could do something more grand... There were small scale cultural related things starting to happen, and with HPOS there was added incentive and interest to form a greater presence."

Allston

Although Allston Open Studios displays the artwork created within two adjacent studio buildings, a situation similar to Fenway Studios, at times they have attempted to develop relationships with the surrounding neighborhood, like Hyde Park.

In 1986, the Rugg Road Artist Group created Allston Open Studios primarily as a way for the artists in two studio buildings (20 Rugg Road and 119 Braintree Street) to interact with Allston's community. Twenty years later, that motivation still carries some weight, but according to the Allston Open Studios organizer, Marilyn Lasek, it is now secondary to creating an opportunity for artists to sell work (personal communication, 10/27/2006). A primary economic motivator for organizing such an event is to facilitate the sale of artwork, as art sold directly to the public is

not subject to gallery commissions. Still, a second motivator is the event's educational qualities arising out of the interaction between the neighborhood community and artists. As Lasek explains, artists showing their work in Allston Open Studios benefit by receiving insight and feedback on their work. Most of the participating artists make little money, but the tradeoff is that they get ideas from artists and non-artists. The third and final motivator for organizing the event is potential exposure to new audiences, as people from a wide range of communities come to the event.

Despite the shift in the event's values, I found that these two studio buildings have a strong identity as places that support "ideal" artist communities. Allston Open Studios is similar to Fenway Studios Open Studios as it is building-centric, occurring inside two studio buildings instead of being neighborhood-wide. The building with the most participating artists, 119 Braintree Street, is 100 percent leased, and has a waiting list for potential tenants (Banks, 6/3/2005). Although the top two floors were recently converted into corporate offices, the building leases the majority of its spaces to many different kinds of creative workers – painters, photographers, sculptors, filmmakers, fashion designers, graphic designers – who are of various ages and at different points in their careers. Of further note, Mayor Menino chose 119 Braintree Street as the launching pad for Create Boston, an economic development initiative of the City of Boston. As the press release states,

“Always strategic and innovative in efforts to provide businesses with the tools they need to succeed and grow the city's job base, Mayor Thomas M. Menino joined with Boston Redevelopment Authority Director Mark Maloney and the arts community to launch Create Boston, a program focused on the city's thriving creative sector. Building on the success of the city's economic sector initiatives, Create Boston will provide a one-stop shop for companies large and small to tap into city resources, including assistance with site location and permitting, low interest loans and financing, workforce development opportunities, and business advocacy. (BRA, 5/2/2005).

The building across the street, 20 Rugg Road, where the idea for Allston's Open Studios originated, has a more complicated story.

For at least twenty years, artists have been living and working in the studio building at 20 Rugg Road. On December 29, 2006, a fire destroyed much of the building's top floor, forcing the evacuation of the entire building. This building was not only the home and storing-place of at least twenty resident artists' and even more businesses' life's work, but it was also a significant venue on Boston's formerly vibrant underground, noncommercial arts circuit. However, according to the *Boston Herald*, Fire Department sources called the building "sort of large 'hippie community'" (Johnson, 12/30/2006). According to Pan9, they "still don't know what caused the fire except for the fact that it was electrical and NOT something stupid like falling asleep with a cigarette or patchouli left burning" (<http://www.pan9factory.org>).

A website set-up by friends of Pan9 to provide a single point of contact that keeps the Boston arts community (and presumably other regional, and other national arts communities) informed of the arts group's developing status, summarizes the shock, fear, trepidation, anger, and defiance felt by the artist group over the tragedy of the fire, the inadequate response of the landlord, and the insensitive reactions of city officials:

Everyone is basically OK. The space is not... The whole building has been indefinitely evacuated whilst our landlord is on vacation in Barbados. They say power will return Tuesday but not for Pan9. We're fucked.

A major concern is that in the midst of handling the conflagration, city officials are fuming over the code violations in the building. It is a reasonable possibility they may shut down the entire building for good. An exciting possibility is that they'll correct the problems we've been plagued with but no-one is holding their breath.

We may need construction help. We may need cleanup and moving help. We may need legal help. We may need a new loft to start again. We may need clean

underwear. For people that want to help the short answer is "we don't know how."
It will take us all some time to get our bearings.

...

Will Pan-9 continue? It may be weeks or months before we know the fate of the building and of the space. We're all in this together and with great conviction plan to fight this thing all the way to keep Pan9 alive. We're exploring all of our options to make this happen.

...

Check back here often and we'll try our damndest to keep everyone in the loop. Pan9 is our life and we're going to fight to keep it up with every bit of gusto we can muster. (<http://www.pan9factory.org>)

The significantly different experiences of these two buildings highlights larger trends in both the development of Boston's arts communities and the City of Boston's valuation of commercial and noncommercial venues. In addition, it provides more evidence of the further disruption of Boston's "arts ecology."

In the next section, I look at the economic development that occurred during the Third Wave of Open Studios, and explore the use of the event to revitalize, brand an identity, and change a neighborhood's image.

The Third Wave

The dawn of the Third Wave came in the late 1990s with reinvestment in urban areas. Building on the Second Wave's focus on community development, the economic development impetus that characterizes the Third Wave draws its strengths both from the fostering of community pride and a reimagining of the neighborhood. However, there is more than one method to facilitate economic development. The spectrum of branding and marketing that I discuss in the following sections places, at one end, all members of the community as equal partners in a neighborhood's revitalization, while at the other end it is motivated by developers strongly influencing property value growth.

Open Studios in the Service of Neighborhood Revitalization

Roxbury

Roxbury Open Studios (ROS) is an example of an Open Studios event functioning as part of a larger effort to revitalize a neighborhood. Established and organized by ACT Roxbury – the Arts, Culture, and Trade division of the Madison Park Community Development Corporation, a locally and nationally respected CDC – the event combines economic and social development in order to change the lens through which the Roxbury community views itself and outsiders view Roxbury. One of the primary goals of the event is to reestablish Roxbury’s cultural significance and artistic achievements. ROS’s parentage plays a large role in the motivations for its continued existence, most notably as the event takes an active role in branding a new identity for the neighborhood, which will in turn catalyze a local economic development and build relationships between local residents and artists.

Goals Pursued through Organizing Roxbury Open Studios:

- Building Community Pride
- Teaching the Business of Being an Artist
- Local Economic Impact
- Bringing People Into the Neighborhood
- Making Businesses and People Visible to Roxbury Residents

The event is intended to further many goals: counter negative stereotypes of the neighborhood, build upon the existing social capital, and support the growing economic base. Like Fort Point, Roxbury is today considered an “up and coming” neighborhood; however, the motivations of Roxbury Open Studio are completely different. Whereas Roxbury is trying to brand, market, and help revitalization of the neighborhood, Fort Point is trying to protect its artist community.

Roxbury was a thriving African American community prior to the distress and divestment that began in the 1960s; it is on its way to reestablishing itself today. When the neighborhood began to see reinvestment in the late 1990s, community leaders saw a potential in culture as a community builder. The Madison Park Development Corporation founded ACT Roxbury (ACT) in response to a new Massachusetts Cultural Council initiative for cultural economic development. ACT organized a number of forums to find out what artists and non-artists in the community wanted, and discovered that the two communities shared a common goal: cultural programming that showed the cultural richness, community, and history of Roxbury. Building off of this reinvestment, community members wanted consistent programs and events that developed over time. More specifically, the community wanted annual events that could be counted upon and the artists wanted professional workshops. The first action by ACT was to start the Danette Jones Business of Culture series; this program sponsors marketing and management workshops, covering subjects ranging from portfolio design, website design, and proposal writing, to home-buying. The Roxbury Art Series followed; it consists of four annual events: a Film Festival (the largest event), the Open Studios, Literary Annual, and Roxbury in Motion. Open Studios, in combination with the other three events helps brand and market Roxbury as the center of New England's African American community.

By 1998, there were seven other Open Studios happening around Boston. Two of the Open Studios – South End and Jamaica Plain – were adjacent to Roxbury, and Roxbury artists had participated in those events. By 1998, it was clear that numerous visual artists were living and working in Roxbury, but prior to the founding of the arts series there was no one available to

organize Open Studios.¹¹ ACT reached out to the Boston African American Artist Association, the Piano Craft Guild building,¹² and the Museum of African American Artists to see if they wanted to be a part of Open Studios. Through ROS, the organizers wanted to show Roxbury's different artistic disciplines and its sizeable population of African American visual artists,¹³ as well as its young artists who had recently graduated from the MFA School and Mass College of Art (both located in Roxbury).

According to Candelaria Silva-Collins, Director of ACT, the greatest benefit of Open Studios is that it builds "community pride. [Roxbury Open Studios] brings positive press about artists who live in Roxbury; it says we are proud who we are" (personal communication, 8/24/2006).

Furthermore, visitors who come to ROS for the "Discovery Roxbury" tour tell ACT that they return to Roxbury after being introduced to the neighborhood during the Open Studios.

According to Silva-Collins, tours help demystify the neighborhood in two ways: first, while walking on these tours visitors can see that "Roxbury is close to places that they are familiar with," like the Back Bay and the South End; and second, the tours give visitors an introduction to Roxbury that encourages them to come back on their own.

Renewed interest and activity has an economic impact. Silva-Collins suggests that the South End and Jamaica Plain neighborhoods probably see a larger impact because these neighborhoods have so many restaurants; however, more restaurants are now being established in Roxbury.

¹¹ The Boston African American Artist Association produces "Art in the Park" in both Roxbury Park and Copley Square, but this event is more of an art fair. Today the association has been in existence for approximately 38 years

¹² The Piano Craft Guild building, also known as the Piano Factory, is technically located in Roxbury, but at the southern edge of the South End. Although this building has a gallery space that often exhibits the work of artist tenants, this building is not artist-owned nor does it solely house artists. Notably located in the building are the studio, art publishing company, and frame shop of Paul Goodnight, one of the twentieth century's foremost African American artists.

¹³ Roxbury has more African American artists than any other neighborhood and this group predominates ROS. According to Candelaria Silva-Collins, the Director of ACT, people from other cities and towns in New England come to ROS to show with the community of color because their neighborhoods do not give them the same kinds of opportunities to be with peers and patrons.

Many of these restaurants are sponsors of ROS, consequently the restaurants receive some promotion when their businesses are highlighted on the event map and website.

In recent months, the event's most salient impact on Roxbury has been the creation of a holiday shop that provides another opportunity for ROS participants to sell their work. The storefront space is located in the headquarters of the Madison Park Development Corporation. The holiday shop has many functions. It is a business venture and a source of pride, but also an advertisement of the changes happening in Roxbury through the efforts of the local community development corporation, thereby helping to perpetuate the neighborhood's new identity.

The next section looks at how Open Studios have been used in the service of branding neighborhoods.

Open Studios in the Service of Branding an Identity

The creators of successful brands understand both their product and their market, either changing the public's perception or reinforcing it. The purchase of "good brands" ensures that the item has value; it is a sure investment that does not require large amounts of research or expertise to inspire confidence. For Open Studios, branding can help change a neighborhood as it changes the lens by which it is viewed.

But branding, and subsequent consumption, is a two-way street. Although "brand-name" products arose out of mass production, they engendered a culture that links consumption with identity, values, and lifestyle. According to Sharon Zukin, branding is of particular importance to the middle class, as it "speaks to both our open anxiety about making choices and our partly submerged desire for status (Zukin, 2005: 197)." Thus, branding establishes the value and

credentials of a product, and can be “a mapping strategy that eases... passage through the chaotic world of goods (Zukin, 2005: 57).” In the context of Open Studios, particularly as the number of participating neighborhoods increases, branding also helps direct where people spend their money.

In the next section, I argue that the South End brand promoted during Open Studios sets a standard that other neighborhoods have tried to replicate. Skilled marketing of the South End Open Studios brand, particularly to the Boston’s western suburbs, has, in my opinion, transformed the neighborhood into Boston’s premier center for purchasing and viewing contemporary art.

South End

Despite the great effort to preserve the artist’s place in Fenway and Fort Point, most people who do not participate in Metropolitan Boston’s arts scene know only the South End as the place where Boston’s “real artists” are. I believe this perception is reinforced by the presence of the Boston Center for the Arts (BCA) located at the neighborhood’s northern gateway, but the neighborhood’s stereotypical, bohemian mix of artists, gays, and yuppies, its wide variety of incomes and ethnicities, as well as its many art galleries also contribute. As powerful as these images are in contemporary culture, they might be lost on the imaginations of Bostonians were it not for the South End’s superior branding and marketing abilities.

South End Open Studios (SEOS) brands and markets the South End as the perfect urban village. At the helm of this effort are four entities: GTI Properties, a significant owner and manager of residential and commercial space in the South End and Back Bay; the BCA; United South End Artists (USEA), the neighborhood artists’ organization; and MPWI, Inc, a Boston-based event

production company that has organized the Open Studios since the mid-1990s. Ironically, USEA has the weakest voice despite the fact that – in principle – the event belongs to them. The degree of the real estate developer’s involvement in this event is significant because it changes the function and dynamic of Open Studios.

To understand this better, it is necessary to first look at the other actors in SEOS. When the event began at the BCA in 1986, it most likely was a response to a challenge from the South End community that the institution has faced since inception: the perception of “us versus them” (Rausch, Berman, & Peditto, 2005: 17). Thus, the event was probably an effort to bridge a communication gap between the institution and South End residents. Perhaps because of the event’s success or perhaps because of signs of gentrification, the event was transferred to the newly formed USEA in 1991. According to its “Articles of Organization” (1991), USEA was created to “provide advice and limited financial assistance to artists in the areas of showing and publicizing their artwork, obtaining affordable housing and studio space, and health insurance and legal assistance. The corporation will also support the development of community art-related education projects.” Four years later, the Articles were amended and USEA’s purpose changed dramatically:

To promote the arts and enhance public appreciation of various art forms within the community; to produce South End Open Studios so as to allow the public to see art in progress and view the process and work of individual artists; and to do everything necessary, suitable and proper for the accomplishment, attainment or furtherance of... (USEA, 1995)

Whereas the organization’s former goal was to *assist* neighborhood artists, its focus changed to *promote* the South End’s artists. The South End neighborhood at this time was changing dramatically. The BCA was beginning to expand physically, and the Boston public’s perception of the neighborhood had begun to shift from a dangerous place to one where ladies could lunch.

Concurrent with the BCA's expansion, GTI renamed the eastern edge of the South End, "SoWa," thereby creating two arts centers within the South End: the historic and gradually more permanent BCA, and the "edgy" former loft district. Similarly, the focus of SEOS shifted and GTI's contributions to the event's production increased with the provision of a shuttle bus as well as large, empty spaces within its SoWa buildings for group shows. GTI's participation in the event served the company well. One artist, who for seven years participated in the event's SoWa group space, remarked how the Open Studios served as an "Open House" (personal communication, 2006). Nearly every year, the location of the group space changed, as one of the visitors would inevitably decide to rent the space after seeing the art on the walls and realizing that the neighborhood was becoming safer.

A more serious critique of SEOS is that the event is no longer strictly about the artists – the weekend has become too carnivalesque and too many businesses take advantage of the visitors while inadvertently competing with the artists. Fun-loving residents take advantage of the Open Studios weekend by throwing block parties, even inviting friends from outside the South End. Enterprising businesses and residents benefit from the weekend's crowds by having outdoor tag sales. In this way, the South End Open Studios weekend becomes a celebration of lifestyle consumption that carries both positive and negative attributes. From a positive perspective, the event is beneficial for most locals (at least for the time being) as residents have a weekend-long festival that inspires envy, and artists and businesses have an opportunity to make money. From a negative perspective, the intangible values created that weekend result in the neighborhood's increased unaffordability in addition to the artists having to be secondary to everything else that is going on.

For all of the great and positive attributes of the South End Open Studios, it is largely an exercise in site control for property owners within the neighborhood. To some degree, the high desirability of the South End has benefited its artists by resulting in a concentration of galleries and venues that in turn increases the support of potential patrons. However, this also means that artists are potentially long-term losers, particularly those who neither rent subsidized spaces nor own their spaces.

Within this context, USEA has a very small voice. For all the shrewd marketing of the Open Studios, USEA's public face has no mission statement, no explanation of what it does, and no readily available information on who the organizers are. A truly United South End Artists organization would have a voice and an organizational presence. From the outside, USEA appears to be an elite club, in which artists are strong-armed by developers and property owners to participate.

Learning from the South End brand

In this section I argue that two other neighborhoods, Dorchester and Roslindale, are explicitly trying to mimic the South End's branding techniques in order to further their development.

Whereas Dorchester's branding serves the artist community in two ways, changing perception of danger and building artist community pride, Roslindale's branding is intended primarily to build the artist community.

Dorchester

Dorchester Open Studios (DOS), currently in its fifth year, has received consistently positive publicity. The event displays a variety of fine arts, crafts, theater, and comedy, as well as a bike

tour of the neighborhood; the number of its participating artists has increased. Despite its successes, the event is not without challenges for the organizers, challenges that can be attributed to the neighborhood's perception by outsiders.

Public perception is largely shaped by two dominant attributes: size and safety. Dorchester is Boston's largest neighborhood – roughly eight times the size of the South End. Furthermore, several areas within Dorchester are amongst Boston's most dangerous. Similar to Roxbury Open Studios, the Dorchester event can be viewed as an attempt to counter these challenges by providing the public a means to access the neighborhood through maps that show visitors positive elements of the neighborhood and where they can feel comfortable exploring.

The perception of crime is still acute, but the media have helped build awareness of the increasing quality and quantity of arts in Dorchester. In 2004, a Boston Globe article titled, "Art in Dot no longer a contradiction," pointed to the increasing number of both artists and live/work studios in the area (Diaz, 10/24/2004). By the following year, the media predicted that the growth of Dorchester's artist population and its galleries would surpass Fort Point and Newbury Street (Kilburn, 10/16/2005). This paints Dorchester as a "hip" place where people hang out; the neighborhood's new residents, who came for the more affordable housing, are increasingly staying in Dorchester for nightlife, rather than traveling to Downtown (Diaz, 1/21/2006).

However, stereotypes about the neighborhood have followed on the heels of praise:

A recent rash of shootings from the quadruple homicide in December near Melville Park to the fatal stabbing of community activist John Beresford, which stunned the Ronan Park community last spring is a reminder that some pockets of Dorchester are among the most violent in the city. In October, the car window of city council president Michael F. Flaherty was shot out as he and an aide drove down Dorchester Avenue, the four-mile spine of the neighborhood. (Diaz, 1/21/2006)

Events like this have made a negative impression on some new residents; however, it seems as though this will not have an adverse effect on people moving into the neighborhood. One of these new residents summarizes the issue by saying that “[people who do not live here] look at Dorchester as a place [where] they are going to be shot and robbed, but it depends on where you go” (Diaz, 1/21/2006).¹⁴

For Paul Hansen, a sculptor and member of the event's organizing committee, greater numbers of artists help to counterbalance the neighborhood's negative attributes: “crime gets a lot of play in the press, and I think a lot of people just don't appreciate the diversity of the neighborhood in terms of both races and socio-economic diversity... This is the kind of event that when you attend, you see all kinds of people who live in Dorchester, both neighbors who wander in, and the kind of arts crowd that actually exists in Dorchester” (as cited in Kilburn, 10/16/2005). Now that Dorchester Open Studios is in its fifth year, a representative from the event's organizing committee senses that “people are used to the idea that there are Open Studios in Dorchester and there are buildings that are becoming known in Dorchester as places where artists create their art” (personal communication, 2006).

¹⁴ In the process of completing this thesis, I emailed draft versions of relevant sections to interviewees. One of the organizers of Dorchester Open Studios disagreed with my understanding of the event, emphasizing that “it would be incorrect to characterize our event simply a means to bring economic development” (personal communication, 2007). This organizer is a strong advocate for the neighborhood, as one would expect of a neighborhood leader and representative of the community. Additionally, the email raises some important points about the neighborhood's safety; they are included here:

Dorchester is huge - the population is close to 125,000 and it covers about 6 sq miles - which means if it were a city separate from Boston it would rank larger than Cambridge, which is the 5th largest in Massachusetts. Its large immigrant population not well-versed in political connection-building, which means parts of Dorchester fare poorly in competition for city services than other neighborhoods of Boston. And crime prevention is one of those services. That being said I walk the streets here alone at any hour of the day or night and have been safe. In 20 years of living here I have never been mugged, or had my home broken into. Some areas here can be unsafe, as can be said about areas in other neighborhoods, even the South End.

The change of outsiders' perception has an effect on the pride of DOS participants. To the outside world, the event intends to "show that the "neighborhood is on equal artistic footing with other neighborhoods," explained one interviewee, "There is art happening here. We want to show it off and celebrate it." However, the event has also been an inward celebration of Dorchester's artist communities. This person further explains that the "event helps to create a sense of community within the community. Not only showing off outside, but saying within 'we think you are worth celebrating, we know you are here, and you deserve to be touted.'"

Dorchester Open Studios was founded by the Dorchester Artists Collaborative (DAC), a growing community of artists who develop and facilitate arts programming within the neighborhood. Although the economic development of Dorchester is not part of the DAC's mission, some of its Board members have been actively involved in neighborhood revitalization. According to a founder of the DAC, real estate pressure within Dorchester has increased dramatically since 2000; however, it is not nearly as intense as in Fort Point, the Fenway, or the South End. To date, "no one has been thrown out, but there definitely is a sense that the neighborhood is getting so high priced that long-time folks cannot buy or stay," says the organizer.

Although not everyone will agree, I posit that DOS focuses on rebranding the neighborhood – deemphasizing the perception of danger and highlighting the growth of its artist population. In so doing, the organization is helping to facilitate increasing investment in the neighborhood. The event organizers, on the other hand, view the event differently: "Dorchester Open Studios was founded by DAC as another means to help solidify political clout for the arts and culture community here," wrote a representative of the DAC (personal communication, 2007). The email continues:

We certainly recognize its importance, in fact one of the co-founders was a key player in the Deval Patrick campaign's arts and culture focus area. It would be incorrect to characterize our event as simply a means to bring economic development - i.e., help our homes hold their value in our 'relatively safe' areas - through re-branding.

My impression is that at least some of Dorchester artists are aware of the South End's, Jamaica Plain's, and Fort Point's development in recent years. During the 2006 event, one participant displayed brochures of his house next to samples of his graphic design work. The slump in the housing market and recent violence in the neighborhood had kept his property on the market longer than he had expected, but he hoped he would still make a profit on the sale. Thus, Open Studios was as an opportunity to improve his home's exposure to prospective buyers.

Roslindale

Although the organizers of Roslindale Open Studios say that the event was motivated by a dream to provide exposure to the neighborhood's artists, this newest neighborhood to organize Open Studios can also be viewed as branding Roslindale as a place with a growing artistic identity.

The village has changed dramatically in the past ten years, most notably from the efforts of a husband-and-wife team, Glenn and Janice Williams, who have played active roles in Roslindale's revitalization (personal communication, 8/8/2006). To their long list of credits, this couple has directed the Roslindale Main Streets program, and founded the Roslindale Art Center, as well as starred in and produced a local cable program.

The challenge Mr. and Mrs. Williams faced in attempting to organize Open Studios prior to 2005 was a lack of interest that hindered the initial momentum needed to start a long-lasting event. As the Open Studios phenomenon grew in the rest of Boston and as Roslindale's artists increasingly

felt disconnected from the artist community in neighboring Jamaica Plain, the attraction of having an Open Studios event in their own neighborhood grew.

Overall, Roslindale Open Studios is not advertised any differently than other events of comparable size. What distinguishes Roslindale's event is that the community is not known for having an artist presence, let alone a professional artist community. Thus, Roslindale Open Studios exists as a tool for Roslindale to market itself as a place where there are artists. In time, it will be interesting to see if artists move to Roslindale as they are priced out of Jamaica Plain, South End, and Fort Point; the neighborhood is affordable and relatively safe, as well as geographically close to Jamaica Plain and Downtown Boston.

Influence of the Boston Open Studios Coalition

By this point, the reader may have noticed that I have hardly mentioned the Boston Open Studios Coalition (the Coalition). This surprises me, too, as I originally thought the Coalition would play a larger role in any account of the development of Open Studios in Boston.

The Coalition was created in 1995, seventeen years after Boston's first Open Studios at Fenway Studios, primarily because the existing events were competing against each other both for visitors and for a limited number of desirable weekends between mid-September and early December. The need for a moderate degree of conflict management spurred the creation of the Coalition, originally a private non-profit organization charged with scheduling and promoting all member events. The Coalition's purpose and its tasks have not changed in ten years, but it is interesting to note that despite its existence and supposedly regulatory function, the Coalition almost broke up in 2005 over its members' competition for visitors and desirable weekends, exactly the issues it was intended to manage. The City of Boston, recognizing the public goods

created by Open Studios but also serving its own creative economy goals, finally incorporated the Coalition into the Mayor's Office of Arts, Tourism and Special Events in 2005.

Technically, no neighborhood receives special treatment as the Coalition's promotion of the events always includes every member neighborhood, regardless if the event has passed, but in practice, the near permanent schedule of the events and lack of rotation from year to year favors some neighborhoods over others (particularly those that come earlier in the Open Studios season).

Interestingly, I originally believed that the events had been organized in two waves neatly separated by the creation of the Coalition, thus giving the Coalition a lot of importance. While the Coalition is useful and has proven to be both beneficial and helpful to newer events, overall, the Coalition has had little influence on the creation of Open Studios. Instead, Open Studios have been motivated by the neighborhoods themselves, and then by the organizers' desire to build political capital, to build community, or to further economic development. In Boston, at least, the Coalition has not had a catalytic role to play.

After being in the field and interviewing most of the organizers and founders of these events, I realized that the motivations I had uncovered – the motivations that were held by organizers of the event – served the larger goals of the neighborhood arts organizations and the city, but I was missing an important set of motivations – those of the individual participants. It was at this point that I realized that I needed to change my strategy and return to the field. These additional interviews form the basis of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4 : ADDITIONAL MOTIVATIONS

The motivations spurring the organization of Open Studios are only part of the puzzle of why these types of events are proliferating. After conducting interviews with most of the organizers, I realized that without some insight into why individual artists participate in the events, I would not have adequately tested my hypothesis. Thus, I went back into the field to interview artists participating in the event. Although artists comprise the second largest group participating in Open Studios – visitors are the largest – artists and their oeuvres are, in principle, the centerpiece of the event.

Casual observers might assume that the motivations behind artist participation are based on attempts to sell their work. Casual observers might also assume that artists are motivated to become self-reliant artists/businesspeople. The small amount of evidence supporting these assumptions paints Open Studios as temporary, informal marketplaces at which artists sell directly to a bounty of visitors who are willing and able to consume, thereby circumventing the need for gallery representation. In this view, access to the Open Studios marketplace is a strong motivator for many participants, particularly those artists whose work is market-driven and/or highly saleable. However, these casual assumptions – which are held by many people, including some organizers of Open Studios – do not adequately take the existing structure of the art world into account.

What I discovered is that there is no single motivation for artist participation in the events, rather there is a range of motivations based on a variety of expected outcomes. I argue that artists' motivations for participation depend on the maturity of their careers. Artists who are fresh out of school and/or do not have gallery representation, for example, have high expectations and levels

of enthusiasm for the event because they hope it will be a rewarding opportunity to meet artists, curators and gallery dealers; gain exposure to feedback; and get invitations to show in exhibitions. Artists who are more established tend to have less enthusiasm for the event because participation brings them fewer benefits and carries more opportunity costs. Although nearly all interviewed artists have in common an expectation and/or desire to make money as a result of their participation in Open Studios, this motivation masks other complex, individual motivations in participating in the event.

Methodology

What compels individual artists to participate in Open Studios? To answer this question, I searched for two different types of artists: (1) artists who had participated in an event recently, and (2) artists who had participated in many events.¹⁵ My reasoning was that new event participants would have fresher memories of their reasons for participating, while artists who had participated in many events were not bound by place and were probably the best source on how to maximize returns. Many other artists, of course, fall between these extremes.

Although I attempted to focus my search on these two categories of artists, I discovered that the categories were not as clear-cut as I had hoped. I found few artists who were brand new to Open Studios. In one case, the artist was new to Jamaica Plain Open Studios, but had participated in Fort Point Open Studios for several years. In another case, the artist was a transplant from Tucson, AZ, where she had participated in the Open Studios for the past three years. In my search for artists who had participated in many events, the majority did not respond to my

¹⁵ Originally, I searched for artists who participated in neighborhoods where they neither lived nor worked, but those that I found seemed to be better characterized by the new category of “participating in many events.”

requests. In the end, most of my information was learned informally through conversations during the event, though I was able to formally interview two of these market-driven artists.

Of all of the interviewed artists, those who were new to Open Studios were predominantly artists who had graduated from arts programs (Bachelor of Arts, Master of Fine Arts, as well as professional arts certificate programs) within the last one to three years. Nevertheless, new participants also included artists who were self-taught (having taken specialized classes at local schools like the Cambridge Center for Adult Education), as well as artists whose careers are further developed (working full-time on their art and having gallery representation). Thus, the information I collected provides only a rough profile of individual artist motivations, and I hope other researchers will be inspired to take up this challenge.

Findings

The mix of motivations behind artist participation is clearly tied to the maturity of the artist's career. On one end of the spectrum are artists whose careers have not yet blossomed. The primary motivation behind their participation in Open Studios is to further their growth as artists through access to feedback and critique. At the other end of the spectrum are artists whose careers are mature. These artists tend to fall into two sub-categories: those with steady enthusiasm and those with waning enthusiasm. In the middle of the spectrum are artists whose participation is tied to personal economic motivations, in other words income earned by selling work directly at the event or by making connections for future sales.

Artists with Young Careers

Artists at the early stages of career development include those who graduated from MFA or BFA programs within the last three years. In participating in Open Studios, the predominant tendency

of these artists is to search for access points to exposure and community. In many ways, this is an extension of their academic experiences where they both received critique and found support. Artists with young careers also tend to be more oriented towards building their social network with the hope that it will decrease the degrees of their separation from dealers and curators.

The new participants interviewed all expressed interest in making money and getting exposure to sell work through Open Studios; however, overall they are realistic about how much they might actually sell, particularly because their careers are in the early stages of development. But they are also very interested in using the event to further the development of their artistic identities.

The following three profiles present, first, the development of an artist's identity made possible by Open Studios; second, an artist's motivation for exposure; and finally, an artist's using the Open Studios as her final attempt to find her place in the arts community.

Motivated to Develop Identity

Anne*¹⁶ has lived in the Greater Boston region her entire life. Prior to participating in Open Studios, painting was something she did for her own personal enjoyment, and she did not identify herself as an artist. The only people who saw Anne's art were her friends and family. According to Anne, this was partially a factor of her inability to "part with originals," but it was also because she could not take the step to price something she felt was priceless. Additionally, she cited her lack of formal arts training, and her inexperience exhibiting and selling artwork.

Anne's friends, on the other hand, had immense confidence in her and encouraged her to participate in Open Studios. Because Anne felt a strong attachment to her paintings, she priced

¹⁶ All names distinguished with an asterisk (*) indicate that identifying details have been changed in order to maintain confidentiality in the publication of this study.

them very high. Although she did not sell any work at her first Open Studios, she received feedback and critiques that she later absorbed into both her creative process and her developing identity.

In Anne's third year of participation in Open Studios, she used the event as an opportunity to display both her artistic identity (through her paintings) and her professional, but creative, identity (though samples of her furniture design and cabinetry work). Because of the feedback she received, Anne now sells printed reproductions of her paintings; this also allowed her to offer a range of sizes and prices. She now feels that her artwork is validated by every sale, and, in the future, Anne wants to become a "full time – not starving – artist." Until then, promoting her furniture design and cabinetry work during Open Studios has helped to grow that business and gain exposure. Anne acknowledges that she still needs to build her art business in order to become a "full time" artist, but she is "very happy with [her] starting point!" Through her participation in the event, Anne was able to develop her identity as an artist. Additionally, with critical feedback she received, Anne's artistic growth was enabled.

Motivated to Get Exposure

Sarah Hardesty moved to Boston in 2006 after receiving her MFA (personal communication, 11/1/2006). Although her home is in Jamaica Plain, she participates in Hyde Park Open Studios where her studio is located. This is partially because of the large size of her work but also because her participation is based in her professional development. Hardesty is very proud of her studio in Hyde Park saying, "It is a great, affordable space, and relatively close to home."

From Hardesty's perspective, the Open Studios format is a good method to introduce herself to Boston's arts community. Prior to her move to Boston, she participated for three years in

Tucson's Open Studios. For this reason, her primary motivation and expectation for the Hyde Park Open Studio was to meet curators and be invited to participate in exhibitions. Hardesty's secondary motivation was more personal. She used Open Studios as a deadline towards which she worked intently in order to finish work-in-process; by working in the studio without something to work towards, "the work could stay in limbo. But in preparing for an event, you have to give the piece a sense of finality."

In terms of selling her work, Hardesty acknowledged it would be nice, but selling was not her focus. Hardesty has a stable income from her design-related "day-job" and a teaching position at a local art school. Although a very small percentage of her income comes from the sale of her art, Hardesty is a professional artist, albeit one who is in the process of establishing herself.

After the Open Studios, Hardesty expressed disappointment in the lack of curators who attended the event; however, although she received no offers or suggestions of forthcoming exhibitions, she was satisfied enough because the event was an opportunity to meet other artists in her studio building. Hardesty said that as long as her studio is in Hyde Park, she would participate in the event because there is always the hope that participation (and the exposure that comes with it) will increase her chances for exhibition opportunities.

Motivated to Find Place in "Boston's Arts Scene"

Sydney Hardin's story is similar in terms of trying to get exposure and find her place within "Boston's arts scene" (personal communication, 12/6/2006). However her participation in Jamaica Plain Open Studios (JPOS) is somewhat different as it was her "last ditch effort to find a community." Hardin moved to Boston in 2004 after receiving dual undergraduate degrees in Fine Arts and Art History, both with distinction from a top-tier university. Although Hardin said

she tried every avenue available to her, she found Boston's art system to be unfriendly. Consequently, more than half of the exhibitions in which she has participated since 2004 are located outside Boston (mostly New York City). Hardin wants to live in Boston, but she is dissatisfied with both the lack of accessible venues and exhibition options, and her lack of connection with an artist community (or at least another artist or two who shares her sensibilities). Thus, JPOS served as test that would decide whether or not she would stay in Boston.

Hardin's participation in JPOS turned out to be a marginally positive experience, and one she hopes to be able to build upon. As a result of being invited to participate in the JPOS Juried Show, she met a curator who will include one of Hardin's paintings in an upcoming exhibition. Hardin is very excited about this opportunity, but she was surprised to meet only two curators through her participation in the Juried Show. As far as Hardin was aware, no curators passed through her studio/kitchen, and she wondered if many attended the JPOS event at all. In terms of building her social network, Hardin did meet two neighbors who are also artists. Although she probably will not become best friends with these neighbors, the combination of meeting people and being offered an opportunity to exhibit work encourages Hardin. Thus, through her participation in Open Studios, Hardin has found some points of access to the arts community.

Artists with More Established Careers

Artists who have more established connections to their preferred arts community tend to have either steady or diminishing enthusiasm for Open Studios. Artists who expressed steady enthusiasm for the event either (1) have a particular bond with the neighborhood (thereby likely aligning themselves with the organizer's motivations), (2) find the event to be a fun experience,

and/or (3) are satisfied with the convenient income made through the event. Artists who expressed a waning enthusiasm for Open Studios want income and exposure from their participation, however they find that Open Studios do not maximize their expected returns as (1) curators and gallery dealers do not seem to attend the events, and (2) visitors to the events seem to expect bargains, thereby posing a major problem for artists with gallery contracts. In addition, some of the established artists are particularly wary of events that receive assistance from real estate developers.

The following two stories explore, first, an artist's bond with the Roxbury neighborhood and enthusiasm for Open Studios, and then an artist's conflicting feelings for the South End Open Studios.

Steady Enthusiasm for Event Participation

Meg Rotzel is an artist who participates in the Roxbury Open Studios through the non-profit and artist-run Berwick Research Institute (the Berwick) that she co-founded in 2000 (personal communication, 10/4/2006). The Berwick is located in Dudley Square and although its mission statement is to provide "alternative programming and exhibition space for artists who work outside the commercial world" (www.berwickinstitute.org), it has worked with ACT Roxbury to contribute to the neighborhood's education programming. According to Rotzel, the Berwick participates in Roxbury Open Studios in order to participate in the arts within Dudley Square as well as to contribute to raising the profile of one of the youngest Open Studios, but this explanation does not take into account the Berwick's strong support for ACT Roxbury's revitalization efforts.

Roxbury – particularly Dudley Square – has revitalized significantly since 1999, and Rotzel is

enormously impressed by the positive changes she has seen as a result of Candelaria Silva-Collins' leadership at ACT Roxbury. In Rotzel's opinion, ACT's achievements in community building were made possible because of the organization's commitment to the involvement of all constituents in the revitalization process.

The Berwick's participation in Open Studios is unique from many other artist groups in Boston, and more so from artists groups that participate in Open Studios. Work created at the Berwick is noncommercial and usually not saleable (performances, temporary public art works, research projects or videos), so they do not display their work and let people flow through the space in the same way that other Open Studios participants usually do; in past Open Studios, the Berwick exhibited music performance collaborations and participatory projects. In addition, the Berwick is in a unique situation whereby the artists have a physical space to make and show their work, but cannot use the space as a venue.¹⁷ By participating in Roxbury Open Studios, the artists can have large, public events at least once a year.

Participation in Roxbury Open Studios is also an opportunity for Berwick artists to expose themselves to other Roxbury artists. Artists from the Dudley Square neighborhood come, and, similarly, Berwick artists walk around and get to know their neighbors in the arts (this is particularly valuable as Dudley Square's identity as a space where artists can be found is relatively new). According to Rotzel, "That's really valuable for us because then we get to walk

¹⁷ The Berwick Research Institute used to have large, public gatherings, but the Inspectional Services Department (ISD) of the City of Boston required that the Berwick cease organizing large public events (in the Berwick's case: openings, music shows, dances, lectures, etc), because, according to Rotzel, those activities were not allowed within the city's prescribed categorization of a gallery. So instead of redefining the Berwick according to ISD's and the City of Boston's definition of a gallery, the Berwick ceased to be a venue and enhanced its studio identity. Today, the Berwick has semi-public events that are called 'open studios,' but they are outside of the Boston Open Studios program. These open studios events are held year-long, and during the events (a) residents talk about their work, (b) they have critiques, and (c) closings (40-60 people attend). These events are specific to one artist and to a research process. At least one of these events happens once a month.

around and see what else is out there. Dudley Square is one of the younger Boston Open Studios participants and the arts community is not as visible as, say, South End, Fort Point, or even Jamaica Plain.”

Waning Enthusiasm for Event Participation

For artists with gallery representation, participation in Open Studios can present a number of costs. First, all participating artists must absorb the cost of the registration fee and preparation materials. Artists who have signed a contractual agreement with a gallery dealer have an additional cost as their work is subject to a commission fee. Many different variables go into determining the appropriate percentage, but, generally, commission fees can be in the range of 25% to 50%, or more. This means that if a gallery’s commission fee is 40% of the retail price, the artist earns 60% of that price.

In addition, preparation for and participation in the event takes time away from the production of their art. In this framework, the opportunity cost of losing time may not be a worthwhile tradeoff for a potentially small increase in income. Many artists who are represented by galleries are not in a position to reduce the price of their work for Open Studios. This can disappoint those visitors who go to Open Studios in search of bargains. However, if these established artists lower their prices for the events, they fear that they might devalue their artwork and risk upsetting their collectors (particularly those collectors who purchased at a higher retail price).

Jane* is an artist with gallery representation who participates in the South End Open Studios (SEOS) because participation is required by her studio lease.¹⁸ Although this at first glance

¹⁸ The requirement includes but is not limited to South End Open Studio events. Other events, like the Spring Art Walk, are also required. According to the artist’s own explanation of her lease, if another event were to be created,

appears to be only a legal motivation, it is also economic. Jane was well aware of GTI Property's lease requirement before moving into her studio at 450 Harrison Avenue.¹⁹ In her opinion, the tradeoff is worthwhile primarily because the studio is affordable, but weighing heavily in her decision is the additional amenity of a central South End location – more specifically, the center of the SoWa arts scene – that is conveniently located near her gallery dealer and peers.

Originally, Open Studios was an opportunity for Jane to make connections with curators and get feedback. After three years, this sentiment changed:

Open Studios are a pain. They have taken on a flea market quality where one can only show work that can be carried away and hung over the couch. Art in the 21st century is so much more than that. I open because I have to and put out what I don't want around. I'm always amazed when someone gets it.

However, when asked if she would be willing to move to another neighborhood and studio building, Jane responded, “I have to participate because it is required in my lease, but leaving isn't an option. I love my studio. I love the building's community. I love that my dealer is nearby... If someone has serious interest in my work, my dealer can bring that person to my studio at that moment.”

Jane's solution is to participate in SEOS without actually being present during the event. Her lease allows her two exit options: she can either hire someone to sit in her studio for her during the event, or she can lend her studio to an artist who wants to participate in SEOS, but has neither a studio nor home in the South End neighborhood. Jane said she is more likely to hire one of her students to sit in her place as temporarily donating her space would make her studio

participation in that event would most likely be required. The lease also requires membership in the United South End Artists Association, but that is tangential to the argument I am making here.

¹⁹ GTI Properties is a South End real estate developer and property manager with extensive holdings in the arts district, SoWa, where 450 Harrison Avenue is located. I did contact the Leasing Director, but was not able to schedule an interview with him.

“become a hotel.” Thus, Jane’s commitment to the event is marginal, but her commitment to her neighboring artist friends, her gallery, her neighborhood, and her studio is well worth any momentary inconveniences.

Somewhere in the Middle, Personal Economics

Although I was not able to interview many artists who purposefully participated in several events, the information I collected strongly suggests that this group’s primary motivation is economic. Artists in this group are most interested in selling work directly at the event or making contacts for future sales. Furthermore, these artists are both highly aware of the products that the market demands, and their work responds to this demand. Thus, these artists pay close attention to the prices and goods that will maximize their economic returns from Open Studios. These artists also participate in other “Arts and Crafts Fairs,” and they agreed that Open Studios are special because they have lower costs of entry and allow the artists more control over the sale and display of their product. In addition, Open Studios are closer to their homes.

John* earns nearly all of his income from his participation in the majority of Boston’s Open Studios. His first Open Studios was in 2003; he was unemployed as he had recently lost his business. Painting was an outlet for his unhappiness, and friends who saw his work suggested that he participate in Open Studios. To John’s surprise, he sold nearly fifty paintings, thus creating a new identity for himself and embarking on a new career.

Today, John’s primary motivation for participating in Open Studios is less about reaffirming his new identity as an artist than it is a means for earning his living. John views Open Studios as the vehicle that jump-started his new career and gave him the most exposure possible without a gallery dealer. However, it would be inappropriate to make gross generalizations from John’s

story – John’s story is very unique. He is a prolific painter of highly graphic and colorful subjects and he strongly believes in keeping his price point low (selling most works under \$100) so that anyone can afford his work. Thus, John makes highly desirable and consumable objects.

In comparison, most Boston artists appear to participate in fewer than three neighborhood events. The artists who participate in multiple events are more likely to do so in order to improve their income (than do artists who participate in a single event). In general, many of the artists whom I interviewed attribute their lack of sales at Open Studios to what they believe is the profile of visitors:

- Visitors are often looking for bargains;
- Visitors go to Open Studios purely to have fun or satisfy curiosity, and never have any intention to spend money
- Visitors come to Open Studios to get a feel for what they might purchase and then follow up with their chosen artist after the event (this is particularly important as the number of participating artists increases and the number of Open Studios increases).

The artists I interviewed posit that these visitor characteristics strongly influence the amount of money they can make through participating in Open Studios. Some artists go further, suggesting that the proliferation of Open Studios divides an already small number of visitors.

Nearly every organizer I spoke with has an Open Studios success story to tell, and the artists described in these stories can earn anywhere upwards of \$10,000 in a single day. These stories verge on myth, and their seductiveness overshadows other motivations for artist participation. In contrast, the individual stories that comprise most of this chapter highlight a need for organizers to better understand motivations of participating artists because when all artists are grouped together it appears as though their predominant motivation is economic in nature when that may not at all be the case.

CHAPTER 5 : CONCLUSION

I began this thesis with the question: *Why are Open Studios being created?* I expected that the creation of Open Studios would be motivated by politics, more specifically by a need for artists to empower themselves as a highly visible group; however, I found that the motivations are a much more complex web of aspirations between the organizers and the individual participant artists. The evidence strongly suggests two conclusions:

- Open Studios are organized as products of their time (Chapter 3).

The organizers of Boston's Open Studios have been shown to include leaders of neighborhood arts communities, the City, and real estate developers; in addition, the motivations of these various groups have been shown to stem from the conditions of particular moments in time. The inspiration for the earliest Open Studios stemmed from a need to build political support and protect the artist's communities. Later, Open Studios were a means for building arts communities and establishing relationships with surrounding neighborhoods. Today, somewhat inspired by the transformation of cities like Barcelona and urban neighborhoods like SoHo in New York City, Open Studios have become part of larger strategies that leverage the arts communities in order to foster neighborhood economic development and revitalization.

- Motivations of participating artists are a product of the maturity or success of their careers (Chapter 4).

Although casual assumptions suggest that artists are primarily motivated to sell their work in the Open Studios marketplace, the rough profile constructed in Chapter 4 supports the argument that artists have a complex range of motivations. The evidence suggests that artist participants fall into two camps: those who are in the process of building their careers and those who have established careers.

One of the major criticisms voiced by many artists and observers, as well as being recognized by many organizers, is that Open Studios are becoming less focused on art and artists. Many would say the events are Open Studio markets, rather than the open arts venues that many artists hunger for. The organizers of the South End Open Studios are particularly aware of the tradeoffs inherent in the neighborhood's SoWa Arts District rebranding as they have received the brunt of such criticism. According to Christine Farris, the organizer of South End Open Studios:

The event dovetails nicely into the rebranding of the South End as a lively arts destination. The South End's increased identification as "the place where artists are" is not solely the result of Open Studios. GTI and Mario Nicosia are actively changing the Harrison Avenue and Albany Street area into an arts destination and trendy place. This is an asset, but could be a challenge as it is a concern of many artists – how does the event distinguish itself and not turn into a destination event – rather than an art event. (Personal communication, 8/2/2006)

Thus, the Open Studios venue has become a marketplace, and this change can be nicely explained with concepts derived from Pierre Bourdieu and his conception of the relationships between forms of capital.

Application of Bourdieu's "Forms of Capital" Theory

Bourdieu's "Forms of Capital" theory (1986) argues that the only way to truly understand society's structure and functioning is to understand *all* of the multiple types of capital:

The structure of the distribution of the different types and subtypes of capital at a given moment in time represents the immanent structure of the social world, i.e., the set of constraints, inscribed in the very reality of that world, which govern its functioning in a durable way, determining the chances of success for practices. (Bourdieu, 1986: 242)

Bourdieu's analysis is meant as a criticism of the failings of classical economics to understand how society really works. Before Bourdieu coined the term "social capital," and conceived of "cultural capital" in the 1970s, economists understood relationships and interactions as either *economic* or *noneconomic*. Economic exchanges are monetary exchanges in which everyone's

actions are conducted purely on the basis of profit maximization. In contrast, noneconomic exchanges are not based in profit maximization. Bourdieu's point is that because classical economic theory assumes that people are motivated only by economic gain, it will never understand why art is created for its own sake, or why children from different social classes will have unequal earning power as they age (despite their equivalent intelligence). Classical economists fail in their understanding of the inner workings of society because they insist on converting everything into money – economic capital. Bourdieu has advocated changing the study of economics to "grasp capital and profit in all their forms and to establish the laws whereby the different types of capital (or power, which amounts to the same thing) change into one another (Bourdieu, 1986: 243)."

Capital, in Bourdieu's view, instead presents itself in three fundamental forms: economic, cultural, and social. *Economic capital* is easily quantifiable and convertible to money. *Cultural capital* is the acquisition of skills and knowledge, and can be converted into money only under certain conditions. *Social capital* is the advantages of human interaction, particularly in the creation of resources (which range from influence to support), and can be converted into money only under certain conditions. Bourdieu distinguishes between these different forms, which classical economists had all defined under "economic capital;" classical economists accomplished this, Bourdieu argues, by simply giving forms of social and cultural capital, inappropriate monetary values.

As I began to argue at the end of Chapter 4, the conceptualization of Open Studios currently places too much value on the economic capital generated through the event. There is no doubt that economic exchanges do benefit the participating artists; however, artists, particularly those

artists who have not yet established their careers, would greatly benefit from the development of their skills (cultural capital) and their social networks (social capital).

Although *political capital* is not part of Bourdieu's analysis, I found that it is also an important motivator in Open Studios. Political capital is political power that is based on the creation of a favorable conception of a subject. Bourdieu's theory, with the addition of political capital, provides a framework for categorizing and comparing the motivations of the two groups – organizer and participating artist.

Economic Capital

Economic capital is, quite simply, money. The organizers of Open Studios build economic capital directly through exchanges between visitors and artists, as well as money spent by visitors in local businesses as a result of the event (for example, at cafes and restaurants). The organizers can also build economic capital indirectly as the neighborhood's property values increase and as its image is enhanced; clearly, as real estate value rises developers and property owners have an incentive to pressure resident artists to participate. In contrast, artists build economic capital through money received following the sale of their work, and indirectly through the establishment of relationships between artists, collectors, and/or galleries.

Economic capital can be converted into other types of capital; however, a lot of economic capital needs to be spent in order to trade it for a smaller amount of social, cultural, or political capital.

In Bourdieu's words:

Different types of capital can be derived from *economic capital*, but only at the cost of a more or less great effort of transformation, which is needed to produce the type of power effective in the field in question. (Bourdieu, 1986: 252)

Bourdieu's concepts of transformation, also known as conversion, will be revisited below following an explanation of the cultural, social, and political capital created and exchanged through Open Studios.

Cultural Capital

Cultural capital is both skill and knowledge. Bourdieu posits that cultural capital can exist in three forms: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized. Of these three forms, only the embodied and objectified forms are relevant to understanding the cultural dynamics of Open Studios. (The institutionalized state is essentially in the form of academic degrees or credentials earned, which is less important to Open Studios.)

The embodied state of cultural capital (for example, knowledge and skill) is an inseparable part of the person and requires a large amount of time and effort to acquire. Artists have embodied cultural capital as a result of years of education and training in their specialty. Embodied cultural capital is not easily transmitted by gift or exchange so, according to Bourdieu, it “presents particular problems for the holders of economic or political capital (Bourdieu, 1986: 245),” because they will not be able to use their usual strategies of buying or concentrating it without having to put themselves through years of extensive training: school, internships, apprenticeships, or on-the-job experience.

Cultural capital in the form of objects can be exchanged for economic capital. The objectified state (for example, material objects like paintings or photographs) is easily consumed through cash. The catch with the objectified state is that although a person with the appropriate amount of money can purchase a cultural object, if that person does not have other embodied states of capital, that person is less likely to understand the painting, thereby decreasing its value. This

sentiment was echoed by Jane in Chapter 4. She had low confidence in the ability of the public to understand her art, and perhaps less confidence in the art that the public, in general, chooses to consume. One could say that this sentiment stems from snobbery, but some of it reflects larger cultural issues of what constitutes as art and who has access to an art education. Twentieth century American culture has seen a rapid rise in the number of citizens accessing art education (Zukin, 1982). This education is not necessarily training in the craft of art, but it is also the product of high school art classes, trips to museums, or just exposure to art that makes people comfortable and articulate in its presence.

Cultural capital gives distinction to people who possess it, because “any given cultural competence... derives a scarcity value from its position on the distribution of cultural capital and yields profits of distinction for its owner (Bourdieu, 1986: 245).” Furthermore, Bourdieu sees social value as well as economic value being generated by the scarcity of cultural capital.

Applied to the artists participating in Open Studios, this aspect of cultural capital theory speaks to the expansion of what art is and who can participate in Open Studios. Therefore, if everyone can identify themselves as an artist, they are devaluing “Art.” This sentiment might explain why many of the Open Studios organizers are quick to point out that it is important for them to have “good artists” at their events; otherwise, some claim, the events attract fewer visitors. However, this “scarcity yields distinction” aspect is problematic as it applies to highbrow culture and discounts popular culture. Although theorists in support of Bourdieu are quick to point out that what qualifies as distinguished is unique to each field,²⁰ popular culture works differently as

²⁰ An example I have heard supporters express is a version of Matt Damon’s character in *Goodwill Hunting*: a working class child with superior intelligence but a working class accent is less appreciated in a place with upper class children because of the difference in socio-economic status that is reinforced by language. However, that same working class child in a working class setting is highly appreciated and a leader of the working class field. This is an extreme example, but it is meant to highlight the characteristics of, and divisions between, class groups.

scarcity does not necessarily yield distinction (consider the case of John, as told in Chapter 5). If anything, abundant accessibility coupled with high visibility yields distinction in popular culture.

Social Capital

Social capital is connection between people. Organizations build social capital by using Open Studios to foster relationship development between the artists and the organization, visitors and artists, and/or artists and artists. Artists build social capital by increasing their social networks through the event. Increased social connections will increase opportunities for both artists and organizations. For example, individual artists who grow the amount of social capital that they possess (by meeting people and developing relationships) decrease their degrees of separation from critics, curators, and dealers.

In addition, social capital has an inherent multiplier effect when large numbers of people are unified. Bourdieu explains that “the volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent thus depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural, or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected (Bourdieu, 1986: 249).” Groups of individual artists who are organized into artist-run organizations can, in theory, accomplish more by virtue of all the people to whom they have access.

Of equal importance is the point that “each member of the group is... instituted as a custodian of the limits of the group: because the definition of the criteria of entry is at stake in each new entry, he can modify the group by modifying the limits of legitimate exchange through some form of misalliance (Bourdieu, 1986: 250).” Thus, every individual belonging to a group has an effect on the organization’s mission. The individuals can either buy into the mission or can change it

over time. This phenomenon is seen with the inclusion of individuals and groups who would not traditionally participate in Open Studios. The influence of real estate developers and local businesses, for example, in the South End Open Studios has arguably helped change the event's mission to focus on the economic development of the SoWa Arts District.

Rob Clifford, co-owner of a gallery that was located in SoWa, at 450 Harrison Avenue, talks about the problems inherent in GTI Properties' lease agreement that all creative tenants in subsidized spaces participate in Open Studios. In particular, Clifford calls attention to the hypocrisy of an additional requirement that all creative tenants must be members of the United South End Artists association:

We were reminded often that we also got membership in United South End Artists for our [South End Open Studios registration fee]. Pardon me, those of you who already see the irony. It's United South End Artists. We're a gallery. We're not supposed to be in your group. You guys are supposed to get together and talk about how much we [the galleries] suck. Remember? That's like inviting your parents to a slumber party. (Clifford, 6/18/2006)

My argument is not that artists should avoid inclusion of businesses and developers in the organization of Open Studios. But in recognizing that every member of the group has the potential to change the dynamics of the event, organizers should endeavor to learn from the organization of Roxbury Open Studios and make every participant an equal partner.

The clearest benefit is that equal partnership builds trust and fosters dialog. Other organizational forms that I have observed do not accomplish this. For example, several artists participating in the South End Open Studios event raised the question of whether or not they were being used to "sell" the SoWa loft spaces. These artists expressed that in all likelihood, they probably were. However, they also noted that this suspicion would not prevent them from participating in Open Studios; rather, it would color their opinions of event leaders.

Political Capital

Political capital gives its possessor the power of persuasion. Those who hold political capital do not need economic capital in order to use political capital effectively (although sometimes, money helps). Rather, if an organization can capture enough of the public's imagination and support, the public can assist the organization by lobbying on the organization's behalf.

Only the First Wave events, Fenway Studios and Fort Point Open Studios, created and made use of political capital in a direct manner. This capital was created through a joint effort of both event organizers and individual artists when they invited the public into their private homes and studios. This act fostered public empathy and support, and was channeled by the artists to preserve their physical place in their neighborhoods.

Although other Open Studio organizations and artist communities do not appear to have used political capital, such opportunities do present themselves. The case of the Inspectional Services Department (ISD) of the City of Boston forcing the Berwick Research Institute to redefine its mission according to ISD's definition of a gallery or cease organizing large public events highlights what might have been a lack of (or failure to use) political capital.

According to Rebecca Dywer, former Assistant Director of the Fort Point Arts Community, elected officials are important to build relationships with: "[l]ocal politicians – city councilors, state representatives, and the Mayor's Office over the years – those people are our allies" (personal communication, 1/12/2007). However, Dywer further notes that these politicians have been helpful when they understand that they cannot make policies that act on artists or are supposed to create an artist community out of nothing. Politicians are most helpful when they assist the artist community to build from within.

The loss of many of Boston's alternative arts venues, most recently Pan9's studio at 20 Rugg Road, highlights the City of Boston's lack of support for noncommercial venues and misunderstanding of at least one means for how an arts community strengthens itself. The creative process requires the nurturing of experimentation and even failure, because, in principle, this is how truly innovative ideas are born. So in the example of "hippie communes," the mythological, bohemian artist of the past revels in experimentation, and sometimes in what some would term, "bad art." This conception of the creative process is difficult to reconcile with Richard Florida's "Creative Class;" however, the divide does not have to be stark, and artists who embody both conceptions – the artist as bohemian and as businessperson – do exist. Nevertheless, the City of Boston structures its support of the arts community on the basis of commercial exchange.

To date, the City of Boston focuses its actions on wealth, job creation, and cultural tourism. Mayor's Office of Arts, Tourism, and Special Events could become more involved in the support of its various arts communities. For example, the Boston Open Studios Coalition does not appear to have had much effect on the building of political support for its group of member neighborhoods; after all, this is not its purpose. As explained in Chapter 3, the Coalition was formed to promote the work of Boston artists and provide assistance necessary for the production of Open Studios. Nevertheless, the various examples of neighborhoods going out of their way to cultivate relationships with their elected officials suggests that the Coalition could adopt an advocacy position for member neighborhoods and artists. This would give the term, "Open Studios," new meaning, taking on an active role in provision of diverse options for the consumption of art.

Capital and the Structure of Power

At the conclusion of this thesis, I am struck with two impressions. First, many of today's Open Studios organizers are placing too much emphasis on the creation of economic capital through the conversion of social and cultural capital. Second, artist participants are allowing this to happen and are not asserting their desires for social and cultural capital; for the time being, they are generally content with the current marketplace format of Open Studios.

In Bourdieu's theory, conversion ensures capital's proliferation:

The convertibility of the different types of capital is the basis of the strategies aimed at ensuring the reproduction of capital (and the position occupied in social space) by means of the conversions least costly in terms of conversion work and of the losses inherent in the conversion itself (in a given state of the social power relations). (Bourdieu, 1986: 253)

Bourdieu's idea here is that healthy conversion is not one-sided (when cultural, social, and political capital become economic capital), but rather dynamic. Multifaceted conversion helps foster the sustainability and growth of all capitals, and, consequently, power.

Power within the organizations is distributed amongst all members of the group. However, when power is not distributed evenly and members operate with vastly different economic advantages (for example, a real estate development firm in comparison with individual artists), the organization's mission will reflect that power structure, and, as seen in the case of Open Studios, the events will be used to perpetuate that structure. This is not to say that artists are entirely disadvantaged. On the contrary, artists are significantly advantaged because of their embodiment of cultural capital, which gives them a degree of distinction not easily transmitted by gift or exchange.

As explained in the cultural capital section of this chapter, the acquisition of embodied cultural capital should present a problem for real estate developers (the possessors of economic capital) and city governments (the possessors of political capital) because, in theory, it is extremely difficult to obtain embodied cultural capital without going through a long time- and labor-intensive process. Yet, in recent years, distinction and prestige have been bestowed on both the interests of real estate developers and the City, by promoting the presence of artists.

The question is, will Boston's arts communities continue to accept this one-sided conversion? The evidence suggests that, for the time being, artists lend their embodied cultural capital through their participation in events like Open Studios because they currently see the events as a means for furthering their interests, as detailed in Chapter 4. Artists with young careers appear to participate in the events in order to develop their identities as artists, get exposure, and find their place in "Boston's Arts Scene." Artists with established careers have a more complex range of motivations, appearing to participate in the events either because they want to help foster the economic development and revitalization of the neighborhood, or, in complete contrast, because they are required to participate as stipulated by the terms of their lease agreements.

In closing, I respond to my question of why Open Studios are being created with yet another question. If Open Studios are an investment made by both organizations and individual participants, in order for the event to be sustainable would it not be wise to diversify the stock of capitals as well as equitably empower all levels of participants? This could require a redefinition of the metrics for success established by the City of Boston, and even the State of Massachusetts, for the creative economy. More specifically for Open Studios, two options in favor of meeting the needs of the various participants present themselves. The first would be to effectively

reposition the event away from its current market form. The alternative would be to leave the current form of Open Studio unchanged. Instead, the Boston Open Studios Coalition could take on an advocacy role for all member neighborhoods' commercial and noncommercial venues.

By pursuing the first option, Open Studios would become a more nurturing venue for artists and for noneconomic exchange. However, it would, in my opinion, require action at the neighborhood level. This would entail detailed studies to determine the neighborhood arts community's demographics. A community with a large number of artists with young careers, for example, could attach a forum to its Open Studios whereby participating artists could gather to review and critique each other's work, as well as receive the feedback from established artists. In this example, established artists could come from anywhere – within the neighborhood or even from outside Boston – and would provide feedback on the production of art, not on the business of selling art. Many different avenues could be explored in enacting this option; however, there are clear drawbacks in organizing this option.

The alternative is to leave Open Studios unchanged and to support the existing infrastructure of Boston's noncommercial venues, and facilitate the revival of lost venues. In pursuing this option, individual neighborhood arts communities would adopt an advocacy role for noncommercial venues within their physical boundaries as well as within the Greater Boston region. Similarly, the Boston Open Studios Coalition, as organized within the Mayor's Office of Arts, Tourism, and Special Events (MOATSE), would adopt an advocacy role for noncommercial venues and MOATSE would facilitate compromises between other City Departments and the arts community. Overall, this option would require the city, developers, and arts community to reconsider how they value noncommercial venues, nurture creativity, and promote diverse

conceptions of art. Not an easy task, but my hope is that this option would prove an achievable means for fostering the sustainability of the city's arts ecology.

In the end, so many questions are raised on how different parts of the arts ecology are valued, how creativity and innovation are nurtured by the City, and how different conceptions of art can coexist peacefully, and this all warrants further research.

APPENDIX A : NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

This section provides some contextual information on neighborhoods that I was able to research more thoroughly, and further elucidates the conditions under which these Open Studio events were organized.

Fenway

Fenway Studios is located within the Fenway neighborhood, at the western edge of the Back Bay. The neighborhood includes several nationally significant museums, including the Museum of Fine Arts and the Gardner Museum. The studio building was constructed in 1905. It was modeled after 19th century Parisian ateliers, but designed to meet the four requirements of Boston's modern, professional artists: access to light, affordable rents, spaces that fostered the production of art, and convenient location.

The first three requirements were in stark contrast to other late 19th century artist buildings, which, according to an 1876 article from the Boston Evening Transcript, were inexpensive but often poorly lit spare rooms that did not have adequate heat, ventilation and plumbing:

Nearly all of our artists are penned up in little rooms no larger than counting rooms, offices, or ordinary sleeping rooms. Of course their work is affected by this want to space in which to accomplish it. The picture which looked well in a small room often becomes insignificant and faulty in a large gallery... All must climb long flights of stairs in search of that rare "north light," undisturbed by reflections, which scarcely exists in Boston. (Boston Evening Transcript as cited in Fenway Studios Landmark Application Committee [FSLAC], 1998: 13)

The building's layout and location achieved the first requirement, and all studios were illuminated by north light. Fenway Studio's rectangular plan gave all 46 studios north-facing windows that are 12 feet high by 5 feet wide. The railroad tracks directly north of the building "while periodically bedeviling the painters with clouds of smoke which muted their light

virtually assured that no further development on that site would permanently compromise that building's purpose" (FSLAC, 1998: 11). The second requirement of sliding scale for rents was realized by varying studio sizes; prosperous artists rented the large corner studios. The third requirement stipulated that even the smallest and least expensive room be adequately sized. The fourth requirement – convenient location – was initially met by the building's location at the western edge of Back Bay and Newbury Street, but was enhanced soon after construction as civic leaders concentrated Boston's cultural institutions on the newly claimed land of the Back Bay Fens.

During the year of the Fenway Studios' conception, Boston felt intense civic pride for its growing "army of professional artists," according to an art critic of the period (FSLAC, 1998: 13). Later that year, in November 1904, a fire destroyed an important studio building, displacing about twenty artists. Sensational media coverage of the fire combined with civic pride fueled calls for Boston's leaders to "provide decent, well-lit, fireproof spaces for its burgeoning artist population" (FSLAC, 1998: 16). In response, the Fenway Studios Trust was created to finance the endeavor.

By 1978, the Fenway Studios had been held in trust by some of Boston's oldest families since the building's conception in 1904. One of the building's main attributes – inexpensive rents – generally could be attributed to the trustee's allowing the building to fall into benign neglect; however, real estate taxes were also overlooked, adding up to a \$156,000 debt.

Artist residents organized themselves into the Artists for the Preservation of the Fenway Studios (APFS) in order to "preserve the building for artists' use and avoid conversion to high-priced residential condominiums" (FSLAC, 1998: 11). APFS set out to gain equity and hire a

preservationist developer by collecting dues from each member and holding an auction of artwork and antiques. Although the auction received publicity and was well attended, the net was “only a disappointing \$6,300” (FSLAC, 1998: 33).

National and local economic conditions from 1978-1980 were intensely difficult for APFS (FSLAC, 1998: 34-35). Although the organization was able to file for Chapter 121A, a Massachusetts law that allows for the organization of urban redevelopment corporations, and thus seek a tax reduction during purchase and renovation of the building, APFS could not find a bank that would risk funding an artist building. A mortgage was finally secured in 1981, and Fenway Studios, Inc was created. By 1982, all 46 memberships in the cooperative were sold and a waiting list of interested artists was created.

Fort Point

The Fort Point neighborhood is a former industrial district located near Downtown Boston. Advantageous for the fishing and manufacturing industries that used to be located there, the neighborhood is surrounded by many physical and psychological barriers: the Fort Point Channel is on the western edge; the Gillette Factory is located to the south; the Convention Center is located to the east; and to the north is a federal courthouse and the new Institute of Contemporary Art, the only buildings on a large expanse of land. Until the introduction of artists, Fort Point had no residential community. The area had suffered a rapid decline since the 1950s as the Boston Wharf Company’s two main sources of income, the wool trade and maritime-related businesses, were obsolete. When artists moved into the empty warehouses beginning in 1976, they were a welcome source of income.

The first artist had been displaced from Jamaica Plain after a devastating studio fire. According to Don Eyles, a local artist, more artists soon followed as the area had the “right kind of space,” meaning affordable and abundant studios (Don Eyles, as cited in <http://www.fortpointarts.org/history.html>). Unlike the 1904 fire that fostered the construction of Fenway Studios, public pride in Boston’s artists and subsequent pressure to house them was not readily visible. Therefore, the artists who moved to Fort Point did not have the financial and legal support of civic leaders, and some became illegal tenants of the Boston Wharf Company. Nevertheless, the artist community steadily grew.

The Fort Point Arts Community (FPAC) was created in 1979, and had nearly 200 members by 1980. In the early 1980s, artists occupied at least three buildings in the area, and several museums and exhibit spaces relocated to the area because of the ample floor space and proximity to artists (the Revolving Museum, Mobius Artists Group, the Children’s Museum).

By the 1990s, the area had become a desirable investment for real estate developers. According to Berkeley Investments, a local real estate developer, Fort Point’s desirability stems from its location “in a sub-market that has benefited significantly from the completion of major capital improvement projects including the decade long CA/T Project (also known as the Big Dig) and the new Boston Convention and Exhibition Center” (<http://www.berinv.com/biextngportfolio.htm>). Other reasons include the redevelopment of the South Boston Waterfront and the movement of boutique creative industries into Fort Point.

Artists were being pushed out one of Boston’s most vibrant neighborhoods, a vivacity that the artists themselves had created, in favor of economic development that was promoted by the Boston Redevelopment Authority. Ann McQueen, Program Officer of The Boston Foundation,

wrote about the contradiction between media reports on the health of Fort Point's artist community and reality:

The real estate market was hot and the Fort Point Channel area was clearly the next frontier. But there had been one too many newspaper articles describing this district as vacant and abandoned, something that any dedicated Open Studio enthusiast knew was simply not true. (Fort Point Cultural Coalition and Mobius. 2004)

FPAC began purchasing buildings and re-selling the spaces to neighborhood artists in the 1990s, and by 1999, a dedicated organization was created to pursue this real estate strategy – the Fort Point Cultural Coalition (FPCC). FPCC's mission was to develop 300 permanent live/work studios for artists in Fort Point.

Complementing the real estate goal was the FPCC's Public Art Series (PAS). According to Ms. Lauricella, PAS was "critical to [the real estate strategy and built]... on the neighborhood's tradition of public art, using it as a way to actively engage and build community" (Fort Point et al., 2004). While many of the urban interventions were located in Fort Point, the series engaged the public at all levels, including a front-page article in the Boston Globe. With the help of a grant from the Boston Foundation, PAS consisted of a public forum and two years of works and events.

INTERVIEWS

The following is a list of people whom I formally interviewed, and who authorized the use of their names in this publication. Although not all were cited, I thank them all for generously giving me their time.

Jane Cooper Brayton	Sydney Hardin	Maureen Murphy
Marci Davis	Glen Kewley	Penny Pimentel
Rebecca Dwyer	John G. Kristensen	Michael Ritter
Christine Farris	Marilyn A. Lasek	Meg Rotzel
Rebecca Gordon	Mary P. McCusker	Gabrielle Schaffner
Fay Grajower	Teri Malo	Candelaria Silva-Collins
Matthew Hakola	Jean R. Mineo	
Sarah Hardesty	Judith Motzkin	

I also formally interviewed a number of people who did not elect for me to use their names in this publication. These included three event organizers, one city administrator, and nine artists. In addition, I had countless informal dialogs with artists and visitors during the Open Studios I visited.

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