Civic Tinkering in a Small City:
Imaginaries and Intersections of Art, Place and Marginality

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this ethnographic case study was to explore the construction and alteration of Roanoke Virginia's cultural imaginary, as well as the engagement of marginal groups and their concerns in those processes. This research examined these issues through the experiences of key actors involved with the creation of Roanoke's first city-wide arts and cultural plan and the creation and growth of the Roanoke-based Marginal Arts Festival (MAF).

Cities around the globe are increasingly engaged in transnational projects of place identification, reconfiguration, and attraction: attracting capital, residents, workers, tourists and attention (Cronin & Hetherington, 2008; Hague, 2005; Jensen, 2005, 2007; Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Zukin 1995). Moreover, cities undertake various kinds of identity projects: on-going, dynamic processes through which spaces are produced and reproduced by conscious strategies of place making and identity building (Nyseth & Viken, 2009). Such initiatives are concerted efforts to establish or extend a particular idea, or imaginary, of a city. This study focused on one kind of urban identity endeavor that has become widespread during the past two decades: the effort to shape and market a creative, culture-rich place, to project a specific urban cultural imaginary.

This analysis also responded to a straightforward problem, that of the manner through which people, in places pursuing arts and culture as a primary focus for development, come to terms with differing understandings of art and its role in development. This study identified four principal future paths for the analysis of cultural imaginaries and the practice of cultural development: studying and supporting civic tinkering activities, recognizing the relevance of localized imaginaries and urban identity projects, valuing full participation in the project of the city, and conducting place-specific and critical analyses.

Dedication

For Meighan and Toby

Acknowledgements:

Field research is not a solo enterprise. I am deeply appreciative of my interviewees for sharing with me their time and thoughts. Some respondents proved especially helpful in reviewing chapter drafts and providing valuable input that clarified matters of fact.

The faculty members on my dissertation committee, Elizabeth Fine, John Provo, and Bob Leonard, were generous with ideas and feedback. I want to especially acknowledge my committee chair, Max Stephenson. He dedicated a number of hours in reviewing and commenting on dissertation drafts. While any deficiencies here are mine alone, Dr. Stephenson has helped make this a much stronger work.

I was buoyed throughout the writing process by the encouragement and support of my wife, Meighan Sharp, and son, Toby Tate.

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Chapter 1:   Introduction

Overview

This dissertation is centrally concerned with the problem of urban imaginaries, particularly how cities construct and alter place identities, and to what extent marginal populations and their interests are engaged or considered in those processes. I define urban imaginaries as the multiple and intersecting ideas, images, myths, and stories of place in various stages of development and coexistence. In this chapter, I

- Share my problem statement,

- Discuss my research purpose,

- Outline my research questions,

- Introduce my case site, and

- Provide an overview of the following chapters and overall structure of this dissertation.

Problem Statement

Cities around the globe are increasingly engaged in transnational projects of place identification, reconfiguration and attraction: attracting capital, residents, workers, tourists and attention (Cronin & Hetherington, 2008; Hague & Jenkins, 2005; Jensen, 2005, 2007; Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Zukin 1995). Moreover, cities undertake various kinds of identity projects: on-going, dynamic processes through which spaces are produced and reproduced by conscious strategies of place making and identity building (Nyseth & Viken, 2009). Such initiatives are concerted efforts to establish or extend a particular idea, or imaginary, of a city. This study focuses on one kind of urban identity endeavor that has become widespread during the past two

decades: the effort to shape and market a creative, culture-rich place to project a specific kind of urban cultural imaginary.

I use the term cultural imaginary in a fashion quite similar to Jensen's (2007) notion of "culture story," and in keeping with a number of studies that have identified a prevalent "legitimizing," "upbeat," "globalist," narrative of "culture as development" (Banks & O'Connor, 2009; Miller & Yudice, 2002; Strom, 2003).

Studies have demonstrated that such strategies produce mixed results (Evans, 2005; Markusen & Gadwa, 2010; Noll & Zimbalist, 1997; Stern & Seifert, 1998) as they may increase social and economic inequalities (Florida, 2005; Mercer, 2006; Stern & Seifert, 2008) and disproportionately concentrate benefits on downtown cores and arts districts while drawing resources away from non-core neighborhoods (Mercer, 2006; Rosenstein, 2009; Stern & Seifert, 2008). Despite this evidence, city officials, developers, and tourism professionals continue to seek to advance the cultural imaginary of their communities through policy decisions, planning strategies, development projects and various forms of boosterism, including marketing and branding efforts.

This research examines the individual circumstances and conditions of a specific city, what I refer to as micro-level field studies. The global placement of all cities can no longer be ignored, even in the most locally focused of studies, and the need to explore the complex global-local interplay that manifests in highly differentiated ways in cities and regions has never been more critical, for "each city must understand its own particularity" (Bender & Cinar, 2007, p. 275). Phrased more simply, my study explores the question: what does it mean to construct and promote a city as a place for arts and culture? There are too few studies that seek to address this

question in the particular, in a comprehensive way, focusing on the qualitative and experiential aspects of the idea of a city.

Moreover, existing studies tend to be dominated by research on global cities and larger metropolitan areas. Small to mid-sized cities are far more numerous than megalopolises, yet there is a "woeful neglect of the small city in the literature on urban studies" (Bell & Jayne, 2006, p. 2).

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this ethnographic case study is to explore the construction and alteration of Roanoke, Virginia's cultural imaginary as well as the engagement of marginal groups and their concerns in those processes. These matters will be examined through the experiences of key actors involved with the creation of the first city-wide arts and cultural plan and the creation and growth of the Roanoke-based Marginal Arts Festival (MAF).

Research Questions

I initially developed four research questions to guide my study of urban imaginaries. I then revised and reformulated those queries through an iterative process of interaction with the data. The questions that resulted from this process are:

- What are the principal elements of Roanoke's cultural imaginary?

- How did the key actors involved with the arts and cultural plan and the Marginal Arts Festival (MAF) understand art, place, and marginality in Roanoke?

- How did the arts and cultural plan, the marginal arts festival, and their key actors and activities produce, alter, or contest Roanoke's prevailing cultural imaginary?

- What does the case I analyze reveal about the construction and alteration of urban cultural imaginaries and the engagement of marginal populations and perspectives in such processes?

Introducing the Case

Picture a city, a smaller city, with its largest building of 21 floors, its downtown of 12 blocks, its core population of 94, 482, and its metropolitan area population of approximately 250,000 (U.S. Census, 2011). This city, ringed by mountains of hazy-blue, is Roanoke, situated in a valley, in western Virginia.

Roanoke is a city in many ways resurgent, a state attributed by some to its downtown revitalization, to its strikingly ambitious new arts museum, to its innovative partnerships with higher education institutions, to its growth in health and life sciences industries or to its expanding technology sector, respectively. The picture of a Roanoke revitalized through some rationalistic planning endeavor, sector-based economic strategy or other simplified formula may be partially true. Such abridged stories of place, however, tend to miss the complexities, the on-going dynamic nature of change: the contested struggles of meaning that define the character of communities.

The question that concerns me here is how to consider such multiplicity in the study of places in the midst of change. In what ways can the official, or single dimensional, picture of a place be expatiated? As Michel de Certeau argued, places are not simply blank tablets on which the tales of urban regeneration may be composed, but rather are opaque, stubborn, stratified compilations of heterogeneous identifications, for the "place is a palimpsest" (1985, pp. 201-202). De Certeau suggested that those interested in understanding city change look first for the frontiers and edges, the marginal and "in-between" spaces (1985, pp. 122-130).

Let me now describe a different Roanoke. Imagine a warm, sunny day in May, a noon-hour on a Thursday. Picture the City's market area, its center in so many ways, an interesting mix of historic architecture, galleries and shops, ambling shoppers, striding professionals and expectant farmers and vendors readying for the last waves of customers for their day. Envision as well a mix of the transient and the homeless, traveling through or resting on benches.

Suddenly this picture of the market is interrupted as a young woman, sunglasses on, sits on the ground, legs crossed, relaxed, staring intently at the screen of an old television, unplugged, silent, and blank. Odd. Across the square, a couple in their thirties cuddles on the concrete in front of a bench on which is perched another silent, blank television. Odder still. And everywhere it seems, there are other people, all gazing fixedly at nothing, all impervious to the stares and gawking of passers-by.

While an unusual scene, perhaps, this description captures a performance art project, entitled Must See TV, intended to encourage observers to reflect and to reconsider their personal relationships to media and time and also to cast public space as a place for artistic production (K. Walker, CityWorks Expo, October, 28, 2011). However, the scene became controversial, when one young participant, a female college student, was arrested by a Roanoke City police officer for remaining in character and not leaving immediately when asked to disperse (Kittredge, 2009).

Local news journalists and some participants video recorded segments of the event. Due to the controversial arrest, local and regional television and print media covered the event and its aftermath in the days that followed. Opinions of the arrest, and of the event itself, were mixed. Must See TV became an edge, a way to see and to consider the tensions and contestations between different meanings of place that overlapped and intersected in the Market area and

across the city more generally. As a *Roanoke Times* columnist observed, "To some, the debate about 'Must See TV' has exposed an irony in Roanoke's efforts to reinvent itself as an arts and cultural attraction. Those efforts were highlighted by the opening of the $66 million new Taubman Museum of Art last fall" (Kittredge, 2009). Kittredge interviewed the artistic effort's lead organizer who described her surprise at the "intensity of opinions about the event - which seem to highlight larger differences about where Roanoke is headed. Before 'Must See TV,' I didn't appreciate the depth of the divide" (Walker qtd in Kittredge, 2009). Katherine Devine, an event participant and local artist, argued, "You can't present Roanoke as a creative city and then have it be that anything that crosses the line is going to be stomped on" (qtd in Kittredge, 2009).

As the discussions and controversies generated by the Must See TV event illustrated, the "imaginative structure" of Roanoke is a site where actors work out problems, ideas and practices in tension (Blum, 2003, pp. 12-13). Imaginaries of art and marginality are of real and timely concern in 2011-12 Roanoke. The city's arts and culture aspirations are quite visible. A *Roanoke Times* editorial illustration from October 15, 2010 by Chris Obrion depicted the role of arts and culture in a new local economy.

Roanoke was founded as a railroad crossroads. Its early growth derived from the manufacturing railroad engines and cars, headquartering railroad company offices, and serving as a financial and commerce center for wealth generated by railroad company investments in the Virginia and West Virginia coal fields. The new "engine" of Obrion's illustration is fronted by the Taubman Museum of Art, standing in for arts and culture generally, followed by buildings representing Roanoke's health care and higher education entities.

The image vividly and simply illustrates that while not the sole focus, Roanoke's city officials, planners, arts and cultural entities and others have been engaged in a concerted effort to

utilize arts and culture as a key driver of economic development. The Taubman Museum of Art

represents the most visible example. The Taubman is a strikingly prominent addition to

Roanoke's downtown architecture, a $66 million building, designed by Los Angeles architect

Randall Stout in a contemporary style akin to the work of well-known architect Frank Gehry,

designer of the Guggenheim in Bilbao, Spain. Knox and Mayer have cited the Taubman as, "a

good example of a cultural facility designed not only to provide exhibit space for an art

collection but also to signal the town's aspiration to be 'on the map'" (2009, p. 158).

Roanoke's new art museum is the most prominent and visible representation of the city's

emphasis on arts and culture-based development, but not the only one. Community officials cite

Roanoke's $2 million annual investment in arts and culture as "significantly higher" than any

other comparable municipality in Virginia (Carr, personal communication, 2011). The city has

invested significantly in public art, encouraged an explosive growth of festivals and events, and

undertaken major capital improvements to downtown cultural anchor institutions. Art as a

development strategy is surely one part of Roanoke's evolving imaginary.

The city aspires to be a place "synonymous with arts and culture" (Carr, personal

communication, 2011). Roanoke's investment in flagship projects such as the Taubman

Museum of Art and the crafting of a city-wide arts and cultural plan exemplifies this

commitment to shaping an urban imaginary rooted in arts and culture. My research follows the

path trod by the key actors involved with the arts and cultural plan and the Marginal Arts

Festival in order to understand better the ways such cultural imaginaries are constructed. I

examine Roanoke's arts and cultural plan and the MAF, not for their own sake, but rather as two

windows into the dynamics of Roanoke's urban imaginary.

The plan and festival represented fertile sites for micro-level study of the negotiation of imaginaries of art, place, and marginality. Most scholarship on imaginaries is based on a social constructivist paradigm, a view that meaning is not given but created through dynamic interaction. In this view, the idea of a city is not fixed, but dynamic and changing over time. An urban imaginary is also multiple, consisting of various city conditions, many of which may contradict one another or exist in states of flux. As Charles Taylor has observed, "The modern imaginary contains a whole gamut of forms in complex interaction and potential mutual transition" (2004, p.171). Thus, "reading" a city necessitates a diagnostic process that delves beneath the veil of popular and visible identity projects so as to explore their inner complexities and contradictions.

By suggesting the presence of a cultural imaginary, I am not arguing that this perspective is the only, or even the most significant set of ideas that exist about Roanoke. Rather, imaginaries, like cultures, are "contested, temporal, and emergent" (Shields, 1992, p. 18). Communities contain multiple sets of spatial identifiers, some of which coalesce into a recognizable and aspirational urban imaginary.   Roanoke, for example, also includes groups and interests that aim to identify the city as a place for outdoor recreation, for local foods, for higher education, for eco-friendly practices, for health care, and for technology-related enterprises. Rather than a singular or exceptional imaginary, I select Roanoke's cultural imaginary as one prominent example of an urban identity that is place-specific in its particular form while also widely shared in its general aspirations by cities around the world.

I focus on the city's arts and culture plan and the MAF for their potential to paint a picture of how ideas of place develop and of the way that concepts of arts and culture, and concerns with marginal populations are balanced and weighed within a community.   Indeed, a

significant value of this study lies partly in its particularity, in its commitment to "follow the little paths" (Latour & Hermant, 1998, p. 90), for "every gesture, even the smallest, has the task of revealing the meanings of this common world" (Maciocco, 2008, p. 141).

Dissertation Structure and Chapters

Chapter 2 reviews the scholarly literature with which this study engages. I also discuss my theoretical foundations and define and discuss key concepts employed in the study, including imaginaries. In Chapter 3, I describe my methodological approach and research strategies. I provide historical and contemporary context for my case site of Roanoke, Virginia in Chapter 4. I ground this study in a place and in that location's particular historical, cultural, and socio-economic conditions in that chapter.

In Chapter 5, I explore the central features of Roanoke's arts and culture imaginary, laying the context for my specific focus on the city's arts and culture plan in Chapter 6. In that section, I use the plan and its key actors as a starting point through which to identify and examine key elements and figures in shaping the city's cultural imaginary. Similarly, in Chapter 7, I share findings from the Marginal Arts Festival. I first provide an overview of the MAF and thereafter describe some of its key components and actors, using selected stories and brief vignettes.

In Chapter 8, I analyze and interpret my findings, offer a synthesis and suggest what they reveal concerning the theoretical frame I employ. My synthesis includes the concept of civic tinkering, introduced below. I close in Chapter 9, with my conclusions and recommendations for further study.

Civic Tinkering and Future Paths

      In the final chapter, I suggest four principal future paths for the analysis and practice of urban cultural imaginaries: studying and supporting civic tinkering activities, recognizing the relevance of localized imaginaries and urban identity projects, a greater valuing of full participation in the project of the city, and conducting place-specific and critical analyses.

      Civic tinkering differs from mere dabbling. My fieldwork identified the presence of informal or unsanctioned attempts to alter place meanings. The Must See TV event, depicted above, constitutes one example. I consider civic tinkering as any impermanent, unsanctioned and informal activity that endeavors to alter a city's identity positively.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Foundations and Framework

Introduction

I discuss my general approach to theory and trace the formation of my conceptual frame for this study in this chapter. My analytical framework has three central components: imaginaries and place identity, art and culture-based development and concerns with marginality. I review and engage with the scholarly literature concerning each of these elements, in turn.

The Role of Theory

The role of theory in qualitative research is not singular and definitive. Indeed, there are a number of approaches to qualitative inquiry (Cresswell, 2009, p. 49). Drawing from my education in an interdisciplinary, theory-based, doctoral program, I emphasized a theoretical problem or construct as both a starting point, a referent throughout my research, and an end result of the study. For me, theory "comes at the beginning and provides a lens that shapes what is looked at and the questions asked" (Cresswell, 2009, p. 49). I also considered theory "on an ongoing basis throughout the study to compare and contrast with the data that have emerged and the study's conceptual framework" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 48). Moreover, I considered this research a form of "building theory" (Luker, 2008, p. 191), in which conceptualization also "becomes the end point" (Cresswell, 2009, p. 63).

The problem of urban imaginaries constituted my conceptual frame and was central to my design and approach (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Schram, 2003). I selected an initial set of theories with which to engage and then entered into the research setting with an appropriately open, but focused, mind. I did not impose a model on the phenomena I

was observing. Instead, I had a partially stocked conceptual toolkit and, as I undertook my fieldwork, I added other means of analysis, as required.

Genesis of My Conceptual Frame

I developed my analytical frame over time, through my interests in the intersections of three different concerns: place, art, and marginality. What is a city? What is art? What does it mean to be marginal or to attend to the marginal? I became interested in each of these questions separately, during my period of doctoral study and through my work with communities. I then selected the interplay among these questions in a particular city as a problem for study. My research is centrally concerned with the question of how cities construct and shape imaginaries and to what extent marginal populations and interests are engaged or considered in such processes. Fundamentally, this study addresses questions of how particular sets of meanings, or identities, become associated with a specific geographic site.

I reviewed the scholarly literature on place identity and spatial theory, eventually selecting the concept of the urban imaginary as my primary conceptual focus. In addition, I examined and incorporated the literature on arts and culture-based development, creative economy approaches, and place branding and marketing. I also explored the scholarship concerning margins, especially issues of marginality and inclusiveness in cities. As my literature review progressed, I decided to study urban imaginaries and the ways that an arts and culture-based imaginary, referred to here as a cultural imaginary, is constructed and altered in communities, attending specifically to the engagement of marginal groups and their concerns in such processes.

Both space and meaning were central concerns to me, because so much of the challenge for researchers as well as for people seeking ways to live well together in places under transition due to globalizing, diversifying, and cosmopolitanizing trends and dynamics, deals with what places mean, who defines those meanings, and in what ways those perspectives empower or disempower, include or exclude, disrupt or indoctrinate. These processes involve contestation or struggle, the tensions between differing ways of living, enacting, and perceiving place.

My research questions and overall conceptual frame come into clearer focus through a closer analysis of three foundational concepts: imaginaries, art, and marginality.

Imaginaries and Place Identification

Place identifications and imaginaries are my primary focus. In Chapter 1, I defined urban imaginaries as the multiple and intersecting ideas, images, myths, and stories of place in various stages of development and coexistence. Places are not static, bounded, or uniform. The brand identity of a specific place, in this case, a city, may be conjurable, in the form of a pithy slogan, an iconic feature, or an ephemeral quality. Brand identity, however, is always partial and it was not the primary focus of my study. Instead, I selected imaginaries as an organizing construct in order to recognize cities as multiple, fluid, becoming, and non-interchangable. Imaginaries reflect a broader canvas of intersecting place images, stories, ideas, and interests in differing stages of development and recognition. Urban imaginaries play an important role in understanding place, and in influencing the decisions that either enable or limit possible futures for them.

The concept of imaginaries is used, in differing ways, in the fields of philosophy, social theory, geography, planning, urban studies, cultural studies, and literature. Cultural studies and

literature utilize imaginaries in analyzing film and literary representations of place. My usage is broader and considers the imaginary as an ensemble of ideas, narratives, myths, and images with both material and discursive implications (Taylor, 2004). The imaginary is the "wider background" that takes on a "sense giving" function and "draws on our whole world, that is, our sense of our whole predicament in time and space, among others and in history" (Taylor, 2004, p. 28). Imaginaries are not immaterial. Indeed, scholarship on imaginaries emphasizes "the impossibility of defining clear-cut boundaries between the real and the imagination" (Donald, 1999, p. xii).

Charles Taylor has referred to imaginaries as "the way ordinary people 'imagine' their social surroundings, and this is often not expressed in theoretical terms, but is carried in images, stories, and legends … shared by large groups of people … a common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy" (2004, p. 23). For Taylor, "one of the principal possible gains from this study of our social imaginaries is that it is on this level that local particularities most clearly emerge" (p. 195). As he has written, "The modern imaginary contains a whole gamut of forms in complex interaction and potential mutual transition" (2004, p. 171).

Benedict Anderson's work on the role of the imagination in shaping ideas of nation helped bring attention to the significance of imaginaries (see Anderson, 1983). The fields of geography and planning had paid much attention to imaginaries before Anderson's work, however. This research referred to the geographic imagination, as a type of "spatial consciousness" (Harvey, 1973, p. 24). Even earlier, planning scholar Kevin Lynch described the importance of "cognitive mapping" of individual perceptions of urban spaces, as a way to describe the "sets of images, which more or less overlapped and interrelated" (1960, p. 85).

The imagined geography is important as the "way we understand the geographical world, and the way we represent it, to ourselves and to others" (Massey, 1995, p. 41). The imagination represents one lens with which to view a city and its changes for "the production of locality is as much a work of the imagination as a work of material social construction" (Appadurai, 2002, p. 34). The ways we individually and collectively understand a city matter and produce material consequences (Donald, 1999, p. 8).

Meanings of place and space are an arena of struggle. Residents and decision leaders do not fully subscribe to circulated global narratives or imaginaries, but engage with them in a process of negotiation. Localities are not bounded in impermeable ways, nor are they fully unbounded and subsumed in a globalized miasma of consumption and commercialism. Appadurai has argued that modernity and globalization do not mean the obliteration of resistance, dissent, and alternatives, for

> … the imagination, especially when collective, can become the fuel for action. It is the imagination, in its collective forms, that creates ideas of neighborhood and nationhood, of moral economies and unjust rule, of higher wages and foreign labor prospects. The imagination is today a staging ground for action, and not only for escape (1996, p. 7).

My approach to imaginaries also derives, in part, from the work of several spatial theory scholars, particularly Henri Lefebvre, and Edward Soja and Rob Shields who refined his theories. A central Lefebvrian theme is the non-neutrality of space. Space is produced by a complex, often under analyzed, usually unrealized process. This produced space influences individuals and their activities (Lefebvre, 1991). Lefebvre proposed a conceptual triad of spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces (1991, p. 33). He argued that a complex interplay exists between spatial practice (perceived space), representations of space

(conceived space), and spaces of representation (lived space). Edward Soja reframed Lefebvre's triad as a "trialectics of spatiality" (Soja, 1996, p. 64). According to Soja, Lefebvre shifted the way that researchers and theorists consider space from an epistemological concern to an ontological one, and in so doing recast spatiality in terms of different ways of being (1996, p. 81). As such, spatiality is best understood as concerned with how individuals make meaning of the world they inhabit. Places are defined, partly through how they are depicted as spaces: foreign or home, vibrant or dull, safe or dangerous.

Spatialization refers to "the ongoing social construction of the spatial at the level of the social imaginary (collective mythologies, presuppositions) as well as interventions in the landscape (for example, the built environment)" (Shields, 1991, p. 31). For every site, there are a preponderance of place images arising from oversimplification, stereotyping, and labeling, and some of these coalesce into one or more place myths, helping to construct the "imagined geography" that residents and onlookers alike associate with a particular locale. Thus the imaginary is intricately linked to the material as "these spatial conceptual forms play a significant part in the rationale by which daily lives are lived and by which decisions, policies, and actions are rationalized and legitimized" (Shields, 1991, p. 47).

My interest in the concept of the imaginary is thus tightly linked to theorizations of the spatial. As mentioned above, imaginaries intersect in situated spaces, as a kind of struggle, manifested in processes of negotiation. For Lefebvre, the spaces of representation are the "dominated … space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate" (1991, p.39; qtd in Shields, 1999, p. 164). Spaces are sites of struggle, contestations over meaning, loci of a kind of on-going tug of war. Space, for Lefebvre, can "only be grasped dialectically" because it is a

"concrete abstraction … simultaneously a medium of social actions, because it structures them, and a product of those actions" (Gottdiener, 1985, p. 128).

I next consider what happens when the idea(s) of a city intersect(s) with the idea(s) of arts and culture. The phenomenon of a cultural imaginary represents a prevailing set of ideas propounded by sites around the world yet also constituted by a number of particular, place-specific components shaped by local culture, conditions, and understandings. Cities, even those caught up in shared projects of attraction and consumption adopted as if from some type of globalized economic playbook, form their own place-specific imaginary of arts and cultural space.

Arts and Culture-based Development

The second component of my conceptual frame consisted of arts and culture. Communities are increasingly utilizing art as a development strategy. Charles Landry's discussion of an arts and cultural approach to city making provides a helpful context:

> The debate on the impact of the arts and a cultural approach to city making has been
>
> developed and driven by cities in Western Europe, Australasia, America and more
>
> recently Asia, but the perspectives generated and lessons learnt will inevitably over time
>
> impact on the cities of East Europe, Africa and South America.
>
> Two forces have catalysed the debate. The first is urban competition as cities have
>
> recognized that their cultural distinctiveness is perhaps the unique asset they have to offer
>
> the external world. Distinctiveness creates positive images and in so doing makes cities
>
> more attractive for their residents, so enhancing their civic pride and in turn it leads to a
>
> drawing power that attracts visitors and potential investors or companies that might wish

to re-locate. In the longer term this has economic impacts. A second factor in the emerging interest in the culture of cities is that culture defines identity, which in a world that is increasingly becoming homogenous helps generate confidence in what is unique or special about a place (Landry, 2004, pp. 3-4).

Landry highlights the significance of cultural identity projects for attracting and retaining residents, tourists, and investment in a global environment of place competiveness that rewards distinctiveness. Elsewhere, Landry has argued that culture and creativity are tightly linked, that investment flows to those locales that demonstrate cultural vibrancy, and that the ability of such places to innovate and problem-solve yields economic benefits that are not easily quantifiable (Landry, 2000). Beyond the general trend toward arts and culture-based identity projects, the precise nature of such initiatives is not uniform. Indeed, the horizon of possible approaches to arts-and culture-based development is quite broad (Currid, 2009; Knox & Mayer, 2009). However, the implications of this tactical abundance are not simply positive:

> We must, however, be careful here. What do we mean by art and culture? Because art and culture are both businesses and, in that sense, tangible and quantifiable but also a zeitgeist of society and, in that sense, ephemeral and intangible, "developing" them becomes multilayered and their definition debatable (Currid, 2009, p. 368).

In the broadest sense, all development efforts represent a kind of cultural intervention in the life of a place, as efforts where "someone (or some institution) consciously and programmatically takes action within a culture with the intent of affecting it in some specific way that the intervener thinks desirable" (Whisnant, 1983, p. 13). Such efforts may vary in scale and intensity and may have positive or negative effects.

Research studies have indicated the presence of a dominant imaginary that tends to link arts and culture to more instrumental economic goals and to creative economy and cultural industry approaches. Such approaches minimize more intrinsic or community-based approaches to arts and culture development (Banks & O'Connor, 2009; Miller & Yudice, 2002; Strom, 2003).

Arts-and-culture development has become an umbrella term that refers to a wide-ranging array of strategies and activities including efforts such as investment in major art anchor institutions, public arts projects, promotion of local heritage, revitalization of spaces for artisans and creative workers to live and work, branding of the communities as cultural destinations and creating or expanding festivals or venues. These efforts may also be referred to as creative economy strategies (Florida, 2002).

The number of places, including Roanoke, utilizing cultural development approaches is rapidly increasing. Communities, again like Roanoke, that see increases or improvements in tourists, tourism dollars, artists and arts studios, entrepreneurs, creative workers or revitalized urban spaces are deemed to be successful. However, it is also well documented that these successes may foster or exacerbate gentrification, class divisions, neighborhood decay and diversion of resources and attention away from existing grass roots development organizations.

Communities that subscribe to this imaginary of art and culture believe they will yield positive economic impacts, including attracting specific labor groups and tourists. Cities also hope these strategies will create jobs (Bianchinni et al, 1988; Florida 2002; Myerscough, 1988; Pratt, 1997). Nonetheless, analyses indicate that causal relationships between investment in cultural industries and facilities and associated economic impacts are tenuous and uncertain (see Evans, 2005; Markusen & Gadwa, 2010; Noll & Zimbalist, 1997; Stern & Seifert, 1998).

Moreover, as already noted, arts and culture-based development, in its more instrumental forms, may increase community social and economic inequalities (Florida, 2005; Mercer, 2006; Stern & Seifert, 2008).

One impetus for the intensification of arts and culture-based development over the last two to three decades is the development of what Miller and Yudice have identified as a "legitimizing narrative" for these approaches (2002, p. 20). A narrative may be understood as a "form of meaning making" (Polkinghorne, 1987, p. 36), "one of the primary ways in which human beings make sense of the world" (Brophy, 2009, p. 42). Strom notes that, "Each city's narrative is unique, but 'culture as development' has become such a prevalent strategy that variations on these stories can be found in cities throughout the United States" (Strom, 2003, p. 261.)

The narratives utilized by the proponents of creative economy strategies include a "suspect utopianism of creative labour," a "contradiction-free marriage of culture and economics," and "special and exceptional claims of the creative industries" (Banks & O'Connor, 2009, pp. 366-367). Moreover, the definitions and boundaries of cultural work and industries are contested (Galloway & Dunlap, 2007; Hesmondhalgh, 2002). Research on the phenomenon of arts and culture-based development has become quite extensive in the academic literature related to planning, development studies, tourism studies, and urban affairs. Much of the research has implicitly supported the "upbeat globalist narrative" and focused on the positive implications of arts and culture-based development for localities and regions (Banks & O'Connor, 2009, p. 36). As already noted, research demonstrating the mixed impacts of arts and culture-based development strategies has also emerged, although such studies are still less common than their "creative economy" counterparts.

As arts and culture-based strategies have multiplied, cultural planning has taken on new life for localities and regions. However, the quality, scope, and impact of such planning efforts vary widely. Mercer recounts, "Cultural planning at its worst can produce the best so-called cultural centre in the world surrounded by decaying neighbourhoods, deserted streets, minimal public transport, homeless families and bankrupt businesses" (2006, p. 7). As opposed to an instrumentalist orientation motivated by a dominant economic lens, Mercer advocates a holistic approach to cultural planning entailing the "strategic and integral use of cultural resources in community development" (2006, p. 8).

A report from the Urban Institute has highlighted a disconnect between the emphasis American cities are providing to arts and culture and the relative inattention they are giving to the local cultural way of life as

> … cities have done less to recognize and systematically promote the cultural lives of urban neighborhoods and their residents. When cultural agencies do not consciously and actively incorporate communities and their needs into cultural development, their policies and programs can in fact conflict with and threaten the cultural health of urban neighborhoods (Rosenstein, 2009, p. 1).

The cultivation and branding of arts districts is another currently common strategy. While this approach may highlight a cluster of assets that exist in one neighborhood or village center and lead to further development and investment there, it may also have more deleterious results, as Markusen has suggested. "One of the great disservices of the naming and imposing of cultural districts from above is that it suggests that all other neighborhoods are not culturally interesting or vibrant" (2006, p. 26).

Thinking about art and culture as a tool for development, emphasizes a more instrumental, economic perspective. Contrasting approaches to arts and culture-based development do exist. These alternative strands go by many names including community arts, community-based arts, and community cultural development. Community cultural development is a form of community-artist collaboration in order to explore concerns and express identity in ways that build capacity and lead to positive social change (Goldbard, 2006, p. 20).

Community-based art is "a field in which artists, collaborating with people whose lives directly inform the subject matter, explore collective meaning" (Cohen-Cruz, 2005, p. 1). Examples of community cultural development efforts, both historical and contemporary, abound. Goldbard provides a comprehensive historical sketch of the field in her book, *New Creative Community: The Art of Cultural Development* (2006, pp. 101-138).

Community-based arts approaches have been tightly linked with democratic goals and embodied in terms such as cultural citizenship and cultural democracy (Graves, 2005). The Ford Foundation's Animating Democracy Project, undertaken from 2000-04, supported 36 organizations utilizing arts and culture to enhance civic dialogue. The initiative found that arts-based civic dialogue, "brought forward new voices, empowering disenfranchised groups and providing access to public dialogue and decision-making processes to people who had never before felt a welcoming entry point" (Korza, Shaffer Bacon, & Assaf, 2005, p. 83). Despite the real and potential contributions offered by community-based arts, the literature reveals that the prominent imaginary "art and culture as development" to which cities and regions increasingly subscribe tends to minimize these approaches.

Arts and culture-based development, then, takes many forms and has mixed effects. I am interested in the ways that it takes shape in specific sites, as a kind of localized "symbolic

economy," or a constellation of place ideas and images that influences and is shaped by economic and governance activities (Zukin, 1995).

Marginality

In the introduction to their book on urban imaginaries, Bender and Cinar observed,

In sum, we argue that a city is produced and sustained, that is, located, in such narratives that proliferate through the daily travels, transactions, and interactions of its dwellers, thereby shaping the collective imaginary (Bender & Cinar, 2007, p. xiv).

While this is true, it is only partly so, as Bender and Cinar neglect power and the amalgamation of institutions, policies, and conditions which enable certain narratives to travel more widely and be shared more prominently than others. Thus, what might be dubbed "narrative circulation" must be considered. While the lived experiences of residents do construct, challenge, and sustain ideas of place, their reach and impact often are limited. Such realities are why I attend to a third set of ideas in this study - those of the marginal.

The concept of marginality is relevant to this dissertation research on several levels. Marginality has been a "central theme in Western culture and thought" (Shields, 1991, p. 276). Described earlier, art and culture-based development holds potential to obscure and entrench margins, on the one hand, or to identify and celebrate margins, on the other hand. Development and planning, as Lefbevre (1991, 1996) argued, may serve as hegemonic vehicles that maintain dominant class positioning and interests.

Arts and culture-based development, for example, is intricately linked with strategies of community branding and place marketing (Jensen, 2005; Meethan, 2001). These strategies have been questioned "Culture may, then, be a convenient and frequently an interesting way to

promote a city. But the question recurs, whose culture is used in the construction of whose image of a city, for whom?" (Miles, 2007, p. 5). This is not simply a discursive question, but one with a wide range of policy and material manifestations (Jensen, 2005, 2007).

Even Richard Florida, perhaps the leading proponent of the creative economy, has noted, "Perhaps the most salient of what I consider the externalities of the creative age has to do with rising social and economic inequality. … The creative economy is giving rise to pronounced political and social polarization" (Florida, 2005, qtd in Stern & Seifert, 2008, p. 9). Public investment in culture is disproportionally based on large-scale projects and is externally focused on tourists or professional workers while the primary dividends for middle-to low-income residents are minimal and consist mostly of service sector jobs and trickle down effects (Stern and Seifert, 2008, p. 8). Stern & Seifert's review of the empirical research concerning urban creative economy strategies concluded that "as culture increases its share of the metropolitan economy, increasing inequality is a much more significant downside than gentrification" (Stern & Seifert, 2008, p. 3).

In considering marginality, I acknowledge the centrality of such inequalities - and the related need to attend to power and to those who may be marginalized in communities due to race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or other factors. I do, however, refer to marginality even more generally as a position or perspective, and, in doing so, draw not only from Lefebvre but also from Michel de Certeau and Herbert Marcuse. Marginality for some is a conscious alternative, a "choosing the margin" as a "profound edge," or a way to emphasize the importance of affiliating with the excluded (hooks, 2004, p. 156). De Certeau wrote about the ways the marginal proliferates, arguing the margins are "massive and pervasive" (1984, p. xvii). Rob Shields developed this contention, arguing "to be on the margins has implied exclusion from

the centre … margins become signifiers of everything 'centres' deny or repress; margins as 'the Other' become the condition of possibility of all social and cultural entities" (1991, p. 276).

I am not suggesting a blanket valorization of all things marginal. Rather, I propose to attend to those points where edges or margins become apparent. I employ Marcuse as a guide in this study for this purpose. In his last work, the philosopher described a capacity of art, its ability to illuminate conditions in which individuals are ensconced, to call attention to that which may be at the margins of the everyday, but which is nonetheless present (Marcuse, 1978).

Marcuse referred to processes of mystification as an expansion and refinement of the Marxian concept of alienation (see also Lefebvre, 1991; Shields, 1999, pp. 44-48). Roland Barthes is frequently cited as an originator of the term, but "the ideas of Barthes and Lefebvre were developed in dialogue and, for a period at least, converged in a common project" (Kelly, 2000, p. 79). Marcuse's usage of mystification is aligned largely with Lefebvre. Mystification refers to a type of veil over everyday life that reveals only its more banal features, and as a result: "We perceive everyday life only in its familiar, trivial, inauthentic guises" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 133). Mystification is a "collective process by which social relations, including power relations, are acted out in everyday life" (Kelly, 2000, pp. 85-86). It "prevents people from taking effective practical steps to overcome the alienation of their daily life" (Kelly, 2000, pp. 85-86).

A part of this mystification is bound up in power relations and the consequences of neoliberalism, in the "marginalization of all non-capitalist spaces and activities" (Shields, 1999, p. 179). Lefebvre called attention to the "subordination of space to money and capital," which "implies a quantification which extends from the monetary evaluation to the commercialisation of each plot of the entire space" where "space now becomes one of the new 'scarcities'" (qtd in Shields, 1999, p. 180).

I do not follow past analysts on alienation and mystification - who argue that such conditions constitute a determinative or all-encompassing part of our modern condition. I differ from this scholarship in my understanding of modernity. Significantly, I follow an emerging group of scholars who either dispute the concept of modernity (Latour, 1993) or suggest the omnipresence of multiple modernities (Appadurai, 2002; Taylor, 2004). Past scholarship on mystification helped to call attention to the role of power and capital in influencing the conditions of everyday citizen's lives. My concern with imaginaries is inseparable from concerns of power and control, representation and legitimacy. This research responds to calls for new ways to study these concerns in increasingly complex urban spaces, for the "reconstructed urban imaginary is a softer and more difficult to see form of social control" (Soja, 2002, p. 98).

De Certeau similarly argued for the relevance of margins in the study of sites. Spatiality for de Certeau constituted construction of bridges and frontiers (1984, pp. 123-130). He emphasized the centrality of the stories individuals tell about places, arguing such narratives function as forms of "spatial legislation," demarcating boundaries and enabling or erasing sets of possibilities and practices (1984, pp. 122-123). Place narratives construct boundaries, yet those borders are not impassable; instead the frontiers constructed by stories about the city are "spaces between" or "in-between" spaces (de Certeau, 1984, p. 127).

In *The Aesthetic Dimension*, Marcuse described the paradox that I outline in the current trend of arts-and-culture-based development: art, commodified, may entrench existing relations of power and economy; whereas art, realized, may illuminate and contest relations of power and economy. This does not refer to a politicized art, as Marcuse emphasizes, but to an innate and radical potential of art. Art, by taking reality and "re-presenting" it, is "committed to an emancipation of sensibility, imagination, and reason … and becomes a vehicle of recognition

and indictment" (Marcuse, 1978, p. 9). For Marcuse, art holds the promise of estrangement that may "lead to the emergence of a new consciousness and a new perception" (1978, p. 41).

I am interested in art's potential to illuminate the edges and margins, the places where contrasting imaginaries and meanings may be more visible. This is of interest, in and of itself, but perhaps of still greater interest when imaginaries of the role of art itself are involved. Art and its role in a place may be a part of the "mystified reality" of commodification and inequality, but Marcuse argues that art's critical purpose is also to subvert and accuse that understanding of reality (1978, pp. 8-9).

As de Certeau has observed, "every culture proliferates along its margins," generating a multitude of interruptions, or possibilities. However, he states that "in the official imaginary, they are noted only as exceptions or marginal events" (1984, p. 140). I contend that attending to the exceptional and marginal, cultural meanings and practices outside the bounds of the official imaginary, is a worthwhile endeavor.

Chapter Summary

My study is centrally concerned with theory and I engaged with relevant conceptual constructs throughout the research process. My analytical frame is concerned with the intersections of the scholarly literature on imaginaries and place identity, art and culture-based development and marginality. I engage with scholarship on imaginaries offered by Charles Taylor and a number of urban scholars, including Bender and Cinar; with spatial theory scholarship pioneered by Henri Lefebvre and developed by other scholars including Rob Shields and Edward Soja; and with scholarship on art and marginality, from Michel de Certeau and Herbert Marcuse. My motivating query in this case concerns exactly what is meant by attempts

to make a city "synonymous" with arts and culture. What does such a process entail? What differing ideas of place and of arts and culture, are encountered and how do those ideas interact with and influence the process of place identification? Are concerns for marginal groups present in processes of place identity construction and change? Are marginal groups included or excluded in such processes and in the arts and cultural life of the city? I explore these and related questions in the context of a specific community, Roanoke, Virginia. The next chapter outlines my research design and methodological approach.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Research Design

Overview and Research Questions

I elected to examine urban imaginaries through an ethnographic case study. In this chapter, I outline my methodological approach and discuss each of its constituent components as well as some of its implications. My research design was guided by a belief that exploring the experiences of some of the central actors engaged in two specific, significant, and far reaching arts activities in Roanoke, the arts and cultural plan and the MAF, would permit a micro-level, field-based focus on the construction and alteration of cultural imaginaries that is otherwise uncommon in the scholarly literature. By exploring these activities and the choice processes associated with each, I hope to contribute to a better understanding of the ways that place-based imaginaries and especially cultural imaginaries, are constructed, contested and altered.

The following methodology section consists of:

- An overview of the strategy of inquiry;

- A description of the research paradigm and qualitative approach;

- A definition of what I take to be an interdisciplinary, theory-based perspective;

- An explanation of the ethnographic case study design and a justification of case selection and sampling;

- A listing of data collection strategies;

- An account of interviewing, the study's primary data collection strategy;

- A depiction of participant observation, a supplemental information gathering strategy;

- A detailing of archival and documentary materials, a supplemental data strategy;

- A synopsis of data analysis procedures;

- An accounting of measures to maximize validity;

- A tabulation of reliability concerns;

- An analysis of ethical considerations;

- A description of data reporting format; and

- A discussion of possible research limitations.

Overview of the Strategy of Inquiry

The constructivist and critical paradigms underpinned my research. I utilized an interdisciplinary, theory-based perspective and a qualitative research approach. I selected a single-site ethnographic case study and analyzed data collected from interviews, supplemented by participant observation and by unobtrusive data gathered from documentary and archival materials. I describe each of the components of this framework in the sections that follow.

Paradigms

A researcher's approach to problems is guided, although not necessarily prescribed, by particular paradigmatic views. For Denzin and Lincoln, a paradigm is "a basic set of beliefs that guide action" (qtd in Bailey, 2007, p. 50). There are a number of lenses through which researchers may approach problems (Bailey, 2007; Cresswell, 2009). My approach aligns with those that emphasize the importance of flexibility in responding to emergent data. I recognized the danger of adhering too rigidly to any predetermined set of guidelines.

My research approach is a mélange of the constructivist and critical paradigms. A constructivist lens assumes multiple realities, co-created understandings of phenomena, and naturalistic procedures (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 32). Analysts employing this frame commit

to examining meanings, to exploring how individuals understand their places and situations and to avoiding any pre-imposition of theory. Rather than seeking to impose a frame on the data, I engaged in research so as to test, refine and develop theory on the basis of the information I had gathered.

I assumed that Roanoke's cultural imaginary contained multiple meanings of place in varying stages of existence and becoming, and that the professionals responsible for Roanoke's art and cultural plan and the MAF organizers were necessarily engaged in a process of discovery, negotiated amongst an array of varied meanings and implications. This process both influenced and was shaped by other prevailing imaginaries, both global and local.

Critical theory encompasses many theorists, from Marx to Marcuse, many associated with the "Frankfurt School" (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Cresswell, 2009). These scholars are united by a shared focus on issues of power and justice amidst interactions of economic, political, social, cultural, and ethical concerns, discourses, and institutions (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008, p. 404-5). Critical researchers also emphasize the constructed and contested nature of experience and knowledge (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008, p. 404-5).

Critical theory perspectives influenced my research design. Such views contrast with more positivist approaches which suggest that researchers should strive for a neutral stance. Critical theorists hold that a researcher not only adopts a paradigm, but is also enmeshed within a set of situated positions, ways of looking at the world influenced by background, gender, geography, class, and other factors (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 28).

I am profoundly interested in how communities take shape and develop, as well as in the role of art and culture in that process. Underlying these interests is a concern for equity and inclusion and whether and how such can result from engaged and deliberative democracy. I am

interested in how marginal populations and the interests of marginal groups, are considered and engaged in place identity and arts and culture-based development processes. Art, in addition to its other functions, may also be a vehicle to help communities grapple with problems of coexistence, of centers and edges, of inclusion and exclusion.

Theory-based and Interdisciplinary Perspective

My study applied an inductive logic that employed theory as a touchstone and guide throughout while simultaneously seeking to "develop new theoretical insights"(Luker, 2008, p. 191). Additionally, I aspired to approach the research problem through a process of interdisciplinary integration. Interdisciplinary integration seeks to examine issues through multiple disciplinary frames. It necessitates "critically evaluating and creatively combining ideas and knowledge to form a new whole or cognitive advancement" (Repko, 2008, p. 116). This "new whole" is something greater than a simple combination of parts and necessitates a critical and creative process of blending insights and knowledge from multiple domains of knowledge. This goal implies an iterative, or "salsa-dancing," approach to the research process (Luker, 2008).

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research has been defined in a number of ways including "as a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Cresswell, 2009, p. 4) and as a way to "study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 4).

Cresswell reviewed descriptions of qualitative research and identified some common characteristics:

- Research occurs in natural settings;

- Where the researcher is the key instrument;

- Utilizes multiple sources of data;

- Performs inductive data analysis;

- Keeps the focus on participants' meanings;

- Views problems through a theoretical lens;

- Makes interpretations; and

- Develops a holistic account of the issue or problem studied (2009, p. 176)

My research study shared each of these attributes. The problem of imaginaries was examined in a particular site, a natural setting where individuals were and are addressing the issue. I was responsible for collecting the data, using multiple data collection methods, in line with best practice recommendations (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Yin, 2009). My research design was emergent rather than static, meaning "the initial plan for research cannot be tightly prescribed and phases of the process may change or shift after the researcher enters the field and begins to collect data" (Cresswell, 2009, p. 175). My analysis sought to focus on the meaning(s) that participants voiced. This project was an "enterprise of discovery" (Luker, 2008, p. 36).

My study was concerned with the key actors involved in formulating Roanoke's arts and cultural plan and shaping its cultural imaginary, and the organizers of the Roanoke Marginal Arts Festival. I did not pre-select participants, but used the case research to identify the individuals and organizations most active in the city's arts and culture scene. For each of the two objects of

study, I was less interested in evaluating performance than in discerning meanings, the ways that actors encountered, navigated and produced differing ideas of the city.

The Ethnographic Case Study Research Design

A case is "a specific, a complex, functioning thing" (Stake, 1995, p. 2). A case study investigates a phenomenon in depth (Yin, 2009, p. 18). Cresswell describes case analysis as a strategy of inquiry valuable to researchers whose interest is to "explore in depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals" (2009, p. 13).

A case study may incorporate a number of different data collection strategies. Such analyses represent an approach to research design rather than a methodology or technique (Hamel, Dufour, & Fortin, 1993).

Case studies entail a systematic engagement with the description and analysis of particular manifestations of a phenomenon. My research questions fit well with overall case study considerations. They were exploratory "how" and "why" questions which Yin has described as often "likely to lead to the use of case studies" (2009, p. 9).

Ethnographic strategies have a historic association with anthropology, but are now also common in a number of fields (Gottlieb, 2006). This evolution has led to varying definitions of ethnography. The qualifier, "ethnographic," denotes a set of strategies that utilize some form of participant observation as one of the data collection methods and seek to understand some part of the world through the everyday experiences of people (Crang & Cook, 2007, p. 1). I describe this approach in more detail in the data collection section below.

Case Selection and Sampling

The concept of theoretical sampling guided my investigative approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The number of cases or samples is of secondary importance in this method to the potential theoretical insights that may be gained from each person or setting. In this case, for example, I selected Roanoke as a site likely to inform understanding of urban imaginaries.

I used a particular kind of single-case study, an embedded design, "which can serve as an important device for focusing a case study inquiry" (Yin, 2009, p. 52). Yin employs the term embedded to denote those case analyses that involve one or more sub-units. For my purposes, Roanoke, Virginia is a single case. Yet, within that analytic focus, I concentrated, as noted, on two sub-units: the central interests and actors involved in the creation of the city's arts and cultural plan and those individuals and groups in the creation and staging of the Roanoke Marginal Arts Festival.

I selected my focus and sub-units both purposefully and opportunistically. The case represents a purposeful sampling of sites that are "information rich" (Bailey, 2007, 64). Roanoke is actively engaged in efforts to become a place "synonymous with arts and culture" (Carr, personal communication, 2011). Chapter 4 contains historical, contemporary, cultural and socio-economic context for my selection and study of Roanoke. I then continue the discussion by describing Roanoke's current arts and cultural aspirations in Chapter 5.

Within Roanoke, each of the two efforts examined (the arts and cultural plan and the MAF) was far-reaching, active, and highly visible and included a number of organizations, interests, and individuals. Moreover, I accurately suspected that ideas of place, of art, and of marginality would be discussed and negotiated by the main actors involved with each of the two activities.

This was also an opportunistic sampling due to timeliness, access, and proximity. My research began as the arts and cultural planning process was getting underway. My interviews occurred while process-related experiences were fresh in participants' minds. The 2011 MAF, for instance, took place during my research. In each of the two activities, the "gatekeepers" were aware of my research interests and me, and were willing to cooperate. Data collection took place in my home community, lessening barriers of time, travel, and cost. The case seemed likely to have both intrinsic significance and to offer theoretical insights, as a more or less typical example of the processes through which intersecting imaginaries of art, place and marginality are negotiated by arts activists, political officials, and cultural leaders in a small city (Yin, 2009, p. 48; Stake, 1995, p. 3).

Data Collection Approach and Strategies

My study data consisted primarily of key informant interviews, supplemented by participant observation and unobtrusive data drawn from public and private archival materials. Prior to commencing data collection, I sought and obtained approval from the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board. The IRB approval form is included as Appendix A of this study.

Interviews

Marshall and Rossman have described interviews as conversations for the purpose of gathering information (1999; Berg, 2001). Interviews are a common data collection technique, but have been subject to critiques recently due in part to their proliferation and ubiquity (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001). I elected to interview individuals in order to aid in the process of identifying participant meaning-making. Qualitative interviews explore "the ways in which subjects experience and understand their world. [Interviews] provide a unique access to the lived

world of the subjects, who in their own words describe their activities, experiences and opinions" (Steiner, 2007, p. 9).

I conducted in-depth, semi-structured ethnographic interviews. With this approach, the researcher asks study participants questions on the same themes or topics, but may vary the wording and order. The semi-structured format also allows interviewers latitude to ask clarifying or exploratory questions, or to offer different queries altogether, depending on the situation (Piergiorgio, 2003, p. 270).

Interviews were semi-structured, to keep questions focused on the construction of participant meanings surrounding art, place, and marginality in Roanoke and the role of the arts and cultural plan and of the MAF in constructing or shaping the urban cultural imaginary. The semi-structured interview "gives both the interviewer and the respondent ample freedom, while at the same time ensuring that all the relevant themes are dealt with and all the necessary information collected" (Piergiorgio, 2003, p. 270).

In addition, the interviews were "ethnographic," which reflects an emphasis on in-depth interviewing. Interviews were my primary data collection strategy, due to their potential to develop the thick description that is often a hallmark of qualitative, ethnographic studies. I also utilized some serial interviews (two or more interviews with the same individuals during a specified time frame). I interviewed 17 individuals and conducted follow-up interviews with five of those individuals.

The serial approach minimized some of the limitations of "one-off" interviews by generating more engaged connections with a select number of respondents over time. I chose interviewees for follow-up based on two rationales: the significance of their role in the activity and whether insights they offered in the initial interview required further exploration. Serial

interviewing offers several advantages. First, it can even out the relationship between the researcher and those being studied by creating a more engaged and reciprocal conversation environment. Second, it can enable "sufficient time, space, and trust to plumb the depths of people's taken for granted biographies and life-worlds" (Crang & Cook, 2007, pp. 74-75).

My interview protocol contained nine primary questions and some additional sub-questions.   That question schedule appears in Appendix B. I practiced the questions in advance, in order to become sufficiently familiar with the queries to conduct the interviews informally and conversationally. Moreover, my question list served as a touchstone, not as a script, enabling me, as I listened, to identify areas that were missed or that required follow-up.

I first identified a small number of initial interviewees, with whom I had previously met prior to my research. The respondents identified other possible interview subjects, a modified "snowball" sampling strategy (Patton, 2002). I contacted all interviewees by e-mail, providing a description of the study and inviting them to sit for an interview. I conducted all interviews in person and in settings preferable to the respondent, such as offices, meeting rooms, or a café. I interviewed all 17 respondents during the March-September 2011 time frame. Five of the original 17 respondents participated in follow-up interviews during September and October of 2011.

I provided all respondents with an electronic copy of my approved IRB consent form for review prior to the interview. On the date of our scheduled conversation, interviewees received a printed version of the form for signature (form is included as Appendix C). All interviews were recorded utilizing a digital audio recording device and later transcribed verbatim. Interviews lasted an average of 65 minutes.

I completed field notes on the basis of nine formal participant observation experiences. These included three public input sessions for Roanoke's arts and cultural plan, a public meeting held by the Taubman Museum of Art, and five 2011 Marginal Arts Festival events.   In addition to these observations, I gathered 60 pages of notes in field journals in which I recorded observations and impressions from 15 meetings of neighborhood organizations in Roanoke, seven gallery and arts institution visits, nine walking expeditions in the city, and the 17 initial and five follow-up interviews

This variety of observation experiences was in keeping with recommendations for participant observation research so as to ensure the design "remain(s) flexible both before and throughout the actual research" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 94).

The line between observer and participant observer is fluid. I use the term "participant observation," not as a strict boundary, but rather as a "preliminary decision about [my] role in the setting without worrying which label to attach to it" (Bailey, 2007, p. 81).   As mentioned above, I collected observation data in two ways, through the use of field notes and via a field journal. Field notes are written notes of an observed event or period of time in a place. As such, however subjective, they are primarily descriptive in character. A field journal is a place to record impressions, feelings, and thoughts arising from a field observation. They are less purely descriptive in character. In order to capture accurately my description of events in the setting, I completed abbreviated hand-written notes immediately and then wrote more detailed notes within 72 hours of the activity or event witnessed.

Five propositions guided my recording of observation notes: record key words and phrases while at the scene, make notes about event sequencing, limit the actual time in the setting

to shorter intervals, write field notes as soon as possible upon exiting the setting, and write notes completely before sharing with others (Berg, 2001, pp. 160-161). In terms of what to record while observing, I attended to six layers of description identified by Cloke, et al.: the location of the setting, the physical space of the setting, the interaction of others in the setting, my participation in interactions in the setting, my reflections on the research process, and generalized self-reflections (qtd in Crang and Cook, 2007, pp. 51-52).

Access is often a key challenge to ethnographic participant observation (see Berg, 2001; Crang & Cook, 2007). My observations, however, were limited to public events and settings, minimizing their invasiveness.

Documentary and Archival Materials

I collected data from documents, ranging from letters to news articles to organizational materials. While limited in usefulness as a stand-alone data source, "documentary information is likely to be relevant to every case study topic" (Yin, 2009, p. 101). I certainly found this to be the case, as documentary and archival data provided essential historical context on the arts and cultural scene in Roanoke.

I reviewed data from sources that included:

- Marginal Arts Festival brochures and web-sites;

- Summary notes from over 100 Collab Fest sessions (explained in Chapter 7);

- Articles from the *Roanoke Times* newspaper (the city's newspaper of record) dealing with the Marginal Arts Festival, the arts and cultural plan, and the arts and cultural scene in Roanoke;

- Power-points and materials provided at public sessions for the arts and cultural plan process:

- Personal correspondence with interviewees;

- Organizational materials from both web-sites and print sources from such
  entities as the Taubman Museum of Art and the Arts Council of the Blue Ridge:

- Drafts and final versions of the Roanoke Arts and Cultural Plan;

- Meeting minutes from Roanoke neighborhood organizations, including the
  Roanoke Neighborhood Advocates;

- Oral histories from city residents archived in the Virginia Room of the Roanoke
  Main Library; and

- Histories of Roanoke, Virginia (see bibliography).

This information was relevant in helping me identify the differing ideas, narratives, and imaginaries of art, place, and marginality in Roanoke. In several instances, documents helped illuminate observation opportunities that I was then able to undertake.

Data Analysis Procedures

Each of the three collection strategies described above generated data for analysis. Information collected included the documents mentioned above, interview transcripts, and field notes and field journal entries resulting from participant observation experiences. The volume of data proved a challenge, as did selecting techniques for making sense of it.

I coded the collected information through a process of initial sorting to divide material into more manageable chunks, and a secondary process of focused coding, which separated the larger chunks of data into more specific categories (Bailey, 2007, pp. 128-129). I also wrote brief memos "regarding insights … derive[d] from coding and reflecting on the data" (Bailey, 2007, p. 133).

I briefly experimented with the qualitative data analysis software NVivo to assist with the coding process. In the end, however, I analyzed my data by hand through a three-step process.

First, I undertook initial coding with colored highlighters, to select and label similar elements in the data. Then, I reviewed and grouped similar elements into thematic areas. In other words, the individual pieces of data were coded, and then grouped that information into categories, after a certain amount of testing and experimenting with both category labels and variations.

Second, following that process, I looked for patterns or themes, both within categories and between and across areas. This process was complex, as I initially separated data from each set of respondents by their involvement with either the arts and cultural plan process or the MAF. I had to look within the activity-specific data while also comparing the two activity domains in order to identify cross-cutting issues and themes that pertained to the broader Roanoke cultural imaginary.

Finally, my analysis led me to revisit my research questions and compare the gathered information with my theoretical framing ideas in order to ascertain the analytical and conceptual significance of the information collected. While I have discussed this as a sequential process, the work was in fact iterative in character, requiring much revisiting and continual attention throughout the analysis period.

I sought to identify themes related to respondent processes of meaning construction and negotiation around the urban cultural imaginary, and related concepts of art, place, and marginality. I examined the data with an eye to micro-level processes as well as to identify the relationships of key ideas and findings to the larger macro-level imaginaries of art, place and marginality.

This sort of analysis is necessarily subjective, but through the use of case study protocol, coding, and memoing, I wanted to make clear my "logic of interpretation" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 117), a "process of bringing order, structure, and interpretation to the mass of collected data" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 150).

Validity

Validity denotes a different set of concerns for qualitative research than for quantitative research (Cresswell, 2009, p. 190). The term refers to the accuracy of findings for qualitative researchers, but not in a sense that is statistically generalizable. Rather, qualitative research's strengths lie in particularity, rather than generalizability (Cresswell, 2009, p. 193). Luker has argued qualitative research is distinguished by its use of a "logic of discovery," rather than a "logic of verification." Accordingly, as mentioned above, this qualitative inquiry aimed to generate theory (Luker, 2008, p. 125). For a qualitative researcher, validity claims may be strengthened by the employment of particular strategies (Cresswell, 2009, p. 190) or tactics (Yin, 2009, p. 41). I strove to enhance my study's validity using data triangulation and member checking and reflexivity, as described in the following sections.

Data Triangulation

Following Yin and others, my study design included multiple sources of evidence, which allowed for, "the development of converging lines of inquiry, a process of triangulation and corroboration." These diverse information sources enabled me to explore the phenomenon of imaginaries, their intersections, and the processes of negotiation concerning them (Yin, 2009, pp. 115-116).

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Member Checking

In keeping with the ethnographic orientation of my project and with accepted practice for increasing qualitative research validity, I worked with respondents to gain their input concerning verification of matters of fact in their interviews. Their comments proved useful in crafting the case study narratives. As Yin has observed, "from a methodological standpoint, the corrections made through this process will enhance the accuracy of the case study, hence increasing the construct validity of the study" (2009, p. 183).

Reflexivity

I strove to demonstrate and practice reflexivity in my role as researcher and to make any biases transparent as "good qualitative research contains comments by the researchers about how their interpretations of the findings is shaped by their background such as their gender, culture, history, and socioeconomic origin" (Cresswell, 2009, p. 192).

Reliability

Reliability is a separate methodological concern dealing with consistency, whether the research procedures and design may be repeated in such a way that similar results could conceivably be attained. To enhance reliability, I have detailed my approach to the study, developed and utilized a case study protocol, documented the chain of evidence, and employed clear and consistent data analysis procedures (Cresswell, 2009, p. 190; Yin, 2009, p. 41).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are very important to qualitative researchers (Cresswell, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 1989). I encountered a number of ethical concerns in this study. My task

as an engaged researcher was to be open about my positioning, to understand the enabling limits of my differing roles, and to be cognizant of and responsive to ethical concerns as they arose.

I worked with some of the interviewees in multiple ways, not solely as a researcher. As such, I strove to ensure that study respondents fully understood my role, my research purposes, and the manner that collected information would be used.

My positioning required not just the informed consent of all participants, which is crucial, but also a type of process consent, a "checking at each stage to be sure participants still want to be part of the project" as well as a "relational ethics … that recognizes and values mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between researcher and researched, and between researchers and the communities in which they live and work" (Ellis in Denzin and Giardina, 2007, p. 211).

I struggled in data reporting with my obligation to respect the privacy and ethical concerns of all participants. For example, the concern for privacy led me to use pseudonyms for my interview respondents. I realized during the writing process, however, that identifying the organizational role of many respondents was often essential to understanding the context of their comments. Such role-based identification makes it possible, in a small city like Roanoke, to identify participants through local knowledge or research. I included the professional role of interviewees, despite the possible compromise of absolute confidentiality, since such identification provided essential information and none of my respondents objected. In order to maintain consistency and further my goal of interviewee confidentiality, I used pseudonyms throughout the dissertation whenever sources referred to a respondent by name or title.

Interviews are almost always freighted with concerns about power, with the relative inequality of the interviewer and interviewee. As Bourdieu wrote, the interview is, above all, a social relationship, and researchers must cultivate a kind of "reflex reflexivity," that "allows one

to perceive and monitor *on the spot,* as the interview is actually taking place, the effects of the social structure within which it is occurring" (1999, p. 608).

Since I focused on two public efforts and interviewed largely arts community leaders and public officials, my research involved only a minimal amount of social distancing. In other words, while I did differ from my respondents in various ways, our differences were not necessarily large. All of my interviewees were college educated and English speaking, and most would be classified as middle to upper income. Thus, class, education level, and language were not barriers as I interviewed the respondents.

My task as interviewer was still intrusive, but my focus on ethnographic and serial interviews did help to reduce any power discrepancies through familiarity. I also sought to practice an interviewing approach that modeled non-violence and minimized the distances between respondents and me (see Bourdieu, 1999).

I was not intimately familiar with any of my interviewees, but had met and worked with some of them in professional settings. As a result, some ethical muddiness arose as the research progressed. After the completion of Roanoke's arts and cultural plan in August 2011, for example, the City's Arts and Culture Coordinator presented the effort to the Roanoke Neighborhood Advocates (RNA), a city commission on which I serve. The official requested that the funding proposals to the city from neighborhood groups be required, or strongly encouraged, to include an arts and culture component. The RNA administers the grants program for neighborhoods. Fortunately, due to previous communications and positive relationships with both RNA members and the city's Arts and Culture Coordinator, I did not feel at all compromised in that situation. Instead, I was able to offer RNA members context on the planning process and to help explain to the City official, in later conversation, why we decided to

award extra points for an arts and cultural component in grant proposals, but were not going to require such a feature.

I was multiply positioned as a citizen of the city, as an appointed city official in a limited role, as a community development professional, and as a doctoral student researcher. This presented both opportunities and challenges necessitating a constant attention to my evolving relationships with the respondents. It required, in Bourdieu's apt phrase, an on-going reflex reflexivity.

I took the following steps to ensure respondents were protected and informed:

- Provided each interviewee a written description of my research study and objectives;

- Secured respondents' written permission for conducting an interview;

- Provided interviewees with opportunities for continuing comment and clarification after our interview;

- Maintained the confidentiality of respondents through the use of pseudonyms and discretion in conversations with other subjects; and,

- Secured IRB approval and followed formal IRB procedures for all stages of the data collection process.

Reporting the Data

In keeping with the qualitative, naturalistic character of the study, I report the final data in a descriptive narrative format. I aimed for "rich, thick description" in reporting the findings (Cresswell, 2009, p. 191). Cresswell suggests that such an emphasis on detail and specificity improves the validity of findings (2009, p. 192). Chapter 4 provides a description of the case

site, past and present, that is intended to provide an empirical base for my study. I depict

Roanoke's ongoing arts and culture scene in similar detail in Chapter 5.

For each of my two case sub-units, analyzed in Chapters 6 and 7, I used an unsequenced, descriptive data-reporting format (Yin, 2009, pp. 178-179). I selected my first research question, concerning the principal actors in Roanoke's cultural imaginary, and reported the data based on some of the key actors identified through my study of that sub-unit, whether the arts and cultural plan or the MAF. Within that format, however, I did seek "completeness" in sharing information that revealed key facets relevant to my other three research questions (Yin, 2009, p. 179). My analysis in Chapter 8 utilizes a more thematic approach focused on my key findings.

This study's consideration of spatial identity also necessitated attention to the specific ways that respondents' experience daily life. Everyday life is both a historical construction and an on-going process. A sense of place meaning may be inferred through a visit to a city center, in a tourism brochure or in a conversation with a resident. If this initial sense of a place's identity may indeed be instructive, it is nonetheless limited, just as an astronomer's sighting of a new planet in a far off solar system, while significant, reveals little about the conditions that exist there.

So, in an attempt to relate some sense of both multiplicity and particularity, while acknowledging the limitations of any single form of place description, Chapters 5-7 aspires to offer a thick description through narrative and vignettes that together comprises a kind of montage, a set of images that reveals the different facets of the constructed, evolving, and contested cultural imaginary of the city of Roanoke. Some of these items are historical, drawn from background research, archived oral histories, and work by historians. A few matters I treat

are personal, drawn from my experiences and field observation. Some reflect more recent

events, news accounts, and interviews. A few are decidedly impressionistic or conceptual.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study has several possible limiting factors including generalizability,

comprehensiveness, and researcher bias. My study is qualitative and place-specific, raising the

question of whether its results may be generalized. In my view, as discussed in the section on

reliability, my focus on particularity, thick description, and theoretical significance strengthens

the potential transferability of this study's findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schram 2003).

Transferability refers to the ways that knowledge and insights generated may be assessed for

potential application in other contexts and may contribute towards theoretical formulation and

modification.

Comprehensiveness represents another potential concern. I do not provide a

comprehensive description of all of the arts and culture institutions or activities in Roanoke.

Some have described Roanoke, for example, as a "festival city," and I touch only on a few of the

many fairs and celebrations that are important to the local cultural geography. There are also

numerous sites for informal arts activities, yet an exhaustive identification of these falls outside

the scope of this study. A possible limitation of my study is its narrow focus on a number of key

actors for each of the two sub-units, the arts and cultural plan and the Marginal Arts Festival. By

focusing on the principals, I risk providing a limited view of the larger context in Roanoke.

However, I have endeavored to remain flexible, to allow possible respondents and areas of

inquiry to emerge from the data. My aim was not simply to tell the story of the "bigger fish," but

also to learn something of the waters in which they swim, the currents in which they were aided

or blocked by other participants, the roles of the smaller fish with which they engaged, and the activities of the larger fish with which they allied or clashed. Put differently, I do augment my interview data with observation notes and documentary data aimed at contextualizing that information.

A third possible limitation concerns researcher bias. Qualitative studies require the researcher to choose foci, perceptual interpretations, and formative assumptions. Such selections are necessarily subjective. I have sought to make my choices as transparent and clear to the readers, and to myself, as possible. While this approach does not eliminate possible partiality, it illuminates the potential biases that may exist and allows the reader to decide if they unduly colored the findings.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined my approach to the study of urban imaginaries. I detailed my research design and included information concerning the choices I made and the potential biases and limitations that may accompany those decisions.   My approach utilizes an ethnographic approach that explored the experiences and understandings of key actors engaged in two case sub-units: the Arts and Culture Planning Process and the MAF. Through a micro-level focus on these two cases, I peer into the city's evolving and multiple urban cultural imaginaries.

Chapter 4: Roanoke, Virginia: An Overview of Its Past and Present

Overview

This chapter has three aims,

- To provide some historical and recent context for my case study;

- To illuminate some of the conditions and events which have given rise to Roanoke's construction and some of its spatial imaginaries; and

- Ethnographically, to lay the groundwork for a thick description of the research site and the lives of the people there.

In examining Roanoke's past, I chose to focus on place imaginaries and marginality. By place imaginaries, I refer to the various ways that individuals, businesses, organizations, and officials have actively sought to influence Roanoke's identity. Such place-shaping includes marketing and attraction efforts by boosters. By marginality, I mean how individuals and groups that have been located near the fringes of the community, due to such factors as geographic, social or economic placement have nonetheless significantly contributed to Roanoke's place imaginary. Imaginaries of place and conditions of marginality are contested domains, and sites of conflict.

This chapter includes the following sections:

- A City Takes Shape: From Great Lick to 20th Century Roanoke;

- Historical Margins in Roanoke;

- Shaping 21st Century Roanoke

- Roanoke's 21st Century Margins

A City Takes Shape: From Great Lick to 20th Century Roanoke

I.M. Warren and Gertrude Blair each compiled histories of Roanoke during the years following the Great Depression. Each author's volume appeared in 1940. Both writers embarked on their efforts while employed by the New Deal's Federal Writers Project, established by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The Project hired writers throughout the United States to compose travel guides, collect oral histories, and capture stories of historical and regional significance. Warren and Blair offered similar perspectives of the early history of the region now known as Roanoke and the Roanoke Valley.

> The Toteras made a village near the lick and … used the trail of the animals, deepened
> them, and, marching single-file, kept them to a width of eighteen inches. North and
> south, east and west, ran the narrow ruts, worn bare with the padding feet of beats, the
> light tread of the Indian's moccasin. Near the big lick ran the Great Path, which led from
> the north to the deep south, and westward across the Appalachians. Another trail came
> from the east, crossing the Blue Ridge, and meeting the north-south route at the lick. The
> site became a favorite camping ground for the Indians, who came to hunt, to "make" slat,
> or who, with squaws and children, halted there to break the hardships of a long journey.
> For uncounted years, the lick remained the meeting place of beast and Indian (Warren,
> 1940, pp 2-3).

Blair described the appeal of the Roanoke Valley region to its earliest inhabitants:

> Big Lick and its early importance lay largely in two facts: the road from the north and
> the east converged at this point, and the trail already made by the Indians through the
> lovely Roanoke Valley gave to the pioneers a foretaste of the Promised Land, which they
> were eager to explore. Here too at the Salt Licks were to be found plenty of game for the

tired and hungry traveler; abundant springs of crystal clear water; mild climate; the high mountains, protecting this valley from high and harsh winds, as often his only couch was on or near the banks of some silvery stream" (1940, p. 10).

Native Americans had burned off hundreds of acres around the marshes, which were located near today's city center (White, 1982, p. 3). The marshes were fed by saline springs and buffalo, deer, and other creatures came to lick the salt. Indians cleared the surrounding brush to create pasture and hunting access. Early western travelers christened this area the Great Lick, the Long Lick, and, later, the Big Lick. By 1742, at least nine families dwelled in the Roanoke Valley and residents formed a regional militia company (White, 1982, p. 4).

Many early settlers arrived from the north through the larger Shenandoah Valley via what became known as the Great Wagon Road. Western travelers followed the road from Philadelphia, past Harper's Ferry, down the Shenandoah Valley, and through the Cumberland Gap into Kentucky. Others arrived across the Blue Ridge Mountains from eastern settlements. The immigrants were often newly arrived Scots-Irish, English, German, and Dutch individuals and families who, "travelled on foot or on horseback, carrying their household goods on pack horses" (Warren, 1940, p. 7). They came to the Roanoke Valley as "prospective home seekers and land speculators" (Warren, 1940, p. 8). Roanoke remained mostly marsh and pasture during the first half of the 19th century, although a small community consisting of homes, a store and a mill gradually developed.

The identity of this early community was contested during the middle 1800s as evidenced by its physical location and by its name. Enterprising residents successfully petitioned the Virginia General Assembly for a town charter in 1835. The community was initially called Gainesborough, or "Gainesboro," as it more commonly came to be spelled. Most residents,

however, still referred to the town as Big Lick. The Tennessee and Virginia Railroad

constructed a line in 1852 about a mile from the small town. Community businesses began to

locate closer to the track, forging the birth of two villages, as Clare White recounted in her 1982

history of the city,

> The immediate effect of the Virginia and Tennessee [railroad] was to act as a magnet for
>
> the little village of Gainesborough, or Big Lick as it was more often called. The depot for
>
> the line was located on Commerce (Second) Street north of the track, and the stores
>
> gradually moved near it, followed by churches and homes. Thus was begun a new Big
>
> Lick, while Gainesborough became known as Old Lick. Thus was also begun the nucleus
>
> of the City of Roanoke (White, 1982, p. 49).

The Civil War created more change in the evolving community. In 1865 federal cavalry

troops destroyed Big Lick and burned the depot, leaving behind a place that "resembled a ghost

town…[that] teetered on the edge of ruin" (Dotson, 2007, p. 4) during the decade or so following

the conflict. Big Lick, in 1880, consisted of a small collection of churches, general stores,

blacksmith shops, saloons, and tobacco warehouses with just 669 residents (Dotson, 2007, p. 4).

Most of the valley was open farmland and wetlands, crossed by a single railroad line.

About this time, however, Philadelphia-based financial companies and investors were

intensifying their engagement with railroad construction, land speculation, and mineral

extraction throughout the southern Appalachians. Frederick Kimball, president of the

Shenandoah Valley Railroad and vice-president of the newly formed Norfolk and Western

Railroad (N&W), was the lead member for a group of Philadelphia-based investors and

speculators (Dotson, 2007; White 1982).

Coal seams were known to exist in far southwest Virginia, but the railroad lines to transport coal to urban Northern markets had not yet been constructed. Kimball and his colleagues visited the region in early 1881, buying railroad charters and mineral rights for hundreds of thousands of acres along what became known as the Pocahontas coal belt. Rail tracks were soon extended from existing locations to the new company town of Pocahontas in Tazewell County, Virginia. Although this was hundreds of miles from Big Lick, the investors realized a junction was needed somewhere in the Valley, a point where the new Norfolk and Western (N&W) line could connect with the existing Shenandoah Valley line (Dotson, 2007).

Towns and hamlets throughout the region pleaded their respective cases to become the hub and offered incentives and support to the railroads, whose interests were represented by Kimball. Big Lick civic and business leaders established a small committee to present the community's interests in such representations. The committee petitioned for support and financial investment from local leaders and thereafter met with railway officials to argue Big Lick should become the planned crossroads. A local farmer and businessman, John Moomaw, was one of many regional agents hired by the railroad to secure necessary rights-of-way. Though accounts differ, he is credited with advising the Big Lick group to offer N&W a $10,000 cash bonus in addition to other considerations if the company would settle on the town as its new hub (Dotson, 2007, p. 8).

Kimball and other N&W employees arrived in Big Lick in early 1881 and began surveying sites around the marshes and in the pastures and fields east of the village. The inexpensive open land favored Big Lick as much as did the cash bonus, since the railroad's plans included not only a junction, but also a company-owned hotel, depot, machine shops, railroad office building, and housing for workmen and officials (Dotson, 2007, p. 8). Regardless of

whether the community successfully attracted the railway as a result of its offered incentive, or simply happened to possess the right combination of desirable characteristics, N&W's decision reshaped the small community.

Shortly after his visit and return to Philadelphia, Kimball received a letter from Big Lick local residents containing their offer to rename the municipality Kimball in his honor. The executive declined, instead suggesting Roanoke, the existing name of a nearby county and river. Meeting minutes from a gathering of investors in Philadelphia on July 15, 1881 record that "the name of the town was changed to Roanoke and the Roanoke Land and Improvement Company was organized for the purpose of acquiring these lands and improving the same" (White, 1982, p. 65). Thus, Big Lick's identity was forever altered in a Philadelphia board room as it became the "Embryo City of Roanoke" (Dotson, 2007, p. 10).

The transformation from the small town of Big Lick to the city of Roanoke was swift and stunning. From 1882-90, Roanoke's population grew by 2,000 percent and, "no city in the South grew faster" (Dotson, 2007, p.1). Regional boosters christened Roanoke the "Magic City of the New South" (Dotson, 2007, p. 1). In a few short years, the area known in the early 1880s as "the frog pond" became the City Market and the lands known as "Tinsley's Farm" became Elmwood Park, a central-city green space surrounded by streets and buildings. The site of a towering "old straw stack" became one of the most prominent city intersections, the corner of Campbell Avenue and Jefferson Street (Warren, 1940, p. 106).

Rand Dotson has described Roanoke's rapid rise in his book *Roanoke, Virginia 1882-1912: Magic City of the New South*. Dotson related astonished accounts from far-flung journalists depicting 1880s Roanoke as "booming like a western city" and set to become "the

Atlanta of Virginia" (2007, p. 15). A travel writer's account describes his first impressions of the city from an incoming train,

> Roanoke blazes up ahead like an illumination; red-mouthed furnace chimneys lift like giant torches above the plain; the roar of machinery, the whistle of engines, the ceaseless hum of labor and life in the very heart of a quiet, mountain-locked valley (Ingersol qtd in Dotson, 2007, p. 15).

By 1900, Roanoke was Virginia's third largest municipality, whose rapid and sprawling rise was fueled not only by the railroad, but also by local entrepreneurs, land speculators and developers. Turkey Bottom, for example, is a name that few, if any, in Roanoke today would recognize. Yet Turkey Bottom was the common name for farmland adjoining the Roanoke River that became the neighborhood known as Norwich. N&W placed a track connecting Norwich to the main rail line and investors laid out industrial sites, planned residential plots and constructed segregated worker housing for blacks and whites in 1890. Industry came and people followed as

> … into the little cottages poured the workman and the prospect of receiving hard money for 10 hours work each day was entrancing. Many had brought with them their life savings or the proceeds of a little farm. Some put their all into a little cottage for the future looked fair (Barnes qtd in Harris, 2007, p. 17).

As another example of Roanoke's rise, a group of local businessmen funded construction of the Academy of Music on Salem Avenue in 1891. The upscale performance and entertainment venue included marble floors, electric lighting, an expansive dome, and seating for 1,500 persons. In addition to serving as an entertainment venue, the Academy also "advertised Roanoke's lofty cultural ambitions and civic spirit to potential investors" (Dotson, 2007, p. 101). Boosterism had become a central feature of Roanoke's economic growth, which was fueled by

its ability to attract workers, skilled labor and investment capital. The Roanoke Commercial

Club, a boosterist entity, formed in 1890 and while short-lived, it nonetheless spawned other

efforts, including advertisements by individual Roanoke businessmen in other cities. Dotson

credits local Roanokers' boosterist ethos and entrepreneurial savvy as one of two equally

important components for the city's rapid rise, the other factor being the influx of investor capital

(2007, pp. 80-81).

Numerous challenges accompanied Roanoke's explosive growth. A record-setting

snowstorm collapsed buildings in December 1890, a flood devastated residences and businesses

near the river in 1891, a tornado struck the community in 1899 (Harris, 2007, pp. 17-21). A

national economic collapse in 1893 briefly halted Roanoke's growth, although the city's

population reached 50,000 by 1920. Expansion slowed significantly thereafter. Prohibition and

economic depression took their toll on Roanoke's economy as thriving local businesses, such as

the Virginia Brewing Company, collapsed, dozens of black and white owned saloons closed and

N&W slowed construction and machine works operations. Many who came to Roanoke for its

"magic" migrated to Northern cities during the 1920s and 1930s (Dotson, 2007).

City economic boosters sought to rekindle fast economic growth by rebranding the

community as the "Star City of the South" in the 1940s. Perhaps Roanoke's most iconic symbol

is a monument to this period in the city's history. In 1949 the city's chamber of commerce

erected what remains the largest manufactured star in the United States (Colbert, 2010, p. 170)

the centerpiece of a marketing initiative. It is still perched atop Mill Mountain, one of the few

mountains located inside a city's limits in the U.S. The star's 2,000 feet of neon tubing emit

17,500 watts of light, visible up to 60 miles away (Colbert, 2010, p.171).

Historical Margins in Roanoke

Dotson described 1880s and 1890s Roanoke as evidencing the characteristics that some urban researchers have associated with "boomtown syndrome." These included public revenue shortfalls, lack of adequate public services, sanitation difficulties, infrastructure challenges, social tensions, housing inadequacies, an unattractive cityscape, and increasing rates of alcoholism, rowdiness, crime, disease and vice (2007, p. 29). These conditions visited their most severe impacts on lower-income residents.

Workers and their families struggled to overcome these difficulties, as reflected in a report by a *Roanoke Times* writer after a visit to homes in Norwich during the 1896 Christmas season,

> If ever a place was cursed with wretchedness, poverty, and suffering, it is the place in question. The starved, pinched faces of the poverty stricken women and children are there to speak for themselves, and can be investigated by any who care to look into the matter (qtd in Harris, 2007, pp. 20-21).

Even younger children in low-income households worked to support their families rather than attend school. The Roanoke Cotton Mill in Norwich, for instance, employed child laborers for more than 30 years until passage of the Federal Fair Labor Standard Acts of 1938. Photographer Lewis Hines came to Roanoke in 1911 and, as part of a larger project aimed at documenting the suffering and exploitation of child laborers, photographed youngsters working at the mill. Ten of those photographs are preserved in a Library of Congress collection of his work, including Figure 2, below, of a young girl.
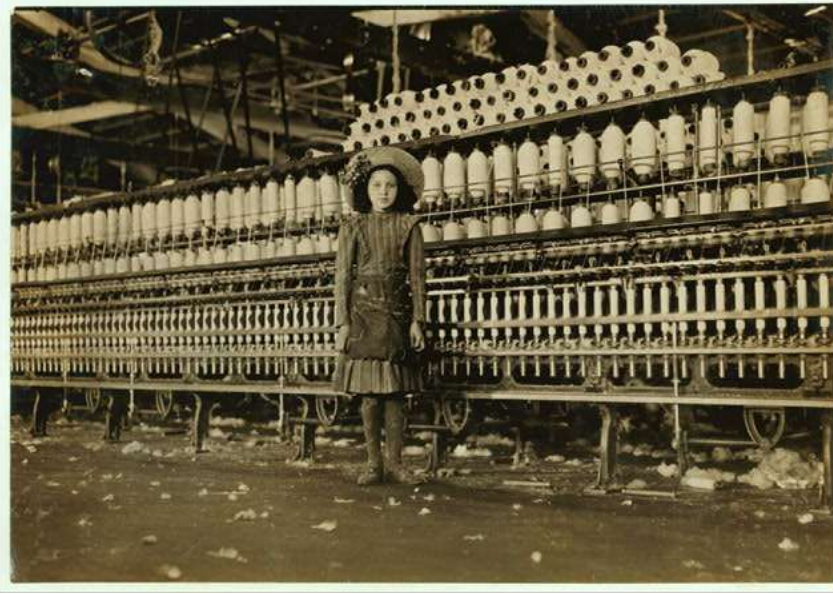
The city had, since 1880, attracted an influx of newcomers, including working class whites from Northern cities and Europe and poor and working class whites and African Americans, from the rural South and middle Appalachia. As it evolved, Roanoke was essentially segregated into three sectors: the white poor and working classes, African Americans and white upper classes, for Roanoke was a place "… deeply divided by race and class …" (Dotson, 2007, p. 83). The city's upper class elite created a distinct society of its own, physically located away from the city's working class and blacks (Dotson, 2007, p. 98).

Racial tensions festered in the city. Blacks in Roanoke dwelled in clustered neighborhoods, toiled in largely unskilled or domestic labor, and frequented African-American businesses and saloons for shopping and entertainment. A small black upper class of professionals and business owners emerged.   Meanwhile, Roanoke's white establishment and newspapers blamed blacks for the city's crime, disorder, and even disease (Dotson, 2007).

Separation and suspicion led to conflagration as the city erupted in racially motivated mob violence on several occasions, most infamously in the Roanoke Riot of 1893, during which eight men were shot and killed by city militia, a black man was forcibly taken from police custody, lynched and his body desecrated, and the mayor had to flee the city to escape being hung himself.   The mob violence led to city and state judicial and policing reforms (Alexander, 1992).

While not all violence was between blacks and whites, the racial divide was both long-lived and difficult as Virginia Jim Crow laws entrenched segregation and denied voting rights to African-Americans. Employment opportunities for the city's black population were also limited. Roanoke's African-Americans "had no access to unions, worked on the lowest and most difficult level of labor, and made even lower wages than whites" (Dotson, 2007, p.197).

Despite the best efforts of city boosters to shape an economically prosperous "Star City" in the 1940s and 1950s, Roanoke's economy was challenged during that period as N&W closed its locomotive manufacturing operations in the 1950s, throwing thousands out of work. Company-built houses also gradually deteriorated during this period, contributing to the decline of several of the city's lower and middle-income neighborhoods (Dotson, 2007).

While black and white schoolchildren began attending integrated schools in the 1950s, segregationist practices and policies continued to have pronounced adverse impacts on mostly African-American sections of the city. Urban renewal in Roanoke, most active from the 1950's through the 1970's, for example, destroyed historically vibrant black neighborhoods in the city's northeast quadrant. The story has been captured sensitively by former *Roanoke Times* reporter, Mary Bishop in her report, "Street by Street, Block by Block: How Urban Renewal Uprooted

Black Roanoke," (1995) and by Mindy Thompson Fullilove in her book, *Root Shock: How Tearing up City Neighborhoods Hurts America, and What We Can Do About It* (2004).

Northeast Roanoke, for instance, once contained hundreds of African-American homes. Today, there are no physical remnants of these residential neighborhoods. Fullilove recounted how the homes were razed to create space for a new civic center, an interstate highway and industrial development. Gainsboro, in northwest Roanoke, still contains an African-American residential population, but only a semblance of the one that once existed. In 1950 the Gainsboro neighborhood contained 900 homes, 165 small businesses, and a dozen churches. By 1995, however, all that remained were 190 older homes, mostly vacant, and 79 newer, small, ranch-type homes and duplexes in a redeveloped area along with a small office building, a few industrial sites, and acres of unkempt empty lots. Fullilove concluded, "Gainsboro was devitalized, not revitalized, by urban renewal" (2004, p. 89).

Virginia Mignon Chubb-Hale spent her childhood in the Gainsboro neighborhood and graduated from nearby Lucy Addison High School. She was an elementary school teacher for more than 30 years, winning the Virginia State Social Studies Award. Her description of the community before and after redevelopment supports Fullilove's conclusion that urban renewal devastated the area,

> a lot of the people who lived in lower Gainesboro had their houses taken for
> redevelopment … they just took so much from that area and often the people really didn't
> get enough to go and buy another house … to me, they just took so much away from
> African-Americans. Henry Street was like a real whole city. 'Cause everything was
> there, you had doctors, you had lawyers, you had the Dumas ... you had the Virginia
> Theatre. My cousin and I would go to the movie and after the movie we would stop at

Jack & Jill's to get a hot dog and some ice-cream and that was just a wonderful time

(Virginia Room, Roanoke Public Library, Gainsboro Neighborhood History Project, Box

1 #31).

One Gainsboro resident commented on the ways that Roanoke's planning and

development efforts since the 1950s have affected neighborhoods very differently,

And every time they decide to do something, why don't they do it, why don't they bring

highways through the South Roanoke over there, or the Southwest area where white

people live, and all the big … they don't bring highways through that way.

They cut everything through the black section. They can use it any time. And they hold

meetings, and they all have a big political talk, "continued good things are gonna happen

to you out of this movement, and this is progress." And who … what the good things,

Who they gonna benefit? And the black people out strugglin' again, Tryin' to find some

way to survive (Meadows qtd in Fullilove, 2004, pp.104-106).

Reginald Shareef studied urban renewal in Roanoke, and came to a similar conclusion,

… what happened in Roanoke was neighborhoods were torn down so that commercial

developers could develop properties and sell it to private interests. And the city won

because it increased the tax base, and the private developers won, because of course, this

was very lucrative. The only people who lost were the people who were promised a

better quality of life … you don't see a vibrant black community anymore …" (Shareef

qtd in Fullilove, 2004, pp 98-99.)

The negative impacts of urban renewal, reduced downtown housing and suburban

commercial developments all contributed to the demise of a once-thriving city center. Central

Roanoke in the decade preceding 1986 had been so altered by the rise of suburban shopping

centers as to give the downtown, "an eerie deserted feeling after dark … with no crowds downtown at Christmas" (Beagle, 1986, p. 12).

Shaping 21ˢᵗ Century Roanoke

Roanoke's identity remains a subject of inquiry as emphasized by the city's website:

How do you define Roanoke? Dictionaries list it as a river or a city in southwest Virginia. Historians will tell you it is the Indian word for shell beads or a town whose growth was spurred by the coming of the railroad in the 1800s. In fact, there are many opinions of what Roanoke is. That's why it was so important for city leaders to find a way to convey its true nature to the world (City of Roanoke, 2011).

The website recounts the brand identity process undertaken by city leaders in 2003. The effort resulted in a logo or "visual identity statement" and a positioning document that reads:

In a world where cities often feel loud and overcrowded and as hard as the concrete they're built upon, the City of Roanoke offers something unique — unexpected balance. Roanoke has the amenities that you'd expect from a dynamic urban center, without losing the charming feeling of a smaller place. Roanoke is a city that encourages you to make things happen, because it's big enough to provide multiple opportunities but small enough so you can make an impact. And the natural beauty that many cities lack has not been lost in Roanoke with the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains visible from most every street (City of Roanoke, 2011).

Roanoke's identity continues to be relevant and discussed. Place boosters still attempt to shape and market place meanings to attract tourists and capital. The Roanoke of 2011 offers much for its advocates to tout. Today's Roanoke is literally an All-American city. The National

League of Cities has bestowed the accolade of "All-America City" on Roanoke five times, more than any other city except Cleveland, Ohio (City of Roanoke, 2011). Partners for Livable Communities, a national nonprofit organization, selected Roanoke as one of "America's Most Livable Communities" in 2004 (El Nasser, 2004). Former Virginia governor Tim Kaine, in 2009, recognized Roanoke for its record of environmental stewardship (City of Roanoke, 2011).

Forbes, in 2011, ranked Roanoke in the "Top 100 Best Places for Business and Careers" and "Top 15 Most Affordable Places for Doing Business" (Roanoke Valley Economic Development Partnership, 2011). Economically, the largest employment sectors include health care and social assistance, retail, and government. Of these, the most prominent is health care with close to 30 percent of the region's total employment. Technology and higher education are also central features of Roanoke's economic landscape.

Carilion Clinic, a large not-for-profit healthcare organization with its headquarters in Roanoke operates an integrated network of hospitals, outpatient specialty centers and primary care practices in the region. In 2009, Carilion's nearly 11,000 employees served approximately 1 million people in more than 23 counties and five cities in western Virginia (Carilionclinic.org, 2011). The flagship hospital and corporate headquarters sits at the base of Mill Mountain. Virginia Tech, whose campus is located 45 minutes from Roanoke, partnered with Carilion in 2009 to establish the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and Research Institute (VTC). The University and Carilion constructed the medical school and research facilities on an industrial brownfield site near the Roanoke River. The first medical school class matriculated in August 2010.

The medical school and the Jefferson College of Medicine, also based in Roanoke, are significant elements of a larger higher education presence in the greater Roanoke region. The Roanoke Economic Development Partnership has described Roanoke as,

> … the center of a larger area encompassing 21 institutions of higher education. From liberal arts colleges to a prestigious research institution, the Roanoke Region has nearly 125,000 undergraduate and graduate students being educated for the future. That's a higher concentration of undergraduates, 0.108 per capita, than in the Boston-Cambridge, San Francisco-Oakland, Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill and Austin areas (Roanoke Economic Development Partnership, 2011).

Roanoke also boasts rising numbers of technology-based and creative sector businesses. According to Census data, Roanoke's 2010 population was 97,032, up 2.2 percent from 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). W. Thompson, an interview respondent who works for the city, shared his perception of how people view Roanoke today:

> [People are] wanting to live here because of what we are, as opposed to "I live here because my mother grew up here which is because my grandmother came here to work on the railroad" and people literally want to live here. More and more I am encountering people … like a woman I spoke with a month ago who is moving here from Connecticut who went on-line and researched cities and places and is quitting her job … to move to Roanoke. Doesn't know what she's going to do when she gets here but is moving here because of what she discovered. I think [Roanoke is] going to be seeing more and more of that as time moves on if we continue on this path that we're on (personal interview, 2011).

While not on the same scale as its Magic City days, downtown Roanoke, at least, is in the midst of a transformation that to long-term residents is remarkable. The number of downtown residents rose from a scant 50 in 2000 to 610 by April of 2010, a rise of more than 1,600 percent (Boone, 2011). Since April of 2010, these numbers have risen again with the creation and lease of more than 134 additional downtown apartment spaces.

The change in the past 10 years has been significant, as

… A decade ago, Roanoke's downtown largely was a place where people did business by day and drove home to sprawling suburbs by night. Apartments and condominiums were scattered above a few office spaces and storefronts, but the streets mostly were reserved for work and entertainment, not day-to-day life.

Fast-forward about 10 years. Lights shine brightly at night from the windows of some of downtown's historic structures. Young professionals walk from their loft-style apartments to work each morning. People stroll the streets and parks with their dogs on leashes.

Welcome to a new way of life in downtown Roanoke, a blossoming urban lifestyle that is changing the way businesses do business, developers choose projects and young professionals view the city (Boone, 2011).

Every one of my interviewees confirmed or commented on this trend in some way. J. Nelson, a leader of a Roanoke arts organization, said the city today is "a whole different place now … as far as the past 12-13 years" (personal interview, 2011). A. Dennison, a local artist, described Roanoke over the last several years as "going through a transformation" (personal interview, 2011).

The identity of 2011 Roanoke includes a resurgent downtown, thriving healthcare and professional economic sectors, and abundant outdoor recreation opportunities

Roanoke's 21st Century Margins

Nonetheless, despite the many trends, Roanoke today remains a "wounded city" (Susser & Schneider, 2003) with lingering sores that include inequality, cultural loss, and a distrust of local government by low-income and African-American citizens.

The long-term implications [of urban renewal] here have been just a deepening, deepening distrust and mistrust between the black community and the city government, because government and government officials really pitted neighbor against neighbor during the 1960s and 1970s (Shareef qtd in Fullilove, 2004, p. 99).

Shareef's diagnosis of a deep distrust between residents of the city's predominantly black neighborhoods and Roanoke's government is one evident to most observers. Such distrust manifests in the public discourse surrounding development, planning, and related issues that affect neighborhoods or residents in the city's northeast, northwest, and to some extent, southeast neighborhoods.

In 2011-12, I helped conduct a new leadership program for city residents. Participants not only studied leadership theory and practice, but also worked in teams to plan a community change project. A well-respected African-American leader in the community enrolled in the program for, despite her many accomplishments, "one can never stop learning," as she suggested to me in conversation. She, however, voiced skepticism when the teams were encouraged to be ambitious in their project ideas, since, as she remarked, there have been too many times over the years when good ideas have been rejected by city leaders.

As a member of the Roanoke Neighborhood Advocates, I also listened to residents of the Fairlawn neighborhood whose homes border the city-owned Countryside property, formerly a

golf course. The city was working with private developers to craft plans for the area and conducted public forums and neighborhood meetings to gather community input. Residents expressed concern in those meetings about traffic patterns, noise, disruption, and lack of community ownership in the plans considered. Additionally, however, participants frequently articulated their distrust of city government at these forums, as a result of the legacy of urban renewal (Roanoke City, 2011).

As another example, the Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority operated the Gainsboro Neighborhood Development Program from 1955 until 2008. The program empowered the agency to acquire land for economic development purposes. According to the *Roanoke Times*, the Housing Authority used the program to obtain and destroy 1,600 residences, 200 businesses, and 24 churches, almost all in African American neighborhoods (Jackson, 2005). By 2008, Gainsboro contained only 500 residential properties and almost half were vacant. Moreover, the Housing Authority owned 85 percent of those vacant residential properties (Adams, 2008). A 2001 suit brought by Walter Claytor, a retired dentist from the Gainsboro community, and 17 of his family members, "alleged the agency devalued the family's land and drove away tenants with a 20-year threat to seize the land that was never consummated" (Adams, 2008). A judge ruled in the family's favor and awarded the Claytors $504,000 in 2006 (Adams, 2008).

Many black residents likewise view the city's recent investments in cultural institutions with suspicion and skepticism. One neighborhood leader voiced his concerns about the Taubman Museum of Art during a meeting of the Roanoke Neighborhood Advocates,

… and we've got this building that the city put tens of millions of dollars into and people

who live here don't use it, and there are people in the city without homes, who are

hungry, who are suffering, and where is the money for those people? (RNA, 2011)

While the opinion represents a common perception, private donors contributed the

overwhelming majority of start-up costs and on-going support for the Taubman Museum.

Currently, Roanoke's city government contributes $100,000 of annual operating support, mostly

directed to arts education initiatives in the public schools.

In addition to neighborhood and race-based divides, heavy concentrations of poverty

continue to exist in Roanoke. The 2009 poverty rate in the city was 21.6 percent, significantly

greater than the state average of 10.5 percent. Also by way of contrast, Roanoke County is a

separate municipality that borders the city and only 4.1 percent of County residents lived in

poverty in 2009 (City-data, 2009).   Likewise, 67.2 percent of children in city schools participate

in the federally subsidized free and reduced price meal program, while 23.6 percent of County

school children do so (KidsCount, 2011). Despite the presence of poverty in Roanoke, the city's

community action agency, Total Action against Poverty (TAP), has continued to experience

budget shortfalls since the 2009-10 economic recession. In 2011, the agency cut 24 positions

and sold its main office, known as the Crystal Tower building, a historic former hotel in

downtown Roanoke. The organization is the most visible poverty-fighting organization in the

city and region, serving 11 municipalities in southwest Virginia (Hammack, 2011).

To summarize, black residents remain distrustful of city government, African-American

neighborhoods continue to experience negative consequences from earlier urban renewal

initiatives, and high concentrations of poverty exist in the city. Roanoke also has its greatest

population diversity since its Magic City days. Census results from 2010 revealed a 280 percent

Hispanic population increase, a 55 percent growth in Asian populations, and a nine percent growth in the black population (Hammack and Chittum, 2011). A portion of the increase in the City's black population includes refugee in-migration from Somalia and other African nations. The total African-American population in Roanoke is 28.5 percent, compared to 5.1 percent in Roanoke County (U.S. Census, 2011).

Roanoke Times reporter Beth Macy highlighted the city's diversity in a 2005 story about the community's Terrace Apartments. She described how just 25 years ago the apartments did not rent to blacks and were located in a decidedly white and middle-class neighborhood. She depicted the same complex in 2005 as, "the most diverse 9-acre spread in Roanoke - a holy jumble of Christians and Muslims, Africans and Eastern Europeans, working-class whites and blacks" (Macy, 2005).

Chapter Summary

This chapter has endeavored to depict some of the foundations of Roanoke's overall place imaginary and the specific construction of marginality in the city, most prominently long-term marginalization of African-Americans. While presented chronologically, I have not sought to offer a definitive history. Instead, I sought in this chapter to situate this study in a place and its particularity. In the next chapter, I trace the arts and cultural aspirations of today's Roanoke. I then explore the city's cultural imaginary through the lens of the arts and cultural planning process and its organizers in Chapter 6, and by an examination of the Roanoke Marginal Arts Festival in Chapter 7.

Chapter 5: Roanoke's Arts and Culture Aspirations

Introduction

This chapter describes some of the ways that Roanoke has sought to become known as a place for arts and culture. The city's initiatives' pertain directly to my overall concern with identity-projects, especially the efforts by cities to shape a cultural imaginary. Several key components of Roanoke's arts and cultural scene recur in studying the community's arts and cultural plan and the Marginal Arts Festival. This chapter first offers a brief overview of Roanoke's arts and culture aspirations, a current and on-going identity project. In the sections that follow that sketch, I describe the following,

- The Taubman Museum of Art

- The Arts Council of the Blue Ridge

- The Dumas Center for Artistic and Cultural Development

- The Harrison Museum of African American Culture and the Henry Street Festival

- Ed Walker and CityWorks

By introducing these key arts actors, I set the stage for analyses of my sub-units (the Arts and Cultural Plan and Marginal Arts Festival) in Chapters 6 and 7. While these are not the only significant arts and cultural efforts or institutions in Roanoke, I highlight them due to their recurrence in the data, their influence in the city's arts and cultural scene and/or the ways they relate to my central research concerns with art, place and marginality. The fifth key actor is unlike the other four arts and culture institutions. Ed Walker and his CityWorks organization illustrate the influence of place entrepreneurs, the rise of the city's music scene and the presence of creative economy strategies that aspire to develop cultural amenities largely intended to help Roanoke attract and retain young professionals, or "the creative class" (Florida, 2002).

The Arts and Culture as a Key Component of Roanoke's Identity

Arts and culture has been a primary feature of Roanoke's current resurgence, traced in Chapter 4. All of my interview respondents suggested the city had become a place known for arts and culture. As W. Thompson observed,

In moving back to Roanoke eight years ago, I saw a huge change [sic] … a paradigm shift of some sort where [the city's] focus was not only going to be on health care, but it was also going to be on arts and culture. And I think that has been evident [sic] … It's just been boom, boom, boom, boom, one thing after another. The Marginal Arts Festival this year was incredible …. You know at one time it used to be, and maybe still is to a certain degree, that Asheville was the place to go for arts and culture. But I'm beginning to see that people are not talking about that being the place to go. More and more I hear people say that the arts and culture are in Roanoke. And it's doing nothing but growing by leaps and bounds every year (personal interview, 2011).

As the director of the Roanoke Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau stated in a newspaper interview, "We are known for our railroad heritage, but now with galleries sprouting everywhere, we're really developing a reputation as a hub for the arts in Virginia" (Bair and Wright, 2011). Many of my interview respondents echoed the thought that, in Roanoke, "arts and culture is creating this amazing sense of community" (J. Nelson, personal interview, 2011).

The city has a number of arts and cultural organizations and key anchors, including the Taubman Museum of Art, the Roanoke Transportation Museum, Mill Mountain Zoo, the Jefferson Center, the Roanoke Performing Arts Center, the Dumas Center, the Roanoke Opera, the Roanoke Symphony, the Harrison Museum of African American History, the Western Virginia History Museum and many others.

Roanoke's Center in the Square houses a number of these entities and is currently

undergoing a $27 million dollar renovation and will reopen in Fall 2012. The new Center in the

Square will house the Mill Mountain Theatre, the Harrison Museum of African-American

Culture, Opera Roanoke, the Roanoke Ballet Theater, the Science Museum of Western Virginia,

and the Western Virginia History Museum. The facilities will include a rooftop deck, a

planetarium, four aquariums, and a butterfly habitat.

Rather than discuss all of these organizations, I have chosen five to profile, based on their

influence in the city's arts and culture scene or their potential to reveal conditions of marginality.

I begin with perhaps the most prominent and polarizing entity in Roanoke's cultural imaginary,

the Taubman Museum of Art.

Taubman Museum of Art

The Taubman Museum of Art is the most visible example of Roanoke's identification

with arts and culture. The Taubman arose from a predecessor's growing pains. The Art

Museum of Western Virginia rented space in the Center in the Square. On January 31, 1999, the

Museum's board announced that the facilities were no longer adequate, due to new collections

and visitation numbers. In June 2000, Roanoke's mayor announced plans for a new building,

containing an art museum and IMAX theatre. The city council pledged $4 million to the project

(Kittredge, 2008).

The proposed new facility received several significant bequests of paintings. The

Museum board hired Georganna Bingham, an arts leader with established fundraising success, as

executive director. The Museum chose Randall Stout as architect for the project. Stout grew up

in east Tennessee, but had designed buildings around the world as a senior associate of architect,

Frank Gehry, in Los Angeles, before opening his own firm in 1996. Gehry is known for, among other buildings, designing the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain. The term, Bilbao effect, refers to the positive urban development impacts of spectacular buildings such as the Guggeheim. Many development practitioners and scholars have credited the museum's opening in 1997 with "transforming a gritty port city in northern Spain into a tourist magnet" (Lee, 2007). As Lee has suggested in his *New York Times* feature on the museum, "The iridescent structure wasn't just a new building; it was a cultural extravaganza" (2007).

However, the Guggenheim was not solely responsible for Bilbao's transformation. The city crafted a plan and implemented actions that included cleaning up its waterways, investing in its transportation infrastructure, and completing downtown commercial and residential development projects (Plaza, 2007). Still,

> Even for those who couldn't spell "Bilbao," let alone pronounce it (bill-BAH-o), the city
> became synonymous with the ensuing worldwide rush by urbanists to erect trophy
> buildings, in the hopes of turning second-tier cities into tourist magnets. The so-called
> Bilbao Effect was studied in universities throughout the world as a textbook example of
> how to repackage cities with "wow-factor" architecture. And as cities from Denver to
> Dubai followed in Bilbao's footsteps, Mr. Gehry and his fellow "starchitects" were
> elevated to the role of urban messiahs (Lee, 2007).

Roanoke was clearly following an established international trend when it placed its hopes in Stout. In an area that some residents have described as "very, very conservative" (Nelson, personal interview, 2011) and "resistant to change" (C. Phillips, personal interview, 2011), Stout's innovative design for the new museum had its detractors, many of whom continue to criticize the facility. The architect's plan was announced in 2005 and it sparked a "lively

debate" (Kittredge, 2008). Stout described the building as a metaphor for the region's natural landscape. Others have compared the structure to a spaceship, or more disparagingly, as "the wreck of the Flying Nun" (Kittredge, 2008). For her part, the museum's first executive director said, "It's a piece of art. People respond very differently to art" (Bingham qtd in Kittredge, 2008).

The city dropped the IMAX theatre from plans for the structure due to its estimated cost. Groundbreaking occurred in 2005 and in 2006 the museum announced higher construction cost estimates due to materials and labor price increases. In 2008, the facility was named the Taubman Museum of Art to honor its most generous donors, Nicholas and Jenny Taubman. Nicholas Taubman had been CEO of Roanoke-based Advance Auto Parts and served as U.S. Ambassador to Romania during the George W. Bush presidency. The Taubmans pledged an initial $15 million to the project and have remained the museum's largest donors (Kittredge, 2008).

The $66 million dollar facility opened with a gala attended by 1,200 people, each paying $250 to join honorary event hosts that included then Virginia Governor Tim Kaine and former professional football player Tiki Barber. Saturday, November 8, 2008, the day following the ball, was the opening for the general public and admission was free.

Roanoke officials and arts supporters collaborated to make the opening weekend a city-wide celebration, complete with jugglers and jazz bands, puppets and street performers, ballet and blues guitarists (Kittredge, 2008). That weekend brought 14,000 visitors to the new facility. While Stout's building continued to generate interest and discussion, the Bilbao effect envisioned by the museum's backers did not materialize. Instead, the Taubman's visitation numbers declined after the strong opening and failed to meet even the minimum estimated yearly

attendance of 170,000 people. Bilbao, like Roanoke, has industrial roots and has a population of

approximately 350,000 people. Roanoke's metropolitan region has slightly over 250,000 people.

In its first year, however, the Guggenheim Museum welcomed nearly 100,000 visitors a month

and the large numbers continued, reaching roughly 1 million visitors per year during its first

decade (Lee, 2007).

As a result of its estimated attendance shortfall and despite its visibility and recognition,

the Taubman Museum of Art soon experienced fiscal difficulties. The first year's operating

budget was $3.75 million, while actual expenditures totaled $6.8 million (Allen, 2010). While

initial expenditures reflected some start-up costs, outlays were nonetheless much higher than

projected. As John Williamson, the organization's first board president, has observed, "Reality

began to set in pretty quickly after the opening, and it's been a struggle ever since" (Allen,

2010).

Board members had focused on fund-raising and construction in the years leading up to

the opening. The Board successfully raised its targeted goal of just under $70 million. That

total, however, was somewhat misleading as the Board initially directed $46 million to

construction, while slating $20 million for an endowment.   Meanwhile, actual construction costs

rose to $66 million, allowing latitude for only a $2.7 million endowment. That amount took a

further hit with the financial collapse in 2008-2009, which caused the endowment's value to

shrink from $2.7 to $2.2 million (Allen, 2010).

The museum's leadership responded to its somewhat disappointing first year by reducing

the organization's staff from 52 to 23 (Allen, 2010). Bingham retired as director in 2009. The

Board selected a new director, who I refer to in this dissertation as M. Hart. Hart worked with

the board to craft a revised strategic plan. Hart described in an interview with me how a part of

his work has included, "trying to inform patrons about what it takes to have a quality art museum in Roanoke with only a minimal public investment" (personal interview, 2011).

Since Hart took the helm, one part of the Taubman's core positioning strategy has been to engage the general public more often and in a greater variety of ways to help Roanokers identify the Taubman as "their museum" (Allen, 2010). Hart organized and led two town-hall meetings at the Museum in order to inform, and solicit feedback from, Museum patrons and the general public on his efforts to address the organization's financial challenges. I attended the second meeting on Wednesday, May 18, 2011 and was struck by the differences from other town-hall type meetings I had attended. The setting was striking, as the gathering occurred in the Taubman's soaring, glass-fronted atrium. The audience differed from many public meetings held for local government planning efforts I had attended before. About 200 people participated, all very well dressed, most men wearing jackets. The audience was older, and mostly white, with only six African-Americans visible by my count. The audience was friendly and Hart's presentation was polished and confidently rendered.

As a *Roanoke Times* reporter described it in the next day's newspaper, the meeting evinced a different tone from a previous town hall meeting in 2010. On that occasion, Hart shared the museum's financial struggles, admitting, "the income projections that drove its construction had been unrealistic" (Allen, 2012, p. E1). He also fielded a number of critical questions from the audience. That initial gathering, however, charted a path predicated on greater fiscal restraint, community engagement, and a focus on core activities (Allen, 2011).

The *Roanoke Times* reporter described a clear contrast in tone at the second town-hall meeting, held just six months later, in May 2011. The new gathering "felt more like a pep rally. And a group hug" (Allen, 2011). Hart reported that the museum had, "delivered on all the major

promises made at the Nov. 11 [2010] meeting. Reduced admission and membership prices, free

admission for Roanoke public school students, more free events, more collaboration with

regional artists, more art classes - all of those things have come to pass" (Allen, 2011).

When I met with Hart, his manner was brusque and no-nonsense, and interviews with

local artists and arts and cultural leaders indicated that, for some, his personality created a

communications barrier. Several interview respondents suggested that his behavior could

sometimes be erratic and volatile (Loman, Vance, Yount, personal interviews, 2011). At the

May 2011 town hall meeting, however, I was struck by his comfort level with the audience as he

handled questions politely and confidently. Others have remarked on his willingness and ability

to reach out to the larger community. J. Nelson, herself the leader of a major arts and cultural

organization in Roanoke, shared with me how she had been struck by how Hart had addressed a

neighborhood meeting by,

> talking with them and saying, do you know about the museum, and is it important to you
>
> or no, and if it isn't, why isn't it? And … there was [sic] a plumber or electrician,
>
> something like that, and he [stated] there is nothing at the museum for me, I am not
>
> interested so [Hart] said, well, I will tell you what, you have never seen our HVAC
>
> system, and if you come over there, it is state-of-the-art and it's the coolest part of the
>
> museum. I will give you a back scene tour (personal interview, 2011).

Hart has worked diligently to make the Museum more accessible to the community. As

noted above, the Taubman has partnered with Roanoke City Schools to offer free attendance to

students. Through strategic corporate sponsorships, the Museum has also expanded its existing

Spectacular Saturdays program from a monthly free family day to a weekly feature with no

admission fee for all, focused around family and youth-friendly activities. My family and I have

attended several of these events, remarking each time on the number and diversity of people there. We struck up a conversation with an older gentleman on one Saturday who remarked how lucky we were to have this museum in Roanoke, just like you'd find in a "real" big city.

In addition to reaching out to the general public, Taubman officials have worked since 2010 to build strong relationships with established artists in Roanoke. The Arts Council of the Blue Ridge exists to serve such arts practitioners in the city through advocacy, promotion and education. As such, it represents an important part of Roanoke's cultural landscape.

Arts Council of the Blue Ridge

The Arts Council of the Blue Ridge was formed in 1976 with initial support from the National Endowment for the Arts to "promote the arts in the Roanoke Valley and provide services to local cultural groups" (theartscouncil.org, 2011). The Council's mission and activities evolved through a number of iterations and planning processes in the following decades. Today, the Arts Council provides services and programming to its core constituency of 100 member organizations and 260 individual artists (theartscouncil.org, 2011). Services include arts education programs, production of a weekly arts calendar, arts business workshops, and a number of collaborative arts development and cultural tourism initiatives.

In 2011, the Arts Council of the Blue Ridge described its mission as

… promoting the value of arts/cultural activities to the vitality of the economic and educational health of the region, creating awareness for community engagement and advocating at the state and local levels for arts funding. We also serve area organizations and artists in marketing and as a resource for connecting the public, business and government to the region's arts/cultural community (theartscouncil.org, 2011).

In the years preceding 2011, the Arts Council experienced some challenges and criticism focused on its organizational direction and emphasis as some local artists perceived the Council's focus as too narrow. Here is how one artist, N. Loman, perceived the Arts Council's work in 2007,

   I saw that the Arts Council, the way it was then, functioned really in a way that I didn't think was beneficial to artists outside of those who are beginning and need that basic support. But there wasn't that attention to the middle niche of artists, those who work ridiculous hours for free and can become this ridiculous engine of change … those artists were coming here, but were not being encouraged … there were [also] artists who didn't want to join the Arts Council because they didn't see it serving them (personal interview, 2011).

The Arts Council recognized and responded to this criticism and to internal challenges of funding and leadership, by conducting a strategic planning process and hiring a new director in 2010 (J. Nelson, personal interview, 2011). In an interview for *Valley Business FRONT* magazine, an Arts Council board member described how in 2010, "Rumors [had] been rampant of late about the health of the Arts Council, an organization that supports area artists and writers in a number of ways, and the quick hire from inside of [J. Nelson] is an effort to put a stop to those rumors" (Smith, 2010, p.1). The president of the Arts Council board said that Nelson's,

   … success will depend greatly on our willingness to roll up our sleeves and get to work supporting her efforts. The fact that we have hired [J. Nelson] doesn't mean that the Arts Council doesn't have financial challenges; we do and those issues must be addressed in the coming weeks and months as we work together … The fact that [our organization]

has been that way for 30 years doesn't mean that it has to stay that way" (Sparks qtd in Smith, 2010, p. 1).

Nelson discussed the Council's shift in focus under her leadership when I interviewed her in late 2011,

… since I've come onboard, it may have changed somewhat. We've been around for 30 years and obviously, I want to say, [the overall] mission has not really changed. I mean it's always been about supporting individual artists in our arts community, meaning arts and cultural organizations throughout this region. That has never changed. How we kind of do that, where the emphases are, is what seems to change. … And then you have to stay relevant, because the arts community is changing, the arts culture is changing. So one of the first things that happened when I came onboard is we had a facilitator come in, meet with all the executive directors of the arts and cultural organizations and basically said is there still a need for an arts council, one if there is, what is that need, what do you need it for? And there was a resounding yes, and some of the things that came up and have become part of our strategic plan are definitely advocacy and awareness (personal interview, 2011).

Nelson argued the Arts Council serves as an advocate for artists and arts organizations with local and state municipalities, policy makers, and arts funders. Yet, she also stated the Council was engaged in a renewed effort to communicate the importance of art to individuals and families in the Roanoke region through projects such as a weekly calendar and coordinated marketing campaigns. She suggested the need to highlight art, and its importance in Roanoke, because that is,

… part of why we are doing the Arts Awareness Campaign is to get out in those

neighborhoods. Okay, so what I am seeing happening is I see like some of our

organizations going into schools and making sure that they are in the schools, in the

neighborhoods (J. Nelson, personal interview, 2011).

The Arts Council has developed a new version of a centralized arts calendar on its

website, so, "you can see who is coming to Kirk Avenue Music Hall and then you can hit the

YouTube and you can hear a sound bite from something that they do so you can become even

more engaged" (J. Nelson, personal interview, 2011). Nelson said a city in Utah implemented a

similar system and "they had everything and the whole city connected. So it's very searchable.

Their participation in activities went up 10 percent in the first six months using this system and

you could Facebook share it; right from there you can buy tickets, straight from the calendar"

(personal interview, 2011).

The Arts Council of the Blue Ridge partnered with the city's Arts and Culture

Coordinator, its Office of Youth, local artists, and the Roanoke Police Department to develop the

Roanoke Youth Art Connections (RYAC) in 2009. One of RYAC's goals was to utilize creative

projects to provide employment and training opportunities for youth, particularly those young

people confronting high risk factors. One RYAC project saw selected youths receive a stipend

while working with professional artists to design and create community murals. As Nelson

explained,

> we work with kids that have been ... put at risk. They are very creative and they don't
>
> really know how to do that in a good way, in a positive and constructive way, and so they
>
> have gotten in trouble and so they have been identified in that way. We pair them with
>
> professional artists, we actually pay them, and we work with the government, we work

with the police department, we work with Roanoke Art Commission, we find public

spaces and they do these public murals (personal interview, 2011).

Teens and artists painted the first Art Connections mural on the interior wall of the

Center in the Square parking garage on Campbell Avenue. The Council and its partners hosted a

public unveiling reception on its completion. Participating youths created a second mural at the

Public Works building and temporary arts installations have also been placed in public locations.

The Arts Council also partners with schools and community organizations to encourage

and provide opportunities for arts instruction and learning in curricular and co-curricular settings.

As Nelson explained,

> We work with arts education, we're kind of that unified voice for arts and cultural
>
> organizations that have programs to go into the public schools and I think especially now
>
> it is just so crucial as some of the art programs in the schools are being minimized and
>
> taken out to make sure that we are supplementing those kinds of offerings (personal
>
> interview, 2011).

The Arts Council is an established entity that clearly has experienced bumps due to the

national economy and to the increasingly difficult fundraising climate for arts and cultural

organizations. As a partial response to these contextual changes, it has begun building bridges

with some of the artists and organizations that it had found less need to work with in the past.

Partly, this is a financial necessity, since,

> An increased interest in partnerships and collaborations is key to showing responsibility
>
> with the limited monies and resources that are available which makes our role in
>
> convening and facilitating meetings with artists and community groups to discuss topical
>
> issues and challenges increasingly important … the Arts Council is just positioning itself

to make sure that arts and culture is constantly being supported in all the areas that it can and so we do that obviously within the arts community, making sure that we were having the conversations for collaborations and partnerships (J. Nelson, personal interview, 2011).

There is a host of other cultural organizations in Roanoke, many of which enjoy neither the size nor prominence of the Taubman or the Arts Council. The Dumas Center for Artistic and Cultural Development offers one such example.

The Dumas Center for Artistic and Cultural Development

The Hotel Dumas was a defining feature of Roanoke's African-American community during the first half of the 20th century. The hotel anchored a bustling Henry Street, with its theaters, shops and restaurants. In a segregated South, The Dumas provided high quality overnight accommodations for blacks traveling for business, tourism, or social visits. African-American organizations and clubs used the facilities for meetings, conferences, dances, and celebrations.

Black musicians, some playing in white venues, stayed at the Hotel Dumas, partly because they were not allowed to stay at the nearby Hotel Roanoke, restricted to whites only. Guests at the Hotel Dumas included the, "greatest names in American jazz – Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, Lena Horn, Dizzy Gillespie, Fats Waller, Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, Ella Fitzgerald, and many others" (Dumas Center, 2011).

Urban renewal in Roanoke, discussed in Chapter 4, and the gradual departure of affluent African Americans and businesses from the city's northwest neighborhoods contributed to the deterioration of Henry Street, the Dumas included. In the 1980's, the structure was "nearly

condemned" (Kittredge, 2006). Its owners sold the Dumas to the Roanoke Redevelopment and

Housing Authority in 1987. Three years later, the Housing Authority transferred the still vacant

and unrenovated structure to Total Action against Poverty (TAP), in a move that drew

controversy, since the family that had owned the Dumas was then seeking to reacquire the hotel

(Kittredge, 2006).

According to TAP's executive director, the idea of renovating the Dumas for use as an

arts center, "just kind of emerged from the groups who seemed most interested in making

something happen there" (Edlich qtd in Kittredge, 2006). Despite interest, the rehabilitation of

the Dumas took nearly 19 years. The total cost of renovation exceeded $4 million dollars

(Chittum, 2007). The hotel was rechristened the Dumas Center for Artistic and Cultural

Development in 2006 at an opening celebration at which the project was "hail[ed] as a step

forward for both Henry Street and the arts" (Kittredge, 2006).

Three arts organizations planned to locate in the new Center, which included a modern

180-seat auditorium: the Downtown Music Lab, a recording studio and music education center

for teens; the Dumas Drama Guild, a "vibrant urban arts organization," (Dumas, 2011) whose

actors were recruited largely from Roanoke's African American community; and Opera

Roanoke, formed in 1976 and "committed to educational and outreach programs providing the

opportunity for youth and adults to enhance their knowledge and enjoyment of opera"(Dumas,

2011). Center planners also saw the Dumas as a venue that could provide rehearsal and

performance space for local musicians and performers, such as the Northwest Jazz Band

(Kittredge, 2006).

At the opening in 2006, the Dumas Center was celebrated as a move forward for the arts

in Roanoke and for a Henry Street that had "been mostly silent for years, except on the weekend

of the Henry Street Heritage Festival" (Kittredge, 2006). TAP's director, Ted Edlich, spoke with

much optimism about the project at its opening, "I think it's going to be very healthy. It's the first

building renovated and operational on Henry Street. That's a miracle in itself" (Kittredge, 2006).

The Dumas Center web-site, managed by TAP, states, in part, that,

Since 1989, TAP has had the distinct privilege of owning the historic Hotel Dumas

located in the heart of the Henry Street district in the Gainsboro neighborhood of

Roanoke, Virginia. This proud old building holds a cherished place in the history of

Roanoke's African American community, and TAP feels profoundly the need to honor

that past in a way that ensures that the building will continue to play an important role in

the community, education, culture, and economy of Roanoke's 21st Century (Dumas

Center, 2011).

However, as highlighted in a 2010 *Roanoke Times* article, the reborn Dumas Center has

struggled to attain its founders' hopes,

Since its rebirth after a $4.8 million renovation, the Dumas Center has been losing

money. And the two arts organizations that were its main tenants, the opera and the music

lab, have left, replaced by two non-arts-related groups: Accunet Information Group and

the Virginia CARES program … Curtis Thompson, director of financial services for

TAP, said that for the past three fiscal years, the Dumas collected $61,500 in rent. But

the building costs at least $110,000 to run annually (last year, the total was $186,000

because of needed repairs to the roof and elevator). TAP has been covering the cost of the

loss each year (Allen, 2010).

In that same news article, TAP's director observed that the organization had not yet,

"discovered the market for that auditorium, and we're struggling to do that" (Edlich qtd in Allen

2010). TAP's short-term solution seems to be locating tenants, based on ability to pay, rather than on ties to the community or to any arts or cultural mission or purpose. Local organizations, such as the Dumas Drama Guild, are now being charged much higher rates for use of the facility, making it much less workable for those entities. Thompson, with TAP, described how the Guild's "children's program, an official part of TAP's offerings, will continue at the Dumas, but if the performers wish to continue putting on the adult plays, they will now have to pay the $400 a day rental fee for the auditorium" (Allen, 2010).

Allen questioned the Dumas' new direction in his article, writing, "the programming there has been so sparse in the past few years, the event listing on the center's website hasn't been updated since 2008, that it raises the question: What can the community expect to see?" (2010). TAP's budget-driven decisions about the Dumas seemingly clash with the quotation from a member of the family of a former owner of the Dumas highlighted on its website, "This building must always be symbolic of a place for people from all walks of life to gather for the enrichment of one's self, and the touching of another" (Darthula Lash qtd in Dumas Center, 2011). TAP, however, which pays for the facility's upkeep, has argued the "center's financial situation means that it has to be run more like a business" (Thompson qtd in Allen, 2010).

I turn next to the Harrison Museum and the Henry Street Festival as additional examples of how cultural anchors based in the city's historically marginalized African-American neighborhoods have experienced similar challenges. Such recurrent difficulties suggest that an understanding of Roanoke's cultural imaginary requires attention to historical patterns, neighborhood dynamics, racial relations and political economy.

The Harrison Museum of African American Culture and the Henry Street Festival

The Harrison Museum began in 1985 as the Harrison Heritage and Cultural Center. Though located in the predominantly African-American Gainsboro, neighborhood, the Center has long experienced challenges in attracting support. Former board president, Mac McCadden, recalled in 2008 that "there wasn't much interest in it from the black community" (qtd in Codispoti, 2008).

The Museum's first director, Melody Stovall, oversaw a period of growth for the center, expanding its collections and programming and initiating the now annual Henry Street Heritage Festival. Stovall was also responsible for the development and publication of *Roanoke's African American Heritage: A Pictorial History*, a 10-year project completed in 1996 (Codispoti, 2008).

Aletha Bolden became Curator of Art and History for the Harrison in 1993 and worked with Stovall and others to implement a number of programs and partnerships. The Harrison collaborated during this period with groups such as the Art Museum of Western Virginia, Virginia's Explore Park, the Salem History Museum, the Virginia Museum of Transportation, local schools, colleges and universities, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Junior League, and the YMCA (Dumas, 2000, p. 7). Many of the Harrison Museum's programs have been targeted toward youth, including youth summits, educational workshops, and celebrations of the Martin Luther King. Jr. Holiday.

The Harrison Museum is,

> … an educational and cultural institution committed to promoting, showcasing, and celebrating the art and history of African Americans for Roanoke Valley citizens and visitors. Our purpose is to cultivate awareness and appreciation of the significant contributions of people of African descent (Harrison Museum, 2011).

The museum has struggled with leadership continuity, enduring a director-less period from 2004-2008, before a search committee hired Bamidele Demerson, as the organization's new director. As a *Roanoke Times* story stated,

> Demerson takes over a museum that has struggled financially but is poised to gain new prominence and support with an upcoming move from Northwest Roanoke to Center in the Square downtown (Kittredge, 2008).

Demerson held the director position for only a year, however, before leaving for another post in a different city. The Board president, Sereina Paynter, said "arts and cultural organizations have a difficult lot in the current economy, and the Harrison Museum has been feeling the pinch … These are dire times for all of us" (qtd in Allen, 2010). The Museum has been closed to the public since December 2009, yet is expected to re-open in the refurbished Center in the Square facility in city center, a change from the former public school that had been its home in Gainsboro. The Musuem's operating budget is less than $200,000 and it was losing money before it closed. It is currently in the midst of a capital campaign to support its reopening.

The Museum's main fund-raising event has been the annual Henry Street Heritage Festival celebrating the one-time heart of Roanoke's African-American community, Henry Street. Today, Henry Street consists mostly of parking lots and parking garages, a four-lane road, and a funeral home. A towering bronze statue of Martin Luther King Jr. gazes away from downtown Roanoke and down Henry Street's remnants, as if to summon the past or to defy what may be absent.   What is in fact visible from the statue is the Dumas Center, one of the few remaining built reminders of the formerly thriving African-American street of shops and nightclubs. In addition to Henry Street venues that hosted the array of music greats noted earlier,

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a groundbreaking African-American director of the 1920s, Oscar Micheaux, filmed his first movies there. Oliver Hill spent much of his childhood in Roanoke, and even played a bit role in one of Micheaux's films, before starting a local law practice and becoming a civil rights leader. His 1951 landmark case on behalf of black high school students in Farmville, Virginia became part of the famous Brown v. The Board of Education U.S. Supreme Court decision that ruled segregated schooling unconstitutional in 1954. Upon Hill's death at the age of 100, then-Virginia Governor Tim Kaine said, as part of his eulogy, "I assert that no Virginian in the past 100 years has had as much impact on the life of every person in the Commonwealth as Oliver Hill" (Kaine qtd in Adams, 2007).

Oliver Hill's home in Roanoke was purchased by a foundation created to preserve and restore it "as an asset to the community and as an asset to the neighborhood" (Brand qtd in Adams, 2011). The Harrison Museum is currently working with neighborhood leaders on a Gainsboro History Walk that aims to highlight notable neighborhood sites, including the Hill home, and provide historical markers, wall plaques and a brochure (G. Evans, personal interview, 2011).

The Museum sponsored the first Henry Street Heritage Festival in Gainsboro amidst the remnants of Henry Street in 1990. For the past several years, however, the Festival has taken place in Elmwood Park in downtown Roanoke. The 2011 festival, billed "Rhythms of a Village," was the 22nd iteration and featured a number of rhythm and blues, funk, and hip-hop performers. The festival included arts and crafts and a sweet potato pie bake-off. Tickets ranged from $5 for youth to $12 for general admission.

The Dumas Center renovation, the planned History Walk, the preservation of the Oliver Hill birthplace, the continuation of the Henry Street Heritage Festival, and the possible re-

opening of the Harrison Museum in the more visible Center in the Square facility might be interpreted as examples of positive cultural development activities related to the city's African-American heritage. Conversely, these efforts might suggest that cultural entities in the city's African-American neighborhoods also experience a continuing marginal status in the larger arts and cultural milieu. The Dumas Center's future seems fragile. Developing the History Walk and preserving the Hill home are currently goals, not funded projects. Moreover, the Henry Street Heritage Festival and the Harrison Museum have both relocated from the Gainsboro neighborhood to a downtown Roanoke location and the future of the Museum is by no means secure.

Thus far in the chapter, I have discussed two of the most prominent arts and cultural entities that influence Roanoke's cultural imaginary, the Taubman Museum of Art and the Arts Council of the Blue Ridge. Relating to my focus on marginalized concerns and populations, this chapter has also explored the struggles of two smaller cultural organizations, the Dumas Center and the Harrison Museum. These entities may be considered marginal in many ways including physical size, perceived status, neighborhood location and racial and cultural focus. In the next section, I discuss an individual actor that has influenced the city's arts and culture identity strongly in recent years.

Ed Walker and CityWorks

Ed Walker has contributed vigorously to the recent resurgence of Roanoke's urban core. Former city councilman Rupert Cutler has described Walker as "single-handedly redeveloping downtown Roanoke. He is amazing" (qtd in Adams, 2009). Cutler is not alone in describing Walker as a driving force behind city revitalization. *The Roanoker*, a city magazine, featured

Walker in the article, "Youthful Midas Touch: How Ed Walker is Remaking our City" (Johnson, 2011). Walker was the top vote-getter in a *The Roanoker's* readers poll for the category of "The Biggest Brain in Town" (Johnson 2011).

I first encountered Ed Walker's work in 2009, as my family and I were relocating to Roanoke and searching for places to live. We noticed promotional materials for newly renovated loft apartments in a building called "The Cotton Mill." The structure, formerly the site of Virginia Mills textiles production, had stood abandoned on the corner of 6th Street and Marshall Avenue since the mid 1990's. The project played a key role in stretching the "redevelopment of downtown further westward … transforming a neighborhood of vacant, run-down buildings and homes" (Boone, 2008)

Walker and his development "team" have completed 17 projects over the last decade, which have refurbished more than 575,000 square feet of residential and commercial space in the city, while housing more than 350 residents (Johnson, 2011). Walker's team, most prominently, undertook and recently completed the $20 million dollar redevelopment of the former Patrick Henry Hotel, a 10-story structure of rust-red brick and greyish stone, opened originally in 1925 (Kittredge, 2011).

In addition to creating living spaces which are helping to repopulate downtown Roanoke, save historic structures, and spark revitalization of transitional areas, Walker is influencing Roanoke's identity in other ways that directly relate to arts and culture.

Most of Walker's activities in the arts and culture arena fall under the loosely linked umbrella of CityWorks, an organization that supports a number of Roanoke ventures, many of them related to the city's growing music and alternative arts scenes. The initiatives include a community radio station, 101.5 FM, the Kirk Avenue Music Hall, the Shadowbox Microcinema,

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the Down by the River Music Festival, Roanoke on the Road, CityWorks Expo, and the Jefferson Center's Music Lab project. CityWorks is "the social entrepreneurship entity that … contributes financial support and some of the collaborative curatorial and logistical support for 'ideas in action'" (CityWorks, 2011).

CityWorks entities are for-profit, but Walker's friend and business partner Carter Youell stated in *The Roanoker* feature, that profitability is not the group's main focus, as, "none have made money and I do not imagine many, if any, will do so in the near future. These entities are part of [Walker's] community entrepreneurship efforts designed to improve the overall quality of life in Roanoke both socially and commercially" (Youell qtd in Johnson, 2011, p. 22).

Music is a defining feature of Roanoke's cultural vibe and, as Walker contends "revitalizes a community better than almost anything" (Powell, 2011). Walker and CityWorks collaborators began Kirk Avenue Music Hall in 2009 in an empty space in a once nondescript downtown street. In its first year alone, the Music Hall "hosted 100 nights of live music with [shows by] 13 Grammy winners" (Powell, 2011).

Kirk Avenue, a formerly unremarkable narrow stretch of road, has become an avenue of hipness. Jason Garnett is the director of the Shadowbox Community Microcinema, which shares space with the Music Hall. The Microcinema opened in 2010 and screens independent, experimental and underground films and hosts special events. The Cinema screened more than 90 films during its first year. Ed Walker, in an interview for a Washington & Lee University Alumni publication, has described the Shadowbox's offerings as eclectic, including a range of films "from skateboard movies to 'Citizen Kane' to documentaries—stuff that would never get on a commercial screen" (Walker qtd in Powell, 2011). The Arts Council of the Blue Ridge annually announces winners of its Perry F. Kendig Awards, with such categories as Outstanding

Individual Supporter of the Arts, Outstanding Arts Organization, and more. In 2011, the

Shadowbox received a new honor for Outstanding Emerging Arts Organization for "recognition

of its impact on our community since opening in 2010" (Arts Council, 2011).

Shadowbox, the Music Hall and related commercial ventures such as a funky coffee

shop/gallery and a unique Cajun-inspired restaurant that sources local food have all contributed

to a Kirk Avenue that has "changed so much from being a back street nobody had heard of, now

it's becoming an arts mecca of the city" (Garett qtd in Ellis, 2011). Walker has suggested,

"Roanoke has an edgy movie theatre and a music venue where bands from Nashville, New York,

Austin, and as far away as L.A., think it's one of the best rooms they play" (Walker qtd in

Powell, 2011).

A. Stuart, an artist in Roanoke, describes the city's music scene as

… really very strong and we're pulling in some pretty amazing up and coming bands and

national acts … and I do think that has to do with, maybe Ed Walker's in investment in

that, and interest in that … Ed and Katherine [Walker] are really big assets to the music

scene here (personal interview, 2011).

Beyond these changes, Roanoke staked a claim in 2011 to being the epicenter of a "small

cities movement," as evidenced by the CityWorks Expo, held in the city in October 2011.

CityWorks Expo was described as an event at which,

Place makers, entrepreneurs, educators, government officials, change agents, community

activists and creative thinkers from the United States and abroad will [soon] gather for an

unprecedented information and idea summit, and the focal point of the Small Cities

Movement. Drawing inspiration from events like Davos and South by Southwest

(SXSW), CityWorks (X)po is the nation's largest idea exchange focused on towns and small cities (CityWorks, 2011).

Publicity for the event advised attendees to "Expect the unexpected. Work hard … play hard" (Cityworks, 2011). Speakers represented the spectrum of place-making topics and included poet Nikki Giovanni; Vermont farmer and local foods advocate, Ben Hewitt; hip hop activist, artist, and educator, Toni Blackmon; the founder of the bicycle-friendly movement in Portland, Oregon, Mia Birk; Harvard social media and civic engagement scholar, Nicco Mele; and community-based artist and scholar, Theaster Gates. Dozens of others also offered presentations of various sorts.

The event sought, in part, to place Roanoke at the forefront of a small cities renaissance. It also provided an opportunity for reflection on how much work still remained to do in Roanoke. More than one speaker mentioned the event's exclusivity, due to cost and its audience's make-up. Theaster Gates spoke eloquently and passionately about the need to bridge differences within communities using a gospel melody at one point to emphasize his observation that there was a visible disparity between the conference setting in the shiny new City Market building in downtown compared to the largely black neighborhoods he had driven through earlier that day, on the north side of the railroad tracks.

As described in the *Roanoke Times*, Gates,

… said he likes to employ a city's "love muscle" to get it interested in parts of town left to disintegrate. The artist and musician is also a planner and redeveloper who has done things like constructing meditative gathering spaces using wood salvaged from Chicago's defunct inner city factories. He opened his talk with a rich gospel-like improv melody

that eventually, good-naturedly acknowledged his audience: "So many white folks, Lord!" (Brunais, 2011).

In her opinion column focusing on lessons learned from the Expo, Brunais cited Gates as articulating the greatest challenge for CityWorks in Roanoke,

Can 300-400 mostly white elites in a Roanoke City Market meeting room change the city's face? Positive energy is always a good thing. But as Gates said in answer to a question from the audience, "There have been white do-gooders in Roanoke trying to bridge relationships." He suggested that, instead, "we drop the do-gooder part and become friends with our neighbors on the other side of the tracks. We can do things in friendship we can't do in policy." Casting a more diverse net to include more Roanoke residents will be the conference organizers' next big challenge if (X)po is repeated next year (2011).

Based on my observations and interactions with fellow attendees, the CityWorks Expo audience consisted mainly of white, upper income, college-educated participants. Interestingly, Gates, in his presentation, also spoke of Walker's awareness of this, and of the fact that Walker solicited Gates' views about potential revitalization efforts in areas north of the railroad tracks in Roanoke.

Walker, according to *Roanoke Times* journalist Beth Macy "has this civic mission to make this a cooler city, a city that's more equitable, a city with better housing, and not just for middle-class people but for all people" (Macy qtd in Powell, 2011).

Chapter Summary

In Chapter 5, I have outlined some of the entities and issues central to Roanoke's arts and culture aspirations. Major arts organizations, such as the Taubman and the Arts Council, significantly influence Roanoke's cultural imaginary. Yet, the experiences of the two arts and cultural entities begun in Roanoke's Gainsboro neighborhood, the Dumas Center and the Harrison Musuem, are instructive in contextualizing some concerns regarding marginality in the city. Creative economy and place-making strategies are also playing a role in the city's urban imaginary, probably none so prominently as the activities of place entrepreneur Ed Walker and his City Works organization. Chapter 6 examines the effort to craft an arts and cultural plan for the city, whereas Chapter 7 describes another part of Roanoke's creative ecosystem, the alternative or marginal arts community. Taken as a whole, Chapters 5-7 reveal a dynamic, multifaceted and interactive urban cultural imaginary, though not one without fault lines, such as those indicated in this chapter's depiction of two African-American cultural entities .

Chapter 6: Roanoke's Arts and Cultural Plan

Introduction

The sections that follow describe the genesis and development of Roanoke's Arts and Cultural Plan. I first discuss the two entities tasked with leading the process, the Roanoke Arts Commission (RAC) and the City of Roanoke's Arts and Culture Coordinator. Thereafter, I outline the planning process itself. The purpose of the plan was, "to identify policies and strategies that will make Roanoke synonymous with 'arts and culture'" (RAC, 2011). I discuss some of the issues and tensions that arose during the process of creating the plan. Lastly, I examine the final plan and consider early efforts to implement it.

Genesis of Arts and Culture Plan

The decision to craft an arts and culture plan for Roanoke has its own origin story. Virginia adheres to the Dillon Rule, meaning cities and municipalities enjoy only those express powers authorized by state statute. In 2006, the Virginia legislature passed a law authorizing a select number of municipalities to create designated arts districts and to impose differential taxing of arts-related enterprises in those districts. Soon thereafter, officials and arts leaders from cities not granted this authority began lobbying the state General Assembly to expand the law to include them.

In late 2009, as discussions concerning arts districts continued around the state, Roanoke's planning office brought together interested stakeholders, including staff members from the Arts Council and the Taubman and a number of other arts organizations, to discuss forming a proposed "Arts District" that would provide financial incentives to arts and cultural entities in Roanoke. City officials, in public forums, described the meeting as a watershed

moment. Participants debated the location and implications of such a district, who would be included, who might be left out. Then, M. Hart, executive director of the Taubman Museum of Art, asked, "How does such a district fit into the city's arts and cultural plan?" (C. Phillips, personal interview, 2011). Hart described the rationale for this question to me in an interview as an attempt to encourage city officials and arts leaders to think strategically (personal interview, 2011). City officials, in interviews and public meetings, described how they were surprised by the query. The city planning staff responded by proposing a city-wide arts and cultural planning process, as explained on Roanoke's website,

> … we started to realize that the [arts district] program should be one of many tools to
> encourage development of arts and culture in Roanoke. Such tools should be part of an
> overall strategy - a strategy that was conspicuously absent. That's when we embarked on
> a process to develop a plan. While City staff working with the Roanoke Arts Commission
> is leading the process, we want the plan to support and guide anyone involved in the
> development of Roanoke's arts and cultural scene (City of Roanoke, 2011).

The idea was discussed internally at the city's RAC meetings and then brought to the Roanoke City Council which charged the RAC and the Planning Department with carrying out a city-wide planning process that would result in an overall arts and cultural strategy. Roanoke's planning staff began laying the groundwork in Spring 2010 for preparation of an official arts and cultural plan.

The Roanoke Arts Commission and the City's Arts and Culture Coordinator

A city ordinance established the Roanoke Arts Commission in 1983 in order to "advise and assist City Council on matters relating to the advancement of the arts and humanities within

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the city" (City of Roanoke, 2011). The Commission's 15 volunteer members include a mix of arts advocates, organization leaders, business professionals, and private citizens. The RAC is all-volunteer, but is supported by a paid, full-time, Arts and Culture Coordinator, a position established in 2006 and housed in the city's economic development office. The Arts and Culture Coordinator supports the RAC, oversees the city's Public Art Program, and serves as an arts and culture planner and development official.

City Council had precedent for tasking the RAC with developing the Arts and Culture Plan. The Commission had been centrally involved in the creation of the City's first Public Art Plan in 2003. Roanoke's City Council established the city's public art program in 2002 and simultaneously charged the RAC with developing a detailed plan for public art. Council approved the hiring of a consultant to assist with that process in 2004. The RAC worked with the contractor to conduct a series of four public workshops, community surveys, and key stakeholder interviews to inform the plan's development (City of Roanoke, 2011). That effort was eventually titled "Art for Everyone: Roanoke Public Art Plan."

City Council formally adopted the new strategy in 2006, which became part of Roanoke's comprehensive plan. City management hired an Arts and Culture Coordinator at that time, and assigned her the primary duty of implementing the plan, in coordination with the RAC. A new Public Art Policy formalized the responsibility in Winter 2006. It conveyed joint authority to the RAC and city staff (in the form of the Arts and Culture Coordinator) to develop comprehensive guidelines for full implementation of the new initiative.

Under the policy's provisions, the RAC and the Arts and Culture Coordinator recommend appropriate sites and advise on policy and procedural matters pertaining to public art throughout the city. The community commissioned its first public work of art in October 2008, a

permanent 30-foot tall stainless steel sculpture, *In My Hands*, by Baltimore artist Rodney Carroll. The sculpture, in Figure 3 below, was placed in front of the Roanoke Performing Arts Center.

Figure 2   Used with Permission
In My Hands, **by sculptor Rodney Carroll**

Later that month, the RAC launched a temporary exhibit it dubbed "AIR: Art in Roanoke," that placed eight pieces in sites around the city for a period of 18 months. The RAC has since overseen the installation of several other permanent works and a second temporary exhibit, AIR II. The Commission has also worked to develop a virtual walking tour of the city's collection of approximately 100 public art works (City of Roanoke, 2011).

The public art project has helped to form Roanoke's arts and culture identity, as this arts organization leader observed,

Of course the public art, I mean I have to keep saying the Public Art Project is amazing, to have that in our greenways, to have that in our public spaces, where everywhere you are going, I think there is even more and more for them, a drive to do that, so that when

you are in public places that you will see art, it will be part of your experience of those places (J. Nelson, personal interview, 2011).

Roanoke's public art program has not been without its critics. The arts commission initially assumed responsibility for siting public art. As a result, neighborhoods were not always actively engaged in the process or selection of art that might appear in their community (W. Thompson, personal interview 2011). Moreover, neighborhood residents were concerned early on that the pieces themselves might be damaged without costly security measures such as video monitoring. Indeed, "when public art first came up, there was a concern with vandalism, that the art would be destroyed and I think more neighborhoods have realized that's not the case, that there is respect by the community of the art being displayed" (W. Thompson, personal interview, 2011).

The city's approach to public art selection and exhibition has evolved and many neighborhoods and residents now report a sense of pride in the art that appears in their spaces.

> … I think it helps build community pride. When you live in a neighborhood, your world is your neighborhood, so that when somebody from outside your neighborhood wants to showcase it, to display public art that's going to draw attention to your neighborhood, then just the mere fact of that taking place instills a certain pride in those that live in that neighborhood that they were chosen for that display. And as a result of that pride it instills property owners to want to have pride in their properties and keep the yards clean and keep the streets clean because they have a pride in where they live" (W. Thompson, personal interview, 2011).

The Arts and Cultural Planning Process (2010-2011)

The RAC coordinated the initial planning process, supported by the Arts and Culture Coordinator, planning department officials, and a select number of city arts and cultural leaders. The Commission conducted focus groups with a small group of arts and culture stakeholders in May 2010. The sessions helped refine an approach to crafting the arts plan. The Commission developed a set of key values and vision and purpose statements to guide the process during summer 2010. The RAC formally adopted the values of advocacy, celebration, collaboration, education, innovation, and inclusion as a working guideline, on October 12, 2010 (RAC, 2011).

During the summer and early fall of 2010, the planning team created an on-line arts and cultural survey to gather information from the general public on its views concerning the community's arts and cultural offerings. The RAC asked citizens to complete the survey through the city's electronic newsletter and Facebook site and through an article and announcements in the *Roanoke Times*. Commission members also placed printed surveys in public libraries and distributed them at selected public events including the Henry Street Heritage Festival. The survey did not include a definition of arts and culture and its content indicated some of the difficulties with constructing such a definition. Question categories addressed community events, music, performing arts, and visual arts. Respondents could choose from only a fixed number of options when selecting "what was most important to them" in each group.

The survey, for instance, listed community arts activities and locations as arboretums, gardens or nature centers; arts/crafts fairs; art exhibits; farmer's markets; festivals; library programs; natural areas; greenways; public art (art placed in public places, usually outside, and accessible to all for free); and walking/driving tours (art, history, architecture, scenic, etc.) (RAC, 2011). The list includes many of Roanoke's arts and cultural sites and events, yet also

omits more informal arts and culture activities, such as hobby clubs or car shows. One of my interviewees suggested the surveys were, "… classist, because they focused on things like symphony and jazz and left out many other cultural activities" (F. Neely, personal interview, 2011).

In addition to the questionnaires, city officials and the RAC conducted public meetings to solicit input concerning the plan. Three gatherings were held in October 2010, including a presentation on the planning process at a Roanoke symposium of artists and scholars, a general public session, and a forum specifically for artists.

The first of these three public events occurred as part of a Virginia Tech symposium, *Mapping Spectral Traces*. The event consisted of an entire week of workshops and learning excursions throughout western Virginia in October 2010. *Mapping Spectral Traces* was an international, interdisciplinary humanities symposium exploring how difficult pasts can be researched, documented, and represented in responsible and ethical ways. The symposium explored community memory and trauma, the "spectral traces" that may not be visibly expressed or memorialized (Mapping Spectral Traces, 2010). Participants included a mix of international and local artists, scholars, and practitioners.

Attendees spent one day in Roanoke that included a guided morning tour related to the city's past and its relative inattention to its own history of racial violence and racialized planning practices. Symposium participants, myself included, settled into the comfortable, modern auditorium at the Dumas center for afternoon presentations. The morning tour was still fresh as we listened to city officials outline the steps being taken to design and conduct a participatory process resulting in an arts and cultural plan truly owned by the community.

The presenters summarized the ongoing planning process and solicited feedback. Presenters' described their process as a model, and emphasized they had responded to input and sought to encourage community participation. Symposium participants, however, had just been immersed in visiting sites and hearing stories of historical injustice in the city. Symposium topics explored how community leaders and residents often fail to listen to and recognize such sites and stories (Mapping Spectral Traces, 2010). The attendees offered both suggestions and critiques on the planning process as outlined by Roanoke officials. Audience queries and comments reflected the view that the planning process overemphasized an economic rationale, lacked considerations of community-based arts approaches and failed to include sufficiently measures to engage marginalized populations and perspectives. The three presenters were polite, although one city planning office official chose to object to some of the offered suggestions rather than to acknowledge or record those comments.

The RAC's second public event in October was a session for the general public. The meeting occurred on October 26, 2010, from 5:30-7:00 p.m. at the Roanoke Civic Center exhibition hall. The meeting included about 45 participants, many of whom were affiliated with the RAC or with one or more of the city's arts and cultural institutions. City staff members provided attendees with an overview of the planning process and repeatedly stressed their desire to make this a community-owned plan. Planning team members divided the audience into discussion groups and facilitated a brainstorming process. In contrast to the symposium presentation, the facilitators recorded all ideas on flipchart sheets without comment. In addition, the planning official who appeared most defensive during the symposium presentation did much less of the public speaking.

On October 28, the RAC held its third public event that month, a meeting targeting artists. Some of my interviewees attended that forum. One suggested the city officials were not really listening at this gathering, but were instead in "presentation-mode" (A. Stuart, personal interview, 2011). The presenters used the format that had seemed effective in the earlier session with the general public and asked for audience feedback on ways to build the arts in Roanoke. F. Neely, another interviewee, remarked to me, "the question itself was problematic, what can we do to create an arts community in Roanoke? The artists in the room were part of the arts community in Roanoke and nobody acknowledged them or their work" (personal interview, 2011).

Overall, the city held 11 public meetings to gather input for the plan, including the three events I have described that were held during October 2010. More than 1,200 respondents completed the on-line survey and commented on Roanoke's arts and cultural offerings and opportunities. In addition, the RAC and the city's arts and culture coordinator worked with other team members to examine more than twenty-five other arts and cultural plans from other communities in the United States. The Commission also utilized a consultant organization, Partners in Performance! The firm, which specializes in strategic planning for collaborative arts and culture-based efforts, provided analytical data and offered feedback on the plan and the process (Roanoke Arts and Cultural Plan, 2011, p. 5).

I attended a public follow-up session on May 31, 2011, at which meeting facilitators shared a draft plan and requested feedback. The RAC and planning staff had reoriented the strategy to focus it on neighborhoods and livability. The facilitators peppered the presentation with references to the "grassroots," "community-owned" plan that is "your plan." I saw few artists in attendance and even fewer participants who did not have some affiliation with

government or and arts and culture organization. In an e-mail to those who had participated in the forums, the city's Arts and Culture Coordinator wrote, "this plan is a community plan in that all the actions were suggested by the community" (M. Reed, personal communication, 2011).

Behind the Scenes Challenges and Tensions of the Arts and Cultural Plan

As RAC member J. Martin recounted in an interview with me, the Commission stepped into a policy role in assisting with development of the Arts and Culture Plan that, in many ways, constituted a new and unaccustomed focus (personal interview, 2011). Prior to this effort, the RAC had primarily engaged in advisory and coordinating functions, serving in many ways simply as a forum for Roanoke arts and cultural institutions to communicate and plan infrequent collaborative efforts. The Public Art Plan was more specific in focus and the RAC's role was frankly secondary to that of the consultants hired to facilitate the process (M. Reed, personal interview, 2011).

The Commission engaged in multiple relationships with the City's planning and development department during the arts and culture planning process, taking directions from its officials in some instances, partnering with them in other contexts, and, as a City-Council-appointed body, making policy decisions that affected the department, in other instances. The RAC encountered challenges with the planning process. These arose in good part from the diverse interests and institutional allegiances at play among the Commission's various members. While the RAC is a volunteer group, its members "do not all come from the same place" (J. Martin, personal interview, 2011). The Commission includes executive directors of major cultural venues, such as the Taubman Museum of Art; arts supporters, many of whom have more

of a corporate or philanthropic background; artists; and others who work with or lead smaller arts and cultural organizations and interests, some with a neighborhood or community-based focus.

The RAC was largely unprepared to lead development of the arts and cultural plan. Prior to this assignment, board meetings had usually been "fun," consisting of discussions of upcoming events and activities of the different arts and culture organizations, or of possible artists and works for the public art program (J. Martin, personal interview, 2011). As work on the city plan progressed, however, RAC members expressed disagreement over the effort's goals. A central question became, "Who are we trying to serve?" (J. Nelson, personal interview, 2011). The city-wide arts and cultural plan included a considerably broader range of concerns than Commission members and city officials had anticipated. Some RAC representatives expressed concern about such a broad-based approach and opposed shifting the plan's focus away from supporting individual artists and arts-based organizations. The role of Commissioners was doubly challenging when they also represented institutions. The role of institutional representative, such as a museum executive director, necessitated active engagement in the planning process on behalf of organizational interests, while the RAC role necessitated collaborative development of a plan for the city's overall benefit. In consequence of these tensions, the RAC meetings shortly were "no longer fun" (J. Martin, personal interview, 2011). The process was, "… a hard one, because we all are going to have our territory and we all want to protect that territory" (J. Nelson, personal interview, 2011).

In an interview with me, the city's Arts and Cultural Coordinator observed that several Commission members, many of whom were executive directors of arts and cultural organizations, voiced their discomfort as possible plan elements unfolded (M. Reed, personal interview, 2011). For example, some Commission participants argued the discussion of

neighborhood engagement and extending arts and cultural activities throughout the city drew emphasis away from the plan's animating purpose, which for some was to solidify support for a downtown arts and cultural district.

In addition to these challenges, the RAC confronted management difficulties in overseeing such a dynamic, multi-layered planning process. To address the complexities and oversight issues, the Commission and city planning officials designated a project team of key stakeholders. The group included the City's Arts and Culture Coordinator as well as representatives from the RAC, Roanoke's Office of Planning and Development, the Downtown Roanoke organization, the Roanoke Visitors and Convention Bureau, 13 additional arts and culture institutions, and the Council of Community Services.

The RAC identified the Council of Community Services (CCS) as a local source of process expertise. A partnership of more than 70 community organizations formed the CCS in 1960, in order to enhance coordination between public service, community development, and planning groups in the Roanoke Valley region. The CCS provided staff members to help facilitate some of the early stakeholders sessions and public forums. Some Council staff also served as members of the overall planning team.

In Roanoke, arts and cultural organizations were experiencing increased financial constraints in 2011. As the number of arts organizations and venues in Roanoke has grown, the city's overall population and wealth had remained relatively static. The recession-created financial challenges in the United States and global economies also increased the relative conditions of competition and scarcity confronting the city's arts entities. Arts and cultural organizations in Roanoke have struggled to maintain financial support from private donors as well as from the local, state and federal government.

An interviewee who leads one of the city's larger arts organizations discussed some of the fiscal difficulties confronting the arts sector in Roanoke,

Right now the money is such a big thing in trying to figure out … how do we identify what are the most important pieces that have to be part of an arts community to support it, and which things maybe need to - I am sorry, I just need to be very careful how I put all this, but which things may need to be pulled together and infused into another component to make that stronger? There has to be that question of, do we need two or three or four theatre groups? Or do we need people to come together and become one strong, really well done quality, and not to say that the different ones aren't, but in a community like this, where the funding is already so sparse, to spread it out so much, is that really what's best for our community? And I think that always for us has to be that bottom line question. Are we doing what's best for our community at large? In supporting the arts community, it's not about the Arts Council, it's not about the Taubman Museum, it's not about the Symphony, it's not about even one of our little burgeoning arts organizations, it's about this community … Are we helping our community, or are we hurting by asking it to try to support so many things and it's not really able to support them in a way to where they can continue to produce high quality art and bring that back out to our community? So are we actually doing a disservice to the community if we are doing mediocre [things]? (J. Nelson, personal interview, 2011)

RAC members struggled with a tension between inclusiveness (of all the city and its neighborhoods, of all the arts organizations) and selectivity (of certain areas of the city to target, or certain organizations to support).   Nelson articulated this tension well,

This community doesn't necessarily have the capacity to support all the arts and cultural organizations that are around here. We have a lot … but there's a huge percentage [of people] that live below the poverty level … in this area. So you've got the same few people supporting the arts … there's an effort to take things out into the neighborhoods and community centers. And while I understand where that's coming from, my concern is we have some major arts and cultural organizations that already are not getting the participation and visitation that they need. … If you think about where your major experiences in the arts are, it's generally you've gone to a major opening in a museum or you've gone to a symphony concert or you've gone to an opera, you've gone to a theater production. It's great to be able to have that on a neighborhood level, but it's imperative that art organizations are here to support that in a real high-quality way (personal interview, 2011).

The Final Plan and Early Stages of Implementation

Roanoke City Council formally and unanimously adopted the Arts and Cultural Plan in August 2011. The final plan provided an overview of the process and its executive summary listed three cross-cutting thematic findings of synergy, collaboration, and creative solutions (Roanoke Arts and Cultural Plan, 2011, p. 5). Interestingly, the plan's recommendations are conservative, as stated in its summary, "In this time of limited resources, this plan does not propose new or additional City funding to support arts and culture in the Roanoke area" (Roanoke Arts and Cultural Plan, 2011, p. 5). The arts reporter for the *Roanoke Times* concluded in his wrap-up of the year in arts and culture, "What effect the plan will have in the long term, however, remains a bit of an enigma" (Allen, 2012, p. E-6).

The final plan included specific recommendations under the rubric of three broad goals of economy, livability, and lifelong learning. Below, I share excerpts from the plan, which provided a defining sentence for each of its three aspirations,

- "**Develop our economy – A Vibrant Region-Healthy Economy**
Strategically advance arts and culture as a significant contributor to the growth of the region and an essential element in the Roanoke brand by supporting our strongest assets while fostering a sustainable, collaborative public/private network that retains the flexibility required for innovation among artists, entrepreneurs, and arts organizations.

- **Increase livability – Livable Communities and Engaged Neighborhoods**
Integrate arts and cultural activities in neighborhood-level planning so that our cultural heritage and contemporary assets are included in events, physical design and revitalization strategies of neighborhoods in a fashion that highlights local talent city wide.

- **Foster an environment of lifelong learning, participation and education**
Increase access for all residents to the vast resources of schools, colleges, universities, institutions, organizations and publicly available arts and cultural assets" (Roanoke Arts and Cultural Plan, 2011, p. 7).

For each of these, the plan described some general policy approaches and strategic initiatives, then offered a matrix of specific actions with a time-frame and a listing of the entities tasked with implementation. For example, the first action item under "develop our economy" was to "structure city grants, capital and line item funding to implement plan recommendations for collaboration, neighborhood outreach and pursuit of diverse audiences" (Roanoke Arts and

Cultural Plan, 2011, p. 13). The report identified the RAC as the primary entity responsible for this activity and listed a number of possible partners.

It is too early to know the impact of the plan's proposed activities, as implementation efforts are just underway. An implementation committee comprised of several RAC members, city officials and other key stakeholders meets monthly to coordinate the plan's execution (Allen, 2012, p. 3). The RAC held a public meeting on February 22, 2012 to celebrate the new strategy and provide an update on its implementation (Allen, 2012, p. 3). Opinions on the plan's significance vary, but the formal incorporation of arts and culture aspirations into the city's comprehensive plan represented a significant step for the community,

I don't know honestly that the plan has created a whole lot of new things as much as it has put it in a package so that people can see it. And that it is part of now what is the governmental plan, so that there can be backing for it and support for it on that level, which is really important (J. Nelson, personal interview, 2011).

Implementing the specific recommendations, however, almost all of which require collaboration, is not straightforward, in a context of scarcity and resource competitiveness. For example, the city's Arts and Culture Coordinator highlighted the interest expressed by city residents in securing more and different kinds of public art throughout the city,

One thing that we have seen come out of the arts and cultural plan ... people love the public arts program but they want to see it expand into more regions of the city. We've heard that people would like to have artwork that responds to social issues, and they would like to have an art park where anybody could go and do their artwork. So expanding the public art program is definitely one of our goals and one of my goals (Jennings qtd in Skeen, 2011).

However, despite passing the arts and cultural plan in 2011, the city reduced 2012 funding for the city's Percent for Art program, established specifically to fund public art. In the short-term, the reduction will prevent the city from replacing temporary neighborhood-based public art installations, which end in 2012, nor is there city funding dedicated for future installations (Allen, 2012, p. 3).

Roanoke also offers a grant opportunity for neighborhood-based organizations. Organizations have used the funding for neighborhood signs, recycling stations, beautification, and leadership development through conference attendance. The Roanoke Neighborhood Advocates (RNA), mentioned in Chapter 4, oversee the program. The Arts and Cultural Plan included an action step stating that arts and cultural activities should be one focus of this program. The city's Arts and Culture Coordinator and the Director of the Planning Department conveyed this information to the RNA in a public meeting. C. Phillips, the Director of the Planning Department, stated during the discussion that the "grassroots" planning process, "emphasized the importance art plays in our community" and "reinforces that not only should art and culture be visible and accessible in each neighborhood but that artists should be encouraged to [engage] in neighborhood [development]" (RNA Minutes, 2011).

RNA members struggled with the specifics of the request, questioning whether this meant that arts and culture should be given greater emphasis than other worthy activities such as leadership training, critical home repairs, and organizational development projects. The group eventually decided to award extra points for proposals that supported either the goals expressed in the city's arts and cultural plan or in its clean and green initiative (RNA minutes, 2011).

Despite the reduction in public art funding, one neighborhood, Hurt Park, applied for funds through this neighborhood grants program to construct a sculpture-based, "artistic bus

shelter," like those erected near two of the city high schools through the Public Arts Program (Allen, 2012, p. 3). I serve on the grants committee for the RNA, which met to review this and other applications on February 15, 2012. Our committee discussed the idea of arts and culture due to a number of proposals, such as the one from Hurt Park that contained an arts and culture emphasis. We discussed and ultimately awarded funding for a "History Walk" project in the Gainsboro community that would recognize some of Henry Street's history.

Dan Casey, in his *Roanoke Times* commentary in 2011, argued that the city's overall policy stance towards art and culture had shifted positively in recent years, recalling how, in 2009, a local sculptor was prohibited from installing an artistic bike rack on a city sidewalk, but that in 2011, the city changed streetscape ordinances to encourage public art in the form of benches, bike racks, and bus stops. As Casey stated,

> Two years ago, the city was prohibiting [functional public art]. Now, its fine print allows them. Its officials are celebrating them. And in some cases taxpayers are footing the bills. Folks seem excited. You can call this whatever you want. Looks like progress to me (Casey, 2011, p. 9).

Many of the individual artists I interviewed, however, voiced mixed feelings about the city's stance. Artists and gallery operators, L. Runnel, F. Neely, and E. Calhoun, said the city of Roanoke had not been a major impediment, but neither had it been a help (personal interviews, 2011). Each suggested that Roanoke could provide funding in smaller amounts to assist individual artists with arts-based projects and neighborhood festivals. The limited city funding available is awarded instead to arts institutions, although the shift toward increased emphasis on neighborhood organization grants represented a move in what these individuals considered a positive direction. Respondents also suggested the city could make it much easier for artists to

display work in downtown empty storefronts, which artists do in other cities, and that changes were needed in current regulations that prohibit or curtail busking and street performers.

The arts and cultural plan includes language on individual artists and community-based arts. The city's Arts and Culture Coordinator emphasized, however, in a newspaper interview that the city's major arts and culture entities remain a primary focus,

> … the Roanoke Arts Commission and the planning department and I have been working for the last year, on developing Roanoke city's first arts and cultural plan. What we've looked at is: How can the city help sustain arts and cultural organizations and, in turn, how can those organizations help the city with its goals of revitalization, economic development and increased tourism? (M. Reed, qtd in Skeen, 2011).

> The arts and culture plan seems to have spurred difficult dialogue about arts and culture in the city. As one arts organization leader said, "So I think those are conversations that are happening and I think that they are constructive and healthy conversations. But I think that we are in the midst of that (J. Nelson, personal interview, 2011).

Chapter Summary

I have depicted Roanoke's arts and cultural plan, from idea to early implementation in this chapter. The planning process revealed some of the contrasting interests and differing perspectives held by actors influential in shaping the city's cultural imaginary. This discussion built on Chapter 5 by continuing to identify the key entities and their roles in the arts and cultural planning process in Roanoke. Taken together, Chapters 5 and 6 provide substantial insight into my initial research questions. Thus far, however, the discussion has largely focused on the city's formal institutions and its arts and culture planning processes. While this emphasis has revealed

many pertinent features of the city's cultural imaginary, the picture formed is an incomplete one. I turn next, in Chapter 7, to broadening this understanding by examining the perspectives of Roanoke alternative artists and others engaged with the Marginal Arts Festival, a very different element of Roanoke's art and culture scene.

Chapter 7: The Roanoke Marginal Arts Festival

Chapter Overview

This chapter provides a general introduction to the Roanoke Marginal Arts Festival (MAF), offers a brief history of fringe festivals, and discusses the origins of the Roanoke MAF. I first examine the growth of the Festival and its curator-driven, do-it-yourself (DIY) operating model. Next, I describe five events of the 2011 Marginal Arts Festival: the Unicorn Stables Project exhibit entitled, "Secret Histories of a Space Age"; Philosophy Inc.'s exhibit "Philosophy Inc. Probes Roanoke"; a performance art work by Alexandria Zierle and P. Lugar Carter at the Taubman Museum of Art; the Fluxus Roanoke events at the Metropolitan Community Church of the Blue Ridge; and the Vexilloid project. Various curators organized these events and together they reveal a great deal about the MAF and the questions about art, marginality, and place that emerged during its 2011 run. My description of the five events is followed by an exploration of Collab Fest, an attempt by Festival organizers and Roanoke-based fringe artists to "keep the spirit of the MAF active throughout the year" (P. Lugar, personal interview, 2011).

Introduction to the 2011 Marginal Arts Festival

My son and I scurried to a standing spot along the route of the 2011 Marginal Arts Festival parade in downtown Roanoke. Anticipating crowds, we were surprised to reach a corner with just a handful of other spectators as the front of the parade was just coming into view. My son heard the parade first, "Drums!" Then, he pointed, "Look, puppets!" My eyes followed his finger and indeed there were marionettes, towering, 10-foot high puppets slowly weaving. We also spotted a squadron of butterfly-winged dancers, a rat float and space creatures. Meanwhile,

a phalanx of figures adorned with the names of financial institutions would periodically stumble and fall to the ground, a moving "financial collapse."   The crowds were sparse, but excited and mobile. Spectators would watch the procession weave past and then scamper to another spot along its circuitous journey winding through the major streets, parking lots, and even an alley or two towards its final destination near the city's epicenter, beside the Taubman and adjacent to the Wells Fargo building, the iconic City Market Building and the double set of railroad tracks that divide the city center from the northern neighborhoods and the English Tudor style Hotel Roanoke.

The Absurdist Street Carnivale immediately followed the parade and included an array of activities. Onlookers and procession participants joined together in tossing rubber chickens and merrily stomping, jumping, and dancing on giant sheets of bubble wrap. Performance artists orchestratedly smashed a piano. As we drove home, my son clutched two souvenir piano fragments of painted black wood and proclaimed, "That was cool!" I had to agree.

I came away reflecting, as the organizers had proclaimed,

This is the sort of festival Monty Python would put on! If you like the absurd, audacious, ludicrous, laconic, sublime or the serene, you'll find all of those things at MAF 2011. We welcome funny walks, ex-parrots, deadpan wit and rubber chickens of all sorts. Like the Pythons, Fluxists, and Dadaists, this festival draws upon historical arts movements as well as contemporary ideas in art to offer a fun, engaged and educational experience for all ages… (MAF Program Guide, 2011, p. 1)

The 2011 Marginal Arts Festival took place from March 3 to March 8, with more than two dozen events and exhibits that included a number of gallery shows and receptions as well as celebrations such as an "Artists' Masquerade Contra Dance Ball," a Vaudeville Night, a Sock

Hop and a Fat Tuesday Celebration. Arts performances included "Marginal Dancers" at the Water Heater, experimental theatre at Studio Roanoke, and a Tableau Vivant, a living reproduction of the painting of "Las Meninas," by Velasquez, "showing La Infanta Margarita with her bodyguards in Velasquez's studio, where he is painting a large canvas" (MAF Program Guide, 2011, p. 6). The festival also offered No Shame Theatre productions, improvised micro-plays with three rules, "pieces are five minutes or less, original, and break nothing (including laws)" (MAF Program Guide, 2011, p.7).

The Vermont-based Bread and Puppet Theatre troupe participated in the parade and carnival and held a "Decapitalization Circus" on March 7, at Hollins University.   The MAF also featured author readings, a labyrinth and multimedia show, theatre performances at Studio Roanoke, a PechaKucha event at the ShadowBox Microcinema, late night music jams, Punch & Judy shows, and the Fluxus Roanoke event, a series of exhibits and performances by "Absurdist, Dadaist, and Fluxus artists from around the country"(MAF Program Guide, 2011, p. 12). There were, in fact, so many events that the *Roanoke Times* described it as being "on a scale that calls into question whether the word 'marginal' still applies" (Allen, 2011). The organizers acknowledged this critique on the MAF web-site,

> MAF is now significant enough to have critics who claim we are not truly "Marginal!" It is true that we are now slightly more mainstream – if "mainstream" is understood as being more welcoming to all artists and more inclusive to the community at large. MAF is still vocally opposed to "mediocre" art: that is, art created merely as a consumer product. Marginal Art celebrates ideas, not worth, the creative process and not the creative object. Marginal Art is the fire, not the grate! (Marginalarts.com, 2011)

A Short History of Fringe

The Roanoke MAF is a "six-day festival of art beyond the predictable that nurtures local identity and promotes contemporary art from the local to the international" (Marginalarts.com, 2011). At this writing, the MAF has just completed its fifth iteration in 2012. Arts festivals have a long history and MAF organizers view their event as continuing "3,000-plus years of human festival tradition" (Marginalarts.com, 2011). Fringe arts festivals have emerged and expanded rapidly since the middle of the 20th century. The first such event was created in Scotland as a response to exclusion, to the "marginal" placement of less recognized arts forms at the Edinburgh International Festival. That event began in 1947 as one strategy to emphasize the role of arts and culture in post World War II Europe's redevelopment. As such, festival organizers emphasized the selection and inclusion of works of "agreed excellence" by artists whose merit was "beyond doubt" (Bruce, 1995, p. 147 qtd in Lane, 2003, p. 7). The fringe festival movement arose as a reaction to the exclusion of local Scottish artists and playwrights from the major international festival occurring in their own country (see Bruce, 1995; Lane, 2003). These artists refused to accept this snub and constructed makeshift performance spaces around the festival's edges, at its "fringe." The Edinburgh Fringe Festival was born, eventually outpacing the size of the original event and morphing into a major worldwide attraction held for three weeks each August and known now as the "largest arts festival in the world" (Edfringe.com, 2011). A central Festival ethos, written into its charter, and responding to the effort's motivating purpose, is that its organizers are "proud to include in our programme anyone with a story to tell and a venue willing to host them" (Edfringe.com, 2011)

Over the past 30 years, fringe festivals have been developed in cities around the world from Australia to Asia, Canada to Chile. While the Edinburgh Fringe was the first and its focus

on accessibility and freedom remains a core principle of most such initiatives, the events vary in their organizing structure, format, and focus (see Lane, 2007). In other words, there is no one model and arts celebrations have developed based on the basis of the particular needs and conditions of their host communities.

Indeed, fringe or marginal has a dual meaning and may lead to different kinds of events, depending on the definition emphasized or embraced by an event's organizers as it evolves. As Lane has observed, fringe may mean either a quality or a principle (2003, pp. 19-20). As a quality, fringe denotes work and artists that are edgy, innovative, and experimental. As a principle, fringe refers to a stance of inclusion and accessibility for all kinds of artists. The Edinburgh Festival has focused on a right for artists to be included and a corresponding freedom from exclusion. The United States was a relative latecomer to the fringe festival phenomenon. Lane has highlighted how tensions have arisen in various events, depending on the precise meaning of fringe most emphasized by festival organizers. In her study of Fringe New York City and Philadelphia Fringe, she identified how the emphasis on edginess has, in each case, created grounds for exclusion of artists whose work was deemed insufficiently "fringe" (2003, p. 22).

Lane has traced the emergence of the American fringe festival and highlighted both the common guiding principles of such events in the United States as well as the contested nature of the concept of fringe among them. For example, she recognized accessibility, the rights of all to participate, and inclusiveness, the desire to reach out to those who may have been excluded, as two central motivations for many festival organizers. Fringe festivals represent attempts to unsettle dominant understandings and perceptions, to create a space for alternatives, to seek out the unusual or quirky. As such, they self-consciously seek to be more or less disruptive of the

status quo in intent and practice. They are also arenas of struggle themselves as some event organizers have decided to minimize accessibility and inclusion in order to emphasize quality and control (see Lane, 2003).

Community High School and the Origins of the MAF

The faculty and students of Community High School, a small private arts-focused high school in Roanoke, Virginia, initiated the city's first annual marginal arts festival in 2007. The event was inspired, in part, by the arts movement described above, that in many cities was seeking to recognize and celebrate "fringe," "underground," or "alternative" artists and arts activities.

Like their counterparts elsewhere, Roanoke MAF organizers have grappled with what it means to be marginal, with the role of art and with the idea of the city itself.   The MAF has been cited by such far-flung sources as the New York City-based *Brooklyn Rail* for being, "more anarchic and socially present than many of its [fringe festival] peers" (Fry, 2009, p. 1).

The MAF's origins were rather unglamorous. Community High School was "looking for a fundraiser and we decided on Fat Tuesday" (N. Loman, personal interview, 2011). More specifically, the private school was interested in a non-traditional fund-raiser and its educational focus, along with a majority of its faculty and administration was arts-based. Fat Tuesday in Roanoke was a quiet time. The School held a fund-raiser on Fat Tuesday in 2006 that was sparsely attended, as the "only people coming were parents and friends of the school. It was a Tuesday night, in dead of winter, and we needed a way to include more people" (N. Loman, personal interview, 2011).

Loman, a faculty member at Community High School, took on the task of developing the event.   He researched the time before Lent and the history of festivals during that period. His studies led him to a focus on art,

> … there were a lot of tie-ins for how contemporary art really functioned…it does sort of act as an alternative for many people to the cathedral in the church ... it does have a satirical commentary built into it on social issues … it's not always the kind of art I like, but a lot of contemporary art has taken on this social and spiritual leadership role. I was just interested in advancing the idea of a contemporarized Fat Tuesday or Carnivale" (N. Loman, personal interview, 2011).

In addition to focusing on art, Loman crafted the event with the larger arts and culture milieu of the city of Roanoke in mind. As he recalled "my idea was to start with this intention to include the type of things that were missing from the local arts scene" (personal interview, 2011).

Growth of the MAF and the Curator/DIY Model

Community High School had existed for six years in 2008, the first year of the MAF. The school had attracted a talented faculty with arts expertise and experience and who shared a commitment to praxis-centered learning through the liberal arts. This orientation stood in direct contrast to more standards-based public school contexts. Community High School faculty members had backgrounds in literature, film, theatre, visual arts, and more. As the MAF idea emerged, its organizers discussed utilizing these individuals as "nodes" to engage people from the larger community in the faculty's fields of expertise.

Loman described the development of this idea in an interview with me:

The vision was to engage not just Community High School faculty, but to use them as tendrils to reach out and identify community artists who might serve as "curators." We have connections throughout the community and each of our faculty act as a kind of node and we would call them curators. We want them [sic] to produce events that are both entertaining and a critique. We are trying to fill gaps and not just duplicate things that already exist. That was sort of our first year's plan. We ended up with 3 or 4 days. We did an exhibition at the Dumas Center. We hung art-work downtown and down the street from us was an empty building where we had an exhibition curated by an artist that had a connection to one of our faculty (personal interview, 2011).

The first year proved a modest success in terms of fund-raising, but media attention and community interest convinced Community High School organizers to produce the festival annually. Faculty and students from the school engage with the festival as event organizers, as community networkers and as participants.

An interesting facet of the MAF that began from the first year was an emphasis on events organized and led by curators. The Festival tasked curators with an array of logistical tasks. These organizational responsibilities ranged from selecting a venue, coordinating with that site, preparing a space, recruiting and coordinating with artists, and staffing the event. Some curators ended up painting walls, hanging canvasses and completing tasks with which they had previously been unaccustomed. For many MAF curators, "logistics were *hard*" (A. Stuart, personal interview, 2011, her emphasis).

Loman explained the MAF curators were expected to produce events that served as a critique and aspired to fill gaps in the local arts scene, rather than simply to reproduce experiences already available. Loman's vision of curation was a do-it-yourself one. Curators,

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moreover, did not need to be artists, but rather people who had a vision, an idea, and could assemble and organize a group to produce an event around that concept. Loman acknowledged the inherent challenges and tensions with this kind of curation during my interview with him. Curators wanted guidance, yet the goal was for them to take ownership of an event. Loman was continually faced with decisions concerning how much counsel and assistance to provide. He strove to strike a balance between support and encouragement and curatorial independence and autonomy (personal interview, 2011).

MAF participants encountered interesting challenges that resulted in creative outcomes as they sought to employ this model in their first year. One artist, for example, led an event that involved stuffed animal toys, "that were distorted or altered in some ways … so they were mohair and two different eyes, very disturbing looking, and a little creepy…" (N. Loman, personal interview, 2011). The artist was a respiratory therapy nurse. She had several friends who also were artists. MAF organizers suggested "Great, let's have you get your artist friends together and you be the curator and we'll call it "Respiratory Space," a loosely created show from people who worked in respiratory therapy and the art they do" (Loman, personal interview, 2011).

Festival organizers described working with curators as an ongoing challenge requiring continual communication, clarification, and checking in. The curator for "Respiratory Space," for instance, "thought you could just walk into a space and hang it … she wanted everything done" (N. Loman, personal interview, 2011). MAF organizers wound up painting and preparing the exhibit space for that curator. After that, the festival's leaders realized they needed to clarify the responsibilities of the curator up front. Loman explained:

… so we said that whatever idea you might have can be reignited, that there is a community here to support you, that we can assist you in finding a space, to advertise it, to get the support and connections needed, and even try to find some funding to help pay for basic materials. In return, we ask that people bring their own energy and excitement for their project and that they include as many other people as possible. I am not really looking for artists, they may be artists, but I am really looking at someone who can be a producer or curator and bring in other people and then that community can work together on a project. I'd really like to make sure that apart from helping to stir the pot a bit, I'd like it to be other people's ideas and not mine … we have to have talks on a regular basis saying "are you o.k. with where you're going with this?" When it gets close to the festival, we don't want people to be curating something they don't have ownership over (N. Loman, personal interview, 2011).

The focus on marginal arts has spurred artists, partners, and curators to consider for themselves the question of marginality. As A. Stuart put it, when she was asked to curate an event for the MAF, she had to ask, "What does it mean to be marginalized as an artist?" (personal interview, 2011). Posing that question led her to think about women and forms of traditional arts and crafts practiced mostly by females that have been historically meaningful, but viewed as less substantial in the larger art world.   Accordingly, Stuart selected a focus on embroidery, needlework and sewing, particularly as practiced by a newer generation of predominantly female artists, and presented their work under the heading of fabric arts. Fabric art has recently seen a "resurgence" and Stuart knew two women in Roanoke who were actively creating such art (personal interview, 2011).

In her interview with me, Stuart explained how she actively works to support younger artists in the city,

> I've had a lot of people ask me to help them with their websites, help them write their artist statements, help edit bodies of work, they ask me for critiques and that sort of thing. So I've realized that mentorship is important and it's especially important to me, to do it because I feel like I didn't have it. My role now I've realized, I can be a mentor to younger women and younger people, like the girls at the Unicorn Stables [Project] if they want help or advice on how to market their work, what to do with their work, I can help them with that (personal interview, 2011).

I highlight the Unicorn Stables Project in the following section. Its youthful curators organized one of the five 2011 MAF events discussed in this chapter.

"Secret Histories of a Space Age" and the Unicorn Stables Project

L. Runnel, F. Neely and E. Calhoun met as students at Hollins University, a private liberal arts institution for women in Hollins, Virginia, a small community located on the outskirts of Roanoke. All three are artists and recent college graduates still in their early 20's. At Hollins, they had lived in the arts house, a themed residential housing space on campus. Upon graduating, they shared an interest in staying in Roanoke, partly due to connections formed in the city's arts community while students. E. Calhoun commented that in her hometown of Charlottesville, artists do not typically work with each other, but in Roanoke everyone is "so excited to collaborate" (personal interview, 2011). F. Neely added that, "Roanoke is surprisingly big but you still have an opportunity to contribute and connect … it is rapidly growing, in really good ways" (personal interview, 2011).

Neely began working with the MAF during her junior year at Hollins. She also participated in weekly artist Collab Fest events (described later in this chapter) and began assisting an established Roanoke-based sculptor in her studio. Runnel worked part-time in the Eleanor D. Wilson Museum and Gallery at Hollins University. Calhoun worked with a regional community services organization, but also wanted to continue her own art.

The trio's decision to form their own gallery was born partly of necessity. Roanoke appealed to them, they felt a part of the city's arts community and they needed their own studio. Existing spaces were too expensive or too large. There were literally no low-rent studios in the city. So, they found an old building for rent that enabled them to have small individual studios which opened into a larger gallery space. The three christened their new location the "Unicorn Stables Project." When I visited their building on Luck Avenue, I followed the labyrinthine hallway that twisted up and into a large open area, expansive but welcoming, with couch and chairs and glowing light sticks.

All three women emphasized how the MAF and the individual relationships they had developed with artists had provided each with opportunities for growth, partnership, and marketing. The trio curated an exhibit and the Unicorn Stables Project became a featured venue for the 2011 MAF. That fact attracted a *Roanoke Times* journalist who wrote a lengthy profile of the three, their gallery and their MAF exhibition entitled, "Secret Histories of a Space Age" (Allen, 2011). The three credited the MAF with helping their studio attract media and public attention by "elevating their profile" (L. Runnel, personal interview, 2011).

The Unicorn Stables exhibit was themed to capitalize on the cross-over that might develop from a science fiction convention that was taking place in Roanoke during the same

weekend as the 2011 MAF. The women transformed their studio into a "campy sci-fi movie set" for the exhibit (Allen, 2011).

The MAF effort was in the same spirit as their ongoing shows, in which their openings are "like performance art," in which everyone is encouraged to don costumes (F. Neely, personal interview, 2011). The trio has organized group theme shows with up to 20 visual, multimedia, and experimental artists. The events are mini-celebrations through which the local alternative arts network "celebrates community and each other" because "there is something magical about bringing people into a single space and seeing how they react" (F. Neely, personal interview, 2011).

The opening reception for "Secret Histories of a Space Age" occurred on March 3 and featured a costume contest and themed music, known as "filking," a technique used to parody popular music utilizing science fiction themes and lyrics (Allen, 2011). The exhibit included works from area artists and contributions from each of the three studio artists. The MAF show also included a themed live model drawing session, featuring individuals wearing sci-fi inspired costumes. The strategy was one the women had used before, inspired by Dr. Sketchy's Anti-Art School, a movement spawned in New York City in 2005, in which life drawing was conceptualized as a form of performance art (Allen, 2011).

While the three deemed the exhibit and related activities a success in interviews, they each also said that it had been difficult to pull together and the hoped-for crossover interest from sci-fi convention attendees failed to materialize. Still, the women were excited about Roanoke and proud of their project. The group's upcoming plans included ProJECT PROject, a light-arts show for downtown Roanoke and a block party/carnival to bring people to their studio area and integrate local businesses and residents into their activities.

Neely argued, "In Roanoke, it is very easy to contribute to culture … everyone here is making something happen"(personal interview, 2011). Runnel added that, "five years ago, when I first came to Roanoke, there was not much to do downtown, not much zeitgeist," but now it seems like "new things are happening every day" (personal interview, 2011). There is a kind of "fearlessness to make things happen" (Runnel, personal interview, 2011). While the founding of the Unicorn Stables Project demonstrates the presence of this type of experimental spirit in the city, I encountered other examples of this sort of energy as my interviews progressed. The story of Philosophy Inc. and its founder, T. Vance, illustrates the innovative DIY mindset exhibited by many local alternative artists.

"Philosophy Inc. Probes Roanoke"

T. Vance has been involved with multiple Marginal Arts Festivals, creates videos, often of the Roanoke alternative arts scene, has been a key member of the Collab Fest activities (described below), and is friends and collaborators with a number of other artists, including the women of the Unicorn Stables Project. Vance embodies the interconnected nature of the Roanoke arts community.

Vance is the creative impetus, and "CEO" behind a band of artists and creative thinkers called Philosophy Inc. (*16 Blocks*, March 2011). Philosophy Inc., as Vance described it to me, is a group he established to serve as a home or unifying brand for a number of creative projects and videos created by he and a small group of art and philosophy minded friends in Roanoke. Philosophy Inc has been "involved in numerous collaborative activities … involving artists, hangers on, geniuses, shady characters and subversives" (*16 blocks,* March 2011). Philosophy Inc "… likes to put its fingers into lots of cultural places" (*16 Blocks*, March, 2011).

As part of the 2011 MAF, Philosophy Inc and Vance served as a curator for an event at the Taubman Museum entitled "Philosophy Inc. Probes Roanoke." The curator worked with about 30 artists, who each created their own map-like versions of Roanoke. The exhibition's goal was to "bring together many diverse areas of Roanoke culture and have local artists portray the city from their own perspectives" (Marginalarts.com, 2011).

Additional elements of the exhibit included a display of photographs entered for jury consideration in the "Boring Photos of Roanoke" contest. Community members and artists submitted more than 60 photos for review. The exhibit also included a measure of MAF trademark quirkiness. Vance recruited a friend and helped him recreate his living room as a part of the display. In describing some of the philosophy behind Philosophy Inc., Vance articulated what seems to be a very common understanding among individuals participating in the Roanoke alternative arts scene, his belief "that art must have particular connection to its location to be relevant" (personal interview, 2011).

Vance also described some of the challenges of curating a MAF event. In his view, such efforts require, "lots of compromising" (personal interview, 2011). The press release for the "Philosophy Inc. Probes Roanoke" event included an awareness that the relationship with the Taubman was an uneasy fit, acknowledging, "In a remarkably courageous gesture, The Taubman Museum of Art has opened its galleries to a host of local eccentrics, outsiders, underground celebrities and avant-garde artists; those normally most excluded from the 'official' regional art and culture scene" (Marginalarts.com, 2011).

The mismatch, while anticipated, proved an even greater challenge than Vance had expected. Despite an agreement with MAF organizers, the Taubman did not advertise or market the event on its website or in print materials. Vance believed that Taubman directors and staff

regarded the effort as fairly secondary to their other, on-going exhibitions (personal interview, 2011).   As a visitor to the event, I also perceived the show as peripheral due to the absence of signage and to its location in a hallway of the museum. The executive director of the Taubman Museum of Art had committed the institution to serving as a major sponsor for the 2011 MAF. He had also cited the Museum's support of the MAF as an example of its outreach to the community (M. Hart, personal interview, 2011). According to MAF organizers, Hart had sought them out and asked them to use the Museum as a site for 2011 events. In Hart's view, the Museum fulfilled its commitment to the MAF by providing space and other support (personal interview, 2011). Festival organizers voiced a different assessment of their 2011 partnership with the Taubman (N. Loman, personal interview, 2011). Another 2011 MAF event, a performance piece by United Kingdom artists, Alexandria Zierle and Paul Carter, also reveals strains in the Taubman-MAF relationship.

Performance Art

T. Vance's challenges with working with the Taubman were not unique. In 2011 Festival organizers began to work more directly with area arts institutions. Yet, some MAF participants were "very uncomfortable with institutions" (P. Lugar, personal interview, 2011). And among the organizations with which they were working, MAF organizers, curators, and participants repeatedly described experiencing tensions with the Taubman Museum staff.

One form of that tension was the MAF curators' desire to ally themselves with the Taubman as a major supporter versus the impulse to distance themselves from the museum as a representation of the kind of established, formal, status-conscious arts institution to which many MAF participants were vehemently opposed. Taubman directors and staff seemed to be

experiencing a similar tension, between wanting to associate with this kind of community-focused, broad-based, grassroots arts movement, on the one hand, and struggling, on the other hand, to embrace MAF efforts and artists in a similar fashion to artists with whom the institution regularly worked. Communication between museum staff and MAF organizers, for example, was a persistent challenge. MAF curators reported multiple instances that museum officials failed to respond to their questions or required that they make last minute logistical changes (N. Loman, personal interview, 2011). The performance art event at the Taubman, curated by C. Yount, provides a clear example of the collaboration challenges both parties encountered during the MAF.

Yount is a central figure in the MAF story. He learned about the first MAF from P. Lugar, an artist and Festival organizer, who I discuss more fully below. Yount was living in New Jersey in 2006, but was very active in some segments of the international alternative arts community, including a loosely linked network of Fluxist practitioners. He came to Roanoke for the first MAF as a participant. After that experience, he decided to make Roanoke his home and convinced another artist friend to join him. The two have been central figures in the MAF and the Roanoke alternative arts scene since (C. Yount, personal interview, 2011).

Yount curated one of MAF 2011's most high-profile events, a performance art work by internationally-renowned artists, Alexandria Zierle and Paul Carter. Zierle and Carter are from the United Kingdom and Yount corresponded with them and arranged the logistics and details for their event.

Similar to T. Vance's focus on art that manifests a strong component of place specificity, Zierle and Carter were known for designing their performance art works to respond to the conditions present in the local spaces where they performed. Previous performances were

designed and enacted in such varied settings as indoor city markets, bustling metropolitan streets, empty railway tunnels, the top of a volcano, a desert, and the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), in New York City. For the MAF, the duo crafted a, "new work specially created for Roanoke and the Marginal Arts Festival 2011 in response to the context of the city" (Marginalarts.com, 2011).

The duo's event was considered a centerpiece of the 2011 festival. MAF organizers selected the Taubman Museum as the performance site, due in part to the interest that the executive director had expressed and to the Taubman's in-kind sponsorship.

The performance was scheduled for Sunday, March 6, 2011 at noon at the Taubman Museum of Art. At 12:30, spectators were still waiting. In his interview with me, Yount described how museum staff had objected at the eleventh hour when informed of the exact nature of the artists' presentation. The performers had to adapt in response, causing the delay in the event's start (C. Yount, personal interview, 2011). Finally, Alexandra Zierle silently beckoned the observers, myself included, up the winding stairs. The interior of the Taubman was gleaming, with towering glass spires, bright walls, shiny light wood floors, and glass bannistered stairways. Zierle methodically and silently began the rather monotonous task of stuffing a pair of pantyhose with chunks and fragments of black coal. The coal was the ominous black of subterranean caverns or deep outer space. Coal dust sprinkled across the wood floors and, as Zierle dragged a bucket and the coal-stuffed hose from a hallway to a primary gallery space, the visitors were fascinatedly stunned. There was something jarring about the coal's blackness splattered around the gleaming space. There was something inherently subversive about the blatant disregard for the cleanliness of the space.

The performance continued, and the artists spread coal to other rooms. Plastic umbrella bags were filled with air and used as balloons to obscure Carter's body totally for most of the performance. Spectators were provided paper and pencil. I will be more specific. Zierle stood silently and offered pencil and paper to spectators who took the initiative to come forward. Audience participation was not mandatory. Zierle spoke softly to those who came forward, "Write down one thing you dream for." Before the performance closed, words in red lipstick smeared across the clear glass that bordered the stairs, umbrella bag-balloons filled the atrium ceiling, Zierle descended stairs on her stomach like a caterpillar, and ice balls went from mouth to hands.

Whatever one takes away from such a performance, the Taubman and Roanoke, had never before seen its like. The work did seem to match its description in the MAF program guide, as exploring "society's conventions, traditions and rituals, often flipping them on their heads and disrupting the norm" (2011). While not obvious to onlookers, my interviewees described how the directors and staff of the museum were not altogether pleased with the performance. For his part, Yount was displeased with his experience with the Taubman officials,

> The way that Taubman handled the performance artists, it seems beyond incompetence. It seemed really sort of insulting and you know the performance artists were around for a couple of weeks and I spent a bunch of time with them, they were here several times and you know we had a dinner a few times, you know they are really, really great people, really open. If they hadn't decided to work with the constraints that were being imposed on them and to make something happen that they would basically be proud of even against what they thought were pretty ugly odds, it could have been a complete fiasco (personal interview, 2011).

One issue seemed to be a gap in both communication and expectation. Yount thought the Taubman officials should have been more gracious, more accommodating, and more aware of what is involved in cutting-edge performance art because the artists,

> They do a certain, they do a very specific kind of live art and it's based on going into a space and studying it, and figuring out ways to respond to it and they are at the cutting age of live art performance. They do some things that are little edgy and they bring all kinds of props in and they scatter them around and they drop them all off of balconies and they slide down stairwells with stuff they get scattered everywhere and it's not hard to find this out (C. Yount, personal interview, 2011).

Moreover, just as in the case of T. Vance and the "Philosophy Inc Probes Roanoke" exhibit, Yount and MAF organizers described feelings of indifference, and even hostility, from the museum staff. Yount claimed that the 2011 MAF events at the Taubman were not on the organization's calendar nor promoted by the museum in any way so that the message from the Taubman to the MAF organizers was the artists were "lucky that we're letting you use our space" (personal interview, 2011). Yount and other interviewees described a moment that seemed to them emblematic of the museum officials' attitudes toward the MAF artists. On the day of the event, Yount had attempted to introduce Hart, the museum director, to the artists, Zierle and Carter. Hart ignored Yount and failed to offer greetings to the visiting performers (C. Yount, personal interview, 2011).

In his interview with me, Yount described the scene on the day of the performance, when he and Zierle and Carter were confronted with objections and demands from the museum staff,

> You've invited, you are hosting them. You are a museum. You are hosting these artists. They are coming from England. You can go to their website and look and find out what

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they do. It might be a safe assumption that they are going to do similar work in your

space. So when they show up and say well, we want to drop coal here, right, we want to

have some ice here and to act shocked and offended that they would treat your space in

such a disrespectful way or whatever they make, they can't do that in here. It was absurd

and it didn't look like the museum had done their homework or if they had done their

homework, I don't know what they were thinking. Perhaps this is not the kind of live art

they want to happen in their space. If that's the case, okay, make their own decisions, but

they invited these specific people and these people have done a lot of work and have

documented it and it's online. You can see what they do. So when they come to the

Taubman and say this is what we are going to do, you can't respond by saying no, not

here. That's what they do. Why did you invite them? (personal interview, 2011)

Even though most of Yount's observations seem apt, it must also be said that the artists

and MAF organizers were not particularly familiar with working with an institution such as the

Taubman Museum of Art. A. Stuart is a Roanoke-based artist who has placed her work in a

number of major galleries in major metropolitan cities and had worked with the Taubman

Museum on an exhibit of her paintings. As she put it, "You know, I think there's a way of going

about things like that where there's a professional way to get things done and then there's a way

to just complain and that's not going to work"(personal interview, 2011). Another MAF

organizer, however, emphasized another distinction, that festival leaders had successful

experience working with a number of other institutions, but these difficulties were specific to the

Taubman and its leaders (N. Loman, personal interview, 2011).

Fluxus Roanoke at the Metropolitan Community Church of the Blue Ridge

On April 4, 2011, our family attended Sunday worship service at the Metropolitan Community Church of the Blue Ridge in southeast Roanoke. A friend who attended the church and was performing a solo that day had invited us.   The Metropolitan Church emphasizes inclusiveness, not only of irregular churchgoers like myself, but more particularly of gay, bi- and transgendered individuals.   The faith community's mission statement proclaims it "a Christian church for all people" (Metropolitan Community Church of the Blue Ridge, 2011). The church is housed in a wonderful structure, built in 1921. Stone arches, domed ceilings, and colorful stained glass windows stretched almost from floor to ceiling, creating a sense of vastness and history.   The dress was informal with more people attired in jeans than at any other service I could recall attending. Greeters and church members were exceedingly welcoming with smiles and handshakes.

In addition to music, dramatic reading, liturgy, community, and a brief homily, the Church service also included a presentation by one of its congregants, an artist, in which she claimed her art was, "helping her find her voice, letting her soul speak."   She displayed and spoke about two of her paintings. One represented the light and the dark and the bridge between while the other represented the unspoken, the presence in the absence.   The paintings depicted the struggles she had experienced in her own life, including drug and alcohol addiction. She had just turned to art recently, but it was, "helping her soul, allowing her to feel closer to God."

I learned art was a regular part of the church's worship service and its overall mission. In fact, the church itself served as a gallery, housing a variety of paintings, metalwork and sculpture. It was also home to a series of art-talks by community artists.

The church also hosted a series of MAF events and showings in 2011, an arts Labyrinth that incorporated Fluxus, Dada-ist, and Absurdist inspired artists and works. The pastor, R. Young, greeted me in his office, a welcoming space that included pottery, paintings and some of his collection of chalices and cups. Two years ago, N. Loman had approached the minister about involving the church in the MAF. Several logical connections spurred Loman's interest in partnering. The church has emphasized arts as a focus, it seeks to engage and welcome congregants who are marginalized because of their gender preferences or sexual orientation and it is physically located in a transitional neighborhood outside the city center that suffers a disproportionate number of drug, alcohol and other criminal offenses as compared to other zones of the city (RNA, 2011).

The church is located on the "other" side of the interstate from city center, an area not known for its arts and cultural venues. Indeed, Young commented to me, "the arts community tends to stop at Interstate 581" (personal interview, 2011). The church also had a great asset: lots of unused space, including two upper floors of high-ceilinged, maze-like rooms. Young, Loman, and other MAF organizers saw this as perfect for a Labyrinth-like linked display of disparate works and performances. The church's board and congregation approved involvement in the 2011 MAF. Young and three other artists including A. Dennison comprised the 2011 curatorial team for the space.

As it happened, more than 200 guests attended the Labyrinth exhibit and church leaders saw the effort as a success (R. Young, personal interview, 2011). Young emphasized to me that the events also produced some quite intense discussions and tensions. The artists did not all appreciate the sacred nature of the space they were using, while the congregants did not always understand the boundary-pushing stance of so many of the participating artists. One exhibit, in

particular, included both violent and sexual imagery, which many congregants "found offensive" (R. Young, personal interview, 2011). The curatorial team and concerned congregants entered into a series of conversations with the artists that encompassed the tensions between sacred space and artistic freedoms, ultimately leading to modifications of the display. The changes retained the works' inherent provocativeness while eliminating some of the more objectionable elements. While this incident was a "surprise," it also ultimately produced a series of conversations about art and the church that its pastor viewed overall as a "positive experience" (R. Young, personal interview, 2011).

The Vexilloid Project

A. Dennison was born and raised in Roanoke but spent much of his adult life in California, before returning to the region a few years ago. Shortly after he moved back, Dennison met some of the artists, including Loman, who were active in alternative arts in Roanoke. Loman asked him to participate in the first Marginal Arts Festival and he "has been involved ever since" (A. Dennison, personal interview, 2011). Dennison emphasized in his interview that the festival has come a long way from its beginnings which were "fairly small." In 2011, he took on organizing the MAF parade and leading the Vexilloid Project. In terms of curating the parade, he argued the process was more complex than he had expected. It had included working with the city to secure permits and the police department to identify routes and traffic control support (A. Dennison, personal interview, 2011).

Vexilloid is a term that describes vexillary, or flag-like, objects used by organizations or countries as a form of representation. The Vexilloid Project sought to engage residents in telling stories of their neighborhood and working with local artists to design a place-specific vexillary

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for them (N. Loman, personal communication, 2011). Dennison worked closely with Loman to lead the Project. He described the work to me as "very challenging." In his view, the effort was important, a way to demonstrate that "art is not just an elitist thing that nobody understands," but also a way to express, discuss, and support community identity (A. Dennison, personal interview, 2011).

The response from neighborhood groups was "initially enthusiastic," but then it became difficult to keep folks involved (A. Dennison, personal interview, 2011). He and Loman attended meetings of six neighborhood groups around the city before deciding to focus on the Southeast Action Forum in Southeast Roanoke. They pitched the Vexilloid idea to the group at one of its regular meetings. Denison told me about 30 people had attended the gathering he had visited and they were supportive, with several residents staying after the meeting to discuss the project further. Dennison and Loman held two more meetings with the Southeast Action Forum to design and fabricate plans, but interest "seemed to fizzle" (A. Dennison, personal interview, 2011). Only one person from the neighborhood association came to a meeting on the date scheduled to design the neighborhood Vexillary at Jackson Park Library, which was "very disappointing" (A. Dennison, personal interview, 2011).

Ultimately, a few people did come to the Jackson Park Library gathering, including some children from the area, and that small number designed and produced a vexillary. Overall community engagement with the project was low, however. This was particularly striking in light of the initial vision for the initiative. Loman had been interested in expanding the concept of "marginal" so as to integrate neighborhoods into the festival and the parade. Dennison and Loman had secured a verbal commitment of financial support for the Vexilloid project from the

Taubman Museum of Art. The City of Roanoke and the Virginia Commission for the Arts had

also pledged funds to the project. The two curators had expressed high hopes for the effort,

> We also want to identify the creative individuals of the neighborhood: the artists and
>
> writers, poets, musicians, and crafts people of course, but also the unusual or overlooked
>
> eccentrics, the seamstresses, dancers, decorators, enthusiasts, activists and cartoonists.
>
> We want to talk to the historians, archivists and honored personalities, as well as
>
> troublesome renters, 'tweens and teens, immigrants, and the homeless. We want as many
>
> different perspectives on the notion of "neighborhood identity" that we can get. We want
>
> to record the conversations and collect them into a document for public record. The
>
> Vexillum will be designed by neighbors, and assisted when necessary from outside, using
>
> the documents gathered as a source (N. Loman, personal communication, 2011).

Festival organizers hope to reframe the Vexilloid to attempt more deliberately to engage

people from city neighborhoods, particularly predominantly African-American or more

culturally and socially diverse areas. In speaking with Dennison and Loman, I sensed both their

pleasure at the festival's growth and its vibrancy, and their disappointment with the Vexilloid

Project and the MAF's ongoing struggle to include or engage more people from marginalized

groups and neighborhoods in the city more successfully. I discuss this further in my analysis in

Chapter 8. Dennison argues the MAF has engaged artists and others who felt disconnected,

since "four years ago, I was marginalized, now, I don't feel that way" (A. Dennison, personal

interview, 2011). He would like to use the arts to help other groups have the same experience.

Denison has helped bring artists together by his participation in Collab Fest, an effort to connect

alternative artists in Roanoke.

Collab Fest and the Continual Festival

The MAF did not develop in a vacuum. Loman was intimately connected not only to the Community High School faculty, but also to a small, but visible group of fringe artists and cultural producers in Roanoke.

One of these was P. Lugar. Lugar became involved in the MAF in its first year, during which he curated an exhibit on mail, or correspondence, art. Ray Johnson, an important innovator for the Fluxus and Pop Art school movements, founded correspondence art. Johnson sent cut-up collages, found objects and even snakeskins through the U.S. mail to friend/artists collaborators as part of the "New York Correspondence School" effort during the 1960s and 1970s (E. Warren, 2008).

Lugar is an admirer, practitioner and collector of correspondence art, "anything sent through the mail that you want to call 'art'" (personal communication, 2011). His personal collection was of such significance that he donated a portion of it to the Ohio State University Arts Library archives in 2010. His collected works included approximately 100 black binders of mostly correspondence or mail art, and visual poetry. Each of the notebooks held 100 sheets, plus front and back pockets (P. Lugar, personal interview, 2011).

For the first MAF, Lugar secured a vacant downtown space and set up tables to display his collection. He was also part of a core group of local artists and festival supporters, who "got together and started talking about the questions of what marginality means and what historical margins sort of look like. So you get into questions about avant-gardes and undergrounds and things like that" (P. Lugar, personal interview, 2011)

As Loman articulated in an interview published on the Interstitial Arts Network website, these discussions helped root the MAF and other Roanoke fringe arts activities in a set of historical and global arts movements because:

> … everyone involved has other models that they refer to and examine. One of the most important groups that helped define the festival were the underground and avant-garde art forms of Mail Art, Visual Poetry, the Absurdists, Dadaists and Fluxists. Each of those groups has national and international events that they actively participate in and some refer to as "The Network" (Allen, 2011).

In an interview with me, Lugar described how, "after the first festival, N. Loman, C. Yount, and I sat down … and we were talking about the next festival, and everyone wanted us to go for it, and one of the things that I was very interested in doing was keeping elements of the festival present in Roanoke, between festivals" (personal interview, 2011). He stated how he and his fellow MAF organizers were concerned the annual marginal arts festival might be dismissed by the regional arts leaders and the general public as a kind of carnivalesque exception to the more recognized mainstream arts scene in Roanoke and "given that there is no history for these things locally, the likelihood was that they would become sort of oddities, kind of like little art ball freak shows that happened once a year" (personal interview, 2011).

Lugar expressed how the MAF organizers' wanted to weave efforts into the fabric of the everyday in Roanoke, to make accessible, edgy and alternative art something that manifested in the city on an on-going basis, that became a part of the way that Roanoke was both experienced and perceived. Loman, Yount, and Lugar individually articulated to me an interest in supporting and building the alternative arts scene, but also in changing Roanoke itself, helping to craft a place where alternative arts became a fixture of the cultural landscape.

As noted above, Yount relocated to Roanoke from New Jersey, with his friend Warren, because of the MAF and the connections he had made as a participant in the first festival and "one of the things I wanted to do when I decided to move down here was to see if I could make Roanoke a node in the global network where people would, people who are interested in the kinds of things that I bring to the table, would think of Roanoke as a place where these things happen" (C. Yount, personal interview, 2011). Several of my interviewees cited the MAF as a major impetus in their decision to locate in Roanoke. As Lugar observed, "… with C. Yount and [his friend] moving here, it was pretty [sic] amazing. This is, they could do what they do anywhere, and they've done what they do in major cultural centers" (personal interview, 2011). Likewise, artist A. Stuart sells most of her paintings to galleries in urban centers like Chicago and New York, yet she has chosen to live in Roanoke, due in part to the arts community (A. Stuart, personal interview, 2011).

Yount cited the accessible and engaged nature of the arts scene in Roanoke, as one of its most appealing features. As he put it,

> Conditions in Roanoke allow a lot more to be done from an underground or DIY model. The local arts community here is different from other cities … there is a high percentage of people here that feel this is their city, they want to make it their home, and make an impact … in most cities, you have to deal with a lot more apathy (personal interview, 2011).

Lugar, Dennison, Loman, and others developed Collab Fest in 2008 as a means to keep the MAF spirit active in the community throughout the year. Collab Fest's initial goals were modest, to "get a handful of people, like a core group, who were willing to meet every other

week. And just do things, whatever, make collages, do little Fluxus Performance pieces, perform sound poems" (P. Lugar, personal interview, 2011).

The first biweekly gathering was held on July 31, 2008 at an unfinished downtown Roanoke gallery space. The space was being redeveloped into loft apartments, so after only a couple of gatherings a new home was needed. Dennison worked out a barter system with another artist so the group could use space in her neighborhood-based arts center/gallery, known as The Water Heater.   She allowed the gatherings to take place at the gallery twice per month in exchange for Dennison helping with other events and activities at the space (A. Dennison, personal interview, 2011).   The group became known as Collab Fest. Collab Fest was driven by the fringe impetus, the focus on providing a venue, a network, and a space for artists to meet and create.

Dennison described Collab Fest to me as "very loose," but at each event the group would have "something specific" (personal interview, 2011). The artist described the approach as an open one. People could bring in things they wanted to share, from film screenings, to bands, to artwork, to projects, to theoretical or conceptual ideas and readings. He described the events as having materials of various types on the tables with which participants could create collaborative pieces, as they wished.

Collab Fest notes reveal a varied assortment of activities and readings from a who's who of situationist, absurdist, Dadaist, and fluxist artists and theorists. The meeting on October 8, 2008, for example, included:

> situationist films, noise, collaborative add and pass mail art, text/image slide show,
>
> assemblage, post-neo absurdist cell phone poems, books and notebooks of mail art and
>
> visual poetry, carved erasers (carved as associational approximations of shapes and

patterns found in the book *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Writing Systems*, by Florian Coulmas, intended for use as a kind of fragmentary asemia and distributed in the mail art network, and found objects modified to be used either as rubber stamps or in the frottage process; books of visual poetry by Sheila Murphy and K.S. Ernst, John M. Bennett and Scott Helmes; the loose watch anthology of works published in lost and found times, issues 1 - 39, edited by John M. Bennett; mail art from the post-neo absurdist solidarity show and readings on the passage of a few people through a rather brief moment in time: the situationist international 1956 - 1972, 1989; Guy Debord, the society of the spectacle, 1973; Isidore Isou, venom and eternity, 1951 (P. Lugar, personal communication, 2011).

The definition and significance of Collab Fest was itself a topic for the collaborators and participants, as this definition from the August 26, 2009 session suggests:

Collab Fest is a bi-weekly multi-media (and intermedia) event that provides an alternative to the customary experience of the gallery visitor. Rather than passively participating as mere visual spectators, the viewers become active contributors to the overall experience. Collaborative works are displayed and new works are created during the events. Activities and exhibits include collage, performance, painting, sound poetry, stencils, sculpture, dance, installation, event scores, video, visual poetry, music, film and conversation (ideally all at once). You are invited to bring whatever you are working on and enter it into the mix. Collab Fest invites and advocates experimentation and improvisation (P. Lugar, personal communication, 2011).

Sessions incorporated arts practice and theory with discussions that were wide-ranging and tended toward the philosophical, as seen in this excerpt from the group's June 17, 2009 meeting notes which described Collab Fest as,

… a work-in-progress, a process, the gaps are palpable, it exists primarily as potential

and the potential is always the same, step-by-step, sometimes as if along railroad tracks,

at other times as if in sand, mostly a matter of desire, or that as much as anything else,

with documented discontinuities, a processual arrhythmia, the heart is persistent but it is

not patient, the mind is incessant, multiple, a fluid ecology teeming with its selves,

therefore it is capable of learning patience, but the discontinuities of the heart,William

Faulkner did not say, the eternal discontinuities of the human heart, therefore gaps and

behavioral disjunction, an awkward flow as much collision as segue, and not because it

stops but because it does not stop, it is punctuated inadequately, inappropriately, perhaps

even intentionally, irrationally, by the absence of the period, the photograph, and forced

into a stylistic, or structural, fiction, a metanarrative about inadequacy as necessity,

trading one constructed recontextualization of ourselves for another, to combat the fiction

of time stopped: this failure having been chosen provisionally as preferable to that" (P.

Lugar, personal communication, 2011).

The Collab Fest documentation is a summary of notes from the meetings, and as such, it

should be born in mind, as a later entry suggested,

> some of this stuff happened
>
> some didn't
>
> some other things happened
>
> A. Dennison took the photos
>
> (P. Lugar, personal communication, 2011).

Collab Fest integrated theory, artmaking, community, socializing and politics. The

sessions served as a breeding ground for ideas like the Must-See TV event described in Chapter

1 and as a continuing connective network for interested artists and social provocateurs. The April 22, 2009 Collab Fest meeting provides an apt example. Participants contributed artwork and then used it to clothe Dennison in a "suit of art" that included layers and wraps of old Collab Fest flyers, a sandwich board that read "Temporary Autonomous Zone", and a number 7 for a nose (P. Lugar, personal communication, 2011). The entire group proceeded to walk downtown to Campbell Avenue, where participants, in turn, ripped off pieces of Dennison's suit and stapled them to an empty storefront that had been covered with plywood. The group placed the letters TAZ on the plywood. Collab Fest notes provide the context for this activity,

> I think that this public action is a manifestation of creating a temporary autonomous zone, and leaving the message T A Z behind as a self-referential sign of the action, points to an idea that is fundamental to collab fest's ideology. This ideology links to the other flash mob public events that some of us have participated in recently ... the pillow fight and the big wheel race (P. Lugar, personal communication, 2011).

Anarchist thinker Hakkim Bey originated the concept of a temporary autonomous zone, and Collab Fest organizers also saw the situationists as a kind of progenitor because,

> … Collab Fest is a situationist concept, or at least something emerging from the evolution over the past 50 years or so of situationist concepts. Creating a space for play is a big part of it, and doing that in a public space, where the public can be invited to attend and participate, and the events can become an acknowledged part of the local community, all that's very important too, it allows the intersection of artistic creativity and socio-political reality to take place, so the events have specific space-time coordinates within the larger matrix of the local culture. That's absolutely essential for a project like this, and is one of the primary reasons for doing these events over and over whether or not anyone

seems to being paying much attention. After a while the reality of the events cannot be

denied, they take their place alongside all the other local events, and their presence alone

creates a new set of potential perspectives on what the local situation is, and on what the

possibilities for living one's life are within it, and one of the possibilities becomes very

clearly that of creating situations for ourselves, in however large a collectivity we can

manage, in which a spirit of play (and playful critique, play as critique) becomes the

guiding principle for organizing and perpetuating group activities (P. Lugar, personal

communication, 2011).

The Situationists formed in France during the 1960s. The movement aimed to "transform

everyday life in the modern world through a comprehensive program that included above all else

the construction of 'situations'"(McDonough, 2009, p. 1). Situations were defined as moments

"concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organization of a unitary ambiance and

a play of events" (Knabb, 1958, qtd in McDonough, 2009, p. 1). Guy DeBord published the

book, *The Society of The Spectacle*, in 1967. His work condensed Situationist thought into a

coherent set of interlinked theories. It offered a "totalizing critique of the existing world and of

every aspect of modern capitalism and its generalized system of illusions" (McDonough, 2009,

213). Collab Fest organizers drew inspiration from DeBord and the Situationists. As Lugar

observed in an interview with me, they had a place-specific focus, but, they were also,

…then at the same time trying to create a presence in the global network for what

happens here in Roanoke. So it's taking lots of photographs and creating text like the

Collab Fest notes and circulating those things in Small Press network and mega wire

network and there's the sort of Neo Fluxus network. So people in Italy and Brazil and

Finland who are interested in these kinds of events start thinking of Roanoke as a place

where this kind of thing happens (personal interview, 2011).

Or, stated differently, "I've always connected Collab Fest to something higher than just a

bunch of dudes hanging out" (P. Lugar, personal communications, 2011). Despite the active

Roanoke alternative arts scene, MAF's growth, and the spawning of various spin-off activities,

Collab Fest may now have "phased out" (A. Dennison, 2011). The primary barrier cited by

Lugar, Dennison and others seems to be space. The barter arrangement that Dennison made with

the Water Heater ceased when the artist who operated the Water Heater separated from her

partner who owned the space. Lugar, Dennison, Yount and a few others have explored renting a

space for a joint studio and Collab Fest event space, but had not yet been successful in doing so

as of this writing.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has described some of the key actors and events for the Roanoke MAF

through a series of short snapshots or brief vignettes. The Star City's Marginal Arts Festival, due

in part to its loose curator-based structure and its inclusion of so many events and artists, is

difficult to depict in brief. I could have selected additional events or actors, but the ones chosen

are broadly representative and also instructive in terms of what they reveal about Roanoke's

larger cultural imaginary and the challenges the city's arts community confronts in engaging

with varying ideas of art, place, and marginality. Chapter 8 synthesizes my findings from the

MAF and arts and cultural plan analyses and places those observations in the context of my

guiding research questions.

Chapter 8: Analysis and Discussion

Chapter Introduction

In Chapter 8, I directly address my central questions concerning the elements and implications of Roanoke's cultural imaginary. In Chapters 5-7, I related, in the form of a series of short vignettes, my findings in a narrative, or story form. Those descriptions, in large measure, reveal answers to my guiding research questions. The vignettes, for example, represented elements of Roanoke's arts and cultural imaginary (research question 1), sketched the perspectives of the key actors (research question 2), and described how the projects or entities produced or contested the city's prevailing imaginary (research question 3).

During my analysis of case study data, I also observed a number of repeated elements and grouped these into six sets of concerns, or features, related to the construction and alteration of Roanoke's cultural imaginary and the engagement of marginal populations and perspectives in its production and reproduction (research question 4). I labeled the six themes

- Institutional Tensions

- Inclusive Shifts

- Spectacle City

- Recurrent Absence

- Utopia-building

- Civic Tinkering

I approached my research questions through an ethnographic case study in an attempt to, "grasp how people understand their own worlds" (Crang & Cook, 2007, p. 148) while also reflecting on the relationships between my findings (detailed in Chapters 5-7) and my initial

theoretic and analytical interests, as outlined in Chapter 2. This chapter synthesizes those results

into a more holistic picture of the six cross cutting themes. I identified these leitmotifs through

data analysis and in keeping with my ethnographic approach by examining the experiences of my

interviewees, the ways they understood their part in Roanoke's arts and cultural imaginary as

well as their understanding of the overall imaginary. These themes are surely not the only ones

that might be identified from my research, but these emerged as the most prominent and most

directly pertinent to my inquiry. I describe and briefly discuss each of the six topics in the

following sections, before concluding in Chapter 9 with specific recommendations for both

research and practice.

Institutional Tensions

By institutional tensions, I refer to three arenas of concern: individual differences

concerning the role of institutions, specific internal organizational challenges, and contrasting

imperatives for collaboration and competition among institutions. I use institutions in this

instance as shorthand for the arts and cultural organizations and entities in the city as well as the

Roanoke government's arts and culture-related bodies.

Differences concerning the role of individual institutions

The first of these tensions concerns divergent individual perspectives on the role of

institutions in the city's arts and cultural scene. Many of my interviewees were uneasy working

with institutions. Interviewees also related examples of incidents that reflected or contributed to

that unease, such as the challenges MAF organizers experienced working with the Taubman. As

MAF curator and artist, Yount, observed in an interview with me,

… the experimental community in some ways by definition is a critique of the institutions and you know … If I am backed into a corner and have to take a position it would be oppositional and it would be a critique of the institutions as such, not just one by one, but just as presences and forces in the cultural landscape" (personal interview, 2011).

MAF organizers described their intent to expand the domain of arts and culture beyond the institutional and the mainstream. Festival activities demonstrated this commitment. Yount acknowledged Roanoke's traditional arts institutions were not overtly antagonistic to alternative artists, but that institutional barriers did exist. He suggested the staff of larger cultural entities may be less familiar working with unconventional artists,

My perspective is [Roanoke City and the formal arts institutions] haven't impeded anything. I think the institutions in general aren't used to working with people who do things the way we do things, so they don't know what their role should be and they might suspect that we are more trouble than we are worth and [the organizations are] not familiar with trying to facilitate DIY [Do-It-Yourself] grassroots experimental, collaborative activities. You know [the institutions] are set up to do different things" (personal interview, 2011).

Internal organization challenges experienced by individual institutions

Interviewees also identified internal organizational tensions and challenges. Roanoke's major arts and cultural organizations seemed almost uniformly to evidence leadership turnover, funding shortfalls and differences concerning strategic direction. The Taubman is the most visible entity and its struggles have been large, but the Arts Council, the Dumas Center, the Harrison Museum, and other organizations also have experienced such operational and sustainability challenges.

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I described the Taubman's financial struggles in Chapter 5. In response the museum's namesakes, Nick and Jenny Taubman, created a grants program to support the sustainability of the city's arts and culture nonprofits. The couple created the program, "in part as acknowledgment of the difficulties area nonprofits had with fundraising during the $66 million capital campaign to build the Taubman Museum of Art" (Allen, 2012). Grant amounts range from $25,000 to $100,000 and a total of $1,250,000 is awarded each year. Nonprofits with history, art, the performing arts, natural history, archaeology or science as central to their mission and that are headquartered in, and conduct the majority of their programs within, a 20-mile radius of Roanoke's city center are eligible for the grants (Allen, 2012). The funding support aims to, "… help strengthen their respective institution's financial underpinnings" (Allen, 2012).

Nonetheless, the Dumas Center's struggles and the intense competition among a number of Roanoke theatre organizations for survival suggests strongly that the city's arts and culture organizations are experiencing on-going financial and sustainability pressures (J. Nelson, personal interview, 2011). As Nelson described in Chapter 6, the difficulties faced by some entities are exacerbated by overlap in mission and activities. Multiple cultural organizations, such as the Harrison Museum, have experienced difficulty in selecting or retaining effective executive directors. Even the Taubman and the Arts Council have had to address leadership transitions and organizational restructuring.

Moreover, Roanoke's alternative arts scene is engaged in the continuous work of sustaining itself.   The MAF is now well established, but alternative artists still negotiate an existence on the fringes, sometimes by choice and often by necessity. The founders of the Unicorn Stables Project rented their gallery/studio space in a former industrial building in a transitional section of downtown Roanoke. As redevelopment transforms the surroundings,

property owners, such as the landlord for the building that houses Unicorn Stables, are selling older buildings or raising rental fees in response. Collab Fest organizers, for instance, have experienced difficulty in finding usable and affordable meeting space.

Conflicting imperatives for collaboration and competition among institutions

Arts and culture entities in Roanoke experience pressures for competition and collaboration, a third aspect of institutional tensions. One artist described "an urgent need for collaboration" for those in Roanoke's artistic community (qtd in Allen, 2011). Many of the activities of the arts and cultural planning process were collaborative. The RAC is nominally a collaborative body, yet its members acted in both cooperative and competitive ways during the arts and cultural plan process.

Inter-institutional collaboration can be a potent strategy for arts and culture-based development, as demonstrated by the Arts Council of the Blue Ridge. The Council's mission is to bring artists together and pool their resources (such as member dues) toward common goods, including grants for emerging artists or for arts-based youth development and outreach programming. In her interview, Nelson described how, as Arts Council director, she seeks to encourage arts organizations to partner, partly by creating opportunities for cross-institution conversation (personal interview, 2011). Yet, arts organizations in Roanoke increasingly participate in an uncertain dance whereby they alternate between collaboration and competition. Multiple interviewees commented on the limited pool of funding resources and donors in Roanoke when compared to the significant number of arts and cultural entities that seek to draw support from those same donors. Institutions like the Taubman and the Arts Council, although they have surely experienced struggles, seem to have acquired a protective or semi-privileged status, due to their size, prominence and importance to Roanoke's overall arts and culture

aspirations. Entities such as the Dumas, Roanoke Opera, Mill Mountain Theatre, Roanoke

Children's Theatre, and the Harrison Museum, meanwhile, face a continuing difficult struggle to

sustain themselves.

Roanoke's alternative arts community also experiences the dual pulls of competition and

partnership. Individual artists in the alternative sector are quite practiced at peer collaboration.

Nonetheless, the two impulses come into conflict when artists balance their anti-institutional

stance and tendencies toward provocation against their desire and occasional need to engage in

working partnerships with the city and arts institutions. The difficulties experienced by MAF

organizers working with the Taubman for the performance art exhibition provide an apt example.

Inclusive Shift

By inclusive shift, I refer to the trend towards a more encompassing conception of arts

and culture in Roanoke. Such an understanding consists of three components: recognizing the

presence and value of the alternative arts to Roanoke's overall cultural milieu, conceiving the

arts and culture in Roanoke more holistically, and breaking down barriers and silos among

organizations.

Recognizing the presence and value of the alternative arts to Roanoke's overall cultural milieu

The MAF's founders have sought to broaden the scope of the city's arts and cultural

scene by encouraging greater recognition of alternative artists and arts forms. The MAF today

counts institutions such as the Taubman, the Arts Council, and the RAC as principal supporters

and partners. Indeed, many of my interviewees commented on the presence and significance of

Roanoke's "alternative" or "edgy" arts community. Reed, the City's Arts and Culture

Coordinator, also expressed this awareness in an interview with a *Roanoke Times* journalist,

… and are there some ways that we can financially support individual artists? There's a great group of artists ... doing this project called PROject proJECT. They're doing light shows downtown, and so we've been working with them on how to make that happen. So one of our big goals is to support these, for lack of a better term, guerilla art movements, things that artists are getting together and doing. Support them because that's what makes the city different and exciting (Skeen, 2011).

MAF organizers have also gradually moved toward a more comprehensive understanding of both community and marginality, so as to include neighborhoods and class, race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation concerns. As the Festival's 2011 program guide suggested, "This year's festival, perhaps more so than ever, is taking the 'community' part of Community High to heart" (MAF guide 2011). The Vexilloid Project, for example, represented an intentional, if not entirely successful, effort to engage neighborhood residents in the Festival.

Understanding the arts and culture in Roanoke more holistically

A second shift towards increased inclusion through a more holistic idea of arts and culture was evident as the city's arts and cultural planning process unfolded. Discussions and public input prompted RAC members to address tensions between the interests of a few core arts institutions and those of groups pressing for extending arts and cultural programs and activities out into the city's neighborhoods as part of an overall focus on livability. The language of livability and a neighborhood focus emerged as core features of the final plan. That emphasis on the entire community seems to have widened the discourse toward an understanding of culture as everyday practice, as a way of life. In other words, participants in the arts and culture planning process, including some of the city's arts and culture organization leaders, began to think about the culture of Roanoke as residing not only in its major landmarks and heritage institutions, its

creative producers and their products, its festivals and events, but also to some extent in the happenings on its streets and the lived experiences of its people. The director of the Arts Council argued the arts are promoting a new sense of openness and an appreciation for difference among city residents,

> Building community through the arts, I think, is starting to happen, and I think that what's really nice is, as we continue to create these plans, that there will be support for that, and … more of a concerted effort to embrace and help … I think it will cause this community to become even closer, because … it's a close community anyways and a very welcoming community, but I think it will help us to become more open-minded and embrace each other's differences even more. Because we have been a little bit more of a closed and conservative community, but what I see is that we are becoming more open, more welcoming, and more open-minded towards our neighbor next door (J. Nelson, personal interview, 2011).

Breaking down barriers and silos between organizations

A third shift towards inclusion pertains more directly to governance and the planning process. Roanoke's experience with the arts and cultural plan is significant for, "Despite the fact that the creative city rubric has the potential to tie urban planning, economic development and arts and cultural policy efforts together, this has for the most part not happened in most American cities" (Markusen, 2006, p. 2). Roanoke's arts and cultural plan at least temporarily engaged these formerly siloed sectors in a joint effort. Indeed, as Markusen has argued, "The major challenge at the local level is the fragmentation of responsibility for cultural and arts policy and planning among at least three distinct agencies" (2006, p. 16). As she has also suggested,

Few cities large or small have the expertise to bridge current balkanized bureaucratic

structures, and few know how to work with multiple constituencies for cultural policy to

develop an agenda that works. Some slap down "cultural districts" on maps without

thinking about their viability or impact on neighbors or competitors. Some commission

cultural plans from outsiders that have no after-life, since they are not generated through

the efforts of local coalitions (Markusen, 2006, p. 19).

Roanoke, rather than duplicating its effort with the Public Arts Plan that overwhelmingly

relied on outside consultants, shouldered the task of crafting the Arts and Cultural Plan itself,

with its own resources. The process, as described in Chapter 6, was uneven and messy,

generating tensions, and creating still largely uncertain outcomes. Nonetheless, the initiative

helped city officials develop a broader perspective on arts and culture, and led to the final plan's

focus on livability and engagement across the entire community.

Efforts to create the arts and cultural plan generated discussions that broadened city

officials' focus beyond art's economic value as a development tool and towards its ability to

further other shared community goals. This raises the question of whether Roanoke might now

be moving toward a more holistic approach to arts and culture-based development along the lines

advocated by Charles Landry,

Cultural thinking needs to move away from an exclusive focus on art forms to an

emphasis on culture as the lived experience or complex reality of a place. This has a

significant implication in that ministries of culture or divisions in cities responsible for it

should see themselves as ministries advocating for culture right across other ministries

and departments rather than being the ministry or department of culture (2004, p. 3).

The RAC and relevant city officials as well as the leaders of some of Roanoke's major

arts institutions seem now to be placing greater importance on community and on working with

artists engaged in alternative, or community-based, arts. I do not, however, simply credit the arts

and cultural planning process alone with this shift. My discussion here is not causal. Rather, the

change is occurring for several reasons, including financial concerns that incentivize

collaboration and greater public engagement in an environment of resource constraints; the

emerging prominence of Roanoke's alternative arts scene, thanks in part to the MAF and

heightened public awareness attained through conversations generated by the arts and culture

planning process and the RAC.

Yet, as suggested below, city officials' and citizens' understanding of arts, place and

marginality are in continual motion, as arts proponents in the city work to create an, "inclusive

and nuanced vision of what the creative city will be: diverse, decentralized, competitive in some

ways, cooperative in others. This is contested terrain" (Markusen, 2006, p. 29)

Spectacle City

A recurrent theme in the interviews conducted for this dissertation concerned the extent

to which Roanoke's arts and cultural aspirations and activities reflected globalizing processes of

consumption and spectacle. Is the city's move towards an arts and culture identity simply a

response to the pulls and pressures of neoliberal capitalism, a matter of "cultural consumption"

(Zukin, 1995)? Harvey has called attention to cities as "hyper-active sites of creative

destruction…[that] dance to the capitalist imperative to dismantle the old and give birth to the

new (Harvey, 2003, p. 25). The case of Roanoke suggests that in some ways arts and culture are

an identification that for some of its proponents seeks to establish the city as a more prominent

capital node, an attempt to attain urban rebirth around the creative class, cultural anchors and culture-based consumption. De Certeau has emphasized how "every urban 'renovation' nonetheless prefers a tabula rasa on which to write" (1984, p. 200). Yet, the slate is never blank and the construction of an arts and culture imaginary represents one more layer in a place where the "imbricated strata" pile up into a heterogeneous multitude of identities and ideas (de Certeau, 1984).

RAC members and city officials seemed initially to view art and culture unproblematically as an asset or a resource for development. In Chapter 7, I introduced the situationists and Guy Debord. Debord examined what he dubbed "the spectacle" or colonization of modern life by the apparatus of capitalism and the processes of consumption (DeBord, 1977; Hetherington, 2007). He remarked that, "in societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles (Hetherington, 2007, p. 35). Art and culture when viewed as commodities, or as vehicles for capital accumulation, are complicit in this spectacle. Notably, DeBord's theorization of spectacle drew on the conceptions of everyday life, alienation, and mystification first articulated by Lefebvre and de Certeau. As introduced in Chapter 2, everyday life, as understood by Lefebvre and de Certeau, is partly an alienated condition, in which individuals are subjected to a process of mystification that reveals only the more trivial and banal features of daily existence (de Certeau, 1984; Lefebvre, 1991; Shields, 1992).

The organizers of the city's arts and cultural plan retained a central economic framing on a view of, "Roanoke as a vibrant and prosperous community where innovation in arts and culture engages people in all aspects of life while contributing to sustained economic growth and development" (Arts and Cultural Plan, 2012, p. 6). Presenters, facilitators, and many participants

at public meetings in which I participated frequently described how development of culture and arts was important for creating jobs, growing the economy or attracting tourists or workers. This framing helped make the case for the plan's importance and justify attention to and investment in arts and culture activities. The economic instrumentalist perspective emphasized the commercial, consumerist orientation of arts and culture as spectacle.

Such a view may be an effect of a planning process that often needs to justify policy focus or investment as resulting in economic growth. Such planning includes core challenges, since,

> If we agree to have policies about culture or link culture to development objectives then we are also consenting, explicitly or implicitly, to a logic of planning. Planning, that is to say, is not just about "hard infrastructure" but also about soft and creative infrastructure: people and what they can and cannot do. Cultural planning is, as Franco Bianchini has put it, a "difficult art." It can be glib and superficial, producing a mask of leisure and entertainment to conceal the most profound social and economic inequities (Mercer, 2006, pp. 6-8).

It is still too early in the plan's implementation to draw definitive conclusions concerning its ultimate impacts. A key question, however, is whether the strategy represents a fundamental shift in the city's understandings of arts and culture (implied in some of the findings discussed above), or instead simply a window-dressing of rhetoric of inclusiveness and relatively insignificant gestures in that direction, while nonetheless maintaining a status quo that tips towards the interests of capital and consumption. Lefebvre highlighted this issue, "To put art at the service of the urban does not mean to prettify urban space with works of art. This parody of

the possible is a caricature" (1996, p. 173). In some ways, the city's arts and cultural strategies seem to be bending towards such parody as they:

- Emphasize public art for neighborhoods while reducing funding for the overall public art program;

- Stress art's potential to influence livability positively while neglecting to invest in capacity building for the practice of community-based art; and

- Champion neighborhood-based arts and culture and organizational collaboration while failing to inject support to floundering, but historically and culturally important neighborhood-based institutions, such as the Dumas.

The Dumas represents the salience of the "Spectacle City" theme. While some city redevelopment funds contributed to its renovation, the Center's ultimate fate seems to rest in its ability to survive in a competitive economic environment. While financial strength is certainly relevant, an economic rationale alone fails to take into consideration the historic and cultural importance of the Dumas. Making an economic case for arts and culture funding is increasingly common. The problems with this orientation are multiple and include the risk of falling into the "instrumentality trap,"

This subservience by the arts to external demands may appear to be a canny way of accessing funds … But the problem is that the very orthodoxy of instrumentalism is counter-productive, and allows the arts to be cast to one side when a better offer comes along. This is the instrumental trap. Art's inability to stand on its own two feet means it is constantly propped up by other agendas. In practical terms, selling the arts to local authorities as useful for non-artistic ends has resulted in culture having to find funding from other budget holders, rather than having an autonomous budget. In local areas,

culture is not established as intrinsically a public good in its own right. The only way to gain support for the arts today is to go on the offensive and re-popularise the intrinsic value of the arts. My solution is that we need to rediscover how to argue for the arts (Fox, 2008, pp. 4-5).

As global economic conditions continue to remain difficult, creative economic strategies that rely on capital flows and tourist attraction may face steeper difficulties. Indeed, "attracting tourists, visitors and shoppers may not be the urban salve it once appeared" (Schneider & Susser, 2003, p. 316). Loman expressed a similar skepticism as he reflected on the MAF's role in the local economy,

> Our small city has struggled over the past decades with population loss, and an economic downturn that has affected local identity and led to the imposition of a generic consumer driven cultural identity. Several years ago city officials decided to use the arts to act as the engine for the city's economic revival. There is a great deal of evidence that shows that many cities around the country and the world have succeeded in revitalizing their communities in this way. This sort of official support for the arts must realistically come with an impatience for results, and many of the artists and cultural advocates were not convinced that the entrenched and institutionalized cultural offerings would be enough to effect that turn around (qtd in Allen, 2011).

Recurrent Absences

Absence as a theme repeatedly occurred in the interviews, in four senses. First, many interviewees and participants in public discussions voiced a concern about the relative absences of African Americans from the city's arts and culture scene. Second, my respondents expressed

a more general concern with the absence of "non-elites," meaning people who were not upper class, white, or college-educated. Third, the absence of the once vibrant African-American neighborhoods in northeast and northwest Roanoke, that were damaged or destroyed for urban renewal was revealed to be not only a past wound, but also a continuing sore, that manifests anew with each fresh planning or development effort. Lastly, the regeneration of downtown Roanoke on the basis of an emphasis on arts and culture, spurred by private and public investment, contrasted with a lack of an equivalent investment in the outlying neighborhoods that included higher percentages of Black, ethnic and lower-income populations. I address each of these forms or evocations of absence in more detail below.

Absence of African Americans

Both those interviewed who worked with the arts and cultural plan and MAF organizers remarked on the difficulties implicit in engaging African Americans in the city's arts and cultural scene. MAF planners, for example, had tangled directly with questions of marginality. The organizers' initial ideas of marginality mostly concerned art forms and artists they believed peripheral in the city's art scene. As the MAF has developed over its first few years, however, its organizers have undertaken concerted efforts to consider other marginal populations, including non-downtown neighborhoods, gay, bisexual and transgendered populations, as well as the city's Black residents. MAF organizers have not enjoyed very much success in those efforts. During the MAF's 2011 panel discussion at Hollins University, for instance, an audience member asked why there had not been more attempts to engage the city's Black residents and predominantly African-American neighborhoods. Panelists and Festival organizers in the audience responded frankly that while they have made efforts, the event has not yet successfully engaged that group.

There is another aspect pertaining to the absence of African Americans. The challenges of the Harrison Museum and the Dumas Center raise the question of why such institutions have not established a broader base of support from the city's African Americans. This question is not one that my fieldwork directly addresses, but seems an important area for further exploration, perhaps one relating to organizational effectiveness, generational gaps, or concentrated neighborhood effects and conditions.

Absence of "non-elites"

The theme of elitism, and of the missing "non-elite" was evident in the interviews, field observations and secondary data. Artists remarked on the "class-ist" bias the arts and cultural planning process seemed to display (F. Neely, personal interview, 2011). The author of a commentary in the *Roanoke Times* asked whether the city's future was being shaped by a few hundred, mostly white elites that comprised the audience of a CityWorks conference focused on place-making (Brunais, 2011). A RAC board member, who also had served on the board of the Harrison Museum, commented on the relative dearth of cultural activities that might attract more of the urban black population, saying, "We don't have the kind of dance clubs, or musical performers, coming [to Roanoke] regularly that interest the younger black population" (G. Evans, personal interview, 2011).

Absence of once vibrant Black neighborhoods

The absence of a formerly robust black neighborhood in northeast Roanoke and the devastation of the Gainsboro community and other northwest neighborhoods constitute a continuing hole in Roanoke's cultural and socio-political landscape. The destruction of Gainsboro's Henry Street, the former cultural center of Roanoke's Black community, reasserts itself with every planning and development issue that affects the city's mostly African-American

neighborhoods. The Virginia Department of Transportation announced in early 2012 that its

plans to widen 10th Street may include the condemnation by eminent domain of up to 16

additional properties in the historic northwest neighborhood. A *Roanoke Times* reporter

described attitudes towards the project from many of those with whom he spoke in this mostly

Black section of the city,

> Distrust of government runs deep in north Roanoke and particularly in the black
>
> community. Many of the blocks along 10th Street consist increasingly of older, retired
>
> residents on a fixed income, and many of them remember the city's urban renewal
>
> movement that moved entire city blocks of people from the Commonwealth, Kimball and
>
> Gainsboro neighborhoods (Adams, 2012).

Absence of focus on outlying neighborhoods

The fourth component of absence reflects the lack of attention to, and investment in

cultural and economic development, in city neighborhoods with high numbers of Black, ethnic,

and low- income residents. A cursory look at some of the major city-supported ongoing or

recently completed downtown redevelopment projects is revealing. The Center in the Square

complex is in the middle of a multi-year $27 million renovation. The historic City Market

building reopened in Fall 2011 after a one-year, $9 million improvement project. The Taubman

Museum of Art was constructed for $66 million. In the case of the Taubman and the Center in

the Square, private donors contributed the bulk of the funds. Still, the city has invested in both

and incurred the major share of costs for the City Market. In that same time period, there has

been nowhere near the same scale of investment in development in the city's low income, non-

core neighborhoods. Moreover, cultural anchors outside of city center have experienced serious

financial hardships, including the Dumas Center and the Harrison Museum. Likewise, funds

have not yet been identified to help preserve and renovate other important historical and cultural landmarks, such as the boyhood home of civil rights leader, Oliver Hill, in the Gainsboro community.

Roanoke is not alone in this kind of resources discrepancy between city-center and neighborhood locations, as an Urban Institute study of cultural development found,

> However, cities have done less to recognize and systematically promote the cultural lives of urban neighborhoods and their residents. When cultural agencies do not consciously and actively incorporate communities and their needs into cultural development, their policies and programs can in fact conflict with and threaten the cultural health of urban neighborhoods (Rosenstein, 2009, p. 1).

Utopia-building

In his essay on urban walking, de Certeau called attention to the "Concept-city" or urban utopian project, the idea that one prominent, privileged story might be written onto and produced in a particular place(1984, pp. 95-96). Once such a conception is adopted, rationalistic planning and governance discourse and organization, de Certeau claimed, must then suppress ideas and practices that would counter it. The ultimate value privileged in such instances is the idea of progress itself, as de Certeau argued. The city, and its overarching and self-organizing machinations for progress, is a mystified and totalizing space, the "dominant theme" of its own legends (1984, pp. 94-95). For de Certeau, however, the abundance of everyday life with its multitudinous spatial practices necessarily served as contradictions to the city as utopia. Still, Roanoke's efforts indicate that attempts to produce utopian ideas of urban space remain quite

active. In an interview, MAF founder and organizer, Loman directly addressed Roanoke's place

identity and the question of how the Festival might contribute to it,

> Culture and Art starts with asking who and where you are. Roanoke is proudly blue
>
> collar, Appalachian, urban and rural: a fascinating cultural crossroad. We are the railroad
>
> and as linked to coal as Newcastle in England and yet we are a leader in green technology
>
> and local foods. Who we are is the most interesting thing about our culture, and yet we
>
> have apologized for it for far too long. We can make this a better town to raise our
>
> families with art projects like [the MAF] AND become a cultural beacon for the region
>
> (personal communication, 2010).

MAF's approach and many others of the actors involved with arts and culture in Roanoke

was to consider the city as a project, or oeuvre. Lefebvre also described a city as a kind of

working project, writing, "And thus the city is an oeuvre, closer to a work of art than to a simple

material product" (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 101). He implied that people and institutions would

continually be working to produce particular kinds of spaces and spatial meanings.

Lefebvre has contended that cities are produced and reproduced by people, residents and

non-residents alike, through everyday life, spatial practices and representations. The creative

city, fully envisioned, is a utopian imaginary. In discussing Lefebvre's writings on the city as

oeuvre, Kofman and Lebas have emphasized this connection, "An experimental utopia is the

exploration of what is humanly possible based upon the image and the imaginary (the

imaginaire), constantly subjected to critique and referring to a problematic derived from the real,

that is a feedback mechanism (Kofman and Lebas, 1996, p. 15).

My interviews and other data suggest that different entities in Roanoke are seeking to

enact their own slightly different utopian, arts-and-culture-based versions, of alternative oeuvres

or imaginaries. CityWorks, for example, depicts Roanoke as a kind of exemplar in the small

cities movement, providing creative amenities as a kind of play-space for the creative class. Once

these are in place, advocates argue, they will provide benefits for the city as a whole.   The Arts

and Cultural Plan seeks to make Roanoke "synonymous with arts and culture," by building its

brand, attracting tourists, strengthening its anchor institutions and extending art and culture into

the greater city. In contrast, Collab Fest envisions Roanoke as a global node in the alternative

arts sector, particularly within certain subsets of the alternative arts community, such as Fluxus

and MailArt practitioners. For their part, MAF organizers view Roanoke as a place where the

alternative arts and its practitioners are seen and valued and as a place where institutional

dominance and a neoliberal, capitalist framework are routinely challenged.

Civic Tinkering

While many of the actors engaged with arts and culture in Roanoke have aims rooted in a

utopian impulse, I also observed the presence of informal or unsanctioned attempts to alter place

meanings. While these too may have a utopian goal, I describe these, in practice, as a form of

"tinkering," or meddling with space. Examples include many of the MAF's activities, the Must

See TV event described in the introduction, and some Collab Fest efforts.

Civic tinkering, then, may be regarded as any impermanent, unsanctioned and informal

activity that endeavors to alter a city's identity positively. Lefebvre argued for representation

and citizen involvement in urban change as a kind of right to the city,

> The right to the city manifests itself as a superior form of rights: right to freedom, to
>
> individualization in socialization, to habitat and to inhabit. The right to the oeuvre, to

participation and appropriation (clearly distinct from the right to property), are implied in the right to the city (Lefebvre, 1996, pp. 173-174).

Lefebvre was concerned not only with open public participation concerning specific development projects, planning efforts, or policy decisions but also with ensuring diverse groups opportunities to influence the idea of the city and its spaces. In Lefebvre's view, citizens should have a right to participate in the imaginative work of the city.

In an interview included in a collection of his writings on cities, Lefebvre suggested, "the passivity of people has often intrigued me: the city is changing around them and they accept it, internalize it and bear the consequence" (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 210). He continued by suggesting that more resistance seemed to be emerging including increased awareness of, and greater demands for, representation in city projects by individuals and informal groups.

Several actors in Roanoke have experimented with spatial interventions and appropriations, or civic tinkering. Modern attempts to shape ideas of place resemble a tinkering approach. Earlier in this chapter I quoted the city's Arts and Culture Coordinator, who argued, "one of our big goals is to support these, for lack of a better term, guerilla art movements, things that artists are getting together and doing. Support them because that's what makes the city different and exciting" (2011). City officials and arts institution leaders recognize the salience of experimental, grassroots efforts to the city's burgeoning arts and culture identity. The Taubman's executive director commented in an interview with me on the "experimental scene that is having an influence on what we are doing" (M. Hart, personal interview, 2011).

To explore the concept of civic tinkering more closely and offer examples linked to my analysis, I turn to the MAF and a share of its activities. Such efforts include four inter-related dynamics: civicism, spatiality, impermanence, and informality.

The tinkering to which I refer is not aimless meddling, but civically oriented, evidencing a positive intent of place-shaping. I borrow from Bell and de-Shalit's notions of civicism to describe these efforts. They have defined civicism as the intent to contribute positively to a city's ethos flowing from a feeling of pride and identification with that community (2011, p. 4). Nonetheless, while I find their view of civicism useful, I employ it differently from their overall argument that cities have a dominant, identifiable ethos. My alternative conceptualization of city imaginaries draws on Lefebvre and de Certeau to understand urban sites as places where space is produced in a complex context, with layers of multiple identifications and meanings in persistent flux and interaction. Regardless, I draw from the ideas of civicism in equating civic tinkering with a range of informal efforts that contain a positive place-making intent. The MAF, for instance, has been centrally concerned with positively shaping Roanoke's identity and strengthening its civic capacities. Loman discussed the festival's impacts in an interview printed on the Interstitial Arts Foundation website, "It is impossible to tell how this festival will benefit the whole community. We hope it will strengthen local identity, encourage more individual participation in civic issues, and perhaps even add to the local economy" (Allen, 2011).

Civic tinkering, moreover, is overtly focused on the spatial. Meanings intersect in urban sites and tinkering efforts often seek to disrupt or to "re-present" urban situated connotations. Such a focus recalls Marcuse's writings on the aesthetic, for in some ways the MAF was "… committed to an emancipation of sensibility, imagination, and reason … and becomes (became) a vehicle of recognition and indictment" (Marcuse 1978: 9). Collab Fest participants, who engaged in public acts such as the temporary autonomous zone (TAZ) described in Chapter 7, demonstrated this attending to the spatial. The TAZ aspired to a kind of anti-capitalist identity for a particular streetscape location.

Impermanence may also be associated with civic tinkering. Activities such as Must See TV and the TAZ were limited in duration, yet aimed to provoke continued conversations and awareness shifts. While the MAF has become an annual event, a kind of alternative behemoth in the city's arts scene, its focus remains on curated events that are temporary and inexpensive to produce.

Civic tinkering activities evidence a fourth feature. Tinkering is frequently conceived and implemented by individuals or groups that do not rely on support or sanction from institutions or governing bodies. The MAF, although led by Community High School faculty and by its organizing team, has encouraged its curators to function semi-autonomously. Activities like the TMZ and Must See TV were voluntary and carried out by a group of interested participants, without the substantive support of any other authority or governing body. Tinkering efforts are temporary, somewhat limited interventions that do not supplant other kinds of ongoing, lasting work such as politically supported change projects. Civic tinkering initiatives, however, may be important as contrasts, counters, subprojects or spurs for more formal, resource-intensive efforts

The planning literature includes examples of "insurgent" or "guerilla" planning that are similar to civic tinkering, as forms of temporary change efforts (Hou, 2010; Miraftab, 2009; Sandercock, 1998). Exact descriptions of such endeavors vary and most focus principally on governance activities. The literature includes few examples of how these interventions influence place imaginaries or strengthen the imaginative capacity of people in a place. The civic tinkering efforts in Roanoke seem to function to stretch or strengthen individuals' capacity to participate in the work of imagining the city.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has synthesized case findings, painting a picture of some key crosscutting themes pertaining to the ways that urban imaginaries are constructed and altered, and the engagement of marginal populations and concerns in those processes in Roanoke. I identified, and then described and discussed, the six key themes of institutional tensions, inclusive shifts, spectacle city, recurrent absence, utopia-building and civic tinkering. Chapter 9 offers recommendations for both research and practice and shares my conclusions.

Chapter 9: Conclusions

Art is process
Art is idea.
Art is everyday.
Art is rebellious.
Art is thinking and being.
Art is as much about voice as it is about medium.
Art lives at the margins as well as in the middle.
Art is sometimes loud, sometimes overlooked, sometimes undernourished, sometimes shocking, sometimes insidious, sometimes spontaneous.
Art is created by community as well as by individual.
Art is potential.
(MAF Program Guide, 2011, p. 1)

This final chapter offers reflections on my research and several concluding observations. In particular, I outline four findings as significant for the study of urban imaginaries and the practice of arts and culture-based development:

- Studying and supporting civic tinkering activities

- Recognizing the relevance of localized imaginaries, or urban identity projects

- Assuring full participation, versus privileged participation, in such projects

- Conducting critical and place-specific analyses of, and approaches to, creative economy efforts, arts-based development, and cultural policy.

Before discussing these conclusions, I will describe Roanoke's art and cultural milieu in a personal way, through my experience on a rainy, cold Friday just before Halloween in October 2011. The Hometown Bank building, on the corner of Jefferson Street and Campbell Avenue, was silhouetted by thousands of colorful stringed lights. I tugged the door to the atrium before someone pushed it open from the inside. "Thank you," I said, shaking myself dry and wiping clear my misted eyeglass lenses. I entered the elevator beside L. Runnel, one of the three artists and operators of the Unicorn Stables gallery. She nodded and we discussed her work and studio

briefly on the slow ascent to the 12th floor. The owner of the building that housed the gallery had just raised rents, so she and her associates were exploring alternative spaces.

Elevator doors opened on a scene of clustered party-goers, standing around couches and counters, lightly laughing, clutching wine glasses or bottles of Virginia craft beer. The walls were mostly windowed revealing the night sky and the city streets below. A friend said hello and asked if I'd seen the roof. She pointed up and I followed the direction of her finger through a common area and past rooms of people to a winding wood staircase that ascended to another level, partly enclosed with a lounge area of stylish couches and a paneled bar. Glass doors opened to the roof and I stepped out, despite the rain and cold. To my right, steps led to a raised hot tub that stretched across one end of the building. Trees, patches of square turf for plantings, rows of lounge chairs, and a long table for outdoor dining were all visible atop the building's spacious roof – which stretched the length of half a football field.

I stepped next to the tub, and leaned against a plexiglass barrier to gaze down at Campbell Avenue and the City Market. Next door, far below, I spied the parking garage and the Center in the Square building, just readied for renovations. In some ways, I was at Roanoke's core, perched atop the ramparts of its keep, in "SkyRanch," the luxury apartment of Ed Walker, hosting the night's party as part of the CityWorks Expo. The party was dotted with visiting place-making celebrities, such as James Howard Kunstler, a celebrated geographer, and author of *The Geography of Nowhere*, who was the "conference Cassandra … warning that techno-grandiosity will not solve our problems" (Brunais, 2011). Yet, here, too, were a smattering of city planners and neighborhood officials, economic developers, local artists and arts institution leaders. Roanoke is indeed, in many ways, a small city, whose key actors in creating and maintaining its cultural imaginary intersect in multiple ways. Still, class, race, and neighborhood

barriers limit those intersections. From far atop the city, I gazed slightly to my right and could see the railroad tracks and the houses beyond.

The party's attendees were, in many respects, similar to Brunais' characterization of CityWorks Expo participants in the *Roanoke Times* as "300-400 mostly white elites," or, as Theaster Gates had more lyrically uttered, "So many white folks, Lord!" As I enjoyed my view, I also became conscious that my presence that night had occurred only after payment of a hefty conference fee. This consciousness led me to consider just what it means to be able to participate fully in the city as oeuvre. With this observation in mind I turn, next, to my concluding reflections.

Studying and supporting civic tinkering activities

My wife and I recently attended a reading at Studio Roanoke, a black-box theatre space on Campbell Avenue downtown. We met a young woman there who told us about her and her friends' "yarn-bombing" activities in the city. Some of the group's handiwork was visible nearby, as flowing strands of colorful yarn flanked the studio entrance.

> Yarn bombing takes that most matronly craft (knitting) and that most maternal of gestures (wrapping something cold in a warm blanket) and transfers it to the concrete and steel wilds of the urban streetscape. Hydrants, lampposts, mailboxes, bicycles, cars - even objects as big as buses and bridges - have all been bombed in recent years, ever so softly and usually at night (Wollan, 2011).

I subscribe to a number of urban and place-making blog and news compilers. In the last year, the number of posts on Do-It-Yourself (DIY)-inspired guerilla arts and insurgent planning-

related activities, such as yarn bombing, has been significant. Planning and urban research scholarship on these efforts is increasing, but slowly.

I have suggested the term civic tinkering as a way to group and conceptualize the sub-set of these efforts that focus on contributing positively to ideas of place through informal and impermanent means. My conceptualization proposes one frame through which to examine these emerging activities. The role of such informal efforts in influencing imaginaries of place has also been underexamined.

Roanoke's relationship to these kinds of efforts seems to be evolving from one of antipathy and enforcement (exhibited, for instance, by the police response to the Must See TV event, or by the absence of attention to alternative arts producers) to one of limited encouragement, as evidenced, for example, in the observation noted above of the city's Arts and Culture Coordinator wanting to support "guerilla" art activities better (M. Reed, personal interview, 2011). In practice, these efforts still receive little formal backing and existing policies and structures often dissuade such activities. Dennison, for example, encountered difficulties in securing permissions for the MAF street parade, yet finally was able to obtain the necessary permits.

The MAF and Collab Fest, as described in Chapter 7, functioned as an incubator for guerilla artists or tinkerers. More than, "a few dudes hanging out", the MAF's curator model and the bi-weekly Colab Fest sessions supported artists and creative individuals by providing a venue for idea-generation, offering outlets for supporting and implementing those notions through a community of fellow artists.

While the MAF model successfully encouraged the civic tinkering of its core audience of alternative artists, this study's description of Roanoke's overall cultural imaginary indicates that

most other groups lack such an infrastructure for insurgency. I have seen little scholarship on this unevenness in the accessibility of guerilla urbanism or insurgent planning type activities. In other words, not all residents are equally equipped to engage in such efforts. The "practitioners," at least in Roanoke's case, appear to be mostly young, white, and college-going or college-educated. If such tactical urbanism continues to prove a useful approach to driving spatial change and challenging spatial identifications, I would argue for increased attention to efforts aimed at enabling more residents to undertake such activities.

Cities that actively incubate informal civic tinkering efforts may create certain advantages, such as a more distinctive and experimental arts environment, the equipping of a new batch of civic-minded arts entrepreneurs and even the transformation of public spaces into arts attractions. Additional research on the civic, social, economic, and cultural impacts of these efforts is needed. Such research, I suggest, might also incorporate place-specific imaginaries, or urban identity projects, as a conceptual frame.

Recognizing the relevance of localized imaginaries, or urban identity projects

Roanoke's decision-makers and arts leaders, as those in many cities, have endeavored to re-cast the city as a place for arts and culture. In my descriptions of Roanoke's arts and cultural aspirations in Chapter 5, of the arts and culture planning process in Chapter 6, and of the MAF in Chapter 7, one can discern the presence of multiple meanings in flux and tension. Metropolitan Church of the Blue Ridge leaders' commitment to art as community outreach and spiritual practice, for instance, differs in some respects from the Taubman's staff and director's focus on working with artists of the stature to reinforce its aim of being a world class art museum. Yet, in other ways, the leaders of both institutions share a strategic aim of reaching out to the wider

community through art. The arts and cultural planning process illuminated differing approaches and provided opportunities for dialogue amongst individuals with varying perspectives. The MAF offered similar opportunities for the negotiation of meaning through its events and working practices.

Identity projects, such as Roanoke's cultural imaginary are common, and yet, comprehensive efforts to engage the public in the shaping of those projects is rare. In that sense, the arts and cultural plan is an exemplar. As I will discuss again in the section below on full participation, however, the process was not without its limitations. Moreover, the question of precisely who is now shaping the city persists. CityWorks, for example, has developed a website dubbed "Envision Roanoke." The authors of the site suggest online that it was developed to gather input on ideas to reshape Roanoke,

> Big Lick grew into Roanoke as a result of entrepreneurial vision. Today a new generation is shaping the Star City into a small city of choice. No one needs to give us permission to invest in it, to create our own community, or to dream up new ideas that continue the progress of this special place. It's our community, and it's yours. We invite your triple-bottom-line (economically, socially, environmentally benefitting) ideas, comments, and participation. Any triple-bottom-line idea that receives at least 50 Likes by February 29 will be presented at the weekly TED Talk forum with a focus on how the community can work together to implement the idea, possibly followed by crowdfunding (Envision Roanoke, 2012).

This project aspires to serve as a vehicle for allowing resident input in the future shaping of the city. Yet, the spectrum of residents who become aware of this effort and provide input is constrained by digital access and competency. In order for a website visitor to suggest an idea or

to vote on ideas, he or she must register. That step requires entering data such as birthdate and other demographic information and also entails entering two blurred words to verify the user is human. I had to try three times before my registration was accepted due to difficulty recognizing and entering the distorted letters. Many of the ideas on the site are excellent, yet are focused on downtown and overwhelmingly on amenities that reflect the interests of an upper socioeconomic or creative class, such as a downtown Trader Joe's store, a rooftop dining/drinking venue, and a zipline eco-tour on Mill Mountain.

CityWorks, however, does seem to counter Hague and Jenkins assertion, "that place identity is being changed by globalization and by everyday life, but that the conscious construction and advocacy of new place narratives is, perhaps inevitably, a process dominated by officials and politicians" (2005, p. 211). In Roanoke, place entrepreneurs and cultural institutions seem to play parts that are as significant as that of public officials in the construction of the city's cultural imaginary.

I have found that it is not simply an abstract notion, but also a set of activities and practices, that produce an idea of the city via arts and culture. In Roanoke, policy-makers, arts and cultural leaders, artists, and individuals often offer different perspectives concerning what constitutes the city of arts and culture. Unfortunately, the relative exclusion of long marginalized populations from the shaping of the city's imaginary continues to be a dominant, if not always intentional, characteristic of such efforts.

Assuring full participation, versus privileged participation, in the project of the city

Individuals and entities differ in their ability to shape ideas of the city that congeal into an imaginary. City officials may aspire to plan a community synonymous with arts and culture.

Institutions and private interests may collude in that project to some extent and seek to influence its exact contours in directions favorable to their interests, whether that is the Taubman opposing an arts district, the MAF promoting alternative arts, or CityWorks supporting creative-class amenities.

This analysis suggests there is cause for both caution and optimism concerning whether residents may more fully enjoy a "right to the city." If this is true in daily terms it is surely the case concerning the development of Roanoke's arts and culture imaginaries. Some populations and entities remain unengaged in the city's arts and cultural activities and are therefore, in part, less effective than involved groups at pressing their interests. This includes residents who are low-income or ethnic and racial minorities as well as under-resourced cultural organizations. The Harrison Museum and the Dumas Center are examples of this phenomenon in Roanoke, for their failure to generate operating support and to establish a stronger niche in the arts and cultural landscape.

Nevertheless, a modicum of optimism is warranted. For example, the MAF's growth suggests that grassroots efforts can encourage and support alternative imaginaries or ideas of place, and forge more inclusive understandings of art and artists in community. In addition the arts and cultural plan articulates a policy approach that emphasizes inclusion and diversity stating, for example,

> Roanoke's diverse neighborhoods are fundamental to the unique character of the City. Arts and cultural offerings have a positive impact on the physical and social fabric of a neighborhood creating more attractive places to live and raise families. This policy approach encourages the involvement and use of community based schools, churches, parks, local businesses and libraries in arts and cultural engagement opportunities. It

engages cultural institutions as well as performing and visual artists, with diverse

audiences to increase the presence and influence of the arts throughout the community

and its neighborhoods (Arts and Cultural Plan, 2011, p. 16)

I came across the term, "full participation," in a white paper on public engagement in

higher education. The authors described full participation as, "an affirmative value focused on

creating institutions that enable people, whatever their identity, background, or institutional

position, to thrive, realize their capabilities, engage meaningfully in institutional life, and

contribute to the flourishing of others" (Sturm, Eatman, Saltmarsh, & Bush, 2011, p. 4). I

suggest that, if one substitutes the word "institutions" with the word "cities" or "places," the

concept offers a useful way of thinking about Lefebvre's emphasis on equal participation to the

city as project.

This dissertation has described Roanoke's arts and cultural imaginary as a complex

mélange of ideas in production and contention, suffused with a number of ongoing tensions. The

idea of Roanoke as a place "synonymous with arts and culture" (Carr, 2011), is contested. Some

residents oppose the extent of focus and funding devoted to the city's arts and culture imaginary.

The neighborhood leader quoted in Chapter 4 offered one example in his critique of the

Taubman Museum of Art as a,

> … building that the city put tens of millions of dollars into and people who live here
>
> don't use it, and there are people in the city without homes, who are hungry, who are
>
> suffering, and where is the money for those people? (RNA, 2011).

Many other residents, artists, officials and organizational leaders are supportive of the

city's arts and cultural efforts, but differ concerning what should be included or prioritized in

such activities. In Chapter 6, I described how the RAC and city officials attempted to conduct an

open and inclusive planning process, despite the existence of sometimes conflicting interests and priorities among Commission members. In many ways, the process was an inclusive one. The public was offered multiple opportunities for input: key stakeholders helped design and conduct the effort, and the final plan included content based on public comments, including a shift in emphasis towards neighborhood and livability. The city sought to forge a shared vision by means of the arts and cultural plan.

That construct, however, may still be a privileged one that reflects the influential roles of major institutions in crafting the strategy and the absence of significant influence and input from marginal populations and groups. Roanoke, for example, has continued to see an increase in minority populations since Beth Macy's 2005 feature on the city's new diversity, referenced in Chapter 4. Nearly 30 % of the city's population is now African-American, close to 6% are Hispanic, and Asian, African, and Eastern European populations have also increased in the city during the past decade (Hammack and Chittum, 2011). A community leader remarked to me, at a 2011 neighborhood meeting, her view that city government and neighborhood groups have not yet reacted to these changes fully and they often still do a poor job of reaching out to newcomers. Despite the efforts of city officials and RAC members, the arts and culture planning process did not significantly engage Roanoke's minority population. Indeed, full participation by these groups in city planning efforts is often inhibited by "cultural dynamics that reproduce patterns of under-participation and exclusion." These require "examining … multi-level decisions, cultural norms, and underlying structures" (Sturm, 2006, pp. 256-257 qtd in Sturm et al, 2011, p.6).

I have considered the question of whether Roanoke's arts and cultural plan functioned as a type of "spatial legislation" that limited certain rights and forms of access, while assigning meanings without sufficiently broad representation from the community (De Certeau, 1984, p.

122). The city's arts and culture identity may be a privileged imaginary that signifies a limited right to the community for urban residents with less stake in crafting and influencing that imaginary due to class, position, race, gender, sexual orientation, residential location or other factors. In Roanoke, class, race, ethnicity and home neighborhood have constricted certain residents' ability to participate fully in the idea of the city.

My findings suggest the continued importance of emphasizing the normative value of an equal right to the city, and the community as project, through full participation, in city planning and development efforts, as well as in identity projects more generally. CityWorks, for example, might more proactively seek to ensure the participation of a wider spectrum of citizens in its efforts. The project might seek to make full participation a core component of its ethos. The same counsel can be offered to leaders responsible for the arts and cultural plan and the city's overall arts and culture planning process. Critical and place-specific analyses may illuminate participation concerns, social and economic inequalities, and related adverse impacts from the adoption of globally salient cultural imaginaries.

Conducting critical and place-specific analyses of, and approaches to, creative economy efforts, arts-based development, and cultural policy

The production of spatial imaginaries is place-specific. While globally salient ideas and neo-liberal economic incentives may be spurring cities like Roanoke to develop arts and culture identities, the exact boundaries and dynamics of those imaginaries are distinct and non-uniform. In Chapter 8, for instance, I discussed the institutional tensions evidenced in the case vignettes offered in Chapters 5-7. While perhaps not revelatory in terms of theory, the degree to which Roanoke's cultural institutions, large and small, almost uniformly experienced organizational

challenges is noteworthy. While national and international trends, such as the economic

recession of 2008-2009, likely played a role in those difficulties, they also highlight what appears

to be a critical local need for institutional capacity-building and leadership development. This

localized challenge requires more analysis of its specific causes and of potential community or

organizational responses.   Such work is exactly the sort of place-specific investigation that I

perceive as necessary in locales undertaking arts-based development strategies.

My dissertation has focused on one place in depth, attempting to elicit the complexity and

shape of Roanoke's arts and cultural imaginary, as a set of ideas in flux and tension. I designed

my study as a response to the relative dearth of such holistic analyses in the planning and urban

studies literature on place-meaning construction. I sought to go beyond branding, marketing and

a primary focus on tourism to explore the complex interplay of place meanings present in a

single locale. This aspiration has lately received scholarly support. Janet Stephenson, for

example, has recently observed,

> … the planning field gives surprisingly little consideration to the non-tangible qualities of
>
> place. Given the key role of planning practices in mediating change, it would appear self-
>
> evident that a central thread of planning theory and methodology should be concerned
>
> with people–place connections, and associated meanings and significance. But … much
>
> planning activity is still largely focused on the physicality of place rather than its
>
> embedded qualities (2010, p. 11).
>
> Arturo Escobar has likewise suggested,
>
> … scholarship of the past two decades in many fields (geography, anthropology, political
>
> economy, communications, and so on) has tended to deemphasize place and to highlight,
>
> on the contrary, movement, displacement, traveling, diaspora, migration and so forth.

Thus, there is a need for a corrective theory that neutralizes this erasure of place, the asymmetry that arises from giving far too much importance to the "global" and far too little value to "place" (Escobar, 2008, p. 7).

My dissertation offers one response to the diagnostic challenge that residents encounter when struggling accurately to conceptualize urban changes influenced by arts and culture. A significant scholarly literature addresses place marketing and branding. However, these analyses are not often grounded in critical approaches and interdisciplinary perspectives. A need remains to "give attention to the complexity involved in place transformation which the branding literature seems to ignore or simplify" (Nyseth and Viken, 2009, p. 4).

I have sought, in part, to provide one example of an alternative approach to the study and understanding of places as sites in which an abundance of entities enact or inscribe certain types of meaning, which consequently shapes ways of understanding, dwelling and experiencing the city. Beyond a focus on local particularity, another essential need for analysts is to adopt a critical stance, to determine how better to see, to apprehend the messy and turbulent flows submerged beneath the sheen of a sense of unproblematic progress.

Many of Roanoke's arts and culture-based activities and changes have been praiseworthy. My family and I enjoy the Taubman, appreciate the local music scene, and relish the vibrancy present in many quarters of the city. I recognize, however, that inclusion of long marginalized populations in these opportunities remains a key challenge that relates to transparency, power, and representation concerns. The city officials and RAC members who developed the Arts and Cultural Plan intended the planning process to be inclusive, collaborative, and representative, yet even the best of such efforts too often function as

… a selective way of imagining, acting, and communicating about a place … thus

planning is intimately involved in the cultural process of creating and disseminating

meaning and modes of perception that help form collective identities … that underpin

action, while simultaneously marginalizing other possible place-related discourses and

actions (Hague, 2005, p. 10).

Beyond the plan, Roanoke's overall arts and cultural imaginary is in motion. Its future

manifestations are an open question. Many places have experienced the ups and downs of

culture-led development. Sharon Zukin, for instance, studied the transformations of New York

City's SoHo neighborhood from its time as a blighted area of abandoned industry in the early

1960s to an arts and culture-driven regeneration that established the area as a bohemian

community with a diverse and economically mixed population. The area changed again in the

late 1970s and 1980s as "marginal" artists, lower income residents and fledgling retail and other

businesses were gradually pushed away from the area as investment and development brought

higher rents and more market-oriented artists (1982). Zukin later described this development

trajectory as the reestablishment of a "landscape of power" (1991).

In this case, I have described how downtown Roanoke has experienced a resurgence, due

partly to cultural development strategies. Walker and the CityWorks organization represent one

set of contributors to this renaissance. The question exists: Is Walker helping drive the type of

culture-led regeneration identified by Zukin, that will eventually force fringe artists, lower

income individuals and aspiring start-up enterprises out of the city center as rents rise and the

area is favored by larger businesses and wealthier investors? This may be happening already as

low-rent studio space for artists has become scarce in Roanoke, according to a number of my

interviewees (Stuart, Neely, Denison, personal interviews, 2011)

Mark Banks has also studied the politics of cultural work. He has argued that a number

of researchers have now documented patterns similar to those Zukin identified in New York in

cities employing arts and culture as a key development strategy. Banks concluded "that artistic

clusters are always susceptible to the incursions of market culture, resulting in cities being

widely robbed of their critical and creative infrastructure and socially vital elements of

autonomous production" (2007, p. 142). Nonetheless, Banks' central findings were

contradictory. He also found that arts and culture-based development efforts exhibit "a great

variety of forms and rationales" (Mommas qtd in Banks, 2007, p. 142). So, Roanoke is not

destined to follow a pattern such as that suggested by Zukin's research. It will likely forge its

own path.

Still, many places subscribe to creative economy approaches in efforts to mimic the

perceived successes of such initiatives in other locales. The Bilbao effect, discussed in Chapter

5, is an example of this interest. The story of the Taubman Museum of Art reveals the dangers

of such mimicry. Cultural development projects and policy approaches that adopt measures

without carefully considering the local context risk a number of adverse community impacts,

including increased inequality and the distancing of marginal populations. Thus, a critical stance

to such strategies that considers the precise local context seems warranted.

In his study of culture-based urban regeneration in the English city of

NewcastleGateshead, Steven Miles concluded the "creative city" mantra propounded by Richard

Florida and others that depicts cultural expenditure as a kind of panacea constitutes an "approach

[that] makes all the noises that policymakers want to hear. It allows them to think big, and offers

the earth in return" (2006, p. 239). Miles contended "the danger here, then, is that small cities

put their faith in flagship developments that may just as likely be forces for social exclusion as

they are for inclusion" (2006, p. 237). His concerns and findings were quite similar to those

Richard Williams found in his study of British urbanism, in which the spectacle, consumption-

based, culture-rich city proved to be deeply class-divided and socially exclusive. Williams

concluded the creative economy model, "has its limits. … Let us think about margins as much as

centres, of work as much as play, of ways of being in the city that do not correspond to bourgeois

forms of entertainment and let us find ways of imagining the city in those terms as well"

(Williams qtd in Miles, 2006, p. 240).

       Roanoke's cultural imaginary contains a number of ideas in tension. I sketched certain

of those in Chapter 8. Given these characteristics and concerns, cultural development projects

and policy-making should be subject to, and to the extent possible, continuously encourage

critique. Nonetheless, both my interview data and my observations suggest that individuals

exhibit a certain hesitancy to criticize arts and culture. Many of my interviewees were

circumspect in their criticisms of arts and culture efforts in the city.

       Critical analyses and critical theory approaches to cultural policy and creative economy

efforts can help identify power imbalances and inequalities. Foucault's theorization of power

emphasized its multi-faceted workings that manifest in many shapes and settings (1982).

Cultural policy is one such arena, comprising an area of focus constructed by governments,

cultural entities, and private interests that purposefully seek to reshape community space and

everyday life through policies and practices. As such, cultural policies and development

activities may reflect the presence of larger power imbalances.

       Power in relationship to place and space also works to put boundaries on participation,

       and to exclude certain actors or views from entering the arenas for participation in the

       first place. Or power, in its more insidious forms, may be internalized in terms of one's

values, self-esteem, and identities, such that voices in visible places are but echoes of what the power-holders who shaped those places want to hear (Gaventa, 2004, p. 37).

In Roanoke, cultural policy and creative economy approaches display the "seemingly intractable paradox of the art-commerce relation" (Banks, 2007, p. 185). I have discussed how participants in the arts and cultural planning process repeatedly voiced a market rationale for arts and culture as economic drivers. This tended to be more common than an emphasis on arts and culture as "related to cultural edification or human flourishing" (Banks, 2007, p. 23). The increased importance of place marketing and branding in a hyper-competitive global economic marketplace has impelled cities to construct "creative" identities to "sell" to both internal and external audiences (Griffiths, 1998; Hague, et al., 2011; Kearns & Philo, 1993). Such place marketing efforts seek to convince internal audiences, "many of whom will be disadvantaged and potentially disaffected, that they are cogs in a successful community and that all sorts of 'good things' are really being done on their behalf" (Kearns & Philo qtd in Hague, et al., 2011, p. 249).

In their text on regional and local economic development, Hague, et al., found that "economic development policies are frequently imposed from above, take no account of the needs of poor and marginalized groups, and in some cases exclude them from sources of housing and income" (2011, p. 266).

Critical approaches may help to address this concern by highlighting and addressing tendencies toward viewing art as simply commerce, challenging simplified place identity projects, arguing for the inclusion of marginal groups and identifying (and developing strategies to address) inequalities and other adverse impacts of cultural policies and creative economy strategies.

Closing Reflections and Chapter Summary

The question I have addressed throughout this dissertation is "what does it mean to construct and promote a city as a place for arts and culture?" This ethnographic case study employed multiple methods to elicit the presence of several, often contrasting, perspectives on this query. In one sense, the idea of a place "synonymous with arts and culture" is a casual utopian aspiration. Viewed another way, it frames policies and practices that sometimes further inequities and preclude alternatives. I have peered through the dual windows of the MAF and the arts and cultural planning process at a significant array of efforts and entities that produce a sense of Roanoke's multi-faceted and dynamic arts and cultural imaginary. Major institutions, including the Taubman Museum of Art and the Arts Council as well as struggling groups, such as the Dumas Center and the Harrison Museum, shape the arts identity of the city. It also incorporates creative economy efforts led by place entrepreneurs such as Ed Walker and governmental initiatives, including those led by the RAC. A host of informal, alternative and individual efforts such as the Marginal Arts Festival, Collab Fest and the Unicorn Stables Project are also part of the city's imaginary. Roanoke's cultural identity is informed by the past and the absence of historically marginalized groups such as African-Americans.

Roanoke's cultural imaginary has surely been influenced by creative economy discourse and neoliberal imperatives. Neo-liberal capitalism, however, does not necessarily eliminate place uniqueness and the potential significance of alternative, localized economic distinctiveness. Indeed, David Harvey, who has written extensively about the spatial workings of capital that inscribe local sites with the characteristics of economic globalization, has argued that capital must still,

… support a form of differentiation and allow for divergent and to some degree uncontrollable local cultural developments that can be antagonistic to its own smooth functioning. It can even support (though cautiously and often nervously) all manner of "transgressive" cultural practices precisely because this is one way in which to be original, creative and authentic as well as unique. It is within such spaces that all manner of oppositional movements can form even presupposing, as is often the case, that oppositional movements are not already firmly entrenched there (qtd in Banks, 2007, p. 186).

Many MAF activities function as just such an oppositional and transgressive force. Its organizers have championed marginality, yet struggled with connecting to a wider swath of marginal populations within the city. Kratke has emphasized the importance of studying urban creative capital and accompanying approaches to local social innovations and alternative visions of creativity, particularly those that seek to "enhance economic prospects and quality of urban life in an inclusive way for all of the city's inhabitants" (2011, p. 207).

This chapter has offered four principal future paths for the study and practice of cultural imaginaries. I have argued that scholars and practitioners may benefit from studying and supporting civic tinkering activities; recognizing the relevance of localized imaginaries and urban identity projects; a greater valuing of full participation in the project of the city; and conducting place-specific and critical analyses.

For me, personally, my study reinforces the importance of the imagination and of the creative work of modern citizenry. Carol Becker has offered a compelling vision for this work,

Here is a vision of democracy that is also a vision of art: Each individual creates, in whatever form or combination he or she chooses, a meaning for the world. When all

these meanings are combined, they become representations of the totality of the human experience at a specific time, and hopefully, they also embody the moral and ethical goals of society (2009, p. 85).

That is, a community's imaginary is not static, for we all participate in the making of meaning in our cities and communities. This need not lead to marginalization and inequality, or to atomization and fragmentation, but instead may produce a clearer understanding of collective aims and goods. Privileged actors and ideas do play large roles in shaping imaginaries of place, yet all citizens have a right to participate in those imaginings. Critical and place-specific analyses of identity projects, along with civic tinkering activities and full participation norms may help more people exercise just such imaginative citizenship.

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MEMORANDUM DATE: March 18, 2011

TO: Anthony Tate, Max O. Stephenson

FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires October 26, 2013)

PROTOCOL TITLE: Pervasive Edges: Imaginaries of Art, Place, and Marginality in Roanoke, Virginia

IRB NUMBER: 11-073

Effective March 14, 2011, the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board, at a convened meeting, approved the new protocol for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm (please review before the commencement of your research).

PROTOCOL INFORMATION: Approved as: Full Board Review Protocol Approval Date: 3/14/2011

Protocol Expiration Date: 3/13/2012

Continuing Review Due Date*: 2/27/2012

*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:

Per federally regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals / work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this

requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.

IRB Number 11-073   page 2 of 2   Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board

Date* OSP Number Sponsor		Grant Comparison Conducted?	

*Date this proposal number was compared, assessed as not requiring comparison, or comparison information was revised.

If this IRB protocol is to cover any other grant proposals, please contact the IRB office (irbadmin@vt.edu) immediately.

1.) How did you come to Roanoke and how do you feel about living or working in the city?
- Where do you work and what does that involve?
- In what ways do you see the city changing?
- What is the role of art in those changes?

2.) So, how did the project, _____, start?
- What are its aims?
- What has been your role?
- How did you first become involved?

3.) What was the planning process for the project?
- Who was involved in the project planning team? Who played key leadership roles?
- Who were the project's important partners and supporters?
- What did the planning process consist of (meetings/etc.)?

4.) Were there any challenges or conflicts during the process?
- What were the internal challenges or disagreements that arose within the planning team, if any? If one or more did occur, could you describe its (their) nature and origins for me?
- What were the external challenges or disagreements that arose from the public or partners, if any? If one or more did occur, could you describe its (their) nature and origins for me?
- How did you respond?
- In what ways, did those challenges or critiques affect the project? Could you explain how and why that was so for me?

5.) What are the positive impacts of the project?
- Is this project changing Roanoke in your view? In what ways? As you think about this question, how do you define change?
- In your view, what is the most significant contribution this project is making in Roanoke?

6.) Are there any people or groups who were not participants or whose views(or interests) were not included in the project?
- If so, who were they? Why do you think they did not participate?
- Did their absence/lack of involvement affect the project? In what ways?
- Did the project organizers try to reach out to those less involved persons? Can you provide an example?

7.) Has your involvement in this project affected your views on art, and the role of art in communities?
- In what ways have your views evolved?
- In thinking about this question, how would you define art?
- What parts of this project have most affected your views on the role of art in communities?

8.) Has your involvement in this project affected your views of Roanoke?

- In what ways have your views changed?
- What, if anything, did you learn about Roanoke through this project?
- Which parts of the project have most influenced your views of Roanoke? Why do you think that was so?

9.) Is there anything I haven't asked that strikes you as important about this project, or about the role of art in influencing ideas about Roanoke?

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

**Informed Consent for Participants
in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects**

Title of Project: <u>Pervasive Edges: Imaginaries of Art, Place, and Marginality in Roanoke,
Virginia</u>

Investigator(s) <u>Scott Tate, Doctoral Candidate; Max Stephenson, Jr., Faculty Advisor</u>

Purpose of this Interview:

We ask for your participation in an interview. In the interview, we will focus on your
experiences as an organizer or supporter of one of two arts and culture projects in Roanoke,
Virginia. The two projects are the Arts and Culture Plan and the Marginal Arts Festival.

We hope to identify some of the different ideas about Roanoke, art, and culture that you came
across in your project. In addition, we are also interested in how you came across or considered
the marginal (people, groups, or ideas that may be seen as outside of, or apart from, the
mainstream of society or of community).

As an organizer or supporter of either the Arts and Culture Plan or the Marginal Arts Festival, we
ask for your participation in this interview. Overall, we will interview about six to ten organizers
or supporters of Roanoke's Arts and Cultural Plan and Roanoke's Marginal Arts Festival. Your
initial interview will last about 65 minutes. We also plan a second interview of equal time.

Procedures

We ask for your participation in an interview conducted by Scott Tate.   Mr. Tate is a
doctoral student at Virginia Tech. Mr. Tate will use your interview responses in completing a
doctoral dissertation. The interview will be recorded. Transcripts will be made. The transcripts
will be used only for fact checking and for quotations in Mr. Tate's dissertation and any related
research papers. Interview files will be kept in a secured location for a period of three years.
Mr. Tate will try not to reveal your individual identity or link specific observations to you in his
findings.

Your participation is voluntary. Participation will involve two interviews. If you have any
questions about this research, please feel free to contact us. Our contact information is listed
below.

Risks

We believe the risk of harm to you from your participation in this study is very low. In any case,
risks from this study are no greater than those you might face in your daily life.

Benefits

We do not guarantee a personal benefit to you from your participation. Though, we are grateful for your consideration. We also hope that this may be a good opportunity to reflect on your experiences. If you are interested in the results of this research, please check one of the two choices below. Please also provide your mailing address if you would like to receive a copy of the final paper.

Please check:

_____ **YES**, I would like to receive a copy of the final paper. You may send it to me at the following address:

_____

OR _____

_____ **NO**, I would not like to receive a copy of the final paper.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

We ask your *written consent* to allow Mr. Tate to use your remarks in writing that results from this research. This may include papers or publications. We are the only ones who will have access to tapes and transcripts. You may choose to speak "on the record" or "off the record" throughout our conversation. We will honor your specific requests for confidentiality or "off the record responses". We will also use alternative names to protect your identity. However, we cannot guarantee that using alternate names will completely protect your identity given the nature of the research.

The Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB) may see this study's data. This would be for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for being sure that any human subjects involved in research are protected. The Board's contact information is below.

Compensation

We are unable to provide payment for you to participate.

Freedom to Withdraw

You are free to withdraw from this research at any time. You are also free NOT to answer questions.

Your Responsibilities and Permission

I, _____, agree to participate in this research. I understand it will focus on my experiences as an organizer or supporter of an arts and culture project in Roanoke, Virginia.   I am 18-years-old or older.

　　　　I have read and understood this document. I understand the purposes of this research. By signing below, I give my voluntary consent to participate:

_____   _____
Signature   Date

Should I have any questions about this research or its conduct, or questions about my rights, I may contact:

Faculty Advisor: **Investigator**:
Dr. Max O. Stephenson, Jr.   Scott Tate
Virginia Tech Professor   Doctoral Candidate
540-231-7340   276-608-6652
mstephen@vt.edu   atate1@vt.edu

IMPORTANT:

If you have any questions about this study, you may also contact Dr. David Moore, Chair Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, telephone: (540) 231-4991; email: moored@vt.edu; address: Research Compliance Office, 1880 Pratt Drive, Suite 2006 (0497), Blacksburg, VA 24061.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND PARTICIPATION

Appendix D: List of Figures and Permissions

Fig. 1 [public domain]
Hine, L. (1911, May). Young spinner in Roanoke, Va. Cotton Mills. Library of Congress,
     National Child Labor Committee Collectoin. http://www.loc.gov. LOT 7479, v. 3, no.
     2158 [P&P] | LC-DIG-nclc-02149 (color digital file from b&w original print).
     Works by the U. S. government are not eligible for U. S. copyright protection.

Fig. 2 [used with permission]
Jennings, S. (2010). *In My Hands* by Artist, Rodney Carroll. Roanoke, Virginia.
     Used with permission; letter attached.

March 27, 2012

Susan Jennings
Arts and Culture Coordinator
City of Roanoke
Department of Economic Development
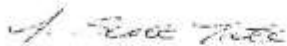117 W. Church Ave
Roanoke VA 24011-1905

Dear Susan,

This letter will confirm our recent e-mail communication. As you know, I am completing a doctoral dissertation at Virginia Tech entitled *Civic Tinkering in a Small City: Imaginaries and Intersections of Art, Place, and Marginality*. I would like your permission to reprint in my dissertation your photograph of the public art sculpture titled, In My Hands, by artist, Rodney Carroll.

The requested permission extends to any future revisions and editions of my dissertation, including non-exclusive world rights in all languages, and to any future publication of my dissertation. These rights will in no way restrict republication of the material in any other form by you or by others authorized by you. Your signing of this letter will also confirm that you own the copyright to the above-described material.

If these arrangements meet with your approval, please sign this letter where indicated below. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

A. Scott Tate

A. Scott Tate

PERMISSION GRANTED FOR THE USE REQUESTED ABOVE:

_____*Susan Jennings*_____
Susan Jennings

Date: 3/27/12