



CULTURAL POLICY CENTER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

A JOINT RESEARCH CENTER OF THE HARRIS SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY AND NORC

URBAN CULTURAL PROJECTS: PRACTICE, RESEARCH, POLICY

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO'S CENTER IN PARIS
JUNE 1-2, 2015



BACKGROUND

On June 1-2, 2015, Cultural Policy Center staff and advisory committee members gathered at the University's Center in Paris for two days of presentations and discussions with European colleagues about urban cultural projects—variously identified as “creative placemaking,” “urban regeneration,” or “culture-led development.” The terms may be different, but collectively they refer to the broad range of artistic and cultural projects and activities that are being strategically cultivated in local neighborhoods, towns, cities, and regions to spur economic, social, and community development and to animate social spaces with a distinctive sense of place and cultural vitality. With an explicit policy focus, arts and culture in Europe have been recognized as a critical part of a broader economic and social development agenda, which includes the goals of fostering civic engagement and social integration and has now been institutionalized in a number of EU commissions and programs. In the U.S., culture-led development projects currently constitute our primary *de facto*, implicit cultural policy operating at the federal and municipal levels as distinctively public-private ventures, involving government, business, nonprofit and community-based organizations. Despite the cultural differences in terminology, funding streams, and explicit or implicit policy goals, culture-driven urban development projects are increasingly visible and recognized as an important component of urban policy around the world.

This was the broad theme for the convening, and it was driven by the Cultural Policy Center's new Global Research Network Initiative, launched in 2014-15 with the support of the MacArthur Foundation. Our goal in the first year of this Initiative has been to explore opportunities for fostering conversations around important global cultural policy issues (Washington, DC, April 17, 2015: a CPC/Smithsonian conference titled “Cultural Heritage: Conflict and Reconciliation”) and for developing a research agenda with international research and policy partners (Paris, June 1-2, 2015: “Urban Cultural Projects”; Beijing, October 27-28, 2015: “Cultural Policy in China and the Internationalization of Chinese Contemporary Art”).



The group of researchers, policy experts, and practitioners who participated in the Paris convening

With a group of 20 participants from France, Italy, the UK, Sweden, Poland, Serbia, Canada, and the U.S., the discussions at the Paris meeting were framed around the following topics:

CREATIVE CITIES in discourse and practice—European and North American perspectives;

ACADEMIC RESEARCH about:

- the shift from an urban industrial base to culture-driven projects and industries;
- the new dynamics of cultural participation, inside and outside of cultural institutions;
- urban and neighborhood cultural “scenes”—and neighborhoods as both policy targets and policy-making entities;
- and the impact of “starchitects” and major cultural building projects on the branding of global cultural cities;

CASE STUDIES in culture-led urban development, including:

- U.S. creative placemaking projects supported by ArtPlace America;
- the redevelopment of the Ile de Nantes, at the center of the former industrial port and ship-building city of Nantes, France, into a creative arts district, “le Quartier de la Création”;
- and an assessment of 30 years of the European Capitals of Culture Initiative;

FUTURE DIRECTIONS in culture-led urban development and cultural policy, with particular focus on:

- the challenges of gentrification vs. social inclusiveness;
- the shift from an effort to expand and diversify audiences through “cultural democratization” to a more robust version of cultural democracy that offers voice and representation to all participants;
- and the blurring of boundaries between cultural producers and users driven by technology and the demand for new means of cultural expression.

REFLECTIONS on the logistics, strategies, and tactics of developing collaborative international research projects and networks, and on the challenges of building the sector through research that is methodologically rigorous and relevant for practitioners and policymakers

