The creative citizen:
citizenship building in urban areas

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KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT

The current work explores the significance of citizenship in the contemporary world, suggesting a new approach to its realization, where artistic practice and the development of cultural awareness combine to produce the creative citizen. This research uses case studies from three Boston metropolitan area neighbourhoods in Massachusetts, USA, to reflect on arts and culture as platforms to re-address citizenship at the community level.

The case studies address examples where citizenship is explored through the development of inter-ethnic and face-to-face connections as platforms of artistic inclusion, the creation of a local identity associated with an Arts District, and through physical space appropriation and reinforcement of cultural identity.

The relationship between urban public space, community, and culture is understood as a platform that may offer new strategies for urban space revivification, and specific strategies of civic engagement and leadership in these communities, providing impetus for the development of creative citizens.

INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the contexts of social processes that shape the relationships between individuals, groups, and communities, highlighting how they influence the concept of citizenship, and the possible contributions they can offer to democratic practices in the contemporary world. New types of citizenship, such as cultural citizenship (Duxbury, 2008; Stevenson, 2007), multicultural citizenship (Kymlicka, 2000), or differentiated citizenship (Young, 1990 and 1995) have recently fuelled the challenge to identify new frameworks in which to understand this concept. Theoretical debates in the area share the common feature of trying to go beyond the ideas of Thomas Marshall and his theoretical debates around legal, political, and social rights. The current work aims to reframe the significance of citizenship in the contemporary world, suggesting a new approach that devotes increased attention to individual relationships within communities of practice, giving specific attention to the work done with communities of youth with few opportunities and experiencing street episodes of violence. Central to this reframing proposal is the suggestion that artistic and cultural related projects may offer innovative channels to rethink citizenship and suggest new venues to enhance democratic practice in contemporary urban societies, giving to youth a new role in building an active voice in urban communities.

The research focuses on three case studies from three metropolitan Boston area neighbourhoods – Jamaica Plain, Union Square, and Villa Victoria (in the South End), in Massachusetts, USA, where specific artistic and cultural related projects are analyzed. The examples reflect on the potential of arts and culture to be effective platforms in promoting civic participation, specifically among youth, but also between other communities. Furthermore, they examine how urban public spaces can influence the nature of cultural interventions. It is explored how, in urban public space, community and culture are interdependent variables that can offer new strategies for community-building initiatives and revitalization of urban spaces, making us consider possible new formats of citizenship building. In the three urban neighbourhoods analysed, the research examines how community and place, when appropriated through arts and cultural-based initiatives, propose new venues for democratic practice, and offer new ingredients for the creation of creative citizens/citizenship at the community level.

FRAMING CITIZENSHIP: THE CREATION OF CULTURAL KNOWLEDGEABLE COMMUNITIES

One of the striking features of the contemporary world is the existence of social divisions, which often lead to conflicts between groups of citizens. Some basic characteristics of this citizen are individuality and a focus on self-development, which promote an independent character and a loss of contact with the public domain (Sennett, 1977: 5-16). The end result can be alienation from others and society at large, and an increase in social divisions. A significant consequence of the decline of the public space is that the nature of the relationships between different social groups in contemporary urban settings very often results in group isolation, intolerant behaviors, and divisions. The nature of these divisions warrants analysis, taking into account the question of urban diversity, which authors of urban anthropology have recently explored through an ethnographic approach to urban life (Costa and Cordeiro, 1999; Costa and Cordeiro, 2003; Cordeiro and Baptista et al, 2003; Frugóli, 2007; Cordeiro, 2008; Cordeiro and Vidal, 2008; Costa, 2008). The scope of analysis around the theme of cultural diversity and difference suggests the need to consider possible strategies to overcome those divisions, implement intercultural dialogue, work towards emancipation and social change in urban communities, and contribute to the reconciliation of the individual with the different other.

This study explores the hypothesis that specific artistic and cultural practices may cultivate a deeper experience of citizenship, one that is capable of vaulting social and cultural divisions. The case study examples presented here emerge, on one hand, in the context of the third way thinking and its critics (Amin, 2005), and on the other hand, under the recent reflections about the social function of the creative class. With social divisions connected to economic growth in many urban settings, scenarios are considered where creativity, when associated with citizenship practices, may offer innovative strategies to address social divisions that lead to disenfranchised communities and persistent community isolation. The intention is to promote a process of exploration that expands our concept of citizenship as we analyze it from the vantage point of arts-oriented creativity.

Thus, it seems that there is a current need to reframe the concept of citizenship, based on the potential of civil society to construct new models of engagement. Viewed thusly, citizenship must be included in the analysis of social intervention in the public realm, as other authors like Lynn Lofland have also contended (Lofland, 1973 and 1998). Following this same line of thought, the public sphere may present the context that could reinvigorate the concept of citizenship, by supporting civic endeavors in which the individual can examine and express personal and social identity. It seems that a new approach to development is needed, one that eschews an exclusivist economic perspective, and instead, capitalizes on the cultural assets of people and urban sites, and promotes relationships between individuals based on social affinities. It may be then at the intersection of cultural/artistic resources and urban spaces that exciting possibilities may emerge.

Urban spaces in the contemporary city are often socially, economically and culturally dissonant. With their multicultural characteristics, these sites are experiencing symbolic and physical divisions between the different ethnic communities, which increasingly populate urban public space. When social conflicts between different groups are rampant, the idea of citizenship, translated into active and tolerant intervention in the urban environment, is put at risk. The way ethnicities interact in the common space is frequently a source of conflict and division, begetting an urgent need for innovative strategies of creative intervention. This study tries to identify tools based on artistic and cultural creativity that may generate creative approaches to issues of social conflict and division and help differentiated community groups create spaces of inter-ethnic dialogue. Specific artistic and cultural endeavors are presented as strategies of civic engagement, resulting, ideally, in diminished social divisions and exclusion.

The focus is on a new type of democratic community generated by the intersection of affirmative action in the public space and the use of artistic and cultural initiatives. Carefully constructed arts initiatives may offer citizens the possibility of building a new mental model, which includes promoting consideration of divergent views and new strategies of action drawn from the dialogue between individuals and groups with diverse perspectives. By their very nature, arts and culture may introduce methodological innovation to the theoretical and practical discussion on dealing with difference, and specifically cultural difference, in the urban contexts under study. Richard Sennett in his book Respect in a World of Inequality corroborates this view when he refers to the performing arts as integrating collaborative elements, essential to generate mutual respect (Sennett, 2003). Artistic activities that include collaboration of culturally differentiated groups may create a sense of equality that, ideally, inspires the individual to reflect on the divisions of the social world with greater insight and imagination.

What is referred here as creative citizenship requires the creation of cultural knowledgeable communities which focus their development on cultural factors, on the recognition of difference, and on the motivation for individual and group involvement. The creative citizen, living in this type of community, is considered to be a producer of political knowledge, expressivity and culture. First and foremost, he is a political knowledge creator because he is

directly responsible for the state of his local society, he may also be the driving force behind social intervention and civic engagement initiatives that strengthen the community. The political knowledge dimension also includes the development of artistic capacities, and the ability to generate community participation in the organization of cultural and artistic initiatives. The expressive character of this individual requires an authentic self and group identity if the goal is the development of more effective tools of dialogue with different groups. Finally, the component of cultural awareness has the individual attuned to the differentiated cultural composition of contemporary society. By integrating the components of political knowledge, expressivity and cultural awareness, the creative citizen in these case studies may create spaces for interrelation between sectors of society that are often separated, and agents of division and social exclusion.

By fostering this awareness, the initiatives included in the case studies focus on the development of strong identities that, bolstered with cultural resources, can create spaces for creative inter-relation between sectors of society previously separated by social and ethnic schisms. Can we envision cultural exchange activities as innovative platforms for the recognition of specific groups` identities and for the acknowledgement of difference? The working hypothesis is that the key to effective dialogue between different social groups can be found at the intersection of knowledge, expressivity, and culture. This intersection may produce the preconditions for the development of creative initiatives in alternative spaces designed to deal with difference and conflict. However, we should not ignore the possible negative role that culture can play on the accentuation of differences inside the community. We have seen this dynamic in many urban contexts and need to be aware of the potential of cultural difference to build resistance and intolerant behaviors towards other cultural groups.

Still, the potential of creativity to bridge cultural chasms is widely accepted. Charles Landry and Franco Bianchini state that creativity involves basic procedures like thinking a problem afresh, a certain degree of experimentation and originality, and the capacity to look at situations with flexibility (Landry and Bianchini, 1995). Furthermore, when Landry investigates urban creativity in the city in his book The Creative City – a Toolkit for Urban Innovators, he connects the creative component of cities with their growth and identifies the characteristics of urban activists, which he asserts have the ability to listen, reflect and learn, the ability to communicate across diversity, and the capacity to work with distinct cultural environments (Landry, 2000). We believe that the creative citizen relies on the same elements that define the "creative city" (idem, 2000: 3): knowledge, free expression, and culture, all of which are essential to promote effective platforms to work against divisions. The promotion of spaces that combine knowledge production, expressivity, and the appreciation of cultural variety represent the adaptability of this approach to different social realities where cultural and social differences can create an antagonistic environment.

PRESENTING THE URBAN CONTEXT: THE CITY OF BOSTON

The urban cultural and artistic transformation that the city of Boston (Massachusetts, USA) (Fig. I) has been undergoing in the last two decades is illustrative of the contemporary influence of arts and culture in the revitalization of urban social space. According to the New England Council's 2004 report, the creative industries (applied arts, visual and performing arts, publishing, the media, museums and heritage sites, fine arts schools, and independent artists, writers, and performers) accounted for 2.3% of all employment, or 157,000 jobs in New England. More than half (82,000) of those jobs were in Massachusetts, where they represented 2.6% of all employment (Fig. II).

Figure I. The state of Massachusetts on the East coast of the United States.

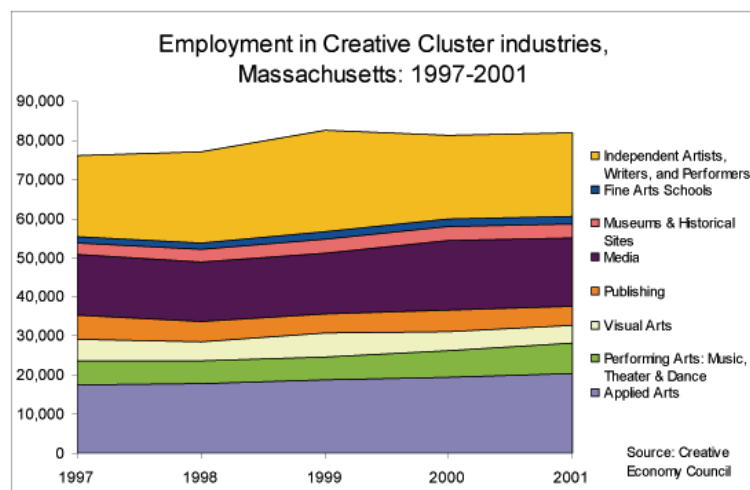*Source: www.resortvacationstogo.com/images/maps/map_u...*

Fig. II. Employment in Creative Cluster industries,

Massachusetts: 1997-2001

Source: Boston Indicators Project, 2004f

Boston holds third place in the Creativity Index ranking (Florida, 2002), behind San Francisco and Austin, also ranking 6th in the size of the creative class, 12th in innovation, and 41st in diversity (The Boston Indicators Project, 2004d). Notably, Richard Florida found a correlation between open-mindedness, innovation, the high-tech industry, the presence of a large "creative class," and population growth, which, in Boston, translates into an interesting demographic mix for analyses of creative cities.

Other factors also contribute to Boston's appeal as a research model for this study. The number of arts organizations can tell us a lot about a city's cultural dynamism, the opportunities for self-expression, and artistic creativity, as well, and are signs of a strong civic mobilization at the local level. According to the Boston Indicators

Project, between 1992 and 1999, the number of arts and culture nonprofit organizations per capita grew 73% in metropolitan Boston, faster than in any other region of comparable size (Boston Indicators Project, 2004c). This evidence of cultural vitality reflects a growing diversity of the population. The evolution of social change in the ethnically diverse local communities is facilitated by these local organizations, which help preserve traditional values and identities. Boston's cultural organizations and institutions, which act at the community level, rely on public, private, and philanthropic contributions, are often catalysts for both economic growth and a robust civic cultural life. The most recent research data from the Boston Foundation Report reveal that the Greater Boston area was second only to New York in per capita contributions to the arts, among 10 comparable metropolitan areas in the US (Boston Foundation, 1999) [1].
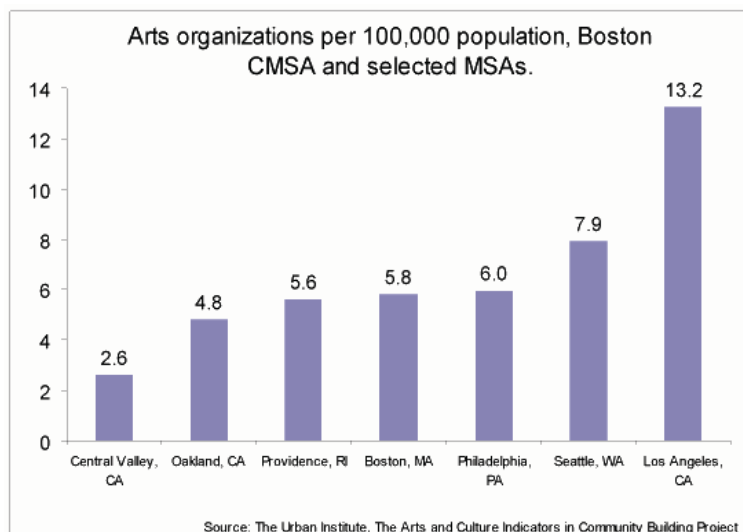

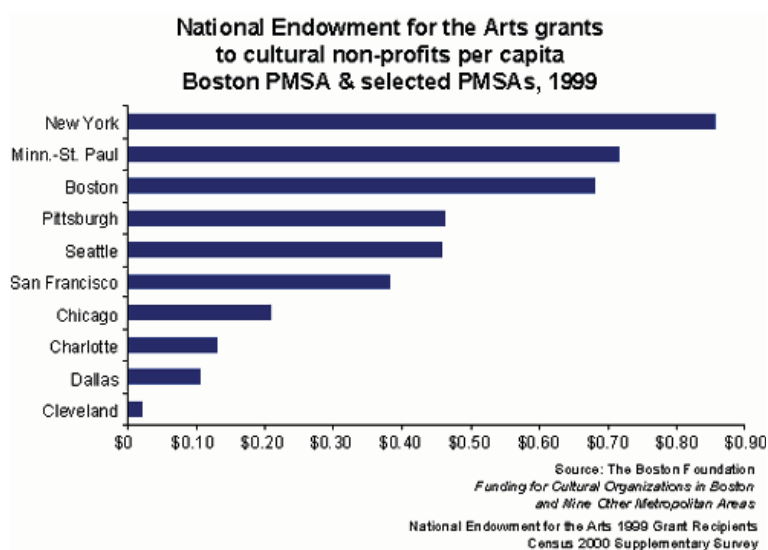*Fig. III. Arts Organizations in Boston*

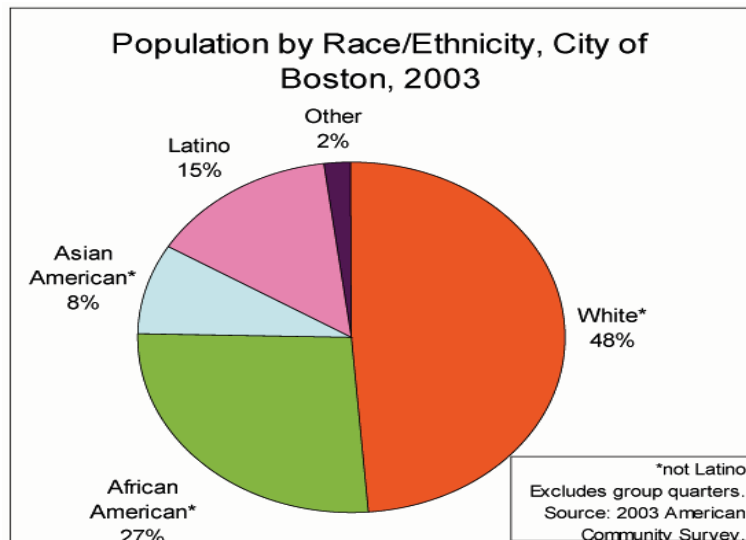*Fig. IV. Funding for cultural non-profits in Boston*

Population by Race/Ethnicity, City of Boston, 2003

- Other 2%
- Latino 15%
- Asian American* 8%
- White* 48%
- African American* 27%

*not Latino
Excludes group quarters.
Source: 2003 American
Community Survey.

Fig. V. Population by Race/Ethnicity in Boston

Residential Segregation: Isolation by Ethnicity, Boston Region: 2000

- Boston
- Urban Core
- Satellite Cities
- Suburbs
- Metro

Percent of population isolated from other ethnicities

Asian Black Latino White

Source: Guy Stuart, Boston at the
Crossroads, Kennedy School of
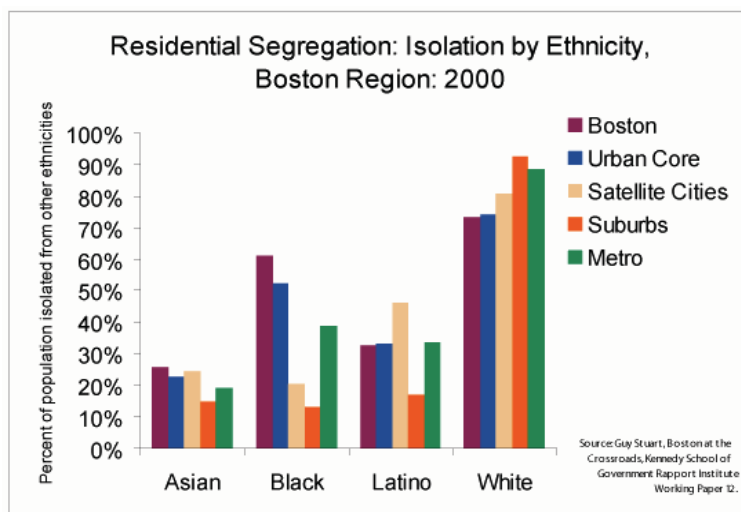Government Rapport Institute
Working Paper 12.

Fig. VI. Residential Segregation in Boston Region

In Boston, the existence of a flourishing civic cultural life and a high level of ethnic diversity make this area a particularly interesting location in which to develop the field work. Associated with issues of ethnic diversity are issues of segregation and, in particular, residential segregation (Fig. VI). Ethnic isolation in residential urban settings, which may result in the development of ethnic enclaves, is a prominent characteristic of Boston[2]. In these contexts, communities have been trying to deal with the issue of cultural division, understood as physical, symbolic, and politic urban separation. These efforts provide some interesting approaches on ways to bring diverse groups together.

The Boston Indicators Project states on its website that "As Boston continues to become more ethnically diverse and culturally vibrant, creative organizations are building audience participation in diverse communities" (The

Boston Indicators Project, 2004a). In fact, artistic and cultural initiatives have an influence on demographics, economic, social and political development, and ethnic diversity. In the past two decades, Boston has been experiencing a cultural renaissance. According to the Boston Indicators Project (2004a), the city had the highest rate (78%) of Greater Bostonians attending a performing arts event in 2002, among 10 metropolitan areas studied. This high rate is accompanied with the responsiveness of cultural institutions to the challenge of making art programming and activities accessible to all types of communities. As of 2006, there are more than 500 free and low-cost events available throughout Boston, particularly Downtown and during the summer months.

Furthermore, Greater Boston is home to more cultural organizations per capita - many of them cutting-edge community-based organizations with vibrant expressions of cultural diversity - than the major metropolitan areas of Chicago, New York and San Francisco. Between 1992 and 1999 there was a 73% increase in the number of arts organizations established in Boston. However, a recent report, released by The Boston Foundation, found that while the number of organizations had increased by 17% between 1999 and 2004, government and foundation funding of these organizations stagnated or declined, which puts smaller organizations at increased risk of closure or merger (The Boston Foundation, 1999 and 2004). Additionally, participation in outdoor festivals and community celebrations is at record number with an increase of nine more public cultural celebrations between 2004 and 2006.

COMMUNITY PROFILES

Jamaica Plain: Activism and the Natural Environment

The way cities relate to their natural environment has always been problematic. Currently, contemporary cities are increasingly an amalgamation of buildings, services, and commercial areas, and, in the bustle of urban activity, natural urban environments are often disregarded. When we speak of civic participation, we cannot ignore the importance of public support in the promotion of spaces of dialogue and social intervention. But there is more to add to this democratizing character of the public space. The urban natural environments - parks, community gardens, lakes and rivers - may represent, as public spaces, a platform to stimulate processes of active citizenship, while also yielding added value in the promotion of a city's attractions, and contributing to the globalized awareness of environmental issues. From this standpoint, the community arts organization Spontaneous Celebrations (in Jamaica Plain), has been working to strengthen the association between active citizenship and urban natural environments in Jamaica Plain.

This neighbourhood has always been known for its vibrant arts community. Spontaneous Celebration, which stages several arts-oriented events in Jamaica Plain, is a community and arts-based organization with more than thirty years of experience in social intervention and community organizing through arts and culture. Consistent with its grassroots principles, it combines artistic expression and open-air festivals, with extensive community mobilization and committed social engagement with social issues such as youth street violence, racial discrimination (especially among youth), environmental issues, and global terrorism. The bottom-up work of this non-profit organization is a prime example of how it is possible to empower community residents (with empowerment represented here by people engaging as active participants in cultural events), focusing special attention to a continuous work of leadership building among participants of the Spontaneous Celebrations youth group: Beantown Society. One of the main strategies to promote public involvement in community events is to use urban public green spaces as settings for festivals, neighborhood parades, and musical rehearsals, so that

passersby can be automatically integrated in the activity, either as spectators or as active participants. By bringing the festivity to the public arena of the park, the garden, the street, and the lake, are we not only making it accessible to everyone, but also reconfiguring urban identity and inquiring about its possible connections with the natural urban environments? This was the reflection that oriented the analysis.

Villa Victoria/South End: a Minority Housing Complex in a Gentrified Neighborhood

One of the most complex social issues that underscore the contemporary metropolis is the divisions that result from everyday cohabitation, in the same neighborhood, of socially, economically, and culturally different groups. In multicultural societies with constant migration fluxes, the urban context itself can be subjected to ongoing economic, physical, and historical transformations. The South End is an example of an inner city area where several minority housing complexes co-exist side by side with an affluent community.

Since its beginnings, Villa Victoria has had a deep commitment to artistic and cultural practices in socially integrated communities. The promotion of Latino culture, through many arts-related programs and events, is part of Villa Victoria's mission. One example is the arts component of the Cacique Youth Learning Center for Teens, which is deeply rooted in this community. The community arts program attempts to reach out to youth at risk in Villa Victoria and surrounding communities, focusing on a variety of artistic and educational activities, like Latin percussion, banner painting, Hip Hop, spoken word, martial arts, theatre, dance, and community education. The key objective is to involve youth from different ethnic communities in order to create spaces of connection for the prevention of isolation and intolerant behaviors.

In the 1980s, arts-based innovation in the community took a leap forward when a century-old church was transformed into a performance center, the Jorge Hernandez Cultural Center (JHCC), which became a Latino cultural landmark serving all of Boston. Currently, this cultural center is open to cultural events organized by Inquilinos Borícuas em Acción (IBA) and the Villa Victoria community, providing a performance, exhibition and learning space for community artists. The IBA cultural center conducts outreach to an ethnically mixed audience through the promotion of Latino culture. One of the benefits of having a performance center was that, in the late 80s, IBA could launch a performing arts series, Café Teatro, to introduce renowned Latin American artists (in areas of Latin Jazz and traditional Latin American music) to the American public. Adjacent to the JHCC, IBA repurposed an historic church parish house into a community arts center, Center for Latino Arts (CLA), a multifunctional community arts complex. As with the JHCC, the main goals of CLA are to nurture Latino arts and artists, offer affordable arts education for at-risk youth, work as an incubator for artists and arts organizations, offer spaces for rehearsals and exhibitions, and develop opportunities for cross-cultural collaboration between Latinos and other ethnic populations. The combination of the performance and community cultural center provides support and visibility for Latino culture and artists, while serving as a venue for the promotion of the Villa Victoria community in the region.

Union Square/Somerville: An Historic and Commercial Urban Space

A common issue of many urban areas is the difficulty of establishing a specific identity. Somerville was, in the past, an industrial center in Greater Boston and, apart from its recent residential and commercial growth spurt, has had to cope with the fact that some of the neighborhoods remained nondescript and became, as it is the case of Union Square, simply a main entrance venue to the center of Boston. The challenge for ArtsUnion project

was how to deploy the ethnic, cultural, artistic, historical and economical resources of the area to transform the indistinct "non place"(Augé, 1995), into a lively commercial, historical, ethnic, and artistic neighborhood.

The object of study in Union Square is the ArtsUnion project, designed to promote the cultural and economic development of the area. This initiative's chief goal is the creation of new economic opportunities for local artists, and the strengthening of the regional identity of the area, by designating Union Square as an arts district. The project includes an assortment of cultural activities which include open air performances in different urban public spaces, local products markets, ethnic markets, historical tours, public space exhibitions and community meetings with ArtsUnion partners. These initiatives seek to mobilize artists, residents, local vendors, local stores, associations, and political personalities for a social, cultural, and economic mobilization effort, designed to realize the dormant potential of Union Square. Is the pattern of activities through time sufficient for the successful implementation of an Arts District? Is cultural diversity an essential element of ArtsUnion project, as if so, will it too ensure that the Arts District reflects the ethnic diversity of Union Square? Is the local cultural dynamic of ArtsUnion a reflection of the social, cultural and economic local diversity or is it, rather, an imposed and selected cultural sample, chosen by the creative local elite? These are some of the more salient questions that arise from this initiative.

METHODOLOGY

The project field work has collected data related to local art events, preparations for neighbourhood initiatives, various organizations' community outreach programs, community meetings and overall cultural and artistic activities. The methodology employed was primarily qualitative and multidimensional and has generated a variety of media, audio and written materials. Specifically, in-depth tape-recorded interviews, video interviews, community video sessions, community-grounded field notes and neighbourhood and community photographs were generated. Interviews were collected based on a purposive sampling technique. The characteristics of the individuals were used as the basis of selection, in order to express the diversity of people involved in the community projects. The main goal was to highlight what kind of communities' people are creating in these areas through the analysis of photographs, videos, field notes, newspaper articles, supporting materials and selected interviews from community gatherings, open air cultural events and neighborhood revitalization efforts.

CITIZENSHIP BUILDING: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND URBAN SPACE CULTURALIZATION

The sense of indifference, alienation, and anomie that authors like Georg Simmel and Louis Wirth observed during their twentieth century urban research (Simmel, [1903] 1995; Wirth, 1938) was reexamined by Richard Sennett, who called attention to the way this conceptualization of urban life changed the relationship of the individual with the public realm, encouraging a retreat into private life (Sennett, 1977). In fact, there has been a significant amount of literature in urban studies concerned with the end of public space (Sorkin, 1992; Mitchell, 1995). One of the main theoretical assumptions derived from this research is the hypothesis that the promotion of artistic and cultural related activities in urban public spaces may have a positive effect over this loss of the public realm. Can the strategies to revivify the city represent efforts of culturalization of the public realm? Might this type of participation and engagement represent an alternative to the new shopping centres and atria in the reconfiguration of the public area? In the same vein as Richard Sennett, Jane Jacobs identified the importance of mixed activities in the streets as a way to promote movement and encounter (Jacobs, 1961).

In order for mixed encounters to happen, different types of initiatives, promoted by ArtsUnion, Spontaneous Celebration's Festivals, and the Villa urban interventions, were created in the everyday spaces of the city (streets, parks, plazas) in association with different social and cultural groups, many of them youth arts education groups. Thus, if group differentiation is a prerequisite for the stimulation of the public realm, direct involvement of minorities and immigrants becomes an important feature of democratic practice and citizenship participation[3]. However, the development of interventionist strategies requires the existence of a civic order principle, which suggests that the social life is organized around the outcome of the individual as a citizen. This citizen, by belonging to a community of rights and duties, is now more than a member of a community. The civic bond results, then, from this shared sense of belonging. According to David Selbourne, community historically precedes civic order, and a sense of community constitutes a powerful tool of civic consciousness to maintain the civic bond (Selbourne, 2001).

In the case of Spontaneous Celebrations, a variety of urban spaces were used to stage artistic and cultural events, with the goal of building cultural identities of the sites by mobilizing the community to organize and attend these events. This was specially the case of the youth arts intervention projects, which mobilize dozens of youth in the organizations and presentation of youth arts public projects, like the 'Youth Stage' in Wake Up the Earth Festival or the presence of Beantown Society at the Immigrant Rally, which took place in Boston in 2005. This was also the case of the community outreach done through the ArtsUnion project in Union Square. Every endeavor to mobilize citizens for cultural intervention in the urban site culminated in a series of public events such as the Street Furniture Project, the Windows Art Project, the Union Square Art Tour, the Crafts and Farmers Markets, or the ArtsUnion open air performances. Each of these events resulted from the collaboration between the local municipality and different groups of urban agents that became civic intermediaries in the organization and in the presentation of the initiatives. Likewise, in Villa Victoria, civic engagement is simultaneously promoted by a focus on the social issues of concern to the residents, along with the creation of a strong Puerto Rican cultural identity. On occasion, there are even cases where community initiatives combine intervention in the public space while raising awareness of local social issues like street violence among youth gangs and the issue of the survival of Puerto Rican culture in an ever more multicultural urban context.

> *In an effort to curb escalating violence [specially among youth gangs] (…) IBA has proposed a series of events to take place at O'Day Park (…) [activities include] outdoor movie nights to attract families; host intergenerational 'family days' where people can play games like dominoes and bingo (…) (Orchard, 2006).*

These strategies use the urban space as a context of intervention to promote social reconnection in order to think collectively about issues that affect the local community. The civic order principle is understood and analyzed alongside strategies of cultural revivification of urban spaces, as civic engagement is fostered through a re-conceptualization of the relationship between the individual/citizen and the urban space that s/he inhabits.

The unconventional use of appropriated space can promote meaningful face-to-face interaction during the preparation and realization of artistic events. Community actors, like neighbours, local businesses, and artists, are encouraged to intervene as active participants in the production and preparation of the events. In the Wake Up the Earth Festival, in Jamaica Plain, youth are responsible for many tasks and acquire substantial production and organizational skills, developing a sense of belonging that is reproduced in their relation as being part of the organizational structure of Spontaneous Celebrations. As stated by one community organizer:

This festival represents a platform to learn about the world of business and performance production. There's a kid who is going help to set up the electronics and hire the groups for the pop stage (…). It really is a great exercise for a lot of people to learn about how the world works by setting up an event (C. Carvalho, semi-structured video interview, 17 February, 2005).

In this case, the civic bond results from a joint community interest in organizing and producing the festival, which is understood as a tool to build Jamaica Plain's identity[4]. People from the community are urged to meet in advance and take the lead in organizing an event like the Wake Up the Earth Festival. That is the case of the Beantown Society Group, which have organized themselves in a group to create specific activities in the Festival Bétances, including the thematic contextualization of the Festival among the theme of 'non-violence in Boston streets'. When community meetings (Fig. VII) and festival preparations (Fig. VIII) take place, community members participate in the committees that oversee children's activities, volunteers, performances, and all of the different venues at the event.

Fig. VII. Spontaneous Celebrations' community meeting
Photos: Claudia Carvalho

Fig. VIII. *Wake Up the Earth Festival preparations: costume making*

In Spontaneous Celebrations' context of action, civic networks are created by promoting social capital at the neighborhood level. The work is based on two different types of strategies that show a holistic approach to the concept of community. The first strategy is related to the urgent need to create spaces of socialization, not only for the youth, but also for people of different ages. According to one community organizer who has been working with Spontaneous Celebrations:

> *Wake Up the Earth Festival is basically an expression about what this community is all about, which is bringing people together to share musical and artistic experiences (…) Festival for me is really the preparation for it because many people in the community come together to work on the Festival (…) for several months (Carvalho, C., semi-structured interview, 17 February, 2005).*

In a society where socialization increasing means online and media based relationships, it is extremely valuable to offer places for face-to-face and collaborative community participation and interaction. These are essential ingredients for civic participation and to create innovative strategies of citizenship building at the community level. The second strategy focuses on the value of the place's ethnic diversity, concentrating all organizing efforts on building culturally-based local knowledge by developing opportunities for collaborative inter-ethnic and inter-generational work. This type of knowledge requires an understanding of the traditions and social behaviors of the different cultures that inhabit the same neighborhood and the encouragement to use the public arena as a place for dynamic cultural interchange. Artistic and cultural events may represent, then, a good opportunity to develop cultural interconnections between the different ethnic groups residing in the same locale.

In the case of the ArtsUnion project, the idea is to reach out to different arts-related partners, in order to create a civic network of involved citizens and organizations. As stated by one of the main ArtsUnion coordinators:

> *The main objective of the project is to try to get better publicity for Union Square, try to get more people down to square to learn about cultural and historical aspects of the Square and also to get [partners and residents] engaged in the activities (C. Carvalho, community meeting, 22 March, 2005).*

Each of the various activities included in the ArtsUnion project: crafts and farmers markets (Fig. IX), outdoor performances (Fig. X), window art exhibitions (Fig. XI), public art efforts, and historic tours, express the civic dynamics of the neighborhood and contribute to build social capital at the community level. Collective clustered endeavors develop each initiative. For example, outdoor performances result from the collaboration between local producers, the Somerville Arts Council (SAC), and local artists. As stated by one of the producers of an ArtsUnion performance event: "We have worked in collaboration since the beginning: SAC, myself and the West African artists" (C. Carvalho, semi-structured interview, October 8, 2005). Beyond the positive effect of strengthening civic relations during the preparations and duration of the initiative, what, if any, are the long-term effects on the development of other types of collective endeavors? Is there an escalating effect, generated by these artistic endeavors, on the neighborhoods' involvement in civic culture? This will no doubt depend on the continued existence of these types of initiatives over the years, as well as a capacity for re-adaptation to the neighborhood social and cultural changes.

Fig. IX. Farmers Market

Fig. X. Event From the Old World to the New Event

Fig. XI. Windows Art Project

The need to provide outreach to different ethnic and immigrant communities, allowing them to experience the potential of Union Square, creates networks of collaboration between local performers, immigrant artists, and community-based groups. As stated by one of the ArtsUnion local organizers:

> *In the outreach that we did for participation in the ArtsUnion event, we got this Latino best player, we got this guy who is Brazilian and works at an insurance company, we got this woman who works in a New Asia restaurant who brought a Chinese group of dancers! So we (…) had to coordinate a lot of people in the community (C. Carvalho, semi-structured interview, 4 October, 2005).*

The outdoor performances are designed to reproduce the traditions from the diverse ethnic populations within Union Square, which are mainly Haitian, Indian and Brazilian. Therefore, strategies to create social capital are based on cultural outreach efforts within the surrounding community.

In the case of Villa Victoria, strong ties among civically-involved individuals are promoted and individual self-help relationships (Williams, 2005) are developed between the residents. Community residents collaborate with the community agency Inquilinos Boricuas en Action (IBA) to organize community events like Festival Betances and other neighborhood events, such as domino tournaments, weddings, and artistic opportunities for the youth, like Critical Breakdown or Youth Truth, where youth had the opportunity to share their reflective thinking with their peers and work on artistic creation pieces based on that reflection. According to an IBA's staff person:

> *(...) the community participation is pretty much committees from residents working hand in hand with IBA (...) Festival Betances is planned months in advance, and we pretty much make a call to the board and to the residents to try to form committees. So there's people working on every different task (C. Carvalho, semi-structured interview, June 30, 2005).*

These dynamics develop from a partnership between IBA and Villa Victoria residents. They are the result of several months of collaborative work and involve many community meetings, thereby increasing ties between people in the communities. By strengthening these social relationships, a civic network is created, based on a culture of pride and cultural resilience. Typical Puerto Rican activities are organized through which the community celebrates its cultural identity with the South End neighborhood and the greater Boston area. During the festival, where Puerto Rican food is prepared by the Villa Victoria residents, traditional celebrations co-exist with the urban Hip-Hop, as a younger generation of residents develops activities which express urban lifestyles associated with contemporary music, dance, and spoken word.

Figs. XII and XIII. Youth participation at Festival Bétances
Photo: Claudia Carvalho

PATTERNS OF CITIZENSHIP BUILDING IN THE THREE CASE STUDIES

The interdependent variables of urban space, community, arts and culture produce unique patterns of citizenship building in the three urban neighborhoods. In the Jamaica Plain case study, the work of Spontaneous Celebrations is focused on the creation of a community of practice. A community of practice is a web of social relationships in a locale that integrates as many community members as possible through joint efforts to enhance local society. Every community member is understood to be a potential agent and active citizen. Consequently, the generation of innovative approaches to the concept of citizenship requires the development of a strategy of action both at the organizational and the community levels. Both levels operate simultaneously and are interdependent. A network of social support is then created between community members through day-to-day relationships. Artistic activities are, on one hand, the tool for outreach to community members, involving different community groups (youth, immigrants, families and children) in the organization of activities. On the other hand, arts represent a tool to share with the society at large to address social inequalities.
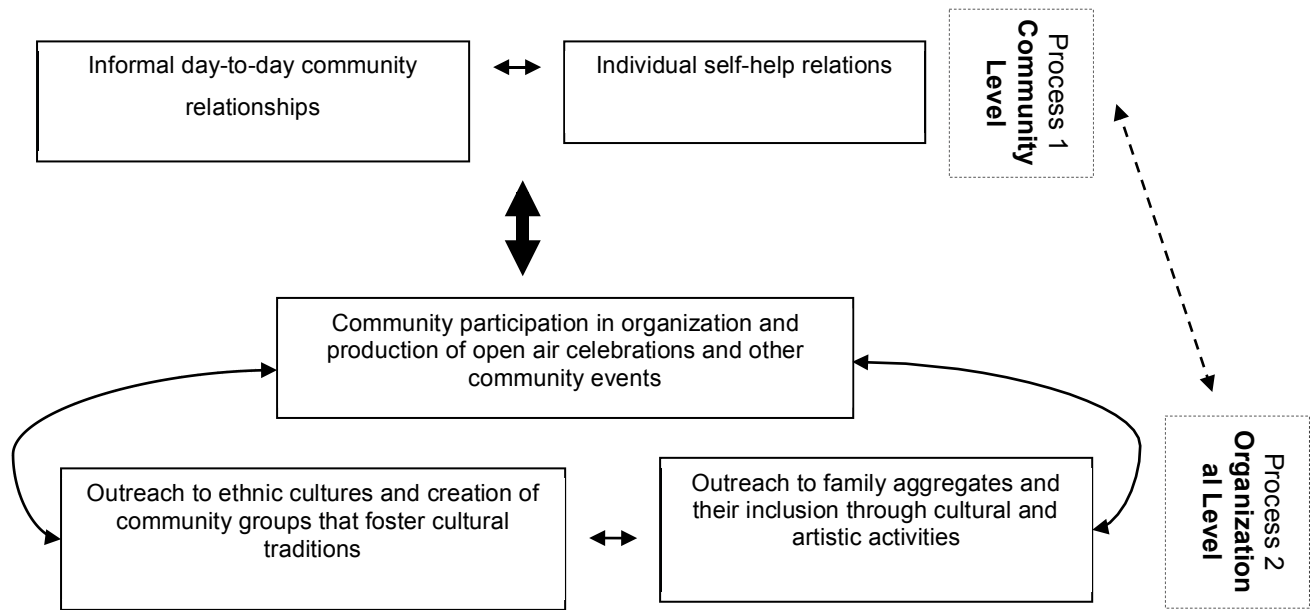
Informal day-to-day community relationships	↔	Individual self-help relations

Process 1
Community Level

Community participation in organization and production of open air celebrations and other community events

Outreach to ethnic cultures and creation of community groups that foster cultural traditions	↔	Outreach to family aggregates and their inclusion through cultural and artistic activities

Process 2
Organization al Level

Fig. XIV. Jamaica Plain: Creative Citizenship in a Community of Practice

In the Villa Victoria case study, citizenship is directly related to the appropriation of a physical space in the city as a strategy of cultural resistance to reinforce Puerto Rican cultural identity. Over the years, the survival of this immigrant cultural identity has been dependent on how well this Puerto Rican community exercises influence over both the physical space and the symbolic space of the city. Thus, the most important component of the expression of citizenship in this social context is its direct relation with identity formation. The main tool used to reinforce immigrant cultural identity is the arts event, Festival Betances, which mobilizes residents through many forms of community participation. The festival also highlights Puerto Rican culture and fosters neighbor-to-neighbor sociability. In this example, citizenship expresses itself in the direct relation of the public space with the mobilization of immigrant cultural traditions.
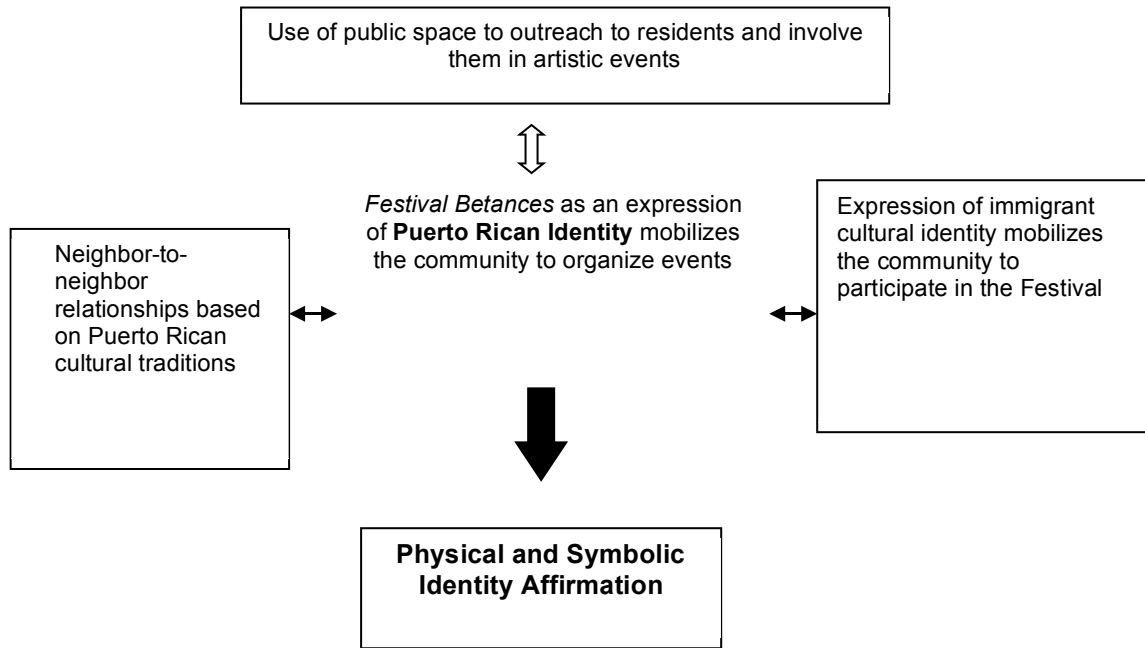
Use of public space to outreach to residents and involve them in artistic events

Festival Betances as an expression of **Puerto Rican Identity** mobilizes the community to organize events

Expression of immigrant cultural identity mobilizes the community to participate in the Festival

Neighbor-to-neighbor relationships based on Puerto Rican cultural traditions

Physical and Symbolic Identity Affirmation

Fig. XV. Villa Victoria: Creative Citizenship and Cultural Identity

In ArtsUnion/Somerville, the creation of strong ties with local community agents is essential to get to know the field of work and to create synergies with the different social groups (businesses, ethnic communities, artists, community organizers). The creation of community networks that can elicit community participation sets the process of citizenship in motion. The establishment of these community networks includes ethnographic field work focused on attracting diverse community members. A far-reaching campaign of community socialization is necessary to become better acquainted with the social context and to identify allies for the social intervention projects.
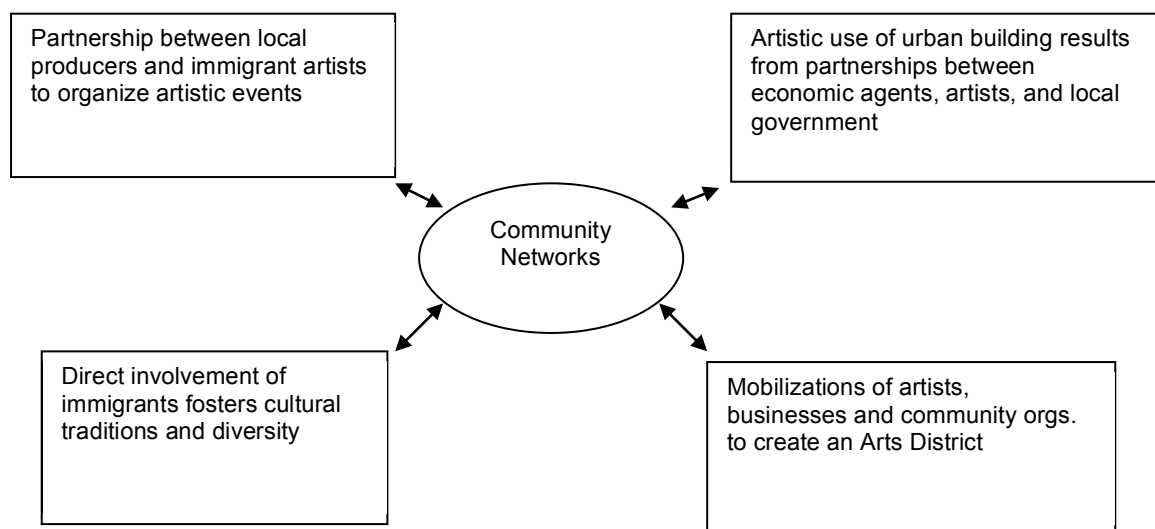
Partnership between local producers and immigrant artists to organize artistic events

Artistic use of urban building results from partnerships between economic agents, artists, and local government

Community Networks

Direct involvement of immigrants fosters cultural traditions and diversity

Mobilizations of artists, businesses and community orgs. to create an Arts District

Fig. XVI. ArtsUnion/Somerville: Creative Citizenship and Community Networks

Different examples of how citizenship can be innovative can be found in the three case studies. Each case study corresponds to a different stage in the maturation process of citizenship building, leading to the next phase in the process of knowledge production at the community level. The first phase identifies the main community actors in the local context and the kinds of associations possible, to take advantage of all local synergies. After the acquisition of thorough knowledge of the social context, the next phase includes the process of building a community identity in relation to others. This process includes the differentiation in relationships to other people and groups. Finally, the mature exercise of citizenship involves the creation of a community of practice, as exemplified by the Jamaica Plain case study.
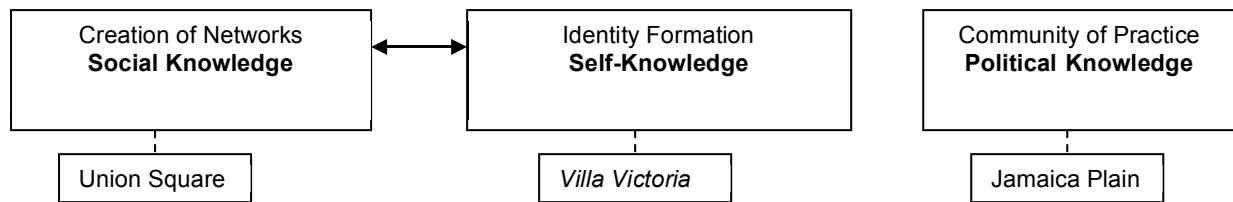
Creation of Networks **Social Knowledge**	←→	Identity Formation **Self-Knowledge**	Community of Practice **Political Knowledge**
Union Square		*Villa Victoria*	Jamaica Plain

Fig. XVII. Citizenship Building and Knowledge Building

CONCLUSIONS ON CITIZENSHIP BUILDING THROUGH ARTS AND CULTURE

Insights have been offered on strategies that use artistic and cultural practices to create more socially integrated communities. The figure presented below summarizes the paradigmatic approach behind the case studies analyzed, showcasing how civic engagement and leadership processes work together to promote creative citizenship.

The overarching goal behind the work is a better practical understanding of what it could mean to be a creative citizen in contemporary urban settings. The innovative quality of the work in these communities represents various ways that artistic and cultural practices can contribute to creative strategies of civic engagement and leadership. Seven venues were identified in which artistic and cultural practices stimulate the promotion of more socially integrated communities: project based experiential learning; inter-group connections through the arts; mentoring arts related programs; social reflection and positive social change through arts activities; creation of organizational leaders; creative learning experiences through the arts; and leadership models. These venues were then categorized in terms of their impact on personal development, organizational development, and inter-group connection, in the society at large. Personal development includes individual or small-group engagement through creative arts learning experiences, and achieving excellence in a particular expressive arts activity. The impact on organizational development can be easily identified through the development of leadership models that both empower interpersonal relationships and contribute to the survival of these organizations in the future. Finally, dialogue between different cultural, political, and religious sectors of the society can be achieved through socially engaged community projects, artistic activities that generate social reflections and community celebrations that integrate socially diverse participants.
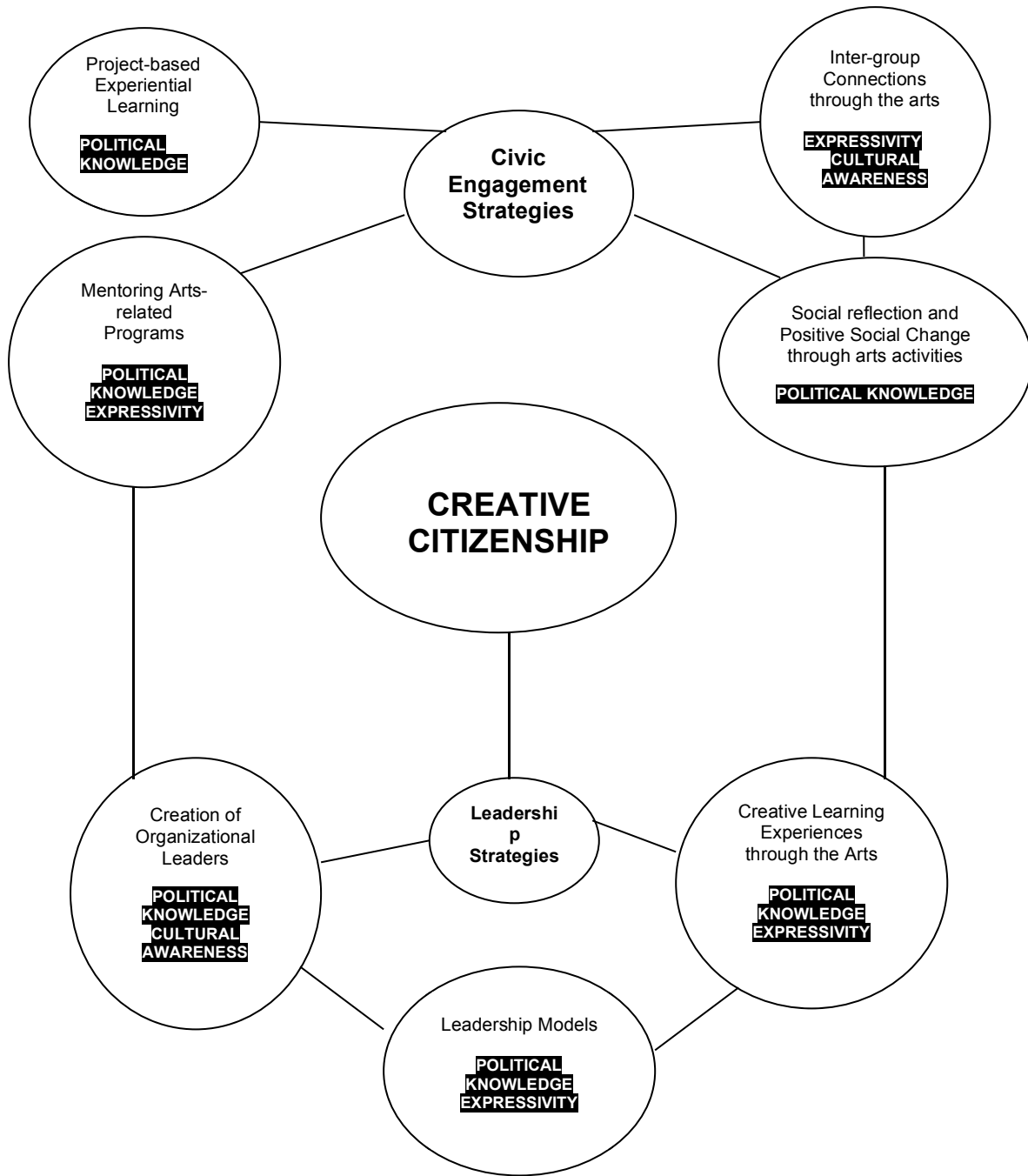
Project-based
Experiential
Learning

**POLITICAL
KNOWLEDGE**

Inter-group
Connections
through the arts

**EXPRESSIVITY
CULTURAL
AWARENESS**

**Civic
Engagement
Strategies**

Mentoring Arts-
related
Programs

**POLITICAL
KNOWLEDGE
EXPRESSIVITY**

Social reflection and
Positive Social Change
through arts activities

POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE

**CREATIVE
CITIZENSHIP**

Creation of
Organizational
Leaders

**POLITICAL
KNOWLEDGE
CULTURAL
AWARENESS**

**Leadershi
p
Strategies**

Creative Learning
Experiences
through the Arts

**POLITICAL
KNOWLEDGE
EXPRESSIVITY**

Leadership Models

**POLITICAL
KNOWLEDGE
EXPRESSIVITY**

Fig. XVIII. Creative Citizenship Building Strategies

The examples given in this paper open venues for further exploration of different forms that innovation in communities may take. A theme that seems to be surfacing in communities, and with those who work with them, is how to gain new perspectives, ideas, and innovative practices. The answer appears to be found in concentrating efforts around designing toward the periphery rather than toward the mean. This means creating paradigm-shifting methods that work outside of the box. Instead of standard programming and doing what has always been done, alternative methods of organizing can breathe new life in communities.

In the cases presented and analyzed, initiatives offer innovative strategies to deal with community struggles like youth violence, urban rivalry, and racial and ethnic divisions. Innovation presents itself in different ways in these cases, helping disadvantaged communities connect knowledge and experience to active participation in the development of new methods of cultural revivification. Furthermore, innovation also envisions the artistic practice as an indispensable learning tool in promoting self-empowerment for the promotion of creative citizens. Artistic creativity represents the innovative, driving force that nourishes community cultural development. The development of the creative citizen is a long process that includes both the development of civic engagement and leadership efforts, and the establishment of a direct relationship with the urban space. Individual participation through artistic practices and the culturalization of public space are the processes that helped us define the framework to rethink citizenship. This framework addresses the contemporary urban citizen from a cultural point of view where political knowledge, expressivity, and cultural awareness are the salient attributes.

NOTES

[1] However, in 2002, the state-funded Massachusetts Cultural Council's fiscal 2003 budget was reduced by 62%, which forced an equivalent reduction in state investment at the local level and therefore in small- and mid-sized cultural non-profits (The Boston Indicators Project, 2004b).

[2] According to data from 2000, the most isolated group is whites living in Boston's suburbs: on average, they live on blocks that are more than 90% white. On average, whites living in *cities* resided on blocks that were 70% white. In the city of Boston, African Americans reside on blocks that are on average 60% African-American (Boston Indicators Project, 2004e).

[3] Nancy Fraser studied how the different groups constitute different public realms and called attention for the need to balance a politics of representation and recognition of these groups (Fraser, 1990).

[4] Authors like Isabel Jackson have also explored the relation between public festival and processes of identity formation (Jackson, 2008).

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