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## **Creative Economies: Using Arts To Revitalize Post-industrial Cities and Towns in Massachusetts**

Anna Price  
*University of Massachusetts Boston*

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**Creative Economies:  
Using Arts To Revitalize Post-industrial Cities and Towns in Massachusetts**

**Anna Price  
Honors College  
University of Massachusetts Boston**

**July 13, 2014**

Thesis Advisors:

Kathleen Banfield  
Office of Community Partnerships  
University of Massachusetts Boston

Megan Rokop, Ph.D.  
Honors College  
University of Massachusetts Boston

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## Introduction

I was born in Fall River MA, and raised in Brockton MA. Being from these areas, arts were never really encouraged as a promising profession. Being from the City of Champions, you're raised to believe you can escape the "ghetto", this place of "nothingness", either by performing exceptionally well in school or being a star athlete.

This characteristic is not unique to Brockton or Fall River. This is a sentiment shared by many other areas all around the state of Massachusetts and many other regions of the country. Aside from the valedictorian-types and star athletes, there are numerous young, creative twenty-somethings like me from areas like Brockton. We are artists and creators, and we hope for opportunities for community engagement that will create a community we can be proud of and where we will hold our heads high. We do not want to feel our voices shake when people ask us where we're from and we reply "Brockton" (or "Broke-town", if you try to keep a sense of humor when talking about it).

Many residents of such towns look for ways out, whether through higher education to get us out of the city, or high paying jobs we don't want but do covet, in order to afford life in a "nicer" town. There is very little that could convince me to move back to Brockton in its current state. But there are ways Brockton could change to make me want to be there. If Brockton created a welcoming environment for artists and artisans, perhaps I would reconsider my choice to move away. If Brockton attracted more creative minds like myself, who could see the beauty in some of its post-industrial decay, perhaps I would stay. But so far, from what I've known and experienced, Brockton has shown little love for its artist residents.

*"There is nothing more truly artistic than to love people."*

– Vincent Van Gogh

During my senior year in the Honors College at UMass Boston, I became involved in the year-long Creative and Social Entrepreneurship Fellowship program. During this program, I interned alongside other UMass Boston students at a local creative non-profit organization, providing the staff with assistance as they worked towards achieving their goals. This internship was funded by the Creative Economy Fund (CE Fund) from the University of Massachusetts President's Office. My involvement in this program sparked an interest in pursuing an Honors thesis investigating the CE Fund and how the awarded projects are benefitted by that fund.

After looking through all of the grants awarded by the CE Fund since its inception in 2007, I decided to research four projects that focused on revitalization of post-industrial cities and towns (including Lowell, Somerville, and New Bedford) by utilizing cultural arts to stimulate the cities' creative economies. The focus of my work is how the CE Fund allowed these projects to revitalize some aspect of these cities, and how these projects assessed outcomes and overall

impacts. In essence, I asked the question: How has each project positively changed its respective city, and to what extent has the CE Fund affected the creative economics of the various regions of Massachusetts?

The four projects on which I focused my work are:

- *Moveable Walls*, 2009, PI: Robert Farrant, UMass Lowell
- *Measuring Urban Reinvention*, 2012, PI: John Wooding, UMass Lowell
- *Fostering Art and Culture*, 2010, PI: Richard Wilkie, UMass Amherst
- *Analysis of the Creative Industry in Somerville*, 2013, PI: Clyde W. Barrow, UMass Dartmouth

### ***Moveable Walls: Project Description***

Professor Robert Farrant's project "Moveable Walls" was funded by the Creative Economies Fund in 2009. The purpose of this project was to build upon 19th and 20th century immigration history research done by Farrant, to tell the stories of local immigrants with the help of the youth. This was done through the students conducting interviews with their families and Professor Farrant conducting a number of interviews with local immigrants who were gracious enough to share their stories of the journey their families faced in coming to America. The second portion of the project involved creating a number of murals depicting immigration stories that were showcased at cultural events, and were then moved to semi-permanent spaces in Lowell National Historical Park, Lowell High School, UMass Lowell, Middlesex Community College, local bank lobbies, and hospitals. Ultimately the murals would become a part of the parks' visual displays so that the works were accessible to the general public through taking park tours and other means (Farrant, Personal Interview).

As a resident of Lowell and historian at UMass Lowell, Professor Farrant has been involved for years in community partnerships that connect the Lowell community with the resources harbored by the university. Lowell is a town of immigrants, but before Farrant's project began, not much work had been done on the post-World War II immigration history of Lowell. The stories told in this project include those of early immigrants from regions like Ireland, as well as those of more recent immigrants from countries like Ghana, Kenya, Burma, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia (Farrant, Interim Report). The partners of this project included UMass Lowell's Department of Regional Economic and Social Development (RESO), the UMass Lowell Art Department, the Cultural Organization of Lowell (COOL), and The Teen Arts Group of The Revolving Museum (RM) (Farrant, Interim Report).

It is estimated that Lowell has at least 1,000 working artists in residence, out of a population of approximately 100,000 people (Farrant, Personal Interview). Farrant believes that art changes the culture of post-industrial communities. He states that "if the city has a lot of projects where various peoples' unique talents can come into the mix...[then] this makes a city more interesting." (Farrant, Personal Interview) Through this project, high school students had the

opportunity to be involved in an arts-related community project that placed value in their stories. Farrant's hope for this project is that "youth become more engaged in civic life wherever they go as adults, and that by doing this, the city of Lowell will tap into a more youthful energy, creating [an artistic] vibrancy in its community" (Farrant, Personal Interview).

### ***Moveable Walls: Project Results***

Two main positive results of this project were the turnout of youth and local residents at the projects' opening event, and the number of students who spoke with their family members about their engagement in this project. Farrant mentioned that many family members shared with him at the opening event for this project that this was the first time their children had ever asked or expressed interest to them about their family story, and their journey to Lowell.

The success of the project was measured by the ability to tell the immigration stories through the murals. A total of six murals were completed by the students for this project, and 35 interviews were conducted with immigrants who had come to Lowell (Farrant, Personal Interview). In addition, 9 of these 35 interviews were compiled into a book titled "The Big Move: Immigrant Voices From A Mill City," authored by Robert Farrant and Christopher Strobel. (The Big Move, vii-ix) In addition, two of the youth muralists became professional artists on account of the fact that their murals were used as the cover art for the book (Farrant, Personal Interview). The murals are both portable and on display at the park along with this book, which is sold at the park gift shop and to schools as part of their curriculum. In the park, they are integrated into the walking tours, and during these tours, visitors are encouraged to purchase the book in the park's gift shop. (Farrant, Personal Interview).

Naturally, it is incredibly challenging to quantify the effects of this project on the economy of Lowell, and to separate any effects seen from those of other creative economies, and other types of economies in the city. It is very challenging to draw conclusions such as how many jobs were created as a result of this effort. But there is undeniable value in how this project engaged all of the members of the community, and how it helped immigrants tell the stories of their journeys to Lowell.

### ***Measuring Urban Reinvention: Project Description***

Professor John Wooding of UMass Lowell received the Creative Economy grant in 2012 for his project "Measuring Urban Reinvention: The Creative Economy in Lowell 2000-2010." The purpose of this project was to assess the impact of Lowell's historical commitment to building a creative economy in Lowell (Wooding, Personal Interview). The following is a summary of the findings of Wooding's research into the history of Lowell's creative economy.

The industrial revolution began in Lowell in the 1820s; canals for water power and turbines were created, and industry boomed until the 1940s and 1950s, when Lowell lost its major industry of textiles. Lowell was already working on a creative economy in the 1970s, before the idea of the “creative economy” had been verbalized. During the 1970s, Lowell had a 25% unemployment rate and a high rate of crime. The vision that the leadership of Lowell had for a way forward was to utilize the old mill buildings to create a celebration of the city’s history. (Wooding, Personal Interview)

In the year 1978, former senator Paul Tsongas persuaded the government to create an urban national park in Lowell (Lowell National Historical Park 1978-2008, pg. 4). This project involved using the mill buildings in Lowell to make a multi-facility park and a series of historical exhibits. This generated tourism and interest, essentially through the process of Lowell figuring out how to make a “theme park” for industrial history (Wooding, Personal Interview).

Professor Wooding described the most recent events in the Lowell arts revitalization as follows: “In the 1990s, a group of individuals who created the Artist Overlay District based on new zoning laws decided Lowell could benefit by bringing artists to the mill space, and to advertise these mills as a place to come work on art. Today, there are over 850 artists living and working in Lowell. The park is now a museum for all the industrial revolution artifacts, including turbines and the canals. Lowell at the same time became a city of immigrants, and the creative economies manage to tie immigrant communities and the art community together.” (Wooding, Personal Interview).

As of this year, there are now over 80 named businesses in Lowell that have been identified as part of a creative economy. While creativity and innovation is important to economic development, Lowell also thrives off of its diversity throughout the community. Much of this diversity stems from the fact that Lowell is home to UMass Lowell, which brings an educated class people to Lowell<sup>1</sup>, and also plays an integral role in educating those living in Lowell already. Both within and outside of the university, under-represented racial and ethnic minorities and LGBT individuals are also prevalent in Lowell. (Wooding, Personal Interview)

One of the hopes of the leadership of Lowell is that the businesses, schools, and diversity in Lowell will attract people who are creative, and make them want to live and work in this area. One of the goals and efforts of other CE-funded projects (such as Professor Pat Fontaine’s project “*Lowell: A City of Refugees, A Community of Citizens*” at UMass Lowell) is the push for getting Little Cambodia on the map. Fontaine hopes that, in the same way that Chinatown attracts visitors who want good Chinese food and Chinese shops, Little Cambodia in Lowell will attract visitors who want authentic, quality Cambodian food. Hopefully these visitors will then experience other local small creative economy endeavors, such as shops that sell Cambodian-made goods and artisan products. Fontaine also aims to build arts events that are tailored to be engaging for ethnic groups such as the Cambodian population in Lowell (as Lowell is the city

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<sup>1</sup> While there has not been research done on the number of UML students who remain in Lowell, Wooding mentioned in our interview that these data would be interesting to compile.

outside of Cambodia that has the highest number of Cambodian residents) (Fontaine, Personal Interview).

### ***Measuring Urban Reinvention: Project Results***

The results of the “Measuring Urban Reinvention” project included a scholarly contribution to the growing literature on creative economies, as well as a source for developing future potential funding and more analysis. The research was also presented in the Innovative Cities Conference hosted by and in the city of Lowell in 2010, and at a one-day conference in Lowell on the Creative Economy Fund, in May of 2013.. Around 50 people attended the one-day conference in 2013 (Wooding, Final Report). Exact numbers of attendees for the Innovative Cities Conference are not available, but attendees included urban policy professionals, city planners, public administrators, scholars, students and the general public interested in learning about best practices in place at several cities in the US (Innovative Cities Conference).

Wooding’s work has also been made available to Lowell agencies and organizations such as Mass Cultural Council, Mass Humanities, and New England Foundation for the Arts. Wooding stated in our interview that he has been able to demonstrate to the Mass Cultural Council (among others) the great economic value of the creative economy in Lowell. From his work, Wooding has calculated that the annual visitors who come to experience Lowell’s creative economy generate about 15 to 20 million dollars of revenue for the city of Lowell each year. (Wooding, Personal Interview)

Through Professor Wooding’s project, 60 people participated in focus groups, which provided a qualitative report for the Lowell Public Matters Program, and also written reports for the Lowell Plan and the Lowell National Historical Park (Wooding, Final Report). An extensive report on the creative economy in Lowell was created and is available on the COOL Website (<http://www.cultureiscool.org/>). A manuscript was developed for publication on the history and impact on the creative economy project on the city of Lowell. It was titled *From Massachusetts to Florida: Lowell and the ReCreated City* and the draft manuscript was completed and submitted for publication in the spring of 2014 (Wooding, Final Report).

Another critical outcome of this project is the proposal of a Lowell DataCommon, powered by WEAVE and UMass Lowell. The DataCommon will provide access to all of the data compiled during this project, and it will also serve as a tool for visualizing these data. This tool will create the possibility for extensive collaborations between the city and a number of local non-profits who have already been recruited as partners (Wooding, Personal Interview).

A main challenge that Wooding encountered in his research is that it became rather difficult to find and compile data that was accurately reflective of what was happening in Lowell’s creative economy over the years. It was challenging for him to obtain data on people who visit Lowell for tourism purposes, and it was difficult to identify what counts as a creative business and thus is



part of the creative economy, and what does not. While Wooding has made data available that reflect a total of more than 80 named businesses that contribute to a creative economy in Lowell, there could be more that haven't been identified. Since the creative economy is still fairly new compared to other economies, research efforts in this area continue to grow and definitions shift, thereby making it difficult to establish concrete guidelines for what constitutes a creative business. (Wooding, Personal Interview)

Throughout his work, Wooding became more aware of the importance of qualitative data combined with quantitative data. Over time, he came to view success in this project in part as the ability to identify the people who played roles in the history of Lowell's creative economy, such that they could tell their stories, and contribute to the collection of historical data on Lowell's creative economy. (Wooding, Personal Interview)

As a continuation of this project, Professor Wooding has received \$25,000 in grant funding from other local sources to pursue and maintain the DataCommon database proposed from this project, which would enable the promotion and marketing of art and culture in the city of Lowell. (Wooding, Personal Interview)

### ***Fostering Art and Culture: Project Description***

Professor Richard Wilkie was the principal investigator for the project "Fostering Art and Culture in The Greater Franklin County", which was funded by the Creative Economy Fund in 2010. The project coordinators were Abby Templer and Leo Hwang-Carlos, of UMass Amherst and Greenfield Community College, respectively (Hwang, Interim Report).

The Greater Franklin County is the most rural county in Massachusetts, and it was historically a manufacturing region for paper mills and machinery. Over the last twenty years or so, most of these manufacturing companies have either downsized or moved elsewhere. The region is often described negatively in the context of being "overly rural," and the region is often perceived as being a place of "postindustrial detritus littered with vacant buildings, high unemployment, and deep-seated poverty; a rural frontier region rarely explored and, in many places, untouched by cell towers or high-speed Internet" (Hwang, pg. 502). Additionally, the region is frequently judged as lacking tools and resources, and therefore this project focused on reinforcing and empowering the resources available in this region already.

The focus of this CE-funded project was to counteract some of the negative stigmas associated with this county, by reinforcing agency within the arts community. The project focused on empowering the skills of workers within the area. The goal of the project was to create a community partnership of people who are trained in recognizing various types of economic activity. The partnership aimed to build capacity for this goal by providing tools and resources to record and document the economic activities of the region, and by supporting the identification of practices and endeavors that can strengthen these activities. The project utilizes a

participatory action research model (PAR) to conduct its work. The PAR model is post-structuralist and veers away from capital-centric<sup>2</sup> and needs-based development discourse for the creative economy within Greater Franklin County. Instead, this project looks to smaller local models as a means for change, such as co-operatives and independent storefronts. (Hwang, Personal Interview)

The project involved 23 artists and artisans, who were accepted into the project out of a pool of 40 applicants. These artists were chosen to represent the largest diversity possible based on categories including gender, race, age, art or craft form, and geographic location spanning Franklin, Hampshire, Worcester, Hampden, and Berkshire Counties and also Southern Vermont (Hwang, Final Report). These artists instigated and pursued several action plans including: art shows in which the artists were invited to participate, a website where all ideas and information and artist websites are shared (<http://www.rethinkingthecreativeeconomy.org/>), and a chapbook<sup>3</sup> (i.e. a small booklet) as an alternative way of sharing the research ([http://www.rethinkingthecreativeeconomy.org/Rethinking\\_the\\_Creative\\_Economy/Chapbook.html](http://www.rethinkingthecreativeeconomy.org/Rethinking_the_Creative_Economy/Chapbook.html)).

### ***Fostering Art and Culture: Project Results***

Two art shows were held and 21 artists participated in the first show “*Creating Multiple Realities: Phase 1*” at the Nacul Gallery in Amherst. Subsequently, all of these artists were invited to partake in the second show at the Leverett Crafts and Arts Gallery (Hwang, Final Report). In addition, 16 of the artist researchers have their links listed on the project’s website (<http://www.rethinkingthecreativeeconomy.org/>). A few members of the community pooled together to sell their arts and crafts, through online Etsy accounts. And recently, two members of the community came together to pilot a co-op retail store, and they have been fairly successful so far (Hwang, Personal Interview).

One of the most important takeaways Hwang learned from this project is the importance of documenting qualitative data in addition to quantitative data. Hwang and his collaborators found that this project was a transformative experience for those involved by conducting evaluation-focused interviews of the 23 artists who participated (Hwang, Personal Interview). Hwang found that many artists involved in this project felt that their involvement empowered and revitalized their art practice. Professor Hwang was pleasantly surprised by the extent to which the artisans expressed appreciation for the opportunities to feel valued and to tell their stories, through their participation in this project.

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<sup>2</sup> Capital-centric models of economy focus on bringing in large corporations that operate by utilizing traditional Capitalist models.

<sup>3</sup> The chapbook detailed the methods used for research, featured quotes from artist and artisan interviewees, and shared initial findings. (Hwang, Personal Interview)

## ***Analysis of the Creative Industry in Somerville: Project Description***

Dr. Clyde W. Barrow is the Director of the UMass Dartmouth Center for Policy Analysis (CFPA), and he received a 2013 Creative Economy grant for his project “Analysis of the Creative Industry in Somerville, MA.” Barrow served as the principal investigator, along with David Borges (the Associate Director of CFPA), whom I had the opportunity to interview. The third member of the leadership team from UMass Dartmouth was Colleen Dawicki, the Project Manager at CFPA (Borges, Interim Report). UMass Dartmouth had worked with Somerville on other projects before this collaboration was initiated, and the university has also worked on similar projects in other areas within Massachusetts, such as New Bedford (Borges, Personal Interview).

The Somerville leadership team for this project included Gregory Jenkins, the Executive Director of the Somerville Arts Council since 2001, and Stephen Houdlette, an economic development specialist for the Somerville Strategic Planning and Community Development office of the City of Somerville (Borges, Interim Report)..

The purpose of this project was to assess the total assets of the arts community within Somerville, in order to help this community build financial leverage within private sector financing mechanisms. Another major goal of the project was to gather data that will allow for even more growth of the community of artists in Somerville, with guidance from the Somerville Arts Council. As Greg Jenkins explained in our interview, Somerville is short on space. There is a need to show lenders and banks that the large group of artists in Somerville needs access to space where they can work and live. Pooling resources among artists will increase confidence in banks and other lenders, leading to a greater likelihood of them investing in the physical spaces that artists need to sustain themselves.

For a number of years now, Somerville has been seen as a hub for arts and a place for artists. Somerville is often viewed as a model for other cities and towns that are seeking revitalization by strengthening their creative economy sector. In many areas, Somerville is already revitalized, but a major issue remains in the Somerville artist community regarding maintaining a balance between working space and living space. (Jenkins, Personal Interview)

While it is known that there are many artists working and living in Somerville, the project aimed to gather quantitative data assessing the population and the assets it provides to the city. When a city is interested in utilizing the creative economy to bolster the public perception of an area, questions are frequently asked that include: “How much does the creative economy impact this city? How much revenue, ideally from the outside the city itself, do creative economies bring to the city?”

There are many reasons why these questions are so difficult to answer. First, many artists and artisans choose to remain under the radar. Second, many artists have multiple sources of income and thus wear two or three different hats. For example, one artist may be a sculptor but

may also participate in a dance company and a theatre group. Third, bookkeeping efforts for creative economy-associated businesses (such as ethnic restaurants and cafés) are often not as extensive and detailed as possible. (Jenkins, Personal Interview,)

This project aimed to gather the data necessary to answer these questions that are so challenging to answer. Notably, this project involved administering multiple surveys. One such survey was a survey of all Somerville open studios, which tracked factors including: the name/organization, number of employees, part-time or full-time artist status, type of art, sales at events, percent of sales from an event as a percent of overall annual sales, and in-kind donations received from the city or other organizations. This particular survey was distributed to participants of the Somerville's Open Studios event, which is the largest Open Studios event in the country, and includes over four hundred Somerville artists. Another survey administered to the artists through this project was the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Analysis, which is used by federal statistical agencies to classify workers into their respective occupational categories. (Borges, Interim Report)

### ***Analysis of the Creative Industry in Somerville: Project Results***

Through all the surveys conducted through this project, approximately twelve hundred responses were obtained, which is much larger than the project leadership initially anticipated. While the data analysis phase of this project is not yet complete, Greg Jenkins cited many critical findings that have already come out of this project. Jenkins states that the project leadership will use the data, once data analysis is complete, to supplement the current predictions they have based on their preliminary data analysis.. (Jenkins, Personal Interview)

The data gathered from this project so far has piqued the interests of many members of Somerville Open Studios and other community members in Somerville. Jenkins mentioned that many are curious to see what can be accomplished for the Somerville arts community, using these data. Some of the ideas of what Jenkins hopes to accomplish include: to be able to show that there are a number of people willing to pool their assets to assist artists living and working in Somerville, to find an investor who will fund the creation of a new space to house members of the Somerville arts community, and potentially in the distant future to start a credit union (within an existing bank) that is exclusively available to Somerville artists. (Jenkins, Personal Interview)

### **Discussion: Varying views of revitalization of post-industrial towns using the arts**

One of the most important factors for how the projects' principal investigators viewed revitalization was based on how much of a creative economy their respective work areas had already developed, before the start of the project. Naturally this meant that revitalization looked different for everyone I interviewed. In general it seemed as though a common idea of

revitalization included creating a place where members of the community can live together and engage in efforts that attract other visitors.

An important consequence of revitalization that must be considered is that the cost of living and housing increases as the area creates a revitalized image of itself. This is what has occurred in Cambridge and, more recently, in Somerville. Thus the revitalization that is done to benefit the city can actually end up leading to the city becoming prohibitively expensive for artists and for many other groups who came to the city when rent was inexpensive. After revitalization, the risk of then losing that space can occur, even though it was often the artists whose efforts developed a creative and desirable atmosphere, and the immigrants and other residents whose stories fostered a multi-cultural and stimulating environment.

For Lowell, Wooding sees revitalization as meaning the creation of a thriving downtown area, where people are out walking around the streets, even after normal business hours. He states that he expects this process will take about 5 years and, when it does, the only negative consequence to this is that the downtown may likely become gentrified. (Wooding, Personal Interview)

In contrast, Farrant believes that Lowell is already in a state of revitalization. He sees this as already happening because the city had many arts-related projects going on before the creative economy funds were in place. So he sees the Creative Economy Fund as assisting with already on-going efforts towards revitalization. Farrant believes there needs to be more studios and galleries made available in Lowell. He believes that, if the city has many arts projects where peoples' unique talents can be applied to make the city more interesting, this will then change the culture, boosting civic engagement. He works to encourage high school students to become involved in projects that place value in their stories in hopes that this will allow youth to contribute to the aforementioned civic engagement and build upon their civic life into adulthood, no matter where they live.

For Wooding, the idea of how art changes the culture of industrial and post-industrial regions is a bit different from how Farrant views the idea. Wooding sees the overall sentiment as follows: "The industry collapsed and it was a choice. The city wanted to keep itself local. By having an already diverse community, this appealed to creative people who wanted to be there, in a diverse environment." (Wooding, Personal Interview)

Hwang also sees art as transformative. In the region of Greater Franklin County, where his work is focused, there are people who have always appreciated and emphasized the hard work of handcrafted goods. He believes that art comes in as an opportunity for revitalization when the region is on a low end of a life cycle. Eventually something happens to push the region into transforming itself into something else, and art can become that transformative choice. (Hwang, Personal Interview) Hwang sees the main focus of revitalization efforts as creating a diverse arts economy benefitting the region by creating diverse different forms of non-capitalist economic activity. He feels that revitalization would be reached through the development of

organizations like co-ops, volunteer efforts within the community, and more small businesses and empowerment of artisans.

Many industries see economic growth in a more traditional light, such as through bringing in large capitalist firms that each create many jobs and each have a major presence. But for the creative economy, there are multiple means of approaching economic growth. Hwang's project focuses on an alternative economic model that he feels is ideal for the creative economy, as it creates successful co-operatives, builds communities through volunteer work, and supports small locally owned and operated businesses. I think making this strategy a part of how creative economies are approached is definitely viable for the arts community. But this strategy relies upon a structure existing – such as a collective – for the individual artists in an area to become a part of, much like Hwang created for the Greater Franklin counties. This is an essential aspect of his model, as success is typically found in numbers, and supporting of a single team tends to be more effective than supporting many fragmented and individualized efforts.

From the perspective of Borges, art creates a hub for the community and attracts businesses that appeal to the arts community, such as cafes and ethnic restaurants (Borges, Personal Interview). Ultimately what occurs for the city is an entire change of image that attracts people and money from the outside.

Jenkins sees importance in the concept of art being reflective of a place. Industrial work (such as that which dominated the city of Somerville for most of its history) is quite emblematic of what artists do, namely create and produce. The growth of arts creates an influx of people from outside into the city, and also an increased demand for housing within the city. Jenkins feels that – by changing or losing an industrial space – you lose spaces that provide jobs. A key focus of revitalization in his eyes is the need to balance the allotment of space for both industry work, other types of work, and housing. Jenkins admits that gentrification is unavoidable when cities are being revitalized through the arts. Being able to remain flexible in these situations is crucial for the city to thrive and maintain balance of arts and commerce. This is a central issue at hand for a place like Somerville, that has already experienced significant revitalization through the arts. (Jenkins, Personal Interview)

When I think of revitalization, I see Somerville as the cornerstone of what successful revitalization looks like, and I think Wooding would agree. Davis Square is just one example of a part of Somerville where creative events and small businesses exist in large numbers, and these events and businesses attract not only artists but many other visitors as well. From my research and interviews, I found that many other cities in the process of revitalizing see Somerville as a model.

I would personally encourage my hometown of Brockton to begin modeling itself after Somerville, but I feel this may be difficult for Brockton, as many of the old mills have already been turned into office space or luxury loft housing. While the Fuller Craft Museum has been operating for decades in Brockton, its appeal focuses on offering exhibits for arts and crafts appreciators and young students, rather than focusing on creating an atmosphere that benefits

artists living and working in the area. As a resident of Brockton for 21 years, and as a practicing artist, the only times I have frequented the museum was through school trips, since crafting doesn't hold the same appeal for me as traditional high art does. Every Thursday evening the Fuller offers Free Admission and while I'm aware of it, I still have never visited on my own account. The Fuller stands rather isolated next to D.W. Field Park, where you can always find groups of people walking, exercising, relaxing by the lake, or picnicking. I would consider it ideal if the Fuller could be incorporated in some way to be a more engaging presence in the city, and if the Fuller could host certain events or exhibits focused on creating a resource for professional artists living in or near Brockton.

### **Discussion: Personal experiences interning at an arts-related community organization in Somerville**

One of the reasons I am particularly interested in the arts-focused revitalization of Somerville is that I spent the last ten months interning at The Center for Arabic Culture (CAC). The CAC is a secular, non-profit arts organization located at the Armory in Somerville, MA. Their mission is stated as "*Building Bridges, Connecting Cultures.*" The main goal of the Center for Arabic Culture is to promote Arabic Culture and the Arab-American experience through education and the arts." (Center for Arabic Culture website) They provide Arabic language classes at Mt. Ida College in Newton, MA for people of all ages and backgrounds. At their headquarters in Somerville, they also provide classes in Arabic dance, Oud (North African Lute), Tabla, calligraphy, Arabic cooking, and monthly film screenings.

The CAC is an organization that has parallels to Farrant's *Moveable Walls* project, as they both aim to educate through cultural events and share experiences through arts. The *Moveable Walls* project allows visitors at the Lowell National Historical Park and readers of "The Big Move" to learn about the immigrant experiences and culture of various peoples in Lowell. The CAC opens its doors to anyone willing to learn more about Arabic arts and cultures. Their students and patrons come from both Arab and non-Arab backgrounds, and their film screenings are examples of event they hold that are free and open to the public. The CAC aims to provide a neutral place where Boston area residents of all backgrounds can come to learn about cultural activities that stem from Arab nations, instead of focusing on religious activities and international disputes (which are the most common topics of discussion in the US when the Arab world is the topic on the table).

The CAC is always seeking creative ways to add new programming and to build their audiences. I participated in these efforts during the Fall 2013 and Spring 2014 semesters, through an internship program called "CSEF" that was funded through the Creative Economy Fund. This internship program was run through the Honors College at UMass Boston, and employed 9 Honors College students at internships located at three Boston-area arts community organizations. Through CSEF, I worked at CAC along with 2 other Honors College interns to survey patrons about desired programming, create a membership model, establish a

sustainable internship program, pilot a newsletter, organize a day-long Open House event, and generate new marketing ideas.

All 9 interns spent six weeks during the Fall 2013 semester engaging in skill-building workshops, readings, presentations, and writing assignments that prepared us for working with an arts-related community organization. Over the second half of the semester, our team of 3 interns began working with Gheed Itani, the Director of CAC, and Alma Richeh, the Program Coordinator of CAC, to identify what project we could develop a written proposal for, in order to obtain a mini-grant funded through CSEF, and thus ultimately by the Creative Economy Fund.

In the Spring 2014 semester, we implemented the efforts described above. Our efforts with the CAC will hopefully create a lasting impact on this organization for years to come. In previous years, the organization discussed the possibility of a membership plan, but the members of the board had been hesitant to approve the implementation of this idea in its early stages. Within the year of our internship, we established a membership model that we helped present to the Board for approval. We then helped the CAC launch their membership program at their Spring Fling Open House event in May. Additionally we created a promotional video that can be used for promoting the membership program in the future. The description of membership perks and how to become a member can now be found on the CAC website (<http://centerforarabicculture.wordpress.com/>).

Additionally, we wanted the CAC to have access to young, college-aged students, much like ourselves, over a longer term, for whenever the CAC staff needed extra help or an external or college students perspective after our year-long internship ended. To this end, we established an unpaid internship, through which college credit could be earned. Before the end of our internship, two new interns were already in place and ready to assist the CAC as needed.

My focus during the second semester was on generating new ideas for CAC's marketing efforts. I analyzed their social media page and used Facebook Insights to recommend strategies for changes that would attract the most interest and buzz. We used some of our funds to purchase a digital camera to take high-resolution photos at events. Additionally, we purchased Google Ad Words to promote the Open House event. A central part of my efforts was to film and edit a promotional video for CAC, which displayed some of the programming CAC offers. This video was posted to YouTube in June 2014 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aq9L4WDkzp0>).

Oftentimes, non-profits are hesitant to adopt a full-fledged marketing effort due to its association with for-profit organizations and businesses, and due to the cost and time that effective marketing efforts require. However, any organization trying to attract interest from the public needs to adopt some means of marketing.

Social media marketing can overcome these challenges with non-profit marketing, because these strategies are free for baseline efforts, low-cost if you choose to boost your advertisement for a small dollar amount per day, and accessible by everyone (from a range of age, gender, and ethnic demographics) who has at least one social media account. A large fraction of the US population has access to the internet from a cell phone through their social



media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.), and thus they don't have to live in a specific region, or be driving on a specific road where a billboard ad is placed, in order to see advertisements.

We compiled a list of social media marketing recommendations for CAC that are free and will give the organization the most online visibility and engagement with their audience. Some of the tips we included were:

- Posting everyday
- Keeping posts concise and direct
- Including photos in posts, as CAC followers are most attracted to photo postings
- Avoiding post that only contain links, or very long status updates, as CAC followers view these less often

Using social media analytical data to optimize marketing practices is invaluable for organizations, as social media is the present and future of marketing, and it is currently how most of the US population stays connected and obtains information.

### **Discussion: Evaluating the successes of projects funded by the CE Fund**

The internship program that allowed me to work with the Center for Arabic Culture in Somerville was itself funded by the Creative Economy Fund, from the UMass President's Office. Thus, this past year, I had the invaluable personal experience of being a part of a CE-funded project. During this particular CE-funded project, the Honors College staff encouraged us to gather plenty of numerical data as part of our efforts to evaluate both how well-received our efforts might be by the patrons of the organization (before beginning our work), and how well we were achieving our goals (during and after our work).

I believe it is important to be flexible in terms of how success is measured, when documenting the successes of CE-funded projects. Our project happened to lend itself to reasonably clear and straightforward means of data collection. Before we began our project, we surveyed survey patrons about desired programming, and their potential responses to establishing a membership model. Their responses informed decisions we made throughout the implementation of our project. During and after our project, we measured success by tracking numerical data such as:

- Number of members joined, and levels of memberships purchased
- Number of attendees and donations at the Open House event
- Number of people who opened and read the pilot newsletter about this membership program and Open House event
- Number of interns who applied and were accepted into the sustainable internship program
- Numbers of CAC followers who viewed and shared posts to the CAC Facebook and Twitter pages

For most projects, numerical outputs such as these can and should be tracked, as they inform future programming decisions, and also allow cases to be made to future potential funders and donors. But many outputs of the work of arts-related community organizations are not so easy to measure. For instance, some projects (like Farrant's "Moveable Walls" project) have very personal goals, and call on civic engagement for successful completion. Though Farrant could track the number of copies of his book that were distributed and sold, it is much harder for him to measure how much it meant to the youth participating in his program to have their stories and murals be published through this book. Having a written component like *The Big Move* to accompany the artwork and stories is crucial to CE work, because it serves as academic literature on the project, making it more powerful. Additionally, sustaining projects by renewing grants or seed grants is critical to gaining visibility within the community and traction in achieving project goals and new goals that arise from the experiences. I believe that flexibility in how success is measure for each project is one of the great benefits of the CE Fund.

In a creative economy, I learned from interviewing the PIs of the aforementioned CE-funded grants that there isn't always an easy way to measure success. Just as one example, it is incredibly challenging to determine how many jobs were created from the work done in any one project. In addition, the value of having the creative economy is exceptionally hard to measure, as it lies in the human experience that it may grant to a group of people or an individual. Thus many of the CE-funded projects centered more on finding ways to engage members of the community in a positive manner, than on accumulating numerical data. For example, Farrant and Hwang's projects gave people both the time and space to tell their personal stories and feel empowered by having a voice through art. By Farrant and Hwang's work could affect a person's outlook on what their community can offer to them and what they can contribute to a community. As Jenkins pointed out in our interview, there is no sense of community without civic engagement. Many times the effects of that engagement are mostly found via qualitative measures of success.

Notably, quantitative data is critical because these data allow each PI to measure, compare, project, and communicate statistical outcomes for each CE-funded project. Numerical data are continually being stressed to higher and higher levels, especially by potential donors – be they individuals, government agencies, private foundations, or corporate foundations. Whether you're measuring the number of participants from one year to the next, or how much revenue an arts-related event can generate, tracking those numbers is more important than ever. When working with institutions such as banks and other lenders or departments in the city government, it is often not sufficient to only present qualitative data, especially if you are seeking investments and support for your creative economies from those institutions. In other economy sectors (other than creative economies), it may be easier to measure and track quantitative outcomes, and actually be able to say "X number of dollars was generated through this program." The creative economy sector needs to be able to compete for funding in order to survive, and thus it must continue to make efforts to rise to the challenge of tracking and communicating these much needed forms of quantitative data.

## Conclusion

People have made art to tell their stories for thousands of years. I think that – when there is a demand for art, and a need for an arts community, and enough people supporting the idea – then the Creative Economy Fund can greatly benefit these communities. Without the urgency for a creative economy and artists wanting to be in a space, the CE Fund alone cannot bring artists and buzz to an area. The CE Fund cannot be the only impetus for revitalization of arts in an industrialized area, as there has to be something already there in the area that appeals to artists and provides a greater sense of community. There needs to be supporters, risk takers and investors already in the area, who are willing to take a chance on adding something different to the community. When those factors are in place, then a CE-funded project can make a significant difference in a community, as is evidenced by the four projects described above in this work.

I think that one main challenge of initiating a CE-funded project in an industrial area is not knowing in advance if the people within the community (i.e. those who are not a part of the targeted art market) will take advantage of whatever investment is created by that project. It is possible that there won't be enough risk takers in the area who are willing to make the moves necessary to substantially change or add to a community. More conservative residents may tend to think of businesses as trying to fulfill known needs, that are more concrete than those fulfilled by arts-related businesses. To this end, surveying local residents before the start of a CE-funded project is an excellent way of obtaining ideas of what may or may not work in a given community, before the project is initiated.

Universities (and therefore the CE Fund) should have a role in CE development projects because they have access to funds and can recruit the participation of students with fresh ideas and enthusiasm for the arts. Recruiting students is important because they have more time in their schedules to volunteer than the average working adult. Access to college-aged adults who want to learn and gain real-world experience makes the role of a university unique in CE projects. Additionally, the subject of the creative economy is wide enough to appeal to students with various liberal arts or social sciences majors, or anyone interested in the arts. This increases the likelihood for a university to find enthusiastic and motivated applicants who want to contribute to CE projects.

The challenging part of university involvement in this type of work is that it requires as much dedication from participating faculty members and mentors, as it does of the students. Everyone involved commits to taking on more work, in addition to their regular schedules, and often they have to make sacrifices in their regular schedules to accomplish CE work.

Public universities should have an obligation to CE work since these are usually very diverse schools (as compared to private universities), and both the CE and public universities stress the importance of serving diverse communities. In addition, it is beneficial to students at public

universities to have as many community internship and experience opportunities as possible before entering the real world. The connections that students can make from working in the CE are invaluable, and the work experiences they gain from interning at CE organizations provide rewarding learning experiences for all involved.

It is clear that creative economies don't simply appear out of nowhere. Local residents, whether they be artists or immigrants or students, have stories that can enrich a community and can teach each other new things. Creative economies begin with communities (even the smallest communities) that decide they want to do something to invigorate and expand their community using the universal language of art. Based on my research into those CE Fund projects that have focused on using arts to revitalize post-industrial cities, I believe that CE Funds can be an invaluable resource for communities that desire this sort of impactful and meaningful change.

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