Creatives' expectations: The role of supercreatives in cultural district development

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A B S T R A C T

In examining the goal of incorporating arts and culture into urban planning, district development and the creation of cultural destinations in cities today, an important element to consider is the role of the so-called “supercreatives,” who are a core part of the creative class. Gaining an understanding of the motivations, expectations, and underlying issues pertaining to these producers of arts and culture – who also may be consumers of creative outputs – can provide a window of opportunity through which to attain valuable perspectives on livability, policy development, and city building.

This paper uses data from a survey of 350 attendees at an arts and music festival in a burgeoning arts district in Columbus, Ohio called Franklinton. The area, once a floundering and financially challenged neighborhood, has begun to re-develop and is in transition in large part because of municipal and community-led efforts focused on attracting the creative community and those who follow them. The study looks at what respondents feel will make an arts district successful. An unexpected finding from this study was that the predominance of respondents fell into the class of “supercreatives,” thus giving a very different meaning to the findings, which can importantly inform policy and planning for cultural destinations in urban centers.

We find that aspects including a creative focus, walkability, and safety are the key elements that must be included. In addition, the findings show that, while the creative community needs to be involved in the fostering of an arts district, leadership of these initiatives should come primarily from politicians, arts managers, residents, policymakers, businesses, and researchers.

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1. Introduction

Many of the municipally developed frameworks for planning for arts and culture districts, destinations and amenities make recommendations as to who should be included as stakeholders in the planning process. The assumption is that stakeholders are able to speak for segments of the population affected by this planning process. Among these groups are the creators of arts and culture, who are a central part of the so-called “creative class.” Richard Florida postied the creative class theory in the early 2000s. The concept of the creative class is an outgrowth of Florida’s investigation into shift from industrial models of production to a more knowledge-based workforce (Florida, 2002a). A synthesis of ideas about economic development theory, economic geography, political economy, and social science together inspired the idea of a new way of understanding this economic, social, and workforce-based paradigm (Florida, 2014). Florida dubbed this the “creative class”.

Aggregating seemingly disparate categories such as law, engineering, finance, and medicine with design, media, entertainment, and architecture – not to mention what Florida calls the “supercreatives”, actors, dancers, poets, and university professors – seemed to include just about everyone with the exception of politicians, industrial workers, and the service class. Within this core of supercreatives lie the “makers; those who traditionally have been thought of as artists, such as painters, sculptors, dancers, actors, designers, architects, videomakers and filmmakers, among others. While Florida’s concept of the creative class includes a wide range of workers within the knowledge economy, it is the cultural producers, or supercreatives, who form the inner circle of this new class.

It is these key individuals who deliberately or unknowingly have fostered the highly observed and well-documented transformation of many downtown areas, some of which were formerly derelict neighborhoods. The core creative producers then have served to attract the outer rings of the creative class, including businesses fostered to serve them such as galleries and cafes, which then in turn draw in tourists and residents to these areas, which subsequently gained the “cool factor” (Agnew, 2016). This paper looks at the supercreatives and what they
desire in a neighborhood, touches upon the market for their outputs, and discusses the development of arts districts and what cities can do to foster cultural districts and creative destinations.

In order to contribute to this discussion and in connection with a burgeoning arts district in a mid-sized city, we entered an exploratory, descriptive study. Our overarching question was, what are the expectations and hopes of supercreatives related to information needed for planning in an arts district? We chose to explore this question at a festival called the Independents Day Festival, which was hosted in the neighborhood. Specifically, we asked the following questions:

- What is their role in relationship to the creative community?
- What is their role in relationship to the community?

- What do those attending desire for the city?
- What do respondents see as desirable characteristics of a creative community?
- What are the important elements of the community to these respondents?
- What is the perceived balance of the arts held by the respondents?

- How should the work for the community move forward?

As a way to examine and interpret the data from this survey, we use a conceptual framework developed for this study as an underlying guide (see Appendix A). We conducted a survey of attendees at an arts festival in an emergent creative community that desires to implement a plan to remain a creative neighborhood. We looked at broad areas of response material and noted that the data could be aggregated into the following two areas: first, the perception of arts and culture by respondents, and attitudes about city life; and second, their views on the role of the State as well as opinions on arts and culture in economic development.

We looked for both similarities and differences within the responses given by residents of and visitors to Independents Day Festival in Columbus, Ohio. Knowing that these data represented only the opinions and thoughts of survey respondents, we wished to gain an initial understanding of how these individuals viewed these issues.

1.1. The original goal of the study and the subsequent findings

This study began as an investigation into the demand side of visitors to arts communities. However, one of the findings that jumped out led us to reconsider what this study could be suggesting, and the subsequent contribution it could make. Indeed, these findings led us to reshape our whole approach. This is significant because these districts often have developed in a kind of "naturally occurring" or organically clustering manner. However, if municipal actors want to deliberately foster an arts district, especially one in which social good and economic benefit were twin goals, these findings would be valuable in making decisions about moving forward (Stern & Seifert, 2007). We will present a framework for understanding the role of supercreatives in fostering arts districts and cultural destinations, examine the aspects of a community these supercreatives desire, and explore what they see as the needs for an arts planning process.

2. The idea of the creative class: from local to global

Florida’s creative class theory incorporated the philosophy of Jane Jacobs (1961), wherein human scale, people-centric planning, and the aggregation both of residents and businesses in a more community-centric way, were paramount. This thinking of Florida’s had as its primary foci cities, issues of clustering, and the expansion of the concepts of economic development to include the human dimensions of cities, as well as economic ones. In addition, Florida (2002b) put forward the concept of the Bohemian Index, wherein he sought to connect the presence of clusters of bohemians with subsequent economic and social capital impacts, especially in urban areas. His work in this area looked for, “the connection between cultural assets, human capital and innovative industries” (ibid).

The idea of bohemians in this context meant creative individuals, specifically those designations for the 1990 US Census data, which included the following occupational categories: authors, designers; musicians and composers; actors and directors; craft-artists, painters, sculptors and artist printmakers; photographers; dancers; and artists performers and related workers (2002b). This research found a strong correlation between high concentrations of bohemians and that of high-technology industries, which Florida interpreted as signaling that the presence of bohemians could be thought of as creating the kind of milieu within which innovative productivity could flourish. Additional factors he found that indicated a creative climate included a strong presence of LGBT community members, as well as a higher educational level than that of the general population.

In his subsequent work developing the creative class theory, Florida embraced the idea of creativity as a driver, rather than focusing on economic prosperity as the fruit solely of physical labor or manufacturing. This concept of creativity as a growth engine led him to look more closely at cities as places where this ‘creativity engine’ would flourish. Putting a stake in the ground, Florida categorized this creative class as consisting of, “jobs in knowledge-intensive industries that involve the production of new ideas and products, or that engage in creative problem-solving” (Florida, 2014). This sector of the US workforce accounts for 41 million individuals, and makes up a third of all US workers, with half of its wages and salaries.

The subsequent study of urban areas as magnets for this gargantuan sector of any population has resulted in a plethora of research, scholarly writing and popular literature. In the United States, the US Department of Agriculture has designated a census track county code called the creative class, a development that could be seen as the entrenchment of Florida’s concept within the policy lexicon. Now that creative class theory is embedded in mainstream thinking about municipal economic development, cultural and city planning, community building, and urban development worldwide, a more nuanced focus on the specific ways that this concept can be implemented and leveraged is both timely and necessary.

2.1. What do supercreatives want? Hard and soft factors for livability

In developing an understanding of what attracts these core members of the creative class to locate in certain neighborhoods or districts, it is important to consider the role of both hard and soft factors. This is essential in establishing an understanding of the conditions that motivate this segment of the creative class to consider living and working in an area, since the presence of these knowledge workers often can play a role in the competitiveness of cities (Musterd & Murie, 2010a, p. 7). Soft factors are thought to be a kind of creative atmosphere, incorporating a cool factor, the buzz of a neighborhood, and its overall “hipness” or bohemian aspect (Crossa, Pareja-Eastaway & Barber, 2010; Murphy & Redmond, 2009). Soft factors also include the proximity to amenities including shops, restaurants, cafés, and other aspects of urban livability.

In the creative city context, tangible and intangible factors that contribute to quality of life are thought to be included in the soft factor consideration. These comprise amenities such as cultural facilities, temporal arts events, and exhibition spaces, as well as entertainment facilities, movie theaters, and dining establishments (Murphy & Redmond, 2009). Additionally, some of the factors that led Florida to delineate the role of tolerance in cities can be found in a discussion of soft factors. These would incorporate openness to diverse income levels as well as to religious and sexual beliefs in addition to an attitude of inclusion regarding minority and immigrant populations.

While some of these factors may be intangible, they can provide a magnet for facets of the creative class who wish to cluster together in...
neighbors, often regardless of somewhat challenging “hard” factors. Hard factors, well known in classic location theory, have more to do with the manifestation of aspects of life in a city such as housing, transportation, and access to municipal services making livability economically feasible; in this case, to creative knowledge workers (Mustert & Murie, 2010b, p. 20). Within the hard factor lexicon, government provision of social programs and access to healthcare are among the parameters that would make a city attractive to creative sector workers. Hard factors also include the presence of and access to educational institutions, especially those of higher learning, and research has shown that cities with higher concentrations of educated workers have a competitive advantage (Glaeser & Saiz, 2003). However, some may consider the availability of educational facilities to be both a hard and soft factor, as the cultural amenities often found in university districts can magnify the ‘coolness quotient’ of an urban center (Mustert & Murie, 2010b, p. 21).

When city planners, policymakers, developers, and other stakeholders align to strategize on the formation and sustaining of arts districts and cultural destinations, it is important to take into account both the basic livability factors and those that enhance the urban experience. While the development of a market for consumers, tourists, and resident ‘cultural staycationers’ is critical, so are considerations regarding the optimal balance of hard and soft factors to attract and retain members of the creative class. These individuals, small businesses, arts organizations, anchor institutions, and larger enterprises such as the film and music production industries often represent a different way of valuing the importance of the experience of the ‘coolness factor’ as an amenity.

It is the visible results of the agglomeration of creatives from a variety of media and sectors that distinguishes a living or working arts/culture milieu. This is very hard to orchestrate, and often is the result of a kind of ‘naturally occurring’ process, wherein early adopters put down stakes in a neighborhood, whether for business or residential purposes. As noted by Stern and Seifert (2008), the organically-fostered presence of supercreatives as residents, business owners, or renters or owners of studio space, together with the amenities that follow these early adopters, has been shown to lower crime rates and boost the income within neighborhoods, especially in areas with minimal development activity.

These authors posit that the idea of a ‘naturally occurring’ cultural district actually may be understood as one where supercreatives and those that want to live and work near them agglomerate organically. Subsequent efforts and strategies created by municipal actors constitute a deliberate planning process, in contrast to that kind of early cluster formation (Stern & Seifert, 2010). The cycle that follows these pioneers can tell us about the mix of hard and soft factors, with scholars, planners and policymakers studying the ways that creative districts evolve and function successfully, and what balance of factors contributes to their sustainability.

3. Cultural district development: a place for creativity

Clustering is a key identifier within the creative class concept. This focus on place as an important anchor to creativity has turned global attention towards creative city concepts and interventions. Among these is the development of cultural districts and arts destinations, as well as the fostering of cultural tourism (Evans, 2009; Markusen, 2009). Often housed in the municipalities, strategies for what has become known as ‘creative placemaking’ have been taken up by cities large and small (Redaelli, 2016). What city would not want to be thought of as the host for creatives and their outputs? The deliberate use of place-based municipal options such as the adaptive reuse of city-owned buildings, rezoning, tax incentives and other tools has inspired developers, arts intermediaries and members of the creative class to flock to culturally-driven urban areas. Many of these actors have worked to transform formerly decrepit city centers into magnets for cultural consumption, live-work districts and sites for temporal events such as festivals and fairs.

3.1. Creative districts: planned and unplanned

The concept of the creative city has traveled the globe in a rapid and multifaceted way, often through the channels of policy boosters seeking to brand their cities as cultural hubs in order to attract visitors and promote business development, as well as to retain residents (McCann, 2013). Among the options available to municipal planners interested in enhancing cultural offerings are festivals and fairs, in addition to the deliberate development of arts districts. While the festivals are temporal events, enhancing the growth of cultural built environment options including live-work spaces, museums and galleries and performance venues can draw younger audiences, attract international visitors, and become magnets for the creative class (Goldberg-Miller, 2017).

The idea of the ‘naturally occurring’ cultural district is that of places where cultural producers gather, drawing in those that wish to be near them and fostering the agglomeration of creatives and consumers in clustered proximity (Zukin & Brslow, 2011). Examples of this phenomenon include New York City’s SoHo neighborhood, Beijing’s 798 Arts District, Kreuzberg in Berlin, and the Temple Bar district in Dublin. The unplanned character of these places has taken on a starring role in the fostering of strategic policy initiatives that purport to facilitate the creation of seemingly organic arts neighborhoods, often to the dismay of the original creative class and minority residents (Dean & Higgins, 2011). Many cities have taken up the concept of deliberately developed cultural placemaking, or the utilization of arts and culture options in enhancing urban livability and cityscapes (Peck, 2012). This has occurred primarily in urban core areas, with the goal being the regeneration of decrepit city neighborhoods (McCann, 2007). However, challenges to the sustainability of these endeavors may include the marginalization and displacement of residents, a lack of community participation, and the failure of the reimagined ‘creative core’ to produce a totally transformed downtown district (Catungal & Leslie, 2009).

Urban areas can begin the process of producing a municipally-fostered cultural plan, which would involve a number of stakeholder partners from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors working together to envision the role of arts and culture in a multifaceted, long-range strategic plan. Planned cultural districts can be developed by neighborhood planning entities, and while they do involve city actors, this kind of process can lead to deeper engagement on the community level. These often are the result of a coalition of interested parties from the three sectors who are focusing on a local trajectory, with immediate goals and a shorter timeframe in which to realize success.

4. Consuming creativity: the market for creative outputs

Consumers worldwide take up cultural options including temporal events, the products of the for-profit cultural industries, and the numerous opportunities offered by nonprofit arts and cultural organizations. Cultural economics looks at the choices made in developing and encouraging the global consumption of these good and services (Tows & Khakee, 2012), as well as ways that the supply side growth of designated and naturally occurring clusters of creative producers can impact cities and regions (Uyarra & Ramlogan, 2012). Recognition of the power of the creative economy has grown, with scholars analyzing both the supply and demand sides of cultural economics (Throsby, 2010), examining consumer tastes, demand for cultural goods and services, and the consumption of creative outputs (Frey, 2013; Levy-Garbouna & Montmarquette, 2002).

The choices made by individuals reflect both their knowledge of available options and the satisfaction garnered through the consumption of these offerings. Throsby (2010) acknowledges the non-rational qualities of cultural consumption, specifically the way that the public’s taste for artistic production may be difficult to measure and quantify. According to Scott (2004), the cultural consumer has a unique relationship with the producers of creative outputs and the goods and services themselves, and the commodification of culture in light of greater
globalization within the creative economy may lead to a dilution and homogenization of offerings. Often, cultural creators attempt to influence as well as predict and respond to the tastes of customers (Scott, 2000). Consumers may identify with a city or region as the locus of creativity, and find themselves visiting or living there as a result of a cycle of regeneration and enhanced brand development, wherein a core community value may reflect an arts and culture-based image (Hackworth & Smith, 2000).

In looking at the role of arts and culture as a factor in enhancing quality of life, issues include ensuring community-based participation, stakeholder involvement, and recognition of the broad scope and interpretation of the offerings resulting from creative expression (Jackson et al., 2003). Cities and regions benefit from the opportunities for residents and visitors to consume culture, and may find that a healthy artistic community serves as a draw for new residents and an amenity for locals while benefitting the business sector in multiple ways (Markusen & King, 2003).

Fostering the consumption of arts and culture means recognizing community norms and values and offering a wide range of options for participation on multiple levels, often within a public good context (Andrew & Spoehr, 2011). This points to the availability of options to consume without barriers to access, which might include factors such as cost of attendance, location of amenity, or feelings of exclusion. Community members feel they are not welcomed or are unable to afford cultural options in their own neighborhoods (Peck, 2012). Especially in urban areas, residents may view these options as having been created for consumption by visitors from suburban areas or out-of-town visitors (Eisinger, 2000).

A key aspect of building demand for arts and culture is the area of tourism, including national and international visitors as well as local residents. Gross (2008) points out that research on the demand side of tourism often has failed to take into consideration the entire spectrum of tourists when investigating decisions made about take-up of cultural offerings. This may include visitors from the home country, tourists unable to afford the more expensive amenities, and those international visitors wishing for a more authentic experience of vernacular culture when visiting an urban area. This suggests that there is an area of tourism demand that may focus on community-based cultural offerings rather than those that are centralized and publicized. In addition, looking at the largely unmeasured area of demand by residents for local cultural amenities can provide an opportunity to examine the ‘cultural staycation,’ wherein city residents wish to explore creative options available in their own backyards.

5. Understanding Franklinton: the home of Independents Day Festival

5.1. Franklinton – the dream of a cultural district

This study is of the re-establishing, inner-city neighborhood of Franklinton in Columbus (see Fig. 1). The Franklinton neighborhood in Columbus has a storied past. One of the first areas to be settled in the region, Franklinton was founded by Lucas Sullivant on the easternmost edge of the Great Prairie facing the area that later would be identified as the location for the state capitol of Ohio, the city of Columbus. Franklinton is east of the Olentangy River, and is bounded by a highway and another river, the Scioto. Located on a floodplain, the neighborhood was colloquially called “the Bottoms” in reference to its geographic location, as well as to what became a tremendously economically-challenged population. Subsequent to the establishment of home ownership in the neighborhood in the early 1800s, industrialization caused the neighborhood to flourish, but frequent and severe floods continued to deluge the district. After two major floods in the early and mid-1900s, the area was declared a floodplain, causing a diminishment of construction in the area. In the eastern part of this locale, fewer and fewer residents remained. At the start of the 2000s, only a few hundred people remained as residents in this neighborhood, which boasts an unobstructed view of Columbus’s downtown.

After a tremendous influx of attention and funding by government agencies, the East Franklinton neighborhood began a revitalization, in large part due to the shoring up of the riverbanks with the intention of preventing the devastating floods that had occurred in the last century. This left a neighborhood without neighbors, as the East Franklinton section of the area was almost abandoned population-wise, but had building stock and easy access to Columbus’s downtown as well as its highways leading to other neighborhoods. The Franklinton Development Association, which was created to deal with issues of concern in the western part of Franklinton, including poverty, crime, health issues, and low levels of education, became the locus of the vision to revitalize this eastern part of the Franklinton neighborhood. An example of the trend towards creative placemaking, this neighborhood began the journey towards regeneration (Nicodemus, 2013).

The combination of the development of the Franklinton arts district and the creation of an urban plan for East Franklinton spurred the influx of attention to and interest in this potentially exciting neighborhood. In the mid-to late 2000s, Alex Bandar, founder of a makerspace called the Columbus Idea Foundry, entered into a unique relationship with the Franklinton Development Corporation just after his for-profit company relocated to a large abandoned warehouse in the heart of East Franklinton. Through a major grant from ArtPlace America, a consortium of foundations and financial institutions dedicated to revitalizing America’s neighborhoods through creative placemaking, the Columbus Idea Foundry was able to build out the first floor of this enormous warehouse into the largest makerspace in the world. This brought tremendous attention, publicity, and excitement to this burgeoning district.

The artists’ venue in Franklinton called 400 West Rich is a building that was bought by a speculative developer and turned into artists’ studios. It is the other anchor cultural institution in the neighborhood. A restaurant located in this building, together with a brewery and another bar in the vicinity, brought nightlife to the area. Soon other arts groups began to locate themselves in this semi-desolate neighborhood, creating the kind of arts and culture cauldron whose formation has been noted by numerous scholars (Florida, 2002a; Currid 2007; Markusen, 2006). What was unique about this section of Franklinton, though, was that there were very few residents to displace. This is the stage setting for the growth and prominence of the Independents Day Festival.

5.2. The Independents Day Festival

The Independents Day Festival, the site for this research, is based currently in Franklinton. The festival was created in 2008, with the goal of providing an opportunity for independent and largely unaffiliated musicians and artists of Columbus to gather and celebrate culture. It began in a downtown location called the Gay Street area, and moved to East Franklinton in 2014. The two-day festival is a mix of live performances, local crafts and arts, and locally-sourced food and beverages (see Fig. 2).

In addition, festivalgoers are able to walk through 400 West Rich, the large artists’ loft-style building. This building, the home to several hundred artists’ studios and workspaces, provides a mix of indoor and outdoor experiences for attendees at the festival. More than 300 volunteers work to present over 100 live musical performances throughout the two days. According to former Columbus Mayor Michael Coleman, “I can’t wait to see what happens when they throw an event bringing together thousands of Columbus’ creative minds in Franklinton” (Keeffe, 2014).

6. Methodology: understanding the producers of Arts & Culture

This was an exploratory, descriptive study using a paper and pencil questionnaire with a convenience sample of adults over 18 attending the Independents Day Festival in Franklinton on September 19 & 20, 2015. The study had a total of 350 respondents.
6.1. Survey instrument

In developing the survey instrument, we utilized research done for the development of a survey on opinions about the role of arts and culture in cities, conducted for the Rockefeller Foundation as a part of a larger study looking at a broader research question about how arts and culture gained a foothold on municipal economic development agendas, which used a conceptual framework grounded in Multiple Stream’s agenda setting theory (Goldberg, 2012; Goldberg-Miller, 2015; Kingdon, 2011). This particular area of concern—focusing on the role of arts and culture in cities—drew upon extant surveys that investigated the opinions of residents throughout the world on a number of key issues relevant to this research, such as those relating both to attitudes on and consumption of arts and culture as well as issues on quality of life (Arts Council of Northern Ireland, 2007; City of Phoenix, 2008; City of Toronto, 2008; Creative Trust for Arts and Culture, 2011; Metropolitan Philadelphia Indicators Project, 2005; Munich Personal RePEc Archive, 2007; Municipal Arts Society in New York City, 2010; National Endowment for the Arts, 1993; Ontario Arts Council, 2010; Plaut, Markus & Lachman, 2002; Urban Institute, 2003; Urban Institute, 2002).

6.2. Instrumentation

The paper instrument included a cover page and an introduction to the study. In the introduction, the respondent was given the context for the study and specifically, some key definitions:

"In this questionnaire, we define “arts and culture” as all creative outputs including visual, musical, theatre, media, design and dance arts. The creative economy is a powerful engine of growth and community vitality. Together, artists, cultural nonprofits, and creative businesses produce and distribute cultural goods and services that generate jobs, revenue, and quality of life.”

The first scale included 12 items in a 7-point, Likert-type scale asking about agreement on desires for the community. Following this,
Fig. 2. Independents Day Festival Map.
participants were given parallel measures of 14 items asking them to select on the left the three most important, and on the right the three least important of the elements of a creative community based on the literature described above.

Respondents were asked to identify their dominant relationship with the arts, followed by primary and secondary (if any) roles in the Franklinton area. They were provided with another 7-point rank-item scale asking how much more or less of each of eight arts the individual believes is desirable for the community. The final scale (7-point rank-item) asked about ten roles (e.g. researchers, politicians, artists), which are all important in the implementation of a cultural plan, and asked how important each role was for community's future. Finally, selected demographics (age cluster, educational level, household income, gender, and intentions to spend money) were asked.

Attendees to the festival were approached using focal sampling with continual ask (a common approach to approximate representative sample in museums and informal settings, [Hines, 2002]), had the study explained to them (purpose, who is conducting it, what is expected from participation, and options for withdrawal), and then invited to participate. If they accepted the invitation, the individuals were given a clipboard with attached pen and a paper questionnaire (4.25 x 5.5” folded booklet). Average time for completion was below 7 min.

Data were entered into an Excel spreadsheet, then transferred into the current version of SPSS. Analysis was primarily descriptive (central tendencies) with some relational analysis (correlations). Using post-hoc, non-parametric measures, the scale on what Franklinton should be had a reliability of 0.854 (Cronbach’s) and the scale on elements of the arts to be fostered was R = 0.878.

7. Findings

7.1. Who responded?

On several dimensions, the 350 respondents were very close to mirroring the larger city (see Fig. 3). The median household income for the city was consistent with the range response in which the median lay ($50,074); the percent of LGBT was slightly higher in respondents than in the city; and the proportion of college-educated respondents was much greater than the city's mean. Both of these discrepancies are part of what Florida suggests are indicators on the Bohemian Index (2002b).

Respondents entered expecting to spend nothing to over $3000, (x = $40) with tri-modality as the dominant mode was $50.00 with secondary modes falling at $20.00 and $100.00. As most of the respondents did not provide data for race, those questions were not analyzed.

Respondents were asked about their ‘role’ in the Franklinton area. Although asked to select one, there were over 400 responses, indicating that some people did not see a single role as dominant. Of these 428 responses, however, three roles subsumed almost all respondents led by 219 who self-identified as a creator/creative (left open to interpretation of any art or media), 135 stated commercial, and 55 identified with a museum. All others were negligible (below 2% with most below 1%). These roles and the secondary roles are compared in Fig. 4.

These data suggest the respondents to this questionnaire are heavily invested in the creative economy. In summary, the population responding was primarily millennial and Gen Xers, college graduates, of slightly higher income than the general public, and members of the creative community.

7.2. What do respondents see as desirable characteristics of a creative community?

For the study, it was important to understand the characteristics that the respondents felt were desirable in this creative community. Of the twelve characteristics identified in the literature (Goldberg, 2012), only one, an upscale community, had a slightly negative mean of 3.51 (on a 7 point scale) with a slightly elevated standard deviation of 1.718, though further analysis did not reveal multi-modality. All other characteristics had positive scores in terms of desirability with normal deviations (1.00–1.50). Respondents had the strongest agreement for Franklinton to be artsy, followed by walkable and safe with means above 6.0 (x = 6.23, 6.11, and 6.01 respectively), then a funky part of town (x = 5.95), and a clean community (x = 5.94).

The neighborhood should be a desirable place to live, a desirable place to work, and an historic neighborhood (x = 5.67, 5.56, 5.37). It would appear that the respondents from the Independents’ Day Festival want Franklinton to have the characteristics of a creative community, and to maintain the character associated with that.

In examining the relationships among these items, there were many statistically significant internal correlations (p = 0.000). Because of the number, a decision was made to examine the correlations that had magnitude of greater than 0.4 (moderately strong). In doing so, five items were inter-correlated: a desirable place to live; a desirable place to work; a walkable community; a safe community; and a clean community. Table 1 shows the strength of these correlations. In any community, being clean, feeling safe, and being walkable are traits of a desirable place to live and work. These findings also reveal that livable and work, and clean and safe are generally seen by respondents as paired.

There were only two other correlations of moderately strong strength or greater: a funky part of town and an artsy part of town had a very strong correlation of r = 0.737; and an upscale community and an historic community had a moderately-strong correlation of r = 0.409.

In looking at those identifying their role as creator/creative versus a museum employee, there was only one item of significant difference: an ANOVA revealed a difference between groups on the item of “a safe community” (F = 5.843, p = 0.016). Therefore, the decision was made to include both categories in the definition of “Creator/creative.” Many respondents identified with more than one primary role, and the largest paring of roles was between Creator/creative and Commercial business. An ANOVA was run to compare those who responded only as a Creator/creative and those who responded with both Creator/creative and Commercial business to determine if they should be analyzed separately. There was only one item of statistically significant difference, “An historic district” (F = 6.698, p = 0.016). The decision was made to include Creator/creative, Museum employee, and Creator/creative with Commercial business for comparison to other roles.

Comparing this combined Creator/creative role against all others, there were statistically significant differences in Franklinton being “A desirable place to work” (F = 5.406, p = 0.022), “A clean community” (F = 4.622, p = 0.034), “A busy center for the city” (F = 5.173, p = 0.025), and “A tourist area” (F = 8.556, p = 0.004). The combined Creator/creative role is less likely to want Franklinton to be a busy place or a tourist area and more likely to want it to be a desirable place to work and a busy center for the city, indicating that they don’t want it to be
oversaturated as a tourist area, but they want it to be a vital and lively neighborhood.

7.3. What are the important elements of the community?

Respondents were given two identical lists of structures or assets associated with creative communities and asked to identify in the first list, the three they believe are most important, and for the second, the three they believe are the least important. The strongest agreement on importance was for low-cost creative studio space (46.7% of respondents identified it as one of the top 3) followed by low-cost residential housing (41.5%). Craft food and beverage establishments, places to gather, and green spaces all had over 25% of respondents identify them as important. For those considered least important, places to gather were considered the least important selected by 41.3%. Green spaces and retail businesses for products created within the area were fairly close behind, with high end residential housing being the only other element with more than 10% of respondents choosing them.

In comparing the Creator/creatives with all other respondents (using the above reconfiguration), a majority of both groups feel low-cost residential housing is the most important element, and festivals are the least important element. Beyond those two, there are mixed perceptions of importance between the two groups. Creative, low-cost studio space, as expected, was more important for the creatives, but surprisingly, so too was craft food and beverage. Festivals were more important for the ‘non-creatives’ and green spaces were more important for the Creator/creatives.

Both groups shared the same five least important elements, although in differing order (see Table 2). Overall, the two groups of cultural consumers at the festival are very similar in what they put as important and not important, and these findings are consistent with the rankings and correlations with what they see as desirable characteristics of a creative community.

7.4. What is the perceived balance of the arts?

Participants were asked how much more or less differing arts should be fostered in Franklinton. All the arts were skewed to having more, although none were particularly strong as means were fairly uniform with the lowest for media arts (̄x = 4.99) and the highest being architecture (̄x = 5.18). Following architecture, the greatest agreement was with crafts (̄x = 5.19), and then design (̄x = 5.15) and visual arts (̄x = 5.15). Of these, only design had a slightly inflated standard deviation (1.970), which would suggest a greater discrepancy among respondents; all other items in this scale had standard deviations between 1.27 and 1.36. There was no statistically significant difference between the Creator/creatives and all other respondents.

7.5. How should the work of the community move forward?

Respondents were asked to rank (7-point rank items scale) how important they felt each of 10 stakeholders and support systems are for Franklinton as a creative micro-community. The question was asked to also determine who should be at the table in planning for a creative community. One element was seen as not important—an economic plan had a very strong negative ranking of 1.31 on the 7-point scale. There was a very strong agreement with politicians (̄x = 6.26, SD = 0.0978) as an important stakeholder, followed by community arts leadership (̄x = 6.01, SD = 1.916) and for a cultural plan (̄x = 6.00, SD=1.063), and then strong agreement on current residents (̄x = 5.95, SD=1.149), businesses (̄x = 5.86, SD=1.240), and researchers (̄x = 5.86, SD = 1.236). Future residents, policies, and artists also had clear agreement, though not as strong (̄x = 5.63, 5.43, and 5.22 respectively with SD = 1.356–1.405). There were no statistically significant differences between Creator/creatives and all other respondents.

8. Discussion

Looking back, we had not anticipated such a large proportion being from the creative class, specifically the supercreatives. Rather, we fully expected the attendance at a festival to be more representative of the general population. Thus, the instrument was not designed to be as sensitive in defining subtle variation in creative roles. In deeper reflection on the findings, the skew of the respondents to that of supercreatives provides an opportunity to examine the key aspects of cultural district development that can be useful in city building. Adding credibility to this discussion are the key factors of the LGBT and the educational

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creator/creatives rank</th>
<th>Creator %</th>
<th>All others %</th>
<th>All others rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Low cost residential housing</td>
<td>57.6</td>
<td>55.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Creative studio space (low cost)</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Craft food and beverage</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Places to gather</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Green spaces</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Festivals</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Retail business for products</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Least important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Festivals</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>61.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Places to gather</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>41.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Green spaces</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Retail businesses for products</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>High end residential housing</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>44.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

Importance of community elements in descending order of most important.

Table 1

Correlations among five items*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Live</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Walkable</th>
<th>Safe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>0.669</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walkable</td>
<td>0.524</td>
<td>0.474</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe</td>
<td>0.542</td>
<td>0.496</td>
<td>0.635</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean</td>
<td>0.491</td>
<td>0.490</td>
<td>0.551</td>
<td>0.747</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* All items were significantly correlated at p = 0.000.
level of respondents tying back to the indicators of a creative community (Florida, 2002b).

The findings in this study point to the importance of the integration of hard and soft factors in creating an arts district or cultural destination neighborhood. Infrastructure providing adequate lighting, safe and walkable streets and low-cost live and work spaces need to be combined with the amenities that contribute to the soft, or ‘coolness’ factor, such as places to gather, green space, festivals, and craft food and drinks.

These data inform us of the elements that must be maintained in creating a cultural plan for the community to move it from a naturally occurring creative community to an intentional, planned cultural community that can sustain the supercreative segment of the creative class. We assert that all cities have creative neighborhoods in different stages—emergent, gentrifying, anchor (cultural institutions), and commercial. This may give us insight into what the supercreatives who consume other supercreatives’ work are seeking, and suggest how to enhance the stability of emerging creative neighborhoods, if that is the goal.

Across our findings, we believe that we have seen members of the creative community who are not necessarily within the geophysical community under study, but instead are in the physical space with an intention to consume. Thus, we have members of the supercreative core acting as consumers of the present creative community. These members of the creative class have given us insights into the specifics of what they see as important in order to sustain and build for the creative community; a livable community that is a good place to work and that is safe, clean, and affordable. Then, they tell us that it is not the members of the supercreative cohort who should be leading the cultural planning for this community, but that such work should be conducted primarily by politicians, arts leadership, current residents, businesses, and researchers.

In essence, we believe this study suggests that the creative class may not see its role as leading cultural planning, but that there are specific elements of the community which will support supercreatives being and remaining in the neighborhood. This would suggest that there need to be positional stakeholders who should be leading the planning process while ensuring those elements are maintained.

8.1. Fostering a creative milieu: policy recommendations for cities

This study points to the important role of key stakeholders in the creation and implementation of strategies for neighborhood regeneration using arts and culture. However, our findings indicate that these members of the creative sector may not be the focal point in leading this process. For Franklinton, as well as for burgeoning and mature cultural districts globally, our findings emphasize the importance of a focus on ways to attract and keep supercreatives and their employers, both for economic development and to develop a city or neighborhood that is regarded as a creativity magnet by residents, visitors, and consumers (Martin-Brelet, Grossetti, Eckert, Gritsai & Kovács, 2009). A blend of hard and soft factors to attract these members of the creative class, coupled with plans for creative placemaking targeting consumers of creative goods and services can be achieved using policy frameworks that take into account the wants, needs, and habits both of producer and consumer cohorts.

Attention to walkability, safety, and the retention of the “cool factor” must be paid in choosing a creative city strategy with the goal of increasing urban competitiveness (Musterd & Murie, 2010c). When initiating and implementing a plan for short- and long-term development of an area, it would be effective to create an advisory body that would include a variety of stakeholders from the three sectors. While the interests and concerns of the creative workers in the area are of importance, having the voices of residents, policymakers, and business owners will be critical, according to our findings.

Policy tools available to cities in the planning and implementation of cultural districts include offering tax incentives for developers, fostering public art opportunities, initiating housing and workspace options for the creative class, and providing education and job training for the sector. Additional strategies involve the repurposing of municipally owned buildings and land to house creative economy businesses and nonprofit arts and cultural organizations. Each of these options can become realities only when these ideas gain a place on a city’s policy agenda (Goldberg-Miller, 2015). Gaining traction on the crowded municipal agenda requires coordination among a variety of stakeholders, who coalesce the interest of public, private, and nonprofit actors to create buy-in to cultural plans and strategic timeframes. Key issues such as branding and marketing cultural district offerings, fostering community engagement, and building and sustaining demand for creative economy goods and services must be taken into consideration in developing an urban cultural policy ecosystem (Goldberg-Miller, 2017).

Although the results of this study cannot be thought to be generalizable, there are several key takeaways that can be useful for urban areas worldwide going forward. While cultural districts and their outputs often may be marketed to non-artist tourists and local residents, our study shows that supercreatives are drawn to creative goods and services. This points to the efficacy of utilizing these findings, as well as doing further studies on the behaviors and take-up of creative sector individuals in formulating decisions about launching, branding, and sustaining cultural districts. Implementing a concept of ‘clustering’ of built environment options for cultural producers, such as live/work spaces and social venues also can be a part of municipal strategies (Stern & Seifert, 2010).

Surveying and analyzing the needs, opinions and suggestions of the creative class as a component of stakeholder partnerships and leadership development in urban creative districts can provide a valuable window into their agglomeration patterns as well as their desire to be a part of the strategic planning process. Urban and municipal planners in cultural districts as disparate as Beijing’s 798 Arts District, Toronto’s West Queen West area, the Parnell Square Cultural Quarter in Dublin, and Adelaide’s North Terrace can utilize these findings in considering the motives and actions of these producers of cultural outputs.

Recognizing the social capital and economic power of members of this sector can be useful in enhancing the economic development and place branding toolkits of municipalities as they seek to establish and strengthen naturally occurring and formalized cultural districts. Policymakers worldwide must recognize that issues such as social inclusion, access to amenities, cultural sustainability, and the fragility of heritage sites all may impact decisions made about the use of city-owned property, transportation concerns, and the allocation of municipal funds for the creation and fostering of cultural districts.

9. Conclusion

Developing an understanding of the motivations and actions of supercreatives in today’s cities is an important tool in the cultural policy arsenal. The concept and subsequent development of scholarship on the creative class may have led to the diminishment of the importance of understanding the core of this class; that is, the supercreatives. In this study, we found a window into supercreatives’ perceptions of what is desirable in a burgeoning arts district, and what they see as their role in moving development forward. Attention to a balance between the provision of hard factors such as safe, clean and well-lit streets, and soft factors that ensure the retention of the district as a “funky” part of town can provide a welcoming and sustainable environment in which creative producers can live and work. While hard factors such as employment opportunities, housing stock, and transportation infrastructure can attract creative workers to a city or neighborhood, it may be the soft factors, including cultural amenities and access to other creatives that keep them there (Dainov & Sauka, 2010; Murphy & Redmond, 2009).

Our finding that supercreatives may not see their role as leading out the development of cultural districts points to the importance of
networks in providing multi-sector leadership towards planning for creative neighborhoods and attractions. This conclusion builds on the observations of Musterd and Murie (2010b) regarding the balance of hard and soft factors that are crucial for development of sustainable cultural districts. Cities need to include stakeholders to create, market, or deliver the hard and soft factors. These include government policymakers, developers, city planners, and business owners.

Through strategic data gathering as well as analysis and planning, actors in today's urban centers can make informed decisions in conjunction with creative economy stakeholders including cultural nonprofit organizations and businesses. Together, these collaborators can utilize valuable information that can impact the provision both of hard and soft factor offerings for creative workers, and simultaneously may be able to influence the availability and consumption of creative goods and services. In addition, policymakers can leverage studies and research when making decisions about support for interventions addressing market failure and providing opportunities for consumption of cultural public good options.

The initial intention of this study was to explore the expectations, desires, and opinions of consumers of creativity at a temporal event that draws people from outside the creative community. We did not expect to see such a large proportion being creatives themselves, who usually may be considered a part of the supply side of the district. Therefore, the findings become important for planning for an arts district. While an urban plan for the area of EastFranklinton was created, it did not utilize a survey such as this in its development (Sweeney, 2014). We believe the Franklinton Arts Plan – and any arts or cultural district plan – should be adapted to reflect the needs and expectations of the supercreatives who might want to become part of the community.

Understanding that cities throughout the world have concerns about creating and sustaining cultural districts, we feel that the findings from this study could be applicable to other urban areas, especially ones in which the neighborhood is in the early stages of a cycle of regeneration. The results of our research point to questions about the ways that supercreatives, as members of the creative class, take up cultural offerings, as well as how they see their involvement in fostering cultural district planning. The study begins to reveal the valuable role for research into the development of arts districts and cultural destination neighborhoods, specifically looking at the ways that these members of the creative class think about their role, and that increased attention to this area of cultural policy can provide an effective tool for today’s cities. Research may serve to inform public policy decisions and subsequent interventions targeted at increasing the community development of creative sector residents and workers, in addition to fostering the demand for arts and culture opportunities.

A careful analysis of the motivations and actions of supercreatives and the conditions that will attract and retain them in cities, including the hard and soft factors identified here, together with technical connectivity and sense of urban heritage (Musterd, 2004), can yield fruitful results for future planning and action by municipal, nonprofit, and private actors. Working together, these stakeholders can form valuable partnerships in order to address important areas in the cultural policy arena, both in understanding the varied elements of concern for producers of the arts and for finding ways of ensuring that opportunities to experience and enjoy these creative offerings are plentiful and accessible.

We assert that this study provides an important step in developing a more comprehensive understanding of the perspectives of supercreatives regarding their desires and needs for a creative community to thrive. Our approach to this study, from the perspective of this segment of the creative class, balances the strategic policy and practices of demand side planning. We feel that the findings support the assumptions that all neighborhoods share certain traits to make them desirable, while highlighting some differences for the creative community that are especially important in planning for what should be, along with implications for when and the degree to which change should happen.

We have since replicated this study at events in two other neighborhoods in Columbus: at an arts festival in the center city, located in an area that has large anchor cultural institutions but does not have the vibrant creative life of other neighborhoods; and at a gallery hop in a highly-successful commercial arts district, one that is a mature destination area with intense development pressure. We believe that the exploration of similarities and differences in neighborhoods within a variety of cities worldwide – reflecting a diversity of motivations – would be valuable for understanding the perspectives, desires and expectations regarding supercreatives and the global arts and culture communities in which they live, work, and play.

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2016.12.011.

References


