Renaissance or Ruin? : Creating an Arts and Culture Destination in North Philadelphia

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RENAISSANCE OR RUIN?:
CREATING AN ARTS AND CULTURE DESTINATION IN NORTH PHILADELPHIA

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While anthropological research focused on cultural tourism is substantial, little is known about the impact of cultural alliances on community relations. This paper is a qualitative look at the North Philadelphia Arts and Culture Alliance, based on participant observation, document gathering, and in-depth interview data from Alliance and Temple University affiliates. Findings suggest a spread of attitudes: faith in the Alliance’s organizing and restorative potential, ambivalence toward making North Philadelphia a “destination,” and severe skepticism related to issues of inequality and power. These findings illuminate the complexities of Philadelphia’s arts and culture tourism strategies and the Alliance’s potential sociopolitical impact/s.

INTRODUCTION

A new-fangled alliance, The North Philadelphia Arts and Culture Alliance (NPACA), is working to launch an arts and culture scene in Central Lower North Philadelphia. The NPACA’s goals to define and commercialize exclusively “North Philadelphia arts and culture” suggest both revitalizing and devastating approaches to community development. In its efforts to reverse the stigma of North Philadelphia, the NPACA has received blind praise and unabashed criticism from different community players. As organizers strive to shape and market North Philadelphia as a new destination, will their efforts mend community fractures (particularly with Temple University), aggravate historical class, race, and community tensions, or produce a blend of both?

In its mission, NPACA advertises accessibility, awareness, and cross-cultural collaboration; most importantly, it advertises dedication to “establishing this district as a destination for cultural, visual, and performing arts” (North Philadelphia N.d.). In December 2008, Tyler School of Art moved from its suburban location in Ambler, PA, to Temple University’s main campus in Central Lower North Philadelphia. Tyler School of Art opened its doors in January 2009 for student-use, and one of its first Exhibitions and Public Programs initiatives was NPACA. In its initial phase, NPACA’s conceived district
stretches between Spring Garden Street and Lehigh Avenue (See Appendix D), but will eventually extend west and east of Broad Street to include neighborhoods beyond Central Lower North Philadelphia. ¹

Sponsored in part by The Samuel S. Fels Foundation, but headed primarily by Tyler School of Art, NPACA includes 40 community organizations. This April (2010) marked the second anniversary of NPACA’s main event, Treasures of North Philadelphia Open House. Over a dozen local organizations opened their doors free of charge to people within and outside the community.

In 1993, former mayor Ed Rendell launched the Avenue of the Arts (AA), an economic and social strategy to “reinvigorate Broad Street as the heart and soul of Philadelphia.” Creating an avenue for entertainment, consumption, and retreat encapsulates the vision for AA. The movement is overseen by an independent non-profit, Avenue of the Arts, Inc., which works to cultivate Broad Street as the “premier arts and entertainment district”—that is, a commercial and tourist attraction spanning the “longest, widest, busiest street in the region” (Avenue 2009). While AA is not driving the NPACA initiative, it has joined forces, particularly since NPACA will extend the arts avenue farther north. Large, illuminated AA’s—which mimic holiday streetlamp trimmings—mark corners up and down Broad Street (See Appendix A). The zone has been visibly stamped a part of the arts district, and established North Philadelphia organizations are just now collaborating beneath the NPACA umbrella.

This paper is a qualitative look at NPACA’s impact/s from the perspective of community leaders, most of who are affiliated with NPACA. On the one hand, NPACA’s goals fit perfectly with the city’s arts and culture tourism thrust. On the other hand, Temple University has had a rocky history with the community. This is mainly due to expansion projects that have generally displaced black, lower class residents and made the space more attractive for white, middle to upper class groups. Because the organization is so new and spawning from a traditionally contested university, examining

¹ For the rest of this paper, I use “North Philadelphia” to refer to Central Lower North Philadelphia. While plans to expand beyond Central Lower North Philadelphia exist—hence the broader use of “North Philadelphia” in NPACA materials—the primary region in which I conducted research is Central Lower North Philadelphia.
organizer/member viewpoints is critical for understanding development goals, the local environment, and individual players within the city’s larger arts and culture tourism movement.

This research is significant because it uniquely contrasts (1) ideas from organization affiliates and (2) ideas from urban anthropologist Judith Goode, PhD, who has taught at Temple University for over 35 years. While my literature provides a strong framework for analysis, Goode’s substantive insights offer a complementary framework. Because Goode is the only person not affiliated with NPACA, but still firmly affiliated with its source (Temple University), our conversations followed a different rubric and bias than other interviews—targeting broad, hypothetical implications of NPACA as well as Philadelphia’s distinct community development history. The intentional informant contrasts throughout this paper allow readers to really “hear” different angles, not just compare findings with literature. More importantly, they help bridge perspectives from on-the-ground NPACA affiliates and the (local) academy.

Prior to this research, I studied at Temple University for nine months (fall 2008-spring 2009), acquainting myself with North Philadelphia, community development ventures, and the field of urban anthropology. In spring 2009, I assisted Judith Goode in an anthropology course titled Urban America: Anthropological Perspective. I initiated and maintained a class discussion board centered on students’ individual research projects. Many of them examined multifaceted development projects in Philadelphia, such as the Mural Arts Program, community gardens, and urban housing projects. In addition to assisting students with specific project questions, I frequently relayed more general community news. After posting information about the first Treasures of North Philadelphia Open House, I became intrigued with the ideas and motives behind it.

North Philadelphia maintains a stigma that makes outsiders weary, and often callous, toward the area and its residents. Efforts to invigorate and destigmatize the space emerge in the form of empowerment and beautification projects, which are not novel approaches to community development.
Yet as more of these projects join forces and begin pursuing AA’s agenda—to cultivate Broad Street as the premier arts and entertainment district—what kind of accommodations will North Philadelphia need to endure? Although NPACA is not strictly geared toward outsiders—NPACA connects local youth, education, empowerment, and arts organizations—the cosmopolitan attraction these projects bear may produce latent consequences. Distinctive language, such as “at-risk prevention,” “recovery arts,” “transformative arts,” and “youth empowerment,” appears in many organizations’ missions. Could this lexicon become a marked “cultural component” — or tourist attraction— of North Philadelphia, and how might this deflect actual consideration of the socioeconomic inequalities contributing to youth violence, addiction, and educational inequity?

NPACA additionally works to link these projects with more high status arts organizations in the area. Thus in its efforts to market North Philadelphia Arts and Culture as a single entity—despite varying class identities of different member organizations—what kinds of ancillary challenges could NPACA face? All of these questions should be considered early in NPACA’s development to determine its fair and productive next steps.
LITERATURE REVIEW

In anthropology, as well as sociology and history, extensive literature has been written on tourism, cultural arts, and community development. For this paper, literature focused specifically on (1) tourism and minority arts production, and (2) Philadelphia’s community development history offer relevant perspectives for analysis. Because NPACA embodies the intersection of local tourism, minority arts, and complex sociohistorical issues, I researched regional and global examples related to these topics as well as more comprehensive anthropological theory.

TOURISM AND MINORITY ARTS PRODUCTION

TOURISM

The exploitative effects of tourism have been critically examined by anthropologists, specifically the unequal dynamics in host-guest relationships. However, more recent scholarship has offered alternate perspectives on tourism, which include both positive and damaging effects. Moreover, contemporary theorists have complicated the very notions of “cultural difference” or “cultural distinctiveness”—fundamental ideas that construct tourism’s “magical” lure in the first place (Graburn 1989:24).

With regard to community tourism, MacClancy (2002) outlines three effects: devastation, revitalization, and refiguring. The devastation perspective denotes community resentment towards tourism, sentiments of “cultural pollution” because of it, and locals’ forced reliance on “new ideas and new money” (2002:422). Revitalization refers to just the opposite: a boosted economy and rewarding indigenous control. In the process of cultural refiguring however, tourism helps refigure or reshape what “culture” could mean for a certain community or space. MacClancy argues (in an example of museum establishment in Spain):
Locals contemplate pictures they would have never otherwise seen, thousands of tourists peer at what locals had previously disregarded, the affluent and their hangers-on have created a ‘high-society,’ and a host of ancillary businesses have opened up.

Furthermore, tourists’ actions present “locals new standards of behavior to assess and maybe to imitate” (2002:427). In this way, cultural refiguring has the potential for both revitalizing and devastating consequences—locals obtain something new (e.g., a museum or outside spectators) but perhaps lose some of their agency (e.g., tourist imitation or passive acceptance of new changes).

In light of globalization and mobile populations, and Gupta and Ferguson (1997) offer a broader perspective on cultural refiguring:

[T]he irony of these times is that as actual places and localities become ever more blurred and indeterminate, ideas of culturally and ethnically distinct places become perhaps even more salient... ‘cultures’ and ‘peoples,’ however persistent they may be, cease to be plausibly identifiable as spots on a map. [1997:39]

Gupta and Ferguson further discuss the problematic ways cultural difference has been conceptualized:

“[O]nce excluded from that privileged domain ‘our own society,’ ‘the other’ is subtly nativized—placed in a separate form of analysis and ‘spatially incarcerated’ (Appadurai 1988b) in that ‘other place’ that is proper to an ‘other culture’” (1997:43). Essentially Gupta and Ferguson contest the notion of community as entity, and many groups or places as “native.” To an extent, this philosophy opposes the very foundation of NPACA: the desire to nativize assorted arts and culture organizations within a self-constructed locality.

MINORITY ARTS PRODUCTION

Class differences within the arts fall along a continuum, but sociologists have pinpointed key binary opposites: high-status versus “ethnic” or “folkloric.” By and large, these categories negatively affect those associated with the “ethnic” or “folkloric” class. According to Li (1994), high-status art and folkloric art (or “traditional”/“cultural” art) are distinctive value categories, recognized by artists and the general public alike (e.g., consider the Philadelphia Museum of Art versus the Village of Arts and
Humanities). Li highlights the polarization of high-status and folkloric art in Canada, arguing that differences defined by national policy work against minorities’ status in the larger sphere of valorized arts and culture. Official policy targeted at minority cultures (seeking to support the development of minority arts) actually creates two different art worlds. And as a result, “the colourfulness and exoticism of minorities’ arts and performances…become living symbols of a multicultural society…taken for granted by white Canadians and accepted by visible minorities as part of the legitimate version of cultural and artistic life in Canada” (1994:382).

Along the same vein, Howard (1995) analyzes the process of Australian Aboriginal art moving into the public eye—a “process of cultural franchising.” Particularly since the mid-1980s, global interest in Aboriginal art has amplified. Exploring both creative and constraining effects of the “aboriginal” discourse and the values Westerners attach to it, Howard predicts the form is “likely to be re-pigeonholed as ‘ethnic’ art”—a definition rather limiting for nonwhite Australian artists (1995:234).

In essence, ethnic arts are marginalized, never fully regarded as equal. The polarized understandings of high-status and folkloric—of highbrow and lowbrow, of first-rate and ethnic—inhibit those producing non-normative art. What is more, minority arts performances can actually become accepted by the performers themselves, an effect that congeals any sociopolitical inequalities between “different worlds”—whether they be art, ethnic, political, or socioeconomic.

**Philadelphia’s Community Development History**

Understanding Philadelphia’s urban renewal strategies is important for understanding the contemporary state of North Philadelphia, and ultimately the NPACA’s efforts within it. The most pertinent historical shift occurred during the 1960s, in which community leaders turned to empowerment and black self-help strategies for social and economic reform. Changes in Philadelphia’s
civic structure can be further categorized by three conceptions of “the city”: the deindustrialized city, the ethnic city, and, most notably, the divided city.

PHILADELPHIA’S URBAN RENEWAL AND THE BLACK POPULATION

While the history of Philadelphia and the politics of its development span centuries, the urban renewal strategy of the 1950s provides a suitable starting point for review. For Philadelphia’s reform administrators, moving from a blue-collar industrial economy to a white-collar service economy became top priority. This initiative required policies for “slum clearance in the impoverished communities (many with large black populations) that ringed Center City in hopes of attracting up-scale developers and residents” (Countryman 2006: 52). At roughly the same time, acute residential segregation appeared—“by 1960, blacks constituted 69 percent of this area’s [North Philadelphia] total population” (2006:53). Furthermore, black workers were excluded from the suburban industrial boom, mainly due to deficient suburban housing for blacks. While black workers did have legal protection against “the disparate racial impact of industrial flight,” these laws “proved woefully inadequate to the task of overcoming racial segmentation in the local labor market” (2006:57).

During the latter half of the 1950s, community leaders in Philadelphia decided to take racial equality into their own hands. These neighborhood leaders recognized the inadequacies of protection policies for blacks and “came to believe that only the mass mobilization of black Philadelphia’s working-class majority could achieve real progress toward racial equality in the city” (2006:83). One of the key leaders of this movement was Reverend Lion H. Sullivan, whose model for change focused on “the moral condition of the race and the promotion of intraracial community solidarity as the key to improving life in black neighborhoods, rather than on government action and interracial alliances” (2006:85).
Through selective patronage—or mass business boycotting—Sullivan and supporters\(^2\) targeted “employment discrimination in a single industry at a time” (2006:104). Despite their efforts and fairly fruitful results, Sullivan decided selective patronage was inadequate to beget structural change. A turn to alliance-building with the city’s business community “foreshadowed his shift toward economic self-help rather than mass protest” (2006:111).

Sullivan’s shift from protest to self-help—launched by the 1964 founding of Opportunities Industrialization Center for local job training—reflects a larger shift in Philadelphia’s civic structures. Before the 1960s and 1970s, neighborhoods\(^3\) maintained “similar constellations” of local groups that “looked inward to the community and aimed for self-sufficiency.” These groups might include local parishes, sports leagues, immigrant service settlement houses, or political clubs, to name a few. Overlapping leadership and membership between groups exemplified the nature of cohesion. However, after the 1960s and 1970s social change movements, empowerment-oriented groups emerged “which emphasized community organization for local control and political change” (Goode and Schneider 1994:101). New federal initiatives stressing civic participation also contributed to this shift. According to Goode and Schneider (1994):

> While the leadership of these organizations may be either homegrown or come from outside the neighborhood, the groups share a notion that they are developing resources within distressed communities...Because of their funding sources and orientation, they are much more tied to new citywide power structures than are the established groups. (1994:102-103)

The notion that these groups were tied to—and thus mainly guided by—larger power structures echoed Sullivan’s quandary: “The enduring irony of OIC is that it grew into a national self-help program thanks to the financial support of white government officials and business leaders” (Countryman 2006:115).

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\(^2\) Sullivan rallied the group 400 Ministers (made up of roughly 400 other ministers) to launch his selective patronage campaign.

\(^3\) Olney, Port Richmond, and Kensington were the specific neighborhoods considered in Goode and Schneider’s ethnography, *Reshaping Ethnic and Racial Relations in Philadelphia: Immigrants in a Divided City.*
While “Helping People Help Themselves” was, and remains, the center’s mission, black self-help depended on financial help from powerful whites.

**CONCLUSION**

The city of Philadelphia experienced an array of social and economic changes following the 1950s urban renewal. Low (1996) offers many metaphors used to conceptualize the city more broadly, but three metaphors speak to Philadelphia’s particular changes: the deindustrialized city, the ethnic city, and the divided city. Whereas the deindustrialized city image is more economically-based (*what are the costs of deindustrialization on residents?*), the ethnic and divided city images capture social issues. The ethnic city metaphor examines immigration, neighborhood reconfiguring, and the establishment of ethnically diverse spaces. The divided city paradigm considers issues of gentrification, racial segregation, identity, cultural capital, and social capital. “Within anthropology it [the divided city] evokes hidden barriers of race and class encoded in metaphors of uptown and downtown, upscale and ghetto, and particularly in the United States, of black and white” (1996:388). The divided city metaphor illuminates the profound social inequalities experienced by blacks in the 1950s, and arguably, still today.

The literature reviewed here provides both theoretical and historical framework for theorizing the impact/s of NPACA. Because NPACA is working to reshape the ethos of North Philadelphia, I focus on MacClancy’s (2002) third effect of community tourism—refiguring—and integrate the predicaments of minority arts discourses as they relate to my research. The detailed city history above is meant to elucidate and substantiate “the divided city” metaphor, which became an overarching social theme throughout this paper.
METHODOLOGY

SAMPLE AND DATA COLLECTION

Prior to my research, I lived in North Philadelphia for nine months (fall 2008-spring 2009), acquainting myself with the neighborhood and community development ventures. I studied two semesters at Temple University, completing coursework in urban anthropology, urban studies, and African-American studies. During my second semester, I completed my Anthropology Practicum as Judith Goode’s teaching assistant in an undergraduate anthropology course.

For this paper, I conducted further participant-observation (fall 2009-spring 2010) in North Philadelphia, including visits to Temple University’s Tyler School of Art, Cerulean Arts, Youth Empowerment Services, Uptown Entertainment and Development Corporation, Village of Arts and Humanities, and the Church of the Advocate. I took photographs of building fronts I visited, but I additionally photographed noteworthy murals and posters inside the Opportunities Industrialization Center (houses Youth Empowerment Services) and the Church of the Advocate (See Appendix A). Furthermore, I gathered substantial documentation from individual sites (e.g. pamphlets, flyers, business cards, news articles, etc.). I also gathered and surveyed a range of online material, including periodic e-mails from NPACA and Tyler School of Art, NPACA’s Facebook Page, NPACA’s website, and individual affiliates’ websites.

I completed semistandardized, in-depth interviews with community members representing different groups. My informant sample included seven North Philadelphia community members, including NPACA Director and Tyler’s Exhibitions Coordinator Shayna McConville, Uptown Entertainment and Development Corporation President Linda Richardson, Cerulean Arts owner Tina Rocha, two teachers from Youth Empowerment Services, and one neighborhood artist. For the teachers and neighborhood artist, I have used the pseudonyms Sarah, Matthew, and Meredith to protect their
identities. Additionally, I interviewed Judith Goode, urban anthropologist and Temple University professor, whose insights provided a framework for comparison against the other interviews.

The selection of my sample depended mostly on timing, accessibility, and the desire for occupational diversity. I was able to interview people with an array of titles—not just all “directors” or all “artists.” For each interview, I followed a semistandardized model (Berg 1998:61-62). I approached every interview with a predetermined set of questions that generally followed the same topical sequence (e.g. Organization History, Mission, Individual Challenges, Advantages and/or Disadvantages of NPACA, Agreement and/or Disagreement with NPACA Mission, etc.). However, I personalized each set to fit the specific organization, title, or person I was considering. I also probed interviewees beyond a given answer if I felt more elaboration or new information should be pursued. The predetermined question sets for Richardson (UEDC), YES teachers, and Rocha (Cerulean) have the most consistency between them (See Appendix B), while the interviews with Meredith (artist), McConville, and Goode were more idiosyncratic in nature (See Appendix C). This was due to larger discrepancies in social location and personal connection to NPACA.

I was able to interview Rocha, Sarah, and Matthew (YES) in person, at their respective work sites. I used a recording device at each interview and simultaneously noted specific quotations, words, and themes in a journal. I then transcribed these interviews as precisely as I could, avoiding paraphrasing. Due to conflicting schedules and distance, the remaining interviews with McConville (interviewed once in December and again in February), Goode, Richardson, and Meredith occurred over the phone. For each of these interviews, I typed responses as precisely as I could while on the line.

Early in December 2009, I traveled to Tyler School of Art for the NPACA holiday party. The event was held in a small room within the exhibitions section. While there, I followed Berg’s (1998) four general aspects of setting acclimation:

1. Taking in the physical setting.
2. Developing relationships with inhabitants (locating potential guides and informants).
3. Tracking, observing, eavesdropping, and asking questions.

In a journal, I recorded spatial arrangements of different groups and moved between clusters of people. McConville became my informant and introduced me to a variety of organization members and community artists. I spoke with people from the Village of Arts and Humanities, Artists for Recovery (briefly with the director, but mainly with a participating artist), The University Community Collaborative of Philadelphia, USiloquy Dance Designs, and Arthur Ashe Youth Tennis and Education. Additionally, I met three community artists, or “NPACA neighbors” as McConville labeled them. Because this was a social event, I followed an unstandardized interview model (1998:61). I did not use a standardized set of questions, but instead observed and eavesdropped to generate appropriate questions. I did however consciously strive to extract people’s views of NPACA.

FIELD SITE

As a Temple University student (fall 2008-spring 2009), I spent ample time familiarizing myself with North Philadelphia as well as other defined regions, such as Center City and South Philadelphia (See Regions Map in Appendix D). I conducted participant-observation within these different city regions, and more purposefully along North Broad Street (fall 2009-spring 2010), between the intersections at Ridge Avenue and just below Dauphin Street (See Central Lower maps in Appendix D). Within this stretch, one will find Cerulean Arts, Youth Empowerment Services, Tyler School of Art, and the Uptown Entertainment and Development Corporation.

Temple University’s “territory” is clearly marked by commercialization and distinct student venues, including a movie theater, retail shops, restaurants, convenient stores, coffee shops, and apartment buildings. The space is visibly delineated, while the spaces directly north and south of
Temple University retain more indigenous historical sites, such as Opportunities Industrialization Center, the Uptown Theater, and Freedom Theatre, for example. Restaurant and retail stores become smaller and less mainstream as one travels north, and appear to target the resident population more. Roughly two miles north of Temple University however, Temple University Hospital has cultivated and hallmarked more space, creating geographic isolates in the region.

Temple University is the perceived driver of North Philadelphia’s development, and outside entrepreneurs have begun to recognize the space’s potential. In 2007, Marc Vetri and Jeff Benjamin opened an upscale Italian restaurant, Osteria, along North Broad Street. One of the main draws for owners Vetri and Benjamin was the abandoned historic Divine-Lorraine Hotel—its grandiose architecture was striking and in time, would likely inspire further development of the area, claims Temple University professor Carolyn Adams (lecture, spring 2009). Similarly, Cerulean Arts opened just south of the Divine-Lorraine Hotel, primarily because of the space’s growth potential. According to owner Rocha, this North Philadelphia zone seemed to fall at the heart of urban development. Essentially, upscaling projects border Cerulean Arts on every side: Center City from the south, Fairmount and the Philadelphia Museum of Art from the west, Northern Liberties from the east, and Temple University from the north.

While North Philadelphia “zones” or “communities” are increasingly blurred due to new developments and varied student-resident relations, Temple University has made a significant impact on North Philadelphia space. Summarized below are the various North Philadelphia sites I personally visited, which have each become affiliated with Temple University by way of NPACA.
Cerulean Arts Gallery & Studio (A on map, Appendix D) is “dedicated to promoting the importance of art within the community” (Cerulean 2006). It is located just below the historic Divine-Lorraine Hotel in North Philadelphia, a building which many developers have contemplated renovating. The cerulean-painted storefront marks the small gallery space.
Youth Empowerment Services (B) is located in the Philadelphia Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC), founded in 1964 by the late Reverend Lion H. Sullivan. The center’s mission is to “assist the unemployed, the underemployed, the homeless, and disadvantaged youth and adults to achieve self-sufficiency and empowerment, primarily through education, training, job placement, and through supportive human services, housing and economic development” (Youth N.d.).
Tyler School of Art (C) is located within Temple University, and is a new addition to the main campus.

The Uptown Entertainment and Development Corporation (D) was founded in 1995 by President Linda Richardson. Its mission is to “stimulate the economy in blighted areas in Philadelphia by creating commercial enterprises, developing neighborhood revitalization projects and managing moderate and [sic] housing” (Philadelphia Uptown N.d.).
ANALYSIS METHODS

My main approach to analysis was a combination of deduction and open coding to identify data categories (Berg 1998:236). I sorted words, themes, and explicit concepts derived from my own urban anthropology coursework, the Goode interview, and NPACA affiliates’ materials. I categorized responses that specifically had neighborhood, destination, beautification/empowerment, and community development components. In this way, I provided a set categorical scheme based off personal experience and collected documentation. However, my in-depth interview data required more open coding of concepts and themes. Because I spoke with people from somewhat diverse community positions, I remained attentive to each person’s social location to more accurately classify his/her messages.
ANALYSIS

ARTS AND CULTURE TOURISM: BOTH RESTORATIVE AND DEVASTATING CONSEQUENCES

The NPACA’s goals to define and commercialize exclusively “North Philadelphia” arts and culture reflect both restorative and devastating approaches to community development. As indicated in the literature review, MacClancy (2002) considers three consequences of community tourism: devastation, revitalization, and refiguring. In the process of cultural refiguring, tourism helps refigure or reshape the very concept of “culture” in a given place; so it creates something new, which has potential for positive or damaging effects.

This model of cultural refiguring, along with Gupta and Ferguson’s (1997) ideas on nativizing space, frames my theory for analysis. “[A]s actual places and localities become ever more blurred and indeterminate, ideas of culturally and ethnically distinct places become perhaps even more salient” (1997:39). Plans to refigure and nativize “North Philadelphia culture” thus present a predicament for organizers and residents alike. To help deconstruct this predicament, I present compelling themes that emerged in my research: themes pertaining to (1) the neighborhood, (2) destination, and (3) beautification/empowerment. These topics are well-recognized by people in the community, yet some carry conflicting attitudes about them—ranging from gung-ho, pro-refiguring to ambivalent to severely critical. The NPACA therefore—in its effort to refigure “North Philadelphia culture”—may have both restorative and devastating effects for the community.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD: PROS AND CONS OF CULTURAL REFIGURING

Transforming North Philadelphia into a destination spot requires deliberate cultural refiguring—that is, organizers must reshape what “culture” means and looks like for North Philadelphia. On the one hand, connecting established organizations could strengthen community ties and celebrate local arts. On the other hand, new tourists could end up shaping a kind of “high-society” in North Philadelphia, in
which neighborhood organizations gain outsider interest but surrender community relevance. For these reasons, intentional cultural refiguring could lend itself to either revitalizing or devastating ends for the resident population.

Stereotypically, North Philadelphia projects danger for outsiders. High crime and poverty brand North Philadelphia as intimidating, hazardous, and generally unpleasant. But according to NPACA Director Shayna McConville, “It’s so much more...culture, art, and heritage. It’s a safe enough place, as long as you’re not doing anything too crazy.” This attitude, that North Philadelphia is a hidden hub of all things creative, drives the NPACA mission: to establish the district “as a destination for cultural, visual and performing arts.” As an employee within Tyler School of Art’s Exhibitions and Public Programs, McConville stresses the importance of collaborating with creative organizations already present in North Philadelphia. Tina Rocha, owner of Cerulean Arts and key figure in aiding NPACA’s development, says “They [people outside of North Philadelphia] don’t go north [past] a certain point. But we wanted to show that there’s so much going on up here, lot of creative people and activity.”

The sentiment that North Philadelphia seems aloof but is really flourishing reflects a process of community refiguring—identifying North Philadelphia space as unique, rather than deficient. Two teachers from Youth Empowerment Services (YES) reflect on a 2009 documentary their students produced called Finding Northadelphia. Students interviewed various community organization leaders about “their ideas on gentrification, redevelopment, and what’s happening here...what they would like to see happen,” says Sarah. While the documentary showcases various cultural institutions, it also features perspective from the president of the Avenue of the Arts. “She was much more on the idea of business, what needs to happen to get more business here, to attract more money to the area, whereas some people [from other institutions] spoke more about the community and the people,” says Sarah.

Despite interviewees’ diverse affiliations, Sarah and Matthew recall an underlying theme: the duality of upscaling versus maintaining local integrity.
The idea of these cultural institutes needs...to have some sort of light shown on it that they did exist. So it needed that light, but it also wanted to maintain its integrity or its authenticity...and [not] become like something where people in the community couldn’t access it because it is now so grandiose or so expensive that it’s not really relevant for the community members.

This tension between upscaling and maintaining community relevance is something NPACA director recognizes. Working with what already exists is NPACA’s main vision. Because Temple University has a rather negative past with community members (seen as the “big white engine of development”), McConville says she doesn’t want the neighborhood changing drastically. Instead, celebrating the “great things going on” encapsulates the initiative and its aim.

Yet embedded in this aim is the discreet notion that arts and culture empower, and consequently, make better spaces. According to urban anthropologist Judith Goode, art as a form of development has been happening since the 1970s. Making areas look good and transforming people’s experiences into creativity are practices used to transform “vulnerable” spaces and populations. Often, distinct power inequities emerge between developers/service providers and recipients. The understanding that art can “soothe the savage beast” (Goode interview, January 12, 2010)—that art can convert people and space into better people and better space—is both ignorant and elitist.

Nevertheless, NPACA’s efforts do seem attentive to these concerns. According to Rocha (Cerulean Arts):

It’s more than Temple now, with so many other organizations, and a lot of them are very community-oriented. A lot of them deal with youth from the neighborhood providing afterschool programming...We’ve all been here already, and we’re just kind of organizing...It’s not like a big developer that’s trying to take over their neighborhood.

The notion that a lot is happening in North Philadelphia, but no one knows is the common issue local organizations face, says McConville. According to Sarah and Matthew (YES), students were indeed surprised by all North Philadelphia’s “hidden treasures.” The neighborhood, then—from the perspective of cultural leaders and YES students— is active in arts and culture production, but disjointed in terms of awareness and resource sharing among them. Connecting organizations that are already rooted in the neighborhood will simply strengthen their exposure and impact.
While focus on connection is promising for North Philadelphia organizations, the extended focus on “creating destination” seems counterintuitive. A handful of NPACA organizations (e.g. Artists for Recovery, Youth Empowerment Services, Village of Arts and Humanities) provide services and produce art with drastically different motives than say Cerulean Arts, whose products attract more middle to upper class groups. This brings us back to the question of upscaling versus maintaining local integrity. The neighborhood produces varying kinds of art for varying reasons; how NPACA will balance these different groups with different needs and audiences is yet to be seen.

If North Philadelphia becomes a true destination spot, with a range of these community organizations as its draw, tourists could end up shaping a new, “high-society” in that space. While there is nothing inherently bad about refiguring culture or space, the consequences could be devastating if imbalanced relationships emerge between tourists and locals. MacClancy (2002) argues that refiguring compels locals to see their community in a new light. This new light could be empowering and exciting, or it could be performative and resented. But regardless of whether or not locals support the changes, they begin to witness their own activities, cultural products, and histories quite differently than before—mindful of new onlookers and the perceived “cultural” interest their various presentations(of self) bear. This kind of refiguring can establish uneven relationships between hosts and visitors if locals lose control over—or never achieve adequate voice in—their own community’s tourist ventures.

**DESTINED FOR DESTINATION?: CHASING FUNDS AND BRANDING SPACES**

Though most NPACA members have embedded ties to the community, NPACA could jeopardize resident relations if upscaling takes center stage. Funding remains the largest hurdle for NPACA, and because NPACA is a small player, it depends on funding from larger players with their own agendas. As NPACA forms a closer bond with the Avenue of the Arts (AA), NPACA could find it challenging to stay
committed to the community. AA’s goal to brand North Philadelphia as part of the city’s premier arts
district again underscores the upscaling versus community relevance debate.

Without a doubt, the development and sustainability of NPACA will depend on adequate
funding and support. The major challenge McConville faces is the lack of staff and budget. For now,
NPACA is a “labor of love,” she claims. “[As our] footprint gets bigger and bigger, maybe we can provide
some more services...who knows what will happen in the future...be more of an education program or
development program.” These aspirations, however, depend on what Goode tags “walking a
tightrope:”

None of these small players can do anything but adapt to the larger opportunities presented to
them...They have a good idea at the beginning, they can’t get the funding [and] have to piggy
back with what they can get funded for...like walking a tightrope...What she [McConville] talks
about is really very important, but over the long-term you can see how those ideas are blocked.

While we cannot foresee NPACA’s future community presence, funding will play a substantial
role in the direction of the organization. At present, NPACA receives some funding from Tyler
Exhibitions, and some programs have been supported by Temple University General Activities Fee.
Funding from the PA Counsel of the Arts, filtered through Temple University, has also supported the
initiative. Yet increased funding is undoubtedly required. According to Rocha (Cerulean Arts), projects
in need of funding include more marketing, literature, flyers, and larger dream projects, such as an
‘NPACA bus loop’ to have “more of an open house feel, instead of having [people take] public
transportation.”

In spring 2009, NPACA held its first Treasures of North Philadelphia open house, with several
hundred people in attendance. The majority of people, says McConville, came from Center City area or
the suburbs, and over 50% of all attendees had never been to any North Philadelphia organization. This
April (2010), NPACA held its 2nd Annual Treasures of North Philadelphia open house, with over a dozen
organizations opening their doors to the public. NPACA’s website encouraged people to “Explore the
wealth of art and culture of Central North Philadelphia...to celebrate the diverse and plentiful programs that make this neighborhood special” (North Philadelphia N.d.).

Though these organizations have entrenched ties to the North Philadelphia community, the NPACA could spoil relationships between community members and organizations. One of NPACA’s strongest partners to date is AA whose leader, Karen Lewis, is “very excited about the Alliance [and] regularly involved and interested in the branding of the AA out there [in North Philadelphia],” says McConville. The goal to brand North Philadelphia space as part of the AA demonstrates a relational challenge for NPACA. Addressing community development projects in general, Goode says:

You can feel genuine closeness with others. It’s not different. But what makes it different is that people with the most power really pat themselves on the back. It’s the unequal way...We actually touched a leper...It never changes the structure; it just makes them [organizations/supporters/cultural tourists] feel so damn good. [emphasis added]

While this perspective on community development is no doubt cynical, the inequality claim (emphasized above) sheds profound light on the process of cultural refiguring. Much like the establishment of a museum – i.e. the branding of culture and the construction of value within a defined space—efforts to “brand” North Philadelphia may simply congeal the socioeconomic inequalities that exist within that space. However, NPACA members do seem cautious about their efforts, ensuring their actions don’t overstep resident desires.

One such project is the renovation of North Philadelphia’s historic Uptown Theatre, which requires $5 million for completion. For now, the project includes a range of education programming for local youths and adults, but aspires to construct a technology center, office space, and artist lofts within the finished renovation. Linda Richardson, President of the Uptown Entertainment and Development Corporation, formed the organization in 1995 to “provide neighborhood services to help better neighborhoods,” says Richardson. “Early on, in order for us to be successful, we had to have residents help shape the program...Some people wanted to tear it [Uptown Theatre] down for housing for Temple. It’s better now because we’ve become much more a part of the community.” Though
upscaling interest from Temple students has surfaced over the years (seeking clean streets and more entertainment venues for themselves), Richardson asserts, “We have not done anything where we haven’t consulted the neighborhood.”

At the same time, Richardson’s vision for North Philadelphia seems to hinge on destination creation, in line with NPACA:

What I hope is that, first, is that some of the negative images of North Philadelphia aren’t always promoted...Second, is to be able to have a place where people want to live, want to go to school...good, nice, clean environment where there are services and opportunities...a place where people want to live. Specifically, in the next year, I would like for North Philadelphia to develop a district that will be able to provide ongoing cleaning and hire neighborhood residents to keep the neighborhoods clean to be able to integrate all the systems — the public education sector, Temple, Uptown, and businesses into a thriving district.

In Richardson’s hopes for North Philadelphia, neighborhood cleanliness emerged as a significant focus. This ideal, paired with community empowerment, kept resurfacing in people’s notions about the neighborhood. If North Philadelphia is really destined for destination, it seems these two elements will remain strong community components. But as NPACA forms a closer bond with AA, NPACA could find it challenging to balance these components with “destination creation.” Branding North Philadelphia as part of the city’s premier arts district may require deliberate refiguring of beautification and empowerment projects—in addition to internal betterment, these projects become “worth seeing” by outsiders (e.g. “Murals & Meals” tours, Mural Arts Program). Originally constructed to “improve” local people and spaces, these projects now become models of “cultural difference,” worthy of touring and outsider dollars.

**BEAUTIFICATION AND EMPOWERMENT: DOUBLE-EDGED SWORDS**

Beautification and empowerment projects focus on improving space and improving lives. Both these aims are not inherently flawed; their fundamental nature promotes helping others. But the double-edged sword surfaces when gentrification becomes a concern as a result of beautified space.
Furthermore, new exposure for North Philadelphia beautification and empowerment projects raises a dilemma for locals. As these projects gain greater exposure—particularly for purposes of creating destination—uneven relations between outsiders and locals could emerge. Rather than repairing the structural inequalities experienced by many local residents, presenting North Philadelphia as a new “cultural experience” could simply perpetuate historical class and racial divisions.

Both the Village of Arts and Humanities (the Village) and the Mural Arts Program maintain a mission of community transformation through the arts. These NPACA affiliates work to beautify public spaces through art parks and large, building murals. According to the Village’s website, “Placing art in vulnerable places and art making is key to improving the lives of vulnerable people” (The Village N.d.) Similarly, the Mural Arts Program concerns itself with transforming not only spaces but individual lives. Empowerment through landscape reflects the understanding that beautiful spaces inspire better people, and particularly “at-risk” young people.

In Philadelphia, support for beautification and empowerment projects is substantial, but ironically funding for them is not. According to Goode, continuation of such projects “comes out of self-exploitation...[She (Jane Golden, director of the Mural Arts Program)] has been given so much affirmation, she does it.” Furthermore, Goode critiques the actual end-consequence of beautified space: the paradox of “making a neighborhood look good and [then] displacing populations.” The double-edgedness of beautification projects relates to gentrification—when spaces are cleaned up and made marketable, a new gentry moves in to occupy them.

Despite this potential end-consequence (whether intended or unintended), the beautification and empowerment philosophy resonates with community service providers, and even with individuals living in the neighborhood. One local artist associated with NPACA talks about her personal resolve for community outreach:

There’s lots of things, maybe a small difference, maybe a big difference. Regularly I go outside and pick up trash. I know it makes a difference in how people feel about walking up and down
the street…I see these people engaged in activity that does not benefit the neighborhood or them personally…It allows me to…find a way that is helpful. Being here in this neighborhood, is there something about my presence, about my being here, is there something that I can do differently so that maybe somebody changes their lifestyle?

Meredith says she gets her inspiration from Martin Luther King’s Letter from Birmingham Jail, in which King describes all life as interrelated and mutual. “We all, you know, influence each other, by every action that we engage in,” she says. “Everything we do has an impact on another person.” As a part-time artist, Meredith plans to develop some types of art programs directed at residents and hopes NPACA will create jobs and inspire more artistic pursuits within the community.

Similarly, Cerulean Arts, the Uptown Theatre, and YES advocate the importance of community education. While this objective is admirable, the contradictions of neighborhood improvement and displacement—or at least exploitation—remain. As arts and empowerment projects gain greater exposure via NPACA’s marketing efforts, could “at-risk” youth or “North Philadelphia residents” experience role changes and become more or less cultural performers for outsiders and/or new residents?

Within the community, some recent student projects have centered on “capturing” the voices or culture of North Philadelphia, including Tree House Book students’ “Voice of Philadelphia” podcasts and YES students’ Finding Northadelphia documentary. “It’s just sort of the honest voice of who lives in this community and what’s going on in this community,” says McConville. Students have “the opportunity to give a voice to the people around them,” she says. Other examples of local projects NPACA advertises

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4 Rocha promotes an “art can be for everybody” maxim and offers weekend workshops. The Uptown Theatre offers an Arts and Education Youth program, research and education classes, internships, and other programming. YES offers a media arts education, GED classes, and job-readiness training.
include: a range of affiliates’ public events, history lectures and speaking engagements (e.g. *A History of North Broad Street* by Robert Skaler, 2010), art exhibitions at Temple Gallery, film screenings, and more.

The potential unintended consequences of these publicized projects relate back to classic anthropological theories of tourism, performance, and the twofold effects of cultural refiguring. Tourists bring new ways of looking at and evaluating “local” or “ethnic” or “different” cultures. In this process, they often create unequal relationships between themselves and the community. These relationships exploit residents in ways that keep the social structure more or less in tact: those particular groups “in need” of beautification and empowerment do not change. What changes is that now they have higher class spectators surveying and commending their projects. Unless they can refigure these relationships in productive and mutually beneficial ways, these two classes remain very separate and unequal.

**CONCLUSION: MENDING AND/OR CREATING COMMUNITY TENSION?**

Whether one calls it community development, upscaling, gentrification, or arts and culture tourism, the changes taking place in North Philadelphia reflect a process of branding “culturally distinct space” and selling it to outsiders. But the actual impact of NPACA is not so clear-cut, and certainly not so cold-hearted. Depending on one’s relative social location, it seems NPACA pursuits can be simultaneously viewed as either mending tension or creating it.

McConville claims that overall, NPACA has been a great bridge to people in the community and that churches and other organizations have responded positively. Future plans for the organization include partnerships with Philadelphia Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts\(^5\) and the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia.\(^6\) Richardson (Uptown) reiterates the “tension bridging” perspective. After

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\(^5\) Provides pro-bono and low cost legal assistance, educational programs, and business counseling to artists and arts and culture organizations.

\(^6\) Preservation and management of Philadelphia’s historic resources in addition to public advocacy.
working in the community for 15 years, Richardson recalls historical conflicts with Temple University. Early in the 1990s, the university had plans to become “one big Broad Street entity,” she says. Richardson remembers some people saying they moved four or five times due to expansion projects. Because of Temple’s hostile community history, the likely challenges NPACA would face appear great. Yet, Richardson views NPACA and similar efforts more constructively: “[I] hope the Alliance has a way of bridging, or one way of bridging the tensions.” She says she does not consider it a problem that NPACA hails from Temple.

While reception of NPACA appears generally positive, both McConville and Sarah (YES) refer to incidents when individuals have in fact protested. “Saw it once at a meeting...really unexpected...[Our response was] ’Ah, you’re crazy! What are you talking about?’” says McConville. In the process of shooting Finding Northadelphia, Sarah recalls:

I mean there was a day when somebody came in...I don’t want to say angry men came in, but like some people who heard we were making the video...and they kind of were really much more on the side of like “This will be gentrification, and this is the end of it!” And you know what I mean. So it was good to at least have the students hear that, and hear that that thought does exist...Whereas most people who we spoke to, even if that was their thought, never mentioned that. They wouldn’t say it to that degree with that much fervor...

Though these instances have been few, dismissing them as outliers may be discriminatory. According to Goode, the way people are given opportunities is deeply political. Speaking from her own community meeting experiences, she discusses how the “troublesome ones are gotten rid of” and often “silenced when they do speak.” Dismissing protesters as “crazy” or “troublesome” allows leaders to deflect responsibility for anxieties or injustices felt. It congeals the unequal relationships between those with the most power—developers, organizers—and those with less.

Furthermore, there is no way I could measure how accessible NPACA has actually been. When discussing an interview his students conducted, Matthew (YES) mentioned the need for residents to be more vocal in the community, but not necessarily to the point of activism per se. He referenced a Los
Angeles community that had protested the establishment of a fast food chain. But Sarah (YES) countered his example:

If you don’t want something in the community, you know, you get down and you say something about it! But my thought was just that, well, if you don’t even know something’s happening in your community...like say for instance, with the North Philadelphia Arts and Culture Alliance. If you don’t...know that it’s even in existence, like how are you to know to use it as a resource?...Like how do you build that trust in the community when, like you say, they’re affiliated with Temple University...how do you build that trust in a people, in a community?

These concerns reflect the ambiguity of NPACA and its development. It would seem mending tension and creating tension denote two very different actions. But depending on one’s relative social location, the same action (e.g. building artist loft space, developing new community services, or hosting North Philadelphia Open Houses) could be labeled very differently by different people—the same action could be viewed by one person as mending tension, and creating tension by another. This is the major implication of my findings, and it demands further analysis as NPACA expands.

**DISCUSSION**

If residents are well-informed and can achieve fair voice, I believe NPACA could mend fractures within the North Philadelphia community, especially with Temple University. But I also believe NPACA could exacerbate embedded tensions that involve issues of white privilege, gentrification, and inequality. In its efforts to refigure North Philadelphia arts and culture, NPACA has potential for both positive and damaging effects.

Unfortunately, NPACA is a small player; its direction depends on funding from larger organizations that have their own agendas. Despite its ties with Avenue of the Arts (AA)—an organization pursuing an obvious social and economic agenda—dismantling NPACA isn’t the answer. Instead, we should invest critical interest in its growth and disseminate that knowledge to Philadelphia residents, leaders, and activists. More time with NPACA leaders and local residents is essential for discerning NPACA’s next steps. On the surface, NPACA’s diverse blend of affiliates seems relatively
neutral—balanced in the sense of organization types, and presumably, in input regarding NPACA’s direction. However, because NPACA is so wide-reaching and because the prospect of convening every member at every meeting is nearly impossible, the question of affiliate “stars” arises.

In an ethnographic study of East Kensington, O’Brien (2006) considers the dangers of “neighborhood imperialism”—or domination—led by gentrifiers and finance capitalists. Looking at how community development organizations reimagine space for economic development, O’Brien tags the urban landscape a “new frontier” in which the “logic of the market” reigns supreme—and consequently, old residents and marginal workers become disposable (2006:185). This market logic is reflected in AA’s mission, and more subtly in NPACA’s mission to “establish destination.”

The difference here is the not-for-profit basis of both these organizations. But while these initiatives must equally compete for funding from larger power sources, AA was indeed a direct initiative of the city. Revitalizing Broad Street for economic gain is advantageous for the city, and thus, any extension—including NPACA—will be also. In this way, neighborhood imperialism could be taking shape, but in a different, less harshly-calculated way. “The ultimate danger of neighborhood imperialism...lies in its construction of a ‘regime of disappearance’ that elides the class continuities among gentrifier and gentrified, colonizer and colonized, worker and worker” (2006:184). Constructing an unintentional regime of class disappearance remains my largest fear for NPACA.

Throughout this paper, I oscillate between the seemingly positive and potentially damaging aspects of NPACA’s impact/s. My research and writing reflect my own vacillating outlook on NPACA—I see both potential and constraint, depending on NPACA’s given priorities and given resources at a given time. Many of my questions prompted people to imagine the direction of NPACA, since discernable neighborhood effects have yet to materialize. NPACA thus demands deliberate engagement from critical urban and public anthropologists—those dedicated to accessible scholarship and community engagement. Pursuing practices of translation between North Philadelphia groups—not just among
culture organization leaders—will be necessary for helping facilitate more “revitalizing” community development/s.

My hope is that future ethnographic research can help support and critique this process. But my foremost hope is that new research can move beyond my own inadequate conception of “the North Philadelphia community.” Over twenty different neighborhoods exist in North Philadelphia, apart from any informal community clusters within these neighborhoods. How people actually endure in the space/culture/label/apparatus/community I’ve constructed and used here—“the North Philadelphia community”—requires substantial, critical attention.
References

Arts & Business Council of Greater Philadelphia

Avenue of the Arts

Berg, Bruce L

Cerulean Arts

City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program

Countryman, Matthew J.

Goode, Judith and Joanne Schneider

Graburn, Nelson H. H.

Gupta, Akhil and James Ferguson

Li, Peter S.

Low, Setha M.
MacClancy, Jeremy

Morphy, Howard

North Philadelphia Arts and Culture Alliance

O’Brien, Robert. T.

Osteria

Philadelphia Uptown Theatre

Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia

The Village of Arts and Humanities

Youth Empowerment Services.
Appendix A
Reverend Leon H. Sullivan
1922-2001

Reverend Sullivan, Founder of OIC, the Architect of the “Sullivan Principles” and a Man of God, created a variable and effective training and employment model that has been replicated around the world. He altered the political landscape of South Africa, and in doing God’s work, created opportunities for millions to become self sufficient.

Framed poster inside Opportunities Industrialization Center
NPACA affiliate, Church of the Advocate
Linda Richardson (Uptown Entertainment and Development Corporation) guiding questions
(February 25, 2010)

1. Can you tell me a little about your history, how this organization came to be, and what it is you do?
2. What is the mission for the organization? How do you see that mission playing out?
3. Have you faced any challenges while working on this?
4. In what ways has funding affected the direction of this organization (for good or bad)?
5. What is currently happening with the Uptown Theatre?
6. Do you see an increased interest? By whom?
7. What advantages do you see the North Philadelphia Arts and Culture Alliance providing?
8. Any disadvantages or things you’re unsure about?
9. What made you say YES to becoming a member?
10. What would benefit your organization the most at this point?
11. I read plans for the theatre include a technology center, artist lofts and office space. Proposed tenants include a faith-based institution, high school, record production facility and restaurant. How are those visions playing out?
12. How do students hear about these opportunities? Or how do students become part of this group? Do parents inquire or...

13. What keeps you going and committed to the mission?

14. Have you had any conflict or struggles with community members in any way?

15. What do you hope or predict for North Philly in the coming years?

16. What kind of stories come out of a program like this?

17. Anything else you’d like to add about your organization?

Youth Empowerment Services guiding questions (February 5, 2010)

1. Can you tell me a little about your history, how you came to this organization, and what it is you do?

2. What is the mission for the organization? How do you see that mission playing out?

3. How do students become part of this organization? Generally, what is the process? (Do the parents inquire and sign them up or?)

4. What are the reasons students say they dropped out of school?

5. Is there any formal or informal follow-up after students leave?

6. What are current students doing?

7. How do the arts empower?

8. What advantages do you see the North Philadelphia Arts and Culture Alliance providing?

9. Any disadvantages or things you’re unsure about?

10. What would benefit your organization the most at this point?

11. How has funding affected (for good or bad) the direction of this organization in the last 10 years?

12. What do you know about the Alliance? Do you agree with its mission (creating North Philly as a destination for arts and culture?) What made your organization say YES to becoming a member?

13. What challenges does your organization currently face?

14. Anything else you’d like to say about your organization’s work or the Alliance?
Tina Rocha (Cerulean Arts Gallery & Studio) guiding questions (February 5, 2010)

1. Can you tell me about your history, how you came to this organization, and what it is you do?
2. What is the mission for your business? How do you see that mission playing out?
3. What advantages do you see the North Philadelphia Arts and Culture Alliance providing?
4. Any disadvantages or things you’re unsure about?
5. What would benefit your business the most at this point?
6. What do you know about the Alliance? Do you agree with its mission (creating North Philly as a destination for arts and culture?) What made you say YES to becoming a member?
7. What challenges does your business currently face?
8. Anything else you’d like to say about your business’s work or the Alliance?

Appendix C

Meredith (neighborhood artist) guiding questions (February 6, 2010)

1. Can you tell me a little about your history and what it is you do?
2. How did you come to North Philly? What advantages do you see living here? Disadvantages?
3. How would you describe what’s happening in this region?
4. How did you get involved with the North Philadelphia Arts and Culture Alliance?
5. What advantages do you see the Alliance providing?
6. Any disadvantages or things you’re unsure about?
7. What would benefit you as a local artist most at this point?
8. What do you know about the Alliance? Do you agree with its mission (creating North Philly as a destination for arts and culture?)
9. What challenges, if any, do you currently face as a North Philly artist?
10. What do you envision for this area in general?
11. Anything else you’d like to say about your work, the Alliance, or North Philly?

Judith Goode (Temple University Professor) guiding questions (January 12, 2010)

1. Avenue of the Arts: What is the history, and do you have opinions about its development?
2. Temple University: how have you seen Temple expand in North Philadelphia?
3. From your research, what can you say about Philadelphia’s urban development?
4. Who are the big drivers of this development scheme?
5. As entertainment, arts, and tourism become increasingly stressed, are there sociopolitical implications for Philadelphia residents? Like what?
6. What major attitudes about these projects have you gleaned?
7. Have neighborhood projects obscured or deflected issues of race, power, and gentrification in North Philadelphia?
8. Is cosmopolitan attraction to these projects (becoming) an issue?

Shayna McConville (North Philadelphia Arts and Culture Alliance) guiding questions

Interview 1 (December 5, 2009)

1. Can you talk about how this initiative began?
2. Who were the main voices driving it?
3. Was the Philadelphia City Planning Commission involved in any way?
4. What is the central mission?
5. What do you envision for the North Philly community?
6. How often do you meet with staff or with whom do you meet?
7. Any resistance from community members?
8. How are you advertising?
9. Any others you suggest I talk with?

Interview 2 (February 23, 2010)

1. I saw NPACA advertised Tree House Books students’ podcast presentations event- who all attended?
2. A lot of projects seem to be centered on “capturing” the voices or culture of North Philly. So many are student-led. How do you see these types of projects fitting in with the Alliance’s mission?

3. Any community or organization meetings since we last spoke?

4. On average, how many representatives attend?

5. Have any new concerns or challenged developed, as far as the Alliance’s development?

6. Has there been any new interest from other organizations?

7. Where are you looking for funding? Who would you say is your closest supporter?

8. What ideas do you have for the future?

9. What is so powerful about an arts and culture network, especially in North Philly?

10. Do you see the Alliance partnering with more “development” organizations in the future?

11. Do you see other developments happening in North Philly that complement the work your organizations are doing?

12. Potential new members?

Appendix D

NPACA Map as of April 2009
The North Philadelphia Arts and Culture Alliance is dedicated to promoting the diverse arts and culture organizations of North Philadelphia, and establishing this district as a destination for cultural, visual and performing arts. We strive to inspire professional, organizational, and cross-cultural collaboration and exchange, and to promote awareness of our resources to the surrounding community and beyond through accessible literature, programs and events.

The North Philadelphia Arts and Cultural Alliance is supported by the Samuel S. Fels Foundation and with ongoing support from Exhibitions and Public Programs, Tyler School of Art, Temple University.

www.northphillyarts.org
North of Girard Avenue

1. Art Sanctuary / Church of the Advocate
   1901 W. Diamond Street
   (215) 236-4905
   www.artsanctuary.org

2. Beech Company
   5150 Carl B. Moore Avenue
   (215) 763-9834
   www.beechmultiplex.com

3. Philadelphia Doll Museum
   2254 N. Broad Street
   (215) 763-0200
   www.phildollmuseum.com

4. Tree House Books
   1432 North Susquehanna Ave.
   (215) 236-2100
   www.treehousebooks.org

5. Uptown Theatre
   2227 N. Broad Street
   (215) 236-2100
   www.philadelphiauptowntheatre.org

6. Village of Arts and Humanities
   2544 Germantown Avenue
   (215) 235-7500
   www.villagearts.org

7. Wagner Free Institute of Science
   1700 W. Montgomery Avenue
   (215) 763-0204
   www.wagnerfreeinstitute.org

8. Youth Empowerment Services
   1221 N. Broad St., F-4
   Philadelphia, PA 19122-4021
   (215) 697-0340
   www.yes philly.org

Regions Map

South of Girard Avenue

9. The Arts Garage
   1332-35 Ridge Avenue
   (215) 806-1491
   www.theartsgarage.com

10. Caracol Art Gallery
    1205 Ridge Avenue
    (215) 234-0674
    www.caracolarts.com

11. Jaeene Rudy Dance
    1315 Broad Street
    (215) 599-4080
    www.rudeydance.org

12. Lamon Ridge Garden
    1211 Mt. Vernon Street
    (215) 732-4110
    www.lamonridgeart.org

13. Mural Art Program
    The Thomas Eakins House
    1139 Mount Vernon Street
    (215) 885-0700
    www.muralarts.org

14. Paul Green School of
    Rock Music
    1538 Brandywine Street
    (215) 988-3988
    www.schooldrock.com/
    philadelphia

15. Philadelphia Museum of
    Jewish Art
    Congregation Rodeph Shalom
    615 North Broad Street
    (215) 627-6747
    www.rodephshalom.org/
    community/museum.php

16. White Lodge Gallery
    1206 Brandywine Street,
    2nd floor
    www.blacklodgeproductions.com

Beyond North Broad Street Member Organizations

In its initial phase, the North Philadelphia Arts
and Culture Alliance is defined by the area from
Spring Garden Street to Lehigh Avenue with
North Broad Street at its core. The Alliance
boundaries will eventually extend west and
east of Broad Street to include the many other
arts and culture organizations outside of Central
Lower North Philadelphia.

Avenue of the Arts
123 South Broad Street
(215) 731-9068
www.avenueofthearts.org

Copy Gallery
319 N. 11th Street, Floor 3
www.copygallery.org

Cranie Arts
1430 North American Street
www.craniearts.org

The Flux Space
300 North Hope Street
www.thefluxspace.org

Taller Puertorriqueño
2721 North 5th Street
(215) 426-0311
www.tallerpr.org

Tiger Strikes Asteroid
319 N. 11th Street, Floor 4
www.tigerstrikesasteroid.com

Yo! Populi
319 N. 11th Street, Floor 3
(215) 236-1226
www.yopopuligallery.org

Learn more about upcoming programs
and each Alliance member at:
www.northphillyarts.org

Front image credit: A Celebration of Poetry © 2004
City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program/Patti Stanaitis.
Central Lower North Philadelphia Maps

indicating
Cerulean Arts Gallery & Studio (A), Youth Empowerment Services (B), Tyler School of Art (C), and Uptown Entertainment and Development Corporation (D)

Images courtesy Google Maps