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The creative fire: An interactional framework for rural arts-based development

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ABSTRACT

The research literature suggests that arts-based development, and rural entrepreneurship, have the potential to strengthen interactional networks that foster civic engagement, sense of community, entrepreneurship, and creative transformation. Arts business incubators, festivals, and community arts venues also present opportunities to enable collaborative network interactions that can build community capacity and support an inclusive community field. This article reviews research and case study literature to present a preliminary conceptual framework for considering the conditions that facilitate community-embedded arts-based development in rural areas—sparking a creative fire. These conditions are categorized under the community creative context, the entrepreneurial context, and the network/interactional context.

1. Introduction and conceptual framework

Arts-based development and rural entrepreneurship have been promoted as means to foster community and economic development along with civic engagement and sense of community (e.g., Clammer, 2014; Grodach, 2011; Anwar-McHenry, 2011b, 2009; Gibson, 2010, 2002; Markusen and Schrock, 2006; Gibson and Connell, 2004; Florida, 2002; Psilos and Rapp, 2001; Scott, 2000). While many different approaches have been suggested to help guide arts and entrepreneurship initiatives, communities that seek to promote such efforts need to consider whether the local context and interactional networks can actually support a creative interactional milieu. This article reviews research and case study literature to examine the role of arts initiatives in building relational networks that foster sense of community and civic engagement within an entrepreneurial and creative milieu. We propose a conceptual framework for understanding the creative, entrepreneurial, and interactional conditions that facilitate community-embedded arts-based development in rural places—sparking a creative fire. Fig. 1 summarizes our observations based on the literature review.

In our preliminary conceptual framework, inter-related community conditions (e.g., processes, community features, collective action) are categorized under the creative context, the entrepreneurial context, and the network/interactional context. The creative context delineates public arts spaces, activities, and amenities of the community that support creative development and interaction. The entrepreneurial context identifies public spaces, amenities, community attitudes, and the focus of policies that support the arts as entrepreneurship. The network/interactional context emphasizes the relational elements of the community and its processes that tie the creative and entrepreneurial contexts together as macro-level outcomes. Public arts venues, festivals, and arts business incubators appear across all three contexts as interactional spaces that support community creativity and arts entrepreneurship. Taken together, the three contexts form a dynamic community ecosystem of vertical, horizontal, and diagonal (implied, but not shown in Fig. 1) relationships that can be supportive of arts-based development. As we note in this article, power dynamics can limit inclusion, civic engagement, and sense of community, or create attitudinal or policy barriers that limit community development in favor of economic growth. Consideration of these elements in terms of how they may strengthen or weaken a community field may assist evaluation of a particular community,

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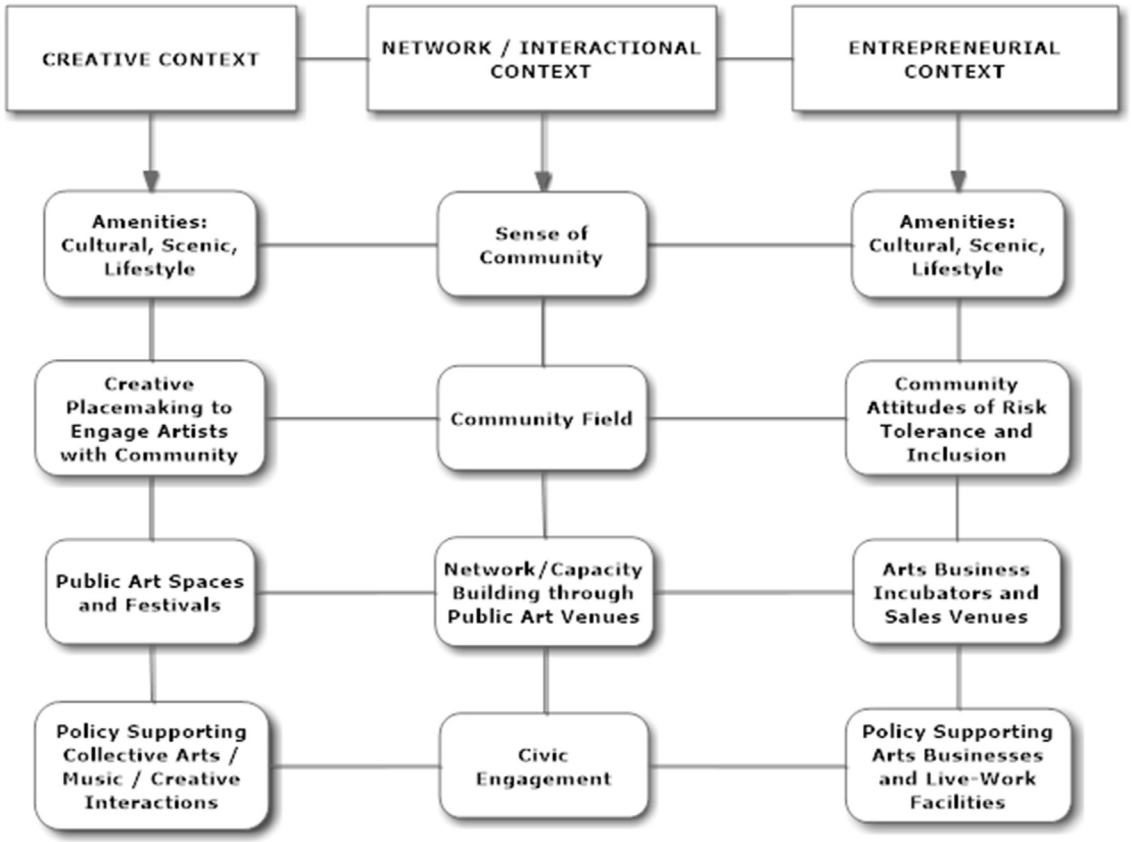

Fig. 1. Conceptual framework. Elements linking the creative, entrepreneurial, and network/interactional contexts that support arts-based community and economic development. Network/interactional relational elements and processes tie the creative and entrepreneurial contexts together as macro-level outcomes.

and social network analysis may be applied as a tool to investigate the relational networks that affect the community field. Future model building and empirical research can measure and test the extent to which these assumptions apply in particular cases.

2. Discovering fire: sense of community and arts interactions

Regular interaction in public spaces supports sense of community—a feeling of belonging and togetherness, group cohesiveness, shared values, and emotional connection (McMillan and Chavis, 1986)—and this used to be a natural byproduct of everyday agrarian society (Cochrun, 1994). The ancient Greeks believed that a sense of community, loyalty, and commitment developed out of frequent public interactions and freedom of discourse between residents of the *polis*—the city-state, or body of citizens—which was the center of political, religious, and artistic activities (Ferguson, 2005; Tonnies, 2001). The modern, rural, small town of a few thousand people is similar in size to what Aristotle and Plato considered to be the maximum effective number of engaged citizens in a polis (Ferguson, 2005; Kitto, 1957). All male citizens were expected to contribute to public debate and vote although, as today, interest in political affairs was not always high (Andrewes, 1971). Civic life included participation in politics, religious rites, ceremonial processions, dancing, athletics, equestrian displays, and theatrical festivals, all attended by both rich and poor and helping to maintain social cohesion (Deene, 2014; Ferguson, 2005; Robinson, 1995). Non-citizens excluded from political discourse at the Assembly—such as women, slaves, and visitors—still interacted with everyone else in the "democratic spaces" such as the *agora*, or marketplace, as well as exercising together in the *gymnasia* and attending religious shrines, thereby creating a shared identity and sense of community (Deene, 2014). Cultural expressions provided entertainment while also dealing with social and political issues in a diverse public forum, shaping the integration and identity of the community. Private individuals who isolated themselves from civic life were suspicious and termed *idiotes*—"of one's own self"—although this word came to have other meanings that depended on the context (Sparkes, 1998).

Many modern observers say we no longer have a strong sense of community, either in urban or rural places (e.g., Putnam, 2000; Chavis and Wandersman, 1990; McMillan and Chavis, 1986; Glynn, 1986). Sarason (1974) says the lack of a strong sense of community can result in feelings of isolation, alienation, loneliness, and depression, terming this a decline in psychological sense of community. The rise of the industrial society and urbanization were processes that conflicted with the Gemeinschaft community-of-place lifestyle, limiting the types of social interactions that produce sense of community (Cochrun, 1994; Stein, 1960; Tonnies, 2001). Local door-to-door interactions between neighbors have been overtaken by place-to-place commuter interactions between individuals and their multiple communities, reducing social dependence on the community of place where one resides (Wellman, 2001). Some observers suggest that the contemporary decline in sense of community results from an imbalance between local community-of-place interactions and dispersed community-of-interest relationships (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990; McMillan and Chavis, 1986; Glynn, 1986). Regular interactions of community members lead to a shared identity and a cohesiveness that allows the community to sustain interactions over time (Assimakopoulos and Yan, 2005; Putnam, 2000). These interactions

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are part of a process and social infrastructure that can address community needs by building and maintaining collaborative capacity (agency), active civic engagement, a collective sense of identity, and attachment to place (Brennan and Luloff, 2007; Wilkinson, 1991).

With globalization and the slow diminution of agriculture and manufacturing in rural areas, in addition to boom/bust cycles of economic activity around extraction and other industries, many rural communities have suffered from interactional problems similar to those of urban areas, resulting in low levels of civic engagement, reduced community social capital, and less attachment to place (e.g., Bridger and Alter, 2006; Luloff and Bridger, 2003; Putnam, 2000). In addition, rural areas are often burdened with youth out-migration, increased senior populations, reduced tax bases to support infrastructure improvements, longer commute times, poor employment conditions, and low levels of endogenous entrepreneurship (Hertz et al., 2014; Jensen and Jensen, 2011; Fortunato, 2011; McLaughlin and Coleman-Jensen, 2008). While some social products of community interaction are in a weakened state, this may be less a result of social isolation as it is a movement of community interactions from public spaces to private homes, where new technologies have changed the nature of social networks (Wellman, 2001; Lin, 2001). Yet many of the benefits of face-to-face public interaction have been diminished, such as civic engagement and informal discussions that promote the flow of information and ideas. Online technologies may have made it easier to maintain contacts with dispersed friends and associates, but this is still a pale shadow of the face-to-face interactions with individuals or in groups—with facial expressions, touch, and physical gestures to convey meaning—that build trust, social capital, collaboration, and innovation in place-based communities (Balfour and Alter, 2016; Healy and Morgan, 2012; Wineman et al., 2009; Allen, 2007; Allen and Henn, 2007, Wainfan and Davis, 2004; Baltes et al., 2002; Oldenburg, 1999). As in the Greek polis, can the arts be the creative fire that brings effective social interactions and social products back into public spaces, particularly in rural communities where populations are often geographically dispersed? Understanding that there are differences between rural and urban communities, how can we employ the arts with other rural advantages to promote beneficial rural transformation?

The “arts,” as the term is used here, are products of creative expression including the visual arts (painting, drawing, sculpture, photography), performing arts (theater, music, dance, film), and literary arts. However, a creative community context can also support related artisanal occupations such as crafts and culinary arts, although these businesses operate in a more functional commercial mode in relation to the marketplace. In a broader context, the arts are a visible social product resulting from interactions, including social infrastructure and organizations such as schools and government that support the production of art (Anwar-McHenry, 2011a; Firth, 1992; Wolff, 1981; Becker, 1974). Many forms of visual and performing arts are viewed in public spaces, drawing people out of their homes and prompting both social interaction and civic participation that help build sense of community (Wellman, 2001; Oldenburg, 1999; Wolff, 1981). The arts can engage communities by developing a stronger sense of place, increasing individual confidence, reducing isolation, facilitating understanding, and creating a focus for rural community development (Anwar-McHenry, 2011b; Ife and Tesorio, 2006; McQueen-Thomson et al., 2004; Matarasso, 1997). As was true of the Greek polis, public participation in the arts and community festivals are opportunities to provide both entertainment and informal interactions that reinforce social integration and cohesion (Ferguson, 2005; Anwar-McHenry, 2011b; 2009; Trewin, 2005; Williams, 1995).

Community and economic development driven by the arts are often cited as a means to stimulate local cultural assets and improve quality of life while attracting jobs, tourists, and new residents (Markusen, 2014; Markusen et al., 2013; Pearn, 2007; Markusen and Schrock, 2006; Mills and Brown, 2004; Gibson, 2002; Guetzkow, 2002). Woods (2010) gives the community regeneration example of Hay-on-Wye in Wales, a rural community with less than 2000 people, specializing in used literature with over 30 used bookstores and 80,000 visitors a year at its annual literary festival. Arts initiatives in rural communities have also demonstrated impacts that strengthen collective sense of identity, increase social and civic engagement, build resilience to inequity, improve regional economic and social networks, and promote rural sustainability in terms of revitalization, empowerment, and well-being (e.g., Anwar-McHenry, 2011b, 2009; McGranahan et al., 2011; Markusen and Johnson, 2006; Trewin, 2005; Markusen and King, 2003; Guetzkow, 2002). In addition, arts-based community development initiatives that broadly engage diverse perspectives can increase collaborative capacity through social interaction, network expansion, and trust development while increasing information flow and the potential for innovation (Balfour and Alter, 2016; Balfour, 2013; Burt, 2004; Wilkinson, 1991). Can arts-based development initiatives be the creative spark to ignite a creative fire in rural communities, essentially acting as the arts did in the Greek polis to motivate public engagement with the community?

3. Finding wood for the fire: sustainable rural advantage

While many studies have examined the beneficial effects of creative placemaking in urban communities to attract cultural entrepreneurs and stimulate collateral businesses in the larger ecosystem, rural communities have often been overlooked until recently (McGranahan et al., 2011; Grodach, 2011; Anwar-McHenry, 2011b, 2009; Gibson, 2010, 2002; Bell and Jayne, 2010; Markusen and Schrock, 2006; Gibson and Connell, 2004; Florida, 2002; Psilos and Rapp, 2001; Scott, 2000). Working artists, particularly those who are younger or involved in the performing arts, often seek out urban communities to pursue their work. However, 48 percent of US artists, as reported in the 2000 Census, are also self-employed and mobile, and many seek the amenities of rural areas (Markusen and Schrock, 2006). Rural areas near large metropolitan centers are also sought out by artists for affordable housing, low costs of living, natural amenities, and reasonable transportation access to urban environments (Fleming, 2009; Mitchell et al., 2004; Bunting and Mitchell, 2001). White (2010) notes that 24 percent of cultural and creative employment in the European Union (EU) is located in rural areas with small populations. Recognizing the opportunity, the EU is promoting smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth through creative sector businesses at all regional and municipal scales and stages of development (Naldi et al., 2015; Jakob and Van Heur, 2015; European Commission, 2012), stating that the cultural and creative sector grew faster than the general European economy from 1996 to 2003 (European Commission, 2012).

While rural communities may have fewer concentrated financial or educational assets compared to urban areas, arts initiatives need not be large to provide community benefit, nor do they need to be initiated by local elites to succeed (Grodach, 2011). In rural areas, raising the visibility of local artists to the community through arts festivals and exhibitions, or expanding artists' professional networks and capabilities by providing physical facilities to serve as arts venues, are all arts-based development initiatives that can be driven by small groups of citizens to build stronger communities (Grodach, 2011; Markusen and Gadwa, 2010). These public venues for the arts can also become informal collaborative and creative free

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spaces that promote the growth of engaged communities by drawing people from their homes and businesses to interact with their neighbors (Currid, 2007; Boyte, 2004; Farrell, 2001; Oldenburg, 1999). An example of a successful arts initiative, in a small US town of 1199 people, is the New York Mills Regional Cultural Center (NYMRCC) in Otter Tail County, Minnesota, which contains the town of New York Mills.

Markusen and Johnson (2006) provide a detailed rural case study of the NYMRCC. The town of New York Mills has no college, little tourism (other than arts), and is about 3.5 h northwest of major US cities. Housed in a renovated 1885 building on Main Street, NYMRCC has a store, two galleries, a large performance/exhibition/classroom space, rooms for visiting artists, and is adjacent to a bakery. It was started by one artist in the late 1980s who moved into the area, got to know his farmer neighbors, and started a non-profit artist's retreat in a refurbished farmhouse with the help of community members. He organized a board of directors reflecting local demographics, half of them over sixty, including some with backgrounds in art, education, and government, and the board convinced the local bank to lend him the money for the renovation in 1990. He then formed a partnership with the city council, meeting with initial resistance, to create the regional cultural center under the status of an economic development project. A downtown building was donated, alongside several other abandoned buildings, and renovated by local workers using donations from the city council, community members, and private foundations. Visiting artists volunteer 15 h a week in the community, typically teaching at the high school or on community arts projects. By providing opportunities such as exhibitions, performances (local and traveling groups), workshops/classes (skills and arts business), artist networking events, retail space, and continually reaching out to broaden its audiences, the NYMRCC has substantial community support. It is also the hub of a burgeoning regional arts network in an area with limited arts opportunities, and is noted for building a sense of community and encouragement for artists and their careers. The population growth to 1199 was twice the projected estimate by the city council prior to the center's construction. Seventeen new businesses opened and employment increased by 40 percent.

In the rural context, arts-based development may help to address social issues that are common in rural US communities. Youth out-migration continues to exacerbate the brain drain in rural areas, whether due to high unemployment rates and nonstandard work, high poverty rates, or because high-achievers leave town to seek urban college educations, after which they are less likely to return (Hertz et al., 2014; Jensen and Jensen, 2011; McLaughlin and Coleman-Jensen, 2008). In-migration of retirees, young families, and mid-life career changers is insufficient for many rural communities to withstand natural population loss and out-migration over the long-term (McGranahan et al., 2010; Carr and Kefalas, 2009). Some distressed post-industrial communities in the US, such as Oil City, Pennsylvania and Paducah, Kentucky have addressed the issue of population loss through artist relocation programs—a targeted approach to creative placemaking that uses incentives such as low-cost housing, zoning for live/work spaces, below-market rents to attract professional artists (Perritt, 2013).

Beyond the developed countries, arts education and entrepreneurial development initiatives have helped communities in Southeast Asia and Africa recover from civil war and genocide while creating rural employment and social healing. Clammer (2014) provides case studies in Cambodia and Rwanda. In post-Khmer Rouge Cambodia, a master weaver from Japan re-introduced traditional textile arts to village women. These women achieved financial independence through weaving, selling their products through local retail stores and creating local demand for silk farming to supply the looms. In Rwanda, scarred by a recent history of genocide, a local artist started the Ivuka Arts Center Kigali in 2007 as a workshop and gallery for young artists, including women and orphans, to develop their skills and sell their work. The original artists managed to survive on the earnings from their art, and many of them have become internationally recognized through exhibits in Rwanda, the US, and the UK. Arts programs such as these can cultivate new economic opportunities as the next section illustrates.

4. Oxygen for the fire: arts, innovation, and the entrepreneurial context

The link between innovation and entrepreneurship is a theme that has been examined in depth since the writings of Schumpeter (1934), who viewed entrepreneurship as a process of *creative destruction.* In stark contrast to a classical view of entrepreneurship that sees entrepreneurs as efficient allocators of resources (leading to more efficient market outcomes) or as economic actors that use available resources and knowledge to create marginal utility from their surroundings, Schumpeterian entrepreneurs use disruptive innovation to shatter old markets into obsolescence, creating entirely new market spaces that are more beneficial to society (Mitra, 2012). By creating new markets, old ones are destroyed, along with the entrenched, burdensome institutional knowledge that keeps rebellious new ideas from emerging (sometimes called "path dependence" or "lock-in," (e.g., David, 2005; Liebowitz and Margolis, 1995; Arthur, 1994)). In the wake of disappointing, mixed results produced by industrial recruitment strategies (Turner, 2003; Boothroyd and Davis, 1993), entrepreneurship is gaining new ground as a widely-used strategy for economic development at the national (Acs and Szerb, 2007; Carland and Carland, 2004) and local/regional levels, including rural areas (Dabson, 2007). However, it must be noted that not all entrepreneurship is the same, and the economic growth fueled by entrepreneurs is neither consistent nor widely shared (Acs and Armington, 2006), and too much faith in the "growth" benefits of entrepreneurship over its other, myriad benefits may be misplaced (Fortunato and Alter, 2015). The connection between entrepreneurship and the development of the community—both economically and in terms of experienced well-being and equitable opportunity—is far more complex.

To see this idea in action, it should be noted that high job- and revenue-growth businesses make up only a very small share of new business activity, and often reflect some of the riskiest business models. High-growth, job-creating entrepreneurship is spatially concentrated (Acs and Mueller, 2008) and typically occurs among a very small number of firms that are capable of providing many new jobs (Henrekson and Johansson, 2010). Even though fast-growing "gazelles" tend to be younger in age, Acs et al. (2008) found that high-impact firms (those with sales doubling within a four-year period) were still about 25 years old on average. There may be a temptation among development professionals to support fast-growth entrepreneurship, with the idea that this growth will spill over into more job creation and higher incomes, and the development of a more well-rounded community (with cultural amenities including arts-based and grassroots business) following suit. However, many communities are taking an inverse approach, following Florida's (2002) *creative class* idea that talented people are attracted to places that exude a sense of creative vibrancy, diversity, economic vitality, and a youthful atmosphere. Florida's ideas have been criticized roundly for suggesting policy that views the culture of young, educated (and mostly white) elites as ascendant, exacerbating inequality and gentrification (see McCann, 2007

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for just one example). However, the idea that creative professionals and entrepreneurs are attracted by scenic, cultural, and lifestyle amenities—including some rural areas—has been supported repeatedly in the literature (McGranahan et al., 2011; Sopuck, 2003; Beyers and Lindahl, 1996).

Put a different way, the *entrepreneurial context* matters. The entrepreneurial context—sometimes called the entrepreneurial *milieu,* or *framework conditions*—may be thought of as the confluence of individualistic or firm-based action, internally- and externally-situated opportunities, and institutional pathways, from formal institutions and leadership to informal drivers like culture and local norms (Fortunato and Alter, 2011). Much of the entrepreneurship literature focuses on the actions of individuals or firms launching businesses under conditions of uncertainty, or on how individuals or firms maximize, identify, or create opportunity. A lesser focus has been the supportive context of entrepreneurship, or that entrepreneurship itself is culturally situated. This idea has been widely explored at the level of the nation-state, and is an ongoing focus of forces driving different entrepreneurship rates and outcomes through the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) (see Singer et al., 2015 for the latest global report). Even in a local sense, Julien (2007) states the entrepreneurial context (or milieu) "is both a place and the collective mechanism that explains and facilitates various social ties, allowing a collective entrepreneurial spirit to blossom and providing the basic resources, including information and tools needed to transform it into knowledge, to meet the challenges of the new economy … The milieu is the factor that best explains why some territories lag behind others and why some decline" (p. 116). Others, including Hustedde (2007), have stressed the importance of local culture, as broadly defined, in determining whether or not entrepreneurship is respected, feasible, or appropriate, including risk tolerant and inclusive attitudes. Without seeking to generalize the culture of communities deeply enriched by the arts, it follows logically that a local context supportive of the arts—whose advancement and proliferation depends upon taking creative risks and respecting new points of view—would be likely to support entrepreneurial action on similar grounds.

When conditions are ripe—an entrepreneurial context combined with attractive natural amenities—artists and creative professionals may seek out rural areas that would otherwise remain stagnant or decline (McGranahan et al., 2011). Communities that are high in artistic amenities may therefore draw more entrepreneurs overall, and culturally support their efforts once they arrive —an important outcome of an arts-based development strategy. An entrepreneurial context supports the growth of businesses of a range of sizes, so we need not think of an arts business as employing only one artist, and should consider the interactions between multiple businesses that benefit a community. If rural arts businesses can be created and sustainably maintained with the support of arts incubators that provide community workspace and train artists in business skills, an entrepreneurial context can be created or strengthened to develop and attract creative employment, slowing youth-outmigration and creating a reason for college-trained artists to return to and/or come to rural communities. Arts employment and arts initiatives are forms of sustainable development because they focus on both near-term and long-term improvements in collaborative capacity, civic engagement, youth arts education, aesthetic connections to nature, and inclusive perspectives that bridge class, ethnic, and power divisions in the community (Grodach, 2011; Markusen and Gadwa, 2010; Fleming, 2009; Reardon, 2005; Gibson, 2010; Adams and Goldbard, 2001; Matarasso, 1997).

While it is often easiest for communities to initially understand the value of the arts through their economic impacts, the benefits derived through increased social interaction and civic engagement driven by arts initiatives may often have the greatest effect (Gibson, 2010; Williams, 1995). So, how does arts-based development foster community engagement and transformation?

5. Fanning the flames: community engagement and the arts for transformation

Arts-based community development initiatives provide a means for transformational creative forces to exert pressure on social systems through interactions that strengthen sense of community and civic engagement while shaping the public identity of the individual. A focus on the arts may also be an important *input* to making communities more entrepreneurial and innovative, and following Schumpeterian *creative destruction,* may also partially replace older cultural pathways supporting stability and path dependence with new enclaves that support exploration, creativity, and collective risk-taking. This notion shifts the discussion from one of simply attracting talent from the outside, toward a process of creative transformation through which like-minded creative individuals create networks, grow their sphere of interest, and begin to have an impact on the society and spaces around them.

Establishing, renewing, or maintaining a creative context through social interactions is one of the keys to addressing community transformation. As Simmel (1976) observes, the creativity that results from collective cultural efforts ("life") exists in both an interdependent and an antagonistic relationship with cultural systems—the institutional "forms" that are the products of creative dynamism. Cultural forms can only survive as the product of creative inputs, but these are also the forces that change and destroy them. Simmel characterizes the process of cultural change, dependent on cultural creativity, as a cycle between "death and rebirth, rebirth and death" (1976, p.224). A problem that Simmel (1976) identifies is that cultural creativity can develop and evolve faster than the inflexible institutions it creates, leaving the two unsynchronized and resulting in a *cultural malaise*. The cultural malaise is an interruption in cultural evolution through a lack of social innovation; a type of stagnation where standardization wins out over individuality. When this occurs, the individual breaks away from collective creativity and acts only in their own self-interest, resulting in gradual self-destruction of both the cultural system and individual's creative relationship to social life. When the creative context of social interaction is weakened or missing, a community stagnates and becomes less capable of adapting to change (Nedelmann, 1991). Mills (1987) also suggests that the source of creative progress is the interaction of multiple perspectives, where people are in contact with those dissimilar to themselves who think and act in different ways. In effect, a lack of interaction degrades the creative context in community and sets it on a path toward destruction.

Competition and the notion of outsiders can create a sense of belonging to a community through social, political, or economic solidarity (Weber, 1946; as cited in Wild, 1981), but this could be viewed as either a positive or negative effect. For example, community support of local sports creates a sense of belonging and pride of place by establishing supporters of other teams as outsiders, potentially limiting bond formation between places (Anwar-McHenry, 2009; Tonts, 2005). However, the arts can provide a means to dissolve such boundaries and engage wider audiences (Waitt and Gibson, 2013; Anwar-McHenry, 2011a). Competitive sporting events, where the fans of two clearly defined teams are present in a public space, are more likely to provoke violence and aggression (Tonts, 2005) than the typical arts exhibition. In effect, the arts offer an antithesis to boundary maintenance promoted by sports, allowing regional bond formation and sense of belonging to emerge.

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The engagement of artists with the rest of the community can also introduce new elements of creativity applied to local challenges. This is the principle behind creative placemaking efforts (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010) and other approaches that integrate the arts with daily life (Mayes, 2010). An example of this type of interaction is provided by Fleming (2009) of rural Chatham, North Carolina, with many arts events and activities where artists have engaged in both community and economic development. Artists with metalworking skills, who had originally collaborated on building life-size chess sets from scrap metal, later joined together to start a biodiesel facility for vehicle fuel. The biodiesel plant also serves to draw visitors to the grounds with a sculpture garden and dance performances, providing an open public space for community interaction. This facility is an example of the boundary-crossing and development of sense of belonging inspired by arts activities that reach out to youth and rural residents to create personal connections to arts and environmental activities (Waitt and Gibson, 2013).

The role of arts initiatives in building engaged social interactions serves both the purposes of expressive individuality and support of communality, creating new interdependencies, relationships, and processes. The creative process helps to drive innovation and the progressive modification or destruction of existing cultural and institutional forms through the expansion of inclusive social networks that build collaborative agency. One means of analyzing these network interactions is to view them as ongoing processes that can be interpreted through their effects on community well-being and belonging.

6. Building a bonfire: interactional fields and community initiatives

Community-based arts programs and the community processes they entail can be powerful catalysts for social change leading to network expansion and development of viable, healthy communities (Anwar-McHenry, 2011b; Markusen and Johnson, 2006; Guetzkow, 2002; Williams, 1995). Community processes are interactions of individuals and their effect on community. Wilkinson (1991) provides a conceptual definition of community as a social interaction process with individuals and groups working together toward commonly held goals. This interaction process in local society contributes "directly and positively to the social well-being of local residents" (p.61), particularly when interaction for the greater good of the community leads to higher-order feelings of belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization. The emergent community process that arises from these intentional collective actions is the interactional community field.

Interactional field theory provides insights into both the theory and practice of community formation and development. The community field relates to local society and its multiple social fields. Theodori (2005) refers to community as a "local society" phenomenon, in which the local society is an area where the "population meets its daily needs and encounters shared problems" (p.663). Local societies contain several *social fields*, or interest groups, defined by Wilkinson (1991, 1970) as a process of social interaction through time directed toward a specific outcome, also noting that the elements and structure of the social field are dynamic. Theodori (2005) notes that, as a process, a "social field is characterized by a sequence of actions over time carried on by actors generally working through various associations" (p.663). Sharp (2001) gives the example of a single social field oriented toward improving community health care, with actors and associations engaged in building a community clinic. An arts organization may just be a social field with a specific interest, such as creating public art, unless it plays a larger role in coordinating and catalyzing collective action across multiple social fields in a community.

A *community field* overlaps multiple social fields in the community with a more general role of coordinating collective action. Wilkinson (1991) states that the community field coordinates and organizes multiple social action fields, but pertains more to structure and creating linkages than to specific goals such as economic development or health care. An arts-based development initiative would be intended to link and coordinate multiple social fields with overlapping common interests, building collaborative capacity and structure that can be applied to a variety of projects and networks over time. According to Wilkinson (1970), the activities and interactions of this type of community-driven initiative, which coordinates and conducts development across a variety of interest areas, presents a convenient focus for study of the community field.

Wilkinson (1991) observes that the development of the community field is the goal of community development. The main value of this process lies in the actions of community members in working collectively toward a common goal, along with the resulting interdependencies and relationships that develop, whether or not they are successful in achieving their goal. From the interactional perspective of community development, the community field is strengthened by finding the points of intersection between groups around which actions occur and linkages can be made (Bridger and Alter, 2006; Luloff and Bridger, 2003). However, not all community members will have equal access to the community field, and Brennan and Israel (2008) note that an interactional field also provides a process by which community members can collect power or interact with elites in such a way as to alter the community through control of decision-making processes. Even so, community field theory provides a framework for studying community processes of interaction that can be modified or enhanced to improve the community and coordinate the activities of multiple social fields for the common good. As a community development analysis tool, the community field concept shifts the focus from organizations to human relationships and networks of interaction among individuals.

Wilkinson, (1991, 1970) stated that the process of community development attempts to strengthen local capacity for community action through the improvement of social networks. These improvements are effected through interactional ties that link social fields, while also developing trust relationships that can be leveraged as a social capital resource. Sharp et al. (2003) note that an understanding of strengths and limitations of a community field is required for effective guidance on improving the relationships that generate the field. However, reaching this understanding can be problematic. While crosscutting linkages among social fields are considered important for a strong and effective community field (Wilkinson, 1991; Bridger and Luloff, 1999; Theodori, 2005), evaluation normally relies on indirect subjective interpretation, and attempts at direct measurement of the community field through its networks have been limited (e.g., Balfour and Alter, 2016; Balfour, 2013; Sharp et al., 2003; Sharp, 2001). If civic engagement is studied in the process of launching arts-based development initiatives, direct measurement of social networks may provide insight into community field social mechanics. This insight may make it easier for practitioners to understand differences and power dynamics among private and public interests, as well as social fields. Practitioners might then use this interactional understanding to identify and engage a diversity of stakeholders for community support and improvement. This diversity of stakeholders will include businesses, so the community field still has potential to be dominated by growth machine activities that are a primary focus of community politics (Sharp et al., 2003; Molotch, 1976). This also means that separate social fields for business and arts may have only weak links and remain essentially separate if business goals

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conflict with community quality of life goals (Whitt, 1989). If social network dynamics are better understood in relation to the community field, it may be possible to minimize or help balance these network and community dominance issues that limit community field growth (Balfour and Alter, 2016; Balfour, 2013; Sharp et al., 2003). The establishment of broad, long-term, diverse, arts-based community development initiatives may provide an efficient means for business, cultural, government, and other interests to support network growth of an inclusive community field in line with local values.

7. Sparking the creative fire despite limitations

In addition to the limitations noted in the previous section on understanding and guiding community field mechanisms, new and established artists may struggle with the practicalities of funding and the social production of art, and their choices have ramifications for their communities. As a social product, art is located within social structures, and therefore affected by them (Wolff, 1981). Society shapes the artist, and the artist shapes society through creative interaction. Although the role of the artist tends to be idealized by society as the non-forced and truly expressive action of a self-actualized individual (Wolff, 1981; Marx and Engels, 1973), a capitalist system either forces the artist to be self-supporting through sales in the market, government patronage in the form of grants, or by working in other occupations to support their artistic practice. As Vazquez (1973) observes, market-oriented arts practice places restrictions on the artist that can stifle creative potential. However, this can also be viewed as a matter of survival as an artist. Employment in arts sectors such as the visual and performing arts tends to create a market oriented toward the self-employed and those who are available to work part-time with flexible hours who are the least likely to find job security (Grodach, 2011; Throsby, 2008; McLaughlin and Coleman-Jensen, 2008; Currid, 2007; Lloyd, 2006; Markusen and Schrock, 2006). As noted by Simmel (1990), more money also provides more freedom of action. If the money that the artist earns is then spent in the community where they reside, they provide another form of benefit that increases freedom of action for the community. That same artist may also create a business that hires more artists and other employees, and that business would diffuse money through the local business ecosystem, creating more freedom of action in the community.

As with other self-employed occupations, networking and relational ties are often the key for artists to find work, collaborators, project funding, sponsors, special tools or equipment, and increased access to new markets or sales channels (Grodach, 2011; Markusen and Johnson, 2006; Evans, 2001; Scott, 2000). As a focal point of community cultural activity, the social elements of arts centers and incubators provide networking, mentoring, and career development opportunities, but they also serve as public venues for social interaction and information exchange that build social capital to strengthen community (Grodach, 2011; Stern and Seifert, 2010; Currid, 2007; Boyte, 2004; Fleming, 2004; Evans, 2001; Oldenburg, 1999; Williams 1995). However, commodification of arts and cultural activity in communities, as when there is too much of a focus on cultural tourism development or place marketing to increase investment, can harm the potential for development of social and cultural links that build community (Williams, 1995). To build this potential while avoiding too much of a focus on commodification, the arts sector can either drive community arts initiatives from the bottom up or work with community organizations and government to empower and develop a variety of stakeholders engaged in cultural outcomes beneficial to the broadest segment of the community (Phillips, 2004; Mayo, 2000). In this way, the arts sector builds on community assets to improve capacity and quality of life (Green and Haines, 2002; Kretzman and McKnight, 1993).

While we may speak of the ability of art to transform community or society, we also have to consider who has access to the arts. Power in modern society is based on economic position and relationship to the means of production, so the ideas of the ruling class tend to dominate, both in art (Wolff, 1981) and the tastes of the leisure class (Veblen, 1902). As noted by Bourdieu (1993), works of art are only appreciated by those who can understand them, resulting from a long process driven by the social institutions of education and family. Formal education transmits and reinforces the culture of the dominant class, with higher levels of knowledge associated with the more refined and academically accepted matters of aesthetics. This cultural capital, as with other forms of capital, is distributed unequally and perpetuates social differences (Throsby, 1999; Bourdieu, 1993). Those who lack the cultural capital developed through academic and family social processes tend to be segregated as inferior if they create or interact with art, just as an academic credential for an artist or an art critic is used to legitimize them as being superior (Bourdieu, 1993; Weber, 1946). Most museums and galleries, particularly in urban places, establish a psychological barrier of elitism that maintains distance from those with low cultural capital outside the physical barriers of their doors. As museum attendance has become more important for their survival, many museums have started to break down this psychological barrier by creating new educational and outreach programs, also providing live entertainment, restaurant access, or other public events in the evenings so that people who work during the day can attend. These targeted programs provide a gradual exposure to art, both for children and adults, in an attempt to educate the public in appreciation of the arts. Similar strategies can be used, perhaps more effectively, in non-metro areas where gradual exposure to the arts can be provided in a context where an engaged community feels more ownership and interest in arts facilities as public gathering places. The Greek polis used its agora marketplace, religious rites, and public entertainment as means to maintain civic engagement and capacity that supported public life outside of political debate. As public gathering places, permanent arts facilities, such as arts centers or incubators, that serve food or drinks all day and evening, hold classes open to the entire community at all levels of skill, or train artists to better understand and work with the marketplace also help to build cultural capital to benefit both the individual and the broader community. Where formal organizations bring people with similar interests together, public gathering places promote informal communication and interaction that enhance the social aspects of community and relationship networks while fostering civic engagement and new ideas (Farrell, 2001; Oldenburg, 1999).

In rural communities where a permanent arts facility may take longer to develop due to limited resources, arts festivals or cultural celebrations can be used to develop collaborative problem-solving skills and capacity for collective action, and these can become annual events to maintain social ties (Borrup, 2011). As in the Greek polis, regular festivals and cultural celebrations can also serve as an informal and semi-ritualistic activity to create a shared identity, maintain social bonds, and create cultural capital (Fleming, 2004; Caves, 2000; Bourdieu, 1986; 1984). An additional benefit of regular community festivals and cultural events is that they reduce social isolation and build relational ties across ethnic and social class divisions, especially in immigrant communities (Borrup, 2011).

What types of arts-based economic development strategies are most appropriate to spark a creative fire in rural communities? Traditional economic development organizations focus on

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attracting businesses, investment, and tourists and most often operate without recognizing potential overlaps, conflicts, or common issues they share with local arts agencies charged with supporting the arts sector (Grodach, 2010; Markusen and Gadwa, 2010). Based on observations of big city strategies in the US, Grodach (2010) delineates a typology of four cultural economy models and policies separate from traditional economic development strategies: 1) *Creative Cities* that aim to attract mobile "creative class" talent, 2) *Cultural Industries* that use agglomeration/cluster approaches, 3) *Cultural Occupations* that use permanent facilities such as arts centers and incubators to develop arts networks and local capacity, and 4) *Cultural Planning* approaches that use asset mapping for place-based community development and local capacity building, similar to asset-based community development (Kretzman and McKnight, 1993).

Cultural Planning maps cultural assets as networks of existing resources and arts organizations to address neighborhood-level problems and build community capacity (Evans and Foord, 2008; McNulty, 2005; Evans, 2001; Grogan and Mercer, 1995). The *Cultural Occupations* model concentrates on the needs and characteristics of artists rather than arts industries, emphasizing policy that supports artists through affordable live-work spaces, arts centers and incubators that help artists network and become more skilled at running their businesses. This model also emphasizes distribution of financial support to smaller arts organizations, adding to the multiplier effect derived from artist networks and sales of their work (Markusen and Schrock, 2006; Markusen and Johnson, 2006). *Cultural Industries* proponents focus on the needs of arts industries as interlocking clusters of high-risk production businesses that mostly rely on part-time and contract workers, emphasizing policy that minimizes risk while building creative labor markets, training creative workers, networking, infrastructure, and marketing (Grodach, 2011; Pratt, 2005; Scott, 2000).

Creative Cities/economy proponents such as Richard Florida (2002) in the US popularized the idea of creating amenable community environments to attract workers in creative occupations, rather than industries, also noting that communities without such amenities would lose these workers due to their largely self-employed and mobile nature. The focus here is on cities attracting creative workers who are skilled and educated, but the "creative class" term for these workers covers a wide range of occupations that include categories such as accountants, managers, and software engineers along with visual and performing artists. There are many critics of the creative cities approach, noting that Florida's creative city ideas have had a major influence on urban policies while reinforcing neoliberal agendas, promoting the interests of elite groups, increasing socioeconomic inequalities, and prompting the government-supported gentrification of core urban zones (Markusen, 2014; Grodach, 2010; Ponzini and Rossi, 2010; Long, 2009; Peck, 2005; Gibson and Klocker, 2005). There is also a questionable basis for Florida's statistical inferences (Sacco et al., 2014; Markusen and Gadwa, 2010; Hoyman and Faricy, 2009), although an analysis by McGranahan and Wojan (2007) found an association between creative class presence in rural counties and rural job growth where natural amenities were plentiful and entrepreneurship was common. In most cases, creative city ideas have been implemented as place-marketing tools or as trendy jargon to support traditional economic development strategies that continued as before (Grodach, 2010).

Of these cultural economy models, the emphasis on individual artists in the *Cultural Occupations* approach, and the emphasis on permanent arts facilities such as arts centers and incubators in the *Cultural Planning* approach—which leverages community asset mapping—are most applicable for arts-based economic development on the scale of small communities (Sacco et al., 2014; Grodach, 2011; Markusen, 2014; Markusen and Johnson, 2006). In particular, rural business incubators often have to take a regional approach with their programs because their intended clients can be widely distributed, local markets may be limited, resources may need to be aggregated from a larger area for enough support, and there can be a limited pool of experts to draw from as business advisors (Lair and Adkins, 2013).

8. Wildfire: too much success

Some outcomes of arts-based development could be perceived as negative in specific contexts. Research needs to continue to substantiate most claims of positive or negative outcomes resulting from arts-based strategies, whether urban or rural. Some strategies will certainly work better than others to achieve either economic or community development goals within the restrictions of the a particular socioeconomic and cultural environment, which is why strategies such as asset mapping are needed to localize development models in collaboration with community members providing input as to their needs, values, and goals. But, if all goes well, can there be too much of a good thing in some communities?

As an example, Cochrun (1994) points out that a sense of community can be too strong. Vigilante groups demonstrate strong solidarity as they attack and intimidate their victims to protect the community. Residents may love their walled neighborhoods and fences that keep undesirables out rather than dealing with community issues of crime and poverty (McMillan and Chavis, 1986). Communities that depend on networks of strong relational ties may feel a great sense of community as it stagnates due to a lack of weak tie interactions with others outside the family who have different perspectives and ideas (Granovetter, 1983, 1973).

While endogenous arts-based economic development strategies may seek to develop home-grown arts business that will remain at home when they succeed, perhaps also reducing the flow of youth out-migration, a stimulating arts environment can also prompt in-migration. Perceptions of a rural mystique remain salient even in modern, urbanized American society, and experiencing rurality first-hand can be transformative for the urbanite eager to explore the mystique of simpler times and stronger interpersonal ties in rural places (Willits et al., 2016). In the storytelling tradition of the healing myth, the traveler who feels some sort of psychological or emotional imbalance leaves home on a journey of learning and healing, returning home transformed (Campbell, 1972), but their perceived bond with rural places may also hold them there as new residents. Smith and Phillips (2001) have described how rural places are "theaters of consumption" (Leiss et al., 1986) that may be crafted, marketed, and sold to middle class urbanites seeking a source of identity and sense of place. These in-migrants may then bring their idealized vision of rural living along with them, appropriating a romanticized historical perspective on rural life (Urry, 1995) from which they may exclude existing residents that they displace or marginalize (Smith and Phillips, 2001; Murdoch and Day, 1998). However, there continues to be a gap in our understanding of why gentrification occurs in some rural communities and not in others (Fleming, 2009; Smith and Phillips, 2001).

Causal explanations linking job growth and gentrification to cultural industries in cities also remain under-tested and difficult to compare because most are based on descriptive individual case studies or correlations not based on causal models of arts-based development (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010). Describing Manhattan, Zukin (1982) characterized arts activities as the bringers of gentrification to be exploited by developers, who would then increase housing prices and market pressures to displace those with lower incomes, such as the artists themselves. Stern and Seifert (1998) responded with a detailed study of 94 Philadelphia

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neighborhoods, finding that those with more artists and participation in the arts experienced more revitalization than those without, and there was no clear evidence of racial or ethnic displacement. Stern and Seifert went on to suggest that cultural investments in places that lack generalized housing market pressures show no signs of gentrification, but do nurture bonding and bridging social capital while achieving both growth and equity goals, increasing incomes, lowering crime rates, and stabilizing diversity (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010; Stern and Seifert, 2010, 1998). Fleming (2009) suggests that rent controls and community land trusts have been successful in maintaining affordable housing for artists as well as other low-income residents who might otherwise be subject to increasing market pressures, and these can be built into arts-based development strategies from their inception.

9. Where there is smoke: conclusion

The monumental edifice of the modern urban museum can look like a fortress of culture to the public uninitiated in the mysteries of art through education or upbringing. Bourgeois society deposits its most sacred relics in these austere civic temples of religious silence, which then strengthen the feeling of belonging among the elite and the feeling of exclusion among the working class who sense barriers to entry even though the museum is open to the public (Bourdieu, 1993). On a smaller scale, art in rural places might serve the same function if it is only intended as a commodity to be consumed by the cultured local or visiting urbanite. These potential cultural barriers are the smoke that can obscure a creative community fire. Arts-based development initiatives must be accessible to the broadest cross-section of the community from the earliest planning stages to avoid exclusion and reduce the obstacles to enhanced sense of community and greater well-being. Excessive commodification of place and cultural goods can have negative socio-economic effects on community, but Fleming (2009) reminds us that creativity and economics are intertwined, artists must become businesspeople to have a career in art, a stronger economy means more support for the arts, and creativity promotes a vibrant society. If entrepreneurship can be viewed broadly as launching something new amidst uncertainty, the same skills required to create noteworthy art may translate readily into skills for reinvigorating local economies through the launch of a variety of creative ventures—some related to art, and some creative in other ways.

In terms of community development, the arts can serve the same function as it did in the Greek polis, supporting frequent interaction in public places, along with political debate and ceremonial processions (e.g., parades), to foster a stronger sense of community. Greek citizens cared enough about their communities and neighbors to prioritize civic engagement and the public good over private concerns, despite the exclusion of women and slaves from public debate, and the arts supported these values through the medium of cultural entertainment. The citizens of modern rural communities are exposed to more distractions that draw their attention away from politics and public issues (Dewey, 1991), but the provision of cultural entertainment in public places can still draw people from their homes and businesses, increasing the potential for new relational ties, a stronger community field, and greater collaborative capacity (Currid, 2007; Boyte, 2004; Farrell, 2001; Oldenburg, 1999). Furthermore, it exposes community members to a range of new experiences requiring the mind to remain open and flexible, offering alternative perspectives of the world from those historically encountered in everyday discourse. Unless it is limited by exclusionary local elites, the communal nature of the arts welcomes community members into this fold, whether it be as fellow artists or engaged spectators. In their study of activities that build social capital, Putnam and Feldstein (2003) concluded that the arts represent the most significant forum in America for rebuilding community, offering safe spaces for cultural experiences and community dialogue that make citizen participation fun. Perhaps the creative fire of arts-based public interaction is not so much a new idea as a remembered idea.

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