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University Creative Placemaking: Insights from UBC Students

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University of British Columbia

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Themes: Community, Buildings, Wellbeing

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University creative placemaking: insights from UBC students

University of British Columbia - Department of Geography

In Coordination with SEEDS Sustainability, UBC Arts & Culture District, and
Campus & Community Planning

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Executive Summary

This report analyzes creative placemaking methods by investigating how students in formal and informal campus arts and culture produce and perform creative space at UBC. This research question was developed through a review of creative placemaking literature, and discussions with our campus partners. Based on our review of the literature, we distilled three major considerations that informed our methods. Firstly, we conceptualized creative placemaking as the production and transformation of a “sense of place” through artistic and cultural activity, rather than a specific strategy. Secondly, we determined the need for a critical approach that considered how student arts and culture participants and their activities are structured by contextual barriers. Finally, we recognized the need to understand which actors were involved in student creative placemaking, and what their roles were.

To understand the experiences, attachments and narratives of students we used focus groups, sketch mapping exercises and surveys as our methods. Our participant demographic consisted of students who self-described as someone engaged with campus arts and culture, often in the role of creators, organizers or facilitators. Participants were gathered through purposive network sampling. During focus groups, students were asked questions about their experiences with arts and culture on campus. Sketch mapping took place during the focus groups. Participants were first asked to draw or brainstorm their own free map of arts and culture at UBC, and then were asked to edit and draw on an official UBC map. Survey questions were operationalized based on focus groups, and were used to reach a larger group of students. We used NVIVO to code and analyse qualitative data from the surveys, sketch maps, and focus groups.

Our findings indicated that student arts and culture participants had frequent conflicts with the norms of the university and its institutions, which they viewed as largely hostile to grassroots arts and culture activities that were “not productive.” We described this phenomenon as *resistant placemaking*. We also found that the UBC Alma Mater Society (AMS) was an especially important overseer of student arts and culture activity. However, our findings

also indicated participants' relationships to institutions were fragmented, and that some practices had more formal support than others, which indicated institutional priorities.

Based on the outcomes of our research we were able to share some recommendations. These included (1) a need for greater long-term resource provision across the university (such as priority housing for students in Bachelor of Fine Arts programs), (2) a need for greater inter-organizational cooperation, (3) more flexible resources and spaces for grassroots opportunities, (4) an increase in social media based promotion, and (5) better signage surrounding the Arts and Culture District.

Finally, we contemplated potential future directions for future research. This included further opportunities for developing the methodology, the addition of evaluative research and the consideration of comparisons UBC with other universities.

Introduction

As of late, it seems that an increasing amount of attention has been directed towards arts and culture. There has, for example, been an expanded interest in the ways artistic and cultural activities can contribute to the aims of “prosperity... social wellbeing, public safety, and stability” (Markusen and Nicodemus, 2019, p. 11). This has coincided with, and often been entangled with, an increasing interest in the opportunities of the “creative economy.” Strangely, however, there has been relatively little investigation into arts and culture activity on universities. Our research report, produced in partnership with UBC Arts and Culture and the SEEDs Sustainability program, aims to explore this lacuna. Specifically, we aim to investigate some of the social and spatial dynamics of student cultural production at the University of British Columbia through qualitative research. We have framed our research through a careful and critical synthesis of relevant scholarship, and selected several notable points of inquiry. Based on our analysis, we also distill a number of recommendations for institutional actors that could benefit student arts and culture across the UBC campus.

Problem Statement

Much like other large research institutions, UBC has a fairly extensive arts and culture apparatus, both academic (e.g. UBC Film and Theater, UBC School of Music, etc.) as well as non-academic (e.g. the Belkin Gallery, the Chan Centre). The UBC Arts and Culture district contains within it many of the university’s formal performance venues, many of its arts and culture related department buildings, and most of its museums. Activities and practices associated with the Arts and Culture District tend to be more professional and curated, and often feature renowned local and international artists. These activities include theatre, opera, and orchestral performances, as well as art exhibitions and film showings. The formal designation of an Arts and Culture district - and the institutional arts and culture initiatives that have followed it - have undoubtedly played an active role in “creative placemaking” on campus.

At the same time; however, two major considerations must be made when assessing arts and culture and “creative placemaking” at universities in general and at UBC specifically.

First, institutional arts and culture apparatuses are inextricably tied to, and must be analyzed in connection with, the other operations and functions of their universities. As well, cultural production takes countless forms across the university that are often left out by conceptualizing arts and culture or “creative placemaking” in purely formal, bureaucratic, or institutional terms. There are many ways to proceed from these considerations, but we have decided to focus on students as constitutive elements of the academy that bind together the university-as-organization and the university-as-place. Consequently, our research question asks how students within both formal and informal campus arts and culture (e.g. registered student clubs, unregistered groups, campus residence plays) produce and perform creative space on campus. Under this broader question, we ask what differential tensions and barriers these students face in this process, and how they interact with the university’s placemaking infrastructures (whether physical, organizational, or discursive).

Literature Review

Creative Placemaking

“Creative placemaking” is a somewhat murky concept that is largely discussed within urban studies and planning scholarship. Markusen and Nicodemus (2019), elaborate on “creative placemaking” as a new direction in cultural policy, tracing its formal adoption to the US National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in the late 2000s. They illustrate that this strategy was, in many ways, a pushback against the defunding of the NEA and its programs in the 1990s. “Creative placemaking,” in this context, “encourage[d] arts organizations and artists to preserve and enliven places by using their visual, musical, speech, writing, and acting skills for and in conjunction with larger publics” (Markusen and Nicodemus, 2019, p. 11). In this context, creative placemaking aims to incorporate grassroots arts and culture into community and public-space planning. However, as Rich and Tsitsos (2016) point out, this definition still remains relatively ‘fuzzy,’ and its vagueness has contributed to the popularity of creative placemaking as a term among municipalities and stakeholders.

A more concrete, application-oriented discussion of creative placemaking can be found in Richards and Duif's (2018) book *Small Cities with Big Dreams*. The authors discuss creative placemaking as a pathway to development for small cities. For such cities, they argue, creative placemaking is a way to improve their "liveability," and consequently garner attention and investment. The authors emphasize, however, a distinction between creative placemaking and "place marketing." Creative placemaking, they state, goes beyond market processes and the mere branding and selling of place; it transforms the materialities, social practices, and meanings that constitute places. Following from this, the authors see "synergy between top-down and bottom-up processes" as integral to creative placemaking (Richards and Duif, 2018, p. 15), and contend that an "attractive external image should be a by-product" of this transformation (Richards and Duif, 2018, p. 16). Under this definition, arts and culture serve to foster or transform a "sense of place."

"Creative Cities" & the "Creative Economy"

However, Richards and Duif's (2018) fairly innocuous and institutional characterization of creative placemaking, along with their neat separation of market logics and social goals, is rather problematic. As Markusen and Nicodemus (2019) point out, creative placemaking has often been closely intertwined with political economy. Much of the initial advocacy for it focused on "how arts spending generates income and jobs for states, localities, and the nation" (Markusen and Nicodemus, 2019, p. 13). This is demonstrated by reports like the 'U.S. Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account (1998-2016),' which states that the economic impact associated with arts and culture is growing. Per that report, the arts and culture 'industry' contributed 4.3% (\$804.2 billion) of the US' GDP in 2016, with consumers spending 32.7 billion USD on entrance fees to performing arts events (NEA, 2019). As well, the early focus on arts organizations was closely tied to their ability to "rebuild neighborhoods and communities" in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis (Markusen and Nicodemus, 2019).

Scholarship has also pointed out the close link between creative placemaking and the idea - initially put forward by Richard Florida (see Florida, 2005) - of an emergent "creative

class” that is central to the growth of contemporary cities (Markusen and Nicodemus, 2019; Rich and Tsitsos, 2016). Creative placemaking has been broadly invoked and utilized as a tool of “creative cities” trying to attract the posited “creative class” and its accompanying economic benefits. As Rich and Tsitsos (2016) point out, creative placemaking practices have been used previously to “[apply] traditional economic development policies to cultural activity,” as well as to brand places for collective consumption (Rich and Tsitsos, 2016, p. 740). Visibly then, aims of social transformation and marketization are often closely intertwined in creative placemaking.

Yet, as Markusen and Nicodemus (2019, p. 12) point out, creative placemaking also encompasses “decades of progressive community-culture-based placemaking” discourses, in addition to everyday acts of cultural production. Consequently, rather than one practice, creative placemaking should be broadly conceptualized as the production and transformation of place through artistic practices. Furthermore, these practices can involve a range of actors and interests beyond just large organizations, and so the relational specificities of place are important.

When we understand the links between creative placemaking and “creative city” practices, much more scholarship becomes available, within both geographical and interdisciplinary journals. Firstly, case studies on creative placemaking practices and “creative city” initiatives shed light on some of their most visible forms. One widely discussed manifestation of creative placemaking is the formation of arts and culture districts (Chapple, Jackson & Martin, 2010; Rich and Tsitsos, 2016; Goldberg-Miller & Heimlich, 2017). Other discussed forms include recurring cultural festivals or events (McClean, 2014), and “tactical urbanism,” which involves “small-scale, unsanctioned, community-led urban interventionist activities” (Mould, 2014, p. 530).

Critiquing Creative Placemaking

Power, access, and social inequality

Before assessing other thematic and theoretical concerns within these case studies, however, it is important to discuss the broad materialist critiques they make of creative

placemaking and “creative city” initiatives, building on the previously mentioned fact that such strategies have been closely intertwined with political economy and market interests. It has been pointed out that creative placemaking initiatives have often been used to brand and sell urban landscapes for consumption, and that appeals to “grassroots arts and culture” have been part of this (Rich and Tsitsos, 2016; Catungal, Leslie & Hii, 2009). In most of these case studies, initiatives were carried out through public-private partnerships with developers or investment groups. Consequently, appeals to “creative urbanism” and “liveability” have tended to reproduce neoliberal and individualistic spatial logics centred around the sanitization of urban space in order to attract capital. This has often worked to gentrify communities, resulting in the exclusion and surveillance of poor and marginalized groups (McLean, 2014) and even displacement (Rich and Tsitsos, 2016; Catungal, Leslie & Hii, 2009), paradoxically making cultural production more difficult. Any discussion of creative placemaking must thus contend with the questions that scholars raise around power, access, and social inequality.

Actors and Positionality in Creative Placemaking

Beyond this, research also sheds lights on the diverse interactional processes through which creative placemaking is realized, and on the actors typically involved in them. As discussed by Chapple, Jackson & Martin (2010), cultural districts (and other forms of creative placemaking) can be both formal and informal. Formal arts districts are those that are products of public interventions, while informal ones take shape “organically”. However, the authors show through case studies of Berkeley and Oakland that this binary hides more complex realities and interdependencies between the formal and informal. Seemingly “unintentional” cultural districts are, for example, often the product of “intentional coordination amongst local social actors” (Chapple, Jackson & Martin, 2010, p. 226). Similarly, Mould (2014) complicates the idea of “tactical urbanism” as “unsanctioned” placemaking practice, showing how it is incorporated into contemporary planning regimes and differentially enabled by “formal” institutions. This interplay of the “formal” and “informal” in creative placemaking becomes a valuable point of analysis that we can use to frame our research.

Another notable tension within existing research is defining actors within creative placemaking processes, particularly “creatives” or “artists” as a group. Goldberg-Miller & Heimlich, (2017), drawing on Florida, conceptualize ‘supercreatives’ as the “class” who “traditionally have been thought of as artists, such as painters, sculptors, dancers [and beyond]” (p. 120). Furthermore, the scholars investigate the presumably close relationship between supercreatives and creative placemaking as a “new class” (Goldberg-Miller & Heimlich, 2017). Yet this is problematic. While creative placemaking implies within it the participation of some “creatives,” “creatives” are not a monolithic group, and large positional and class differences exist between people that can be called artists. For example, as McLean (2017) highlights, even community artist groups have internally tense and varied relationships to creative placemaking and branding initiatives, as some artists may be excluded by the same programs that others artists benefit from. Furthermore, as Pratt (2010) points out, “creativity” is extremely contingent, as “what may be creative in one place or time may not be creative in another context” (p. 19), which questions the validity of attempts to internally measure it as Florida (2005) does. Artists’ differential relationships to and interests within creative placemaking initiatives are thus another central consideration within our research, as are the contextual meanings of arts and culture.

Creative Placemaking at the University

Thus far, the literature discussed has largely studied and critiqued creative placemaking and the spatial logics of “creative urbanism” within the context of cities. However, because our research is within the context of a university, we also have to understand how universities are connected to these phenomena. There have been some examples of creative placemaking initiatives in university contexts. One of these is what Curtin University (in Perth, Australia) calls ‘place activation’. This initiative attempts to increase involvement in arts and culture on campus, by allowing students to submit what they would like to see through their website. The website also outlines events and programs in the arts (Curtin University, n.d.).

Nonetheless, there is little research directly on the topic of universities and creative placemaking, but scholarship has noted the ways universities are connected to previously

discussed trends in the “creative economy.” Even Richard Florida has emphasized “the university’s role in the broader creation of talent” and in fueling the posited “creative class” (2005, p. 153). Universities are closely implicated in the kinds of market processes discussed in the literature. Over the last several decades, it has been pointed out, universities have broadly oriented themselves towards markets, and have emphasized research and knowledge production (particularly in STEM fields) as engines for economic growth (Berman, 2012). This, of course, manifests differently from institution to institution, and should be seen as taking hold at not only an organizational level, but also at the level of daily student life. Furthermore, as already discussed, artistic and cultural production, which takes place across university campuses, is embedded in these social-material contexts. However, despite some examples and all the large-scale speculation about universities as “incubators” for talent and creativity, there has been little investigation into how students actually engage in embodied cultural production, and how they construct place through that production. This is precisely what our research seeks to explore.

Methodology

Our discussion and critique of existing scholarship provided us with three foundational ideas on which to design our research. Firstly, creative placemaking needs to be understood and conceptualized in broader terms as the production and transformation of a “sense of place” through artistic and cultural activity, rather than a specific strategy or set of practices. Secondly, arts and culture are embedded in and mediated by various social-material contexts, and any study of creative production and activity must consider how artists and their activities are differentially impacted by these larger contexts. Finally, cultural production is the result of complex interactions between “formal” and “informal” actors, and research in creative placemaking must study the specificities of these actors and interactions rather than reifying the simple division. In the context of the academy, students are valuable for this because they embody both the university as an organization and as an interactional space.

Due to our need to understand the experiences, attachments and narratives students embody and construct using arts and culture, we used multiple qualitative methods - including focus groups, sketch mapping and surveys - triangulating our research. Our sampling frame was limited to UBC students with existing connection(s) to UBC arts and culture. Specifically, students with existing connections were determined by student affiliation with one or more organizational or institutional affiliation to UBC arts and culture for one winter term or longer. For example, students participating in or leading arts-based student groups or organizations, students studying bachelor of fine arts, and so on. Using non-probability network sampling, we purposefully sampled students' with varied affiliations to UBC arts and culture to facilitate diverse student perspectives and backgrounds. Due to our three month time constraints, manpower constraints, and emergency public health restrictions, our sample size was limited to 38 students: we conducted three focus groups with a total of eleven students, and received 27 completed student surveys. Each participant was asked in some way to describe their affiliation(s) to UBC arts and culture. This prefaces our research with a comprehensive and succinct understanding of each student's positionality in regards to UBC arts and culture.

Focus Groups and Sketch Mapping

Using three focus groups of eleven students total, we explored the student experience of arts and culture within the broader university, examining how students produce and perform creative spaces. Specifically, we aimed to answer questions such as:

- What is arts and culture to students?
- What are students' experiences of and involvement in arts and culture?
- What barriers exist to producing arts and culture at UBC for students?

Ultimately, the focus group structure aimed to facilitate a structured yet organic conversation (Clifford, French & Valentine, 2010). Furthermore, focus groups are useful for orienting researchers to a new field (Clifford, French & Valentine, 2010). Given the lack of research on student-based creative placemaking at universities and in the context of UBC, focus groups could help establish preliminary understandings on the abovementioned. With these

considerations in mind, our focus group questions (see Appendix A) were intended as loose and flexible guides that could be revised or improvised based on the circumstances. Participants' informed consent for focus groups was recorded through consent forms which provided details on research purposes and procedures.

Using the same sampled groups, we conducted a sketch mapping exercise asking students to draw maps describing their spatial experience of university arts and culture. These sketch maps complemented the focus groups by illustrating the spatial dimensions, concentrations and limitations of participant experience. This exercise addressed questions such as:

- Where spatially is student experience tied?
- Where is student placemaking naturally happening?
- Where can it be facilitated?

The sketch map exercises took place during the focus group sessions, after the completion of group discussions. Participants were given a sheet of paper that was blank on one side, and had an official map of UBC campus on the other side. They were asked to first draw a free map of their arts and culture activity on the blank side, and to then draw on top of the official map. In both cases, we told participants that they should draw without restrictions, so as to minimize the imposition of spatial meanings or constructs on them. By asking students to draw out where and what they think means arts and culture at UBC we aimed to develop a deeper understanding of the 'place' of arts and culture at UBC.

Online Surveys

Surveys (see Appendix C) were operationalized based on focus group data, and functioned as a way of further measuring the variables and specific themes that had arisen in focus group discussions. These consisted of some classificatory questions (which assessed, for example, what a respondent's affiliation with arts and culture is), but largely focused on behavioural or attitudinal data. As focus group participants consistently discussed the *function*

and *motivations* of arts and culture in student and campus life, as well as their *institutional interactions and support* these were the primary focus of our questions.

We used a mix of open and closed format questions. Answer choices in closed format questions were constructed based on the explicit ideas mentioned by students. For example, in one question on student motivations for participating in arts and culture, we included “Enjoyment,” “Social bonds,” “Building skills or experience,” “Creating social change,” “Benefits for future goals or career,” as these encompassed the range of motivations discussed by focus group participants. Nonetheless, in recognition that these may overlap or not be exhaustive, we used matrix questions or enabled respondents to check more than one answer, and included fill-in options on all closed ended questions. Open-ended questions, meanwhile, were coded using the codes developed for focus group transcriptions.

Surveys were developed online using UBC’s *Qualtrics* platform and were selectively distributed through purposive network sampling. Samples were, once again, restricted to students affiliated with arts and culture groups for a minimum period of one semester. Many respondents were students who had been contacted about but were unable to attend focus groups. Completion rates were a notable challenge, as more than ten students did not finish the whole survey. Incomplete surveys had to be discarded, leaving us with 27 completed responses. This relatively limited number of responses, along with our use of non-probability sampling, limits our ability to make generalizable inferences. However, this is un concerning as our surveys were largely meant to supplement and apply the concepts developed in our focus groups to a slightly larger group.

Coding and Analytical Procedures

Focus groups were the most central source of data, and served as the foundation for other methods. Sketch map exercises built on the discussions that preceded them, and surveys were operationalized on the basis of preliminary focus group analysis. Consequently, focus group transcription and coding was the earliest step of data analysis, and provided the basic codes through which surveys and sketch maps were analyzed as well.

Our coding was, of course, loosely informed by the themes discussed in the literature, which had also shaped the questions that we asked participants. Nonetheless, our process broadly resembled an exploratory ‘grounded theory’ approach, since codes and patterns were continuously developed as transcripts were read. Our formal codebook (see Appendix D) largely consisted of descriptive codes, while analytic themes were developed and constructed in notes by looking at the overlap between different coding categories and comparing them with concepts found in the literature. The larger themes that developed from these centred around the value and meanings of student arts and culture, dynamics of participation, and the relationship of both of these to university institutions and organizations.

Analysis

Focus Groups

Meanings and value of students arts and culture

Before discussing the meanings of student cultural production, it is important to note that focus group participants acknowledged student arts and culture to be diverse. Students acknowledged that there are different and fragmented meanings and motivations for “creativity” across campus. This compliments the idea, as articulated by Pratt (2010), that creativity can’t be seen as insular or having a “pure” form. Rather, creative practices are situated and entangled with contextual motivations. The majority of participants, for example, emphasized the value of arts and culture to forming *communities and social bonds* in the context of a large research university. The following statement from one participant captured this larger sentiment:

When I came to UBC I found it really hard to meet people here... and I found that through arts and culture, and specifically music, so far it's been the only way that I've been able to make meaningful connections with people.

Similarly, most participants also conceived of arts and culture as a means of *enjoyment*, which overlapped with the aims of friendship and community building. In one group, for example, students consistently drew comparisons between arts and culture activities and parties, stating

that they “are both ways of having fun and letting loose,” and allow students to have a “healthy social culture on campus.” When discussing the high attendance and popularity of their own club’s (UBC Improv) performances, one participant stated that it had to do with those performances being an accessible and “safe environment” for students to laugh and drink, as they did not necessarily need “a certain level of knowledge” to enjoy it. Many participants also conceived of arts and culture as a form of qualitative *personal fulfillment and expression*, emphasizing that “there’s a lot of vulnerability in art, and being involved with the arts; there are a lot of emotions and a lot of people.” Under this reasoning, arts and culture participants were “in it to make something really beautiful.”

In the context of the university, participants viewed these values and meanings of arts and culture as broadly in conflict with UBC institutions and their understandings of arts and culture. One dimension of this conflict was that participants saw their individual artistic activities as opposed to their other student responsibilities. One group voiced this conflict as such:

P1: I find that, when I do music and arts and culture, they give me a bit of my life that isn't associated with academics. So it's a bit of an escape from the rest of my life.

P2: Yeah I was going to say the exact same thing. Hip-hop is a real escape from all the academia that I face on a daily basis.

While student arts and culture was discussed as an “escape” from the norms of the university, it was also inversely seen as being *restrained* by them. When asked about the barriers to student participation, participants in every session spoke personally about how a lack of financial support and high academic expectations produced “exhaustion” or “apathy.” This exhaustion was seen as a barrier to the mental and physical “presence” needed for artistic activity. Students also related these individual conflicts to the broader dimension of institutional culture. One participant stated:

P3: We have this productivity mindset where people forget that art doesn't need to be productive. You can go to enjoy things; it doesn't need to be you accomplishing something. But

that's all we know how to do right now. It's just, "well I'm here and I'm having fun, and that makes me feel terrible."

Participants also frequently gave examples of how "UBC...tries to market itself as a really academic place," and consistently agreed that the university does not fund or appreciate "art [as much] as sports or other things, like engineering, medical school." On a day-to-day basis, they stated that this manifested in a largely "dead" campus culture and very few active or pop-up arts events and spaces.

At the same time, participants acknowledged that student arts and culture is also practiced in different forms across campus, and that some of these forms are more "professional" and "marketable." Participants in one group explicitly discussed how many students also saw arts activities as a way to demonstrate skills and "build resumes" in a highly competitive environment. Relatedly, in the same conversation, one participant voiced a desire for different tiers of participation in arts activities, where there would be "a more professional level and then one that's just for fun." These discussions thus noted a contrast between the unproductive/unprofessional and productive/professional meanings of student arts and culture activities, while also associating the latter with inaccessibility.

These more "professional" forms were also seen as more compliant with the institution's motivations and ideas regarding the value of arts and culture. For example, participants expressed frustration at the way UBC had constructed large art installations (specifically the tree shadow outside the Student Nest) by "outsourcing [them] to someone," instead of sponsoring student art projects. Similarly, when asked about their interactions with the formal UBC Arts and Culture District and provided with pamphlets about it, participants in all focus groups generally voiced a lack of identification with the district. To most, it lacked the "vibrance" of arts and culture spaces that came with grassroots social activity, and appeared largely as a collection of venues. Some participants explicitly categorized the district and the activities advertised by it (such as opera, theatre, and museums) as "professional" and consequently saw them as inaccessible, even if they personally attended those events. These were contrasted with first-year residence plays, which were described as accessible and

valuable for community building, as they had low barriers to entry. As participants noted, there used to be three plays that were “consolidated into one” in 2019, which meant “not as many people [could] participate.” Participants contrasted these two types of events to indicate institutional priorities. In the eyes of participants, UBC institutions understood the meaning and value of arts and culture in a more professionalized and competitive capacity, and as a way to bolster the university’s image. Despite some support for student arts and culture that complied with these aims, students broadly thought that “the school itself doesn’t do enough for arts and culture... you really have to create it yourself.” This function of student arts and culture could thus be described as *resistant placemaking*, since it was seen as taking place in opposition to the social, cultural, and spatial norms of the university.

Institutional and spatial interactions

The conflicts that participants discussed around the meanings and value of arts and culture also manifested in their described interactions with formal university offices. Participants mostly discussed interactions with the UBC Alma Mater Society (AMS), suggesting that student arts and culture is heavily concentrated under that organization. Firstly, every group expressed intense frustration with the process of organizing arts and culture events and gaining access to spaces. Several participants detailed the requirements they had to navigate. These involved contacting a number of different people, acquiring various different permits four to six weeks in advance, and, in many cases, hiring private security companies and AMS catering. Participants emphasized that this was prohibitively expensive, and agreed that it “discourages those who don't have as many resources.” Furthermore, participants consistently agreed that access to institutional spaces and resources came with heavy restraints on their activities, and required them to comply with strict behavioural codes. These ranged from prohibitions on alcohol consumption, to restrictions on the content of paintings. For example, one participant discussed how they were not allowed to serve a bannock platter during an art exhibition with indigenous themes because the AMS could not provide it. Similarly, one participant recounted that their group was almost barred from holding an outdoor acoustic music event because of complaints from two faculty members, and had to “fight for it” to

proceed. Participants discussed these regulations as a way of maintaining the “brand... landscape and... the visual identity of the campus.” Campus institutions were thus seen as enforcing the spatial codes of the university as a productive and professional space.

Per participant’s accounts, student arts and culture groups respond to these formal barriers and constraints in various ways. First, as per some participants’ accounts, a number of groups resist institutional incorporation. For example, one participant who was part of the campus radio station, CITR, expressed relief at the fact that they “get [their] funding from [their] annual fundraiser,” rather than a university organization. Another participant discussed how her group, The Calendar, was unassociated with university organizations and worked only with independent spaces on campus, which freed them from formal restrictions. However, she also discussed that this decreased visibility, making the group more insular and less accessible for many students. Additionally, participants discussed how the policies and logistical barriers created by university organizations pushed student arts and culture groups towards hierarchy, as there was a greater need for executive positions to take on responsibilities among otherwise voluntary groups. This concentration of power was once more seen as creating competitiveness and inaccessibility, as student groups “are supposed to be representing a diverse class of people but... only have three or four voices.”

However, once more, it’s important to emphasize that student arts and culture groups’ relationships to university institutions were fragmented, and that these institutions do not necessarily operate as a cohesive, intentional whole. Participants had varied positional relationships to university organizations, which granted differential access to resources and spaces. For example, one participant noted that she had been hired in a paid position by the UBC Arts and Culture District. This not only gave her support to pursue her activities, but, in combination with her position as a Theatre student, also granted her access to many of the venues and spaces within the district that most others did not have access to. Similarly, one participant who was part of the Visual Arts Students Association discussed getting resources from his department as well as several other organizations like the Walter Gage Fund and Social Justice Centre. The fragmentation and university organizations, resources, and arts spaces was

illustrated by the fact that most participants in all groups were unaware of or had little overlap with these different organizations and resources.

Additionally, participants pointed out that not all arts and culture activities are handled the same way by university organizations. For example, one participant explained that organizing a landing spot for UBC's Pride event was much easier than most of his other interactions with the AMS. Similarly, another group agreed that the AMS devotes considerable resources to "one-time events... like Block Party." This illustrates once more how specific events and forms of arts and culture are selectively enabled based on university organizations' priorities. Nonetheless, participants broadly saw themselves as engaging in resistant placemaking against formal university infrastructures when creating arts and culture events or spaces.

Sketch Maps

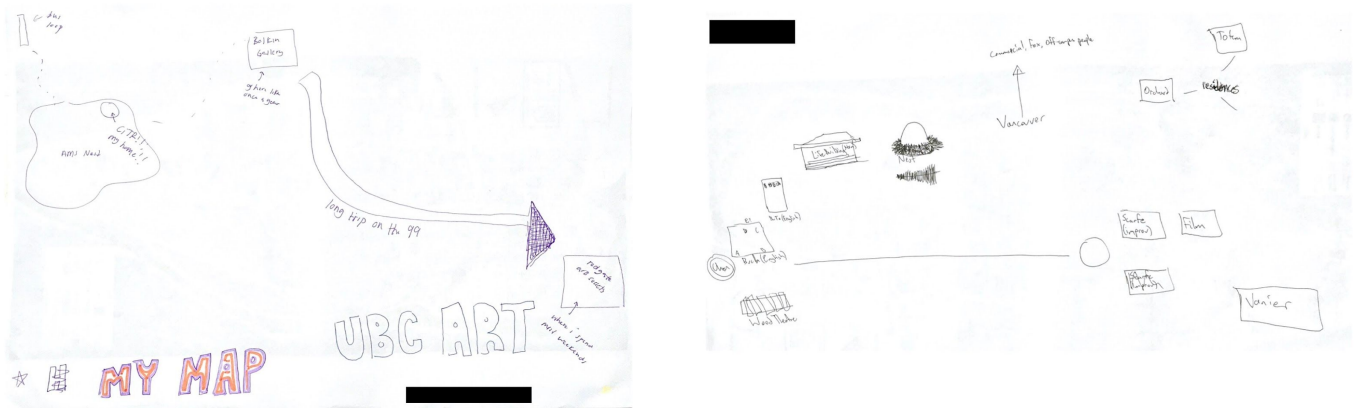


Figure 1: Student sketch map examples

Sketch maps revealed the geographically placed narratives of UBC and Vancouver arts and culture for UBC students, revealing their sense of geographically placed creative narratives (See Fig 1 & Appendix F). The AMS Nest, and organizations within the Nest was one of the most cited locations to embody a creative place for students with fourteen references, evident in the tree map below and Appendix E. Interestingly, although students did not cite the Arts and Culture District, various venues within the District were frequently visualized. While this enabled the Arts and Culture District to be visualized seventeen times, it also showed that students lacked knowledge of and place identity with the Arts and Culture District. Specifically, the Chan Centre was frequently referenced in maps. This may show that students had creative attachments to the Arts and Culture District, even if they were not informed of the formal title of the District.



Figure 2: Treemap visualizing the nested hierarchy of locations where the size of each triangle represents the amount of coding references at each node.

Other significant spaces visualized by students included “home,” the Life building, UBC residences and various venues in Eastside Vancouver such as Red Gate Society and the Riot Theatre. Conclusively, these maps acted to spatialize and visualize the oral anecdotes of arts and culture discussed in the focus group.

Surveys

Surveys both supported and complicated the understanding of student arts and culture as predominantly a form of resistant placemaking. When respondents were asked in a matrix question how important various motivations were to their individual arts and culture participation, they responded as a whole with the following results:

Motivation	Weighted score
Enjoyment	52
Social bonds	40
Building skills or experience	39
Benefits for future goals or career	32
Creating social change	23

Table 1: Total weighted importance of various motivations for survey respondents.

In their answers, respondents largely did seem to conceive of student arts and culture especially as a means of enjoyment, community building, and personal development rather than as a means of professional advancement. Yet it is also apparent that these motivations were not necessarily mutually exclusive at an individual level, as individual participants could simultaneously have various and intertwined reasons for participation. However, when asked how their arts and culture activities fit in with their other student responsibilities, the majority (18/27) of respondents implicitly or explicitly noted a conflict between the two. As well, when asked what barriers exist to student arts and culture participation, the majority (17/27) of respondents discussed concerns related to productivity and professional value. While the inferences we can make from this data are limited, they are consistent with focus group participants’ discussions of arts and culture activity as both an escape from the norms of the university, and as hindered by it.

Surveys also provided some insight on institutional interactions. When asked which UBC organizations or administrative bodies they interacted with for their arts and culture activities, respondents gave the following results:

Organization	Count
AMS	12
Academic Faculties/Departments/Schools	9
UBC Arts and Culture Office	6
I do not interact with any UBC administrative bodies/offices	6
Residence Life	2
Campus and community planning	1
UBC Student Housing and community Services	1

Table 2: Total number of survey respondents' that interacted with various university organizations for arts and culture activities.

While we once again can make limited inferences from this data, it is consistent with our focus groups in suggesting that student arts and culture participation takes place under a variety of separate organizations, but that the AMS is an especially important overseer.

Research Significance & Implications

Scholarly

As discussed in our review of the literature, existing scholarship has established the rise of arts and culture and creative placemaking as means of achieving economic growth and development (Markusen and Nicodemus, 2019). As well, it has also established the widespread use of creative placemaking initiatives in the “creative economy” as a way of attracting human and financial capital to urban spaces through the branding and marketing of urban landscapes (Rich and Tsitsos, 2016; Catungal, Leslie & Hii, 2009). Coinciding with this, there has also been speculation about the relationship of universities to the “creative economy,” as “creators of talent” and human capital that fuel the posited “creative class” (Florida, 2005, p. 153).

Meanwhile, research has established the increasing orientation of universities toward market aims, as engines for economic growth (Berman, 2012).

The results of our analysis provide preliminary insights into the micro- and meso-level manifestations of these large processes at the university, while also problematizing these concepts. Our research on student arts and culture participants at UBC supports the notion that cultural and institutional norms at the university are oriented towards productivity and professionalization. However, rather than fueling a uniform “creativity,” this cultural and institutional context selectively enables specific forms of arts and culture while largely discouraging forms that are “not necessarily productive” or marketable. In this context, the latter are a form of *resistant placemaking* that tend to serve the purposes of grassroots community building and enjoyment, in opposition to students’ academic responsibilities. This highlights the vagueness and non-uniformity of “creative economy” processes, and the need, as shown by Pratt (2010) and McLean (2014), to look at the contextually and positionally specific consequences of these processes. The meanings and positions of arts and culture may similarly vary even between different universities.

Recommendations for Action

Overall, students felt that the University did not recognize or emphasize arts and culture, creating systemic barriers to participation for students. Students often compared the University's prioritization of varsity athletics to fine arts, which was evidenced by who was given priority access to campus housing:

P4: BFA students should really have priority housing as well... do you know how scary it is... being in the theatre until 2am in the morning and then having to get home, do you know how scary that is? But if I [lived] near [the theatre]... some people have to transit for two hours. No one in the BFA program sleeps, that's essentially what it is.

The participant notes that the decisions of the University in priority housing access has ramifications for the embodied safety and health of students on campus. Based on this, we recommend that UBC Student Housing and Community Services should review their provision

of priority housing, and broaden such to include Bachelor of Fine Arts students, and perhaps, other groups. This is one example of how the University can combat systematic barriers to ensure that the University itself does not act as a hindrance to participation.

Furthermore, increased funding, resources and employment may act as platform-like mechanisms to allow students to practice creative placemaking. Students emphasized grant funding and equipment as effective platforms for student creative placemaking:

P5: For funding, I know the Walter Gage Fund is a go to place for a lot of arts and culture on campus. It's like Grant Writing 101. I know that our academic journal this year was funded by the Walter Gage Fund and I know that the Social Justice... Centre also allocates a lot of funding for events... that are socially engaged or activist in nature... my department [The Department of Art History, Visual Arts and Theory], also gives student associations a lot of fundings as well.

P2: I wish the AMS would help provide that [music] equipment for the outside, because... all they do is... use it for the inside... it really doesn't give us a lot to work with in terms of what kinds of events we can make and where we can operate... we have that [equipment] resource I just wish that it could be used outside.

One student spoke specifically to the Arts and Culture District, citing paying artists and reclaiming campus spaces for marginalized groups as effective practices to uplift student creative placemaking:

P4: [UBC Arts and Culture District is]... reclaim[ing] artistic spaces. Having students perform in the Chan Centre, having performances for Women's Day in the Life building.... They had this 'Every Kind of Love' event recently which was just artists from around the Vancouver and campus community all coming together... it was supposed to be more inclusive and it was performed in the Telus Theatre and it was like yes, this is an artistic space that we are reclaiming for more inclusive purposes... it was incredible, things like that should happen more often... paying artists was wonderful.

Rather than focusing purely on top-down approaches to creative placemaking and large investments in professional art, these insights suggest that the University should increase its usage of low barrier mechanisms similar to those described to create platforms for grassroots, student-driven creative activations. Evident in the mechanisms described by participants,

effective platforms are often well funded, low barrier, loose associations that do not come with intense supervision or many restrictions. Because arts and culture activities and resources are fragmented, inter-organizational cooperation could also be facilitated by providing coordinators that can direct student groups through booking processes or guide them to the different available resources that they may not be aware of. Throughout the focus groups, some students were aware of a portion of resources on campus, while other students were aware of others, and participants only learned about these resources from one another.

Participants also voiced a need for effective communication through greater social media engagement to market arts and culture events. Specifically, students recommended greater Facebook presence: one student noted that *“the events I go to are the ones Facebook reminds me of.”* Participants spoke to the importance of personal networks, expressing that seeing or being invited by their friends on Facebook was a primary cause for event attendance.

Lastly, students articulated a lack of place identity in the District to distinguish it from the rest of UBC, and an inability to see themselves within the District:

P3: Nothing about this pamphlet that really speaks to me... the word that really comes to mind is... ‘bourgeoisie.’ Like just [go to the] Museum, go to the Opera, and go to the Theatre.

P1: When I think of an arts and culture district I think much more vibrant... like Main Street in Vancouver... whereas the Arts and Culture District here seems kind of like it's just a few venues that are close to each other and there's not much of an actual identity.

This was evident in sketch maps, where venues within the District were highly visualized, but students were unaware of the existence of an Arts and Culture District. To create place identity and enable students to reclaim and make visible in the Arts and Culture District, students suggested using events and public space activations to capitalize on high value (socially, visually, financially) spaces in the Arts and Culture District. One student compared Lee Square to the Rose Garden, arguing the potential of the Rose Garden to be vibrant as Lee Square through event activation. Therefore, the university could empower students to use and reclaim District spaces by piloting low-barrier public spaces for art and event activation.

Finally, increased visible signage marking out arts and culture spaces may establish the existence of the Arts and Culture District for students, and ensure that arts and culture venues are associated with the District by students. This is needed due to the lack of association of significant art and culture places cited by students - such as the Museum of Anthropology or Chan Centre - with the Arts and Culture District.

Future Research Directions

Since creative placemaking is deeply rooted in human interactions and participation, gaining participant knowledge was essential for our research. Due to time constraints and the occurrence of COVID-19, some of our initial methodologies were not fully implemented. With more time a number of steps would have been taken. Expanding on what we have done with the focus groups, they would be increased in size to our original goal of 11 people per focus group. This would be further enhanced by adding students that are not affiliated with arts and culture at UBC in order to obtain ideas from more diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, tailoring research to how Aboriginal students are included and excluded in arts and culture may facilitate understanding of the tensions between creative placemaking, unceded territory, and UBC. Furthermore, examining categories such as gender, ethnicity and sexuality may further reveal the experiences and associations that, intersectional and marginalized, groups have with creative placemaking on campus. Secondly, place-based interviews could be conducted, based on the methods developed by Holton and Riley (2014) specifically for undergraduate students. These would be tailored to individual interviewees, allowing them to pick specific sites that are important to their arts and culture activities. These could be valuable for assessing how arts and culture participants interact with and transform actual spaces during their activities. This would help to further triangulate our research and allow us to view concepts from a different angle. Place-based interviews would help further conceptualize students' relations to spaces of arts and culture on campus.

With regard to future research directions, evaluative research would be effective for both analysing current creative placemaking strategies on campus but also testing methods that were recommended to us by the students during focus groups. By observing and

participating in events that fall under 'creative placemaking' on campus we could examine the concepts that had been discussed in the focus group prior. Taking this one step further, we could use the ideas surrounding creative placemaking that students have shared in order to create an event, examining how these ideas play out in the real world and allowing us to test the effectiveness of our recommendations.

In terms of expanding the project further, there is potential for examining the university campus against other university campuses. This idea was brought to light during the discussions in the focus groups. Many students mentioned universities from their home cities in Canada and pointed out arts and culture events which had been effective at those universities. Often these examples were used as a critique of creative placemaking opportunities on the UBC campus, pointing out that commonly 'free spaces' were not available for pop up events on campus due to the requirements of booking outdoor space as well as noise complaints. Much of this was linked by students to UBC working to cultivate an image of academic prowess in forfeit of campus culture. By studying the practices and successes of corresponding universities through their arts and culture initiatives, we could argue for and implement a cultural shift in the importance of Art and Culture for the university.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Focus Group Questions

- First a brief solo task. Please say your name, year, program, and your affiliation with arts and culture?
- What do you consider as being arts and culture?
- What attracted you to partake in arts and culture on campus?
 - What role does it play in your life? Is this something you think you will carry forward?
 - What is the relationship between your academic activities and arts and culture activities?
- What factors play into students partaking in such activities?
 - Who do you tend to see partaking in these activities? Are there any noticeable differences between who you interact with within and outside of your creative activities?
- What role do you see yourself as playing in building this university as a space?
- Which university entities or offices do you interact with on a regular basis (e.g. the AMS, UBC Arts and Culture, faculties and departments) for the purpose of creating or engaging in art and culture?
 - How do they impact your arts and culture activity?
- What resources do you need to engage with or partake in art and culture?
 - How do you get these resources?
 - What would you improve about those resources and what resources do you wish you had?
- What campus spaces are central to your artistic and cultural activities?
 - What is your relationship to the designated Arts and Culture district?
- Are you content with the amount of art and culture you engage with/partake in?

- If not, what barriers do you see as students that limit your interactions?

Appendix B - Baseline Maps



Appendix C - Survey

GEOG 371 - Student Arts and Culture Survey

Start of Block: Consent

Q1 This survey is being conducted as part of a research project for *GEOG 371: Research Strategies in Human Geography*. The purpose of our study is to explore how students within both formal and informal campus arts and culture (e.g. registered student clubs, unregistered groups, campus residence plays) produce and perform creative space on campus.

If you choose to proceed, your survey records will be kept private, and information shared within the research paper will be anonymized. We appreciate your contribution to our research project.

- Proceed (1)

End of Block: Consent

Start of Block: Relationship to Arts and Culture

Q2 How do you participate/have you participated in Arts and Culture at UBC? Select all that apply.

- Member of AMS registered student club(s) (1)
- Member of other student club(s) (2)
- Degree program (e.g. School of Music, Visual Arts, etc.) (3)
- Campus residence groups (e.g. residence plays) (4)
- As an audience member or attendee at Arts and Culture events (5)
- Other (please describe) (6) _____

End of Block: Relationship to Arts and Culture

Start of Block: Motivations for participation

Q3 To what extent is/was your participation in Arts & Culture at UBC motivated by each of the following:

	Primarily (1)	Somewhat (2)	Not at all (3)
Enjoyment (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social bonds (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Building skills or experience (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Creating social change (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Benefits for future goals or career (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please describe) (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Motivations for participation

Start of Block: Arts and Student Life

Q4 How do/did your Arts and Culture activities fit in with your other responsibilities as a student?

End of Block: Arts and Student Life

Start of Block: Barriers to Participation

Q5 What do you think are the primary barriers to student Arts and Culture participation?

End of Block: Barriers to Participation

Start of Block: Institutional Interactions

Q6 In the process of your Arts and Culture activities, which UBC administrative bodies/offices do/did you interact with?

- AMS (1)
- UBC Arts and Culture Office (2)
- Academic Faculties/Departments/Schools (4)
- Campus and community planning (8)
- Other (please describe) (5) _____
- I do not interact with any UBC administrative bodies/offices. (6)

Display This Question:

If In the process of your Arts and Culture activities, which UBC administrative bodies/offices do/di... != I do not interact with any UBC administrative bodies/offices.

Q7 What are your interactions with these bodies/offices like? How do/did they facilitate or hinder your Arts and Culture activity?

End of Block: Institutional Interactions

Start of Block: Arts and Culture Spaces on Campus

Q8 Which campus spaces do/did you interact with in your Arts and Culture activities? How do/did these spaces facilitate or hinder your activities?

End of Block: Arts and Culture Spaces on Campus

Start of Block: Arts and Culture District

Q9 Have you heard of the UBC Arts and Culture District?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

End of Block: Arts and Culture District

Appendix D - Focus Group Codebook

Nodes

<i>Name</i>	<i>Files</i>	<i>References</i>
Accessibility, Barriers and Concerns	1	15
-Individual	2	8
-Structural-Cultural	3	36
-Structural-material	3	64
Interactions with/responses to institutional infrastructures	0	0
-Discursive	3	22
-Organizational	3	58
-Physical+spatial	3	33
Motivations (and thoughts on)	1	1
-Of students	1	3
--Community building and social bonds	3	55
--Enjoyment	3	19
--Learning and Self-fulfillment	3	14
--Productivity + Professional aspirations	3	21
-Of university institutions	3	30
Student position and participation	2	4
-Experience or skill	3	15
-Hierarchy	3	15

-Roles	3	21
Value of Arts and Culture	3	24

Appendix E - Sketch Maps Codebook

Locations/Nodes

Name	Files	References
Bus	3	3
Friend's Homes	3	3
Home	5	5
UBC	11	76
<i>AMS Nest</i>	9	14
CiTR	2	2
Hatch Art Gallery	1	1
Pride Collective	1	1
The Gallery	1	1
The Pit	1	1
<i>Arts and Culture District</i>	8	17
Belkin Art Gallery	1	1
Buchanan	3	3
Chan Centre	5	6
Frederic Wood Theatre	3	3
Museum of Anthropology	2	2
Rose Garden	2	2
<i>Audain Arts Centre</i>	1	1
<i>Binnings Studios</i>	1	1
<i>Bus Loop</i>	1	1
<i>Bus Loop Restaurants</i>	2	3
<i>Doug Mitchell Thunderbird Sports Centre</i>	1	1
<i>Film Crews</i>	1	1
<i>Geography Students Association</i>	1	1
<i>Great Dane Cafe</i>	1	1
<i>Koerner's Pub</i>	2	2
<i>Lee Square</i>	2	3
Knoll	1	1

<i>Life Building</i>	4	4
<i>Main Mall</i>	3	3
<i>Martha Piper Fountain</i>	2	2
<i>Mercante</i>	1	1
<i>Nitobe Gardens</i>	2	2
<i>Residence</i>	3	8
Orchard Commons	1	1
Ritsumeikan-UBC House	1	1
Totem Park	2	2
Vanier	1	1
<i>Scarfe Building</i>	1	1
<i>Sprouts</i>	2	2
<i>Theatre-Film Production Building</i>	1	1
<i>Tim Hortons</i>	1	1
<i>UBC 350</i>	1	1
<i>Wreck Beach</i>	1	1
Vancouver	7	18
<i>Beach</i>	1	1
<i>Downtown</i>	3	6
Davie Street	2	2
Pubs & Cafes	2	2
<i>Eastside Vancouver</i>	4	6
Chinatown & Eastside Art Galleries	1	1
Commercial Street	2	2
Fox Cabaret	1	1
Red Gate Arts Society	1	1
Rio Theatre	1	1
<i>Granville Island</i>	1	1
<i>Queer Spaces & Parties</i>	1	1
<i>Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage</i>	1	1
Gulf Islands	1	1
Internet	1	1

Appendix F - Sketch Maps Codebook

