

CreateNYC: Gentrification, Displacement and Community Development Focus Group 3/28/17

Prerana- Queens Museum- Public space advocacy, local immigrant communities, proposed development and affordable housing.

Emily- Pratt Institute-creative place making and place keeping.

John- Grad student

Carmen-CASA-volunteer, community leader, interested in discussing Bronx rezoning

Alicia-Artist, resident-MOM (mothers on the move), is there a plan in pace when people are disposed or deplaned due to gentrification?

Monica- Queens Museum- Community organizer, street parties to engage community in public spaces and activities in flushing and corona

Akiva-Laundromat project- Development and Communications

Jocelyn-Intern at El Museo-art & justice fellowship

Pratik-Pratt institute student

Caron- Arts and democracy, NOCD-Cultural Plan needs to name issue of gentrification even when it can't be solved through it

Ana- Community Engagement, El Museo

Notes

- Context - 104th & Park just had the largest real estate sale in NYC history.
- El Museo is playing a leadership role in rezoning plan
 - Important to recognize arts and culture already happening in communities instead of just packaging it as an attraction to bring new folks into the neighborhood.
 - How can we not make East Harlem a museum? What happens to spaces when the people who made them are not there anymore? People and organizations shouldn't work in silos- dialogue is important.
- Why are JLPD & BJH involved in the planning process? Their work on the MIH rezoning – initiated with private developers, planners and cities without community groups and residents.
- How to keep growing as an arts and culture city and yet keep it as a sanctuary for immigrants, individuals and also free expression.
- The plan has to work in coalition with other groups-community organizers
- The right name for gentrification is 'ethnic cleansing' and that is how it should be referred to as. There are organizations opening up in the BX with gentrification money-no shown partnerships with community and its residents E.g. BX Documentary Center- what kind of money lies behind it? Is having capital to open an arts org enough or is it important to know where it comes from? Leads to residents being pushed out.
- Large amount of inequity in CIGS (this conversation has been going on for 45+ years and yet no change)
 - More conversations need to happen in public- transparency.
 - How can CIGs be held accountable to engage and take their work to communities? How can grassroots organizations partner with orgs like MET and Carnegie hall to share resources, not just funding, but also organizational? E.g. Queens Museum started a storefront (IMI) to channel and redistribute funding into community
 - It needs to be taken into account that orgs like MET have corporate heads (like Amazon) on their boards- how can it be ensured that public and corporate interests are not in conflict?
 - CIGs have a lobbyist-very organized-how can community based arts work respond to this power?

Recommendations-

- 1) Community Cultural Hubs as anti-displacement strategies. E.g. El Puente and The Point?
 - o Funding Equity is necessary to maintain cultural hubs, especially if they are expected to be on the frontlines- MET receives a lot of money-80% CIGS rather than funds going to The point or El Puente. Staff is drained looking for grants. Small orgs can't do it without more support than just operational budgets, operating costs and staff funding, disability funds inequitable.
- 2) Cultural Plan Accountability- The City ("higher powers") need to be held accountable to policies that come out from the Cultural Plan. E.g. Previously, Williamsburg, Greenpoint and more recently, Chinatown have had long community planning processes that have been completely ignored. Community groups need to build movements. People pour their hearts out and these plans need to be acknowledged.
- 3) Community Benefit Development Agreements - Plans cannot be appropriated for real estate development – the money that is spent needs to be recognized and regulated at least to some level through Community Benefit Development Agreements E.g. Berlin, Downtown Brooklyn Cultural Corridor
- 4) Community Cultural Fund- A percentage of money from fairs, festivals and other commercial events can go into a pot that supports neighborhood-specific cultural programming.
- 5) Comprehensive Urban Plan- NYC doesn't have a comprehensive urban plan-we need to have that and talk about cultural plan alongside that. There needs to be a bridge-powerful combination of tools for community members, developers - where lines are drawn how can regulations be introduced and connected to business-need a comprehensive plan outside of the cultural sector as well so that issues are addressed as an ecology and not in isolation. Right now, rezoning and other planning efforts are happening in an arbitrary manner.
- 6) Stabilization of Small Business Environments- Support the Small Business Act and incorporate artists within that. Culture needs to be thought of as an ecology - small businesses form the backbone of immigrant cultures and communities. Stabilize not just core cultural organizations, but also small businesses, connected artists etc. Find a way to identify Trojan horse small businesses- those that are actually big, but seem like small and find a way to support existing ones instead. Mixed rezoning haven't worked, support small businesses act + incorporate artists within that. Backbone of many communities how to protect them? Keep manufacturing areas intact for crafts-based folks who haven't had an expensive, formal education.
- 7) Building Healthy Community Identity - Neighborhoods in transition vs. gentrifiers - many tensions exist between community groups - developers pit them against each other - building healthy community identity and ownership over spaces is really important.
- 8) Redefining Artistic Excellence - Right now the definition is only around economic issues and the only reason why some get funds over others- this needs to change. Excellence needs to be defined in terms of social impact as well. How do we determine what is excellence? Through whose eyes?
- 9) Community Stabilization Fund or Programs- Dedicate resources to neighborhoods faced with rezoning pressures. The funding is too scattershot at the moment. DCLA should incentivize funding for both artists and institutions that catalyze community building and partnerships.
- 10) Reconfiguring the BCC program- The BCC program-needs to be reconfigured to be made more useful to

neighborhood who really need it, without being a competitive process. Instead of trying to build capacity, it should listen more (folks already know what the needs are) and recognize existing capacities in neighborhoods (like East Harlem). It's not enough to just hire one program manager and expect them to change or add to cultural systems that have been established in communities over a long period of time.

- 11) After School Programs as part of planning processes- The after school program movement through orgs like Casita Maria can contribute a lot to the creation of a cultural plan and should be involved in a deeper way.
- 12) Benefit Pools for Small Organizations- Staffing and healthcare support- CIGS get city employee benefits. There needs to be a pool of benefits for smaller organizations. There is a need for an insurance pool apart from grants funding. Small organizations really struggle due to the lack of these. Pots of money need to go towards General Operating Support- funding currently doesn't recognize these issues.
- 13) 'Creative Tech' vs Artists/ artisans- While providing direct funding or distributing resources, distinguish clearly artists/ artisans from 'Creative tech' class like architects, dot coms etc. who are much wealthier and have access to other sources of funding.
- 14) Supporting Culture as a part of Everyday Life- Small organizations like Laundromat Project are gatekeepers – through re-granting they can fund or reinforce arts and culture already happening in neighborhoods and is a part of everyday life and who people are- places of worship, small businesses, street performers, subway dancers, people hanging out in the park etc. Fund spaces and artists that are “off the radar”.
- 15) Public Space Access- Make public spaces open in order to encourage and support everyday culture and stop policing these spaces or adding bureaucratic barriers. Keep it open e.g. plaza programming by Queens Museum. Strengthen the right of cultural expressionism in public spaces more- what needs to be permitted and what doesn't? This needs to be thought about carefully to prevent access issues.
- 16) Community land trusts to provide REAL affordable housing and real 21st century solutions. Fallow land shouldn't be given to private investors and given to CLTs instead (in fear of the 70s). The value of people should be higher than that of land.
- 17) Commercial Rent Stabilization- Support small businesses to support culture- the City should be held accountable.