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PLACE | PARTICIPATION + CONTESTED SPACE
Local Practices Of Placemaking In Over-The-Rhine

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ABSTRACT

The concept of place has taken on increased importance in the practice of planning as officials attempt to order and re-image communities in an effort to attract and retain private investment. Expert placemaking practices are often at odds with the informal ways in which local users contribute to the meaning of place. Three case studies explore the ways in which the local practices and everyday activities of users offer new potential for planners to create meaningful, participatory and just place.
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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 10

CHAPTER 1 | EXISTING CONCEPTS AND APPROACHES 14
1.1 Places as a Social Construct 14
1.2 The Production of Space 15
1.3 The Planned Production of Space 17
1.4 Expert Practices of Placemaking 18
1.5 Semiotics of Place 19
1.6 Normative Design Theory 20

CHAPTER 2 | CONTESTED SPACE 22
2.1 Contested places 22
2.2 Public Interest 22
2.3 Public Space 23
2.4 The Right to the City 24
2.5 Democracy and Participation 25

CHAPTER 3 | EMERGING CONCEPTS 26
3.1 Lived Space and Local Practices 26
3.2 Development Lived Space 27
3.3 The Practice of Everyday Life 28
3.4 Everyday Public Space 30
3.5 Summary of Local Practices 32
3.6 More meaningful, Diverse and Democratic 33
INTRODUCTION

The idea of place has long been central to planning and design practice, but increasingly and with more awareness experts are intervening in the experience of places in order to influence community dynamics. This expert practice of placemaking is rooted in a theoretical understanding of place, and limited by the practicalities of intervening in the physical form of urban space. While placemaking is an important tool for experts to utilize in community planning, it should be accompanied by a thorough understanding of the contemporary social dynamics of place and the implications it has for the people who inhabit these places. This study seeks to re-frame our understanding of place in order to better equip planners to deal with the contemporary complexities and dynamics of placemaking.

In order to accomplish this aim the study is organized into six chapters. The first three chapters consist of a literature review covering existing concepts and approaches to place among planners, the contested nature of the contemporary urban situation that planners must operate within, and the emerging concepts that suggest new alternatives for approaching place in this contemporary context. By first outlining the existing approaches we can better understand why place is important in urban society and why planners are interested in intervening in it. Realizing that place is a social construct that is socially produced makes it possible to explore the ways in which experts are involved in the planned production of space. Through a consideration of a trialectic of spatiality (Lefebvre 1991) it is revealed that space is socially
produced and planners typically practice within the realm of “conceived space”, and increas-
ingly “perceived space”. These expert practices of placemaking are the product of empirical
studies, which serve as generalizations of the context of placemaking. In addition, several
normative theories serve to orient experts towards what is desirable. Many have argued that
these expert practices are problematic given the current context of placemaking.

The second chapter considers the context in which expert practices of placemaking are operat-
ing and underscores many of the problems others have raised and which this research aims to
address. Much of the literature points towards an increasingly complex social make-up. The
notions of increased fragmentation, and discord among urban inhabitants suggest that the
methods and practices of expert placemaking are limited in their capacity to be meaningful,
inclusive and democratic.

With this understanding the Chapter Three considers the concept of “lived space”, as the third,
and under-explored, aspect of the trialectic of spatiality, or the social production of space (Lefe-
vre 1991). In considering the developments of lived space the origins are explored to better
understand the implications of more recent reconsideration of the idea. A review of the initial
developments and current thinking about lived space suggests that local practices, as opposed
to expert practices, offer a new potential for a placemaking practice that addresses the contested
nature of place.
Based on the existing expert practices, the current issues of placemaking and the suggestions of the emerging theory this research considers if local practices create more meaningful, participatory and just places.

Chapter four outlines the research question that evolves from the literature review and describes the research design used to better understand the implications of lived space in the realm of placemaking. Using the literature review as a foundation, the research design builds on the existing expert practices of placemaking and the normative theories that have been developed. A case study method accommodates the qualitative nature of place, and allows for a framework that is inclusive of existing practices. In order to accommodate the qualitative nature of the research question a case study method is used. The case studies are developed around observations and interviews from Cincinnati’s Over-The-Rhine and then organized around the principles of lived space, and the context of existing expert practices. An evaluation of the practices with regards to a series of performance criteria establishes a relationship between the local practices and existing normative theory. Chapter five covers each of the three case studies.

Finally, in the sixth chapter the conclusions summarize each of the case studies by relating the lived space characteristics, the contextual expert practices, and the performance criteria to a set of placemaking principles that have been derived from the literature. Where the
performance criteria reveal how the local practices operate, relating them to the placemaking principles describes why they are effective at allowing for a more meaningful, inclusive and democratic places. In addition to this summary of the local practices the relationship of local practices to expert practices is also considered. The conclusions illustrates that while local practices cannot simply be adopted by experts, but why experts should be involved in assisting in the formation, continuation and inclusion of local practices.
CHAPTER 1 | EXISTING CONCEPTS AND APPROACHES

1.1 | Place as a Social Construct

In its everyday use place is a ubiquitous term practically devoid of meaning. Theoretical inquiries into place have described it as being distinct from space (location), the material setting for social relations (locale), and related to the human capacity to produce meaning (sense of place) (Agnew 1987). It is through an individual’s experience of social relations that the material setting of space is endowed with value and made distinct from abstract space (Tuan 1977).

Figure 1-1. Place Diagram

Cultural and societal knowledge plays an important role in the production of place (Cresswell 2004), but place is also described as primary to social relations (Malpas 1999). Place and the production of its meaning, is based on social dynamics and consequently reflects the social milieu, ideologies and power structures (Harvey 1996).
In fact, this is largely the premise that planners and designers operate under in promoting the considered design of the built environment. As planners practice placemaking they are inherently involved in determining the social production of place. Placemaking is the most concrete practice of producing place. While there is no agreed upon definition of placemaking, it generally is understood as a process that is part of urban design that makes places livable and meaningful (PPS 2008; Flemming 2007). In practicing placemaking planners are directly engaged in the production of place.

While placemaking maybe common among planners and designers, it is not simply a tool that professionals use to create livable communities. People are constantly adapting to their environment, appropriating space intended for one purpose for something either competing or complementing a determined function. This constitutes a two-way process between the user and the environment (Lynch 1960), where lived experience informs the everyday practices. While people ascribe meaning to place based on their experience of social dynamics, they also derive meaning from it based on the intentions of its producers. Social and cultural factors inform our experience of place and our activities in it.

1.2 | The Production of Space

Theoretical inquiry into these often competing modes of production has led to what has been described as a “trialectic of spatiality” (Soja 1999; Lefebvre 1991). This theoretical
construct proposes three realms of understanding and experiencing space as a dialectical triad. *Conceived space*, or representation of space, is the dominant mode of understanding space and involves the ordering of abstract knowledge and values into signs and codes that are both implicit and explicit. This is the primary mode of operation for planners because they view space as system and are involved in ordering expert knowledge. The second realm is *perceived space*, or spatial practice, and refers to the mediated experiences of space which are coherent and empirically measurable. This involves the interpretation of the signs and codes, accurately or otherwise. Third, *lived space*, or spaces of representation, is directly produced and experienced as images and symbols formed by everyday life of users (Lefebvre 1991; Soja 1999). Lived spaces emerge as a result of people using space to perform the necessities and frivolity of daily life.

**Figure 1-2 . Trialectic of spatiality**

![Trialectic of spatiality](source: Lefebvre 1991)
1.3 | Planned Production of Place

Planners and designers throughout history have acted as agents in the social construction of place under varying agendas and degrees of awareness. These interventions have primarily involved ordering of expert knowledge and grand civic meaning into social signifiers and codified functions of urban form. This can be equated with the concept of conceived space (Lynch 1990, Lefebvre 1991). Traditionally planners, designers and architects have been among the few professionals who directly produce meaning through the ordering and structuring of form through codified languages (Sennett 1976; Lefebvre 1991).

Increasingly, planners are realizing their expertise and influence over place through a more image-based approach. By understanding and intervening in the production of place through symbols and images planners are capable of representing social, economic and political dynamics of spaces. As trained experts, planners use a number of advanced methods to design, regulate, promote and organize place and the experience of it. There are benefits to this approach to place. Because it is a more comprehensive understanding, it can be more accessible, and therefore, have a more direct influence on the dynamics of place. Still, there are a number of shortcomings. Many of which are addressed in a later section.
Public spaces are a major component of the planner’s arsenal when it comes to placemaking. The majority of the planners’ authority over place occurs in the public spaces of the city. Planners and academics typically categorize public space as distinct from privately-owned spaces. In reality, the distinction is much less apparent. Planners are aware that the appearance of private space has an impact on the community at large and therefore intervene in the qualitative regulations and codification. This happens through zoning, design reviews, ordinances, and publicly sponsored urban design plans.

1.4 | Expert Practices of placemaking

Placemaking has evolved as a result of this increased realization of the influence planners have over the “sense of place” and consequently, social dynamics. These expert placemaking practices are the consciously planned interventions into the form and structure of place to influence the meaning and experience of urban space, and primarily, public spaces. This approach involves an understanding of place as a system of socially produced meaning, and attempts to create an ordered, coherent, and measurable perception of place, or perceived space. In order to accomplish this the practices of expert placemaking are supported by a foundation of theory, both empirical and normative.

Empirical theories attempt to form an understanding of existing conditions and are based on observable, or empirical evidence. They attempt to systematize relationships between
forces that shape place, or are our understanding of place. Normative theories attempt to determine what should be, and are intended to serve as an operational guide. While empirical findings may inform normative theories, a normative theory is a conception of what should exist, yet does not. This has typically been the task of experts who, with the access to expert knowledge have been able to know what is best for society as a whole. As professions involved in placemaking become more specialized and fragmented, as does society there become multiple and conflicting facts and opinions from which to operate.

This method of expert-defined theory translates to an expert production of space. This expert production of conceived space is a the root of architectural profession. But “during the modern project, professionals constituted a class of people charged with ‘applying’ their knowledge generated in domains outside the place at hand on ‘the people’ of given places” (Schneekloth & Shibley 2000, 134). To a large extent this universalizing tendency of Modern thinking is still prevalent despite a rejection of the consequences it often produces. Still the expert is not obsolete and neither are their theoretical developments.

1.5 | Semiotics of Place

Planning and design research on place has produced several theoretical frameworks for understanding how we perceive the city and place as a semiotic system of images and symbols. The Image of the City (Lynch 1960) and The Evaluative Image of the City (Na-
Both view place as a semiotic system of forms and objective situations that can be empirically identified, structured and convey meaning through a legible or imageable language. These theories emphasize the cognitive and perceptive experience of place, but are primarily concerned with how the cognitive system operates and the preferences of observers rather than the actual production of meaning (Lynch 1960, Nasar 1995). They offer little normative or prescriptive basis and do not necessarily deal with how to plan, design or what sense of place should be produced.

1.6 | Normative Design Theory

In addition to viewing place in semiotic terms, planning literature about placemaking often emphasizes certain values that should inform placemaking. Social justice, participation and the significance of the meaning created are common rhetorical terms and concepts (Flemming 2006; PPS 2007). In addition to literature specific to placemaking, a theory of Good City Form (Lynch 1981) offers an extensive normative theory and a set of performance criteria dealing with social relations and environmental form. The performance criteria include such concepts such as vitality, sense, fit, access, control and two overarching concepts of efficiency and justice (Lynch 1981). While perhaps broader than the scope of placemaking these concepts deal directly with the relationship between human values, activities and urban form. These characteristics can be associated with lived space as they refer to the direct social relations between users and the environment.
Any approach to place as a social construct that can and should be intervened in through expert practices should be built of a foundation of research that considers the existing expert practices, how they implicitly and explicitly shape place. As the practice of expert placemaking increases in the context of contemporary urban space it is important to understand the evolution of these practices and how they relate to the shaping of community dynamics. We have confused space and place, forgetting that places, unlike spaces, are not interchangeable and discardable (Schneekloth & Shibley 2000, 133). Both the empirical and normative conceptions of intervening in place outlined above suggest that the user plays a significant role in determining, creating and upholding the image of a place. Still, there is no in-depth understanding of why this is so or how experts can be involved in placemaking that is rooted in the dynamics of the users. In addition, the users are often at odds with the sanctioned image that is desired.
CHAPTER 2 | CONTESTED SPACE

2.1 | Contested places

“Place, both as a concept and as a discrete space on the earth, is a contested terrain” (Schneekloth & Shibley 2000, 132). Despite the sophistication of planning knowledge and practice, the complexity of social dynamics inherent in place presents planners with a difficult responsibility given that their “primary obligation is to serve the public interest” (APA 2007). Like place, public is a dynamic concept whose contemporary conception has evolved in response to social and cultural milieu and shifting ideology (Sennett 1985). In short, there is no clear conception of the public. Typically, an understanding of the public considers common values and characteristics and civic identity.

2.2 | Public Interest

Historically, there have been times where it is relatively easy to identify these common traits in a more singular civic sense. In the recent past, however, it has become increasingly difficult to identify this common sense. Social forces such as globalization, polarization, and fragmentation have made any singular identity more of an aspiration than a reality. In reality, there are multiple publics, conflicting and divergent (Healey 1993), competing for scarce resources and left to their own devices to create their place. These publics, or discourse communities, have their own goals, ways of understanding, and means of furthering their aims (Healey 1993, Swales 1990). The need for planners to define a singular public interest can reinforce
and create conflict between the interests of various publics or discourse communities. Private life, especially in American society where it has always been a central value, has become an important aspect of social values. Given the heterogeneous and fragmented nature of social relations in contemporary cities planners’ ability to intervene in the sense of place is further complicated. It is hardly possible to equally represent the cultural diversity, and heterogeneity inherent in contemporary public discourse through placemaking.

2.3 | Public Space

Not only are people becoming more private, but also there is a general consensus that public space is increasingly privatized and exclusionary in regulatory and physical terms (Mitchell 2003; Soja 1996; Davis 1990). This is partly a response to increased concern for order and security in the public realm. Following severe disinvestment in cities, especially central cities, the urban environments worldwide have witnessed and continue to be impacted by physical, economic and social deterioration. Private property owners have abandoned buildings leaving them to deteriorate. Concepts, such as the broken windows thesis, placed significant blame on the quality of public spaces proclaiming that an apparent lack of order invited and bred crime (Kelling 1982).

As discussed earlier, the social dynamics of community are interpreted and inform our perception of place. In the case of these marginalized areas, the public space is central to this issue. In public space symbols are made visible and signify the underlying social relations. As cities
attempt to revitalize the areas that were once central to their history and which hold important cultural assets they are confronted with the problems of this decay and the marginalized activities. It is a natural reaction for cities and planners to exhibit concern for these areas and the condition of the public space. There have been a myriad of responses and trends to combat the condition of the public spaces that inform our perception of communities.

2.4 | The Right to the City

“The right to the city” (Lefebvre 1996; Mitchell 2003) deals with social relations, alienation and the implications of the official power structure in controlling and regulating the accessibility and function of public space (Banerjee 2001). With regards to placemaking, the right to the city can be extended to include the cultural variations that define the type of place and its physical and social manifestations. The practice of placemaking implemented by those that live and use a space, and therefore, define the experience and sense of place has been referred to as “the right to design the city” (Mattila 2002). This right to design the city is limited. This is partly because it has been determined that it is in the public interest to exert influence over the experience of public space through ordinances, land-use policy, design guidelines, redevelopment strategies, surveillance and police powers (Loukaitou-Sideris et al. 2005). While many times these strategies are effective in achieving the intended results, it should also be noted that these regulations have effectively de-emphasized, privatized, and excluded activities and people from public space (Loukaitou-Sideris et al. 2005). The implications of these regulations and their effect on the production and experience of place raise concerns for social justice.
2.5 | Democracy and Participation

One way in which planners and designers address social justice is by promoting the concept and practice of participation. There has been a championing of democratic processes in planning as one of the most important opportunities for research (Kalinski 2006). Still, participatory strategies of research are often limited in their reach and feasibility for practical use by planners. The formal nature and expert knowledge of planning fails to be inclusive of the complexity of social relations.

The issues associated with expert placemaking practices are complex and problematic. The heterogeneity of public discourse raises issues of whose interest and what public. Secondly, the condition of public space, and control and regulating of it raises questions of what functions public space serves and who has the right to it. The same is true of the placemaking process in general. Those who have access and vested interest are represented disproportionately. From these broad issues a number of problems with the current trends of expert placemaking practices emerge.

1. There is growing heterogeneity and divergence of the public interest which is difficult for planners to serve through a centralized and generalized approach to placemaking.
2. The control and regulation of public space excludes certain persons and activities explicitly and indirectly limiting the possibility and diversity of experiences.
3. The result of placemaking is defined by those capable and willing to participate through official processes.
CHAPTER 3 | EMERGING CONCEPTS

3.1 | Lived Space & Local Practices

While planners clearly practice expert strategies related to conceived space, the concept of lived space has been more elusive to the planner’s role in placemaking. In fact, as experts intervene in the social production of place they often discount the value of local knowledge and consequently, lived space. Although it is understood that local knowledge and social dynamics are critical in shaping place and are inextricably linked with lived space planning has mostly overlooked the practices that constitute lived space. There is a need to shift the theories and practice of placemaking from the expert practices to a more use-centered approach. Users have always been involved in determining the physical and social make-up of places (Gans 2002).

Despite the significance and intentions of planned intervention in place, the daily activities of people continue to influence the experience and sense of place. This is especially true in communities where people have been left with few civic resources, are effectively marginalized and disenfranchised, and left to their own devices. Places become filled with local meaning specific to the needs and desires of the community. These spaces are reflective of the cultural, social, economic and daily realities shared by people and are made evident through the accumulation of actions and activities that are direct responses to these conditions. This is the essence of lived space and has only recently been inserted into the planner’s theoretical lexicon. Drawing from
the idea of lived space recent theorist of urban space have put forth the ideas of *Thirdspace* (Soja 1996), *Everyday Urbanism* (Chase, Kalinski & Crawford 1999), and *Loose Space* (Franck and Stevens 2007). In each of these theories there is an emphasis on the ability of ordinary citizens, or users, to become involved in the formation of place.

### 3.2 | Development of Lived Space

Lived space is one third of the trialectic of spatiality introduced earlier in this study and which served as the basis for the understanding of traditional planning practices as it relates to place and placemaking. Traditionally, planners have practiced in the realm of conceived space, or representations of space, and more recently by intervening in perceived space, or spatial practices. The third aspect, and pioneering development of the trialectic of spatiality and the social production of space, is that of lived space. While the concept of lived space is part of Lefebvre's trialectic it stems from earlier writings on the importance of everyday life.

Developed through extensive writings during the mid-twentieth century, mostly by three French social theorists Lefebvre, Debord and deCerteau, the concept of everyday life is inseparable from the idea of lived space. More accurately translated from French, it is the idea of the quotidian, or commonplace. The concept of the everyday was what separated these social theorists from those that came before. Elaborating on Marx's conceptions of the industrial society, Lefebvre considered the everyday as important, if not more so, than industrial factors of production (i.e. labor
and capital) for creating a revolution in modern society. Lefebvre defined the everyday as a set of functions, a product, and a condition (Lefebvre 1997, 34). The everyday is a concept that encompasses the processes, outcomes and context of experience. It is simultaneously ordinary and extraordinary. Lefebvre saw the everyday as the arena for revolution and believed that “in order to change life, society, space, architecture, even the city must change” (Lefebvre 1997, 37).

While the original development of the concept of the everyday was spawned from Marxism it certainly has implications for contemporary urban issues. Lefebvre’s interest in the everyday as the site for revolution, as expressed in both the Production of Space and Urban Revolution (1970), is critical to the application of the idea to contemporary cities. While there is a Marxist conviction from Lefebvre it is no difficult to see how democracy is also implicated in these ideas.

3.3 | The Practice of Everyday Life

It is the idea of everyday life itself that transcends political and social theory and effectively joins the ordinary practices of citizens with theories of them. Until recently these matters were of little concern for professionals, academics and institutions and can be seen in the gap between practice and theory. In The Practice of Everyday Life (deCerteau 1984) this gap is further diminished. In a critical consideration of Lefebvre’s ideas deCerteau adapts the theory of the everyday to analyze actual practices of everyday life. He discerns a distinct
framework for understanding what constitutes everyday practices and the significance of popular cultural consumption in the social and political determination. His analysis shows “that a relation (always social) determines its terms, and not the reverse, and that each individual is a locus in which an incoherent (and often contradictory) plurality of such relational determinations interact” (deCerteau 1984, 6).

As part of the concept of the everyday Lefebvre and deCerteau were occupied with the idea of alienation and marginalization. They observed and described what today is accepted in the case of contemporary cities that “marginality is today no longer limited to minority groups, but is rather massive and persuasive” (deCerteau 1984, 16). With an understanding of the growing separation between “expert producers” of knowledge and the life of “local consumers” the idea of the everyday developed by Lefebvre and deCerteau serves to legitimize and strengthen the political dimension of everyday practices. For deCerteau the distinction between expert and local is understand in the modes of operation. Experts tend to utilize strategies, which he describes as:

the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an “environment”. A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as proper and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it (competitors, adversaries, “clienteles,” “targets,” or objects of research). Political, economic, and scientific rationality has been constructed on this strategic model. (deCerteau 1984, 29).
Strategies are part of the lexicon of planners. Strategic plans delineate spaces, process and the identity of a place and thus make it proper. Opposed to this is the idea of a tactic, which for deCerteau is “a calculus which cannot count on a ‘proper’ (a spatial or institutional localization), nor thus a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality. The place of a tactic belongs to the other.” The tactical is not proper, but “insinuates itself into the other’s place, fragmentarily, without taking it over entirely, without being able to keep it at a distance”. It undoubtedly has a spatial component and implication, but it is inherently temporal. A tactic is “always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized ‘on the wing.” Tactics create everyday spaces and establish places by taking advantage of opportunities to “combine heterogeneous elements” and it is “the intellectual synthesis of these given elements takes the form” (deCerteau 1984, 29).

3.4 | Everyday Public Space

It is from these basic ideas on the philosophy of everyday life that recent ideas of everyday public space and loose space have become part of the lexicon in theories of urban design and that offer new territory for understanding their democratic and participatory aspects. Everyday public space includes spaces that have been appropriated for temporary uses and have “multiple and shifting meanings rather than clarity of function.” Everyday spaces represent a bottom-up approach to re-configuring urban space that lies outside the professions of planning and design where users are able to redefine the function a
space should accommodate. Most importantly they are distinct from the “normative public spaces, which produce the existing ideology, these spaces help to overturn the status quo” (Crawford 1999, 28).

Generally, loose space is similar to everyday space. It is made up of the publicly accessible spaces in the city and those that offer a freedom of choice as well as physical elements that a user can appropriate and re-configure. Loose space is predicated on group and individual activities (Franck and Stevens 2007, 2). Loose space can be planned open space or leftover spaces that are usually publicly owned but void of any determined or exercised function.

Loose space affords opportunities and new possibilities to occur. It is the “indeterminacy of loose space, along with free access, [that] opens the space to other possibilities: to activities not anticipated, to activities that have no other place, to activities that benefit from a relative lack of control and economic constraints” (Franck and Stevens 2007, 17). With this looseness comes a mixture of people with diverse interest, backgrounds and intentions. This diversity “nurture partcularity in the urban public realm, sustaining local practices and allowing the identity of a place and culture to flourish” (Franck and Stevens 2007, 21).
It is this concept of sustaining local practices that are based in the cultural, economic, and larger social and political context that are the subject of this study. The ability to afford new meaning, intrinsic to the daily life of users, enables urban space, public or private, to address the complexity of contemporary urban condition. It is the reflection of values and beliefs in all there diversity and conflict that offers the potential for lived, everyday and loose space to engender stronger cultural and social significance in a place and to provide for more democratic and participatory places.

3.5 | Summary of Local Practices

In this research the activities and interventions of users that utilize local social and cultural knowledge are referred to as local practices. The idea of local practices is a combination of the many threads of theoretical discourse that deal with similar issues. The difference is that local practices, as the name implies, are centered around, specific to and meaningful for a local base of users.

The user is the critical component of local practices; it is their experience and perception that defines their sense of place. Their knowledge of local cultural and social relations informs their experience and perception of place and in turn, their activities and practices. The exercise of local knowledge in the activities and practices of local users shapes their
own but also others’ perception and experience of a place. Through local practices users consciously and unconsciously intervene in the sense of place. These local practices are equally important to placemaking because they allow meaning to be the direct result of, and directly relevant to, the social and cultural practices of users. They are often marginalized, both socially and spatially, but are significant representation of the public life and social and cultural dynamics of place (Crawford 1995).

3.6 | More Meaningful, Diverse, and Democratic

Because local practices allow for a more direct relationship between the user and the environment, places can become more meaningful and significant. Not only do local practices potentially produce more meaningful places because they exhibit the cultural and social relationships inherent in our understanding of place, but should also produce more diverse places (Crawford 1995). A discourse community that utilizes various means for various ends and defines place differently from another discourse community can coexist in the same space. The places of different publics can overlap and inform others’ experiences. This diversity, when made manifest is a means of various groups building tolerance, consensus and understanding, in effect more just.
In this regard local practices have interesting implications for the participatory nature of planning. Viewing the individual actions as decisions that affect the experience of place suggests that local practices enable people to participate in placemaking in ways that are related to their values and cultural differences (Kalinski 2006). Not only does everyone have the right to the city, their everyday activities exercise their right to design the city. This exist outside of traditional participation, but the dialogue that places affords can be read as participation and signify demands of underrepresented citizens. Innovations in participatory design processes as well as in the democratic functions of governing are expanding.

Considerations of the tools and experiences of users is becoming critical for all planning practices (Kalinski 2006). Specifically, local practices of placemaking offer planners with unlimited potential resources for informing and implementing expert interventions in placemaking. The expert and non-expert knowledge can enable the “communal practice of creating beloved places that also enrich the basis for knowledge and our ability to situate knowledge in place while opening spaces for multiple and contested meanings” (Schneekloth & Shibley 2000, 133).

With this understanding of the contested nature of place in the contemporary urban context and the suggestions of emerging theory, this research suggest that it is the realm of lived space, and the local practices that constitute it, that can achieve the desired intentions
of placemaking. These local practices of placemaking appear to allow for more meaningful, participatory and democratic places, especially in locations where space is being contested by different groups that have access to different participatory and power structures.

In moving out of the realm of expert practice we create new opportunities for placemaking to contribute to the vitality of everyday life (Schneekloth & Shibley 2000, 130).
CHAPTER 4 | RESEARCH OVERVIEW

4.1 | Research Design

The following research is aimed at determining the value of local practices with regards to contemporary placemaking and how they contribute to more meaningful, just and participatory places. To this end the research will use a case study format to identify and describe four local practices in Over-The-Rhine, a central city neighborhood in Cincinnati. First, the activities will be described in relation to theories of lived space, everyday urbanism, and loose space. Next, they will be examined in relation to the existing normative performance criteria. The final finding will use both the lived space description, and the performance criteria to determine the overall value of local practices in relation to expert practices. The three local practices being considered were determined through initial observations in the neighborhood. They are:

1. Street Vending
2. Local Public Arts
3. Sidewalk Living Rooms

Each of these activities exhibited characteristics that correspond to theories of lived, everyday, and loose space. Their spatial and temporal characteristics are related to the everyday life of the
neighborhood and appear to reflect the social and cultural values and beliefs of the majority, but not the politically dominant group. The structure of this research is intended to elucidate the relationship between these practices, the theory and their value in placemaking.

Initially, each activity is addressed individually. First, they are described in relation to the parameters of local practices outlined in the previous chapter. Second, an in-depth consideration of Kevin Lynch’s performance criteria will relate them to the normative aspects of placemaking. With both of these descriptions, for each practice, it is then possible to analyze how they offer users a meaningful, just and participatory sense of place. This is achieved by comparing all three practices along each of the three measures.

By first considering the local practices in terms of lived space the research will identify and describe the activities in terms of spatial and temporal characteristics, a profile of the users and observers as they relate to the space and the images and symbols produced. Next, these elements of lived space will be evaluated in terms of Lynch’s performance criteria (1981) along the dimensions of sense, fit and control, the normative performance criteria. These criteria, broken down into sub-dimensions (explained in detail below), will examine the activities in more detail and are expected to illustrate the cultural and social value of local practices. The sub-dimensions of sense include identity, structure, congruence, transparency, legibility and significance and are intended to reveal how users experience the place in relation to the activity. Fit measures the ability of the local practice, activity or users to manipulate and adapt to spaces
and the needs of the neighborhood. The measure of control will examine the ability of the user to manage the local practices and exercise a degree of spatial rights through the practices.

Finally, with this information the value of the local practices can be related to the expert objectives of placemaking practice in terms of creating meaningful, participatory and just places. These three criteria, derived from the remaining criteria in Lynch’s normative theories of urban from as well as contemporary placemaking literature, represent the aims of expert practices. They are not intended to be an exhaustive set of considerations, but will begin to establish the relevance of local practices in expert placemaking. Each placemaking principle is an analysis of all the case studies and a selection of the descriptive dimensions of lived space and performance criteria.

Whether the activity or practice is meaningful is based on the dimension of sense. This allows for a wide range of considerations as to what is meaningful necessary in this study. Participation is determined through the dimensions of fit. The ability for users to adapt to and manipulate urban form and experience, while not a traditional model of participation has been elucidated through the literature review. The measure of justice is formed through a consideration of the control. The continuum of spatial rights (presence, use and action, appropriation, modification, disposition) helps to illustrate the ability of the users to live out their daily life. In cases where spatial rights are abused that is also noted.
2.2 | Methodology

Using a case study methodology three instances of local practices are evaluated based on the elements of lived space, urban form and placemaking principles. This approach allows for a systematic description of the activities and interventions and an evaluation of their relationship to expert placemaking practices (Yin 1994). Case study, as a holistic in-depth investigation, reveals the qualitative details from the users perspective and observer’s perspective and is often used in research that focuses on the environmental-behavioral research (Tellis 1997). Observation and interviews are the primary methods for data collection. Photo-documentation and library research also support the observations and interviews. This descriptive case study utilizes an analytical framework drawn from the concept of lived space, a normative theory of urban form and principles from placemaking practices.

2.3 | Case Studies

The case study is guided by the questions of the value of local practices with the objective of considering local practices in the context of expert placemaking practices. The three practices are described through data collected through observations and interviews. The process of documentation and data collection considers the analytical framework as a guidance of what information is significant to the study. After collecting the data the local practices are analyzed and compared to one another and to the expert practices along
the concepts, criteria and principles derived from the literature of place, urban form and placemaking. Conclusions have been drawn through the relationship of local practices to expert practices. To answer these questions a period of field research and observation was necessary for collection of the data. The procedures described below in addition to the main research questions and objectives guided the observations.

2.4 | Data Collection

Time and Duration: Preliminary observations have been conducted over a 6 month period, ending in December of 2007, to formulate research direction and aims. The following research was conducted over a period of six months from January to June. Due to the time constraints interview will collect information about activities that happen at times other than those observed.

Area and location: The area of Over-The-Rhine as defined by the City of Cincinnati served as the area of research. The initial observations occurred at a larger scale to identify locations to be observed in more detail. Particular attention was paid to the relationship between the locations of local practices in relation to expert practices.

Observations: Observation have been conducted over a period of six months, from January to June of 2008. Times and location were varied in order to provide a representative perspective of the local practices and their position in the context of the neighborhood both temporally and spatially.
Interviews: Twenty interviews were conducted using an intercept method, meaning individuals were approached in public based on their participation in the activities being studied. The interviews were conducted in the neighborhood to collect information and perspectives of the local practices being examined. Interviews happened in conjunction with observations and were directed towards understanding the user’s perspective of local practices. The population sought for interviews was based on the objective of collecting user perspectives of local practices. Users are determined to be people who either live, work or regularly visit the neighborhood. This is explained in greater detail at the end of this chapter. Photo-documentation captured the visual and physical character of the local practices and their relationship to the surrounding context. No individual identities have been revealed through the images.

Library Research: Additional information to explain and validate observations of activities was collected through library research. This included studies from sociology, criminology, public art, and planning and urban design. The City of Cincinnati’s municipal code was also used to determine existing regulations.

2.5 | Organizing Observations

The information obtained through observations and interview has been organized based on the conceptual dimensions of lived space and the performance criteria. The complexity
and depth of these concepts does not lend itself to compartmentalization, yet it is important to be able to rigorously evaluate local practices. This framework for organizing the observations served as a loose structure and every attempt is made at cross-referencing where appropriate and avoiding redundancy. It is not necessary that each practice conform to the following descriptive dimensions. Instead, they serve as a basis for questioning and are organized in this manner for quick reference.

Lived Space: Three aspects of lived space will be considered: the user, the activity and the image produced, and the experience or sense of place as distinct from the larger context. The aspects of lived space will describe the instance in terms of the social production of space; identifying the actors or discourse community, the intervention or activity, and the resulting image produced and the meaning that it has for both the users and observers.

Urban Form: A theory of Good City Form (Lynch 1981) offers an extensive normative theory as a set of performance criteria for good urban form including dimensions of sense, fit, and control. The criteria deal directly with the reciprocal relationship between social practices and the design of urban form and offers subjective and qualitative measures to analyze that relationship relative to cultural and social context.

Performance Criteria for Good Urban Form and the measures being considered
1. Sense (extent to which settlement is structured in time and space by residents)
   a. Identity- How users associate with activity
   b. Structure- How activity is structured
   c. Congruence- How activity relates to context
   d. Transparency- How activity reveals the context
   e. Legibility- How easily others can determine the meaning
   f. Significance- How activity reveals cultural and social values and history

2. Fit (match of form with human activity)
   a. Adaptability- match between form and behavior
   b. Manipulability- Amount a space is changed

3. Control (degree to which users control resources)
   a. Spatial Rights
      i. Presence
      ii. Use and Action
      iii. Appropriation
      iv. Modification
      v. Disposition

By using the performance criteria it is possible to evaluate how the local practices achieve, or accomplish an intervention in urban form. Because they are qualitative measures they are used as a loose guide for comparison between criteria and practices. There is no standard by which each practice is rated or assigned a value. Instead, they provide a guide for the observations in determining what should be considered.

2.6 | Developing Conclusions

Placemaking Principles: Using a summary of literature about placemaking a concise set of principles will guide the final analysis and findings. Here the intention is to determine the value of the local practices as a whole and to relate the local practices to expert practice of placemaking. Measures consider whether a practice is indeed meaningful, participatory and just. These three principles, derived from the remaining criteria in Lynch's normative
theories of urban form as well as contemporary placemaking literature, represent the aims of expert practices.

The relationship between the performance criteria and the placemaking principles is two-fold. First, they are extensions of the performance criteria and serve as overarching concepts. Second, they are useful in translating how local practices relate to expert practices. While the performance criteria reveal how each of the practices exhibit characteristics of the criteria the placemaking principles illustrate why the practices can, or cannot, be considered useful in terms of the aims of expert practices.

This method is not intended to be an exhaustive set of considerations, but will begin to establish the relevance of local practices in expert placemaking. Each placemaking principle is an analysis of all the case studies and a selection of the descriptive dimensions of lived space and performance criteria. Whether the activity or practice is meaningful is based on the dimension of sense. This allows for a wide range of considerations as to what is meaningful necessary in this study. Participation is determined through the dimensions of fit. The ability for users to adapt to and manipulate urban form and experience, while not a traditional model of participation has been elucidated through the literature review. The measure of justice is formed through a consideration of the control. The continuum of spatial rights (presence, use and action, appropriation, modification, disposition) helps
to illustrate the ability of the users to live out their daily life. In cases where spatial rights are abused that is also noted.

2.7 | Research Limitations

The focus of this research is on three local practices. While it is not intended to be exhaustive it does have implications for the general knowledge of placemaking within the field of urban planning, urban design and environmental design. In many ways it is an examination of user-centered design research. Generally, a user is someone who is involved in the activity and events of a place. In order to understand the users in this study it is important to first understand the locational context of the study.

2.8 | Location Context

The study is also rooted in a specific context and is not intended to construct a universal approach to local placemaking. Using Over-The-Rhine as the context for this case study serves several purposes. Firstly, like many central city neighborhoods the social dynamics of Over-The-Rhine have been dramatic. While this study is not an attempt to resolve or romanticize these dramatic events, the neighborhood serves as an agreed upon example of a contested space. In addition its accessibility prior to and during the research period made possible the extensive observations necessary.
Over-The-Rhine, north of Cincinnati’s Central Business District and south of the University Medical Center, is in the midst of the two most significant economic, cultural and political cores of the city and is also home to many regional attractions (City of Cincinnati 2002, 65). As a result of its location it is also well served by transportation networks including interstate highways, major arterials and public transportation. Despite these factors, it is set apart from surrounding communities. This is partly due to geographic factors, but the social forces cannot be ignored. While the neighborhood has a rich historical and cultural landscape that has significance at a regional level, the demographics of the community are representative of many inner city neighborhoods. Also, like many inner city neighborhoods, these factors create real and perceived issues of safety, physical condition and economic disinvestment (City of Cincinnati 2002). The community continues to lose population and business, which, in turn, has dramatic effects on the condition of housing (U. S. Census 2000).

As one of the largest existing examples of early nineteenth century urban architecture, Over-The-Rhine is home to many important historical edifices (City of Cincinnati 2002, 32). The area holds many designations of historical significance. A number of buildings have been identified by on Historic Registers at the local and national level. Among these are Findlay Market, Music Hall and Old St. Mary’s Church. Two designated districts comprise the largest locally created historic districts (City of Cincinnati 2002). Despite all of these efforts by preservationists, the
neighborhood is also on a list of the most endangered historic sites (National Trust 2007).

The current population of the community is a fraction of earlier times. At its peak, the population reached 44,475 (Miller and Shapiro 1998, xix). The 2000 U.S. Census places the current population at 7,638. Of this an overwhelming majority are African American (76.9%). In addition to the segregation based on race there is equally disturbing trend of concentration of poverty. While the numbers from the 2000 U. S. Census show some improvements from earlier census reports, it also shows a significant difference between the neighborhood and the larger Cincinnati area in terms of poverty. The rate of poverty among persons in Cincinnati in 2000 was 21.9%, while in Over-The-Rhine it was 57%. This was down from the 1990 census (79%). The median household income in 2000 ($11,787) was up significantly from the 1990 ($5,001), but is still significantly lower than Cincinnati’s median in 2000 ($29,493).

These demographic factors contribute to a visible deterioration of the housing stock and built environment. According to the U. S. Census (2000), the census in 1970 accounted for 7,312 units in the neighborhood. The 2000 census places this number at 5,261. The median year housing structure was built, according to the 2000 census, is 1938. This, coupled with the low rate of home ownership (3.9%) and high level of vacancy (31.7%), worsens the condition of housing stock.
The social, physical and economic context of Over-The-Rhine is not unique. The historic significance, the potential it holds as urban places enjoy a renewed appreciation, and the political, social and cultural tension are common to American central cities. There are as many ways of addressing these problems as there are places, but there are many similarities and lessons to be learned between them. As discussed earlier placemaking is one tool that is common in the planner and designers toolbox for dealing with these situations.

While this study is limited to the role of local practices in placemaking and is not intended to deal directly with issues of demographic change or gentrification there is an implicit and understood connection between placemaking and the social dynamics of place. It is largely because of the disinvestment in these types of areas that many local practices have been able to develop. The practices identified by this study are the more visible and easy to document, but there are many others that are often indiscernible to the stranger. Recently, considerable attention has been given to the issues of crime and safety. These components of revitalization often undervalue local practices. Over-The-Rhine has defined “sense of place.” While it is partly tied to the social and cultural dynamics the neighborhood is also steeped in the history of Cincinnati and it’s development. This rich architecture and cultural history are often cited as the logic for revitalization.
2.9 | Description of Users

As mentioned earlier the concept of lived space and local practices suggest the importance of a more user-oriented approach to planning and design. This is partly because experts who operate from outside the realm of those who inhabit a space are detached from the realities they face in their daily lives. Also, and perhaps more importantly in the context of Over-The-Rhine, many of the users are in some way excluded from conventional or formal channels of participation. Often it may be through their own accord that they choose to opt out of mainstream society, but it is also because traditionally these channels have failed to serve some groups interest. Embedded in the concept of a discourse community is the idea that people of different backgrounds have different methods of understanding, different aims, and ways for achieving them. In this case the formal channels simply cannot account for the diversity in demand, values, and discourse of the various competing publics.

In Over-The-Rhine this is especially notable where the resident, past and present, have historically been excluded from the political economic process or have been the subject of expert policies not of their own design. As a largely minority neighborhood the interest of residents are not typically represented through elective politics yet, they have often been adversely effected, directly and indirectly, through decisions made from expert positions. The failures of social policy, and the means for participating in them, to exclude the many
of the users of Over-The-Rhine has forced them to develop their own informal practices. As the case studies will show there are many different users groups within Over-The-Rhine, and more not covered with in this study. For the purposes of this study the focus is on the users who fall, or place themselves, outside of conventional channels of civic participation and who involve themselves in the local practices observed. This includes those who have remained in the neighborhood, those who have left but return for various reasons, and those who find themselves there because of the opportunities, and informal networks available in the neighborhood. Their use of the neighborhood makes them users, just as those who work in a central city, but reside elsewhere makes them users of the central city. While some choose to opt out of formal channels of economic and social practices and others are not property owners, or residents, they are all assumed to be legal citizens and are therefore afforded the same rights as any other legitimate citizen.
CHAPTER 5 | CASE STUDIES

The following case studies are presented in no specific order and do not reflect the order in which they were conducted or their importance. Each case study is presented in three main sections. Following a brief introduction of each of the activities being observed, the case studies are divided between the lived space description, a contextual discussion, and an evaluation based on the performance criteria.

The introduction to each case study briefly identifies the extent and limitation of the observations and delineates the variations between aspects of each local practice. Following this, the lived space description serves as an overview of the ways in which the activities constitute a local practice. This covers the spatial, temporal and user characteristics of each practices. Next, a contextual overview serves to situate each of the practices within the expert practices, and regulations that directly and implicitly influence the activity. Lastly, each of the case studies is evaluated based on the normative performance criteria. This evaluation allows us to draw conclusions in the final chapter by relating the performance criteria of the practices to the principles of placemaking identified in the first chapter.
5.1 STREET VENDING

Increasingly, planners and public officials are recognizing street vending as a viable use of public space. Typically, cities are responsible for regulating spaces, structures and mediating between vendors and other business. This study considers the informal aspects of street vending to examine how it may provide for just, meaningful and participatory places. By allowing individuals to buy and sell goods, vending has the potential to meet local social and cultural demands and provide social interaction and economic opportunity. Because street vending is a small-scale activity that utilizes the opportunities provided by
local circumstances it is an important local practice. It can be contested because of the goods being sold, the procedures for selling those goods or the use of certain spaces. It can also be an important aspect of an “informal” or “micro” economy. This study is primarily concerned with the social dynamics and influence of street vending on the dynamics of place and only superficially deals with the economic impacts.

5.1.1 | Description of Lived Space

There is a wide range of street vending activities in Over-The-Rhine. While they are all related to the social and cultural dynamics of the neighborhood some offer more potential in this study for determining their value as a local practice of placemaking. The different types of vending are distinct in terms of their use of space as well as the goods or services offered and their relation to existing regulations. Those practices that are clearly illegal including prostitution and the dealing of illegal drugs are not dealt with in this study. While not conventionally thought of as street vending, these practices have come up in interviews and have been observed in Over-The-Rhine. The social and criminal aspects of these practices are beyond the scope of this study but their relationship to the social and cultural dynamics of the neighborhood should not be ignored and deserve further study. Other types of vending activity, such as peddling of bootlegged music and videos, are also known to be illegal and present in Over-The-Rhine. These are also not dealt with because their criminal status prohibits much of the potential that other street vending offers.
The main type of vending activity observed in Over-The-Rhine involves the exchange of goods, and though much of it is not inherently illegal there are regulations that directly guide what is acceptable. This includes the location of vending, the type of merchandise, food, and to a lesser degree, services. The selling of merchandise and goods is by far the most prevalent of all vending activity in Over-The-Rhine and includes a wide range of goods. The more common goods include clothes and fashion accessories, movies, music, home accessories, small appliances, cleaning products, toys, fragrance oils, packaged food, decorative items, and books. Many other items can also be found, but are much more sporadic in their availability. A number of reoccurring vending locations offer goods with little predictability. Exercise bikes, grills, carpet, furniture and much more has been observed.

The two aspects of location that are considered in relation to vending are where in the neighborhood and how it is arranged as a site in public space. The locations in the neighborhood are useful in revealing how it relates to the larger social, physical and economic context and the use of public space helps in describing how vending relates to the experience of public spaces. Vending activity is dispersed throughout the neighborhood, but the area near the intersection of Vine and Liberty consistently has more vending activity than other areas. This area is a physical node, or center of the neighborhood, but also constitutes an economic and social node. Vine and Liberty are the main thoroughfares bisecting the area north and south. Both streets have a large amount of auto traffic and pedestrian activity.
In addition, vending was observed in a number of sites scattered throughout the community. While some of these sites had reoccurring vending activity in others vending was only observed once. Other reoccurring sites include the area around the perimeter of Washington Park, near Central Parkway and Main Street, and another section of Vine Street towards the southern edge of the neighborhood. It should also be noted that there is a number of vending sites that surround Findlay Market. These locations are more formally organized and do not clearly constitute a local practice so are not considered in this study.

In terms of the use of public spaces vending typically happens along the public sidewalks though some occurs just off the sidewalk on what is undefined publicly and privately owned land. When situated on the sidewalk, vending is almost always located at the outer edges of the sidewalk nearest to the street. Most of the vending is operated between the street and the sidewalk as vendors park vehicles, mostly vans, in on-street parking spaces. Using collapsible card tables they create a temporary display table that they can be overseen from the vehicle and by passers by on the sidewalk. Facing away from the street oriented towards the pedestrian traffic provides vendors with more enclosure as it forces pedestrians into smaller spaces. The location of street vending activity at both the neighborhood level as well as the site level is clearly related to the existing pedestrian and commercial activity. While a few instances where observed in locations away from existing commercial activity there was always a high volume of pedestrian traffic present. In
addition to being in areas of high pedestrian traffic most sites are visible by car traffic. All of the vending takes advantage of loose space in the neighborhood. This was observed in both physically and socially loose space, places that were not clearly defined by social expectations and sites that were not clearly physically defined. Sites were sidewalks were unusually wide or in front of vacant lots and buildings.
The temporal pattern of vending is correlated with the time of day, the day of the week, as well as the seasons and temperature variations. It is not just the amount of activity, but also the type and specific goods being sold. Vending can be seen throughout daytime hours, but it is concentrated in the late afternoon and early evening hours when casual pedestrian traffic is at its peak. Additionally, there is more vending activity on weekends, during holidays and warmer weather. One of the vendors interviewed acknowledged that he only comes out when the weather is good because he is sure that more people will be out. While there is an increase in vending activity during these times it shouldn't be overlooked that vending happens year round throughout the week and year. Vending was observed near Vine and Liberty during the peak of winter when temperatures were as below freezing. This vending activity during colder weather exemplifies the shifting characteristics of the activity. The colder weather necessitates winter clothing and accessories such as gloves, hats, scarves and coats. In the summer sunglasses become standard across vendors. Both the daily and seasonal variations of vending activity illustrate its tactical orientation as well as its orientation towards the social and economic needs of the community.

The users of vending are broken down into the vendors and those who visit the booths. A number of the merchandise vendors are black males in their later years, those that offered their age where between 55 and 65 years old. Another large demographic of merchandise vendors is international immigrants. Many were of African or Caribbean origin, many
which spoke little English. For both these user groups vending offers an activity that provides a low barrier occupation that allows them to supplement existing income or enter into the economy through means familiar to them.

Figure 5.3 | Street Vending along edge of Washington Park
5.1.2 | Context

Vending is an activity particularly suited to urban areas fulfilling markets that are otherwise under served. Still, vending is viewed as a threat to the conceived order and the existing businesses that argue that their taxes and regulations differ for vendors. In contrast to this sentiment against vending it is an age-old practice in cities. Throughout history commercial activity in cities has relied on vendors, which have occupied an important physical and social space in the public life of a city. Cincinnati’s Over-The-Rhine neighborhood is no different. When Over-The-Rhine was a German district it was common to see vending. Paintings, photographs and narratives about the neighborhood recall a bustling street life that often includes vending. Wienerwurst men were once “common on Vine Street” (Wimberg 1987, 56). These men “sold hot frankfurters, bratwurst, and Wieners from the metal chest they carried. Often they were accompanied by a boy who supplied the hot dog buns and mustard” (Wimberg 1987, 56).

Despite an historical appreciation for street vending, it is “often below the radar screen for planners and public officials” (Ball 2002, iii). While many cities have dealt with vending productively it remains a clear that vending is looked at more as a potential nuisance that needs to regulated than as an local practice that generates social and cultural significance for a neighborhood.
In Over-The-Rhine vending has been an openly contested activity. Recently the city enforce regulations against vending and even enacted legislation allowing violations to be dealt with immediately rather than through the typical administrative procedures. Generally, vending is allowed through the City of Cincinnati Municipal Code. Chapter 839, Peddlers and Itinerant Vendors, allows for various types of vending and declares the licensing process and fees, vending districts and provisions for vending inside of and outside of vending districts.

Peddlers are described as “any person who goes from city-to-city, or from place-to-place, or from door-to-door, selling or offering to sell or barter, or carrying for sale or barter, or exposing therefore, any goods, wares, merchandise, food, confectionery, drink, or other commodity, carried by hand, from portable stands or tables, or by manually propelled vehicles, or by motor- or animal-drawn vehicles” (City of Cincinnati 2008, Chapter 839, Sec. 839-1-P). Itinerant Vendors are those who are engaged in “a temporary or transient business buying or selling goods, wares, merchandise, food, confectionery or drink with the intention of continuing such business in any one place for a period of not more than 120 days” (City of Cincinnati 2008, Chapter 839, Sec. 839-1-I).

The permitting process is an effort to manage and make vending and accepted use, by requiring permits cities attempt to limit the numbers of vendors within the city and reserve
the right to enforce penalties so that vending conforms to the desires and goals of the city (Ball 2002, 28). While the licensing process is relatively low barrier the fees, $150 per year for peddlers and $150 per day for itinerant vendors, are potentially limiting to lower earning individuals. In Cincinnati the regulations and details of the ordinances severely limit where, when, and how people can vend. If these regulations were to be strictly enforced there would be very few areas in Over-The-Rhine that would accommodate vending.
5.1.3 | Performance Criteria

SENSE

Street vending contributes to the sense of the neighborhood in a number of ways. These include how users identify with the activity, how it relates to the larger social context, and the ability for users and others to understand what it signifies. Identity is concerned with the ways in which the users understand vending as an aspect of the community. In some regards vending appears to be taken for granted and for the most part none see it as a direct representation of themselves or of a larger group. However, through observations and more general conversations about vending it was evident that users see the neighborhood as a place for vending because of the existing demographics and the opportunities created by a lack of existing formal retail and the pedestrian activity present. In addition, users also related vending to issues of race and class. One vendor interviewed made it unequivocally clear that others did not care about vending in Over-The-Rhine because of issues of race and poverty.

Vending was also determined to contribute to the structural understanding of a place. It alone may not always reveal a larger experience or meaning, but taken as part of the context of the neighborhood vending can be understood as an important aspect of Over-The-Rhine. In the context of vacant storefronts, low median incomes, and other signs of economic and social hardship vending can be seen as providing certain needs that aren't
being met through conventional retail operations. In fact, some of the streetvending operation is in conjunction with storefront businesses. The cost of renting and improving a storefront to is not always justified to offer such low order goods and attracting people into un-maintained storefronts is more difficult than setting up a vending table directly outside of a storefront. Vending gives users a means to offer and obtain goods that otherwise may not be readily accessible.

By the same token, there is also congruence between streetvending and the larger social relations. There is a basic correspondence between the spaces where the activity happens, the form that it takes and the non-spatial socioeconomic context. In addition to providing an affordable, accessible retail environment the tactical aspects of streetvending take advantage of the way that other potential users move through the environment. It is consciously pedestrian oriented, not because it is intended to encourage foot traffic, but because foot traffic is there to be taken advantage of. It is evident that streetvending takes advantage of the level of pedestrian activity because of the use of sidewalks and areas immediately off of sidewalks. Over-The-Rhine is a neighborhood that is well suited for pedestrian activity, not just because of its physical design, but also because its social and economic conditions. According to one vendor interviewed, vending allows for those that are excluded from traditional entrepreneurial opportunities.
Even though the activity reveals many of the larger social context, it is not always a well-understood relationship. The legibility of the activity, similar to the identity of the activity, is not clear among those that participate and even less to those who are only observing. Those who are accustomed to seeing and using street vending for their everyday needs are unlikely to see that it relates to a larger social process, not because of ignorance, but because of innocence. They are not concerned with this as a contested practice and accept it as part of their experience. In this way it is a highly legible activity. It exists as an almost literal signal of itself. To those unfamiliar with street vending it is likely to appear as a signifier of the larger social relations and thus serve as a spatial practice of considerable tension.

In regards to the dimension of significance street vending’s orientation towards the local dynamics makes highly significant. It clearly reveals a number of the social cultural and
historical narratives about the neighborhood. Not only are the products and services oriented towards the local community in terms of what is offered, as identified above but the practice also signifies the economic realities of the community in terms of available jobs, skills of the workforce and the communities need for affordable retail. For the discerning viewer it is possible to understand the connection between these larger social dynamics, the history of the neighborhood, especially that of recent.

In addition to the overall significance it was observed that within the vending activity occurring in Over-The-Rhine there are sub groups of social and cultural needs being met through the activities. As was discussed before, vending sometimes occurs in relation to a storefront space or business. One example of this involves an Islamic cultural center that through its street level building space does not readily invite inquiry and engagement. Occasionally, the center sets-up a table outside the storefront to sell crafts, books, and other goods. This enables even the most skeptical passerby to catch a glimpse of what is happening within the otherwise discrete storefront. While it is still up to the passerby to make the effort to understand the center's intentions the center does make an effort to become publicly available and in doing so contributes to the complex cultural fabric of the neighborhood.
In the same way the vending relates to the sense and meaning of the neighborhood it can be related to the form. As was indicated above the form of vending takes advantage of loose spaces. In taking advantage of this loose space vending adapts to the available opportunities that are accessible and that meet the demands of the vendors and those who use the vending. While vending doesn't permanently alter the environment it does temporarily manipulate the physical space of the neighborhood. This is especially notable in the area near Vine and Liberty streets where vending activity is concentrated. Here it reconfigures the space of the sidewalk as well as the street. By parking in street side parking spaces and occupying the outer edge of the sidewalk vending constricts the public space of the sidewalk creating a bottleneck that pedestrians must navigate. People must decide to walk around, stop or avoid it. It is at these points where people come face to face with one another and each other’s culture.

This ability of vending to re-configure the space of the sidewalk, as well as other aspects of vending, illustrate the limitations and opportunity provided in public space. It would be an exaggeration to claim that vending completely controls the space that it occupies, though some who oppose vending suggest that is the case. The levels of control exerted by vending fall short of displacing other activity. The temporary nature of vending means that any
control is also only temporary. Still, by simply being present vending exerts some power over the space in which it exists. Not only does it re-configure the physical space, but its presence also re-configures perceived space. The acknowledgement of the ways in which vending relates to the social context confirms that its mere presence affords some control. But it goes beyond presence. Vending also uses and activates area that are otherwise un-used, or under-used. It also, if only temporarily, appropriates and modifies the space.

Still, the power of vending is limited. As it is it cannot persuade people to perceive it differently or to even to defend its right to presence. It is an extremely tenuous activity and, as discussed above, it is not clear if it is going to continue unimpeded. Users are often at the will of the city and those who exert influence over the city. While the City allows the activity to exist in a regulated capacity it does nothing substantial to support, empower or enable vendors to increase their activities. In light of recent enforcement against vending activity vending seems to be increasingly threatened. It has not suffered any comprehensive attack, but as the neighborhood dynamics shift it seems to be under pressure.
Public art has long been a part of the experience of the city and this is not lost on urban planning practice. It is not uncommon to see revitalization and placemaking efforts that have a public art component. Planners and designers realize the usefulness of art as a social and cultural asset and as a way to engage community members in experiencing and contributing to the significance of a place. Still, art is a complex phenomenon and as much as institutions have tried they are often unsuccessful at attracting the general population into museums and galleries. In the recent past art has made many attempts at bridging this gap between high and low arts. The field of public art is particularly attuned to this gap.
While the low, popular and folk arts, often fall outside of accepted high art practices they are often much more directly related to the cultural and social milieu of a community.

In this study public art that is conceived by officials and planners is largely ignored in favor of the more locally based folk arts. This often involves various forms of inscribing names, messages and images on publicly visible surfaces. The practices local residents use to inscribe, communicate and memorialize urban space is not unique to Over-The-Rhine, but the social dynamics of the neighborhood make it a rich territory for such practices. Because these activities are expressions of local people, issues, and events they are presumed to be an important local practice. The following observations include works that are typically overlooked in the world of art, but are often the subject of negative attention in the realm of planning and public art and are viewed, especially by private property owners and public officials as a nuisance to community redevelopment. This study suggests that even thought there are obvious property rights issues local public arts contain unrealized value.

5.2.1 | Lived Space Description

Initial observations revealed a large amount of incidents of very individual, low order, appropriations of the surfaces and spaces in the neighborhood to inscribe and sculpt works of art. This broad range of practices is extremely resistant to any discrete categorization. Terms like graffiti, street art and murals are commonly used to describe the types of local public art seen in
Over-The-Rhine, but the preconceptions associated with these terms presents problems for any attempt to revisit them an offer a new perspective. Still these terms offer a basis and common reference point for understanding the practices present in Over-The-Rhine.

In many ways the concept of graffiti encompasses much of the local practices of public art that occur in Over-The-Rhine. The term itself captures the contested nature of these practices. On one hand graffiti has become synonymous with urban decay. It is the cliché of the broken windows theory as it signifies blight, poverty and disorder. But on the other hand graffiti has evolved and has emerged among high art in contemporary art institutions. It is found in museums and solicited by major corporations for its ability to capture the imagination and interest of a wide range of the public. Some cities have made efforts to capture the allure of graffiti and use it to capture a comparative advantage in the new creative economy. Generally, graffiti is a complex and diverse urban practice that has many forms, intentions, messages and meanings. These originate with the artist, but their interpretation is left open to those that experience it. It is communicative and expressive, public and private, and sometimes violent and resistant. The City of Cincinnati defines graffiti as

Any inscription, word, figure, marking or design that is marked, etched, scratched, drawn or painted on any premises, including buildings, structures, fixtures or other improvements, whether permanent or temporary, whether public or private, without the consent of the owner of the property or the owner's authorized agent, and which is visible from the public right-of-way or other public or quasi-public location within the city (City of Cincinnati 2008, Ch. 16 Sec. 1601-1b).
At its most basic graffiti is a drawing or inscription made on a wall or other surface, usually so as to be seen by the public (Graffiti 2004). This can include any drawing medium, surface, message, or artist intention. For the purposes of this study and out of the observations distinctions can be made between different forms of graffiti. For the purposes of this study they are delimited based the perceived intention of the user, the substance of the inscription and to a lesser degree the methods used. The three main categories include street and graffiti art, memorials, and messages.

**Street Art and Graffiti Art**

The modifier art is used here to distinguish between the over arching concept described above and the practice that intentionally utilizes stylistic, conceptual and aesthetic means to communicate and embellish the environment. Street art has become a fashionable term that often encompasses graffiti art. However, graffiti art and street are distinct from one another in some important ways. While this study acknowledges this distinction for the purposes of this study they are combined. The important differences are primarily in method, though there are some sub-cultural distinctions as well. Street art generally includes the use of posters, stencils, stickers and other prepared mediums while graffiti is typically created directly on a surface through the use of markers, paint and occasionally stickers.
A comprehensive description of the subculture of graffiti art is outside the scope of this study, but it is important to highlight a few points that reoccur in the literature and that emerged during interviews. Both graffiti art and street art are part of a growing international art culture that is moving between the gallery and the street. Graffiti art, often referred to as tagging, is sometimes associated with territorial markings and while both street art and graffiti are clearly urban spatial practice neither are as directly an attempt to define territory as is typically assumed.

Examples of Street Art

Figure 5.9 | Wheat pasted figure in alley off Clay Street
Figure 5.10 | Large Hand drawn poster along Main Street
Figure 5.11 | Wheat pasted figure in alley off Clay Street
Figure 5.11 | Wheat Pasted Scene in an alley near Main Street
Examples of Graffiti Art

Figure 5.12 | Spray painted graffiti art
Figure 5.13 | Marker graffiti art
Figure 5.14 | Paint marker graffiti art

Figure 5.15 | Graffiti Art between buildings
Figure 5.16 | Graffiti Art in Alley

Figure 5.17 | Large scale spray painted graffiti art
Figure 5.18 | Large scale spray painted graffiti art
Graffiti art and street art in Over-The-Rhine is rather sparse in comparison to the other practices observed but there are a number of instances that are worth pointing out because they have important potential for local practices of placemaking. A more detailed description of graffiti art can be found in the context section of this chapter.

**Memorials**

Memorial graffiti is intended to celebrate or honor the memory of individuals or events. Many of the memorials seen in Over-The-Rhine are created in reference to lives lost through violence, making them a unique and locally oriented social and cultural practice. Many of these inscriptions are simply written using markers on the surface of buildings, boarded up windows and other more unconventional surfaces. Some sites observed involve much more extensive and elaborate processes of collective action. These sites illustrate an accumulation of various markings, discarded objects and flower arrangements and more.

**Messages**

Messages describe the final category of local public arts. It can still be included in the technical definition of graffiti used by the City of Cincinnati but is quite distinct from graffiti art. Again, it is both the method and intent that makes this distinct from graffiti art. Messages are the most diverse of the local public art practices in Over-The-Rhine because of the large variety of users, content and methodology. What makes them similar
to each other is the apparent intention, which is to communicate an idea, thought or information to others. They are commonly simple inscriptions, phrases, passages or words that communicate to an audience that varies from a specific person to a general public. The messages observed in Over-The-Rhine range from hostile statements about society to the celebratory musing of individuals.

Examples of Memorials

Figure 5.19 | Memorial on street sign
Figure 5.20 | Paint marker memorial
Figure 5.21 | Collective memorial
Figure 5.22 | Memorial graffiti in alley
Figure 5.23 | Collective graffiti and placed object memorial
Examples of Messages

Figure 5.24 | Marker written messages
Figure 5.25 | Message about life
Figure 5.26 | Scratched surface
Figure 5.27 | Spray painted message
Figure 5.28 | Message on abandoned building
Figure 5.29 | Message to an individual
In addition to graffiti and street art, messages and memorial, a few other practices observed in Over-The-Rhine are related to public arts but are not significant enough for this study. These include codes and incidental art. Codes are tailored to specific groups or users and appear to communicate something site specific. In the scope of this study it has not been possible to determine the origins or meaning of many of the codes, but they appear to range from being reminders to one’s self or to others with similar needs or uses.

It has been reported that robbers often use a code to communicate to other criminals the status of a place as it relates robbery. Hobos and tramps are known to use codes to mark their passage, but also to specify information and warnings to others about a place (Slack-action 2008). The codes observed in Over-The-Rhine are different from both those used

Examples of Codes Incidental Art

Figure 5.30 | Handprints on doorway

Figure 5.31 Impressions in concrete

Figure 5.32 | Coded graffiti
by hobos and burglars discovered in library research. Still, there are a number of different instances that are clearly codes that deserve further exploration. Incidental art is another phenomena observed that is related to local public art. These include other apparently unplanned, and possibly subordinate markings that cannot be attributed to any user or intention, but remain as traces to a past activity. The uncertainty involved in any analysis of these two practices leaves too much room for error to be helpful in this research and are therefore avoided.

Most of the forms of local public arts occur throughout the neighborhood across a variety of sites, and on various surfaces. In general the location and spatial aspects of local public arts is related to the opportunities provided by environmental conditions. It is not uncommon to find local public arts in alleys, behind buildings and outside of traditional public space under bridges and in other loose spaces. These loose spaces occur at multiple levels. More elaborate graffiti art is often very strategic about in regards to placement, using rooftops, fire escapes, and other areas that are outside of usual perspective of the public, while the less elaborate forms of graffiti art, messages and memorials take advantage of the spaces that are readily available. Boarded up structures, windows and doorways, which are common in Over-The-Rhine, are prime places for these forms of expression. They offer a place where an individual feels like they aren’t doing damage to any valuable property. Many of the graffiti artist interviewed indicated that they sometimes just walk around and get-up when and wherever they can and other times
Location of Graffiti Art

Figure 5.33 | Rooftop graffiti

Figure 5.34 | Fire escape graffiti

Figure 5.35 | Fire escape graffiti

Figure 5.36 | Rooftop graffiti
they will plan and execute a specific mission. Often desirable locations include those that are highly visible during daytime hours, but are less visible at night allowing artist to get in and paint uninterrupted. Determining location can be a critical aspect of graffiti art and those who were interviewed discussed going to great lengths to get to spots and indicated that this was part of what made the activity meaningful to them.

Messages are also found in loose spaces including doorways, alleys, vacant lots and many other crevices and other under used and low visibility spaces. But are much more accessible. The messages that can be observed throughout Over-The-Rhine are most commonly on the boarded up doors and windows of abandoned buildings. Many of the memorials are very site specific, being placed in close proximity to spaces where the event being memorialized occurred or where the person being memorialized use to reside. This spatial correlation to the social dynamics is a critical component of the function of memorials.
The major temporal characteristics observed in relation to public arts is two fold. On one hand there is the times that it is produced, or when the “artist” are actually creating their interventions. And on the other hand it is about when it is seen. This can be about how long it last, but also about who travels past it and how do they see, or if it is overlooked.

It was also observed that the length of time that an act of public art existed depended on its location, form and content. Sometimes local public arts go entirely unnoticed for an indefinite amount of time. This denotes that some local public art practices are perceived differently than others. Also, it is often possible to see the evidence of public arts that have been covered up, or as those interviewed called it, buffed. Buffing is a term used to refer to the leftover markings from graffiti being painted over. This is a common phenomenon in Over-The-Rhine. Many of the buildings in the neighborhood have a patchwork of different colors of paint and overlapping layers that signal the removal, or covering-up, of unwanted graffiti.

The users of local public arts are multiple and diverse. There is no simple classification to categorize them. Many of the graffiti artists are young and male, but this was not universally true. Those that were interviewed were between the ages of 16 and 30, males and white. Because it was not possible to locate any artist from the other categories it is impossible to be certain what differentiates these users from those interviewed. However, by
understanding the context and content of the other practices it can safely be assumed that these users are much more representative of the local population. The messages reflect the varying viewpoints and perspectives of the users and some appear to be from homeless individuals who are typically voiceless and unheard. This is also true of many of the youth in the area. Memorials have the most specific user group in that they are clearly used by those inclined to express their memories and experiences of a past event or person. These users are close to the event or people in some way, for example friends and family of victims of violence.
5.2.2 | CONTEXT

The means and ends of these practices are sometimes explicitly adversarial to accepted behavior and are therefore suspect to a myriad of regulations. Other times these practices occur incidental to regulations. In both cases they contest the conceived order of officials and planners. With the advent and popularization of the Broken Windows theory cities and politicians in many large cities have established graffiti task forces who are explicitly charged with the responsibility of identifying, removing and charging people with acts of vandalism.

Cincinnati is no exception. In the municipal code Chapter 16 Neighborhood Quality of Life Uniform Code, where the definition of graffiti is found, graffiti of all kinds are determined to be a direct threat to community vitality. This encompasses the majority if not all of the forms of public art discussed in this study. In order to enforce this the city has a number of programs and services targeted at eliminating and enforcing graffiti violations. Chapter 751, titled Graffiti Abatement, declares graffiti a “public nuisance” and outlines the procedures for its removal. It is the property owner’s duty to keep their premises free of graffiti. If they fail to do so the city reserves the right to serve notice and if the graffiti is not removed the city manager reserves the right to use public funds to remove the graffiti. It is also possible for property owners to transfer the responsibility of eliminating graffiti to the city. Despite this coordinated effort graffiti remains prevalent in Over-The-Rhine.
Much of it is below the radar of public officials, but when official planning efforts look to re-conceive the image of an area the removal of graffiti is an easy step to signal progress towards a safe and clean place.

Still, graffiti art is increasingly understood as an art form. Many galleries and events showcase graffiti and street art as an acceptable art form. Every year Cincinnati host an international festival, Scribble Jam, that showcases over a hundred graffiti artist from around the world. Another event that took place in Over-The-Rhine in 2004 attracted a nationally renowned artist by the name of Swoon who in an interview conducted by the New York Times talks about the importance of street art.

I really love to work outside and I love graffiti and I love the handwriting and the weird messages and the stickers and all of the interaction that comes with being in an open space... I try not to make a lot of sanctions between graffiti and street art, but I will say for people who aren't really familiar with what's going on there are a lot of artist who are finding that they want to make their work more engaging with their daily life's and more involved in the daily activities of the city and so they find that there is a lot of left over spaces... One time I was in Cincinnati and I went to go do this gallery show and I got there and I really didn't like the gallery and I said I really don't want to work in here, but then there was an amazing alley outside it was beautiful and I was like I not going to work in here I'll work outside. On the last day that I was working this guy came by and was like 'did you do this' and I was like yeah, yeah, and he was like 'oh man you're a monster'. He was like 'I stayed up all-night and talked to the drawings'. He was like 'thank you so much'. I thought, god this is the kind of thing that really never could go on with the quiet controlled space of a gallery. I love adding the little bit of texture and maybe even a little bit of chaos. (Swoon 2004).
5.2.3 | Performance Criteria

**SENSE**

The local public arts identified and observed in Over-The-Rhine all exhibit a strong sense of identity. The experience of those who use the neighborhood as a space for these forms of public arts relate to the neighborhood in a way that is unique from other users. Each user of local public arts identifies with and experiences their own unique sense of place through their use of the practice. Based on their experiences users identify differently than others because of their understanding of and use of the spaces they appropriate. Even those that do not directly participate in these forms of public arts identify the neighborhood as a place where these activities are present.
The graffiti artist spoken to described having a unique relationship to the city in general. They noted seeing a place or buildings in it as a canvas for their work. Instead of just being an observer they are looking for opportunities to intervene in the landscape. They also describe the act of searching for and spotting other graffiti. Both of these ideas suggest that graffiti artist see a place differently than other users based on their individual uses. Much of the same can be said in terms of street art. The experience of artist is oriented towards a reading of and movement through the city that emphasizes the ability to appropriate spaces for their work and to reach an audience broader than what a gallery has to offer.

Memorials also very clearly affect the sense of place from both the perspective of the user and observer. The user, by participating in the commemoration of a person or event, is actively engaged with the meaning that the environment holds for them. Those who inscribe and create memorials are making the evident the spaces that signify specific events.

Local public arts have also been found to fit in the context of where they are found. The degree of congruence is relative to the type of local practice and the characteristics of the immediate area of any specific instance. This is most evident with regards to the memorials that are located at or near the site of the event or location identified with the person being commemorated. Two instance of this in Over-The-Rhine can be seen in figures… The other forms of local public arts, graffiti art, street art, messages, also exhibit congruence in that they fit within their context. This can be seen at he level of the site and the
general context of the neighborhood. In terms of the sites graffiti art and street art the artist, as described above, often take great care when selecting locations making sure that the context is appropriate. This appropriateness may be because sites are easily accessible, because they are un-maintained, or because there are views from public spaces.

Local public arts also exhibit congruence at the level of the neighborhood. The broken windows theory explains this as disorder attracting more disorder, but it fails to consider that often these are the chosen forms of expression and means available to certain user groups. The consideration of why these might be the case is also important, but they cannot be ignored. All of the practices of public arts exhibit a strong sense of transparency. They directly correspond to the larger social and cultural context and processes. Graffiti art and street art are direct expressions of individual utilizing the opportunities presented with in the neighborhood to assert themselves. This is often viewed only seen as an act vandalism that reads as a violent outburst. This sentiment reveals a disconnection between social and cultural norms that is at play beyond the practice of graffiti. Messages are also direct expressions of individuals and reveal much of the larger social and cultural processes at work. Many instances illustrate the sentiment among residents that their lifestyle is important and undervalued. Memorials are clearly the most transparent of the public art practices. They reveal that there is a larger social concern for violence and respect for those that have lost their lives due to the social situation in which they found themselves.
While the practices of public art are transparent they are often illegible, meaning that even though they communicate the accuracy of the meaning that they communicate is often lost in translation between users. Those unfamiliar with graffiti art are likely to be unable to decipher it and in turn be concerned that it is gang related and declare it vandalism rather than a legitimate artistic expression. Messages, while often very clear and explicit are also likely to be misinterpreted. They method, manner and place of these practices prevent them from being accessible to many of those that use the space. Memorials offer the highest degree of legibility in terms of public arts. They concept of memorializing the past is a universal practice and the methods that individuals use are often respected to some degree, especially when it involves the death of a person.

Local public arts are extremely significant to local social and cultural relations. They are directly related to the conditions, experiences and exchanges of local users. Some instances may reflect global issues, but reflect the perception of local users and the local context. Graffiti art is a worldwide phenomenon, but is practiced at the local level and therefore reflects a knowledge and understanding of local conditions, spaces and social relations. Much of graffiti art is itself part of a subculture and reflects the unique set of values and beliefs of those that associate and relate to that subculture. There is some amount of graffiti that is purely vandalism, but the vast majority of graffiti, as viewed by those that participate in it, is considered a craft or creative endeavor. While not all graffiti artist consider themselves as a part of the sub culture of hip-hop much of the roots
of modern day graffiti art can be traced back to this youth social movement. Even those that don’t consider themselves part of this informal subculture have much in common with those who do. The expressive, rebellious and do-it-yourself nature of graffiti artist is clearly evident in much of the instances observed in Over-The-Rhine.

Messages, in particular, are oriented towards local circumstances. They respond to specific issues that are present and create a discursive relation between that unseen dynamics of the neighborhood and the users experience of it. Specific messages reflect the conditions of certain user groups. The homeless are one group that is particularly related to the messages in Over-The-Rhine and messages like “Streets let me Eat” are literal expressions of the social and cultural values held by individuals who are part of this group. Memorials also provide insights into the values, culture and social relations. In Over-The-Rhine this is often the unfortunate truth that is part of a larger social issue of violence and crime among black youth. The nicknames, locations and locations all reveal the characteristics of the event and people and reflect the social and cultural issues, however negative.

FIT

Local public arts certainly adapt to the social and physical context of an area. Graffiti artist are especially adept at adapting to situations and determining what form of their art is most applicable in any given situation. From the graffiti and street artist interviewed
it was determined that they are highly adaptable to their environment and often have a very clear understanding of how to appropriate a space. This may be what medium to use, markers, paint, stickers, posters, stencils and other tools all seems to have a specific function and their use is determined by the circumstances and conditions present at any given moment. All of the local public arts to some degree manipulate the environment. Some are much more intrusive than others but all to some degree impact the forms and image of a place. This is clearly not universally good as some are highly negatively influenced by the presence of graffiti art, street art and the other forms of graffiti.

**CONTROL**

Each of the forms of local public arts takes exerts a level of rights in a space that falls somewhere between appropriation and modification. While all forms are exerting their presence and are acted out by users none can be considered to be a complete disposition of a space because they do not prohibit any other activities from taking place.

In addition to exercising these basic rights in public spaces local public arts are very restricted. Most are certainly outside of accepted behavior and while they may not be illegal they are often unaccepted and efforts to counter them are organized. So while those who participate in local public arts have access to the means to create and utilize the loose spaces of the neighborhood they are also up against a series of restrictions that are
both informal and formal. While many citizens have no authority to intervene they are informally given the right to interrupt the activity through the support of government and social expectations. With this understanding local public arts exist in a high degree of uncertainty. There are very low expectations that any activity will endure a significant amount of time.
5.3 | SIDEWALK LIVING ROOMS

A general theme in the literature of lived space, everyday urbanism, and placemaking in general is public space and its use. The term “sidewalk living rooms” was derived from a concept developed by Steve Rasmussen-Cancian, a landscape architect in California. He developed the idea to “build sidewalk living rooms furnished with permanent benches, sitting boxes, and planters so neighbors can claim their right to public space while at the same time discouraging those who would like to see them gone altogether” (Hammett
2007). It was a direct response to the vibrant and active street life that is common to low-income minority communities, but that is often offensive to and threatened by middle and upper-class populations attempting to revitalize neighborhoods. Rasmussen-Cancian was concerned with creating new furniture in order to legitimize existing activity, but in this study the focus is on the existing activity and how users actively appropriate spaces and objects.

As indicated above this is a basic but contested use of public space in communities that are populated by lower income minority populations that are undergoing demographic shifts as is the case in Over-The-Rhine. Most of the literature concerning placemaking advocates public space that is useful, but also meaningful and memorable. Everyday urbanism is concerned more with the nature of tactics and strategies employed by users. If placemaking looks to design and make meaningful public space, lived space considers how users create meaning despite intended or preexisting meaning. Sidewalk living rooms constitute an appropriation of public space for use not clearly intended, or in contest with intended meaning.

5.3.1 | Lived Space Description

Sidewalk living rooms are the most prevalent and dynamic of the local practices in Over-The-Rhine. There are very few commonalities between location, temporal activities and users. Gen-
erally, they occur throughout the neighborhood, throughout the day and by all types of users and user groups. Spaces may be occupied for an hour or less, or people may bring chairs and makeshift furniture and sit for an entire evening. Other times people may congregate in front of a building, or a park bench. Most of the activity involved in sidewalk living rooms entails sitting or “lounging”. Sometimes there is a subsequent activity that is happening, drinking, smoking, chess, dominos or other games. It is often viewed as a wasteful, unproductive and territorial occupation of space or associated with illegal activities such as drug dealing or violence.

Sidewalk living rooms, as the name implies, happen primarily on sidewalks, but can also be found in other loose spaces such as parking lots, vacant lots and other private spaces that are immediately off the sidewalk. In Over-The-Rhine, many of the spaces of sidewalk living rooms are circumstantial, including the ledges of buildings, surrounding parks, and abutting sidewalks that provide seating. The steps, or stoops leading to building, both occupied and vacant are also prime spaces for sidewalk living rooms.

Sidewalk living rooms do not happen where there has been a planned attempt to provide seating and other amenities. Instead they happen despite these planned public spaces. It was often observed that a small pocket park off of Vine Street that appears to be a nice quiet cozy space had very few if any occupants, while less than a block away a group would stand on the corner, or sit on a nearby ledge. Sometimes it is because of adjacent uses or functions that keep people
in an area and others constantly passing by and stopping for a few minutes to catch-up. The many social service agencies in Over-The-Rhine are constantly under fire by officials for this very reason. The most oblivious and contested space exemplifying this is in the southwestern section of Over-The-Rhine. Here a large public park, Washington Park, and a large homeless shelter, the Drop-In Center provides the context for a constant gathering of people.
Sidewalk Living Rooms are a constant activity in Over-The-Rhine. The intensity fluctuates with the time of day and the temperature, but even in cold weather late at night it is possible to find groups congregating outside together in public spaces. Around Washington Park it is not uncommon to see dramatic fluctuations throughout the day. Early in the morning there may only be around five people gathered at one corner. Two hours latter there was five groups of five people stretching along the side of the park. A few hours later there are only a few groups scattered along the sidewalk, then later in the evening the ledge surrounding the park is almost full of people.

The majority of the users of sidewalk living rooms are the local residents of Over-The-Rhine. Within this group it is primarily black residents and also a number of those who are homeless or living in the area shelters. These groups often have limited space for domestic life and public spaces offer an opportunity to relax, rest and socialize. There are very few commonalities among the users of sidewalk living rooms. They are as diverse in terms of income, age and sex as the neighborhood itself. The exception is that there are very few white or other ethnic groups of middle and upper income. Those that are white or other minority appear to be homeless or living in shelters.
5.3.2 | CONTEXT

In many ways this is exactly the function of public space put forth in theory after theory. Jane Jacobs, William Whyte, Jan Gehl, Richard Sennet and many more have spoke endlessly about the role of public space in connecting social and individual life. Still, there is a thin line between accepted and unaccepted behavior. There are clearly illegal activities, such as drug-use and dealing, prostitution, and squatting, which conflict with any planned intention. Still, most of the activities of public living space can’t clearly be classified as illegal, but are nonetheless activities that exist in the grey area between accepted and unaccepted.

Some of these may be officially regulated and others are simply discouraged or overlooked. Simply standing on the sidewalk is commonly accepted, but if a business owner chooses to post no loitering signs then that space is subject to higher scrutiny. By the same token, parks have hours of operation and other posted rules of behavior. Often these expectations are not explicit, but implied. Also, previous abuses of public space to commit acts deemed criminal also force higher scrutiny of users and uses. When trying to regulate the image of an area perhaps one of the most direct ways to influence an outcome is by controlling the behavior of the users. This is especially true when the activity of the users is misunderstood.
Many activities are being squeezed out of public space. While some may be justified it is difficult to discourage discreet activities and avoid influencing other unrelated activities. But as sense of place becomes more important activities that are deemed unacceptable are regulated more and more heavily. There are a number of local regulations that apply to sidewalk living rooms both directly and indirectly. These include regulations regarding the use of street and sidewalks, Chapter 723 of the municipal code, and Chapter 910, Public Order. Chapter 723 Section 76, Sitting and Lying within the Public Rights-of-Way Prohibited states,

“No person shall sit or lie down, or otherwise block a public sidewalk, or sit or lie upon a blanket, chair, stool, or any other object placed upon a public sidewalk, in any area designated for commerce, in a manner which recklessly interferes with pedestrian, vehicular, or other traffic.”

Figure 5.42 | Example of the domestication of public space
The areas designated for commerce include most commercial zoning designations as well as neighborhood business districts. This includes a number of areas within Over-The-Rhine. In addition to the regulations of streets and sidewalks Chapter 910 Section 21, Loitering with the intention of Committing Unlawful Drug Transactions, includes language that can be applied to disrupt and eliminate sidewalk living rooms. This gives police the right to “detain the individual for the purpose of investigating whether the person is in violation of engaging in a unlawful drug related activity”. It defines loitering to mean “to sit, stand, lie, pace or otherwise remain in essentially the same place in a manner or at a time not usual for a law-abiding citizen.”

Clearly these regulations are created to protect business owners from activity that would obstruct their ability to conduct business as well as protect citizens and enable police officers to investigate potential drug related activity. Still, there is a certain amount of grey area that allows enforcement and interruption of legal, activity. Alone these regulations seems rather benign and insignificant, but when considered together with the more ambiguous and hard to define feeling of many of those that are actively altering the image and landscape of the neighborhood the vagueness and grey area becomes cause for concern.

It is unfortunate that dynamics that exist in the neighborhood show undercurrent of racial profiling and bias against cultural activity unfamiliar to those who have the ears of the authorities. The organization of business and property owners, residents and other stakeholders against the benign activity can be seen in the “safe and clean” campaigns that are being promoted.
5.3.3 | Performance Criteria

SENSE

While outsiders may negatively identify the area as a place where people loiter and congregate in the streets and sidewalks, local users take for granted sidewalk living rooms. They may be aware of the contested nature in that they are unwanted, but they are not easily swayed from doing so. If they identify with the activity at all it is as an opportunity to claim the space as their own. They may say that a site is their “spot”, or that they “hold it down” at a certain place. This can reflect in who they are or whom they associate with and in turn represent characteristics intrinsic to them, but it is rare that they consider sidewalk living rooms as a direct representation of who they are.

As the literature suggests sidewalk living rooms are an important aspect of the social life of certain groups. This is particularly true in Over-The-Rhine where private living space is limited, especially for the homeless. In addition, the social organizations are not structures around family units and the spaces of sidewalk living rooms are places where individuals are able to socialize, share experiences, stories and engage in discussion.

The forms and functions of sidewalk living rooms also relate to the larger social processes prevalent in Over-The-Rhine. While it is not only the homeless and unemployed that util-
lize sidewalk living rooms; they are a large percentage of the local residents and users of the neighborhood. The prevalence of sidewalk living rooms can be associated with the amount of unstructured time and the need for spaces to pass this time. It is understandable that this is not a desirable situation, for society in general, but also for those involved, but the reality of the social situation is such that many of the users are limited in opportunity. Sidewalk living rooms are a prime example of how those with minimal means are able to create situations that fit their needs and desires. Using ledges, milk crates, not intended for seating, boards not intended for tabletops and many other appropriations exemplifies the adaptation necessary given the lack of official accommodations provided.
Sidewalk living rooms are relatively transparent in that they relate to the larger social conditions. There are a number of users that are homeless and it is often clear that their use of sidewalk living rooms is related to their need for spaces to lounge, relax, socialize, drink, eat, and sleep. It is also evident that others who use sidewalk living rooms that are not homeless have very different tendencies. It is not uncommon to observe people using sidewalks for activities typically associated with front porches. People use this space for grilling, setting up chairs, radios and conversation. This indicates that there is limited space afforded by the dense physical make up of the neighborhood and that the public space of the sidewalk is an opportunity to rest and relax as well as commune with friends and neighbors.

For outside observers the legibility of sidewalk living rooms of minimal and is often viewed as illicit or illegal activity when there is none. The activities described above, while limited to some extent, a rarely illegal. Still, there is an issue of an open air drug market in the neighborhood that creates the perception that anyone who is loitering in public space is associated with illegal activity. Users who are aware of the individuals are able to discern which activity is illegal and which is not, but for those unfamiliar it is difficult.

**FIT**

Those that participate in sidewalk living rooms are constantly adapting to their environment. In addition to using ledges or bring out chairs and other furniture for seating it was com-
mon to people using trash cans and boards to construct tables. None of these adaptations and manipulations is permanent. They are very temporary and responsive to the conditions provided. Because the adaptations are temporary and affect no permanent change to the physical environment there is little manipulation. Typically the temporary adaptations only last for the duration of the activity. In the case of bringing out lawn chairs or a grill these are promptly removed at the end of the activity.

**CONTROL**

Sidewalk living rooms exhibit a low amount of rights. There is a low level of intervention in space and it is especially tenuous. While there is definite presence even the elements of use and action, and to some degree appropriation have little opportunity to develop into a secure sense of control. Even though there is little modification, and no dislocation, the mere presence such activity if perceived as a threat to the stability and image of the neighborhood. Even presence is tenuous. If no counter action is taken there is a definite sense that the activity is contested by the proliferation of no loitering signs and the rigid enforcement of strict park rules. Users of sidewalk living rooms are only capable of exerting the a level of control afforded to them by the level of regulations. This practice is in large part a main target of the “safe and clean” strategies described above. There is little question that in the future these activities will be more tightly regulated and enforced.
CHAPTER 6 | CONCLUSIONS

Each of the case studies examines in detail how each activity constitutes a local practice and relates to a quality of sense, fit, and control. This section summarizes those findings and discusses how each of these practices, and local practices in general, contribute to more meaningful, participatory and just places. As set forth in the research design the relationship between sense, fit, and control and meaningful, just and participatory is one of extension and translation. While the performance criteria are used to evaluate how the local practices contribute to place the placemaking principles conclude why local practices are useful in the context of expert practices. The findings of each of the case studies suggests that while local practices generally offer users, as determined in the Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, the opportunity to be involved in placemaking at the local level in ways that are meaningful, participatory, and just.

6.1 | Street Vending Summary

Street vending is clearly a local practice as the spatial and temporal distribution relates directly to local conditions and circumstances as well as the users. While not entirely from the neighborhood, user find the location to be an opportunity to sell their goods. This confluence of the factors of location, time and users confirms that streetvending is a local practice.
It is also notable that streetvending is serving an unsatisfied demand for goods through an informal economic system. The informal economic aspects, while beyond this study, are important to understand as a particular dimension of local practices.

**Meaningful**

The ways in which streetvending relates to the measures of identity, structure, transparency, legibility and significance are the primary indicators of whether the activity is meaningful. Based on these criteria it was observed that while many of the users do not directly relate vending to the image of the neighborhood they do see a connection between the opportunities that the neighborhood offers, the cultural, social and economic conditions and their activity. People choose to vend in Over-The-Rhine because of the large amount of pedestrian activity, the lack of available retail opportunities and most importantly because of the demand for and familiarity with this type of exchange. The historical significance in the context of the neighborhood also contribute to the meaningfulness of streetvending in the context of Over-The-Rhine. The low barrier to this type of economic activity, for both the buyer and seller, makes streetvending an activity that is not just well suited for the neighborhood, but one that has arisen out of social and cultural demands. Streetvending is especially meaningful when it reveals these characteristics, or in other words when it makes legible its connections to the neighborhood and the users who participate in it. This is done through the types of goods being
sold the location and concentration of the activity and when the users are more closely related to the neighborhood and aware of the dynamics. It is less meaningful when the activity happens at the periphery of these criteria. That is when users, goods and locations are not clearly related to the physical and social context of the neighborhood.

**Participatory**

Because the users of vending are temporarily manipulating the physical environment they are engaging in a re-configuration of public space. This directly influences the design of the streetscape and the activity occurring within it. Setting up tables in places determined based on pedestrian activity and other contextual factors is a response to the existing conditions, but it also has a significant influence on the real and imagined understanding of the public spaces of the neighborhood. While there is a lack of formally designated locations or equipment for vending in Over-The-Rhine this allows for those vendors to participate at a higher level and with greater influence. Street vending is less participatory when it is regulated, and relegated, to areas where there is less impact on the physical form of the sidewalk. This is seen primarily at the intersection of Vine and Liberty, where an otherwise empty street is often filled with activity. Even places with active storefronts do not generate the level of activity on the sidewalk that these areas of vending do. The users of this practice are extremely involved in shaping the physical, and social perceptions of the neighborhood.
While vending has the ability to re-configure spaces and influence the perception of the neighborhood the level of justice being served is relative to the scale of who is being considered. Through observations and interview it became clear that those who live in the neighborhood benefit functionally from the increased availability of retail. Those that vend also benefit from the ability to sell their goods with little overhead. Even though many are abiding by the regulations established there is some level of disconnect between the acceptance of the vending activity amongst outside observers and to a lesser extent the local business owners. Despite the absence of conflict and the minimal overlap between what is being provided through vending and what existing stores offer vending is still seen as a parasitic activity rather than one of choice and opportunity. It may remain just for the immediate users of the activity because they are still participating in the control of the space and benefiting from the economic aspects. While it may serve to increase the functionality and cultural relatedness among certain user groups it doesn’t increase the perceived viability of these spaces for everyone. This aspect of vending must be considered in relation to whether or not it is a just local practice.

As stated in the observations, the power of vending is limited. In its current form it cannot persuade people who are not accepting of it to become more aware of the social and cultural demands that go unsatisfied. But the other side of this is that it does assert the
necessity for the variations in cultural and social choices. This is directly in line with the ideas presented in the theory of Everyday Urbanism. The idea of establishing a micro politics whereby those that are not willing or able to participate in conventional social and political channels are able to, through direct action, meet their own needs.

This undoubtedly leads to some level of conflict and division between groups but as vending mostly falls well within the limitations of the law it is considered as a local practice that provides for a just, participatory and meaningful place.
6.2 | Public Arts Summary

Because the local public arts are the more complex local practices observed in Over-The-Rhine the analysis has taken into account distinctions based on the users intention, substance of the artwork and to a lesser degree the methods used. Though widely varied in terms of type, location, temporal characteristics and users, the local public arts in Over-The-Rhine exhibit many similarities with respect to the measures of sense, fit and control. The differences between the types are simply a matter of degree.

Meaningful

In terms of their meaning, the local public arts are quite representative of the diversity of users present in the neighborhood. The street and graffiti art represents a group quite distinct from those that use messages and memorials. Street art is primarily associated with young generation of artist living, working and studying in the neighborhood. There is some overlap between this group and those that are practicing graffiti art, but much of the graffiti artist are lesser intrinsically related to the neighborhood and instead utilize its relatively high level of loose space for their activity. This is especially true around the perimeter of the neighborhood. Both of these user groups relate the neighborhood to a place where they are able to create and display their work. For them it is identified as a place of tolerance and opportunity. This is similar to the streetvending in that it takes advantage of opportunity, but is different in that it is not concerned with preexisting pe-
destrian activity, and instead seeks out the reverse. The relative lack of pedestrian activ-
ity in certain areas allows street artist and graffiti artist to create their work unnoticed 
and uninterrupted. For this group Over-The-Rhine is thought of as a place where the
risks they take are minimal and the value that they offer great. This value relates directly
to the aspect of participation discussed below.

Memorials and messages are also highly meaningful. In terms of the intentions, and
substance they are highly correlated with the larger social and cultural context of the
neighborhood. This is in many ways inherent to these forms of local public arts. Both
are individual and collective responses to the conditions specific to them. A memorial
expresses emotions that are felt by and individual or group and the messages commu-
nication information or feelings. Messages and memorial exhibit a correlation between
the users and the neighborhood and suggest that the users are directly identifying with
the space, or establishing a mechanism for creating an identity of the neighborhood that
includes them.

The difficulty with graffiti and street art in terms of meaning is its lack of legibility and
transparency. While in terms of identity, congruence and significance these two are
highly meaningful local practices the lack of congruence prohibits others from accessing
that meaning. The aesthetics and unfamiliar visual language employed through these tactics
is a barrier for those unfamiliar with graffiti and street art. This is also true of messages even though the visual and textual languages are often much more accessible, the tactics used often prevent people from seeing past the activities seemingly aggressive nature.

Simply put the users of these local public arts identify with the neighborhood in way that correspond with what they feel they have to offer. This may be to beautify loose space, to proclaim a statement, to draw attention to a space, their selves, or an event. Regardless, each of the local practices is highly meaningful to the specific users groups that participate in these practices ad by doing so they are directly engaged with empowering themselves to alter the social context drawing into question whether these local practices are a new form of participatory action.

**Participatory**

Briefly mentioned above was the idea that by inscribing these forms of local public arts individuals and groups are contributing something they deem of value. It was suggested that this relates to the dimension of participation central to this study. Like the vendors who actively engage in the temporary re-configuring of the public space of sidewalks and other areas of the neighborhood. Local public artist are also engaged in re-configuring the ways in which the neighborhood is read. This reading of a place, well established in the writings of numerous scholars, is not confined to the conceived space of architects
and planners, but is also informed by individual actions. Because it has been established that the local public arts in this study do contribute meaning it is only logical to conclude that those who are involved in these practices are participating in shaping the contextual reading of the environment. By manipulating the surfaces of loose spaces, vacant buildings etc, these users are empowering themselves to affect the understanding of the place. This is done consciously and unconsciously, and effectively and ineffectively.

The graffiti and street arts are rather split in their effectiveness and consciousness of participating. As suggested in analysis of the meaning the lack of legibility and the disregard for property rights makes the effectiveness relative to the observers own personal values. Those that are value personal property rights as an unalienable right have a very difficult time to see the messages for what they are worth. Instead they are resigned to see them simply as infringements on a higher value.

Those that are more open to variable control and maintenance of many of the surfaces appropriated are often aware of the individual’s intention and desire to communicate. Memorials are the most successful at this because they confront a circumstance that all can relate to, even if separate from the incident being memorialized. This issue of property rights is directly related to the dimension of justice.
When considering the degree of justice offered by a particular practice this study looks at the ways in which an activity exerts control over space, the degree to which it manipulates space and the level of legibility. In the instances of public art it was clearly observed that forms of graffiti street art, while not vastly different in terms of control or how a space is manipulated, are vastly different in terms of legibility. In some ways it is the methods and the advanced techniques of graffiti and street art that make it inaccessible to those not familiar with it. Messages and memorials are more accessible because they are not an exclusive language, but rely on common practices and tools.

The regulations and laws against graffiti, as defined by the City of Cincinnati, do not delineate between the various forms identified in this study, though they do in application. As was observed many of the more illegible and less transparent forms of local public arts are targeted for abatement more heavily than those that are more legible. Graffiti and street art are more directly targeted for abatement than the messages and memorials. Each of the forms has relatively the same level of control in that they all appropriate and modify spaces, but are not treated and viewed the same by officials or general public. This suggest that those forms of local public arts that are less threatening, or are more tolerated offer greater potential in transcending the gap between those who participate and those who observer.
6.3 | Sidewalk Living Rooms Summary

Summary

Generally sidewalk living rooms are the most common of the local practices observed in this study. But they are also the most mundane. This use of public space is very simple and does not rely on any special sub-cultural knowledge or awareness of regulations. While it does have cultural significance it is not unique to any one cultural. Like street-vending the aspects of meaning, participation and justice are often taken for granted. During observations and interviews it was very difficult to get anyone to see beyond the most basic aspects of sidewalk living rooms. The only connection people were willing or able to make was from the mundane to the political. Those interviewed had little to say about why they choose to use public space in this way or what it meant as a part of the neighborhood. When asked why they thought that some had a problem with it conversation went directly to issues of race and class.

Meaningful

Sidewalk living rooms are quite similar to the other activities in terms of identity. Though no one interviewed claimed that this activity was a direct representation of themselves they did mention concepts that indicate that they relate to certain spaces over others. Referring to spots and the activity as holding it down suggests that the individuals involved had a close connection to the spaces they frequented. In addition to the
aspect of identity there was a high level of congruence. The observations, particularly around Washington Park, where many of the users are connected to the Drop-In Center or other social services that use the park as a base, revealed that the activities had a direct relationship with the larger social conditions of the neighborhood. The types of conversations overheard during observations also suggest that those involved see the activity as a time for sharing information and views on whatever is of concern.

**Participatory**

Sidewalk living rooms re-configure the space of the sidewalk and the public spaces in much the same way of street vending. But where street vending re-conceives the space for economic purposes sidewalk living rooms re-configures it for domestic purposes. This domestication of public space has extensive effects on the perception of the neighborhood. When uses typically associated with private spaces occur in public there is a forced reconsideration of this boundary. In fact this is where much of the contested nature of sidewalk living rooms is evoked. This is especially true in the area around Washington Park where a significant amount of users are homeless or unemployed living in the shelters. There is a necessity for spaces to accommodate the activities that many people would prefer to happen in the privacy of their own homes, such as drinking and loitering.
Because the users of sidewalk living rooms exert very little control over the space they occupy, the highly temporary nature of the adaptations, and the targeted enforcement of regulations it is minimally just. In addition to this the lack of legibility makes it difficult for outside observers to appreciate the benefits of the communal nature of this local practice. While the observations and literature point towards this activities significance as a social and cultural practice there is little attempt to encourage or accept the ways in which users adapt and appropriate the forms of the environment.
6.4 | Final Findings

This study has defined local practices in the context of expert planning and placemaking efforts, observed three case studies, and analyzed them in relation to a set of performance criteria of urban form and their role in creating meaningful, just and participatory places. Through this research it can be determined that local practices are indeed an important element to placemaking. It is not the intent to suggest that expert placemaking practices be forgone for local placemaking or that local placemaking can even be accomplished by expert practices. Still there are a number of implications for aspects of placemaking that have emerged.

First, it has been observed that these practices are highly meaningful. They rate strong along most measures of sense. This includes identity, congruence, transparency and significance. This is primarily because these practices are derived from the lived experiences of users and are therefore closely related to local social and cultural circumstances. The criterion of legibility, also part of the dimension of sense that considers the degree users are able to communicate via an activity or practice, is one area where the observed local practices are consistently weak. The study does not attempt to explain this in detail and further research is needed to fully determine the cause, but it the context of this study it should suffice to say that there exist a gap between the social and cultural preferences of various groups that prevent a universal legibility. This, however, should
not be construed as a shortcoming of the individual local practices or of the potential of local practices in creating meaningful, participatory or just places. Rather this apparent disconnect between the users intention, the meaning and ability to participate in the activities described indicates that while there is a low level of legibility their existence challenges common conceptions of acceptable behavior. This has been identified in the context of the theoretical framework as an important element of lived experience.

Second, each of the case studies suggests that local practices allow for participatory methods of placemaking. Each local practice observed re-configures the physical and perceptual environment to some degree. By either adapting or manipulating existing spaces local practices allow for users to be directly engaged and empowered in the shaping of the lived environment. Local practices of placemaking enable a form of participation distinct from those of expert practices in that they allow for users to define and redefine the space of the city. Where traditional methods of participation can potentially have influence over seemingly greater outcomes, such as large-scale projects and more permanent alterations, local practices directly relate to the social and cultural needs and desires of the users. This relates back to the issues of meaning and sense. In addition, traditional channels of participation (community meetings visioning, focus groups, and other civic and political forums) have been shown to be not entirely inclusive due to the various discourse communities present in a neighborhood. Local practices enable these
various overlapping communities to participate in ways that are not mutually exclusive and are to some extent inclusive of other community interest.

Third, and related to the issues of legibility and manipulation is the degree to which these practices allow for just places. As indicated in the literature, the idea of a just place involves the ability for users to have a right to the city, not just in terms of access, but also in terms of design and the control of what a place is and how it is shaped. While each local practice exerts some level of control, the temporality, contestation, apparent aggressiveness and other factors limit the potential for them transcend the existing hegemony. As mentioned above this is not simply a shortcoming of local practices and needs further research to determine the causal relationship between the accepted order of expert placemaking and the potential of local practices. In many ways the local practices observed fall well within the legally defined rights, but push the boundary of what is deemed acceptable. In this way local practices constitute an effort at re-conceiving just places.

6.5 | Relation to Expert Practices

As the above analysis shows the local practices of Over-The-Rhine contribute to a more meaningful, participatory and just place for those users involved in the activities. While this is the case it is important to understand the limitations of these practices as well.
Within the analysis of each of the local practices and the final findings it becomes clear that it is the users of the activities that benefit from them. In some cases this adversely affects other users. This is especially true of the local public arts where private property is used to the benefit of those participate and to the detriment of the owners of the property.

It can also be seen that the tension between the local practices and the expert practices that regulate them serve to minimize the harm done to others. What the regulations fail to do is maximize the benefits to the users of the local practices. From the research it can be concluded that while the local practices do enable a more meaningful, participatory and just place for the users involved in them there is not a balance between the benefits afforded to users and the benefits to the larger and more inclusive set of users.

To a large extent the local practices operate in the loose space, not just of the physical spaces of the neighborhood, but also the loose space created by regulations. This tactical approach of users taking advantage of both the physical and regulatory looses space of the city suggest that users of these local practices are pushing the boundaries of the what is acceptable and allowed within the formal structure of expert practices.

While this tactical approach is characteristic of local practices it also places them at a
disadvantage when it comes to transcending the stigmatization and unfavorable perceptions of the practices themselves. Even thought they do in many ways create more meaningful, just and participatory places for the users they do not do the same for other users. This leaves experts in a position of reacting to these local practices in order to mediate between what is clearly acceptable behavior and that which lies in the grey area.

Because the observations and analysis indicate that much of the shortcoming of the local practices has to do with how they are read by those not involved this research suggest that there is a need for experts to become involved in the ability of local practices to extend benefits beyond those that are directly involved. There are infinite ways in which this could be accomplished. Most importantly experts should take the local practices into consideration when regulating, designing and re-imagining what a place is or can be. In doing this experts can establish ways in which existing local practices are legitimized, strengthened, and made to be more legible. Exposing the connection of these activities to the larger social context and giving value or credibility to activities that temporarily appropriate and give purpose to the loose spaces can allow the multiple and shifting meanings created through local practices to extend beyond those that are directly involved.
The aim of this research has been to determine if there is value in local practices and to relate them to the larger expert practices of placemaking. While there is clearly value to local practices, in that they contribute to more meaningful, participatory and just places for those who are directly involved, it is important to recognize that more needs to be done to determine how expert practices can accommodate, encourage, and value local practices. This is certainly non simple task and requires a reconsideration of design and planning paradigms, not to mention shifts of political power.


