NEO-BOHEMIA: ART AND NEIGHBORHOOD REDEVELOPMENT IN CHICAGO

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ABSTRACT: *Drawing on an extended case study of Chicago's Wicker Park neighborhood, this article develops the concept of neo-bohemia. Neo-bohemia suggests that traditions of cultural innovation in older city neighborhoods persist, but that these bohemian traditions intersect with economic development in new ways in the post-Fordist city. Neo-bohemia supports both residential gentrification and the concentration of entertainment and new media enterprises, creating the context for the redevelopment of former industrial spaces in Chicago. Neo-bohemia complicates contemporary urban theories that stress deconcentration, and theories of urban tourism that overstate the regulated and hermetic nature of consumption spaces.*

Drawing upon an extended ethnographic study of Chicago's Wicker Park neighborhood, this article develops the concept of neo-bohemia. Arguing that traditional advantages offered by cities for cultural innovation interact with new patterns of capital accumulation, neo-bohemia complicates many recent urban theories. Against those that stress urban deconcentration, this analysis of Wicker Park indicates how neighborhood spaces that might have been thought anachronistic in the wake of post-Fordist restructuring can offer comparative advantage for key postindustrial enterprises. Further, Wicker Park suggests a different model for the city as a site of cultural production and consumption than we find in much of the current literature on culture and tourism as engines of center-city redevelopment. While such literature most often focuses on big ticket development projects and the homogeneous, administered nature of tourist spaces, in neo-bohemia smaller scale cultural offerings and offbeat elements of street level culture are not only important amenities for particular urban consumers, but resources for cultural and new media enterprises.

During the 1990s, Wicker Park gained a national reputation as a site of hip urban culture with a thriving music and art scene. In defining the local scene, both press accounts and participants evoke bohemian traditions of artistic innovation in the city. What

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distinguishes Wicker Park from past bohemian models is the intersection between these developments and a restructured urban economy. In Wicker Park the population of artists and lifestyle aesthetes abets residential gentrification as well as the concentration of entertainment outlets and design intensive media enterprises. Thus while elements of the modernist bohemia persist in spaces such as Wicker Park, with creative individuals continuing to derive benefits from urban association, global economic trends elevate the importance of these practices to the reconfiguration of the neighborhood as a site of accumulation. These trends include: 1) The displacement of older economic functions, principally manufacturing, providing material and symbolic spaces available for adaptive recycling; 2) The increasing importance of culture as a commodity, available to be consumed locally in entertainment venues and to be exported through traditional culture industries and new media enterprises; and 3) The changing occupational structure of the global city, increasing the importance of educated, culturally competent workers to the material and immaterial labor of cultural production generated in a neighborhood like Wicker Park.

Bohemia here is understood as spatial phenomenon, rather than, as is sometimes the case, a style or a state of mind. But the production of local space both conditions and is conditioned by the subjective orientations of participants, many of whom make explicit recourse to past representations of bohemia in their contemporary definition of the situation. This can lead elements of the urban experience often perceived to be liabilities by politicians and developers to be folded into new representations of bohemian chic, characterized by a notion of diversity that often fetishizes the gritty and the illicit as authentic. The new in neo-bohemia is the interaction between these spatialized social practices and the post-Fordist economy in which they are embedded. Examining Wicker Park, we can see how socio-spatial patterns once thought to be marginal, or even oppositional, to the real productive work of cities like Chicago now potentially operate as key features in a new regime of capital accumulation. At the same time, continued development generates contradiction, in which the reproduction of an innovative labor force conflicts with the homogenizing tendencies produced by intensified capital investment.

CULTURE IN NEW URBAN ECONOMIES

A growing body of literature in urban studies addresses the role of culture and consumption in contemporary strategies of center city economic development. When addressed to older United States cities like Baltimore, Chicago, or Boston, the emphasis on culture as an economic variable follows from the relative decline in explanatory importance of older variables associated with industrial manufacturing. The steady loss of industrial jobs in older urban cores since the peak period of the Fordist model of economic organization at mid-century led to grave consequences for these cities, and urban entrepreneurs have scrambled to find new strategies to fill the spaces left vacant by the flight of productive capital. These new strategies do not invent so much as rediscover and reconstruct elements of urbanism. Cities have long been sites of trade and cultural innovation; on the other hand, the city as the central space of material production coincides with the industrial revolution and is a relatively recent phenomenon.

Now, we have entered a new period of urbanism in the US, which is referred to variously as informational, postindustrial, post-Fordist, postmodern, or global (Castells, 1989; Dear, 2002; Keil, 1994; Sassen, 1991; Scott & Soja, 1996; Soja, 1989). The theorists of the loosely aggregated LA school of urbanism stress the deconcentration of economic functions and the sprawling growth patterns especially exemplified in the Los Angeles region, a consequence of what Soja (2000) refers to as "the third period of crisis-generated restructuring" of urban

form (p. 110). Others demonstrate the importance of tourism and consumption in strategies to redevelop older urban cores left behind by patterns of deconcentration. Generally, this strain of current scholarship has focused on capital intensive developments such as the Disneyfied Times Square, the building of downtown sports stadiums and convention centers, or the injection of cultural centers, theater districts, and museums into decaying areas (Eeckhout, 2001; Euchner, 1999; Hannigan, 1998; Zukin, 1991, 1995). In these studies, the advantages of spatial concentration are reasserted, now as the concentration of cultural amenities rather than blue-collar labor and factories.

But current focus on consumption by urban theorists too often loses sight of everyday life and the spatial practices that link the lived activity of residents to new labor patterns, strategies of accumulation and urban spectacles. Instead, most theories of the city as a site of consumption posit a radical disjuncture between the new spaces of capital and the lives of residents. Judd (1999), for example, poses the formation of tourist bubbles in large cities, which regulate consumption and are cut off from the everyday routes of lived experience. Likewise, Sorkin (1992) argues for a theme park model of urbanism in which the heterogeneity of the old city sidewalk has been progressively replaced by the sanitized venues of consumption. Eeckhout (2001) echoes Sorkin's obsession with Disneyland, characterizing recent redevelopment in midtown Manhattan as the Disneyfication of Times Square. So complete is the disconnect between postmodern urban spaces and the residential practices of the city for some scholars that it seems to make sense when Jameson (1998), the premiere theorist of postmodernism and consumer culture, uses a hotel as the exemplary material manifestation of postmodernism in the city.

These theories make no distinctions among users; locals in such spaces become like tourists, all surrendering to the authority of administered consumption. But city dwellers are active in the production and consumption of cultural amenities in ways that the Disneyfication thesis fails to grasp. To discover the role culture plays in the amenity profile for urban residents, many of whom are young and sport high levels of education and cultural competence, we need to broaden our perspective beyond the signature spaces of postmodernism. The city remains a place where people actually live, not just visit. They also hold jobs; many are involved with the production of culture and consumption opportunities. Neo-bohemia suggests that rather than viewing consumption as the other of productive practice, we need to look at the new intersections of consumption and production in urban space.

Emphasis on big-ticket items like athletic stadiums locates the production of new urban space solely in the hands of developers and political elites. It obscures more evolutionary processes of cultural development, including the expanding role played by traditional patterns of urban subcultural affiliation and artistic innovation in the postindustrial economy—both in terms of local consumption offerings and the concentration of cultural and design enterprises. By approaching the Wicker Park case ethnographically, this study places greater emphasis on the distinctions among the users of urban space than is typical in examinations of what Zukin (1996) calls the city's symbolic economy. The cultural profile of Wicker Park, with its diversity of artistic offerings from popular music to galleries to poetry readings, is responsive to the dispositions of educated young urbanites whose own work may involve aesthetic innovation. Further, the breadth and depth of this local culture contributes directly to conditions supportive of cultural and technological innovation.

Scholarship on the technology-driven economy emphasizes the importance of talent to the success of firms, that is, of the labor of individuals referred to as knowledge workers (Bell, 1973; Drucker, 1995) or symbolic analysts (Reich, 1991) who possess the creative competence required by technology and design enterprises. Many argue that access to

such labor has become the key to understanding the location choices of firms, replacing the older spatial variables of fixed capital and transportation that characterized industrial production. These studies emphasize the importance of local amenities as a magnet for highly mobile knowledge workers, employing a number of methods and measures to operationalize quality of life (Clark, Lloyd, Wong, & Jain, 2001; Florida, 2000, 2002b; Lloyd & Clark, 2001; Nevarez, 1999, 2002).

Recently, Florida (2002a) added the concept of bohemia to the analysis of regional amenities. Using a statistical measure called the bohemian index (based on occupational data from the 1990 Decennial Census Public Use Microdata Samples), Florida finds a robust correlation between the presence of artists in a region and the concentration of high technology enterprises.

> The ... presence and concentration of bohemians in an area creates an environment or milieu that attracts other types of talented or high human capital individuals. The presence of such high human capital individuals in a region in turn attracts and generates innovative technology based industries (p. 3).

Florida argues that the driving force behind urban prosperity is the ability to attract members of what he calls the creative class. Members of this class are not necessarily interested in the hermetic spaces focused on by Sorkin and other theorists of theme park urbanism and Disneyfication. "The creative class is drawn to more organic and indigenous street-level culture. This form is typically found ... in multiuse urban neighborhoods" (Florida, 2002b, p. 182). Both ethnographic informants and media accounts identify the appeal of Wicker Park in this sort of street level diversity, in which even gang activity and homelessness are valued as markers of urban authenticity.

METHOD AND SITE SELECTION

Ethnography facilitates finer grained distinctions among types of creative labor. It also reveals the importance of the neighborhood milieu to distinct types of enterprise in culture, technology and design. What emerges is a more nuanced picture of the relationship between the arts and new strategies of accumulation. This article provides an overview of the neo-bohemian concept drawn from an extended case analysis of Wicker Park. Its primary data come from formal interviews and participant observation and is supported by census data, other demographic and economic indicators, and media accounts. The project was piloted in 1993, a period when Wicker Park was gaining significant national attention for its art and music scene. After 1994 the project was set-aside until 1999 when observation and interviews were resumed for a two-year period ending in 2001. In this time I acted as a participant observer in a wide range of relevant neighborhood venues, including entertainment providers (bars, restaurants, nightclubs), art galleries, live performances of theater, music, and poetry, and the loft studios of working artists. I visited the offices and observed workdays in several local media and design firms. Recorded, open-ended interviews, typically lasting one to two hours, were conducted with roughly three-dozen informants. Informants included local artists, designers, entrepreneurs, and service workers. Often informants occupied more than one of these categories: for example, an Internet designer who plays in a local punk rock band or a painter who also manages a local bar. The preponderance of such individuals highlights the extent to which the arts cross-fertilize other economic activities.

In any ethnographic study, the choice of a site is crucial. Generalizing from a single site has inevitable limitations, and the propositions advanced here serve as invitations to comparative work in other locales. There is evidence to suggest that such comparisons will be fruitful. Substantial recent scholarship demonstrates the growing importance of artists in urban areas, including cities not commonly identified with bohemian traditions. Markusen (2000) demonstrates that artists are a growing population in the workforces of many mid-sized cities. The positive correlation found by Florida (2002a) between his bohemian index and high technology is evident in metropolitan areas like San Francisco, Washington DC, Boston, Austin, Atlanta, New York, and Seattle. The broader trends of urban restructuring with which I contextualize my analysis, such as de-industrialization and the growing importance of new media production, apply in varying degrees to cities throughout the US. Thus, the concept of neo-bohemia is intended to both elucidate the particularities of my site and to serve as a heuristic that can be applied and tested elsewhere.

Identified as a site of cultural innovation, a tourist destination, and new media hub, Wicker Park has attracted wide attention in the national media. It was selected in 2001 as the location for MTV's popular series *The Real World*, reaffirming its ongoing importance to the generation of hip media images. Wicker Park resembles New York's East Village, probably the best-known new American bohemia of the last 20 years, in which similar intersections between high tech, high art, and consumption are evident. But New York is exceptional in terms of its cultural tradition; it has been a world capital of modern art since World War II shifted the balance of cultural power from Paris (Guilbaut, 1983). Chicago has historically been a backwater of cultural production when compared to New York and Los Angeles, at least in terms of the media and fine arts. Thus, the emergent importance of Wicker Park's art and media presence is especially revealing.

NEO-BOHEMIA AND THE POSTINDUSTRIAL NEIGHBORHOOD

Mired in postindustrial decay during the 1980s, Wicker Park has undergone a striking rehabilitation. By 1993, the local music scene centered in Wicker Park was attracting significant attention nationwide. *Billboard*, the music industry's trade publication declared "Chicago: Cutting Edge's New Capital" in a cover article that featured a detailed map of the neighborhood and its proliferating performance venues (Boehlert, 1993). *The New York Times* followed up with an article in its Living Arts section entitled "Edgy in Chicago: The music world discovers Wicker Park" (Rochlin, 1994). In fact, by the time the music scene was receiving national attention, attention clearly facilitated by the 1990s "indie rock" craze initiated in Seattle, a loosely integrated community of artists operating in a variety of mediums was staking a claim to local spaces in Wicker Park. In addition to the growing popularity of neighborhood venues showcasing up and coming rock bands, the annual "Around the Coyote" art festival, begun in 1989, advertised the work of local artists and simultaneously showed off their rehabbed loft spaces.

The nationally recognized arts and music presence in Wicker Park is directly implicated in its redevelopment from an industrial neighborhood into both a site of residential gentrification and concentrated enterprises of cultural production. At the same time, acceleration of investment generates contradictions, including conflicts among competing capital interests. A relatively moderate cost of living is necessary to maintaining the balance of cultural offerings neo-bohemian neighborhoods provide, which includes offbeat, experimental, and alternative fare. It is also necessary to facilitate the reserve of culture workers who live in the neighborhood area and are available to enter into flexible

employment relations. This is confounded by the classic growth machine pressures for ever rising ground rents (Logan & Molotch, 1987).

The once derelict spaces of Chicago's industrial past now house trendy restaurants, boutiques, bars and galleries, and the residential profile features a large number of artists, students, and young professionals. The neighborhood is also attracting participants in design intensive economic activities, including an increasing presence in "media driven Internet companies" (Jaffe, 2001, p. 1). See Figure 1. These new economy enterprises benefit from the local ambiance of innovation, as well as from the presence of individuals with creative competence who are available as potential employees (Lloyd, 2001). The association of Wicker Park's gritty spaces with creative energy has helped initiate a new identity and concomitant development. Rather than the hyper-segregation of consumption venues, production sites and residence posed by many theories of contemporary urban morphology, Wicker Park is characterized by the promiscuous mixing of such locales within the neighborhood space. These local trends, linking cultural production to postindustrial development, are important to understanding the continued advantages of dense urban development to postindustrial economic enterprises, and suggest limitations

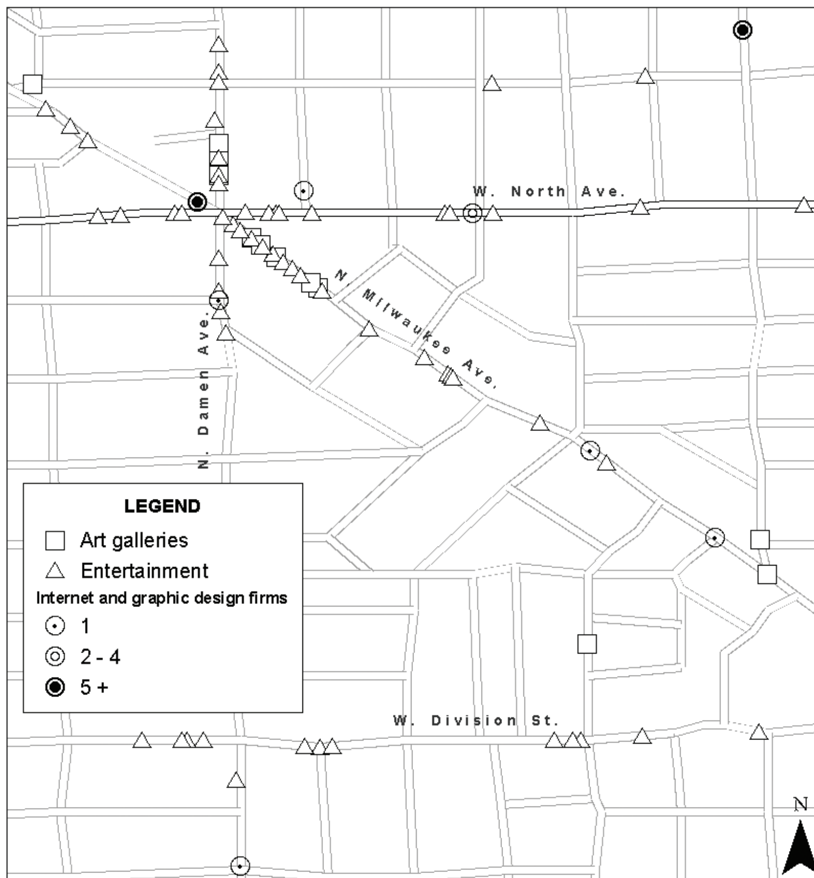

FIGURE 1

Art, Entertainment, and Design in Wicker Park
Note: Map created by Todd Schuble, University of Chicago

to urban theories that overemphasize deconcentration and sprawl as the characteristic postmodern geographies (Soja, 1989).

Both the blight that afflicted Wicker Park in the recent past and its newfound role as Chicago's neo-bohemia must be understood in the context of global capitalist restructuring. Wicker Park's decline into an obscure and depopulated barrio by the 1980s reflected industrial disinvestment. Once a thriving white ethnic working class neighborhood (Hoekstra, 1994; Lopata, 1954), the neighborhood experienced steady erosion of its economic base in the latter half of the century. In the six-year period from 1977 to 1983 alone, the near West Side lost a staggering 12,543 manufacturing jobs. Although a significant subpopulation of white ethnics remained in Wicker Park, by the 1980s the majority population had become members of the city's newer immigrant groups, mainly Puerto Ricans and Mexicans. Because new immigrants traditionally found employment in Chicago's manufacturing sector, industrial displacement significantly affected employment opportunities for Latinos. While 58% of the Hispanic workforce in Chicago was employed in manufacturing in 1970, that number had declined to 39% in 1991 (Villanueva, Erdman, & Howlett, 2000). Increasingly, Wicker Park evinced characteristics of what Wilson (1987) calls concentration effects, with rising poverty, crime, and other urban ills. The neighborhood population in 1980 had dropped to 40% of its peak in the 1930s, and the median value of single family homes was less than half that of the city as a whole. The poverty rate in 1990 for the larger West Town area in which Wicker Park is embedded stood at 32%, compared to 21.6% for the city (Lester, 2000).

But even in the face of de-industrialization, cities like Chicago continue to evince advantages for some central activities over suburban, exurban and Sunbelt locales. Culture is not incidental. Cities concentrate diversity, and create unique opportunities for cultural production. Neo-bohemia illustrates the importance of neighborhood culture to urban renewal, especially when compared to the perceived cultural homogeneity of the suburban eu-topia (no-place), to borrow Davis's (1990) term describing LA's suburban extensions. These elements create the context necessary to understand the shifting identity of Wicker Park in the 1990s.

The decades following the 1970s saw a resurgence of capital investment in older downtowns, now responding to the demands of an increasingly globalized economy. Global finance and the centralized administration of diffuse economic activities provide part of the answer to center city resurgence. These do not exhaust the economic activities of the postindustrial city, however. Cities like Chicago are still production sites, despite the decline in manufacturing employment. Accounting for the ongoing economic centrality of Chicago requires new categories of production beyond those steeped in industrial capitalism. Sassen (1991) argues that global cities are not only sites of administration but that they also produce innovations, whether in finance, design, technology, or culture. Recent studies by Scott (2000) and Kratke (2002) demonstrate that the production of cultural and media images that may be available for global circulation nonetheless occur within an urban hierarchy of place. As global corporations shed production facilities in exchange for outsourced manufacturing, the emphasis on the aesthetic component in the chain of value added has increased (Klein, 1999). Ironically, former sweatshops in older US cities are now being put to use in the manufacture of images for the aesthetic economy.

Both the spaces of the industrial past and the cultural themes of the neighborhood palimpsest are incorporated into the contemporary construction of neo-bohemia in Chicago. As Sassen (2002) points out, "much of... Chicago's built environment responds to earlier locational logics and [its] distinct construction and transport options" even as the contextual field is characterized by new dynamics such as globalization and the heightened

role of aesthetic production in Western economies (p. 49). However, it would be inaccurate to view the inherited built environment only as a source of constraint. Some features of the inheritance of older cities, such as loft spaces or the pedestrian sidewalks passing by what Jane Jacobs (1961) called mixed primary uses, can be sources of comparative advantage for neo-bohemian cultural production; so too can the cumulative nature of local culture—the cultural depth of older city spaces. The reconfiguration of the neighborhood around new spatial practices of accumulation requires neither a massive clearing project bulldozing the material relics of industry, nor a wholesale erasure of local history.

The built environment is revalorized through what Dickinson (2001) refers to as the "adaptive recycling" of industrial space (p. 47). Historically, artists have proven innovative in their use of space; the spatial practices of artists in New York helped to initiate the market in living lofts (Simpson, 1981; Zukin, 1982) and provide a model for similar strategies in Wicker Park. Beyond residence, these spaces become postindustrial sites for capital accumulation, housing boutiques, restaurants, nightclubs, recording studios, and office space for new media enterprises.

Thus, even with the flight of heavy industry from the city, the spaces and structures of the industrial past need not be seen as a liability. The history embedded in them becomes a source of identification for urban residents, one that is counterpoised to other forms of settlement space. The endlessly reproducible sprawl of tract homes and strip malls cannot provide the depth of history sought in the neo-bohemian cityspace. Faceless strip malls defy the cognitive mapping described by Lynch (1960) as essential to an integrated urban identity. For the growing number of self-described artistically inclined persons, suburban extensions do not provide adequate inspiration. Place is recovered in the city, as participants incorporate the cumulative culture inscribed on urban spaces into their definition of the situation, including fantasies of urban grit and vice.

While the focus here is on the redevelopment of former industrial spaces, the neo-bohemian concept may also be useful in examining strategies of newer cities where spatial tropes are being reproduced that recall industrial environments in a postindustrial economy, creating a kind of socio-spatial isomorphism. Even Las Vegas and Orlando, urban spaces antithetical to Chicago in character and tradition, are enacting strategies to encourage a local arts presence. Orlando sponsors the annual "Fringe Festival" to advertise its own neo-bohemia, and Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman plots for a new urban core with "some culture" including a museum and an art school (Egan, 2001). Such strategies may have only limited effectiveness. The cumulative texture (Suttles, 1984) of local urban culture is something that elite efforts alone cannot produce. As Molotch, Fraudenburg, and Paulsen (2000) note, "Urban tradition arises through interactive layering and active enrollments over time, something that is difficult to produce all at once" (p. 818). In short, neo-bohemia is more than just window-dressing. The historically embedded culture of cities is raw material in new productive processes.

ARTISTS AS USEFUL LABOR

Heading into the 1990s, Chicago ranked third in the United States behind New York and Los Angeles in the number of individuals employed in creative occupations (Zukin, 1995). This corresponds to United States population rankings; what makes the figure more striking is the high rate of growth for this population, a trend evident in a wide variety of cities (Markusen, 2000). New York and Los Angeles continue to be dominant sites in the geography of cultural production. However, the growing importance of aesthetic production to the economy generally has outpaced the carrying capacity of

any one city. While remaining an urban phenomenon, the geography of aesthetic production now incorporates an increasing diversity of cities and neighborhoods.

Chicago has a cost of living much lower than that of New York, while still possessing the cultural advantages of heterogeneity and cosmopolitanism. This combination of relative affordability and cultural diversity makes Chicago particularly well suited to concentrating cultural producers in the nascent periods of their careers. In Chicago, formal arts education is important to concentrating participants. The arts-oriented Columbia College and the School of the Art Institute now enroll over 11,000 students in the South Loop area alone and project high rates of continued growth (Cannon, 2000). The Elevated Train's Blue Line links the South Loop to Wicker Park, and these schools contribute to Wicker Park's cast of aspirants in painting, literature, sculpture, and performing arts. Accordingly, the neighborhood clusters related business activities, including performance venues, galleries, and supply outlets. Although some informants insist that Wicker Park's bohemian moment is over, squelched by gentrification, a recent survey conducted by Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs (2000) confirms that the area still has the largest concentration of working artists and studio space in the city. Artists, whether living in the neighborhood or simply frequenting it, continue to impact local character and development to an extent disproportionate to their numbers.

In Wicker Park, local artists often articulate their ideological antagonism towards an imago of the privileged urban resident—the yuppie. This antagonism belies the structural similarity of bohemian artists and intellectuals to their object of disdain; a relationship alluded to by Bourdieu (1984) when he refers to them as the "dominated fractions" (p. 176) of the dominant class. While some participants in the local scene are recruited from low-income origins or the ranks of racial and ethnic minorities, many others are pedigreed by middle or upper class birth and elite levels of education. The Chicago Artists Survey 2000 confirms significant educational attainment with 87% of respondents reporting a college degree or higher, compared to a rate of only 25.5% for Chicago as a whole. At the same time, incomes are low; over half of the respondents report total annual household incomes below $40,000, and a significant number report incomes below $25,000. Only a minority makes most of their income directly from art, and most artists are compelled to subsidize their incomes with other work (see Table 1). While there are well-documented cases of artistic practitioners reaping huge financial bonanzas for their efforts, including some who have come out of Wicker Park in the last decade, these are rare exceptions.

However, the poverty of artists is of a distinctive flavor. It does not imply marginality in the new economy. Although artists may forego conventional avenues to material acquisition

TABLE 1

General Demographics for Chicago Artists by Percentage Income from Art, 2000

% Income from art	Total number of respondents	Between ages 25 to 45 years	With college degree or higher	Annual Household Income: Under 25 K	Annual Household Income: 25 to 40 K
0 to 25%	562	45	85	26	29
26 to 50%	107	64	85	38	29
51 to 75%	28	67	91	39	36
76 to 100%	217	71	85	22	30

Source. Chicago Artists Survey 2000, Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs.

(enacting the familiar role of the starving artist), their relationship to material scarcity is complicated, not least by the personal insistence that this life was chosen rather than simply foisted upon them. As one neighborhood entrepreneur puts it: "There's a big difference in being poor by choice." While poverty as it is normally experienced inhibits self-determination, the voluntary adoption of relative poverty by bohemians is intended to increase autonomy.

Bohemians may self-select into poor and working class neighborhoods; however, their dispositions are decidedly cosmopolitan. Moreover, they are quite creative in re-imagining the spaces they occupy, often adding significant value by their presence. Despite limited economic means, artists are resourceful urban dwellers. In the past, bohemians in the city may have occupied a marginal space with relation to the mainstream operations of capital acquisition; however, it has always been a kind of privileged marginality. In contemporary Chicago, this condition, supported by the ideology of bohemian self-sacrifice, makes the artistic population available as flexible labor for local enterprises that range from entertainment provision to design subcontracting.

Thus, neo-bohemia incorporates young artists and aspirants into the production of value well beyond that accounted for by formal art markets. In fact, from an economic point of view, most of the artistic activity in the neighborhood produces a trivial amount of direct monetary gain. Few can sustain themselves through pursuits like local theater, musical performance, poetry, or painting; nor do these pursuits in themselves generate much surplus value for others to extract. And yet, the concentration of artistic subcultures is crucial for the new accumulation strategies enacted in the neighborhood space. The paucity of direct economic returns does not make the arts unimportant to the local economy; rather, this importance is complex and mediated.

The relatively large number of young people attracted by the arts community and its associated lifestyle scene often find their creative competence and their colorful personas indirectly valorized. They may toil as bartenders or servers in the hip local nightspots, making the scene as surely as they make drinks. Others divert their talents into media and graphic design, often as freelance contractors. The fact that such jobs usually lack the stability and upward trajectories that were so central in the past to the Fordist social contract is absorbed into dispositions that define fundamental instability as a kind of autonomy. Work in these flexible contexts becomes characterized by mutual non-obligation between employer and employee. Zukin (1995) argues that many artists accept menial and dead end jobs in the service sector because "their 'real' identity comes from activity outside the job" (p. 13).

However, ethnographic work in Wicker Park suggests that artists do not just bracket such employment as a necessary evil supporting authentic creative pursuits. Instead they attempt to construct this labor as continuous with their bohemian lifestyles, even where such efforts are problematic due to the inevitable constraints of wage labor. The ethic of bohemia comes to play a surprising role in incorporating these workers into the flexible relations of the postindustrial service and media economy.

It is easy to dismiss such labor force participation, which is often contingent and temporary, as unimportant. This would be a mistake. With entertainment now Chicago's leading industry (Lloyd & Clark, 2001), and the standardized career trajectories of the Fordist factories and bureaucracies accounting for an increasingly smaller share of the workforce, these flexible labor categories are, in fact, more and more important to new profit generating strategies. This state of affairs is not limited to menial service sector jobs. Even before the bursting of the dot.com stock market bubble, it was apparent that so-called new economy enterprises such as digital design were striving to maximize flexibility in

employment relations. Freelancers and highly educated temporary workers provide an important part of their workforce. Under these circumstances, access to a pool of labor possessing appropriate dispositions for flexible labor as well as necessary creative competencies is crucial to the success of many technology-driven enterprises.

THE DIGITAL BOHEMIA

Young artists, who generally possess higher than average levels of education and often exceptional technical skills, are practiced in the negotiation of uncertainty. A neighborhood concentrating artistic talent, therefore, also concentrates a potentially useful workforce, and thus becomes an attractive location for relevant enterprises. Sure enough, Wicker Park earned a national reputation for its concentration of new economy enterprises in digital design by 2000. *The Industry Standard*, a trade publication for the Internet economy, declared Wicker Park the "best new place for media companies" in a recent cover article (Jaffe, 2001). *E-Prairie*, an online publication focusing on the Midwest, echoed the sentiment, noting that "tech artists find Wicker Park great for business" and quoting a local Internet entrepreneur as saying: "I think it's a natural home for creative business" (Littman, 2001). For these firms, individuals with formal arts training become a flexible labor pool, often working as subcontractors. The arts, including small-scale pursuits like poetry readings or experimental visual arts, contribute to a creative milieu that concentrates individuals with diverse competencies and feeds innovative dispositions. As a recent article in the online publication *inc.com* notes:

> When choosing where to locate, companies in these emerging industries are ignoring traditional factors, such as taxes, the cost of doing business, and convenience, which tend to be favorable in the suburbs. Instead, they are considering where creative individuals want to work and environments that foster collaboration (Kotkin, 2000, p. 1).

Local artists are not just color for tech designers who favor a countercultural ambiance. Young artists, always on the lookout for new tools of expression in order to differentiate themselves from predecessors, have taken to digital technologies. Notes Pariser (2000), "Contemporary artists have embraced the Web, creating websites as a natural extension of their artistic output" (p. 62). By the middle of the 1990s there was an evident explosion of Internet use by artists who prided themselves on their ingenuity creating websites for themselves and their friends (Madoff, 1996). The ability to harness the aesthetic potential of digital technology is increasingly in demand, for example, for motion picture effects or Web site design, giving young artists a new means to convert their creative competencies into remunerative employment. As Michael Weinberg (personal communication, February 6, 2001), founder of the Wicker Park Internet design firm Buzzbait, said, "My friends used to say there's no money in art. I say bullshit. I'm making web pages, full motion video, and, it's true, Digital Kitchen [a digital effects firm] can't scrape up enough visual effects people here [in Chicago]." Wicker Park, with its nationally recognized reputation as an arts center, concentrates creative talent, which new media enterprises are motivated to exploit.

In contrast to the popular image of media millions, these firms capitalize on the scaled down salary expectations of artists who trade salary and security in order to work in creative occupations and live in a funky neighborhood. Thus bohemia becomes more directly linked to new strategies of capital accumulation in an economy predicated on its aesthetic dimensions, obliterating the distinction between base and superstructure that had

peripheralized culture in past debates on production. In other words, culture is not a reflection of contemporary productive processes, but rather is integral to the new logic of accumulation. Still, the linkage between the subcultural affiliations of artists and scene makers with a new world of urban labor is both surprising and confounding when read through the lens of traditional interpretations of bohemia. It suggests that a socio-cultural pattern usually interpreted as resistant to the standard norms of capital accumulation has now become part of a new regime of labor incorporation.

THE STREET

Artists' interest in locating in marginal neighborhoods whose majority population is poor and usually non-white involves the desire to occupy inexpensive space adequate to their needs. In the words of Mele (1994), they are a transient population, breaking ground in marginal urban areas that may be targeted for redevelopment. "Because of their limited economic resources and/or preferences for residing in alternative neighborhoods, these groups endure above average levels of crime, noise and drug related problems" (p. 186). But such problems in Wicker Park were not simply endured; in fact, many young artists today lament their increasing disappearance. Street level diversity, even if personal interaction remains superficial, is part of their image of an authentic urban experience, and in keeping with bohemian traditions, the definition of diversity incorporates the illicit elements of an urban underworld. One young sculptor vividly evokes the striking juxtapositions created within the neighborhood in the late 1980s, as the emergent entertainment scene intersected with the seedier elements generated by postindustrial decay.

> I mean, what's really funny is that when the North Side [bar] opened up [in 1988 on Damen just north of the Borderline] there used to be a smack house right across the street, so you could sit at the North Side watching the junkies go get their dope. It was that diverse.

Within three years, the smack house he referred to was also rehabbed into a popular bar. Delia, a film student at the Art Institute, recalls:

> Being a corn fed midwestern girl walking into Wicker Park, I had never seen a six-way intersection before. But it kind of reminded me of how Greenwich Village looked on TV. Kind of gritty inner city, cars, homeless people. So it was pretty much a big culture shock. I had spent most of my time in either rural kind of pseudo suburban area, or a medium sized town like Columbus. So there was nothing like that kind of energy. I loved it. I loved the colors and the people and the sounds and the streets and the whole bustle. It was great.

Residents may even be titillated by increased danger as a part of the "flight from the rationality and sameness of the suburbs" (Allen, 1984, p. 28). One informant notes of Wicker Park during early stages of residential transformation,

> There's a sense of vitality in the streets. Along with danger there's a vitality that you lose—when you're sure of your personal safety there's a certain edge that goes away. And there is something exciting about having that edge.

Given their desire to associate with the fringe, while still having access to galleries, good bars, and school at the Art Institute, it is not surprising that newcomers to Wicker Park

soon resented those who followed and upset what appeared to be its ecological balance. Wistfully recalling the arts scene in 1990, a local writer indicated:

> There was a really strong sense of community [among white artists]. I think there was a certain amount of respect... you got balls enough to live here, you must be doing something all right. We were still the extreme minority, the young white suburban artist.

By 1994, such residents were far less quick to give newcomers the benefit of the doubt. A *Chicago Reader* article cataloguing growing anti-gentrification sentiment, entitled "The Panic in Wicker Park," makes clear that the most noisily panicked were usually residents who had themselves been there for only a handful of years at most (Huebner, 1994). The arts scene has endured in an uneasy relationship with its own celebrity. Most recently, the decision of MTV to film its popular program *The Real World* in the neighborhood has given rise further protest, largely motivated by the media co-optation of a neighborhood aesthetic over which local artists feel proprietary (Kleine, 2001). Given that their own presence is heavily implicated in neighborhood change, such protests suggest what Rosaldo (1989) calls *imperialist nostalgia*, "where people mourn the passing of what they themselves have transformed" (p. 69).

The widely heralded street edge produces benefits for individuals interested in creative pursuits. Diversity and concomitant street level vitality are factors of production in creative enterprises that help us to understand the ongoing association of cities with bohemian activity. The city is not just a container concentrating human capital, but instead distinctly urban arrangements enhance this capital, especially in terms of fostering creativity. Benjamin (1999) provocatively examined the relationship between the observations of the urban stroller and creative dispositions, resolved in the figure of the *flaneur*. Central to the *flaneur* is the diversity of the city street; the *flaneur* encountered not only the dandy on his walks, but also the ragpicker (Buck-Morss, 1997; Gilloch, 1996). "They have little in common save that they jostle each other on the same street," Zorbaugh (1991) wrote of pedestrians on busy Chicago streets in the 1920s. "Experience has taught them different languages" (p. 12).

As Jane Jacobs (1961) observed, the pedestrian on the sidewalk is a key figure in understanding the magical nature of urban life, especially when juxtaposed to "the virgin sidewalks" of suburbia (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, & Speck, 2000). In Wicker Park, local artists emphasize diverse sidewalk life as informing artistic innovation: "It's the difference between having a culture and not having a culture. Culture is you're walking down the street and you see a poster and you read it, it looks interesting to you and you go to see it." Adds another:

> I like the beat of the city. The pace. There are so many things happening in the city on any given thirty seconds that you can add to a story and you can either use those, they could be some kind of symbol, or hey, maybe they'll just be there... I believe you can paint a scene just with these little glimpses that a person might see as they're standing on a corner waiting for a cab.

Such sentiments are direct bohemian descendants of the Impressionist street scene or Baudelaire's urban poetry.

The concentration of various forms of cultural production, ranging from pop efforts to more esoteric or folk offerings, are inscribed in the habitus (Bourdieu, 1977) of local

participants, whose own creative efforts are inflected by the diversity of the field. As Molotch (1996) indicates:

> Local art is a factor of production ... Every designer's hand ... draws from the surrounding currents of popular and esoteric arts and modes of expression—verbal, literate, and plastic—that makes up everyday life. These interpenetrations of daily rounds and high culture, ways of life and circulating beliefs, are raw materials of what can come from place (p. 225).

The local creative and lifestyle subcultures are "raw materials of what can come from place" (p. 225) that underlie Wicker Park's strategic advantage as a site for new media enterprises, supporting the image production that feeds what Frank (1997) refers to as hip consumerism.

Analysis of neo-bohemia indicates that artists contribute more than whiteness to neighborhood attraction. The presence of individuals pursuing creative activities is part of the package that new residents view favorably as comprising rich urban life. While sanitized environments like Navy Pier, cut off from any urban residence, are popular, they do not exhaust the urban amenity profile for many educated newcomers. Moreover, cosmopolitanism and creativity are valuable attributes not only for avant-garde artists, but also for professionals in a global economy that increasingly valorizes the creativity of labor force participants (Beck, 2000; Florida, 2002b). The aestheticization of the economy described by Lash and Urry (1994) helps us to understand why many young professionals find the spatial practices of artists so attractive. The trends on the part of small digital firms toward locating in neo-bohemian enclaves in the city, and toward recruiting workers from the artistic community, highlight the surprising and diverse ways that bohemian cityspace can contribute to enterprises in the new economy.

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