

Successful cultural districts increase employment and income

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Summary

The paper takes a look at the impacts that ‘cultural districts’ had on their neighbourhoods, towns and cities. Specifically the research analysed data from 99 cultural districts in the US to examine whether cultural districts increased income, employment, diversity, property values, education levels and retention of residents. The results suggest that cultural districts ‘appear to boost property values, incomes, employment, and turnover in the vicinity’, however they also are likely to displace poor residents.

Demarcating cultural districts has been a key part of US cultural policy for 20 years

Cultural districts are neighbourhoods which are identified as having ‘concentrations of cultural activities and institutions’. They may be rich in assets that create culture, or assets like theatres and galleries. The districts vary a great deal in size and character, and reflect specific local circumstances. Many were created in the last 30 years by local arts associations, local governments or other interested parties.

The author took census data from the districts themselves, neighbouring areas and host cities between 1980 and 2000

The paper charts the effects of cultural districts as they were initiated and changed over time. They then undertook sophisticated statistical analysis to

tease out what effects could be attributed to the establishment and success of the cultural districts.

Something to keep in mind

It's difficult to say what would have happened to these neighbourhoods without the conspicuous demarcation of 'cultural districts', perhaps the effects would have been felt anyway, as the neighbourhood evolved in its own organic fashion. The study also does not take account of failed or defunct cultural districts.

Keywords

USA **census** **property** **cultural districts** **neighbourhood** **employment**
income

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