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Definitions Matter: Dynamic Policy Framing of the Arts in Boston's Sustainable Cultural Development

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Abstract: Cultural sustainability has become a fourth pillar in sustainable development studies. Different from the research approach to embedding culture into conventional sustainable discourse, this article argues that the sustainability and resilience issues within the arts and cultural sector should be paid more attention to. Putting the arts and cultural sector in urban settings, sustainable cultural development entails dynamic policy framing and changing policy justifications in response to an evolving socioeconomic and political environment. Taking the policy framing of the arts as an analytical lens, this paper aims to investigate this dynamic change and key driving factors through an in-depth case study of Boston's urban cultural development. This article finds that different definitions of the arts are associated with different arts-based urban development strategies across four stages of cultural development in Boston spanning a period of over 75 years. The working definition moved from art to the arts, then to the creative arts industry, and eventually to cultural assets and creative capital. The policy framing of the arts keeps evolving and layering in pursuit of more legitimacy and resources regarding groups of stakeholders, field industry components, types of industrial structure, and multiple policy goals. This dynamic policy framing has been driven by arts advocacy groups, policy learning process, urban leadership change, and cultural institutional change, allowing Boston to draw on a growing and diversifying set of cultural resources in pursuit of sustainable cultural development.

Keywords: arts; definitions; policy framing; Boston; sustainable cultural development

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Since the idea of sustainability and sustainable development was put forward by the UN's World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987, culture has been embedded in conventional discourses of environmental and economic sustainable development in terms of fostering common beliefs and catalyzing actions on sustainability issues [1]. Moreover, studies have concentrated on the instrumentalized value of culture (e.g., arts and cultural heritage) in sustainable urban development due to their role in creative place-making, social identity, and inclusion [2–6]. Through a thorough literature review, Soini and Birkeland identified seven perspectives on cultural sustainability issues, namely cultural heritage, cultural vitality, cultural diversity, economic viability, locality, eco-cultural resilience, and eco-cultural civilization [7]. The role of creative economy in sustainable development has not been studied until recently [8–10], despite preceding scholars having argued for the role of creative industries in urban competitiveness for a while [11–14].

As practices and theories have developed, culture has been regarded as the fourth pillar of sustainable development beyond environmental, social, and economic sustain-

ability [7,15]. Some scholars claim that cultural sustainability should not only focus on the instrumentalized value of the cultural sector in socio-economic and environmental sustainability [1,16], but also pay more attention to the organizational and sectoral survival of itself [17,18]. Loach and Rowley (2021) analyze sustainability issues in cultural organizations and how libraries could enrich cultural heritage, cultural identity, cultural diversity, and cultural vitality [19]. Kong (2012) finds that social relationships, geographic location, and governance structure are three important elements determining the sustainability of cultural creative clusters [20].

Targeting the whole cultural sector, cultural sustainability fundamentally means cultural vitality, defined as "the evidence of creating, disseminating, validating and supporting arts and culture as a dimension of everyday life in communities" [21]. In this sense, cultural sustainability depends on resilient and robust cultural capital, including tangible and intangible cultural assets, by principles of intergenerational equity and intragenerational equity, which entails the healthy development of small–medium-sized cultural organizations and creative businesses, cultural diversity, equal opportunities for cultural participation, and cultural networks and support systems [21,22].

This article applies the cultural vitality approach, in which "the key question concerning [cultural] sustainability is how change can take place in a way that does not damage the cultural continuity or identity of cultural capital and that promotes social inclusion and the sharing of cultural capital" [7] (p. 217). In other words, sustainable cultural development or cultural sustainability concerns a narrow meaning of culture, referring to the arts and cultural sector rather than values, beliefs, and way of life in a society. To be sustainable and resilient in the long run, the policy image of the arts and cultural sector should be dynamic and evolving in response to changes in the socioeconomic and political environment [23]. The key questions are what affects this dynamic change and who plays a key role in realizing this goal.

Defining policy issues and framing policy images play a critical role in policy venue shopping strategy, which refers to how advocacy groups and policy makers seek new decision settings to propose alternative policy choices [24,25]. Taking the policy framing of the arts as an analytical lens, this paper aims to investigate this dynamic change and key driving factors through an in-depth case study of Boston's urban cultural development. Technically, we adopt the causal process tracing (CPT) method to deeply explore "how" and "why" the policy image of the arts changes, and they are linked to Boston's sustainable cultural development agenda as it moves through a succession of strategies and policy goals.

The rest of this article is organized as follows. We discuss our analytical framework in Section 1.2. In Section 2, we present our method and data. In Section 3, this article presents details about how the dynamic policy framing of the arts has happened across the four stages of Boston's cultural development. Section 4 focuses on the key explanatory factors for this dynamic change. Conclusions and implications are provided in Section 5.

1.2. Analytical Framework

The past two or three decades have witnessed multifaceted policy images of the arts in a variety of urban development strategies [26], including arts-anchored urban revitalization strategy, municipal cultural planning, culture-based city branding efforts, and the creative city strategy [27–35]. In these cases, framing and reframing the arts helps bridge to other prioritized policy arenas in pursuit of support from a larger group of stakeholders, gaining resources for its sustainable development.

It is asserted that through building conversations with the other policy arenas, new policy images of the arts could be formed [23]. For example, if the urban revitalization is the main policy agenda, the creative arts in terms of cultural uses and cultural facilities are likely to be framed as a core part of vibrant urban life in pursuit of urban attractiveness and resurgence [28,29,31]. Alternatively, if the innovation-based economic growth becomes a main policy agenda, the creative arts are likely to be defined as a core part of the creative

economy or creative industries in pursuit of jobs increase, wealth generation, and human capital accumulation [30,36,37]. In addition, the creative arts could also be instrumentalized in the education policy agenda as a stimulus to the cultivation of individual creative capital [38], or it could be positioned as a tool for strengthening community identity and social cohesion [39,40].

Policy framing and reframing reveal policy change, either in an incremental or dramatic way [25]. In this process, the definitions of the arts are adapting as the arts are integrated into a changing series of urban development strategies and goals. Specifically, definitions of the arts can be seen as varying along two dimensions, namely the field/industry composition (arts, media, design, heritage, etc.) and types of organizational structures (nonprofit or commercial; small, larger or flagship, etc.). The changing definitions manifest distinct policy images of the arts based on different arts assets portfolios and multifaceted public value.

As shown in Figure 1, we construct an analytical framework to explain this dynamic policy framing game in American urban settings. Changes in socio-economic conditions and abrupt external perturbations are unexpected dynamic factors [41]. As denoted by the punctuated equilibrium theory, these external instable factors could bring dramatic change to current policy environment [42]. The core values and beliefs embedded in a society are determined by complicated social-economic-political systems. These fundamental values and core beliefs have a decisive role in certain cultural institutional arrangements, related to certain policy image of the arts. However, changing socio-economic environments and political constituencies could challenge the traditional political belief of the arts, like "arts for art's sake".

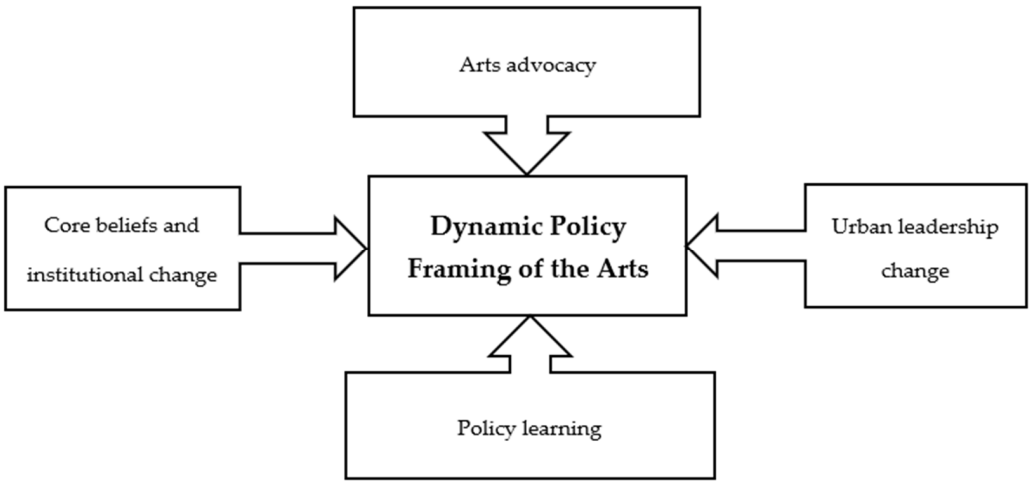


Figure 1. Multifaceted factors for dynamic policy framing of the arts.

Policy learning is another dynamic factor that happens at the individual level, organizational level, and regional level by means of policy entrepreneurs, policy intermediaries, advocacy groups, and the civil society [43]. Policy entrepreneurs function as key agents to generate new policy image or promote policy innovation [44]. Policy intermediaries foster the communication and diffusion of new policy image, while advocacy groups endeavor to find new justifications and political support for the changing policy image [41].

The changing urban leadership signals either challenges or opportunities for the arts sector. When there is convergent interest between urban policy makers and the arts community, new justifications for the arts sector could be easily adopted and integrated into the overall urban development strategy.

To conclude, from external factors to internal factors, from bottom-up mobilizations of arts advocacy groups to top-down interventions by urban authorities, the dynamic policy framing of the arts is influenced by multifaceted factors. A chronological perspective is needed to unveil this complicated phenomenon.

2. Method and Data

2.1. Method

This article adopts an in-depth case study to investigate the dynamic policy framing of the creative arts in the city of Boston, particularly from a chronological perspective. A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, and it mainly aims at answering "how" and "why" questions [45]. As illustrated by Yin, case data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining both quantitative and qualitative evidence to address the initial propositions of a study [45]. There are five specific techniques for analyzing a case, namely pattern matching, explanation building, time-series analysis, logic models, and cross-case synthesis. We mainly use the former two techniques in our analysis.

As for explanation building, this article uses the causal processing tracing (CPT) method to identify the dynamics about how the creative arts have been defined and framed in different models or different stages of Boston' urban development agenda and why. The aim of the CPT is "to reveal the sequential and situational interplay between causal conditions and mechanisms in order to show in detail how these causal factors generate the outcome of interest" [46] (p. 59).

For pattern matching, this article has adopted qualitative content analysis to identify and trace themes and patterns of the arts-related policy discourse. Specifically, this article uses the NVivo software to identify the word count frequency or code relevant themes in a specific document or a group of documents at different phases as the policy goals and strategies shift.

2.2. Case Justification

Through a preliminary examination of public documents and policy practices in Boston's urban cultural development (see Figure 2), this article finds that the policy image of the creative arts has been constantly evolving, specifically manifesting in four stages. Transitioning from one stage to another, the policy image of the arts does not replace what has been defined in a prior stage. Rather, policy framing and reframing keep building on prior policy practices and legacies by layering groups of stakeholders, field industry components, types of industrial structure, and multiple policy goals.

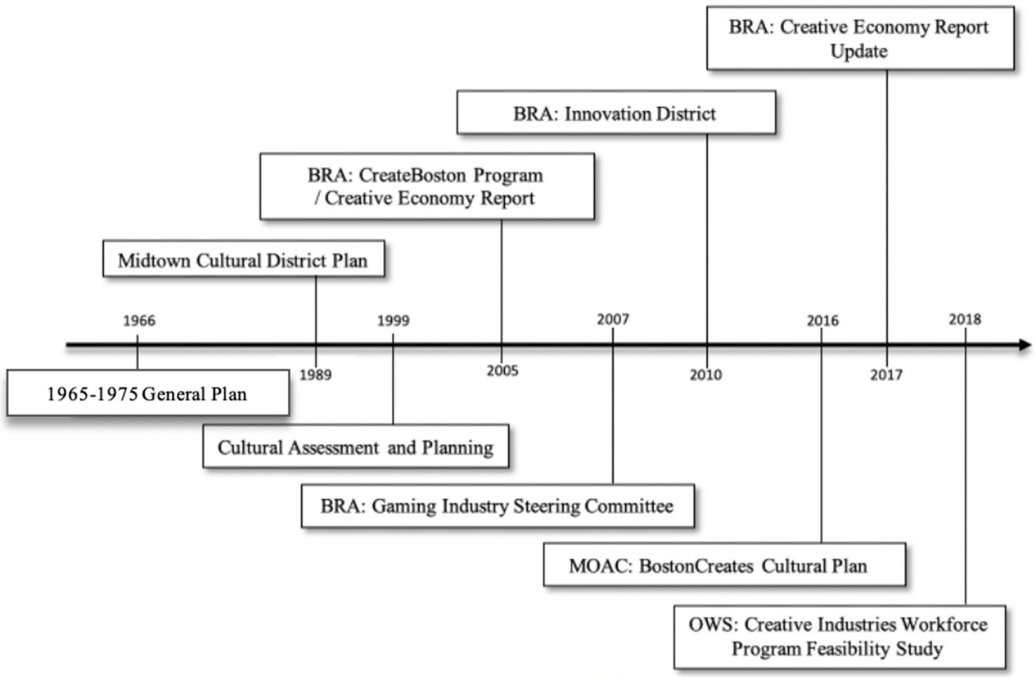


Figure 2. Positioning the creative arts in Boston's urban development agenda: A timeline.

The first stage is defined as the private patronage model (1870s–1960s), in which the arts are essentially defined as elite nonprofit arts organizations like museums and theaters, which grew to constitute the fundamental arts and cultural assets base of Boston [47]. In this stage, the arts, particularly the fine and high arts, were bonded with the cultural capital of social elites in a de facto civic development strategy when the local municipal government chose to play a very limited and indirect role in local cultural development [48].

The second stage (1960s–1980s) witnessed the institutionalization of public patronage from newly created external sources like the National Endowment for the Arts (1965) and the state-level Massachusetts Council for Arts and Humanities (1966), where local cultural institutions could compete for competitive grant allocations. By the time Boston organized a local cultural council around 1980, a full "inter-governmental and public/private" cultural governance model had emerged in the city of Boston. The policy image of the arts in Boston expanded to include small- and medium-sized nonprofit arts organizations as well as the elitist large and flagship cultural organizations. All were challenged to provide cultural and social benefits through the arts for the public. This stage also witnessed the nation-wide trend of arts-based urban revitalization, in which legacy arts institutions were reframed as a tool of urban regeneration.

The third stage is characterized by the creative economy initiative, driven by a regional public private partnership in 1998 to position the arts in economic competitiveness of the New England region. The creative economy discourses soon after diffused to local policy practices as nonprofit arts organizations, and for-profit creative businesses started to be bridged in policy discourse. The arts are regarded as part of the creative industries in terms of jobs and wealth generation. More connections began to be built among diverse policy images of the arts, like "artistic", "cultural", "creative", and "innovative", in pursuit of sustainable cultural development.

At the fourth stage, the mayor of Boston led an effort to launch a city-wide cultural plan in 2016, which aimed to "provide fertile grounds for a vibrant and sustainable arts ecosystem" [49]. In this ecosystem, the arts were defined as including formal and informal art, fine art and folk art, contemporary and traditional cultural practices, nonprofit arts organizations and commercial cultural businesses, and large and small entrepreneurial businesses [49]. The 2016 cultural plan in Boston places the art in a most comprehensive and inclusive policy framework, defining the arts as capable of advancing neighborhood vitality, local and regional creative economy, human creative capital accumulation, and a unique urban character.

2.3. Data

This case study takes advantage of triangulation data sources, including first-hand interviews, second-hand policy documents, media reports, and relevant academic studies. The multiple sources of evidence help construct the validity of this research.

The authors conducted a group of in-depth semi-structured interviews with key cultural policy makers and researchers. Specifically, key officials and researchers were interviewed or contacted: Julie Burros, former Chief of Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture (2015–2018); Greg Liakos, External Relations Director of the Massachusetts Cultural Council (2004–2019); Helena F. Altsman, former Creative Economy Industries Director (2011–2014), Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, MA; and Dee Schneidman, Director of Research& Creative Economy Program (2006-present), New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA).

In addition, the authors collected a variety of public documents, including public reports, archival documents, as well as academic articles and media coverage, which provide abundant evidence on both current cultural development practices and the past cultural policy endeavors. Specifically, (1) we conducted field trips to the Boston Public Library to collect the original documents from the 1960s urban renewal and 1980s' Midtown cultural district plan. (2) We surfed the government website and online archive for useful information. (3) We turn to online archives of the Boston Globe and Boston Herald for

significant media coverage on the historical and current cultural development practices in Boston.

3. Results: A Case Study of the Dynamic Policy Framing of the Arts in Four Stages of Boston's Sustainable Cultural Development

3.1. Stage One: From Private Philanthropy Patronage to Institutionalization of Government Support for the Arts

3.1.1. The Private Philanthropy Patronage Model

In Boston's historical tradition, modern businesses, modern professions, and modern cultural institutions were interrelated with each other [50]. Boston's earlier charitable organizations and cultural institutions were established by earlier generations of capitalist Brahmins for themselves and their children, known as inter-generational reciprocity.

The institutionalization of the nonprofit system of cultural establishments in Boston dates to the 1870s [47], when the Irish "Know-Nothings" captured the state government and attacked the elite-dominating cultural and charitable organizations. In response,

> *Boston's [cultural capitalists] retreated from the public sector to [build] a system of nonprofit organizations that permitted them to maintain some control over the community even as they lost their command of the political institutions.* [47] (p. 40)

This institutional isomorphism of nonprofit elite arts organizations got formed under America's tradition of philanthropic patron mechanism, and it "institutionalized a view and vision of art that made elite culture less and less accessible to the vast majority of Boston's citizens" [47] (p. 39). By the 1930s, Boston had witnessed a sharp increase of "high culture" institutions, especially museums and theaters [51–53].

However, as "traditional [private] patrons have been unable or unwilling to bridge the gaps", caused by slow revenue growth and highly increasing expenses [51,54], there came urgent financial issues in these major cultural institutions. In addition, there occurred populism cracks in elite pillar arts and cultural institutions by the 1970s, which widened in the 1980s [55]. This elitism/populism crisis challenged the fundamental value of the nonprofit arts ecosystem, namely "the arts for art's sake".

In response, the nonprofit arts community continued to educate and cultivate the growing middle class to enlarge the potential market on one hand. For another, they began to reframe their mission to benefit the broad community in pursuit of sustainability and resilience.

3.1.2. Institutionalization of Government Support for the Arts

As the public value of art gets favored by its political constituency, artistic creation is no longer seen as just professional activities, but "a form of middle-class relaxation", and "art is anything with creative intentions" [56]. As discussed by Berman, a new concept, "the arts", rather than "art", began to dominate in the policy discourse to highlight the "public value of the institutionalized creativity".

The institutionalization of federal government support for the arts and cultural sector dates to 1965 when the National Endowments for the Arts and National Endowments for Humanities were established.

> *[T]he institutionalized expenditure of funds provided by the federal government . . . was hallowed by the intention of providing artistic experience to hospitals, urban ghettos, rural regions, community centers, and various agencies of welfare.* [56]

The institutionalization of public patronage soon diffused from the national level to the state and local level governments. In 1966, the Massachusetts Council for Arts and Humanities (MCAH) was instituted (Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 589, 1966). In 1984, the mayor of Boston, Raymond Flynn (reign of 1984–1993), appointed his first Arts Commissioner, Bruce Rossley, working under the Office of Business and Cultural Development, and later becoming head of the Office of Arts and Humanities (OAC), created

by the mayor in June 1986, making Boston one of the last major cities, establishing a formal municipal arts agency [57].

The initial institutionalization of local government support for the arts in Boston was not only driven by the long-term advocacy efforts and the national policy impacts, but accommodated to the general urban redevelopment agenda, manifested in a series of arts-included urban renewal projects.

3.2. Stage Two: 1989 Midtown Cultural District Plan: Arts-Included Urban Revitalization

The arts-included urban revitalization started in mid-1960s, when, for the first time, urban neighborhood renewal plans gave some consideration to cultural uses of spaces and renovation of cultural facilities [58]. At that time, building spaces for cultural uses and renovating cultural facilities were minor concerns of the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA), which was established in the Fall of 1957 in response to the federal–local contracts on urban renewal and beautification projects [59].

Under the leadership of mayor Flynn, who asserted a balanced growth strategy to regulate and manage urban development in pursuit of the combined goals of economic growth and urban life improvement, the BRA began to reconsider Boston's downtown zoning plan [60].

In response to the opportunity brought by the 1987 Downtown Interim Zoning Plan, Boston's Performing Arts Task Force, formed in 1984 in pursuit of reframing the public value of the arts through a series of economic impact studies, started to enlarge itself with more constituencies to include stakeholders from the other field of the arts, residents, businesses, community leaders, and so on. As a result, the ad hoc Performing Arts Development Task Force was renamed as Midtown Cultural District Task Force, steering the grassroot cultural district planning process in pursuit of sustainable cultural development [61].

The Midtown Cultural District Plan is based on a strategy to make use of the arts to revitalize Boston's historic and underutilized entertainment district. A word frequency query of the plan document shows that "culture" and "arts", specifically the performing arts and "theaters", are tightly related to "public" "space" and lively "streets" and diverse urban "blocks", signaling the priority of urban revitalization (See Figure 3).

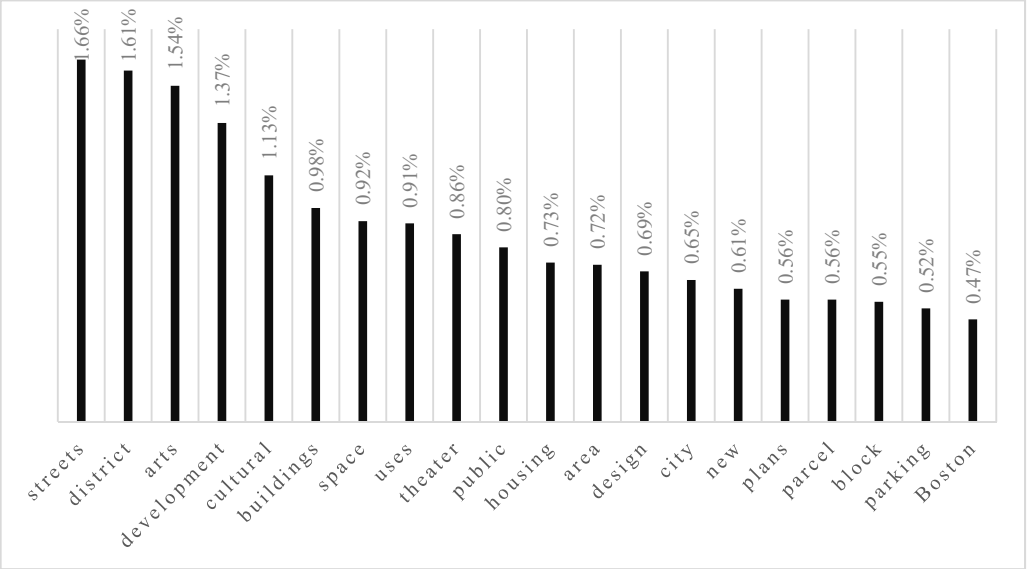


Figure 3. Word count frequency of the Midtown Cultural District Plan.

The plan reveals a local arts-included urban revitalization model. The arts sector is positioned in intra-urban vibrant life, specifically neighborhood-based physical vitality, social vitality, and economic vitality. As Taper argued, "the arts have been more honored in Boston than in most American cities, and by 'the best people'", but "never have they played

a meaningful part in the life of the whole Boston community" [48] (p. 6). This has been gradually changed as the financial problems and space issues force the arts community to rethink and reframe the economic impact of the arts. "Arts for art's sake" has been replaced by a more comprehensive and sustainable policy rationale, including arts community's self-interest, urban revitalization agenda, and the public value.

3.3. Stage Three: Multi-Level Positioning of the Creative Arts in Economic Competitiveness

The arts-included urban revitalization in Boston and the grassroots arts advocacy activities signal the first wave to reframe the value of the arts towards a sustainable cultural development. A second wave grew from outside Boston as a regional creative economy initiative and diffused across the six state areas and local policy practices.

The paradigm shift from public patronage for the arts to creative economy initiative in the New England region was driven by NEFA [62,63], which has sustained the efforts for two decades to frame and reframe the policy image and expand the definition of "the arts" into a more inclusive and diverse set of cultural creative industries, spanning nonprofit and for-profit cultural sectors.

As a milestone of these regional reframing efforts, the Creative Economy Initiative report was drafted by Mt. Auburn, an economic development consultancy firm, under contract to NEFA. The report positions the creative economy in the region's economic competitiveness agenda [63]. The nonprofit arts sector began to be framed as a core part of a large concept, the creative economy, which is defined as a sector composed of creative enterprises, creative workforce, and creative community. Dialogues between nonprofit arts organizations and for-profit creative businesses began to be built.

It is noteworthy that in the 2011 report, New England's creative economy: Nonprofit sector impact, the nonprofit arts sector is redefined as an industry, compared with other creative industries [64]. It is an attempt to reconstruct the typical nonprofit arts narrative and to redefine a creative arts industry through demonstrating its economic significance.

Following the regional creative economy initiative, local policy endeavors for creative economy development started quickly in Boston based on a regional and global policy learning network. Boston was a natural starting point for the localization of the creative economy discourse as it displayed one of the largest concentrations of the cultural creative industries in the region.

In 2005, mayor Menino (reign of 1994–2013) launched the CreateBoston program to help creative businesses and entrepreneurs to grow. In collaboration with CreateBoston, the BRA conducted the creative economy report, known as Boston's Creative Economy, which took a similar approach to NEFA, focusing more on the artistic and cultural core and excluding the other broad creative industries used by Florida [33]. Specifically, Boston's creative economy is defined to include written media, film, broadcasting, crafts, performing arts, visual arts, architecture, photography, design, advertising, sound recording & music publishing, museum & arts galleries, libraries & archives, arts education, software, and internet publishing [65].

However, under the stewardship of the 15-member Advisory Committee, the Program identified the digital media, particularly the video game industry, as a highly growing industry in Boston. It began to narrow its focus on this single industry since 2006, when the first Boston Gaming Industry Steering Committee was established. The specialized program aimed to build Boston's competitive advantage in the digital game industry, as Mayor Menino stated,

> *In order for us to gain a competitive edge in the [video games industry], we must lay the foundation that will increase the game development presence through business attraction and expansion . . . We must rebrand Boston as a digital media epicenter.* [66]

3.4. Stage Four: Framing the Creative Arts for Building Creative Capital and Creative Community

Stage four is characterized by the 2016 BostonCreates cultural plan, the first city-wide comprehensive cultural plan, initiated following an extensive community engagement

process in pursuit of strengthening Boston's creative capital and cultural identity [49]. As shown in the plan, the arts are a diverse and inclusive sector, which encompasses formal and informal art, fine art and folk art, contemporary and traditional cultural practices, nonprofit arts organizations and commercial cultural businesses, major cultural institutions, and emerging arts organizations [49].

The plan aims to solve a series of sustainable issues existing in Boson's arts and creative community, like minimal municipal support for the arts, inadequate and unaffordable spaces, less connection between the arts and the broad Bostonian community, etc. These issues have been long recognized by arts-concerned foundations, research institutions, and journalists [67–69].

To get the plan implemented, a series of cross-department collaborations and public-private partnerships have been fostered among the Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture, Boston Planning and Development Agency, the Department of Neighborhood Development, the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development, Emerson College, Massachusetts College of Art and Design, UMass Donahue Institute, and so on. The Creative Industries Workforce Development Program and the Upham's Corner Arts and Innovation District manifests how policy makers seek to break silos in Boston's cultural creative sector.

As a result, the creative arts are positioned by political leaders and policy makers as city image conveyors, community identity builders, and creativity catalysts. As Mayor Walsh stressed in his vision, the arts-anchored creative capital plays a critical role in building Boston's creative workforce, which is key to Boston's continuing competitiveness in a more innovative future. Strengthening Boston's historical character and building a new image as municipal arts leader weighs more in the city branding strategy to retain and attract high education students, creative workforce, and businesses.

3.5. Comparisons

The dynamic policy framing of the arts in the four stages of Boston's cultural development manifests two overarching shifts of how the arts are understood in the policy agenda, and how these changing definitions contribute to the sustainable cultural development. The first shift is from the civic private patronage model to the public patronage model. The elite core of the arts has been challenged by a populism shift to the broad arts nonprofit field to include small and medium-sized arts organizations. Correspondingly, the elitists' private cultural capital is challenged by a public value justification. The second shift is from the nonprofit arts field to the inclusive creative economy discourse, encompassing arts nonprofits, commercial creative businesses, and individual artists.

This dynamic policy framing indicates that the instrumentalized value of the arts have also evolved in response to urban development and redevelopment agenda (see Table 1), specifically from seeing the arts as a catalyst for intra-urban neighborhood vitality in 1980s, to treating the creative arts industry to economic competitiveness in 2000s, then to framing the arts as a core element of Boston's creative capital and cultural identity.

Table 1. Comparing the three models of arts-related urban development strategies in Boston.

	Arts-Included Urban Revitalization	Creative Economy Initiative	City-Wide Cultural Planning
Scale	Community-based	Regional, state and city level	City-wide
Emerging Time	1960s–1980s	2000s	2010s
Sectoral Components of the Arts	Primarily theaters and museums	Fine arts, media, design, etc.	Fine arts, media, design, and cultural heritage.
Organizational Structure of the Arts	Legacy nonprofit cultural institutions	Cultural nonprofits, commercial creative businesses, and individual artists.	Small and medium-sized nonprofit arts organizations, commercial creative businesses, and individual artists.
Policy Framing of the Arts	Catalysts for intra-urban revitalization	Creative arts industry for economic competitiveness.	Core element of creative capital and cultural identity.

It needs to be mentioned that in Boston's current policy practice, the policy image of the arts becomes the most inclusive one, shifting from art, to the (nonprofit professional) arts, to the creative arts industry, to cultural assets and creative capital. Correspondingly, the three overarching instrumentalized public values of the arts co-exist in current urban policy agenda in Boston. This inclusive policy image manifests the cumulative layering strategy of policy framing through enhancing the cohesive power of shared beliefs within the enlarging arts coalition, and through strengthening the artistic capacity by augmenting field components and diversifying industrial structure. This changing policy image is needed to mobilize the growing resources, to pursue a succession of arts-based urban development strategies, and to foster a growing complement of policy goals. Adjusting the policy image of the arts has allowed Boston to draw on a growing and diversifying set of cultural resources towards cultural sustainability.

4. Discussion: Key Factors Affecting the Dynamic Policy Framing of the Arts in Boston

Based on the analytical framework (see Figure 1), we identified four major factors driving the dynamic policy framing of the arts in Boston, namely arts advocacy coalition, policy learning, cultural institutional change, and urban leadership change.

4.1. Arts Advocacy Coalition (AAC): Adapting Justifications and Enhancing Recognition

A main task of the AAC is to promote public understanding of the diversified value of the arts, specifically through mobilizing resources, adapting justifications, improving visibility, and enhancing recognition. In this case, the AAC contributed to Boston's dynamic cultural policy framing in three ways.

First, the AAC functions as a mobilization machine to coordinate resources and partnerships from all levels. The 1980s' cultural district plan was initially driven by a grassroots task force, led by three arts community leaders, Bruce Rossley (commissioner of OAC), Larry Murray (Arts/Boston executive director), and Libbie Shufro (executive of the Massachusetts Cultural Alliance). To take the opportunity brought by a new era of downtown zoning and planning, this ad hoc task force strategically mobilized the broad community, including businesses, citizens, civic leaders, etc., to collaborate on the possible cultural district revitalization project. As the constituency got larger, they won more buy-ins from urban planners and municipal leaders to put the arts' interest at the core.

Second, the AAC collaborates with research institutions, consultancy firms, or individual researchers to provide impact analysis and robust justifications for the arts. The local performing arts advocacy group in Boston conducted the first economic impact study in 1987, titled as *The Economic Impact of the Arts on the City of Boston*, which aimed to push the new policy image of the arts into Boston's urban policy agenda [61]. From a regional perspective, NEFA, functioning as a key intermediary in the AAC, published three impact studies of New England's nonprofit arts sector from 1980 to 1996 in collaboration with economist Gregory Wassall, which was then transformed into a newly created policy image, the creative economy. Stepping into the 2010s, the AAC collaborate with WolfBrown, a consultancy firm to integrate the framework of creative capital into Boston's 10-year cultural plan. It could be seen that from economic impact studies, to creative economy discourse, then to the recent creative capital framework, the AAC keep working with research institutions or consultancy firms to generate innovative justifications for the arts in pursuit of larger political recognition and support.

Third, the AAC itself is evolving and enlarging, signaling a strategic venue shopping strategy to make the nonprofit arts sector more visible. The arts-included urban revitalization witnessed the first wave of this venue shopping strategy, as the initial performing arts advocacy coalition strategically expanded itself into a larger coalition, including businesses, local neighborhood leaders, residents, and developers. The creative economy initiative occuring at the beginning of the 21st century indicates another policy venue shopping strategy, as key representatives (including NEFA, Boston Symphony Orchestra, and the

six state arts agencies in New England region) from the nonprofit arts subsystem strategically collaborated with the New England Council, a private business advocacy coalition, to form a larger nonprofit-commercial coalition. Under the aegis of NEC, NEFA awarded a contract to Mt. Auburn Associates, an economic development consultancy firm, to launch the creative economy initiative, published as *The Creative Economy Initiative: the Role of the Arts and Culture in New England's Economic Competitiveness*, constructing a fundamental basis of New England's creative economy tradition.

4.2. Policy Learning and Transfer: Supportive Inputs from Civil Society and Media

As claimed by policy scientists, policy learning could result in policy change, especially in an incremental manner [13,43,70,71]. Sabatier (1987) pointed out that policy-oriented learning could cause policy change in three ways,

> *[improve] one's understanding of the state of variables defined as important by one's belief system . . . [refine] one's understanding of logical and causal relationships internal to a belief system . . . [identify] and respond challenges to one's belief system.* [70] (pp. 672–674)

Based on evidence from media coverages, research reports, and key learning agents' resumes, we find that policy learning has played a significant role in Boston's sustainable cultural development, incrementally changing prior cultural policy framing through layering and conversion [72].

It is noteworthy that policy learning could happen in the AAC, but it goes beyond that. As shown in Table 2, there are different actors in Boston's cultural policy learning process, including information and knowledge owners or providers (e.g., individual researchers, research institutes, consultancy firms, peer cities, etc.), information and knowledge conveyors (e.g., media, conferences and networks, individual agent, advisory committee, etc.), and information and knowledge receivers and users (e.g., individual government official, like mayor, arts commissioner or administrator, etc.).

Table 2. Actors in Boston's cultural policy learning process.

Actors in Cultural Policy Learning Process		Examples
Knowledge Producers or Providers	Research Institutes	Umass Donahue Institute, Umass Center for Social Policy
	Consultancy Firms	TDC, The Planning Group, WolfBrown, Mt. Auburn Associates
	Individual Researchers, Consultants or Scholars	Gregory H. Wassall, Professor in Economics, NU Douglas DeNatale, Cultural Logic, Inc. Richard Florida
	Peer Cities or Best Practices	Chicago, San Jose, Austin
Conveyors	Local, Regional or National Arts Intermediaries	NEFA, The Boston Foundation, Boston Performing Arts Research Coalition, The Barr Foundation, Arts/Boston
	Media	The Boston Globe, The Boston Herald, etc.
	Conferences, Networks, Initiatives	The United States Mayors' Conference, Greater Boston Creative Economy Network, Creative Economy Initiative, Americans for the Arts, etc.
	Individual Agent	Julie Burros, former director of cultural planning in city of Chicago
	Advocacy Organizations	Arts & Business Council of Boston, MASSCreative, etc.
Receivers or Active Learners	Individual Arts Organization	BSO, MFA, Boston Ballet, ICA, etc.
	Individual Government Official	Mayor, Arts Commissioner, BRA director, etc.
	Government Agency	Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture, Boston Planning and Development Agency, etc.
	Advisory Council/ad hoc Task Force	CreateBoston Advisory Committee, Mayor's Transition Team on Arts and Culture

As our interviewer said, "many people see [NEFA] as arts advocates. Actually, we are not. Our role is more like an intermediary to provide research and data, and to build networks for the arts community" (Dee Schneidman, Creative Economy Program Director, NEFA). Like NEFA, there are some other arts intermediaries functioning as knowledge

and information producers and providers, like the Boston Foundation, Arts/Boston (See Table 3), which play a key role in framing the arts sector in sustainability discourses.

Table 3. Policy learning evidence from key information providers.

Research Document	Organization	Evidence
The Creative Economy Initiative	New England Council, 2000	Make new justifications; Build new policy image
Funding for Cultural Organizations in Boston and Nine Metropolitan Areas	The Boston Foundation, 2003	Seek for political support
New England Creative Economy: The Nonprofit Sector Impact	NEFA, 2011	Make new justifications
The Arts Factor	ArtsBoston, 2014	Make new Justifications
Culture Track' 14: Focus on Boston	LaPlaca Cohen, 2014	Make new Justifications
How Boston and Other American Cities Support and Sustain the Arts	The Boston Foundation, 2015	Seek for political support

In addition, media coverage has also argued for the arts through epistemic learning endeavors. For example, the conservative commentator Jone Mclaughlin traced the sustainability issues of Boston's arts sector in articles "*The Arts and America's Cities: Money for the Arts Still Falls Short in Boston*" (15 April 1984, The Boston Globe), "*The Arts and America's Cities: Culture is Booming in Places Big and Small, Old and Young*" (16 April 1984, The Boston Globe). Some other commentaries like "*U.S Cities Offer Lessons for Boston*" (1 December 1997, by Antony Flint, The Boston Globe) and "*Artists need affordable housing and studios*" (16 November 2014, by Rona Pondick, The Boston Globe) have constantly contributed to discussions of the sustainability issues in Boston's arts and cultural development.

4.3. Cultural Institutional Change: Seeking More Legitimacy Power

There are three lenses to understand cultural institutional change, namely fundamental values, organizational structure, and sectoral components. Transitioning from the private philanthropy model to the public patronage model and arts-included urban revitalization strategy, the institutional value of the arts has witnessed a public value shift.

This shift is a result of three factors. First, the Great Depression and after-depression economic crisis, and the deindustrialization and suburbanization trends declined the inner-city areas, where those nonprofit cultural institutions were located, which decreased audience participation and lowered external funding revenue. Second, the development of media technology and new entertainment products and services brought fierce competition to the traditional nonprofit cultural organizations. Third, the populism shift challenged the elitism pillar of America's nonprofit cultural system [55]. As a result, the fundamental belief of "arts for art's sake" became a more disputable policy image of the arts, while a triple bottom line argument, balancing the artistic excellence and public value, began to dominate the policy image of the nonprofit arts sector [73]. Nonprofit organizations started to reframe their missions and rebrand themselves in search of potential audiences, private donations, and public contributions.

The discourse shift from arts nonprofits to the creative economy reflects another dynamic institutional change in Boston's cultural policy arena in terms of organizational structure and sectoral components. On one hand, the cultural nonprofits and proprietary creative establishments are integrated together in the creative economy initiative, of which the former includes both large nonprofit cultural institutions and small, embedded or community arts organizations, while the latter includes both major or oligopolist cultural enterprises and entrepreneurial small and medium creative businesses. On the other hand, a group of commercial arts industries are included in the creative economy mapping, like design, digital games, recording music, films, and advertising. This sectoral bonding approach and policy venue strategy enlarged the definition of the creative arts to include both nonprofits and commercial cultural industries, which helps to reframe the arts as significant means to urban competitiveness.

To conclude, cultural institutional change functions as an aegis for the nonprofit arts sector, driven by arts advocacy groups and epistemic community. This institutional change provides more legitimacy for policy support, which is fundamental to sustainable development of the arts and cultural sector.

4.4. Urban Leadership Change: Wielding the Political Will for the Arts

There are three main systems of city government in terms of local power distribution in the U.S: mayor-council system, the commission plan, and the council manager plan. Boston uses a strong-mayor form of government in which the mayor acts like an "autocrat" regarding urban planning and strategic decision making [59].

The subsequent three stages of cultural development in Boston witnessed three mayors, Raymond Flynn, Thomas Menino, and Marty Walsh, who have played different roles in urban development and expressed different visions for Boston's arts and cultural sector (see Table 4).

Table 4. Comparison of Boston's three Mayors from 1984.

	Raymond Flynn (1984–1993)	**Thomas Menino (1993–2014)**	**Marty Walsh (2014–2021)**
Party	Democratic	Democratic	Democratic
Political Will for the Arts	Medium	Low	High
Creative Economy Initiative	No	Yes	Yes
City-wide Cultural Plan	No	No	Yes
Cabinet-level Office of Arts/Culture	No	No	Yes
Vision for Arts and Cultural Sector	Urban revitalization	Innovation, Creative Economy	Creative Capital, Creative Workforce
Role	Balanced-Growth "Progressive"	Growth "Autocrat"	Growth "Democratic"

"Fighting with working people and the poor in their struggles for economic justice" became a hallmark of Flynn's ten-year reign as mayor [74] (p. 380). As interventional policy instruments, planning and zoning were commonly used in Flynn's tenure to manage Boston's growth, specifically to revitalize the declining city center. The priorities of his leadership were creating jobs and revitalizing neighborhoods, defined as "balanced growth" [75].

With constant advocacy efforts from the performing arts task force, the policy image of the arts got reshaped into a tool to generate social and economic benefits in the process of urban neighborhood revitalization, which totally met the mayor's agenda. As a result, the arts were put at the core of the Midtown cultural district plan.

In contrast, Mayor Menino treated economic growth as the core of his regime [76]. During his tenure, he did a cultural planning and assessment in 2000, but most funding-related and staff-related recommendations were neglected in implementation [68]. Affected by the creative economy discourse, he started the CreateBoston program, which later on evolved into a video gaming industry initiative, with it turning out that the ideational innovation was preferred in his economic growth agenda, as also shown in his vision to promote Boston as the world's innovation hub. Although the arts were reframed into the large creative economy concept, urban political leaders could play a decisive role in choosing their preferrable nuts and pieces in the creative economy pie. As shown in Menino's vision, the nonprofit arts sector was neglected while the commercial creative businesses were preferred.

Compared to Mayor Flynn and Mayor Menino, Mayor Walsh expressed the strongest political will for the arts, indicated by his efforts to support Boston's arts community. He established the Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture, created a cabinet level position for arts and culture, and increased the budget of Boston Cultural Council. During the reign, he was willing to support the arts through breaking silos in the cultural creative sector, strategically

building cross-department collaborations to foster the creative workforce cultivation and creative community building under the guidelines of BostonCreates Cultural Plan.

To conclude, leadership change could result in dramatic or minor political environment changes for the arts. Together with long-term advocacy efforts and active policy learning, the policy image of the arts has witnessed an incremental change in Boston's urban policy agenda. Especially when the convergent interest occurs and the political will is ready, the new policy image of the arts could be integrated into the overall urban development strategies, either as urban regeneration anchor, innovation economy facilitator, or creative capital catalyst, contributing to a more sustainable development of the cultural creative sector.

5. Conclusions and Implications

This case study investigated the cumulative changes in policy definitions of the creative arts in Boston's sustainable cultural development agenda. Specifically, the working definition moved from art to the arts, then to the creative arts industry, and eventually to the creative capital. The relevant policy image of the arts has been framed as a key stimulus to urban revitalization, a core part of the creative economy, an important asset for creative capital cultivation, and a tool for shaping a unique urban character and city image. This changing definition is needed to mobilize the growing resources, to pursue a succession of arts-based urban development strategies, and to foster a growing complement of policy goals. Adjusting the definition of the arts has allowed Boston to draw on a growing and diversifying set of cultural resources to promote the sustainability of the cultural sector.

Based on evidence from Boston's cultural policy practices, we identified four major explanatory variables to explain this dynamic policy framing strategy. Specifically, we found (1) the advocacy coalition keeps promoting justifications and visibilities of the arts in Boston's urban development strategies; (2) policy learning within academic communities, arts intermediaries, and media has been constantly seeking for new justifications for the arts; (3) the shifting institutional value and enlarging sectoral components have provided more legitimacy for the arts in urban development agenda; and (4) municipal leadership matters to determine whether the changing policy image of the arts could be put into effect.

Three implications could be drawn for arts stakeholders and urban policy makers. First, convergent interest matters for the sustainable cultural development. As shown in this case, the traditional public patronage model in terms of supporting the nonprofit arts organizations is woven all the way through the process of a series of arts-based urban development strategies. On one hand, the arts advocacy coalition strives to find new cases for the nonprofit arts. On the other hand, urban policy makers actively take advantage of the creative arts sector in pursuit of city branding, urban revitalization, and industry-focused economic growth. The key is when and how this interest convergence occurs. Therefore, arts organizations should conduct careful research of what is prioritized in the mayors' agenda and what is valued by urban planners and developers. What is more important is to communicate proper justifications with the right person at the right time.

Second, changes of justifications in the discourse do not necessarily lead to policy changes. Discourse change is just the beginning of a long-term incremental change of the policy image. However, the policy venue shopping strategy could be in vain without adequate political will. As shown in this case, three different mayors expressed distinct understandings and visions for the arts. Consequently, the arts sector was integrated into different urban development strategies.

Third, as shown in this case, the definition of the arts in political agenda keeps growing. The inclusive policy image of the arts manifests the cumulative layering strategy of policy framing through enhancing the cohesive power of shared beliefs within the enlarging arts coalition, and through strengthening the artistic capacity by augmenting field components and diversifying industrial structure. However, researchers and policy makers should be careful about these distinct terminologies, like artistic, cultural, creative, and innovative. In reality, there still exist controversies on different understandings of "creative", either

as culturally creative or innovatively/ideationally creative. Moreover, there are still weak connections among sectoral components and organizational structures of the big creative economy pie. In pursuit of a more sustainable development of the cultural sector, a more balanced approach should be adopted by policy makers in terms of resources allocation and opportunities sharing.

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