Merchant effects: Neighborhood entrepreneurs, agents of revitalization
The case of a merchant association

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Originally prepared for the National Conference of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning, Kansas City, MO. October 29, 2005
Revised: March 2007

Summary: Previous research indicates that urban neighborhood renewal has become increasingly dominated by conventional economic development. At the same time, many urban scholars have become increasingly critical of conventional economic development, particularly its narrowly defined goals, ideological biases, and the often limited social and economic interests shaping development outcomes. In conventional economic development practice, it is not uncommon for neighborhood *insiders* - residents, merchants, and community groups – to be relegated to positions of marginality during redevelopment discourse as *outsiders* – property developers and speculators, locally situated "international" institutions, corporate capital, and state actors - direct local planning and decision-making. In view of popular power asymmetries, I apply a temporal lens to examine processes of inner-city neighborhood revitalization. In so doing, I expose what I call "merchant effects," or the effects merchants have on the physical, social, commercial, institutional and communicative dimensions of neighborhoods. While merchant effects do not shift manifest power inequities associated with redevelopment, they emphasize the importance of reflecting on the type(s) of neighborhoods we hope to develop and the corresponding strategies we employ. Drawing on an extended case study of revitalization in Fort Greene, this paper complicates conventional understandings of economic development by first focusing on its antecedents and then on the myriad outcomes that are implicitly important for sustaining neighborhood improvement but often ignored or under-valued. I argue that in inner-city neighborhoods, minority merchants should be considered important *insiders* that influence revitalization processes in ways that go beyond conventional economic development contributions.

Between the 1960s and 2000, the prevailing perception of Fort Greene (a neighborhood in Brooklyn, NY) shifted from a deplorable black ghetto to a vibrant cultural enclave. This paper exposes neighborhood entrepreneurs as under-explored agents in the transformation of Fort Greene and explains why the process of change is instructive for social scientists and policymakers interested in both economic development and community building. There is tacit acceptance that neighborhood retail influences the social and economic value of urban localities. It is not surprising, therefore, that access to, variety and quality of retail amenities are important concerns within policy debates, academic research and everyday discourse. Nevertheless, specific ways that small neighborhood merchants participate in inner-city revitalization remains implicitly assumed in most instances, yet conceptually underdeveloped.

Drawing on an extended case study of revitalization in Fort Greene, this paper develops the concept "merchant effects" to capture important outcomes uniquely crafted by neighborhood small businesses. Neighborhood merchants, it is argued, produce symbolic and material resources that produce social and economic value for the areas in which they area located. Moreover, in contrast to conventional economic development projects, neighborhood small businesses have greater ability to facilitate community building. (Both points I will explain and elaborate on in subsequent sections) In this study, I find that minority merchants, particularly black entrepreneurs operating in a predominately black neighborhood, facilitate inner-city revitalization by identifying and actualizing individual business opportunities and by facilitating collective action, political engagement and strategic visioning in the places in which they cluster.

The purpose of this article, therefore, is threefold: first, to introduce the concept "merchant effects," as a way to frame contributions of inner-city neighborhood small businesses; second, to conceptualize ways that minority merchants, wittingly and unwittingly, revitalize urban neighborhoods, thus contribute to both economic development and community building; and third, to explore the utility of highlighting neighborhood merchants as agents of inner-city revitalization. In other words, this paper exposes antecedents of conventional economic development produced by neighborhood merchants. The Fort Greene case suggests that *insiders* transformed the neighborhood into an attractive and alluring destination, which eventually precipitated further investment by *outsiders*. In view of the dialectical relationship between neighborhood insiders and outsiders, I argue that conventional economic development in Fort Greene was not a fortuitous occurrence; rather it was a direct response to early revitalization efforts spearheaded by local minority merchants (and other insiders) that predated conventional development projects as they were largely initiated when was largely perceived a black ghetto and an undesirable area.

Background: Contrasting perceptions of Fort Greene

I was initially exposed to Fort Greene merchants in late 1995 while providing ad hoc support to two business start-ups. Through ongoing interactions with venerable and newly arrived entrepreneurs, residents, and community-based organizations (CBO), I learned firsthand of longstanding pernicious perceptions of Fort Greene as a black ghetto. I also learned how the widespread stigma surrounding black places and black-owned institutions could be harnessed by some neighborhood actors and used as a foundation for attachment and collective action.

As a newcomer to the neighborhood, I was initially perplexed by seemingly incongruous neighborhood identities. On one hand, Fort Greene was economically and socially vibrant, similar to other chic urban neighborhoods in New York, with its assortment of boutiques and bistros and local entertainment. On the other hand, however, conventional rhetoric about Fort Greene frequently highlighted high crime, disorder and instability. Upon reflection I realized that the tension in my understanding of Fort Greene was rooted in conflict between personal experiences of vibrancy along the commercial corridors and popular perceptions of Fort Greene as an inner-city black ghetto,[1] which were produced and reproduced through media representations and the everyday discourse articulated by outsiders. This study, therefore, was motivated by tensions between dominant and countervailing neighborhood identities; particularly how conflicting rhetoric surrounding Fort Greene worked shaped socio-spatial dynamics.

[1] The term ghetto lacks analytic and conceptual clarity (Wacquant, 2004); nevertheless, in this paper it is used to connote a racialized confinement, typically a majority-black area isolated from dominant society and considered socially and economically marginal (Marcuse, 1997, 2005).

During the 1960s and 1970s, both *outsiders* and *insiders* described Fort Greene in disparaging terms. Recurring allusions to poverty, crime, unemployment, and racial segregation in Fort Greene perpetuated a 'politic of fear' of and a general disregard for the area. By the mid-1980s, however, spatial descriptions were far more complicated. Widely held negative perceptions of Fort Greene as having "departed from its silk stocking past" (*New York Times*, 1984) sat along side more positive characterizations of the neighborhood as a "black mecca," a "hip and happening hood" and a "shopping district."[2]During the 1980s through much of the 1990s, *outsiders* - property developers, cultural institutions, real estate speculators, and state actors – maintained the veil of urban decline that hung over Fort Greene during earlier decades. Conversely, *insiders*, or those with on-going personal interactions in the neighborhood - merchants, residents and community organizations – envisioned and constructed a more favorable neighborhood image.

Various rhetorical forms were employed by *outsiders* to perpetuate the mid-century image of Fort Greene as an untamed urban frontier in need of redevelopment. Fort Greene was frequently portrayed as lacking the central amenities that signified neighborhood normalcy. For instance, in 2005, a *New York Magazine* critic lamented that "… just three years ago there were few sit-down restaurants along De Kalb's commercial strip." The critic went on to marvel at the rapid development in the area by stating that "today, there are nearly a dozen [restaurants]… but the area still lacks the bakers, butchers, smaller retailers, and quality takeout options most New Yorkers take for granted" (Kachka, 2005). The paucity of retail amenities was invoked as an indicator of local need. Jeanne Lufty, President of the Brooklyn Academy of Music Local Development Corporation (BAM LDC), elaborated on the sentiment. During a New York City real estate forum in 2000, Ms. Lufty shared the BAM LDC's multimillion dollar "Cultural District" redevelopment plan for Fort Greene. In sharing the neighborhood context, Ms. Lufty stated: "it is unbelievable that Fort Greene with its wonderful brownstones and new escalating real estate prices and its density in population does not really have any amenities.

[2] Descriptions of Fort Greene appear in various *New York Daily News* and *New York Times* editorials between 1966 and 2001. Given the fifteen year time span, I matched current and reflective perceptions of Fort Greene. For instance, most narratives about Fort Greene, collected during the 1960s or remembrances of the 1960s documents years later, described poverty, blight, racial segregation and/or the devastation associated with urban renewal.

You can walk the streets in the neighborhood and find there are no stores…" Both of these statements contradicted perceptions held by many *insiders*.

Despite decades of public and private sector neighborhood disinvestment in Fort Greene during the latter half of the 20th century, and popular perceptions of despair leading up to the new millennium, *insiders* invested in and helped to stabilize Fort Greene with intentionality beginning in the mid-1980s. Minority "old-time" merchants, those who located in Fort Greene during the 1980s and 1990s,[3] opened a range of trendy and mundane businesses along the three primary commercial corridors. Many old-timers viewed Fort Greene as an appealing business location during the late 1980s and 1990s despite the public perception of the neighborhood as a ghetto and a foolhardy location for boutiques, cafés, or other up-market retailers. For example, Kevin, a black Jamaican born old-timer, recalled his desire to locate his café and juice bar in Fort Greene. During 1994, Kevin traveled via city bus through Fort Greene on a daily basis in route to his job at the Department of Education in Downtown Brooklyn. Kevin said he looked at the small business clusters along the Fulton Street corridor as a positive expression of cultural identity. According to Kevin, the storefronts along the Fulton Street corridor suggested that "a lot of stuff was bubbling up" in the neighborhood, much of which escaped the purview of *outsiders*. Kevin said his motivation to become self-employed was partially due to his perception of Fort Greene "… I saw this neighborhood as one of the proudest neighborhoods I know. I was fascinated with the vibrancy along Fulton…"

Old-time merchants were instrumental in stimulating the local economy and revitalizing Fort Greene by transforming it into a destination location for minority entrepreneurs, tourists and others. Through personal and professional networks, old-timers persuaded other minority entrepreneurs to locate in Fort Greene, which led to the clustering of creative black-owned businesses in the area. Furthermore, old-timers typically employed local residents, young and older, and contributed to the social and aesthetic coherence developing along the commercial corridors. By the early 1990s, merchants recalled that Fort Greene was viewed as a prime

[3] The typology of merchants has been constructed based on when the entrepreneurs began conducting business in one of the storefronts in Fort Greene. Those who arrived from 1952 through the 1970s are called "Pioneers," merchants who arrived during the 1980s and 1990s are the "Old-Timers," and merchants that started business between 2000 and 2002 are the "Newcomers." This paper focuses on the Old-Timers.

destination for black-owed retail enterprises. Many insiders characterized Fort Greene as "New York's black bohemia" during the 1990s (Milner, 1997). Hence, the merchant association they established during in the mid-1990s was an important institutional actor for shifting Fort Greene image from "ghetto" to "enclave." Based on a Fort Greene market analysis conducted in 2003, researches pointed out that the newfound allure of Fort Greene began "over the course of the last ten years." They added that new millennium Fort Greene "owes at least some debt to the Merchant Association" (Phillips Preiss Shapiro, 2003 p.26). After decades of disapproving depictions coupled with a myriad of policies and practices (e.g., urban renewal, deindustrialization, and suburbanization) that led to a precipitous decline in amenities and public services (e.g., sanitation removal, street lighting, infrastructure maintenance, park and public space upkeep), by the new millennium Fort Greene had finally become a place with both local and popular appeal, a widely desirable urban locale with distinct charm and unique urban chic.

In 2002, the *New York Times* published an article about Fort Greene entitled "Diversity, Culture and Brownstones, Too."[4] This succinct description introduced an equally laconic exposé of the neighborhood. The formulaic neighborhood narration fused select elements of Fort Greene's past, as home to New York gentry, which remains observable in the neighborhood's pristine 19th century architecture, with a fresh vision for its future, seen in the redevelopment plans to help shift longstanding negative perceptions. The imminent plans of modernization and redevelopment invoked in the *Times* editorial can be understood as a tacit signal that Fort Greene was once again a sound site for investment. The imagery and rhetoric in the *Times* article helped develop and sanction a storyline about Fort Greene as a site of revival and a destination for middle-class consumption. In many ways the new millennium image of Fort Greene mirrored the neighborhood image merchants and other insiders had purported years earlier.

[4] Nancy Beth Jackson. 2002. "Diversity Culture and Brownstones, Too." The New York Times, September 1. On average, this descriptive article appeared congruent with weekly real estate editorials in the New York Times that generally feature ideal type urban and suburban neighborhoods as part of the Sunday "If You're Thinking of Living In" column.

The newspaper rendering of local improvement prominently featured particular actors considered instrumental in the process of change, namely: public sector officials, private real estate developers, corporate interests, locally-situated international institutions (e.g., the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM)), but disavowed other agents such as the old-time merchants. By failing to offer a fuller expression of key institutional actors, chiefly agency among minority merchants, the *Times* piece narrowly framed the process of revitalization. The obfuscation of *insiders'* agency affirms widely held beliefs that indigenous agents often lack the capacity for neighborhood improvement (Porter, 1995). Moreover, silencing grassroots revitalization efforts put forth by Fort Greene merchants reifies many of the negative popular perceptions about black urban space, generally, and black-owned businesses, more specifically, whereby black entrepreneurship is often not considered a viable engine for economic development.

The remainder of this article is divided into four sections. First, a discussion of how economic development and community building have been conceptualized in the literature; these perspectives on neighborhood change are then criticized for failing to offer a more nuanced articulation of the relationship between neighborhood entrepreneurship and revitalization. The second section briefly lays out key dimensions of "merchant effects" and outlines the methodology used for collecting the empirical data presented in the case study. The third section begins with relevant dimensions of change in Fort Greene, which leads into a case study of the Fort Greene Merchant Association that highlights "merchant effects" produced by the Association. Finally, the conclusion emphasizes both theoretical and practical implications of this research, particularly how it helps expand conventional thinking about the types of outcomes small neighborhood merchants produce, how these outcomes are central for revitalizing inner-city areas, and how they become platforms on which traditional economic development can build.

Perspectives on neighborhood change

Dating back to late nineteenth century Progressive era reform, American policymakers and social scientists have been bewildered by strategies for revitalizing inner-city neighborhoods. From Charity Organization Societies (COS) to Community Development Financial Institutions

(CDFI), urban improvement initiatives have evolved in response to dominant ideological biases and the political-economic contextual factors that typically frame debates over urban reform. The expansion of urban reform initiatives has also led to a concomitant proliferation in the nomenclature used to describe urban improvement, including: economic development, local economic development, community economic development, redevelopment, community development, revitalization, and community building. The distinct dynamics these labels capture have not been clearly articulated. Though a more thorough typology of neighborhood improvement is needed, this paper only addresses the tension between economic development and community building, which is essentially rooted in ideological divergence in the rules, so to speak, that structure urban revitalization processes. Put another way, the intellectual and practical schism between economic development and community building is best understood as part of "seldom-considered assumptions and theoretical relationships" that inform thinking about ways that power asymmetries, democratic practices and capitalistic values manifest during revitalization[5] (Beauregard, 1993:267).

What is economic development?

Urban scholars, policymakers and practitioners use the term economic development; the meaning, however, is open to interpretation. *The MIT Dictionary of Modern Economics* defines economic development as the process of improving the standard of living and well being of a population by raising per capita income. A plethora of conceptions of economic development coexist with slight distinctions based on intended goals and the balance of public and private resources allocated to anticipated outcomes (Reese and Fasenfest, 2004). According to Reese and Fasenfest (2004), the "economic" part of the concept has traditionally implied private capital investments and business growth; while Porter (1995) suggests that the role of the public sector should be facilitator of growth. The term "development," on the other hand, typically refers to economic expansion, growth, market efficiency or positive effects for private enterprise (Bartik,

[5] It is important to state that throughout this study, the term "revitalization" is used to refer to: infusing an area with new life through economic growth and expansion of options for residents and tourists, as well as the establishment of new activities and interest in areas previously considered stagnant or declining and unattractive to many outside investors (Holcomb and Beauregard, 1981). Revitalization is a process of change conditioned, though not fully controlled, by the subjective position of actors able to shift popular spatial perceptions and improve material outcomes.

1991). However, in some instances a normative conception of development is employed to mean improved outcomes and capacities for local residents (Beauregard, 1993).

Since the 1980s, urban reform has been aligned, often uncomfortably, with the rhetoric of economic development, which has been characterized as "corporate centered" approach (Fainstein, Fainstein, Hill, Judd and Smith, 1983). By the 1990s, urban community improvement initiatives were more deeply embedded in the ideological and political nature of economic development (Beauregard, 1993 p.269). In this paper, I rely on the "corporate centered" approach described by Fainstein, et al., and the "ideological biases" of the 1990s described by Beauregard as the basis for what I call conventional economic development. [6]

The term conventional refers to the contemporary logic of economic development that "dominates public perception, political debate and policy initiative" (Beauregard, 1993). Based on this understanding, I posit that conventional economic development utilizes the rhetoric of generally accepted aims such as economic growth and job creation as well as public-private governance structures to sanction particular development projects (e.g., big-box retail, national chain stores, shopping malls, and entertainment venues). However, while economic development implies that the welfare of residents will be improved; the reality is often that power asymmetry and long-term accountability obfuscate laudable initial goals and intentions. Moreover, the anticipated economic growth and job creation intended to benefit localities often accrue citywide, and local areas may experience residential displacement (Blair, 1995). State and local policy has become a primary instrument of economic development interests (Bradbury, Kodrzycki and Tannenwald, 1997). The public sector can leverage tax incentives and other subsidies to offset private sector costs associated with property development, as well as the tangible and intangible relocation costs firms bear. In return, firms are expected to generate net increases in jobs and tax revenue for specified jurisdictions. However, the direct impact of tax incentives on economic activity for any locality is difficult to measure (Bartik, 1994).

[6] Temporal shifts in the objectives and resources that shape urban redevelopment, as well as the influence of public and private sector actors see: Robert Mier and Joan Fitzgerald (1991) "Managing economic development," *Economic Development Quarterly*, 5:268-279.

In view of this articulation of conventional economic development, the Michael Porter (1995) thesis is centrally located within the plethora of conventional approaches. Porter (1995) purports that inner cities have unique characteristics (e.g., strategic location, local market demand, integration with regional clusters and human resources) that can be leveraged by private business interests. Porter also suggests that racial minorities with significant human capital should become inner-city entrepreneurs and the logical brokers to eschew capital and community tensions. The Porter thesis concurs with conventional economic development by emphasizing people-based strategies such job creation and the success of individual entrepreneurs. The Porter thesis, however, dissuades entrepreneurship among other neighborhood insiders, who are considered to have inadequate human and financial capital to operate successful economic development enterprises.

Countervailing perspectives

While forms of economic development have been popular since the 1960s, conventional economic development has been criticized by academics and practitioners as part of the post-1980 neoliberal environment (Mele, 2000; Smith, 2002). It has been argued that capital interests emphasized within conventional approaches often displace or overshadow small business and community-led ventures (Beauregard, 2003). Therefore, "neoliberal" is used to capture a shift in the ideology that frames development discourse and shapes material outcomes in urban localities. Neoliberal development differs from previous iterations of development due in part to the iterative shift away from social welfare concerns, or the utilization of public sector resources to help improve and empower the poor, toward market models, or emphasis on private sector capital interests (Newman and Ashton, 2004; Smith, 2002). Within a neoliberal development environment, private capital interests do not pursue development with exclusively private recourses, however, as a pure market model would suggest. Instead, public sector resources – land, capital, regulatory environment, public rhetoric - are allocated to and combined with private sector capital. As a result, public–private development partnerships significantly influence not only the direction and magnitude of urban renewal but the redevelopment legacy that is conveyed to others.

Moreover, redevelopment aims, within a neoliberal environment, are often cloaked in the rhetoric of "creating social balance" (Newman and Ashton, 2004:1154); however, the production of equitable outcomes is often found to be systematically less of a concern than they were during earlier economic development paradigms. A spate of literature focuses on ways that neoliberal development has put pressure on localities to be "entrepreneurial" and compete for economic resources and political power (Jessop, 1998; Squires, 1989).

Advocates of neoliberal pro-growth approaches have compelled local leaders to increasingly prioritize big business-friendly policies and growth-oriented strategies over social services (Squires, 1989) as large businesses are presumed to create jobs and generate tax revenue (Porter, 1995). In recent years, nonprofit organizations (e.g., community development corporations), private capital interests, and government officials have adopted pro-growth economic development strategies and thus have established opportunities and incentives for corporate capital entry or big business expansion in inner city markets. However, the distribution of benefits remains in question. In lieu of equitable outcomes, the rhetoric of plural planning that underlies neoliberal development has adapted to expressions of local resistance. In some cases plural planning is invoked by development interests merely to squelch vociferous resistance and other times as an under-realized good intention.

While conventional economic development goals are reasonable, their underlying assumptions are shortsighted. In some instances, they truncate the capacity of indigenous small businesses for future growth. Conventional economic development discourse implies improved wellbeing for residents, and "residents" suggests existing occupants in an area. Given this understanding, opposition to economic development is akin to opposing progress or contesting attempts to advance access to the goods and services that bolster quality of life (Beauregard, 1993). However, the dynamic of economic development reveals its intrinsic contradictions. Below I use economic development practice to highlight three of the *insider–outsider* tensions regarding the distribution of benefits and burdens that manifest during conventional or neoliberal economic development initiatives.

First, the local, or neighborhood, effects of economic development are often unclear. The revenue and 'good' jobs produced by development projects do not necessarily trickle down to insiders. Moreover, corporate expansion into local areas many undermines the capacity for small businesses actors to meaningfully participate in development planning and decision making. Speaking to this point, Robert Beauregard has called for a more complicated assessment of the "theoretical tendencies and ideological biases" that underlie mainstream economic development and "dominate public perceptions, political debate and policy initiatives" (1993: 268). *Insiders'* responses to inequitable economic development projects have been varied. In some instances a cross section of community interests have mobilized and waged strident opposition to big box retail development plans (e.g., Austin, TX). These insider groups often use locally developed counter cost-benefit analyses to punch holes in popular rhetoric that inflates the economic and employment benefits proposed to accrue locally but are typically realized regionally. Development opposition campaigns also highlight negative externalities (e.g., congestion, traffic, out-of-scale development, loss of meaningful social interactions) that burden localities.

Second, conventional economic development objectives fail to acknowledge the importance of and incorporate mechanisms that preserve aspects local character democratically determined by indigenous residents. According to Susan Fainstein (1996:120) there is a great need for the reformulation of economic development strategies, particularly critical thinking and policy prescriptions that offer inner-city redevelopment strategies that are "as creative as and less destructive than the *modus operandi* of typical urban growth coalitions."

Finally, there is a tacit acceptance of inequity in the distribution of development benefits (and burdens) produced by economic development initiatives. The development of big box retail, convention center expansion, and sports stadium construction, for instance, has become the strategy of choice in both declined and growth oriented cities interested in attracting tourism revenue and revitalized downtown or central business districts. Although these strategies generate tax revenues for cities, put to greater use under-utilized buildings and land, and provided employment opportunities, the neighborhood effects of such projects are unclear. Benefits tend to be dispersed throughout the city and not concentrated in particular neighborhoods. Further, previous research suggests that the amount of public subsidies used to support such projects may often overshadow the benefits these projects provide (Kim and Peebles, 2004).

Regardless of the acceptance of or opposition to economic development, both the rhetoric and reality of large private and public sector investments serve as tacit signals of inner city change. They suggest to the general public that urban improvement imminent as public-private development partnerships are intended to rebuild central cities in ways that will lure the middle class back to inner city areas (Holcomb and Beauregard, 1981). Accordingly, both development signals and implemented plans tend to attract further investments and hasten conventional redevelopment.

The community-building perspective

Community building and community economic development (CED) overlap along numerous dimensions. For instance, they share a normative perspective of neighborhood revitalization in which questions of equity should be considered. The CED philosophy rests on beliefs about change in which residents define and manage reform processes, including the creation and sustainability of economic institutions. Many CED initiatives incorporated comprehensive approaches to change that often included local control of land acquisition, rezoning, housing and business development (Kelly, 1976; Giloth, 1988). During the sixties and seventies when CED became popular, it was understood as a strategy for local autonomy, control and resistance to public sector urban renewal and clearance projects that often marginalized neighborhood residents. The contemporary "community building" movement mirrors the early CED philosophy of comprehensive indigenous development shape by local control (Kingsley, McNeely and Gibson, 1997; Kubisch, Fulbright-Anderson and Connell, 1998).

During the 1990s, the term community building became a popular way for characterizing an ideological and practical position on urban reform. Community building incorporates some dimensions of the community development movement popular during the 1960s and 1970s as a process driven approach for fostering democratic civic engagement and local ownership (Kingsley, McNeely, Gibson 1997). Additional aims of community building include: bolstering local capacity; establishing social capital in the community; and valuing racial equity, economic justice, and respect for local culture and history (Kubisch, Fulbright-Anderson and Connell, 1998). There are at least two obvious challenges associated with adopting a community building perspective. First, the goals of social capital, capacity enhancement and empowerment are not easily codified and therefore difficult to track, measure, or modify. Second, within the current neoliberal environment, localism is particularly ineffective. Institutional actors engaged in local reform must address local needs and concerns by engaging the extra-local environment in entrepreneurial ways.

In the new millennium, it is fair to suggest that there has been resurgence in attention to community inclusion in planning and decision making. However, uncritical admiration of popular inclusion rhetoric (e.g., participatory and communicative planning community benefits,) stifles the ability to identify new ways that power asymmetries are reproduced. Additionally, the rhetoric of community inclusion, while important, does not address the capacity of local actors to manage power asymmetries and strategically engage in decision-making processes (Fainstein, 2005). John Forester describes tensions surrounding community voice in planning and development in this way: "notions of interest and community are politically shaped- not only by planners imaginations, but by who speaks and who does not, who attends meetings and who does not, which interests have articulate and effective advocates and which do not" (1994: 5). Forester (1994) goes on to argue that both "community" and "interests" are constructed and reconstructed through political and contextual currency. The elusive meaning of "community" and the subordination of local benefits to extra-local needs, points to the need for intentional production of mechanisms and coherent strategies to protect insiders' interests.

While conventional economic development is understood as largely led by *outsiders*, community building inherently encompasses *insider* led processes. However, community building has been criticized as too nostalgic and anti-modernization or anti-development. Clearly, both conventional economic development and community-building scholarship have independent shortcomings. One shared limitation is the failure to explore agency among minority merchants for neighborhood revitalization. Therefore, despite the popular disjuncture between economic development and community building, I argue that when neighborhood revitalization is examined through the lens of local small business owners greater overlap becomes manifest.

Neighborhood change has been largely examined through the lens of residents, housing markets, and community based organizations as opposed to the local small business owners. As change is perceived to be driven by outside business interests, local resident or community based organizations. These rigid perspectives have exacerbated the silencing of subjective position of neighborhood merchants who occupy the middle-ground within the capital and community conundrum. Merchant effects, therefore, represent a myriad of symbolic and material factors critically influenced by the business community and that interact with broader spatial perceptions to shape neighborhood identity.

Deriving merchant effects

Arguing for the relationship between minority entrepreneurship and local economic development is somewhat reminiscent of community economic development arguments made popular during the 1970s (Kelly, 1977). However, the capacity of small business to affect local improvement is often contested by advocates of market-based conventional economic development, which utilizes large businesses – big-box retail, national chain stores, mega malls and festival marketplaces - as efficient strategies for inner city improvement (Porter, 1995; Robertson, 1997). Despite the generally marginalized position of small businesses within economic development practice, economic impact studies of localities have found that locally-owned small businesses have a greater economic impact on neighborhoods than large chain stores[7] (Civic Economics, 2005). When it comes to understanding to role of *neighborhood* entrepreneurs, there is a paucity of empirical literature (Koebel, 1999) and a slowly expanding body of theoretical scholarship that focuses on the meaning of retail establishments to community life (Jacobs, 1961), particularly the relationship between minority entrepreneurship

[7] A study of Andersonville, a neighborhood on the north side of Chicago, found that for every dollar spent at small businesses $.73 is returned to Andersonville compared to just $.43 at large chain stores in the same vicinity. Moreover, upwards of 70% of the consumers surveyed preferred to patronize locally owned businesses and traditional business districts to big box retail and mega malls (Civic Economics, 2005).

and inner-city renewal or stability (Butler, 1990; Drake and Cayton, 1945; Hodge and Feagin, 1995; Villemez and Beggs, 1984).[8]

I delineate "merchant effects" as shorthand for the various physical, social, commercial, institutional, and communicative contributions that neighborhoods entrepreneurs' offers inner-city areas. The principle components of merchant effects, therefore, are derived from a confluence of scholarship that specifies individual-level and institutional-level measures[9] considered influential for shaping community outcomes (Briggs, Mueller and Sullivan, 1997; Kingsley, Gibson, and McNeely, 1997; Ferguson and Dickens, 1999; Gittell and Thompson, 1999; Sampson, 1999; Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh and Vidal, 2001; Vidal and Keating, 2004; Willis, 2004) (see Table 1).

I argue that vibrant neighborhood small businesses can create unique neighborhood character that bolster real estate values, attract tourists and new settlers, and ultimately serves as a platform for further redevelopment. Inner-city neighborhoods are revitalized through the interplay among multiple actors; accordingly, attribution of effects poses an obvious research challenge. Nevertheless, I employ "merchant effects" as a way to parse out dimensions of community life shaped by clusters of neighborhood small businesses that may be overlooked when focus is almost exclusively on other neighborhood institutions (e.g., CDCs). Community psychologists have found important and complicated relationships between the physical environment and sense of community (Chavis and Pretty, 1999). Using this insight, I point to the aesthetic neighborhood corridors get shaped by local merchants, for instance. In the select communities in which CDCs exist, they may play a role in shaping storefronts, but ultimately, the street-level storefront aesthetic is determined by the owner of the private enterprise. Through storefront design, in-store layout, product offerings, hours of operation, creation of

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[8] It is important to note that ethnic enclave literature has focused on ways ethnic enterprises contribute to the economic life and the social order of immigrant area (Portes, 1987; Waldinger, 1993; Wilson and Martin, 1982; Wilson and Portes, 1980; Zhou, 1992). However, the enclave literature is generally silent on the relationship between black entrepreneurs and black urban space.

[9] Kingsley, Gibson, and McNeely (1997) define community building strategies as those that: are intentional and focused on specific local improvements; reinforce widely held values and help develop the social and human capital of insiders; locally managed with broad civic and democratic engagement; strategic and entrepreneurial; tailored to neighborhood scale and conditions; collaboratively linked to the larger society in order to strengthen local institutions and expand individual and institutional network opportunities; support local actors dismantling various institutional barriers.

space for face-to-face interaction, civic engagement, and so forth, neighborhood entrepreneurs', wittingly and unwittingly, shape urban localities. Exploring clusters of inner-city small businesses reveals way they do more than brave the lean years in inner-city areas, they shape social, physical and economic dimensions of neighborhood life. They convert ghettoized places into desirable destination locations.

Table 1: Merchant effects

Dimensions	Influence of Neighborhood Small Businesses
Physical	Small businesses help create and maintain an aesthetically appealing corridor and shopping district that directly involve the business owners (e.g. re-zoning and adaptive reuse, building and permit activity, façade restoration and beautification, storefront displays and decorative awnings, street lighting, sidewalk landscaping).
Social	Small business enterprises are privately owned but nevertheless they become important public entities. Theses establishments provide: public spaces for face-to-face interaction; neighborhood identity; neighborhood cohesion; sense of group pride and attachment.
Commercial	Small business owners provide amenities (e.g., goods and services) to residents and visitors. Merchants establish neighborhood niche(s) or local business cluster(s), which in turn attracts more patrons to the area, helps foster small business density and provides local jobs.
Institutional	Collectivities of small businesses establish a formal and informal rules, norm and behaviors that shape dynamics along the corridor. When merchants organize (e.g., establish merchant associations), they provide a platform for the 4Ps: Participation (collective action, transference of information, and collective voice); Political clout; Pecuniary resources; and Production (the growth and expansion of enterprise).
Communicative	Small businesses play a central role in "place marketing" that targets potential new entrepreneurs, tourists, philanthropic initiatives and other capital interests. Neighborhood enterprises often attract media attention and thus have unique opportunities to shape spatial representations.

Though clusters of neighborhood merchants are found to have positive effects on inner-city areas, a couple questions remain in the case of Fort Greene, such as: one, what neighborhood dimensions changed? And two, how is existence of neighborhood merchants related to change?

The transformation of Fort Greene was correlated with very tangible effects including: a decline in storefront vacancy from approximately fifteen to eighteen percent through 1980s to less than eleven percent by 1995 (Phillips Preiss Shapiro Associates, 2003); significant decline in crime with a 26% decline between 1987 and 1993, which was well before the citywide drop in crime (Phillips Preiss Shapiro Associates, 2003); an expanded range of product and service amenities;

and increased corridor cohesion and beautification efforts. Through collective action and increased civic engagement, the entrepreneurs improve the commercial prestige and allure of Fort Greene, and enhance social group power and pride.

Case study method

This study employs an ethnographic approach, which informed how I collected and analyzed personal and group-level data on Fort Greene merchants. This research, however, departs from conventional ethnography in two significant ways. First, the study adopts an extended case approach. This qualitative approach expands the conventional boundaries of ethnography and participant observation by calling for research that is both historically grounded and applies a structural perspective. In other words, the extended case allows for linking local patterns to ideologies and common practices that are observable both within and outside of the local environment (Burawoy, 1991, 2000). According to Michael Burawoy (1991), the extended case approach allows social scientists to extrapolate outward from a particular site by reconstructing explanatory theories. Therefore, employing the extended case methodological and epistemological approach allows for a more complicated understanding of the institutional practices, public policies, and social interactions that shifted the spatial status of Fort Greene during the 1980s and 1990s.[10]

Second, I enhanced the extended case approach with a survey that I disseminated to small business owners. The surveys were useful for collecting information on business and personal characteristics. I also relied on the decennial United States Census for 1970-2000, specifically the Neighborhood Change Dataset that allowed me to examine tract-level, citywide and county change, and extensive use of archival data, including newspaper accounts and various institutional documents. This mixed methodology enhanced the explanatory power of my proposition that neighborhood minority merchant had an effect on transforming Fort Greene from what was considered a black ghetto to a cultural enclave.

[10] This paper is part of a larger research project in which I use the same method to examine race, revitalization and entrepreneurship in Fort Greene between 1952 and 2002.

When conducting ethnographic research, site selection is critically important. With an interest in examining the intersection of race, revitalization and entrepreneurship, I chose Fort Greene[11] based on both methodological and substantive grounds. Fort Greene has a long history of black entrepreneurship. Dating back to the 1850s the area was the "business Black Belt" due to early clusters of black-owned caterers, restaurants, tailors, real estate agents and beauty product manufactures peppered the Myrtle Avenue and Fulton Street corridors (New Muse Community Museum of Brooklyn, 1977). Historically and contemporarily, black entrepreneurship has played a substantial role in Fort Greene. According to United States Census data, in 1980 the percent of households with a self-employed worker in Fort Greene was just slightly lower than the borough of Brooklyn, 4.11% and 5.01% respectively. However, self-employment among Fort Greene residents was growing faster there (+30.47%) than the borough of Brooklyn (+21.76%) or New York City (+26.47%) overall. By 1990, the percent of household with a self employed worker in Fort Greene surpasses both Brooklyn and New York City with 10.39%, 7.75% and 10.02% respectively. These trends continued through 2000 (see Table 2).[12]

[Insert Table 2 (self-employment)]

Although archival data suggests that Fort Greene has historically been a haven for minority entrepreneurs, neither census data nor historical reports answer the question(s) of central importance to this study, that is: how did minority merchants in Fort Greene help revitalize the neighborhood? And, why locate merchants' at the intersection of economic development and community building?

In 2003, I conducted forty-four in-depth interviews of entrepreneurs who had located in Fort Greene between 1952 and 2002. I conducted an additional eleven interviews with representative of community based organizations, political representatives, and other civic leaders. I began by interviewing entrepreneurs I had come to know through my earlier work in the neighborhood

[11] The twenty-one census tracts included in this study represent both Fort Greene and Clinton Hill. I combine the two neighborhoods because historically they were joined as Fort Greene. Culturally and politically they are still considered one large neighborhood although Clinton Hill has begun to establish its own identity. By combining Fort Greene and Clinton Hill the neighborhood is approximately one square mile bounded by Park Avenue on the north, Atlantic Avenue on the south, Classon Avenue on the east and Flatbush Avenue on the west.

[12] Tract-level self-employment data does not allow me to make claims about the racial identity of individual entrepreneurs.

and attending community meetings. I then asked my key informants to recommend other merchants and supplemented respondents'' recommendations with the merchant association roster. I created a typology of merchants based on their date of arrival in Fort Greene and labeled merchant groups: "Pioneers" (1952 – 1970s); "Old-Timers" (1980s-1990s), and "Newcomers" (2000-2002). I chose a temporal typology as opposed to one based on industry or business sector because I found that across industries, merchants cohorts had similar individual-level attributes and entrepreneurial and community philosophies. Table 3 disaggregates the merchant typology by retail which highlights the fashion and food related business clusters among "old-timers."

[Table 3: (Retail Mix)]

Fort Greene

[Insert Map of Fort Greene]

Mapping neighborhood change

Arguing for merchant effects requires using a socio-historical lens to illuminate neighborhood change, pinpoint moments of revitalization, and then develop logical explanations that link neighborhood merchants to revitalization. This section starts with a background of the Fort Greene local economy to provide important historical and cultural context. It and then moves into a contemporary description of the Fort Greene merchant association, which I hold up as an independent institutional effect produced by collective action on the part of merchants. As an institution, Bogolan produces additional merchant effects.

Historical context of Fort Greene

Following the Great Migration, the black population in Central Brooklyn expanded significantly especially along the Fulton Street and Atlantic Avenue corridors (Connolly, 1977). Early immigrants of Dutch, German and English ancestry occupied the pristine 19th century Italianate and neo-Greco single family brownstone dwellings located along Fort Greene's tree-lined side streets. During the 1920s, more than half of Brooklyn's black population of 31,912 was concentrated along the lengthy thoroughfare that extended though Fort Greene and into Bedford Stuyvesant (Rosenberg, 1998). During the Depression era, Fort Greene's housing stock declined precipitously and most middle-class European ethnics vacated the area after selling or abandoning their once palatial brownstone and limestone estates. Single family brownstones were later subdivided into single room occupancies (SROs) and rented to low-wage and working-class immigrants and blacks and Puerto Ricans. The proud image of Fort Greene shifted from being part of “brownstone Brooklyn,” or the “city of homes and churches,” which provided a respectable respite for those who sought cover from the “bustle and congestion of Gotham” (Jackson, 1985:27). Fort Greene’s nascent legitimacy as a place for art and culture with establishment of the Brooklyn Academy of Music and other local arts and cultural institutions were marred by the influx of dirty industry, working class and poor white ethnics, and black and Puerto Rican newcomers.

The migration of blacks to northeastern cities such as Brooklyn during the 1940s and 1950s was “greater than the Great Migration” (Kusmer, 1996). Momentous demographic shifts coincided with a reshaping of the New York metropolitan area as black newcomers settled in Brooklyn and to a lesser extend in Harlem. This second wave migration nearly doubled the black population in Brooklyn from 107, 263 in 1940 to 208,478 in 1950 (Connolly, 1977). Similar to the Great Migration, the second wave was largely fueled by a combination of dreams for a better life and seemingly trustworthy information about real employment opportunities. Brooklyn manufacturers sought black southerners and encouraged their relocation to support the advancement of the northern industrial economy (Connolly, 1977).

Fort Greene’s port location made it an attractive site for a multitude of light and heavy manufacturing firms like Mergenthaler and Intertype, which manufactured ninety-nine percent of the worlds’ typesetting machinery; a division of Borden Milk Company and producer of Pioneer ice cream; the Griffin shoe polish company (Willensky, 1986). The proliferation of industry made Fort Greene an attractive locale for unskilled and semi-skilled workers. Around World War II, there was economic resurgence in Fort Greene as a result of the wartime manufacturing. The shipbuilding and weapons plants located at the Brooklyn Navy Yard in Fort Greene provided over 9,900 jobs. These jobs fueled the neighborhood economy and kept the Brooklyn economy bustling as well. However, the defense industry’s productivity masked massive early deindustrialization which had devastated other northern inner city. Soon after the Navy Yard was decommissioned in 1966, there was a mass exodus of more than 10,000 residents, many of whom were shipyard workers and other working class white families living in and around public housing in Fort Greene.[13]

Following deindustrialization and the rapid out-migration of white residents, the image of Fort Greene shifted from a respectable working-class neighborhood to a black ghetto. Fort Greene continued to loose residents through the 1980s. Between 1970 and 1980, Fort Greene population declined from 62,846 to 51,628 residents. By 1980, the white population had dwindled to 19% compared to 35% a decade earlier. "White flight" in Fort Greene seemed particularly stark as it coincided with an increase in black residents from 60% in 1970 to over 69% in 1980 and greater than 70% by 1990 (see Table 4). Other indicators of neighborhood conditions also exhibited noteworthy improvement for Fort Greene's black residents between 1980 and 1990 with a leveling off by 2000. For instance, in 1980 71% of black Fort Greene residents, at least 25 years old, had earned only a high school degree or less; by 1990, the rate had dropped to 56% with an increase from 28% to 42% of those who attended at least some college during the same time period. On average, black Fort Greene residents had higher levels of education than black residents in the rest of Brooklyn or New York City overall (see Table 4a). In terms of income, between 1980 and 1990, black residents in Fort Greene experienced an increase in the proportion considered low income, as well as those classified as upper income (see Table 4b).

Based on the generally accepted indicators of neighborhood conditions, the overall picture of Fort Greene was that of declined during the 1970s and 1980s and a rebound during the 1990s with slower improvements in 2000. Clearly a multitude of factors contributed to restructuring in Fort Greene during the 1990s. For instance, the tight housing market in Manhattan which pushed displaced Manhattanites into Brooklyn coupled with the borough's long-tem plans to redevelop the Downtown area starting with the MetroTech development produced spillover effects in Fort Greene that provide a partial explanations of local change. However, the intentionality of local merchants in terms of their location decisions and their collective actions

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[13] A major joint state and city effort supported the construction of public housing in Fort Greene which opened in 1944. The NYC Housing Authority managed the project which, at the time, was the largest public housing development in the country with the capacity to accommodate 3,500 families (*New York Time*s, 1941). The public housing consisted of thirty-nine buildings, twenty-seven six-story apartments, four eleven and four thirteen story buildings. The buildings were bounded by Park Avenue, Flushing Avenue, North Elliott Place, Carlton Avenue, and Tillary Street in a northwestern corner of Fort Greene.

exposes an alternative explanation for revitalization. It is important to remember that during the 1980s and 1990s Fort Greene progressed in lieu of additional public sector support.[14]

[Insert Table 4, 4a, and 4b]

Clearly, a multitude of public policies, institutional practices and popular representations shaped life this majority black neighborhood. A twenty-year veteran in the Brooklyn Borough President's Office working in the office of Economic Development said there were no projects or initiatives designed to revitalize the commercial corridors in Fort Greene during the 1980s through 1990s. He went on to say "There weren't specific policies against Fort Greene; it was more laissez faire. Although I'm a democrat, sometimes free market economics works best." He then shared an ad hoc "back of the envelope metric" used in the Borough Presidents office to assess when to invest in commercial revitalization. "We tend to invest when commercial corridors are already on the upside, less than 10% vacancy… If I remember, Fulton Street (one of the primary commercial corridors in Fort Greene) had over 10% vacancy for some time… but now it's really going, huh?." Without solicitation he acknowledged the diligence of local merchants in "turning Fort Greene around" but stated that his office wasn't really familiar with the merchants' efforts until recently.

The merchant association and merchant effects

Merchants who settled on Fulton Street, De Kalb Avenue or Myrtle Avenue in Fort Greene during the 1980s and early 1990s were particularly challenged by the black ghetto stigma that characterized the neighborhood and the commercial corridors more specifically as having uninviting façades, a range of shoddy merchandise, licentious activity (*New York Daily News,* 1981) and ultimately a high risk business. Though decent and well-run eateries, family restaurants, entertainment venues and personal service shops have a long established presence

[14] Pratt Area Community Council (PACC) involved itself in economic development in 1997 by developing a strategic plan for expanding into economic development, but did not begin to offer services until 1999 when they expanded core service provision from housing and advocacy to include economic development. PACC opened an economic development branch office in the neighborhood and provided hands-on assistance to area merchants and residents concerned with commercial revitalization, corridor improvement and business support. Around the same time the Myrtle Avenue Revitalization Project Local Development Corporation was also established to restore the "Main Street" of Fort Greene.

on these corridors, interspersed among them were less desirable enterprises; hence respectable establishments were often overlooked and under-valued by outside observers.

Although the stigma prevailed through the eighties and into the nineties, many merchants were optimistic about the direction that Fort Greene was heading. One factor that stimulated the positive sentiment among insiders was the arrival of a clothing boutiques owned by filmmaker Spike Lee. Mr. Lee's clothing store (Spike's Joint) and his production studio (Forty Acres and a Mule) opened on De Kalb Avenue in the mid-1980s. Spike Lee's enterprises helped increase public awareness of Fort Greene and brought more favorable attention to the area. His shop became a tourist attraction and the cluster of fashion retailers in proximity to Spike's Joint generated a consumer buzz.

Merchants recognized signs of improvement, notably small business investments that signaled to them that Fort Greene was on the mend. The positive neighborhood sentiments among merchants were tempered by growing uncertainty about how the neighborhood was to be defined and by whom. As the image of Fort Greene began to improve, there was growing concern about the long-term implications of a creating a neighborhood identity with wide appeal. Some merchants questioned their sustainability if rent increases followed neighborhood upgrading, while others focused on capitalizing on potential increases in patronage. Though most merchants extolled the expansion and diversification of neighborhood retail with the arrival of new merchants, there was an emergent murmur that some renewal may prove to be "too much of a good thing," as described by one merchant. Reynolds, a longtime resident of Fort Greene who owned a retail shop on the same block as Spike Lee, recalled how the development of MetroTech[15] in 1989 evoked feelings of vulnerability:

> Here I am, now in Fort Greene, looking around and feeling the vibe and I'm like 'wow, this neighborhood is…' [Smiles and nods] and then here comes the

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[15] See Susan Fainstein (1994) *The City Builders: Property, Politics & Planning in London and New York* for a detailed case study of the MetroTech development. The 16-acre MetroTech Center is the result of a strong partnership formed in the mid-l980s between Brooklyn's business community, the leadership at Polytechnic University, government and community leaders. They came together to address Brooklyn's need for new, modern office and academic space. Eight new buildings and three renovated ones have become home to major financial institutions and firms such as Chase Manhattan Bank, Bear Sterns, and the Securities Industry's Automation Corporation. Regional utilities such as Keyspan Energy and Bell Atlantic also now have MetroTech addresses. (a statement made by Howard Golden, past Brooklyn Borough President, at the New York City Real Estate Forum Roundtable in 2000)

> rumble from the distance, and the big ugly rumble is the MetroTech complex and now we're hearing of them building Atlantic Center Mall. So my thoughts at this time are, wow, we are gonna be steamrolled, this neighborhood is gonna be steamrolled and we'll be nonexistent in a little bit if we don't start circling our wagons, now! (Reynolds)

Reynolds was not alone. Other old-timers feared that business solvency would be jeopardized if multimillion dollar developments continued in Fort Greene or around Downtown Brooklyn. Many merchants recognized the need for a collective advocate, or an institutional actor dedicated to protecting the interest of the small business community and promoting their collective accomplishments as important neighborhood resources. Roslyn Waters (Rozz), an old-timer and owner of a fashion boutique, articulated it this way, "we're not looking for handouts. We just want some acknowledgement, that's all, acknowledge what's here and has been… They want to be like [Christopher] Columbus, you know." I asked Roslyn who "they" are and she emphatically stated "BAM… and crew." The "crew" referred to powerful attendant *outsiders* supporting the BAM redevelopment plan, most notably the Mayor, Brooklyn Borough President and Forest City Ratner (the private developer).

By the early 1990s, Fort Greene was abuzz with speculation about demographic shifts and the opening of the MetroTech complex. According to Reynolds, a handful of old-timers shared feelings of discontent with the lack of transparency in the MetroTech development. Reynolds said MetroTech "left a sour after taste." Meaning, numerous old-timers recognized the collective vulnerability of Fort Greene's minority business community and their lack of collective voice in development discourse. Consequently, after meeting informally and intermittently for more than a year, a cadre of old-timers formally established the Bogolan[16] Brooklyn Merchant Association in April 1995 as a minority merchant led community institution that would not only serve as the institutional voice of local merchants but would also facilitate the transference of reliable and timely information among Fort Greene merchants, participate in neighborhood visioning and planning processes, and help bolster the visibility of Fort Greene as a boutique destination. According to Bogolan charter documents (1995) and interviews with

[16] The name Bogolan is short for Bogolanfini, or "mud cloth" in English. Bogolanfini is a unique fabric that looks simple in appearance but its development is an elaborate process. Bogolanfini is created by Bambara women of Mali West Africa. Bambara women apply aged mud to a bleached textile. Through a complex dyeing process they color the cloth to create storytelling designs. The designs typically tell a story about an event or particular person in the history of the development of the community.

founding members, the merchant association was explicitly organized to represent and give voice to the local black business community at the various political and economic conversations and decision-making venues that shaped neighborhood conditions; and to support the local entrepreneurs by promoting Fort Greene.

Building "Bogolan Brooklyn"

Mixed in with the neighborhood bookstore, home furnishings, bakery, and restaurants are a plethora of venerable enterprises including hardware stores, fashion designers, cafés, antique shops, and art galleries. A true entrepreneurial mélange exists in Fort Greene by the early 1990s. However, there are no conspicuous signs of systematic public sector support for the neighborhood's businesses. Rather, the growth, expansion, and diversification of the neighborhood small businesses were organic. All along the tree-lined commercial corridors signs of social and economic life emerge as small groups of garrulous men and women congregate in shops and interact in the public spaces in front of restaurants and cafés. Neighborhood identity banners proclaiming "Bogolan Brooklyn" hung boldly from streetlamps along Fulton Street within a few months of Bogolan's incorporation. The large black and white flags that read, "Welcome to Bogolan Brooklyn: The soul of the Brooklyn renaissance" decorated the Fulton corridor for nearly ten blocks between Flatbush Avenue and South Oxford Street. "Bogolan Brooklyn" represented the merchants' quest to reframe the identity of Fort Greene.

The initial task of Bogolan was "institution building;" according to Reynolds. This entailed "deciding on a name, marking our territory and building membership." A small cohort of merchants, mostly owners of fashion-related enterprises or food service businesses, decided on the name "Bogolan" because according to Reynolds, "it reflected what we were about." Black-owned fashion designers and apparel enterprises constituted the largest and fastest growing Fort Greene business cluster. Bogolan represented "the renaissance of African-centered creativity, culture and entrepreneurship taking place in Downtown Brooklyn" (Bogolan Charter, 1995). Bogolan members were principally intent on amassing the requisite resources – human, financial, political, media – so as to make visible black commerce and make claims on Fort Greene. Merchants assumed that highlighting the civility and "unique" concentration of minority entrepreneurs in Fort Greene could have the potential to stave off redevelopment plans that often rested on "radical redeveloping."

After naming the organization, delimiting its social-geography was of chief importance. Bogolan founders and initial members publicly demarcated the boundaries of "Bogolan Brooklyn." Reynolds reiterated the importance of boundary setting: "I remember when we all sat around a table and declared the area 'Bogolan Brooklyn'… We have it on tape. We knew it would be an important day." In view of encroaching redevelopment, this nascent organization intended to "claim and take responsibility for" a particular geography, which was an important precursor to spatial re-imaging.

Finally, founding members launched a door-to-door membership drive to promote Bogolan and gain support for the concept of "Bogolan Brooklyn." Retailers, service providers and professionals joined the organization. The momentum surrounding Bogolan grew among a disparate group of minority "artists, designers, film makers, entertainers, journalists, doctors, lawyers, and retailers," (Bogolan Charter, 1995) who shared concerns over the implications of development for them personally and for the neighborhood. Reynolds reflected on the early days of Bogolan and its hodgepodge of business owners and stated, "we needed bodies… it was a movement in the making." Reynolds went on to say, "Enough people understood what was happening and liked the idea and decided to participate." Minority business owners joined Bogolan for a myriad of reasons. Some joined because "at least they [the organization] were trying to do *something*," as Lena remembers; while others joined as a way to remain informed and establish the collective capacity to challenge anticipated conventional economic development. Still others like Lisa Fellows, a café owner, established her business in Fort Greene in large part because of Bogolan. As she put it, "I wanted to be around black folk, black business folk."

Approximately seventy business owners constituted Bogolan's early dues paying membership within a year to eighteen months of its inception. Additional "affiliates" or non-member businesses regularly attended monthly meetings, participated in Bogolan sponsored community cultural events, political action, and mutual business support strategies (e.g., collective advertising, neighborhood-wide promotions, and media campaigns). It is difficult to know the racial composition of small business owners in Fort Greene, although any insiders believed that retail establishments were over-represented by black and Latino owners. Lena Johnson, a founding member and early old-time apparel retailer, did not know the exact number but was confident that during the 1990s "Fort Greene had the largest concentration of black-owned businesses."[17] Though other predominately black Brooklyn neighborhoods such as Bedford Stuyvesant and Flatbush were also known for black entrepreneurship, Fort Greene's fashion and food clusters made it distinct.

The rapid swell in Bogolan membership confirmed a prevailing belief among merchants regarding their need for support networks, resources and the encouragement that merchant organizations can provide. Teresa Carter, started an espresso bar and cyber lounge in 1995, explained that she began her operation with "patient capital" from private investors, some of whom were celebrities such as filmmaker Spike Lee and author Alice Walker. After more than two years of business, Teresa began to look for a small amount of debt capital to finance equipment upgrades and business expansion. Initially Teresa contacted the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce which directed her to business assistance in the Fort Greene area. As Teresa describes it:

> First, the guy, the small business consultant, was only there like one or two days a week, in the afternoon. When I called to set up an appointment, I spoke to him directly, so he knew why I was coming, mind you. I don't mind it so much that I had to leave here [her business] in the middle of the day, I had people to cover…You know what I got [from him]? Nothing, basically nothing! He just hands me a bunch of brochures for banks and the SBA. He couldn't answer my questions; he didn't know loan officers… Please, he had nothing to offer.

In many ways Teresa's inability to access business assistance was familiar to other minority merchants who are often disadvantaged by the dearth of community institutions that provide direct business assistance and can provide timely and accurate information regarding city and state economic development and small business expansion programs. Consequently, Bogolan's

[17] According to the 1997 Economic Census, Brooklyn (Kings County) was third in the state of New York for percent of black owned firms: Los Angeles, CA (38,277 or 48%), Cook, IL (32,377 or 79%) and Kings, NY (24,629 or 28%). At the state level, New York (86,496), California (79,110) and Texas (60,427) have the largest number of black owned firms overall. However, states with the largest proportion of black owned firms as a proportion of all firms include: Maryland (11.9%), Georgia (9.8%), and Virginia (7.0%)

growth reflected recurring requests by merchants for collective voice and institutional representation. Establishing the merchant association, however, was only part of Bogolan founders' overall vision. The overarching vision for "Bogolan Brooklyn" encompassed spatial "claiming and naming," so as to influence local commercial and cultural dynamics. The intention was to export "Bogolan Brooklyn" imagery and products, thus garnering legitimacy for black urban spaces and establishments.

Merchant association members

An editorial in *Essence* (1991), a black popular culture magazine, described Fort Greene as "The Happening 'Hood." The article referred to Spike Lee as well as a plethora of black artists and entrepreneurs who called Fort Greene "home." A central aim of Bogolan was to solidify its reputation as an insiders' organization as leverage for enhancing the reputation of Fort Greene which was described by black resident as the "bastion of the city's black middle class" (*New York Times*, 1992). Fort Greene was home to black cultural elite including jazz singer Betty Carter, trumpeter and composer Terence Blanchard, cinematographer Ernest Dickerson, comedian Chris Rock, and numerous others. Although these high profile residents did not participate in Bogolan, their longstanding attachment to Fort Greene validated its emergent image as "A black Mecca" (*Daily Ne*ws, 1997). Founding members of Bogolan, wanted "Bogolan Brooklyn" to be gain popular appeal as another New York City enclave and "shopping district" akin to Little Italy, Chinatown and SoHo (Bogolan charter documents, 1995).

The desire to reframe and restructure Fort Greene into a vibrant (black) cultural enclave was an underlying intent of Bogolan. At a time when the "competitive advantages of the inner-city" (Porter, 1995) were not well known and Fort Greene was not considered a viable marketplace for sophisticated or upscale retailers, Bogolan showcased the diversity and appeal of local merchants and shifted the way black urban spaces and institutions were typically framed. Recognizing the concentration of local talent among merchants, Bogolan founding members began to leverage the local skills and expertise of individual merchants for collective gains. The institutionalization of Bogolan reflected and facilitated the expansion in the number of minority-owned business establishments in Fort Greene. The old-timers who arrived in the early to late nineties were somewhat different from their predecessors and they debunked popular negative stereotypes about black entrepreneurs lacking human capital, financial resources and business acumen to own and manage successful business ventures. Old-timers in Fort Greene, most of whom were black, entered self-employment after acquiring skills and resources through mainstream mechanisms such as reputable MBA programs, schools of fashion design, and hospitality schools, as well as through hands-on experience in managerial and other professional positions in the corporate sector at firms such as Chase Bank, Solomon Smith Barney, Abraham and Strauss, Deloitte and Touche, to name just a few. As a collective entity, Bogolan intended to refute the stigmatization of black urban spaces and commercial behavior by holding up its members as countervailing evidence. Bogolan, therefore, was intended to represent a new image of black urban culture and black entrepreneurship.

Old-timers entered self-employment with ample human capital and often with significant financial capitalization (see Table 5). These entrepreneurs chose to locate in Fort Greene, amid its stigmatization, thought their resources suggest they had other location options. Bogolan's founders and early members hoped to leverage their collective resources in enhance individual operations, the growing cluster of black merchants in Fort Greene and the neighborhood more generally. Wittingly and unwittingly, Bogolan members organized around a racial ideology[18] that operated in tandem with the collective business mission. I describe the racial ideology as both explicit and implicit because the impetus to establish Bogolan was based on shared fear of displacement due to redevelopment, which merchants believed inherently disadvantages the most vulnerable and marginalized members of neighborhoods. Despite their resources and skills, black merchants acknowledged their subordinate position vis-à-vis the logic of redevelopment and capital interests.

[Table 5: (Business-owners characteristics)]

Though Bogolan's racial ideology was largely transparent, Reynolds and other founding members said the group did not intentionally exclude non-black merchants. A few early

[18] Countervailing ideologies challenge the convention by expressing alternative social frames, making popular new narratives and giving voice to untold experiences. *Racial ideology,* therefore, refers to racially based frameworks that attempt to challenge dominant racial frames and rearticulate social group position and processes of mobility (Bonilla- Silva, 2003).

members even discussed repeated attempts to gain participation from Cambodian, Chinese, Japanese and white merchants which never succeeded. There were mixed views as to the scant participation white and Asian Fort Greene merchants. Some contended that Bogolan was started as a cultural organization that later evolved into a business association, and its strong cultural underpinnings dissuaded full participation across the spectrum of cultural identities. Rozz claimed to have personally invited and cajoled numerous non-black merchants in proximity to her shop to attend meetings and get involved with the organization. Rozz believes they were put off by Bogolan's "black leadership." Rozz went on to say: "the Chinaman wouldn't join; the woman on the corner who is white wouldn't join, because they saw it [Bogolan] as a cultural group… They were in a black neighborhood but felt like hey, I don't need the organization." Conversely, non-black merchants felt their participation was not solicited. "I have not heard of Bogolan," said the manager of local Sushi Restaurant, although a "Bogolan Brooklyn" flag hung from the streetlamps directly outside of her building. "No one approached me about it," she went on to say (McKenzie, 2003).

Bogolan accomplishments and merchant effects

Bogolan was the first formal merchant association in Fort Greene in over fifteen years. During the Bogolan's initial four years it produced significant organizational and neighborhood-wide accomplishments. Most notably, Bogolan provided a venue for merchants to collectively envision the neighborhood they wanted to create. Merchants organized Bogolan largely in response to outside-led redevelopment pressure. However, in addition to be constituted as an oppositional organization in response to redevelopment pressure, merchants articulated a neighborhood vision that included dimensions of Fort Greene they wanted to preserve as well as area in need of development. Most importantly, merchants upheld Fort Greene's sense of community and the commercial cohesion as part of the externalities that merchants provided.

The expanding cluster of fashion and creative enterprises were essential to Fort Greene's local economy and appeal and the industries also played a critical role in establishing Fort Greene as a tourist destination, which contributed the overall allure of the City. Errol T. Louis, the Executive Director of Bogolan (1998-2001), offered a succinct description of Bogolan, which brought into balance the cultural and business duality of Bogolan. Mr. Louis started by informing the audience that Bogolan was not the project of a local nonprofit organization. Instead, it was a group of "merchants coming together and banding together." Errol Louis went on to describe Bogolan and Fort Greene more generally:

> There are very different visions of the commercial future and the residential future of the neighborhood and the merchants got together not just for the usual sort of common promotion, sanitation services, safety, lighting and other kind of basic concerns that storefront owners tend to have, but also to introduce in a more sharply focused and coherent unified way what really has been an important part of the growth and development and the attraction of this neighborhood which is that it is a cultural district but with an Africana or African Diaspora sort of flavor. (New York Real Estate Forum Transcript, 2000)

Bogolan promoted Fort Greene as a shopping and small business destination cultural experience and received a small discretionary grant of $5,000 from the Office of the Brooklyn Borough President. A letter of appreciation to the Borough President's Office, written in 1997 by Bogolan's Executive Committee, stated that the resources would facilitate the promotion of the "culturally stimulating area as a safe and prosperous place to do business." Additionally, the letter stated that the Office of the Borough President and Bogolan shared four objects: first, the establishment of "Bogolan Brooklyn as an official business/cultural district;" second, the "promotion of Bogolan Brooklyn as a tourist destination," with the area's black owned boutiques, shops and restaurants as marquee attractions; third, the securing of real estate for Bogolan members to ensure the long-term stability of the businesses; and finally, to secure financing for neighborhood business development and marketing. Although the size of the grant was not noteworthy, Bogolan eventually was able to leverage important political affiliations and develop communicative capacity after gaining the attention of the Offices of the Borough President. For instance, State Assemblyman Roger Green allocated $300,000 ($50,000 for Bogolan operations and $250,000 earmarked for beautification and "cultural projects" along Fulton Street). Finally, Bogolan was one of three organizations to receive $40,000/year for three years from Fleet Bank. The money was part of the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce, Fulton First program, intended to help stabilize local businesses and to support local retail shops to meet the needs of the neighborhoods flanking Fulton Street. These grants directly produced institutional effects by strengthening on-going operations and indirectly facilitated additional merchant effects. Moreover, the resources Bogolan accrued, for beautification projects, greater communication and neighborhood promotion, would not have been realized in Fort Greene without the organization.

The small grant from the Office of the Borough President supported institution building neighborhood promotion; however, the substantive subsequent grants really helped increase the legitimacy of Bogolan to a plethora of elected and appointed officials, bankers, and philanthropists, and they further increased exposure the of Fort Greene. So much so that in 2001, the Brooklyn Tourism Council, began for the first time, to promote "Bogolan Brooklyn" in their visitors' guidebooks and walking tour material. The materials described Fort Greene as a "shopping district" and "a consortium of cultural arts institutions, fashion houses, gift and furniture stores, salons restaurants and cafés…" The placement of Fort Greene in the brochures advanced the neighborhood's appeal as a site to visit in the borough.

As a membership organization, Bogolan members described the networking capacity as the organization's greatest recourse, particularly for minority merchants in fashion and other creative industries. For instance, fashion retailer Jeffery Hamilton explained how general Bogolan meetings also became a venue for business cluster meetings and networking, designers often met before or after Bogolan monthly meetings. Jeffery remembered that he met other fashion designer retailers through Bogolan soon after he opened his boutique in Fort Greene. One example of networking that Jeffery recalled included a handful of designers who pooled individual expertise and resources to rent a booth at an important trade show, which would have been otherwise unaffordable to any of them individually. "I designed the clothes, mostly daytime outfits, Rozz coats, someone else did hats and this sister did wonderful jewelry and accessories" said Jeffery. In view of limited external resources, Bogolan members recognized the potential advantage of cooperating and lending individual resources and capacities to the institutional endeavor.

Besides networking, additional social effects of Bogolan are best articulated by the merchants. For instance, Lester, the owner of a home furnishing store, saw Bogolan as symbolic of group pride or "pride among our people" as he stated it and "neighborhood pride." Lester appreciated Bogolan meetings when members "got into the nitty gritty neighborhood stuff" as

Lester put it, meaning the myriad mundane concerns that created a semblance of neighborhood cohesion, from coordinating times that retail establishments should open and close to allow potential patrons to maximize the shopping and dining experience to issues related to streetscape design, lighting, tree planting, window displays, awnings, and other beautification issues along the corridor. Conversely, Lester also discussed numerous ways that time was wasted during monthly Bogoloan meetings as members lament about imminent change in the local demography. Many black merchants expressed concern over the influx of white residents around the new millennium. Lester, however, was in favor of Fort Greene becoming more racially mixed; however, he did not believe that it should occur at the expense the neighborhood's African American history. Lester believed that "Bogolan has to wear many hats." He went on to specify some of those hats: first, Lester saw Bogolan as an institution for preserving Fort Greene's past, particularly the local business culture. Second, Lester said "it [Bogolan] gives us some legitimacy," which included a collective voice for engaging in redevelopment discourse. Finally, Lester commented that Bogolan evoked "pride." Lester described pride associated with black entrepreneurship this way:

> …it's definitely meaningful to me, being able to run a business and try to do it reasonably well. And as a black man, I think, there's a certain amount of pride in doing that, you know… It's funny, sometimes people come in and ask me if this is black-owned because we're trying to shop black, you know, with black owned businesses.

For Lester, pride surrounding black entrepreneurship was not merely created by an individual black entrepreneur. Instead it was collectively established densely concentrated cluster of black merchants who were organized and who provided unique product and service offerings. Black patrons commented on and sought out minority merchants in Fort Greene for these reasons and Bogolan played a crucial institutional role in reshaping the image of Fort Greene by promoting business density and creativity.

Bonds that fray

Despite Bogolan's significant and mundane accomplishments, the racial ideology and the position of resistance that motivated organizational formation and early actions were not sustainable. Based on interviews with former Bogolan members, it seems that a number of factors led to dismantling of Bogolan. Merchants shared diverging perspectives; therefore, it is impossible to state definitively what led to the organization's fissure. Nevertheless, narratives point to a few recurring themes, that can be summarizes as both external factors that constrained the on-going operations and internal dynamics that curtailed organizational growth.

By 2002, internal fragmentation and external pressure from conventional economic development proved too much for Bogolan. While the neighborhood vision purported by Bogolan helped reframe Fort Greene into a "hip and happening" place, the new vision for Fort Greene was subsumed by a larger vision for Downtown Brooklyn largely crated and promoted by the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Brooklyn Academy of Music Local Development Corporation (BAM LDC), property developers, the Borough Presidents office and other capital interest. Bogolan members repeatedly described the BAM LDC's proposal to develop the "BAM Cultural District" as an intractable challenge.

Why did it seem intractable? The BAM LDC project was made public in 2002, though speculation surfaced years earlier. The $630 million dollar capital investment earmarked for the Cultural District was the largest redevelopment project in Brooklyn's recent history (Concerned Citizen's Coalition, 2003). The project leveraged both private capital and state and city subsidies totaling more than $50 million dollars. The magnitude of the proposed development coupled with demographic shifts in Fort Greene by 2000, which shifted neighborhood dynamics in ways that for the first time old-time merchants had to respond to. Bogolan's loose organizational structure and its historic position as a reactionary organization as opposed to a proactive organization led to internal conflicts members over contrasting beliefs about the appropriate direction for Bogolan.

Bogolan's internal fragmentation reflected tensions between the past and future visions for Bogolan and differences of opinion regarding the redevelopment of Fort Greene. Many merchants who arrived during the eighties and early nineties, most notably Bogolan founders, wanted the organization to maintain its internal coherence by adhering to original mission, with just slight modification when necessary. This included maintaining an implicit if not explicit racial ideology, which had sustained Bogolan until the turn of the twenty-first century. In contrast, another cadre of merchants, many of whom arrived during the mid to late nineties, believed that Bogolan should do more to accommodate the racial and ethnic diversity of "newcomers," or post-2000 merchants, to Fort Greene.

Roslyn Waters shared her perspective on the causes of internal conflict: "we ran into problems every time we tried to be something we weren't. We're not just a business association; we're also a cultural organization." When I asked Rozz what it meant to be a cultural organization as opposed to a business association she explained that it often comes down to decisions the organization makes regarding putting your group first, without excluding others; "every other group does it." Rozz offered an example as to how attention to culture influences business decisions and strengthens local capacity:

> When Jon fell on hard times, we [Bogolan members] found out about it and went to him. We collected money to help keep him open… Jon was a part of the community. We can't always respond like that but I'm glad we did. When Clyde was closing we didn't help. We found out kind of late but he never showed an interest in being part of the community…

Rozz lamented the loss of collective support and solidarity among merchants over the years, and expressed bewilderment as to why the general perception, particularly among new members and leadership, that it was not conducive to integrate a socio-cultural focus with business concerns. "It's possible… it can happen," Rozz went on to say "it [merging of culture and business] is happening in other neighborhoods." Rozz described Bogolan early on as a "movement" that she was proud to be a part of, as it helped debunk negative stereotypes about black social and economic spaces and it facilitated merchants' collective engagement in a range of "social" activities such as street fairs and community festivals. For Rozz, such activities provided both individual and community-wide benefits.

In contrast to Rozz's openness regarding the duality of Bogolan's mission, Lisa Fellows, an old-timer who arrived later to Fort Greene, described the ambiguity of Bogolan as problematic. For Lisa, Bogolan's "façade" as a solid merchant association was part of what drew her to the area but critiqued the organization for:

> Never really making a decision as to what it was going to be… it was not really thinking of itself as a business, it was thinking of itself as a social organization or as a cultural organization with some business thrown in.

Most Bogolan members affirmed the need organizational flexibility given the neoliberal environment. However, members were divided over how much to deviate from Bogolan's core principles. The most skeptical members were the younger merchants with significantly less tenure in Fort Greene. The recurring complaint they articulated was that Bogolan had become "out of touch with the needs of new business owners" as Adrienne stated. As a group, these younger merchants supported aspects of Bogolan's community building vision, such as merchant cooperation and collective voice strategic action. However, many younger merchants, who also happened to be over-represented in food services, expressed annoyance with what organizational "rigidity" and nostalgia. On average, however, merchants with less tenure were also less engaged in the various civic activities fundamental to community building.

Discussion and implications

The case of the Bogolan Merchant Association shows the delicate balance among merchant practices, neighborhood revitalization, and gentrification. Bogolan helped restore and stabilize the social, economic and cultural fabric of Fort Greene, and engendered political capacity and legitimacy for local merchants. The multiple dimensions of Bogolan, as a business and cultural organization, provided neighborhood resource beyond conventional economic development, Bogolan shaped important elements for the overall revitalization of Fort Greene. The collective accomplishments of the merchants reframed the longstanding stigma of Fort Greene as a black ghetto. Though initially the reversal was only understood among *insiders*, over time Fort Greene evolved into a unique black urban neighborhood appealing to *outsiders* as well. The newly established allure of Fort Greene not only attracted new merchants and tourists but it also drew the attention of large public and private sector capital investment.

The case of the Fort Greene Bogolan Merchant Association is instructive for exploring the circumstances lead to the formation of community institutions (e.g., merchant associations or otherwise); expanding our understanding of ways that community institutions beyond CDCs contribute to change, and for examining the possibilities and limitations of institutional capacity when faced with political-economic and ideological challenges. At least four themes or insights can be drawn from this case. These insights have implications for revitalization theory and practice.

First, across revitalization scholarship, particularly within the areas of economic development and community building, there is a need for greater conceptual clarity. This case illuminates ways in which the assumptions and definitions brought to bear on neighborhood revitalization are not always explicitly articulated. The Porter (1995) thesis, for example, has gained currency within the community development movement. The underlying assumptions of the Porter thesis are twofold: first, inner cities should be considered competitive strategic locations business ventures. The unique characteristics of inner-city localities are most efficiently leveraged by private enterprise. Porter's second hypothesis suggests that not-for-profit community development agencies have limited capacity for redevelopment. Therefore, he posits that public sector resources be directed to facilitating private sector business development. In other words, inner-city neighborhoods are best revived by investing in and supporting private sector business development. These entities are presumed to be owned and operated by neighborhood *outsiders*, as they typically posses greater human capital than *insiders*. The success of such investments are said to produce spillover effects correlated with neighborhood improvement.

The Fort Greene case demonstrates that neighborhood revitalization occurs through a combination strategies. In terms of neighborhood small businesses, clusters of small enterprises matter for the social, physical, commercial, institutional and communicative dimensions of the neighborhood. The concentration of vibrant enterprises offers more to neighborhood appeal than the success of one large business. Nevertheless, attention has been given to the material outcomes that large enterprises can produce. While these conventional economic development outcomes are necessary (e.g., jobs and growth) they are not sufficient for building and/or revitalizing community. Collective action, civic engagement, and spatial visioning are essential factors for strengthening neighborhoods but are excluded from conventional economic development. The point here is simply that how we conceptualize inner-city revitalization is contingent on our beliefs about inner-city land use and biases toward the possibility for inner city reform.

Second, there remains a need to fill in gaps in our knowledge about ways merchants and merchant associations contribute to revitalization. Related to this point is the need for a neighborhood and business typology. According to Weber and Smith (2003), a general test for revitalization efforts in low-income neighborhoods should be the ability to increase the economic status of residents giving them reasons to stay in the neighborhood. Additionally, Jane Jacobs, in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), called for a better understanding of urban dynamism, which she likened to a human ecosystem with a multitude of interdependencies. Within urban ecosystems, according to Jacobs, neighborhood merchants play a principal role. Jacobs' nostalgic appeal for mixed-use planning and development that respects traditional neighborhood character and values an active street life, public space for social interaction and a plethora of small shops may not independently produce and sustain revitalized urban localities as Jacobs' fails to "anticipate the realities of present market tendencies" (Fainstein, 2005: 6). Nevertheless, Jane Jacobs' plea suggests that planners and developers critically reflect on the types of institutions that make inner-city neighborhood livable and those that help mend the social fabric of inner-city communities. For Jacobs, the social and physical effects of neighborhood merchants were clear. Merchants were instrumental "public characters;" they kept an eye on the neighborhood and shaped the rhythm of the place.

In Fort Greene, for instance, merchants were indeed a stabilizing factor during the neighborhood's lean years. The merchants attracted additional minority business owners. The expansion of the fashion related merchant cluster lured residents and tourists, and helped transform the once downtrodden area into a destination location. However, redevelopment scholarship generally fails to adequately reflect the full range of contributions that racial and ethnic entrepreneurs make to the many of the neighborhoods they invest. Too often the multiple literatures highlight purely economistic indicators to measure the success or failure of the enterprises. However, after closely observing the forms and functions of community enterprises, one notices that small businesses make contributions to neighborhoods that are not purely economic and cannot be easily measured.

Third, in the twenty-first century, adopting a community building as a framework for managing neighborhood revitalization processes, and thus producing more equitable neighborhood outcomes requires that neighborhood institutions have both capacity and flexibility. Community building scholarship has posited that enhancing institutional or organizational capacity is central to the "ability of community organizations to get things done" (Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh, and Vidal, 2001) on behalf of the neighborhood. According to Chaskin et al, (2001: 62) capacity manifests through the agency of individuals in the community as well as through social networks in the community that operate through according to share goals. Similarly, Glickman and Servon (1998) developed a typology of capacity building for community development that includes five capacities: resource, organizational, programmatic, networking and political.

In order to mediate the dominant course for neighborhood reform given the current political economic context (heretofore I have described as a neoliberal environment), capacities outlined by Glickman and Servon (1998) are the first step. The success and limitation of Bogolan suggests that there are at least six capacities, or areas of emphasis, necessary for organizations engaged in community economic development (many of which overlap with Glickman and Servon). However, in addition to internal capacities mentioned, the Bogolan story suggests that change agencies must engage in clear visioning and theory of change development, actively engaging civil society, regional research and market analysis, participating in policymaking processes, building strategic alliances, and developing communicative strategies.[19]

Bogolan's formation, early growth, and merchant solidarity represent a strategic response to the general economic development ideology and practices shaping redevelopment in Fort Greene, New York City and urban growth areas across the country. Bogolan's capacity to affect revitalization in Fort Greene shifted as outside perception of the neighborhood changed from stigmatized black ghetto to vibrant cultural enclave. During the early years, collective reaction to popular stigmatization was the shared goal among merchants. As the neighborhood's image improved among outsiders, the goals and intentions of some merchants also shifted. However, the fissure of Bolgolan highlights the need for flexibility in long-term planning and organizational dynamics. As an organization, Bogolan did not evolve and reflect new need of

[19] I elaborate on institutional capacities in my dissertation. The capacities have been adapted from a set of capacities that I developed with my colleague Keith Lawrence at the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change as part the "Structural Racism and Community Change" project.

some of its membership. Instead it became fragmented by competing internal interests and external pressure. In some instances, capacity refers to the ability to engage in the political and economic discourse that shapes development. In the case of Bogolan, they lacked the capacity to invoke the merchants' past contributions to rebuilding Fort Greene into the vision for Fort Greene's future being constructed by *outsiders*.

Fourth, there is a need for a normative framing of revitalization that embraces aspects of economic development (e.g., local economies and regional context) and community building values (e.g., racial equity, social and economic justice, and respect for community assets, including local culture and history (Kubisch, et al 1998)). That said, I argue that the tension between economic development and community building mirrors tensions between capital and community, and tensions between outcomes orientated versus process oriented change. While conflict over urban space often appears as a bifurcated struggle between: us-them; insider-outsider; community-capital; black-white; poor-wealthy, the rhetoric employed fuels such tensions irrespective of the reality of local outcomes.

Within conventional economic development discourse, there is often an attenuation of the seemingly individualistic and rational goals associated with business development and the collective goals of community building. I argue, therefore, that neighborhood merchants can be understood as important intermediaries; they occupy the middle-ground within the capital and community contradiction. According to Stoecker (1997) there is an inherent conflict between community's tendency to preserve neighborhood spaces for the enjoyment, betterment, and utility; while capital's tendency is to maximize the profits of neighborhood space. Fort Greene merchants occupy a precarious middle ground whereby enterprises serve dual purposes of profit maximization and community creation. Put another way, these inner city merchants helped transform a disinvested inner-city neighborhood into an area that offered both use value and exchange value (Logan and Molotch, 1987; Stoecker, 1997). Accordingly, the neighborhood small businesses served as important symbolic and institutional agents in the community building process. In other words, when considering local economic development as opposed to conventional economic development, neighborhood character matters.[20] Since local enterprises impact the social and economic value of the areas in which they are embedded (McPherson and Silloway, 1986), we need to take a closer look at the policies and practices designed to develop and sustain these enterprises.

[20] I recognize that local economic development (LED) carries its own set of meanings that are more than just development at the neighborhood level. LED became popular in the eighties as a response to neoliberal economic development, does not focus on small businesses, per se; the locality is of central concern. Moreover, LED implicitly attends to questions of equity (Beauregard, 1993; Cox, 1988; Krumholz, 1999). In practice, however, LED utilizes local governmental resources to stimulate private investment in much the same way as mainstream economic development. Given the practical similarities of the two, the terminology is often conflated. However, the theoretical distinctions are important. The geographic specificity implicit in LED engages the dialectic of local and extra-local urban redevelopment but validates the importance of focusing on neighborhood dynamics.

Table 2:

Rate of Self-employment in Fort Greene

	1970	1980	1990	2000
Fort Greene				
Households w/ self-employment	4.48%	4.11%	10.39%	10.03%
% Change		30.47%	154.08%	7.61%
Brooklyn				
Households w/ self-employment	7.24%	5.01%	7.75%	7.86%
% Change		21.46%	54.38%	7.92%
New York City				
Households w/ self-employment	7.85%	6.80%	10.02%	9.38%
% Change		26.47%	48.70%	0.49%

*census tracts include 25, 27, 29.01, 29.02, 31, 33, 35, 179, 181, 183, 185.01, 185.02, 187, 189, 191, 193, 195, 197, 199, 201, and 231 - Source: US Census, Neighborhood Change Database, GeoLytics and Urban Institute.

Table 3:

Fort Greene Retail Mix*

Retail sector	Pioneers Number	Pioneers %	Old-Timers Number	Old-Timers %	Newcomers Number	Newcomers %
Fashion				.3429		.2143
Adult apparel			12		2	
Children's apparel					1	
Food Related		.5000		.2571		.5000
Bakery					1	
Café			2		1	
Grocery store	1				1	
Restaurant (take-out)			2		1	
Restaurant (sit-down dining)	1		5		3	
Entertainment		.2500		.0857		
Bar/lounge	1		1			
Bookstore			1			
Gallery			1			
Music, Electronics						
Home Furnishings				.1429		
Antiques			2			
Furniture			2			
Home decoration			1			
Personal Goods		.2500		.1143		.1429
Body products			1			
Florist			1			
Gifts					1	
Hardware	1		1			
Newsstand/stationary						
Pet store					1	
Video rental			1			
Personal Services				.0571		.1429
Real estate			1			
Business services			1		2	
Other				.0285		
Auto repair			1			
Sample Size	4		35		14	

*The fifty-three businesses represented here reflect merchants who completed the survey I disseminated. I conducted in-depth ethnographic interviews with forty-four of the merchants. Approximately 77% of these merchants were also members of or affiliated with the Bogolan Merchant Association.

Table 4:

Racial composition in Fort Greene

	1970	1980	1990	2000
Fort Greene*				
Total Population	62,846	51,628	55,147	56,278
White	36.81%	19.13%	18.64%	23.08%
Black	60.86%	69.56%	70.26%	63.18%
Latino	17.35%	15.87%	16.77%	18.57%
Asian	n/a	2.17%	2.76%	4.34%
Brooklyn				
Total Population	2,601,038	2,230,726	2,300,664	2,465,326
White	73.79%	56.74%	46.93%	43.05%
Black	25.18%	32.44%	37.97%	37.99%
Latino	15.09%	17.62%	19.46%	19.80%
Asian	n/a	2.07%	4.83%	8.20%
New York City				
Total Population	7,892,351	7,070,424	7,322,670	8,008,278
White	77.16%	61.49%	52.33%	46.73%
Black	21.10%	25.29%	28.78%	28.29%
Latino	16.20%	19.89%	23.73%	26.99%
Asian	n/a	3.48%	6.97%	10.75%

*census tracts include 25, 27, 29.01, 29.02, 31, 33, 35, 179, 181, 183, 185.01, 185.02, 187, 189, 191, 193, 195, 197, 199, 201, and 231 –
Source: US Census, Neighborhood Change Database, GeoLytics and Urban Institute

Table 4a:

Proportion of Education Attainment by Race and Geography
1980 – 2000

		High School or less	Some college - BA
1980			
White	Fort Greene*	0.5595	0.4405
	Brooklyn	0.7581	0.2419
	New York City	0.6648	0.3352
Black	Fort Greene	0.7174	0.2826
	Brooklyn	0.7884	0.2116
	New York City	0.7687	0.2313
Latino	Fort Greene	0.8466	0.1534
	Brooklyn	0.8825	0.1175
	New York City	0.8442	0.1558
Asian	Fort Greene	0.2724	0.7276
	Brooklyn	0.6261	0.3739
	New York City	0.5315	0.4685

		High School or less	Some college	Bachelors	Graduate school
1990					
White	Fort Greene	0.3513	0.1697	0.2702	0.2088
	Brooklyn	0.6151	0.1709	0.1128	0.1011
	New York City	0.5272	0.1804	0.1561	0.1363
Black	Fort Greene	0.5627	0.2239	0.1192	0.0942
	Brooklyn	0.6634	0.2265	0.0732	0.0369
	New York City	0.6449	0.2316	0.0806	0.0430
Latino	Fort Greene	0.7388	0.1458	0.0762	0.0392
	Brooklyn	0.7856	0.1507	0.0403	0.0234
	New York City	0.7510	0.1675	0.0506	0.0324
Asian	Fort Greene	0.2222	0.2378	0.2290	0.3109
	Brooklyn	0.6178	0.1436	0.1488	0.0898
	New York City	0.5061	0.1605	0.2085	0.1251

		High School or less	Some college	Bachelors	Graduate School
2000					
White	Fort Greene	0.2958	0.1466	0.3103	0.2473
	Brooklyn	0.5062	0.1889	0.1713	0.1336
	New York City	0.4442	0.1904	0.1980	0.1675
Black	Fort Greene	0.4609	0.2433	0.1693	0.1265
	Brooklyn	0.6046	0.2512	0.0942	0.0499
	New York City	0.5791	0.2632	0.1025	0.0552
Latino	Fort Greene	0.7090	0.1432	0.0989	0.0489
	Brooklyn	0.7462	0.1685	0.0541	0.0312
	New York City	0.7001	0.1946	0.0647	0.0406
Asian	Fort Greene	0.3234	0.1910	0.2562	0.2294
	Brooklyn	0.6370	0.1277	0.1564	0.0789
	New York City	0.4921	0.1471	0.2315	0.1302

*census tracts include 25, 27, 29.01, 29.02, 31, 33, 35, 179, 181, 183, 185.01, 185.02, 187, 189, 191, 193, 195, 197, 199, 201, and 231
** Population 25 years and older
Source: US Census, Neighborhood Change Database, GeoLytics and Urban Institute.

Table 4b: Racial Group Income Distribution 1970 - 2000

1970		Population	Low * income	Moderate income	Upper income
Fort Greene	white	5,208	39% (2081)	29% (1516)	31% (1611)
$7,918 AFI	black	9,254	45% (4198)	29% (2083)	26% (2373)
Brooklyn	white	523,847	39% (206,039)	26% (134,015)	35% (183,793)
$10,308 AFI	black	154,923	60% (92,883)	22% (34,486)	18% (27,554)
New York City	white	1,631,361	41% (674,622)	32% (519, 344)	27% (437,395)
$11,452 AFI	black	394,145	64% (251,468)	25% (100,085)	11% (42,592)

1980		Population	Low income	Moderate income	Upper income
Fort Greene	white	1,840	32% (590)	30% (549)	38% (701)
$14,463 AFI	black	8,247	47% (3877)	28% (2322)	25% (2048)
Brooklyn	white	306,175	43% (131,703)	28% (84,672)	29% (89,845)
$17,734 AFI	black	174,075	62% (107,549)	23% (40,783)	15% (25,743)
New York City	white	1,050,133	36% (373,473)	27% (285,221)	37% (391,439)
$20,287 AFI	black	420,009	58% (244,898)	24% (99,089)	18% (76,022)

1990		Population	Low income	Moderate income	Upper income
Fort Greene	white	4,171	37% (1563)	17% (700)	46% (1908)
$29,476 AFI	black	15,085	49% (7359)	16% (2424)	35% (5302)
Brooklyn	white	438,446	44% (192,905)	30% (130,312)	26% (115,229)
$32,732 AFI	black	289,816	53% (153,587)	30% (86,931)	17% (49,298)
New York City	white	1,687,415	37% (620,292)	30% (512,372)	33% (554,751)
$37,055 AFI	black	711,586	52% (368,704)	30% (210,632)	19% (132,250)

2000		Population	Low income	Moderate income	Upper income	High Income
Fort Greene	white	5,507	41% (2256)	16% (899)	31% (1742)	11% (610)
$41,250 MFI	black	14,461	49% (7064)	16% (2350)	29% (4223)	6% (824)
Brooklyn	white	405,768	58% (234,160)	11% (46,521)	23% (94,002)	8% (31,085)
$37,333 MFI	black	312,216	67% (208,836)	12% (36,404)	18% (56,335)	3% (10,686)
New York City	white	1,565,270	53% (824,425)	18% (276,727)	17% (265,994)	13% (198,124)
$42,159 MFI	black	754,344	70% (526,205)	16% (118,078)	11% (82,360)	4% (27,706)

*Low income = ≤ 80% of average family income (AFI); Moderate income = 81% – 125% of average family income; Upper income ≥ 126% average family income. In 2000, high income includes individuals make ≥ $125K.
Source: US Census, Neighborhood Change Database, GeoLytics and Urban Institute.

Table 5:

Characteristics of Fort Greene Business-Owners

Characteristics	Pioneers Number	Pioneers %	Old-Timers Number	Old-Timers %	Newcomers Number	Newcomers %
Race						
Black	3	75%	33	94%	9	64%
White	1	25%	0	-	2	14%
Latino	0	-	2	6%	3	21%
Partnership structure	0	-	11	31%	4	29%
Education						
High school	2	50%	0	-	0	-
Some college	2	50%	4	11%	1	7%
College	0	-	23	65%	11	79%
Beyond college	0	-	8	23%	2	14%
Some business training (school)	0	-	16	46%	8	57%
Some business experience (work)	2	50%	9	26%	12	86%
Live in Fort Greene	4	1000%	21	60%	7	50%
Live in Community District 2	0	-	7	20%	3	21%
Live in Brooklyn	0	-	5	14%	3	21%
Median start-up capital	n/a		$90k (10k-400K)		$65K (10k-150k)	
Median annual revenue in 2002	n/a		$210K		$230K	
Own building business located	3	75%	2	6%	3	21%
Average # full-time employees	1.5		1.3		1.4	
Average # part-time employees	1		0.9		1.1	
Level of Civic engagement**						
Exceptional	0	-	8	23%	1	7%
High	0	-	9	26%	0	-
Moderate	2	50%	12	34%	5	36%
Low	1	25%	5	14%	7	50%
Disengaged	1	25%	1	3%	1	7%
Sample Size	4		35		14	

*The fifty-three businesses represented here reflect merchants who completed the survey I disseminated. I conducted in-depth ethnographic interviews with forty-four of the merchants. Approximately 77% of these merchants were also members of or affiliated with the Bogolan Merchant Association.

** Exceptional = 10 to 12 hrs/mo; High = 7 to 9 hrs/mo; Moderate = 4 to 6 hrs/mo; Low = 1 to 3 hrs/mo and Disengaged = 0

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