

Artist in SoHo: Victim-Leader of Gentrification

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Abstract

Not until 1971 is the name "SoHo" publicly known. In the early 1960s, SoHo was still the gritty South Houston industrial district earmarked for urban renewal (Petrus 2018)¹. Unlike today's deindustrialized and gentrified SoHo, SoHo in the 1960s still held manufacturing and warehouse firms, but it was rapidly losing them due to the high operating cost². SoHo was left desolate and facing the risk of demolition. Zukin (1989) insights on the transformation that the region went through in what her study described as the 'happy meeting between art and real estate.'³ This work will focus on the artist-lead transformation in SoHo: the revitalization of a desolated industrial district into an artist enclave, the artist's gradual change into a rich-living neighborhood. The study will also explore how the artists changed SoHo in the past and what role artists play in the current gentrified neighborhood while also looking at the whole gentrification issue. The paper will also address the impact of artists on SoHo's economy, demography, and land use.

Introduction

About 60 years ago, though there were several buildings, 'SoHo' was nonexistent. Some people referred to the area as "Hell's Hundred Acres" and considered it a dying manufacturing and industrial relic full of unattractive buildings. Sharon Zukin, a professor of sociology who specializes in modern urban life, reveals the attention brought by the cultural transformation and shifts in economic activities from a personal experience when she moved in a loft in 1975⁴. Today, the area (bounded by Canal Street, Sixth Avenue, West Houston Street and Crosby Street) boasts of modern amenities, though its landscape remains unchanged, this transformation is credited by Zukin to the artist activities in the area. It is home to affluence and loft real estates as well as upmarket retail malls. The transformation leaves the question of: What might

¹ Stephen Petrus, *From Gritty to Chic: The Transformation of New York City's SoHo, 1962-1976* (SoHo Memory Project, 2018), 2

² SoHo Broadway Initiative. *SoHo Zoning Guidebook: The History and Current State of Zoning and Other Regulations in the SoHo, Neighborhood and Broadway Corridor*. (New York, 2018), 8

³ Zukin, Sharon (1989). *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change*. Rutgers University Press.

⁴ Zukin

have prompted the pervasive and swift changes in popular perceptions and political intentions associated with the district? Even for those well aware of the region's past historic scenes, it is inevitable for one to be interested in finding some clues behind the shift, especially when one visits the now robust streets off SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District.

Through adaptation, loft buildings are central to the converted SoHo streets after a group of urban artists inspired the abandoned area's transition into modern-day streets. The regeneration was undoubtedly unprecedented. Consequently, the transformation acted as a testing ground to other areas around the U.S., especially in inhabiting other post-industrial sectors. The transformation is commonly referred to as the 'SoHo Effect,' which indicates the enormous shift in aesthetics, urban planning, and culture after new businesses continuously replaced the old industrial buildings⁵. These changes took place either through interior restructuring or preserving the exterior parts and mixed-use policies for loft buildings. All this began in the 1960s through the 1970s, converting the place into a competitive center of urban living which came with a number of social challenges⁶.

Before the founding of SoHo Artist's Association (before 1968)

SoHo's cast-iron structures which were standing as early as 1900s, were built for businesses that manufactured goods on the upper floors and sold goods on the ground floor. However, the cast irons structures' spatial features could not meet modern industries' needs, which required a large loading zone and other modern industrial amenities. Just as SoHo is gradually losing its manufacturers, the Manhattan Expressway primary planner, Robert Moses, marked the SoHo neighborhood as “slum” and advocated for clearance⁷. The plan was then defeated by the efforts of local advocates and planners.

During the Second World War, Zukin observes that there was a general decline in industrial production in urban areas due to the war, a great depression in growth in technology and mass production.

⁵ Currid, Elizabeth. *The Warhol Economy: How Fashion, Art, and Music Drive New York City*. Princeton University Press, 2007.

⁶ Shkuda, Aaron. *The lofts of SoHo: gentrification, art, and industry in New York, 1950–1980*. University of Chicago Press, 2016.

⁷ Roberta Brandes, Gratz, “SoHo,” *In The Battle for Gotham: New York in the Shadow of Robert Moses and Jane Jacobs*. New York: Nation Books, 2010. 978-1568584386, 97

SoHo was not spared⁸⁹. As manufacturing, industrial and commercial businesses (which formed a significant part of SoHo economic practices) turned their attention away from the city, the newly vacated spaces became attractive urban artists' spots. Within no time, buildings that once considered 'cutting edges' for the past decades now became obsolescence greatly troubling city planners and landlords¹⁰. However, the lofts, now abandoned, became attractive structures to urban artists who resided in the inexpensive but spacious urban spaces since they could experiment more freely, as long as the inspectors did not expose their illegal occupation¹¹. In her work, she further notes that as the second world war dust settled in the 1950s and 1960s, the industrial activities in the area ceased, as shown in the figure below there's a loss of more than 5,000 manufacturers from 1958 to 1967, and nearly 10,000 manufacturers moved by 1977¹². While the area was "abandoned" by the manufacturers, it became an artist's haven as a small number of artists moved into the large but unoccupied industrial spaces¹³.

Table 2
Decline of Manufacturing Activity in Manhattan, 1958–77

	1958	1963	1967	1972	1977
<i>Establishments</i>					
Total	22,854	20,714	17,841	14,929	13,289
With 20 or more employees	(6,155)	(5,658)	(5,216)	(4,360)	(3,800)
Garment industry	10,329	9,079	7,517	5,716	5,096
Women's and misses' outerwear	(3,533)	(3,105)	(2,696)	(2,326)	(2,552)
Fur goods	(1,424)	(1,382)	(1,153)	(694)	(516)
Printing industry	3,972	3,950	3,563	3,350	3,242
Machinery, except electrical	486	391	335	290	220
<i>Production Workers</i>					
Total	335,369	293,906	278,300	225,600	191,300
Garment industry	167,261	149,034	138,300	114,900	104,100
Women's and misses' outerwear	(68,241)	(62,125)	(58,300)	(51,800)	(53,600)
Fur goods	(7,093)	(6,866)	(6,500)	(3,300)	(2,600)
Printing industry	55,348	55,261	52,600	42,200	31,800
Machinery, except electrical	4,071	3,351	2,800	2,300	1,400
<i>Value Added by Manufacture</i>					
Total	\$4.2 billion	\$4.7 billion	\$5.7 billion	\$6.4 billion	\$8.9 billion
Garment industry	\$1.6 billion	\$1.7 billion	\$2.0 billion	\$2.2 billion	\$2.8 billion
Women's and misses' outerwear	(\$735 million)	(\$807 million)	(\$982 million)	(\$1.0 billion)	(\$1.5 billion)
Fur goods	(\$86 million)	(\$101 million)	(\$108 million)	(\$76 million)	(\$101 million)
Printing industry	\$1.4 billion	\$1.8 billion	\$2.4 billion	\$2.8 billion	\$4.3 billion
Machinery, except electrical	\$49 million	\$50 million	\$48 million	\$55 million	\$44 million

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *Census of Manufactures*, Geographic Area Series, 1958, 1963, 1967, 1972, 1977

⁸ Hornick, Sandy and O'Keefe, Suzanne. *Reusing Industrial Loft Buildings for Housing: Experiences of New York City in Revitalization and Misuse*. 27 Wash. U. J. Urb. & Contemp. L. 157 (1984).

⁹ Zukin, Sharon (1989). *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change*. Rutgers University Press.

¹⁰ Chall, Daniel E. *Neighborhood Changes in New York City during the 1970s: Are the "Gentry" Returning?* New York: FRBNY Quarterly Review/Winter, 1983-94.

¹¹ Currid, Elizabeth. *The Warhol Economy: How Fashion, Art, and Music Drive New York City*. Princeton University Press, 2007.

¹² Ranney, Susie. "SoHo: Beyond Boutiques and Cast Iron: The Significance, Legacy, and Preservation of the Pioneering Artist Community's Cultural Heritage." PhD diss., Columbia University, 2012.

¹³ Currid, Elizabeth. *The Warhol Economy*

As the artists continued settling in the SoHo area, they found themselves continually battling the New York City's municipal building codes. The struggle was either due to renewals displacements, evictions caused by district rezoning, and shortage of approval units for zoning accommodative to the artists' lifestyles and work. In 1961, the private and public entities erased and rebuilt some cityscape areas¹⁴. The City Planning Commission of New York changed the Zoning Ordinance in order to control new development¹⁵. The New York City Zoning Code introduced three land use categories based on density, bulk, and floor-area ratio¹⁶. The categories outlined the purpose and function of the land: "R" district permitted community and residential use only; "C" districts allowed residential, commercial, as well as community uses; "M" district allowed warehouse, manufacturing, and commercial use but prohibited community and residential use as a result of hazardous effects the industrial emissions and effluents have on human health¹⁷. Though the new revisions did not alter the principles put in place in the 1961 code, the city planners were making effective ratifications on the separate planning principles¹⁸.

The planning policies for the land use greatly affected the urban artists who had settled in the city. Consequently, they formed the Artists Tenant Association (ATA), later known as the SoHo Artists Association (SAA). The association remained active from 1959 to 1976. SAA worked tirelessly in bringing to an end the constant artist displacement and made sure that the artist community was able to work and live within the city as noted in Currid (2007) work. The ATA realized that the city planners' recommitment to district rezoning would only perpetuate their struggles in securing adequate space for their studios (Yukie, 2015). In fear of the ongoing and previous decades' urban redevelopments affecting urban artists, the ATA, with other artists organizations' help, appealed to Robert Wagner who was the New York City Mayor for lenience and exception¹⁹.

¹⁴ Ault, J. (1999). *Art matters: How the culture wars changed America*. NYU Press.

¹⁵ Louie, Amanda. *SoHo Artists Association Records, 1968-1978*. Washington D.C.: Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 2012.

¹⁶ Shkuda, Aaron. *The lofts of SoHo: gentrification, art, and industry in New York, 1950-1980*. University of Chicago Press, 2016.

¹⁷ Ranney, Susie. "SoHo: Beyond Boutiques and Cast Iron: The Significance, Legacy, and Preservation of the Pioneering Artist Community's Cultural Heritage." PhD diss., Columbia University, 2012.

¹⁸ Susie;

¹⁹ Rapkin, Chester. "The South Houston Industrial Area." *New York: City Planning Commission, Department of City Planning* (1963).

In recognition of the artist class's role, the ATA and New York City convinced the Mayor to set aside a zoning variance for accommodating the artists' 'special needs'²⁰. Consequently, Mayor Wagner issued an executive order to establish the first Artist in Residence program in 1961²¹. However, Shkuda(1950) work notes that this initial attempt to solve the housing problem was mostly unsuccessful; it only increased many artists' misery as many faced evictions for failure to have the necessary certification²².

Due to the 1963's rezoning that threatened further artists' eviction, the ATA threatened to have a citywide strike. In response, Mayor Wagner immediately placed a moratorium on the evictions. In 1964, the New York State legislature revised the Multiple Dwelling Law with 7-B, which recognized the Artists in the Residence (A.I.R) law²³. Through the A.I.R program, the artists with certificates from the Department of Buildings could work and reside in former manufacturing and commercial districts or buildings²⁴. However, there were stringent limitations and codes on the number of residents (artists) residing in the same building, especially the SoHo artists. Currid (2007) work acknowledges that it was illegal for active manufacturing and artist businesses to reside in the same building. However, this was not strictly followed, especially by SoHo artists. Instead, they developed their districts in a way that it could be used for mixed purposes: artistry, commercial, industrial and residential purposes. Even though this came to the city planners' attention, they first turned a blind eye to the illegal activities due to the limited number of artists and the city's lack of significant developers

Deindustrialization to the Fading of Past SoHo (1968 to 1980)

The constant clashes between the state and artists would not be allowed to live for long. The New York authorities were deliberating on every possible strategy to take over the area. Chester Rapkin, a professor of Urban Planning at the University of Pennsylvania and then Princeton featured prominently in the decision-making bodies which wean him the title of the 'father of SoHo.' In 1962, Middle-Income

²⁰ Chester;

²¹ Chester;

²² Susie;

²³ Gratz, Roberta Brandes. *The Battle for Gotham: New York in the Shadow of Robert Moses and Jane Jacobs*. Bold Type Books, 2010.

²⁴ Ault, J. (1999). *Art matters: How the culture wars changed America*. NYU Press.

Cooperators of Greenwich Village (MICOVE) proposed to raze SoHo and replace it with projects meant for middle-income earners. Consequently, the City Planning Commission requested Rapkin to conduct a study on the neighborhood (Yukie, 2015). He conceptualized that the businesses were struggling and incapable of competing with 20th century businesses with 19th century structures²⁵. However, he maintained that the area was integral to industrial jobs, especially to the African Americans and Latino new Yorkers. It is these findings that initially saved the SoHo from being bulldozed down to the modern city it is today.

The SoHo artist community became widely known due to their prominent role in overturning the Lower Manhattan Expressway (LOMEX) proposal for development²⁶. In collaboration with Jane Jacobs and Margot Gayle, the SoHo artist community fought both in public and behind the proposal's scenes²⁷. Through a well-strategized and prepared process, Zukin notes that they aired a definitive voice in protesting to the city authorities. The opposition, led by Jacobs, maintained that “City was needlessly going to uproot an entire community which was predominantly Italian,” which had already established historical and cultural significance in the development of New York City. Besides, Jacobs opposed the rezoning processes, arguing that district development's ideal process would only be realized through a locally determined and organic mixture of uses²⁸. Jacobs, on her part, advocated for the rights of Little Italy²⁹.

On the other hand, Margot Gayle strongly advocated and campaigned for the architectural importance of the physical structures now under the SoHo artists' community. Later, she founded the Friends of Cast Iron Architecture as well as the Victorian Society in America through which she garnered support from her friends, for instance, James Marston Fitch, academia, and Ada Louise Huxtable, an architecture critic of the New York Times. Even though she failed, her attempt to retain the districts as areas of architectural importance came immediately after the city's Landmarks Preservation Commission was founded³⁰.

²⁵ Chester;

²⁶ Rapkin, Chester. "The South Houston Industrial Area." *New York: City Planning Commission, Department of City Planning* (1963).

²⁷ Currid, Elizabeth. *The Warhol Economy: How Fashion, Art, and Music Drive New York City*. Princeton University Press, 2007. 978-0691138749

²⁸ Currid

²⁹ Chester

³⁰ Ault, J. (1999). *Art matters: How the culture wars changed America*. NYU Press.

As Gayle and Jacobs' drummed support towards defending architectural history and academia planning, the artists and their families enlightened the public on the importance of SoHo survival towards the larger population of the city. Zukin (1989) notes the instance when Dancer and wife of one of the artists, Donald Judd, as well as Julie Finch chaired the Artists Against the Expressway (AAE)- which was an independent committee based in SoHo that increased the influence of most influential figures not only in the art world but also in the academia. Finch made a significant contribution by organizing campaigns for letter writing to the residents' influential friends in the government of the city and beyond³¹. The central role of these letters was to emphasize the value the neighborhood's buildings played to the artists, as well as the value of the artists' population to the city of New York.

AAE was well aware that the city would be on the verge of slipping from its heritage as a prestigious center of both national and international art production³². Thereafter, the movement contended that the lofts offered the most palatial places for studio spaces remaining within the city, and their demolition would mean the loss of artists in the city. The public forum convened on June 19, 1969, marked the end of the LOMEX proposal³³.

After LOMEX was overturned, the 'secret' residency of SoHo exposure, and the toleration of illegal activities increased the number of speculative developers³⁴. This marked the beginning of the city conversion process from the former industrial structures. The city then realized the need to regulate and legalize the occupancy to protect the city. After deliberation, a master plan was for New York city that was drawn in 1969, where the role of 'white-collar-jobs' was recognized giving way to middle class 'invasion'³⁵. It was agreed that the artist community was free to revitalize and transform the depressed neighborhood "into a vibrant contributor to the city's economic and residential markets"³⁶.

³¹ SoHo Broadway Initiative. *SoHo Zoning Guidebook: The History and Current State of Zoning and Other Regulations in the SoHo, Neighborhood and Broadway Corridor*. (New York, 2018)

³² SoHo Broadway Initiative.

³³ Sharon;

³⁴ Chall, Daniel E. *Neighborhood Changes in New York City during the 1970s: Are the "Gentry" Returning?* New York: FRBNY Quarterly Review/Winter, 1983-94.

³⁵ Amanda;

³⁶ Ranney, Susie. "SoHo: Beyond Boutiques and Cast Iron: The Significance, Legacy, and Preservation of the Pioneering Artist Community's Cultural Heritage." PhD diss., Columbia University, 2012.;

Contrary to the principles they had ratified a decade ago, the City Planning Commission acknowledged the mixed-use neighborhood's role by allowing permanent occupation in industrial districts. In 1971, the zoning laws were amended, allowing the SoHo artists to become the first zone for mixed-use housing (use of lofts). Using SoHo as a testing ground, the same policy (artist-and-light manufacturing mixed-used zoning system) was copied in NoHo and TriBeCa (to the north and south of SoHo) later on³⁷. Later in 1982, the state's Loft Law was passed, making it mandatory for landlords to make the buildings into livable conditions, thus protecting the residents from eviction and making it possible for loft-dweller to remain affordable rents³⁸.

The SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District report released in 1973 highlights the role of architectural historians, architects, city planners, and artists. Even though Currid (2007) credits Chester Rapkin for coining the "SoHo" nickname in his report in 1963, the final designation report denotes the "SoHo-Cast Iron" name to the region's structural diversity, indicating the relevancy the artist community has introduced in the city³⁹. A decade after the revision of the New York City zoning ordinance proved the role the artists played in displaying mixed-use significance. Besides, the artists' community also highlighted the need to preserve the old neighborhood⁴⁰.

As the artists continued to reside in the lofts, they decorated them and modernized them to the best of their abilities. However, due to limited resources, they only upgraded their interiors while the historic preservationist preserved the exteriors and rehabilitated them. Zukin (1989), in her personal experience account notes that before the 1970s, not so many people wanted to live in and around Houston Street. Some referred to it as "The Valley" since it is located between Lower Manhattan and Midtown. Others referred to it as the "Hell's Hundred Acres" due to the increased fire instances. However, it is through Margot Gayle's (Preservationists) and her Friends of Cast-Iron Architecture and New York Times critic Ada Louis

³⁷ Susie;

³⁸ SoHo Broadway Initiative. *SoHo Zoning Guidebook: The History and Current State of Zoning and Other Regulations in the SoHo, Neighborhood and Broadway Corridor*. (New York, 2018)

³⁹ Chall, Daniel E. Neighborhood Changes in New York City during the 1970s: Are the "Gentry" Returning? New York: FRBNY Quarterly Review/Winter, 1983-94.

⁴⁰ SoHo Broadway Initiative

Huxtable efforts that the region was from abandonment⁴¹. Through their efforts, the Landmarks Preservation Commission created the SoHo Cast-Iron Historic District, a no mean achievement in 1973⁴².

However, through the artists' hosting of curious outsiders, they came to learn about the lofts. The artists' community frequently invited them into their loft buildings to convince them to legalize and register loft housing. The artists also hosted performances in the lofts to lure people into buying the buildings in SoHo. The attendants of the vents were mainly the 'creative' professions, for instance, advertising, architecture, and academia⁴³. They ended up occupying and displacing the artists in SoHo⁴⁴.

Most of the artists had bought their lofts through cooperatives. While some remain to date, the majority low-income households hold them at high profits albeit unsustainable in the 'invaded' neighborhood. In the mid-1770s, as Louie observed the demand for lofts outstripped supply⁴⁵. A peak into Shkuda (2016) reveal how the prices changed from the 1970s as the new businesses opened in the area. Between 1970 and 1973, there was 106% increase in the prices of houses but fast forward to 1985, the study notes the relative prices from 1972 had risen by 466%. From a price of 106,000 dollars in 1973 along the 134 Wooster Street, the same housing unit was going for a whopping 600, 000 dollars. Along the 127 Mercer Street, Shkuda (2016) further notes the enormous rise in prices from 125,000 in 1970 to a whopping 561,000 representing a percentage increase of 349%. With the changes in prices, the poor artists' fate had effectively been sealed-some artists were forcefully displaced. This displacement was led either by artists who were knowledgeable about the market or building owners who had owned property in SoHo for generations. The new tenants were wealthier professionals or artists or the members of the 'creative' class⁴⁶.

⁴¹ SoHo Broadway Initiative. *SoHo Zoning Guidebook: The History and Current State of Zoning and Other Regulations in the SoHo, Neighborhood and Broadway Corridor*. (New York, 2018)

⁴² Currid, Elizabeth. *The Warhol Economy: How Fashion, Art, and Music Drive New York City*. Princeton University Press, 2007. 978-0691138749

⁴³ Daniel;

⁴⁴ Hornick, Sandy and O'Keefe, Suzanne. *Reusing Industrial Loft Buildings for Housing: Experiences of New York City in Revitalization and Misuse*. 27 Wash. U. J. Urb. & Contemp. L. 157 (1984).

⁴⁵ Louie, Amanda. *SoHo Artists Association Records, 1968-1978*. Washington D.C.: Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 2012.

⁴⁶ Hornick, Sandy and O'Keefe, Suzanne. *Reusing Industrial Loft Buildings for Housing: Experiences of New York City in Revitalization and Misuse*. 27 Wash. U. J. Urb. & Contemp. L. 157 (1984).

The Affluent Neighborhood Becomes Well-known (1980 till now)

The modern SoHo is a different place, the streets are buzzing with commercial activities. The middle class have invaded the place which offers them a warmer place during winters, the lofts are no more, the artistry community are no longer there, Currid (2007) observes that even the few who are there are just the wealthy ones and the few others who were absorbed into the region's economy⁴⁷. Is gentrification a catalyst in the loss of social capital? This question continues to beg for answer when the case of SoHo is examined from Shkuda (2016) viewpoint. The shift from the artistry community to wealthy middle class and the loss of its historical lofts and culture is undeniably one of the regrettable results of the regions urban renewal. The investment by government and real estate led to economic development and social security which reduces the rate of crime in a neighborhood. The regions poor who were unable to sustain themselves in the newly competitive economy were gradually driven out as house rent shot through the ceiling⁴⁸.

Since the 1990s the prices of residential properties have kept rising. The region is now dominated by wealthy middle class, fully urbanized and after the rapid gentrification, the cost of a new housing unit can only be explained in the same context with the cost of adding an extra floor to the storied structures⁴⁹. The explanation for this possibly is on the lack of responsive regulatory barriers and with little additional supply of housing units nothing can keep the prices down. Despite the prices skyrocketing, since 1980 the housing stock has increased by less than 10%⁵⁰.

Hornick et al (2012) argues the environmental and economic consideration when urban regeneration project is being designed should feature equally prominently as the potential loss of social capital. Although in this case the community was actively opposing the New York laws, the failure to consider their concerns was one way the authorities failed to define discover and address the social concerns. Gentrification of soho is arguably one of the most complex matters and scholars differ with the proponents

⁴⁷ SoHo Broadway Initiative. *SoHo Zoning Guidebook: The History and Current State of Zoning and Other Regulations in the SoHo, Neighborhood and Broadway Corridor*. (New York, 2018)

⁴⁸ Rapkin, Chester. "The South Houston Industrial Area." *New York: City Planning Commission, Department of City Planning* (1963).

⁴⁹ SoHo Broadway Initiative

⁵⁰ Chall, Daniel E. Neighborhood Changes in New York City during the 1970s: Are the "Gentry" Returning? New York: FRBNY Quarterly Review/Winter, 1983-94.

arguing it was not human driven but a market reality⁵¹. Shkuda, however, argues that the social restructuring is a ‘diplomatic displacement’ observing that ‘Gentrification could potentially be led by the market forces, but urban regeneration of SoHo proves how gentrification have a tremendous impact on the lives of the native residents⁵²⁵³.

The Washington DC region of Anacostia is a perfect example of how earmarked settlements can be spared the social and historical structures loss in gentrification process. Carollsburg development managed by replacing the demolished structures with another one with the same footprint. Avni and Teschner (2019) argue that the Southwest Waterfront gentrification project managed social loss through crystallizing the planning process with an agreement where residents obtained a unit in the new urban developments. in the context such rapid changes the sensitivity to diversity and density offers offer a reliable urban resettlement strategy⁵⁴. Although the cost for such plans comes with the risk of pollution and social fragmentation, they also come with opportunities such as increased demand for commodities and development of social amenities. This proves that the biggest issue as far as gentrification is concerned should be a comprehensive understanding of losers and winners in the plan for it to be responsive to the needs of the residents.

SoHo’s Education, Housing and Education data

The United States Census Bureau (2018) census put the number of people living in the region at 151,979. The majority of the residents are the whites who makes up 72.6% of the population, followed by those of the Asian decent at 14.5%. The Hispanic and African decent form 7.4% and 1.7% respectively. Median household income in 2018 was \$150,600, about 132% more than citywide median household income (\$64,850). American Community Survey (2020) report put the poverty rate in Greenwich

⁵¹ SoHo Broadway Initiative. *SoHo Zoning Guidebook: The History and Current State of Zoning and Other Regulations in the SoHo, Neighborhood and Broadway Corridor*. (New York, 2018)

⁵² Ohta, Yukie. *SoHo Past, Present, ...Future?*. New York: SoHo Memory Project, 2015.

⁵³ Shkuda, A. (2016). *The lofts of soho: gentrification, art, and industry in new york, 1950– 1980*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

⁵⁴ SoHo Broadway Initiative

Village/Soho was 6.6% in 2018 compared to 17.3% citywide⁵⁵. The Soho report further put the home ownership rate in Soho at 31.6% below the citywide rate which was at 32.8%. Since 2010, the rate of home ownership has risen by 6.3% with rate of loan for residential property and condominium units purchase increasing by 6.3% since 2010⁵⁶.

The area has a relatively higher number of college-educated graduates than the rest of the city. With the majority above the age of 25 having a college qualification or higher, those who hold qualifications lower than higher school certificated the report indicated are at 4% with 12% being high school or have some vocational qualification⁵⁷. At a serious crimes rate of 26.7 crimes per 1000 residents in the whole city, this proves that the scars of rapid gentrification still haunt the city half a century later⁵⁸. This was a worrying increase in the crime rate which was at 11.3 crimes per 1000 residents in 2010⁵⁹.

The region has developed into a middle-class neighborhood with the education sector recording only 7% of students in the elementary schools missing more than twenty days in a school year. This proves the region's well-established support structures considering the whole city average is at 20%⁶⁰. Additionally, the high school students who graduate on time stands at 91% against a citywide average rate of 75%⁶¹.

The residential building construction of residential units was allowed in this historic city's empty lots in 2005. Regrettably, with no proper regulation and enforcement of the zoning laws or consideration to the original artistry residents, only the affluent middle class benefited from this legislation⁶². Many scholars have however argued that the artists still own the city as they owned the lofts through the cooperatives which is a popular misconception as gentrification forced them out⁶³. The Loft law of 1982 afforded them little protection. Many new residents are now counting decades the time they have lived in this

⁵⁵ Soho Broadway Initiative Report, 1982

⁵⁶ SoHo Broadway Initiative. *SoHo Zoning Guidebook: The History and Current State of Zoning and Other Regulations in the SoHo, Neighborhood and Broadway Corridor*. (New York, 2018)

⁵⁷ American Community Survey, 2020

⁵⁸ Ohta, Yukie. *SoHo Past, Present, ...Future?*. New York: SoHo Memory Project, 2015.

⁵⁹ Yukie

⁶⁰ American Community Service, 2020

⁶¹ SoHo Broadway Initiative. *SoHo Zoning Guidebook: The History and Current State of Zoning and Other Regulations in the SoHo*,

⁶² SoHo Broadway Initiative

⁶³ Hornick, Sandy and O'Keefe, Suzanne. Reusing Industrial Loft Buildings for Housing: Experiences of New York City in Revitalization and Misuse. 27 Wash. U. J. Urb. & Contemp. L. 157 (1984).

neighborhood. Currid (2007) notes that the housing pressure that bit in the 1990s saw most of the galleries move to Chelsea although several like the William Bennet Gallery, Franklin Bowles Gallery, and Pop International Gallery among others still remained.

The geographical location of this city and the lofts historical appeal as residential spaces, the architecture have all been instrumental into this regions revolution with the gentrification earning the title ‘Soho Effect.’ A former haven for small factories and poor artists, the place is a tourist destination and those seeking a place with exquisite architecture, fashionable clothing, expensive jewels and expensive real estates are the new owners of this former ‘slice of heaven’ behind the tall skyscrapers and buzzing city of Manhattan. Currid (2007) notes that SoHo's chain outlets are now clustered in the northern area of the neighborhood, along Broadway and Prince and Spring Streets. Her works further paints the image of the sidewalks in this area as often crowded with tourists and with vendors selling jewelry, T-shirts, and other works. SoHo is known for its commercialization and eclectic mix of boutiques for shopping although in 2010, it had twice as many chain stores as boutiques and three times as many boutiques as art galleries⁶⁴.

Indeed, artists have enjoyed a long history of societal reverence and influence. However, the SoHo artist community showed a new form of power to be used by the creative class towards modern urban planning. This gentrification pattern is commonly referred to as the ‘SoHo Effect’ and is common in many states in the United States. As Chall (2007) observes, the reinvention of the artist community of the SoHo stands one of the first in comprehensively repurposing an entirely industrial district to residential uses without necessarily demolishing the fabric⁶⁵. The ‘SoHo Effect’ and the artist’s SoHo immediately interfered with the city planners, the public, and real estate developers in assessing the change effect on postindustrial areas and cities. Before the artists’ SoHo became successful, the private and public redevelopment projects of ‘brightened’ or maligned city fabric led to forced artists’ displacements. However, after the SoHo district's successful reinvention, city planners began drumming support and encouraging artists to reside in the depressed districts with the hope of ‘rediscovering’ SoHo though their

⁶⁴ Rapkin, Chester. "The South Houston Industrial Area." *New York: City Planning Commission, Department of City Planning* (1963).

⁶⁵ Daniel

efforts achieved little success⁶⁶. However, the ‘SoHo effect’ affected the artists negatively after rents and leases went beyond their control. The rising rents became unaffordable and led to the displacements of artists as well⁶⁷.

The desired use of SoHo lofts as living places, the architecture, and the reputation of this part of the city as a haven for renowned artists significantly contributed to the changes (‘SoHo Effect’). Due to its history as a backwater of low-income earning artists and small factories in the 1970s, SoHo is now one of the most popular tourist attraction sites for people interested in fashionable clothing and exquisite architecture. Beside this, the region is donned by beautiful houses-some of the most luxurious in the modern US⁶⁸.

The chain outlets of SoHo are now concentrated in the northern neighborhood area, along Spring Street and Broadway Prince. Tourists crowd the SoHo sidewalks daily with traders selling T-shirts, jewelry, and other art works. The city is also prominent for its electric mix and commercialization of shopping boutiques. However, in 2010, the number of chain stores was twice that of boutiques, which were three times more than art galleries⁶⁹.

Conclusion

The SoHo artist community's history indicates the outside influence that can accompany success in a preserved system, emphasizing the recognition of physical and cultural integrity. The legacy of SoHo’s cast iron has been successfully preserved albeit in a small way. However, with an outcome, early artists’ community memory and their effort to improve the area has a chance to be passed down to the members from the public's cultural memory and the landscape of SoHo⁷⁰. From the persistence and constant appeal by the early artists to the authority that SoHo developed in a unique way, although the native artistry residents were displaced, the gentrification gained public unprecedented approval compared to other districts

⁶⁶ Daniel

⁶⁷ SoHo Broadway Initiative. *SoHo Zoning Guidebook: The History and Current State of Zoning and Other Regulations in the SoHo*

⁶⁸ Ohta, Yukie. *SoHo Past, Present, ...Future?*. New York: SoHo Memory Project, 2015.

⁶⁹ Yukie

⁷⁰ SoHo Broadway Initiative. *SoHo Zoning Guidebook: The History and Current State of Zoning and Other Regulations in the SoHo*

as the ‘artist-led gentrification’). Indeed, the little effort to preserve the culture afforded a smooth translation of the district from an industrial area to modern residential and commercial streets. With time, other districts now feel the ‘SoHo Effect’ and tries as much as possible to transform but evidently, little attention is directed towards preserving the aboriginal’s heritage. Gayle and Jacobs's role cannot be forgotten due to their significant role in preventing the razing of the critical neighborhood for the LOMEX program when the SoHo case is cited. Notably, the research and proposals by Chester Rapkin (1963) also played a significant role in initiating the changes and in recognizing the importance of the neighborhood.

Aside from the effort to preserve the SoHo lofts, other efforts were also made to make the loft-living as a “trend”. The overall economic trends and real estate market push the further development of the loft market. As Zukin argues in her book, *Loft Living*, “living lofts seem to represent a typical, though rather specialized, real estate market”. Two stages were observed in the loft market: first, the decline of small businesses that attracted the artists (supply create demand); second, the expansion of living loft to middle-class people who have no connection with art (demand encouraged supply).

For years the area that had remained quaint and small has is a commerce center. Only a handful of artists have remained. The cost of housing rise in the 1970s meant only a handful could afford to buy a unit. A few artists store also remains with fancy interiors donning the interiors still. The artists are adopting new trends inspired by "mystical expressionism," which is a mix of traditional art and contemporary consciousness. These stores serve to remind the New Yorkers of the origin the tall structures, perhaps the only reminder of the ‘Artists-led gentrification’

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