Chapter 78

Business Fabric and Place Branding:
Measuring Entrepreneurship at the Street Scale

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ABSTRACT

In some downtown locations entrepreneurship is flourishing. While current geospatial analysis including planning scaled Geospatial Information Systems provide zip code or census trade information, the street-scale dimension of business fabric goes unmeasured. The research presented in this chapter investigate use of a new geospatial methodology to formulate, collect data and analyze and visualize business, architectural and entrepreneurial data at the resolution of individual street addresses. On-site data was collected at street address for downtown business areas in Barcelona, Spain, Portland and Eugene, Oregon, and Jersey City, New Jersey. The finding reveal new understanding of both methodologies to compute and communicate understandings of business fabric and also initial affirmations of geospatial relationship between business activities and benefits of nearby urban design amenities such as open space, third-space and affordability.

INTRODUCTION

A walk down La Rambla street in Barcelona, Spain provides an urban experience of tourism oriented business activity. The 1.2 kilometer street of shops often and spectacles elicits disapproval from local citizens but is, along with other Modernisme architectural experiences including Gaudi along Passeig de Gracia, an established city branding campaign for tourists to stay, shop, eat, and walk. The walk down the brand driven La Rambla with international companies McDonald's, Zara and Banco Santander dif-

fers from a walk through the Gracia neighborhood with local entrepreneurial city branding (Pike, 2009) (Freire, 2009). Gracia's touristic draw, though smaller in scale than La Rambla, invites a high volume of tourists. Both La Rambla and Gracia are examples of city branding but with two different understandings of business fabric, or woven urban texture, between larger-scale, international and planned from a bird's eye view, and the other smaller, more entrepreneurial and spatially intimate scale at the human street level. Do the qualities of small new startup businesses, or entrepreneurship, and architecture relate? This chapter investigates how city branding may be understood through small, street-scale geospatial relationships of business, architecture, and entrepreneurial qualities, providing a geographic information system, GIS, tool that investigates latent branding opportunities to improve a city's or destination's place identity from the bottom up. This bottom up approach furthers the notion that a more successful place branding campaign may emerge from top-down policy initiatives if a rigorous bottom-up strategy celebrates existing place based strengths.

This chapter will explain the method and assertions to measure the impact of business fabric and possible role in current and subsequent neighborhood and city branding, using neighborhood case studies in Barcelona, Spain, Portland and Eugene, Oregon, and Jersey City, New Jersey. City scaled branding does not always acknowledge the small-scale geospatial qualities that support distinctive identities, bottom up, from the street scale to the city scale. For example, in DUMBO Brooklyn, Down Under the Manhattan Brooklyn Overpass, the high price of established downtown Manhattan office space pushed entrepreneurs elsewhere to the small-scale urban fabric of this previously under-utilized neighborhood in Brooklyn. Similar emerging business districts rely on relationships of small-scale urban and architectural fabric. The research builds on assertions that geography and branding are entangled by 1) inescapable socio-spatial associations; 2) inherent differentiation through space and 3) articulation of economic and competitive socio-spatial relationships (Pike, 2009). While recent research explores relationships between urban development and urban branding (Rehan, 2013) it does not focus on the small-scale urban qualities as small as individual streets or three by three block areas. Owners in these locations not only aspire to have a successful small business for themselves but to collaborate with the most skilled and talented young workers who seek attractable (Bitner, 1990), walkable street level activities, affordable places to live and eat, and access to natural amenities (Lindzon, 2015). These small businesses can move from space to space within a building or neighborhood without losing customers, but neighborhood location is still important for small, creative class businesses (Florida, 2008). According to Entrepreneur Magazine, the long-term phenomena of entrepreneurship relies on communities and policy makers to work together to attract vitality to a region (Clifford, 2013). This longer term trend subsequently has deep influence on the business fabric of a place and, in turn, attracting investment (Kotler et al. 1993) to perpetuate a long-term city brand.

To measure business fabric, the work is first contextualized within a broader urban design and computation method called the Social Interaction and Cohesion Tool to measure how the built urban environment may support the social aspect of sustainable urban design (Speranza et al, 2015). That tool and method measures the small-scale and dynamic qualities of social interaction that are not easily measured using traditional planning scaled GIS methods at the city or district scale. The chapter will then describe a theoretical formulation to measure three aspects of business fabric: 1) fundamental business characteristics; 2) architecture and 3) entrepreneurship. Data was gathered on-site at multiple neighborhoods in Barcelona, Spain, Portland and Eugene, Oregon and Jersey City, New Jersey to begin to identify precisely how fundamental business characteristics, architectural features, and entrepreneurial identity result in a dynamic urban process of city branding in public space. The neighborhoods of these respective cities

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