“Down in the *Treme*”: Media’s Spatial Practices and the (Re)Birth of a Neighborhood After Katrina

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Abstract

In this project, I take the HBO series *Treme* (2010-present) as a case study for theorizing contemporary relationships between media, urban space, and raced and classed geographies. I argue that textual analyses of media’s representations of city space and place, which comprise the bulk of contemporary scholarship on media and urban space especially as it relates to New Orleans and questions of race, are not sufficient in understanding the work of media in contemporary cities, and in post-Katrina New Orleans, in particular. *Treme* does not just represent race and place in New Orleans, it participates directly and materially in the rebuilding of the city and its marginalized neighborhoods by soliciting practices of community and neighborhood engagement, city branding, tourism, employment, and historic preservation. HBO also enjoins viewers to participate in the rebuilding and revitalization of the city by eliciting the spatial practices of viewers in the form of tourism, ethical consumption, and utilizing online interactivities to create emplaced material communities. Moreover, city and cultural policy, as well as HBO branding efforts, are aimed at fostering these kinds of interactions and spatial practices. *Treme* is therefore literally helping to drive, create, and intervene into the city that it represents, putting the spatial practices of media production and its viewers to work in ways that present solutions to racial, class, and spatial antagonisms made manifest in the Katrina event.

This project therefore aims to contribute to media studies of city space by theorizing *Treme* as a spatial practice in the neighborhood. *Treme* provides a poignant case study that enjoins scholars to go beyond the text to consider the broader and more material aspects of HBO’s original programming as well as in how media intervenes...
into particular city sites. It thus brings into focus the innovative ways in which both media and cities are increasingly articulating themselves to each other in the neoliberal city and provides some possible tools for media scholars to analyze those articulations. Theorizing media as a spatial practice, I consider how *Treme* participates materially in the production, governing, regulation, and organizing of urban and media space at the present conjuncture. I query how the series provides a vehicle for both cultural and economic revitalization and renewal in post-Katrina New Orleans, and I ask what this means for media scholarship on cities when the media industry takes up a role in the transformation of lived, material, and vernacular urban space?
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Introduction: Toward Theorizing *Treme* as a Spatial Practice

The Hurricane Katrina event brought to the forefront of the public’s attention the gross class and racial inequalities that mark New Orleans both socially as well as in terms of its physical space. The Katrina event created what Foucault (2003a) terms a “problematization”—“the development of a domain of acts, practices, and thoughts that seem to...pose a problem for politics” (p. 20) and which makes “possible the transformations of the difficulties and obstacles of a practice into a general problem for which one proposes diverse practical solutions” (p. 24). Overwhelmingly, the people hit the hardest by the storm were the black, poor, and elderly who resided in New Orleans’ most vulnerable areas. These inequalities of race and class and their relationship to space and government policy serve as problems that debates over the rebuilding process and the future of New Orleans must contend with.

Notably, media industries—those very same industries who are credited with revealing Katrina’s devastation much in the same way that they are attributed as supposedly revealing the devastating consequences of the war in Vietnam or the brutality of segregation during the Civil Rights era—have taken a leading role in proposing practical solutions in the rebuilding process. Indeed, the media have not only represented the rebuilding process and the debates surrounding this process, but they have also contributed to the literal built environment in New Orleans. Television shows such as *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* (ABC, 2003-), *This Old House* (PBS, 1979-), *Guiding Light* (CBS, 1952-2009), *Good Morning America* (ABC, 1975-), *Holmes on Homes* (HGTV, 2000-), and a host of others traveled to New Orleans to air their cast
rebuilding peoples’ homes. Celebrities too—including the likes of Brad Pitt with his Make It Right Foundation, Wynton Marsalis and Harry Connick, Jr. with their Habitat for Humanity’s Musician’s Village rebuilding project, and Wendell Pierce’s Pontchartrain Park rebuilding organization—mobilized networks, resources, and residents to return and rebuild. Disney too took on New Orleans as a special project—setting up a faux New Orleans at Epcot Center to raise money for Katrina’s victims as well as forging relationships between its subsidiaries with city government officials in the rebuilding of public and private space (Morgan Parmett, 2012). How can media scholarship attend to these more material ways in which media is implicated in post-Katrina New Orleans, where it does not just represent the rebuilding process, but literally takes a part in offering solutions to Katrina’s problematizations through participating in the rebuilding itself?

The HBO series Treme represents a particularly unique and interesting example in these efforts. Filming its third season on location in New Orleans at the time of this writing, the series takes up the problematizations of post-Katrina New Orleans as central provocations in its dramatic storylines. The series, the first season of which is set in New Orleans three months after the storm and its second season the following year, is created and produced by David Simon and Eric Overmyer. Like Baltimore in Simon’s earlier work, The Wire (HBO, 2002-2008), the city, and especially the neighborhood from which the series takes its name, serves as a character in Treme. The series details the lives of racially diverse residents extending outward from the Tremé, a historic neighborhood adjacent to the French Quarter associated with the city’s jazz history and poor and working class African American community. Treme focuses on the struggles
of individuals to rebuild their homes, lives, and neighborhoods in New Orleans after Katrina. The narrative takes an explicit interest in the city’s culture (and its musical culture in particular) and the struggles of its practitioners as the city tries to recover from the storm. Ultimately, *Treme* is a celebration of New Orleans’ culture and an argument for rebuilding the city in and through that culture. As the HBO website describes the series,

> What keeps the city afloat through all of this is its culture. Mardi Gras Indian chief Albert Lambreaux (Clarke Peters) is sewing in preparation for Mardi Gras. The social aid and pleasure clubs are getting ready to hit the streets in their colorful, fast step finery. And those loveable rogues, Davis MacAlary (Steve Zahn) and Antoine Batiste (Wendell Pierce) have cooked up a new set of schemes on and off the bandstand. (HBO, n.d.)

*Treme* aims to be distinct from the traditional parlay of New Orleans’ city branding efforts and Hollywood representations of the city by emphasizing the quotidian practices of artists and artistic practice rather than the spectacular sites of Bourbon Street tourism. Producers of *Treme* stress that the series is committed to communicating a sense of New Orleans that is “authentic,” such as the practices of Mardi Gras Indian sewing, rather than a spectacular version of the city that has so often been the subject of previous television and film representations. It is, indeed, a show that still highlights the city’s “holy trinity” of food, music, and architecture, but it also provides a critical look into what has traditionally been accepted into these categories and makes space for debate and struggle over them as well. *Treme* aims to show the cultures of those groups and individuals who had for so long before Katrina remained invisible to much of the
white, middle-class, tourist population who visited the city. More so, it aims to show how this culture serves as the heart and life force for the city as a whole. The decision to title the show after the name of the historic neighborhood Tremé points to Treme’s investment in highlighting areas of the city not well-trodden on the tourist map, to engage (raced and classed) spaces in the city that were adversely and unequally affected by the Katrina event, as well as to celebrate the creative potentiality that is indigenous to these spaces.

In an interview, David Simon notes, “Lots of American places used to make things…New Orleans still makes something. It makes moments” (quoted in Mason, 2010). Whereas Simon’s work in The Wire offered a pessimistic critique of the failure of institutions and individuals’ inability to escape their subjectification to those institutional ideologies, Treme seems to hinge upon a hope that individuals, through their creative practices, can draw upon these moments to make something new, to transform institutions and American culture. Though the series commentates on the structural barriers and institutional struggles each of its characters face as creative practitioners in post-Katrina New Orleans, Treme presents a fairly overt optimistic tone. The optimism hinges on the celebration of local, “authentic” New Orleans culture. As Jacques Morial, son of former Mayor Marc Morial, states in an episode, “The culture of New Orleans, that’s what’s at risk, if they knock out the infrastructure that sustains the infrastructure, then it is gone forever” (Season 1, Episode 7). The argument Treme ultimately makes, then, is that New Orleans must be rebuilt, and it must be rebuilt through the vitality of its “authentic,” i.e. not simulated for tourists, culture.
Similarly, if its neighborhoods are to come back, then it must have a culture for them to come back to.

Though *Treme’s* emphasis on the humanity of individuals and their struggles to return and rebuild through cultural practices do indeed get played out on screen, the series’ engagements with the city’s culture, “authenticity,” and its residents’ identities and struggles go beyond what they represent on screen and are also made manifest in the show’s broader relationship to the city in more materialist terms. *Treme* participates directly and materially in the rebuilding of the city by soliciting practices of community and neighborhood engagement, city branding, tourism, employment, and historic preservation. HBO also enjoins viewers to participate in the rebuilding and revitalization of the city by eliciting spatial practices of viewers in the form of tourism, ethical consumption, and creating material communities through online interactivity. *Treme* is therefore literally helping to drive, create, and intervene into the city that it represents. Moreover, city and cultural policy, as well as HBO branding efforts, are aimed at fostering these kinds of interactions and spatial practices.

In this project, I take *Treme* as a case study for theorizing media as a spatial practice, where my interest is less in the ideological work of the text and its representations of space and place and more so in the ways in which media participates materially in the production, governing, regulation, and organizing of urban and media space at the present conjuncture. I query how the series provides a vehicle for both cultural and economic revitalization and renewal in post-Katrina New Orleans, and I ask what this means for media scholarship on cities when the media industry takes up a role in the transformation of lived, material, and vernacular urban space? I argue that
theories of media’s representations of city space and place, which comprise the bulk of contemporary scholarship on media and urban space especially as it relates to New Orleans, are not sufficient in understanding the work of media in contemporary cities, and in post-Katrina New Orleans, in particular. Instead, drawing from de Certeau, Bourdieu, and Foucault, I call for theorizing media as a site-specific spatial practice in the city. Thinking of media as a spatial practice means considering the more material practices of media as they become imbricated in and take up a position in everyday life in the cities in which they inhabit. It also attends to how media invites distant viewers to participate in these material places at the present conjuncture. I suggest that the case of *Treme*, in particular, enjoins media scholars to analyze the material ways in which its practices, and the practices it solicits from viewers, in a particular site with a specific history participates in the production, reproduction, and navigation of post-Katrina New Orleans and the neighborhood *habitus*. Turning to theorize media as a spatial practice in addition to a representational one requires media scholars to go beyond the text and consider the ways in which media’s material practices are implicated in a broader dispersion of discourses, encounters, actors, and sites than are traditionally associated with media scholarship on urban space. I therefore argue *Treme* calls upon scholars to ask a different set of questions about media’s relationship to New Orleans than they have of previous television and film productions about the city. In this project, I suggest *Treme* in particular enjoins scholars to consider how media materially participates in urban planning, zoning, land use, tourism, gentrification, historic preservation, philanthropy, city and network branding, community building, and global and local activism. I thus argue for the need to consider how the series is also intertwined with a
dispersion of institutions, actors, and networks, including cultural policy, film commissions, urban planning experts, tourism boards, neighborhood organizations, as well as interactive technologies and convergent media. Working at the intersections between media, cultural studies, and cultural geography, this project therefore seeks to contribute to contemporary scholarship on media and urban space by theorizing how media works as a spatial practice that is harnessed by local, global, private, activist, and corporate entities as a means of urban and cultural renewal and the production of citizenship in the neoliberal city. My research contributes to a growing body of work in media studies on space, and urban neighborhood space in particular. What it adds to these literatures is an attention to the materiality of media culture.

To date, much of the work on media and cities, and on media and New Orleans, in particular, addresses the relationship of media to city space in terms of practices of representation and the production of identity. Exemplified in media scholarship on the 1987-1988 series, *Frank’s Place* (CBS), this work takes up questions of place in representational terms to query how space and place signify particular meanings and the ways in which these interpellate viewers and implicate racialized identities and ideology. Changes in the cultural economy of cities, film and television production, and in New Orleans, however, position media to intervene in cities in ways that are distinct from the days of *Frank’s Place*. Unlike *Frank’s Place*, *Treme* is filmed on-location in New Orleans, and it participates more directly in the space and politics of the post-Katrina city. *Treme* also calls upon viewers to participate in more active, direct, and material ways in New Orleans—they are called upon to do more than make an appointment to watch, as in the *Frank’s Place* era. Instead, they are invited to become
active participants, not only online, but also as ethical tourists, consumers, and community builders in the material space of New Orleans with a responsibility to participate in its rebuilding. As a result of these shifts, *Treme* has become implicated in New Orleans’ city space in ways that were perhaps unimaginable during *Frank’s Place*. *Treme*’s participation in New Orleans’ city space, however, is not entirely separate from its practices of representation. Indeed, the series’ aim to capture an “authentic” representation of the city is in many ways both made possible by, as well as helps to make possible, its more material practices that aim to network with local and vernacularly cultural actors and spaces of the city’s historically marginalized. This project thus aims not so much at an abandonment of representational analyses as it does in complicating and throwing into focus how representations interact with the more material practices of media within particular spaces and places.

In so doing, I aim to contribute to scholarship on media and urban space that positions media in more material terms. In particular, scholarship on how media works as a cultural and creative industry strategy for urban renewal provides an important context for making sense of *Treme*. This scholarship suggests that since the 1980’s, cities have turned to media industries as instruments of urban renewal and branding to address the post-war disinvestment in urban centers. This research, however, primarily addresses how media works from above as a culture industry to impose a set of meanings to cleanse city space of its previous meanings, such as in strategies of Disneyfication (Comella, 2003; Davis, 1999; Gotttdiener, 2001; Sorkin, 1992; Zukin, 1991) or the Fantasy City strategies discussed by John Hannigan (1998). This project differs from this work and builds on emerging work in media studies on the creative
industries (Miller & Yúdice, 2002; Ross, 2004) by considering instead how media works as a spatial practice in ways that entrepreneurialize culture from below in the context of neoliberal rationalities of governing citizenship. Practices of vernacular culture from below, at the level of the neighborhood, are cultivated in ways that can lend meaning and value to media and city brands, rather than the culture industries lending their brand to impose its meaning on neighborhoods. Working in terms of what I have referred to elsewhere as the Disneyomatic (Morgan Parmett, 2012), where media industry attempts to entrepreneurialize and cultivate vernacular cultural practices of the marginalized for the purposes of urban renewal, I suggest *Treme* can lend insight into how media industry in New Orleans is positioned to entrepreneurialize local and vernacular cultural practices in ways that have perhaps distinct consequences from the Disneyfying urban renewal strategies of the past.

Because the specific place and time into which *Treme* intervenes is bound up with post-Katrina problematizations of New Orleans’ racial, class, and spatial antagonisms, this project is particularly invested in how *Treme*’s entrepreneurialization of raced, classed, local, and vernacular cultural practices provides solutions to these problematizations. I consider how New Orleans’ cultural policy situates media industries and technologies, and productions like *Treme* in particular, as means to rectify racial, class, and spatial antagonisms made manifest during Katrina. The series contributes to the efforts of New Orleans to rebuild and rebrand itself through revitalizing its cultural economy and creative industries (Amin & Thrift, 2004; Dávila, 2004a; du Gay & Pryke, 2002; Florida, 2005; Hannigan, 2008; Miller & Yúdice, 2002; Yúdice, 2003; Zukin, 2008, 2010). Thus, placing *Treme* in the historic context of New
Orleans’ cultural policy and its relationship to a kind of “creative cities” strategy of urban renewal (Florida, 2002), I argue that the Katrina event shifted the way in which the city rationalized the creative cultures of poor, black neighborhoods. Whereas before the storm, these neighborhoods’ cultures were largely problematized, after the storm, marginalized cultures were envisioned as expedients to urban renewal in both economic and social terms. Thus, what I call the “post-Katrina rationality” of New Orleans’ cultural policy and urban planning make possible a production like *Treme*. So too, however, I also argue that *Treme* serves as a technology for materially implementing these rationalities in the city’s neighborhoods. *Treme*’s spatial practices help to implement a tactical urban plan that entrepreneurializes the poor and marginalized by rendering neighborhoods into sites of potential mediation, or what I refer to as the media neighborhood—a space not marked by flagship projects or disembodied stimulations of creative clusters but, rather, an embodied space of vernacular creativity.

In addition to considering how the series works in tandem with the cultural policy and rebuilding efforts of post-Katrina New Orleans, I also ask what HBO stands to gain from investing in New Orleans’ rebuilding at the present conjuncture. In the context of critics suggesting HBO is on the decline and in a “post-*Sopranos*” crisis, I contend that *Treme* is a key part of HBO’s contemporary rebranding strategy that shifts the network from the “It’s Not TV, It’s HBO” brand to their more simplified “It’s HBO” brand. Whereas the “It’s Not TV” brand positioned HBO as “quality” programming distinct from the “wasteland” of network TV, the “It’s HBO” rebranding responds to HBO’s anxieties over shifts in television to a kind of post-broadcast medium. Drawing on the network’s “relevance” programming and corporate social
responsibility branding, I suggest that *Treme* helps to constitute this shift in brand identity by cultivating “passionate engagement”—i.e. in eliciting the real, material spatial practices and affectivities of viewers through a variety of web based interactivities and convergences. Viewers are enjoined to visit New Orleans as ethical tourists, consume “authentic” New Orleans culture, and to build material communities in and through New Orleans by utilizing the web-based interactivities provided and guided by HBO. In so doing, HBO’s passionate engagement rebranding positions the HBO brand as a kind of global conduit that exists in the no-place/everyplace of the web but can connect viewers to someplace in particular. In turn, this plays on viewer anxieties over how new media’s collapse of space has alienated us from our real, material communities, an anxiety made all the more poignant in the context of the displacements produced in the aftermath of the Katrina event. The hope for HBO is that the spatial practices it elicits from viewers will help to constitute a more intense engagement with the series, and consequently the HBO brand, that goes beyond viewer interpretation around the water cooler and can help ensure its future in the post-broadcast TV era.

Toward these aims of spatializing and materializing media studies’ of cities, my dissertation draws on six distinct, though intertwined, literatures: work on media, cities, and representation; emerging work in media studies on space; cultural policy, citizenship, and governmentality; creative industries, branding, and creative cities; production studies; and theories of neoliberal racism and “post-racial” media culture.
Media, Cities, and Representation

Though, as Ronald W. Greene (2010) notes, the spatial turn in academia now seems to be more of a commonplace than a new and unexplored territory of inquiry, media studies’ theorization of the relationship between media and space is a somewhat less well-trodden path. There is only just beginning to be a substantial body of work that can accurately be described as a subset of media studies invested in theorizing its relationship to space and to urban space in particular, much of which is devoted to the analysis of texts and their representations of cities/spaces. This is true of media studies more generally as well, which is largely defined as a field by its investment in the critique of media texts and their representations, the political economics of the media industries that circumscribe these representations, and studies of audiences and their interpretive practices with regards to media’s representations. Media studies’ analyses of urban space overwhelmingly tend to pose questions as to how representations of urban spaces implicates our relationship to and lived experiences within that space and how these representations negotiate ideological tensions about urban space at particular historical conjunctures. In this section, I attend to five sets of literature that demonstrate the tendency of media scholarship on cities to oscillate around textual representations. This review includes a discussion of exemplary work on cinematic cities; key anthologies on media and space; scholarship in media geography; research on media and New Orleans, and on the Katrina event in particular; and scholarship on the Treme series. Following this review, I explain how this project diverges from this scholarship by theorizing the material practices of media as spatial practices.
Clarke’s (1997) collection *Cinematic Cities* and Sheil and Fitzmaurice’s (2001) *Cinema and the City* both demonstrate the tendency to understand the relationship between media and the city in terms of the representational and aesthetic capacities of media. This approach, often referred to in the literature as research on “cinematic cities,” suggests that the city and the film are mutually constitutive. That is, film plays a central role in the production and imagination of city space while at the same time, the city plays a central role in the way in which film, cinema, and film spectatorship have historically been produced and imagined. As Clark (1997) notes in the introduction to *The Cinematic City*, these studies tend to draw on semiotic, psychoanalytic, and historical materialist theory and engage in textual analyses that make sense of how film represents city space and its consequent impact on subjectivity. Thus, these approaches tend to focus on how the text plays a productive role in city space through representations of struggles around issues of identity, images that form our sense of self and reality, and through contestations of space and social practices in ways that have real, material effects on the lived experiences of its inhabitants. Much of the work in this area suggests that media representations of urban space negotiate tensions and anxieties over changes in social and spatial shifts, particularly to modernity and post-modernity. An exemplary work in this area is that of Bruno’s (1987) analysis of the film *Blade Runner* (1982), where she argues the film forms a constitutive representation of the postmodern city. Although some work on cinematic cities takes up issues of policy-making and urban planning, these are approached largely in representational and textual terms.
Couldry & McCarthy’s (2004) collection *MediaSpace* and Berry, Kim, and Spigel’s (2010) *Electronic Elsewheres: Media, Technology, and the Experience of Social Space* both call for a departure from this kind of representational emphases on space and in cities, especially. However, the contents of each collection maintains a majority focus on the representational practices and capacities of media. This is particularly the case in *Electronic Elsewheres*, where the editors suggest that “the work on media and cities reflects a movement from looking at how cities are represented in the media to understanding the media both as part of the city and as active in constructing the contemporary urban experience” (p. xviii), but whose contributions almost exclusively focus on practices of representation. Charlotte Brundson’s (2010) piece, for example, textually analyzes maps of the London underground, which she views primarily as mechanisms of representation that influence spatial practices. Marita Sturken’s (2010) piece discusses how media images and artifacts of Ground Zero produce narratives of redemption of the nation, where media representations produce memory and mourning.

In cultural geography and urban studies where media is increasingly becoming a subset of the larger discipline (as “media geography”), the approach has also overwhelmingly focused on how the built environment, and especially place, is bound up with media’s spatial representations and imaginings (Adams, 2009; Burgess & Gold, 1985; Rogoff, 2000). As Sharon Zukin (2010) notes, “we cannot consider power to control urban spaces, usually seen as the economic power of capital investors and the legal power of the state, without considering the cultural power of the media” (p. xiii). But Zukin too is most interested in the role media plays in constructing representations
of city neighborhoods and how these representations contribute to how space is imagined. Though many scholars consider how media technologies shape and change space and our experience of it, as Adams (2009) notes, few scholars in geography or urban studies consider the media as geographical in and of itself.

Research on media and New Orleans overwhelmingly focuses on how the city is represented on screen, particularly as a kind of cinematic city. Attention is paid especially to how New Orleans is represented as a space of vice and corruption but also exoticism and romance in ways that intervene into social and political debates at particular conjunctures (O’Connell, 2002; Schuth, 1981; Staggs, 2005; Straw, 1997). Schuth (1981) notes that representations of New Orleans in film often depend upon stereotypes that exploit the city for plot device and narrative structure in ways that fail to grasp the more complex, rich, and varied cultures and spaces of the city. One example of these stereotypical imaginings of New Orleans is detailed in Will Straw’s (1997) work on what he terms “the lurid city of the 1950s.” Analyzing the 1958 film *New Orleans After Dark*, Straw argues that urban confidential films worked intertextually to produce a discursive construction of the city as lurid, or “jazzy, nocturnal, vice-ridden” (p. 123). *New Orleans After Dark* and other urban confidential films, then, tend to position the city as something dystopic, but also fascinating and desirable. Additionally, a significant set of scholarship on media and New Orleans attends to how the city is invoked as a symbolic signifier of blackness in popular media (Amaya, 2008; Gray, 1991; Guerrero, 1993; Regis, 2001; White, 1991), which I discuss in more detail in a later section of this chapter. Scholars have also researched how
media representations of New Orleans foster dominant practices of tourism (Bordelon, 2003; Huey, 1993).

This tendency to view media’s relationship to New Orleans as a primarily representational relationship is followed in the way in which scholars theorize the role of media in the Katrina event and the rebuilding process. Much of the work on media and Katrina centers on journalistic representations of the city during and after the storm, particularly focusing on how media represents and frames disaster with particular attention to racialized dimensions (Babbington, 2010; Beaudoin, 2007, 2009; Dawkins, 2006; Durham, 2006, 2008; Dyson, 2006; Fry, 2006; Fuqua, 2009; Grano & Zagacki, 2011; Kahle, Yu, & Whiteside, 2007; Littlefield & Quenette, 2007; Lule, 2006; Meehan, 2006; Nadesan, 2009; Rieder, 2005; Robinson, 2009; Rojecki, 2009; Serazio, 2010; Shah, 2009; Thevenot, 2006; Tierney, 2006; von Mossner, 2011; J. Walker, 2010; Weik von Mossner, 2011). A good deal of work attends specifically to how images from Katrina communicate visually (Booth & Davisson, 2008; Faux, 2006; Jenkins, 2007; Jordan, 2007; Miller & Roberts, 2010; Streit, 2007; Trumbo, 2007). Scholars particularly focus on media’s criminalization of blackness following the storm, especially in debates over the Yahoo! News portrayal of the “looting” and “finding” pictures of black and white, respectively, Katrina survivors.9 There is also an emerging body of scholarship that focuses on film and television depictions of New Orleans in the post-Katrina context. This work attends to representations of racial difference in film and television and their relationship to ideologies of post-multicultural and post-racial discourses that legitimate neoliberal strategies of rebuilding and tourism (Bibler, 2008; Brayton, 2011; Fuqua, 2009; Gotham, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c; Gregory, 2010; Negra,
2010a; Pezzullo, 2009; Treat, 2008). Scholars also address the uses of local media to counter dominant representations of global media, offering an opportunity for citizens to tell their own stories (Dunnebacke & Mayer, 2009; Fuqua, 2009; Streible, 2007).

Diane Negra’s (2010b) collection *Old and New Media after Katrina* is an exemplary work coming from media studies on how scholars tend to understand Hurricane Katrina and post-Katrina New Orleans specifically in relation to city space in terms of representation. As Negra notes in the collection’s Introduction,

>A consistent element in the essays that comprise this collection is the recognition that while Katrina represented an anomalous event in some respects, it has generally been made to conform very heavily to preexisting and ongoing narrative and ideological patterns. Its media presentation, for instance, adheres to an increasingly consistent U.S. regionalization of value and morality…deeply invested in staging the loss of certain cities in the process of defending/reclaiming the nation. (Negra, 2010b, p. 10)

Negra makes a convincing argument for scholars to consider the importance of media in the Katrina event, as so much of what the public witnessed and the effects of such a witnessing were born out on television, newspapers, radio, and the internet. A collection committed to unearthing the ideological work of various media texts in the context of Hurricane Katrina, the book largely maintains a focus on textual and representational analyses. These include ideological analyses of the film *Last Holiday* and its legitimation of neoliberal subjectivity and entrepreneurialism (Negra, 2010a); neoliberal senses of self-responsibility in the television show *House M.D.* and the documentaries *Trouble the Water* and *When the Levees Broke* (Elliot, 2010); representations of
survival in nature-reality programs (Goodridge, 2010); and neoliberal rationalities of rebuilding in makeover shows (Weber, 2010). Fuqua’s (2010) and Pramaggiore’s (2010) essays in the collection also take up issues of representation, but not in terms of television series or film. Fuqua looks at artistic representations of “home” in New York and New Orleans, and Pramaggiore considers NPR’s online Katrina memorial representations.10

Given that Treme is a relatively new series, there is little academic scholarship on the show. However, scholars’ discussion of Treme to date reveals a tendency toward understanding its relationship to New Orleans in terms of its representational practices, particularly in terms of how the series constructs a sense of place (Jasmin, 2010; Leyda, 2012), narrates struggles over public and private space (Moylan, 2012; Yousaf, 2010), and how the series constructs what it means to be at home (Fuqua, 2011, 2012). This work is also concerned with how the series’ constructs a discourse of authenticity and if its representations of “authentic” New Orleans and culture position the series as a tourist text, or, in other words, if the show’s textual representations of space inculcate viewers as primarily tourists in search of “authentic” culture (Banks, 2011; Fuqua, 2012; Lemann, 2010; Rathke, 2012; Reed, 2011; Thomas, 2012; Tyree, 2010). Scholars also take up Treme’s representations of raced musical culture and multiculturalism, querying how these representations implicate contemporary conceptions of race and racism (George, 2012; Gray, 2012; Reed, 2011; Smith-Shomade, 2011). Additionally, scholars attend to whether or not the text ideologically supports neoliberal rationalities of rebuilding (Cwynar, 2011; Leyda, 2011; Reed, 2011; Smith-Shomade, 2011). The text is also noted for its thick intertextual references, which rewards viewers who are
privy to its insider allusions to the city’s personalities, cultures, and places obliquely referenced in each of the episodes in its quest for representing an “authentic” New Orleans (Andersen, 2011; Banks, 2011). These rewards too are critiqued for how they position New Orleans as “cool” and viewers as “hip tourists” (Banks, 2011). Critics are also quick to contrast Treme with David Simon’s previous work, The Wire, which some television critics herald as the best television series ever (Carey, 2007; “The Wire: Arguably the Greatest Television Programme Ever Made,” 2009; Traister & Miller, 2007; Wilde, 2007). Nicholas Lemann (2010), for example, credits The Wire for its narrative focus on the institutional and structural workings of urban America through the prism of Baltimore, but faults Treme for romanticizing cultural practices.

Yet, both The Wire and Treme do more than merely represent the city. Whereas Ethridge (2008) argues that The Wire offers no material political outlet through which viewers might direct their critique in order to forge ties of solidarity toward new alternative renderings of urban America, I suggest that this is the case for Treme only if we remain transfixed on the text and on TV as a medium of representation. Though an analysis of Treme’s textual and representational practices might yield a fruitful discussion of their ideological function in legitimating particular policies and actions (both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic) in the city as well as in hailing subjects to do that work, it would be remiss to only focus on the text. Indeed, what makes Treme so interesting is its work in the city that goes beyond the text: its material and on-the-ground investment in giving voice and vision to repressed cultural practices (such as that of the Mardi Gras Indians, second-line parading, the jazz funeral, the everyday lives of musicians on the streets or in the club) and its material means for
providing the space and employment for these practices to take place. So too, *Treme’s* highlighting and material support to city spaces off the tourist map, its facilitation of viewers to move in and through those spaces, and its work in providing the material means for television and film production and other forms of cultural work in marginalized neighborhoods can really only be assessed if one looks beyond the text to the series’ broader spatial practices in the city.\(^{16}\) *Treme* invites its viewers to do more than contemplate its meanings on screen, and it instead calls upon them to engage materially in the city.

I therefore argue *Treme* calls for a significant departure from the ways in which media scholars in the past have addressed the importance and significance of media and its relationship to New Orleans, whose approach might best be summarized by Schuth (1981) when he suggests,

> The image of New Orleans in a film…does not depend on location shooting…The image of the city depends on what the image maker selects to include, real or not, and how he or she chooses to present it. What matters is not how authentic the image of the city is, but how the image shapes the viewer’s total idea of what New Orleans is like. (p. 240-241)

Conversely, I argue that the location of shooting and the material practices of production within New Orleans as a location very much shapes the kind of image of the city that is represented on screen. Although what makes it on screen is undoubtedly bound up with choices made by producers, directors, and writers, *Treme’s* commitment to on-location shooting and its networking and hiring of local groups, individuals, and organizations means that the local culture and space of the city also influences and
shapes these decisions. Thus, whereas in previous filmic representations of the city what was happening in the city in reality might have mattered very little, for *Treme* the city itself is a real material force that implicates the series’ textual representations. So too, because of its embededness in city space, *Treme* also has participates in what is happening in the city in ways that go beyond its representational impact on lived and material reality. Moreover, the material practices of viewers—who are enjoined to visit the city as tourists, ethical consumers, and members of a diasporic community—are elicited as forms of shaping the viewer’s idea of what New Orleans is like just as much (if not more so) as the images portrayed on screen. *Treme* thus reflects the shifting terrain of the cultural geography of television production as well as changes in media’s imbrications in contemporary city space. It is in this context that I consider *Treme* as participating in the material production of the city, or how it works as a spatial practice.

**Media as Spatial Practice**

To capture *Treme*’s material participation in city space and its imbrications in post-Katrina New Orleans’ rebuilding, I suggest theorizing media as a spatial practice. In so doing, I follow James Hay’s (1997) call for a broader theorization of media’s relationship to the city. Discussing cinema studies, in particular, he argues,

> What would be most useful are strategies for thinking about a historical dispersal (a historical geography) of “the cinematic”…To study “the cinematic” would involve considering the place(s) of film practices within an environment and their relation to other ways of organizing this environment, of organizing social relations into an environment. (pp. 211-212)
Hay’s call stems largely from his (Hay, 2006) and Lawrence Grossberg’s (1996, 1997) theorizations of cultural studies as spatially materialist, or a philosophy that is bound up with the material and as such is implicated not only in knowledge but also in embodied doing. Driven by these provocations, I aim to analyze *Treme*’s more broadly conceived social practices and spatial processes. Thus, my aim is to inquire less about what *Treme* provokes us to think and more about what *Treme* provokes us to do. It is in this sense, then, that I wish to pose *Treme* as a spatial practice, where the series exists as a form of material regulation, governance, and struggle over city space that makes possible particular kinds of actions and interactions. As Couldry and McCarthy (2004) argue,

> Understanding media systems and institutions as spatial processes undercuts the infinite space of narrative that media appear to promise; it insists that our object of analysis is never just a collection of texts, but a specific and material organization of space. (p. 4)

In posing *Treme* as a spatial practice, I hope to rectify the gap in media studies’ of urban space by helping to provide a theoretical framework and critique for how media scholars might address the more material ways that media participates in the production of city space (Lefebvre, 1991) beyond its textual practices.

In considering how *Treme* works as a “spatial practice,” I am indebted to de Certeau’s (1984) rendering of this concept, but my use of it also departs from his theory. De Certeau attends to the possibilities opened up by a focus on practices of the everyday, and he is particularly interested in how the everyday is a decidedly “spatial practice” carried out by “ordinary practitioners” as opposed to the city planner, cartographer, or planner urbanist. These ordinary practitioners “live ‘down below,’
below the thresholds at which visibility begins. They walk...they are walkers...whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban ‘text’ they write without being able to read it” (p. 93). Through these practices, which compose a story with no author and no spectator, de Certeau seeks to locate the practices that present themselves as Other to the planned city,

Within this ensemble, I shall try to locate the practices that are foreign to the “geometrical” or “geographical” space of visual, panoptic, or theoretical constructions. These practices of space refer to a specific form of operations…and to an opaque and blind mobility characteristic of the bustling city. A migrational, or metaphorical, city thus slips into the clear text of the planned and readable city. (p. 93)

It is important in reading de Certeau to avoid reducing his conception of spatial practices to something that is purely representational or embodied in structural, textual practices. That is, to understand spatial practices as not only as speech acts but also as a material and embodied practice of spatialization. Thus, it is important to attend to not just how spatial practices produce subjectivity but also to how subjects in space constitute that space. It is in this sense, then, that I want to think of Treme not as the sole work of plans and planners, or of the space of dominating culture industries, but, rather, in terms of its everyday and quotidian practices that are implicated in the tactical construction of space.

In understanding these tactical negotiations, however, Bourdieu’s (1984, 1990) conception of habitus is also particularly useful in understanding the potential for how media works as a spatial practice. For Bourdieu (1990), the habitus is composed of,
Systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. (p. 53)

The *habitus* helps to explain the relationship between practices and a particular context whose meanings are immanently produced by the *habitus* itself (Bourdieu 1984, p. 101). Such practices are embodied and thus are played out and performed not through conscious imitation, but through enacted practices. In other words, they are ritualized. It is not only the body through which one learns practical mastery, but it is also through structured spaces and times which perform an educative function and impose orders on bodies (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 76).

In terms of media’s relationship to space, Bourdieu offers valuable tools for thinking through how media structures the *habitus*. As McRobbie (2005) argues in her reading of the reality TV program *What Not to Wear*, media can be read as one of the cultural structures in which individuals are educated as to how to perform within their *habitus*. Media engages its viewers in a set of practical exercises that are aimed at practical mastery. Yet, my own concern with media in cities, and *Treme* specifically, is less in terms of how texts engage viewers in practical exercises and more invested in how media practices work in a broader sense in the city to structure, govern, and regulate the practical relations of citizens to New Orleans. I am thus interested in the more material, practical exercises and technologies offered by the *Treme* production as a whole. In this sense, I suggest considering the way in which media’s everyday tactical
imbrications in and negotiations of city space become constitutive of the *habitus*. That is, in what ways can we understand media as structuring spaces and temporalities of the city and the spaces of *Treme*’s distant viewers to enable enacted practices of everyday citizens and bodies?

In asking this question, I am also invoking Foucault’s conception of space, power, and body in terms of how media’s imbrications in space works toward the aims of governing and the production of citizenship. Theorizing media as a spatial practice, then, also attends to how media work as cultural technologies of governing and citizenship. But rather than understanding how media works in a disciplinary sense to surveil and discipline bodies in space, I am more interested in how media spaces in the city work toward the aim of a kind of governing through freedom. Nikolas Rose’s (1999) critique of freedom is therefore also a central corollary to de Certeau’s understanding of everyday spatial practices as constituting possibilities of resistance and to Bourdieu’s conception of *habitus*. As media industries increasingly depend on the free labor (Terranova, 2004) and creative production of its users in a tactical sense (Manovich, 2009) and urban planners also increasingly depend upon the participation and creative practices of city residents to entrepreneurialize and create the creative city, it is increasingly difficult to understand de Certeau’s spatial practices as embodying the kinds of resistant potentials he seems to assume. I am thus hesitant to attach the same political valence to spatial practices as de Certeau. Yet, I am also not arguing that *Treme* works as a kind of culture industry that commodifies and homogenizes city space.
Instead, I argue *Treme*’s spatial practices work in terms of a kind of neighborliness, or as constituting the media neighborhood, in a site-specific sense where *Treme* takes up a place and role as a kind of neighbor. As city planners increasingly focus on the creative and diverse culture of local and so called “authentic” neighborhoods, media industries are called upon to take up a role in these spaces and places as well, through cultural policies, zoning, and other form of governmental incentives to utilize media industries as agents of urban renewal. These trends that link media directly to spatial planning and production call for a need for an analysis of practices like on-location shooting, employment, television tourism, and “socially responsible” production practices and philanthropy in terms that contextualize the ways in which these practices intervene materially into the places and spaces in which they are employed. So too, as this media neighborhood is broadcast to near and distant viewers across the globe, distant viewers are also invited to participate in neighborly practices, but in ways that are filtered in and through a branded global media conglomerate. Drawing on the theorizations of Bourdieu, de Certeau, and Foucault above, how can we understand the practical ways in which media takes up a position in these neighborhoods, intervenes into, and produces neighborhood space in an everyday sense, for both residents and distant viewers? How is it, then, that media industries (in a broad sense) adapt to and take up a position within the neighborhood? In what ways do their engagements in the neighborhood appropriate that space and become constitutive of the daily practices and rituals of those spaces? How, in turn, do media industries and brands profit from these endeavors? I query how *Treme* speaks to this imbrication of media in the production of neighborhood and neighborhood space at the current
conjuncture in post-Katrina New Orleans as well as how this uptake of a specific neighborhood speaks to the spatiality of media in the convergent and post-broadcast media age.

It is necessary to note that Lefebvre (1991) also theorized spatial practice as one of the tripartite ways in which space is produced. Though I am indebted to his theorizations in terms of how space is socially produced, my use of the term draws more from de Certeau than it does from Lefebvre. Lefebvre viewed spatial practice as “perceived space, between daily reality (daily routine) and urban reality (the routes and networks which link up the places set aside for work, ‘private’ life and leisure” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 38). Lefebvre’s spatial practice is therefore more related to the space that is lived in the context of the dominant, strategic, urban plan. I find de Certeau’s theorization of the tactical negotiation of space as spatial practice to be more useful in the context of the increasingly tactical nature of urban planning, which I address in Chapter 2. De Certeau’s characterization of the tactical spatial practice might be more closely associated with Lefebvre’s “representational spaces,” or what Soja (1996) has referred to as “Thirdspace.” Lefebvre (1991) suggests representational spaces are, “Space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’…This is the dominated—and hence passively experienced—space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate” (p. 39). However, both Lefebvre and Soja place more emphasis on the representational and imaginary than I wish to here, as I aim to emphasize the non-representational and embodied spatial dimensions of media that exceed the representational.
Toward these aims of theorizing media, and *Treme* in particular, as a spatial practice, I am indebted to work in media studies and cultural geography on space and cities, including scholarship on media sites and social practices; media, branding, and urban renewal and the cultural economy of creative cities and industries; and cultural policy and governmentality studies. It is to this research that I now turn.

**Media Space**

In the chapters that follow, a significant body of literature I draw on is work that has influenced a more materialist view of media in terms of its relationship to sites and social practices. One particularly influential strand of work combines cultural studies of television with a cultural geography approach. I also consider work in cinema and film studies that draws from Walter Benjamin’s (1999) work on the arcades. Finally, I discuss scholarship on digital media and the production of media cities before explaining how my approach both contributes to and departs from these literatures on sites and social practices. I discuss specifically the emergence of discourses of media convergence and post-broadcast television, where I suggest that *Treme* enjoins media scholarship to contend not only with a specific medium and its participation in modes of spectatorship in the sites and social practices of viewers but also with the ways in which viewers are called forth to directly participate in the production of space.

A key set of literature that informs this project is on the cultural geography and spatiality of television, such as the work of Anna McCarthy (2001), Lynn Spigel (1992), Victoria Johnson (2008), and Lisa Parks (2004a, 2005). These works are indebted to Raymond Williams’ (1974) insight into how specific mediums develop or are put to use in relation to changes within the urban infrastructure and economy, and, in particular,
his theory of mobile privatization. Williams argues that TV developed in response to
problems arising from urban industrial living, developing the need to move and stay
put. Thus, media technology such as television developed in response to anxieties over
changes in space and was imbued with properties that were posed as a kind of solution
to those anxieties.

Drawing from Williams’ insights, a number of media scholars analyze the
relationship between media and specific sites and social practices. Victoria Johnson
draws on Benedict Anderson’s (1991) theory of imagined communities and theorizes
the ways in which television—in its texts, institutional practices, and audience
receptions—both draws on and helps to produce regional mythologies about the
American Heartland. Johnson (2008) analyzes the regionally specific spatial dynamics
of television in the Midwest, attempting to “re-write regionalism back into television’s
history” through, for example, investigating broadcasting history and regulatory policy
(Johnson, 2008, p. 6). She lends specific attention to the gendered, raced, and classed
dynamics of the Heartland mythology how assumptions about identity are linked to
imaginations of place and space in broadcasting policy for the Heartland.

Anna McCarthy’s (2001), Lynn Spigel’s (1992, 2001, 2005), and Lisa Parks’
(2004a, 2004b, 2005, 2007) contributions to a spatial approach to television studies
inquire into how television as a material entity, whose meaning and value is constructed
through a broad array of discursive nexuses, enters into particular spaces and shapes the
emphasizes the ways in which televsional technology, such as cable and satellite, helps to
shape and regulate spatial practices and mobility in a variety of global and local spaces.
Similarly, Spigel’s (1992) highly influential study of post-war domestic sitcoms is also invested in the spatiality of the televisual medium itself. Spigel looks at the materiality and spatialization of television in the domestic sphere, such as instructions on how and where to place the TV in the living room. She attends to how discourses about television play a productive role in the construction of domestic and public space, and the construction of post-war domestic citizenship and gender identity. A number of studies extend and build upon these insights on the relationship between media (especially television) and domestic space and everyday life (Gauntlett & Hill, 1999; Gray, 1992; Leal, 1990; Moores, 1996; Silverstone, 1994; Taylor, 1989); suburbanization (de Sola Pool, 2004; Haralovich, 1989; Lipsitz, 1986; Morse, 1990; Morley, 2000; Silverstone, 1994); as well as how digital technology and new media reconfigure the domestic (Allon, 2004; Boddy, 2004; Heckman, 2008; Klinger, 2006; Lally, 2002; Spigel, 2005; Turow & Kavanaugh, 2003).

McCarthy’s (2001) work on “ambient television” considers television’s relationship to the public, rather than the private/domestic, sphere. A crucial aspect of McCarthy’s argument, and from which I draw on here, is her conception of site-specificity, where she argues TV screens serve site-specific purposes that makes it “impossible to single out one mode of spectatorship to define the relationship between screen and environment…the televisual place sustains quite particular effects in each place” (p. 3). McCarthy’s and others’ work on the relationships between media and the negotiation of public/private space also attends to how media negotiates tensions between surveillance/discipline/control of space and the potential for agential practices (Bolin, 2004; Boyer, 1996; Graham & Marvin, 1996; Krause & Petro, 2004; Lyon,
2003). Of central concern as well is how media’s attendant social practices produce new forms of subjectivity and new forms of spectatorship in public and private spaces (Hansen, 1991; McCarthy, 2001; Morse, 1990; Scannell, 1996).

Scholarship in cinema and film studies is also an influential body of work for studies on media space and its relationship to constructions of the public and the private. A number of scholars take up Walter Benjamin’s (1999) work on the arcades to parse out the relationship between film and city space. Benjamin’s approach is distinguished from the structuralist and semiotic readings of space that are characteristic of analyses of representation in that he calls forth an approach that is thoroughly historical and bound up with material space in given social contexts. Working along these lines, a number of scholars consider how cinema played a central role in producing the modern urban form (Benjamin, 1979; Conley, 2007; de Sola Pool, 2004; Kracauer, 1995; Nowell-Smith, 2001; Soja, 2000; Tarr, 2004; Thrift, 2004). Feminist film scholars take up how these confluences between cinema and urban modernity took shape through the production of gender, race, and class subjectivities. Anne Friedberg’s (1993) work, for example, looks at how historical shifts in modernity brought about new forms of mobility and changes in urban architectural spaces, which in turn played a central role in configuring the form that cinema took. Friedberg attends specifically to the gendered norms that emerged in relation to the structuring of city space and cinema space, through, for example, analyzing “window shopping” practices in department stores, and the ways in which cinema space opened up possibilities for women to move and look as well as to occupy and visualize city space in new ways. Lauren Rabinovitz (1998) takes this thesis of the relationship between urban space, cinema, and gender
further in her book *For the Love of Pleasure*. She suggests early cinema cannot be studied as the mere despatialization and disembodiment of the spectatorial position, a scholarly practice that often results in the fetishization of the text over its embeddings in specific social contexts and spaces. Rather, studying the spaces of the theaters themselves and the relations between film, its audience, and the positions of spectatorship that film and theater-going present throws focus on how early cinema was not an attraction primarily for its images but, rather, for the public space it provided. Though she attends to how specific texts represent gender rules and norms in the modern city, Rabinovitz’s innovation is in her argument that film scholars need to attend to the cinema as a cultural institution invested in cultural governance. While Friedberg and Rabinovitz make some commentary on the ways in which these gendered norms were also raced and classed, other scholars have attended more specifically to the relationships between cinematic space and the production of racialized geographies and subjectivities in the modern city. These scholars consider how cinema space played out racial struggles and tensions over spectatorship and the struggles over the rights for raced bodies to occupy public space in the city (Carbine, 1990; Forsher, 2003; Gomery, 1992; Jones, 2003; Stamp, 2000; Streible, 1993; Stewart, 2005; Waller, 1995).

McQuire’s (2008) book, *The Media City*, is also heavily influenced by Benjamin and takes an historical approach to theorizing how media technology is inextricably intertwined with the production of modern and post-modern city space. Whereas Friedberg and Rabinovitz tend to view the production of urban space as influencing media technology, McQuire is invested in thinking through how, in moments of transition, media technology has been used to settle urban crises. Thus, whereas
Friedberg and Rabinovitz focus on particular sites, McQuire focuses more on historically situated technologies—serial photography in the Haussmanization era, electrical lighting in the city in the 1880s, the modernist glass house, the city symphony film of the 1920s, and the computer city of today. He argues that at each of these junctures, media technology emerged within a liminal space of transition in ways that helped to contend with contradictions and contestations over urban space.

Following this perspective, contemporary work on “media cities” tends to primarily focus on the relationship between city space and digital media technology and how such technology alters our experiences of life in the city (e.g. Boyer, 1996; Eckardt, Geelhaar, & Colini, 2008; Graham & Marvin, 1996; Krause & Petro, 2003; Graham, 2004; McQuire, 2008; Yoshimi, 2010). While some theorists contend that media technology creates a kind of space/time compression or distanciation (Giddens, 1981; Harvey, 1989; Virilio, 1986), there is a great deal of debate over the particular ways in which digital media influences and reconfigures local place, social relations, and the meaning and practice of community and identity (Berry, Martin, & Yue, 2003; Jones, 1997; Kolko, Nakamura, & Rodman, 2000; Mitchell, 1995; Nakamura, 2002; Nelson, Tu, & Hines, 2001; Robins, 1996; Sconce, 2003; Shohat, 1999). A central concern is in how the mobility provided by media technology reconfigures various sites and social practices as well as relationships between the local and the global and the public and the private (Govil, 2004; Graham, 2004; Hay & Packer, 2004; Packer, 2008; Parks, 2004a, 2004b). Graham’s (2004) Cybercities Reader attempts to map out how information communication technologies are productive of new forms of city life and spaces. Parks (2004a) argues for thinking of digital technology as enabling a kind of
trajectory movement that creates geographically mapped social pathways. She therefore argues for understanding the use and engagement with digital technology in more bodily and material terms, calling for education on how digital technology connects bodies, movements, and territories across sites of production, distribution, and consumption. Studies of how media influences relationships between the global and the local in light of these new kinds of mobilities and interconnectivities have also spurred a fertile area of scholarship on the relationships between media, transnationalism, globalization, ethnicity, and diaspora (Abu-Lughod, 2005; Aksoy & Robins, 2000; Berry & Farquhar, 2006; Gillespie, 1995; Mai, 2001; Mankekar, 1999; Mayer, 2003; Morley, 2000; Morley & Robins, 1995; Naficy, 1993, 1998, 2001; Rajagopal, 2001).

Scholars have attended specifically to how new media and new uses of old media during Katrina made possible global and diasporic connections, through, for example, online search and rescue efforts, radio broadcasting, and blogging (Procopio & Procopio, 2007; Thelwall & Stuart, 2007; Macias & Freimuth, 2009; Moody, 2009; Scheible, 2010).

These existing studies on media and urban space inform my own approach in terms of the ways in which each helps to construct an understanding of media, and television especially, as a material medium that is bound up with the production, organization, regulation, and governance of city space within the context of particular historical conjunctures and social practices. However, the scholarship discussed above tends to be invested in specific mediums—whether television, cinema, or the digital—within given historical time periods. My own approach departs from these studies by analyzing post-Katrina New Orleans not in terms of its relationships to specific
media, but, rather, to thinking of media practice in broader terms to incorporate a wider understanding of its social and spatial practices. In part, this is due to the particular conjuncture into which *Treme* intervenes, where industry discourse increasingly promotes the rationality that it is almost impossible to think of television as an independent medium or technology. As Henry Jenkins (2006) theorizes, media has entered into an era of convergence, defined as “the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences” (p. 2). This is certainly not the case for all television viewers and users—for television production, consumption, and distribution continues to be marked by a digital divide that reifies racial, class, and gender divisions in terms of access to and skills in using technologies of convergence. As Victoria Johnson (2010) notes, “Digitalization also compresses and accelerates the historic and ongoing reality of selective rather than universal market cultivation and the unevenness that is structured into communication technology institutionally, in regulatory and cultural/symbolic terms” (p. 108). Still, the television industry, HBO included, is steeped in anxieties around discourses of convergence and digitization, as these are posed as threatening the stability of the medium in the future. As a result, a rationality of convergence pervades industry practices and discourses at the contemporary conjuncture. *Treme* demonstrates the social forces of convergence in that it is a cable television show about music culture that also calls forth a variety of web-based audience interactivities. Moreover, the show, as an HBO original program, has been a crucial part of HBO’s post-*Sopranos* business and marketing strategy (Guthrie, 2009).
and HBO’s attempt to remain culturally relevant in the wake of shifting terrains between media production and consumption in an era of post-broadcast convergence.

As many scholars note, television is a medium in transition, and though HBO has long sought to distinguish itself from other television networks, it too is experiencing a great deal of pressure and uncertainty due to these changes. Whether referred to as the “post-broadcast” (Hartley, 2009; Lotz, 2007a; Parks, 2007; Turner & Tay, 2009; Kackman, 2009) or “TV III” (Johnson, 2007; Rogers, Epstein, & Reeves, 2002) era, shifts in new media technologies such as iPods and iPads, multiple screens, time-shifting technologies, online streaming, the DVR, viewer interactivity, media policy changes, and so forth have taken their toll on the medium, leading some scholars to prognosticate “the end of TV” or at least “the end of TV as we know it” (Lotz, 2007a). According to these and other scholars, although it is not dead and is indeed still a dominant medium, television is forever altered by new media (Turner & Tay, 2009, p. 3). This leaves us in a kind of uncertain moment for television, or in what Spigel and Olsson (2004) refer to in their collection *Television after TV*, as the era of television that comes after TV. Spigel (2004) notes that,

The demise of the three-network system in the United States, the increasing commercialization of public service/state-run systems, the rise of multichannel cable and global satellite delivery, multinational conglomerates, Internet convergence, changes in regulation policies and ownership rules, the advent of HDTV, technological changes in screen design, the innovation of digital television systems like TiVo, and new forms of media competition all contribute to transformations in the practice we call watching TV. Indeed, if TV refers to
the technologies, industrial formations, government policies, and practices of looking that were associated with the medium in its classical public service and three-network age, it appears that we are now entering a new phase of television—the phase that comes after TV (p. 2).

Given the convergence of these varied forces, Turner and Tay (2009) argue television has moved beyond broadcasting, where it is no longer tied to domestic space and addressed to a national audience articulated to a democratic state through a universally available communications infrastructure. Instead, it has become a post-broadcast medium, where it has escaped domestic space, proliferated across multiple platforms, and indeed become a spectacle of urban public space itself (Turner & Tay, 2009, p. 1).

I therefore situate *Treme* in this context in terms of how it negotiates HBO’s relevance in a post-TV or post-broadcast convergence era (Leverett, Ott, & Buckley, 2008; Lotz, 2009; Spigel & Olsson, 2004; Turner & Tay, 2009) and how this seemingly despatialized era co-emerges with changes in urban spatiality at the current conjuncture. Building on the insights of existing scholarship on how new media reconfigures city space and experiences of public/private space and mobility, I consider how *Treme*, as a form of “old media,” operates in this context and, specifically, how it influences material spatiality and rebuilding in post-Katrina New Orleans and the consequences this has on strategies and practices of governing, citizenship, and for HBO’s branding efforts in the post-broadcast era.

**Cultural policy, citizenship, and governmentality**

In the chapters that follow, I also position *Treme*’s practices within the context of the broader systemic and regulatory policies that aim to promote art and cultural
creativity in the city through cultural policy. Miller and Yúdice (2002) define cultural policy as,

The institutional supports that channel both aesthetic creativity and collective ways of life—a bridge between the two registers…embodied in systematic, regulatory guides to action that are adopted by organizations to achieve their goals…it is bureaucratic rather than creative or organic: organizations solicit, train, distribute, finance, describe and reject actors and activities that go under the signs of artist or artwork, through the implementation of policies. (p. 1)

Lewis and Miller (2003) argue, “Cultural policies are a means of governance, of formatting public collective subjectivity” (p. 2), as they become bound up with the production of standards of taste that, through specific policies, are formulated into techniques aimed at influencing well-regulated and manageable subjects (Miller & Yúdice, 2002, p. 12). In this sense, Foucault’s conception of governmentality is central to the study of cultural policy and greatly informs my perspective on Treme. Thus, while I am indebted to the work discussed above on media and space in terms of materializing the work of media in specific sites and spaces, I turn to work on cultural policy studies and governmentality to understand the particular mechanisms and techniques through which Treme’s spatial practices, as well as those of the residents and viewers it calls forth, participate in the production, organization, and regulation of media and city space.

Foucault (2003b) argues that, simply put, governmentality is the “art of governing,” or the “conduct of conduct.” For Foucault, the art of governance is inextricably tied to a kind of rationality, or a rationalizing, of governmental objectives.
Thus, the conduct of conduct is neither limited to nor restricted by official government. Rather, government is dispersed through society and operates through the further dispersion of governmental rationality toward a plurality of aims. To question how these relations are rationalized, Foucault directs us not toward the broad macro-processes of state or sovereign, but, rather, to the microphysics of specific practices and techniques by which populations are made governmentalizable and brought into alignment with the rationality of governing. This is not to say, however, that a governing rationality has a totalizing end. Instead, governmentality implies a “plurality of specific aims” (2003b, p. 237). An analysis of governmentality, then, aims to untangle the specific aims and means toward which particular governmental objectives are carried out.

Drawing on theories of governmentality, scholars working in critical media studies theorize media as forms of cultural technologies of governing, where a primary interest is in how media constitutes practices of citizenship (Bennett, 1992, 1995, 1998; Bratich, 2008; Bratich, Packer, & McCarthy, 2003; Miller, 1993, 1998; Ouellette, 2002; Ouellette & Hay, 2008; Packer 2008; Palmer, 2003). As Bennett (1998) argues,

Culture emerges as a pluralized and dispersed field of government which…operates through, between, and across [civil society, the state, and the social formation] in inscribing cultural resources into a diversity of programs aimed at directing the conduct of individuals toward an array of different ends, for a variety of different purposes, and by a plurality of means. (p. 77)

Though scholars generally look to Foucault’s early work on disciplinary power or his work on heterotopias when considering issues of space and geography (Crampton &
Elden, 2007), my research considers how his later work on governmentality can be helpful in considering *Treme* as a cultural technology of governing and of citizenship in terms of its spatial practices.

I follow Thrift (2002), Hay (2003), and Huxley (2007) in considering how Foucauldian conceptions of governmentality are useful for thinking of space in its productive capacity. As Thrift (2002) argues,

An important element of governmentality is space…Because to govern it is necessary to render visible the space over which government is to be exercised. And this is not a simple matter of looking: space as to be represented, marked out. And these governable spaces “are not fabricated to counter experience; they make new kinds of experience possible, produce new modes of perception, invest percepts with affects, with angers, and opportunities, with saliences and attractions.” (p. 205)

A key question I ask of *Treme* in terms of its relationship to city space is, then, what rationalities of governing are made possible by the spaces produced through the cultural policies that undergird *Treme*, and what rationalities of governing space, in turn, are made possible through *Treme*’s own spatial practices? By being made governable, I do not mean to deny subjects agency, but, rather, following Nikolas Rose (1999), I argue this kind of production of space assumes agential subjects and enlists that agency to be put into practice in order to make possible “governing at a distance.” Liberal and advanced liberal (or neoliberal) governmentality assumes a subject of freedom, where subjects are to be governed *through* their freedom and expressions of agency rather than through ideological mystification and alienation. The aims of government are brought
into fruition through active subjects who exercise their freedom as agential, liberal
subjects, albeit in “appropriate” ways. Theoretically, then, I depart from the political
economy tradition that tends to assume that economic practices determine and shape
space and economic subjects (e.g. Davis, 2006; Harvey, 1989, 2005; Smith, 1996). That
is, I am invested in understanding how the series’ production of space is bound up with
not only an economic rationality of a global culture industry, but also in how it is tied to
a broader dispersion of aims and rationalities related to governing and citizenship in the
post-Katrina and convergent media era. By drawing on theories of governmentality, I
therefore look to not only the political economics of *Treme*’s production but also to its
micro-practices in the city—such as on-location shooting, local hiring, relationships to
tourism and ethical consumption, corporate social responsibility, and practices of
neighboring—as well as its relationship to a broad dispersion of agencies of
governing—such as neighborhood organizations, the city’s film commission, and
interactive technologies.

I am particularly invested in understanding the show within the context of
advanced, or neoliberal, governmentality. My understanding of neoliberalism is
indebted to Foucault’s (2008) theory of neoliberalism and others who have furthered his
analysis (Brown, 2005; Burchell, 1996; Rose, 1996). As Brown (2005) suggests,
neoliberalism is a kind of rationality “extending and disseminating market values to all
institutions and social action even as the market itself remains a distinctive player” (p.
40). In his *Birth of Biopolitics* lectures at the Collège de France, Foucault (2008) details
the emergence of American neoliberalism, which he argues draws on but also marks a
break from liberal governmentality. American neoliberalism is distinct from classical
liberalism in that it shifts the theory of human capital by extending its currently existing domains and by extending into new domains. In so doing, neoliberalism revives the theory of *homo oeconomicus*, or economic man [sic], and produces a theory of an active economic subject who is an entrepreneur of herself (Foucault, 2008, p. 225). American neoliberalism generalizes the economic form of market throughout the whole social body and social system. Consequently, economic rationality functions as a “principle of intelligibility and a principle of decipherment of social relationships and individual behavior” (Foucault, 2008, p. 243). The economic grid of intelligibility can also be applied to government and to its success or failure, as “a sort of permanent economic tribunal confronting government” (Foucault, 2008, p. 247). Neoliberal governmentality emphasizes the freedom of choice; its conduct of conduct orchestrates subjects who are instructed as to how to manage and govern themselves free from government intervention (Nadesan, 2008, p. 30).

Neoliberal governmentality is a central facet of urban cultural policy and culturally focused urban renewal policies. Over the past thirty years, we have witnessed the all but complete elimination of public funding for the arts and other creative cultural practices, but simultaneously, the centrality of creative culture to the promotion and branding of cities in the global economy has intensified (Scott, 2000). As a result, cities increasingly turn to cultural policies that aim to entrepreneurialize arts, culture, and creative practitioners who do not depend on public support and funding, but, rather, can promote themselves in ways that also promote the city to future workers, investors, and tourists. Cultural and creative practices and the cultural and creative industries have therefore played a significant role in the production of the neoliberal city (Dávila,
Cultural practices are put to work not just for economic purposes, however, but are also drawn upon as expedients to resolving social aims as well. Marginalized communities, in particular, are enjoined to entrepreneurialize their heritage through the creative arts in order to gain access to financial resources, cultural validation, and to gain a “voice” in the city. But they are instructed to do so in such a way that their culture can ensure a return on investment (Dávila, 2004a; Yúdice, 2003).

*Treme*’s intervention into local, vernacular space therefore must be understood in the context of the governing rationalities embodied in the neoliberal city. It provides an alternative source of funding, legitimation, and entrepreneurialization for creative cultural practices, but also for the rebuilding of the neighborhood spaces that are theorized to engender these practices, in the wake of receding governmental funds. It is therefore bound up with the production of neoliberal forms of citizenship, but in such a way that is necessarily tied to the discourses and problematizations of city space and its relationships to race and class in New Orleans after Katrina. But it is not only those within New Orleans who are “empowered” to produce creative space in the city. *Treme* viewers are also enjoined to make material connections to the city, as well, in ways that are posed as a kind of post-Katrina ethical responsibility. Although these practices can be commodified in the form of brand value for HBO in their production of experiences and affective connections to the network, they are also practices that negotiate the responsibilities of citizens to New Orleans in the post-Katrina era.
It is in this spirit that I subtitle this dissertation “the (re)birth of a neighborhood.” Drawing from Foucault’s (1994) *The Birth of the Clinic* and Bennett’s (1995) *The Birth of the Museum*, I contend that *Treme*’s spatial practices are constituent of a kind of (re)birth of the neighborhood. Foucault argued the clinic emerged as a solution to problematizations of the modern city and convergences of discourses about health, and Bennett argued the museum emerged out of debates and discourses regarding the appropriate ways to regulate liberal subjectivity within the context of changes in the modern city. Both Foucault and Bennett attend to how the *space* of the clinic and the museum materializes the rationalities and discourses of governing and citizenship at these different conjunctures. In a similar way, I argue that the neighborhood emerges in post-Katrina New Orleans as a solution to problematizations of race, class, and space in the neoliberal city made manifest during Katrina, where *Treme* converges around this set of discourses, rationalities, and debates and, in effect, reinvents the neighborhood as a solution to these problematizations. By way of arguing that *Treme* intervenes into the context of neoliberal governmentality and the centrality of the neighborhood and creative industries in the neoliberal city—and media as a creative industry in particular—I now turn to discuss the existing literature on urban planning and branding of the neoliberal, creative city and neighborhood.

**Creative Cities, Branding, and Neighborhood Space**

In this section, I review the literature on media and its relationship to cities’ cultural and urban renewal strategies. I first consider 1980’s “Fantasy City” and “Disneyfication” strategies and their concomitant relationship to a kind of “Fortress City” before turning to a discussion of neoliberal strategies of the creative city. I then
discuss how my project intervenes into these literatures by problematizing their reliance on a “culture industry” theory of media space, drawing instead on theories of governmentality to argue *Treme* enjoins scholars to consider how media and city branding works to entrepreneurialize culture “from below.” In so doing, I draw on theories of the “neighborhood” and discuss how *Treme* intervenes into the production of neighborhood space in ways that navigate between the more dominant strategies of the creative city and the more vernacular tactics of urban resistance.

Though there is a longer history of urban planning and renewal that speaks to the historic role of culture in struggles over city space, it was not until the 1980’s that culture, and media especially, began to take such a prominent role in the discourses and rationalities of urban branding, renewal, and planning. The 1980’s were a time of wide-scale economic recession, a solidification of a shift to a post-Fordist global service economy dependent upon what David Harvey (1989) refers to as flexible accumulation, and the influence of neoliberal rationalities of governing. Cities, especially formerly industrial cities like New Orleans, which had relied on its trade port and oil production as a key economic base, found themselves faced with further economic difficulties that only exacerbated the city’s problems following post-war suburbanization and so-called white flight. Characterized by a rationality of what Brenner and Theodore (2002) term “roll back neoliberalism,” public support for the arts and culture was increasingly viewed as a form of welfare (for the rich), begetting widespread federal and state cuts intended to entrepreneurialize the arts and artists to become more economically self-responsible. As Sharon Zukin (1995) contends, it was primarily during this era that cities became in the business of culture (p. 2). Cities, who were also left to fend for
themselves in a globally competitive market for investment, tourism, and labor, turned to public-private partnerships with culture and the arts in an effort to distinguish their cities as unique and interesting. In the 1980’s and 1990s, then, culture, both high and low, began to be seen in light of its potentially productive qualities (Scott, 2000, p. 14), particularly its economically productive qualities, and cities aimed to harness its potential in a combined consumption, production, and image strategy (Freestone and Gibson, 2006). This marked a shift in the discourses of culture in cities, which had previously foregrounded art and culture under a patrician or publicly funded program that rationalized art as a social and cultural good, to one that was framed within an economic and entrepreneurial neoliberal rationality (Edensor, Leslie, Millington, & Ratisi, 2010; Kong, 2000; Miller & Yúdice, 2002).

These collective forces helped to spur a development and urban renewal strategy that John Hannigan (1998) calls Fantasy City, where new solutions were posed to revitalize downtown neighborhood districts into a space for fun. Hannigan (1998) argues that in the 1980’s, disinvestment from the city was accelerating, and the central city was figured as an area of decay and danger associated with discourses of pathological blackness (Haymes, 1995; Wilson, 2007). What was needed, it was theorized, was for the city to be able to offer entertaining and pleasurable spaces that were not available in the suburbs that would not be seen as overly dangerous. As a solution, city planners and developers forged public-private partnerships to build urban entertainment destinations. These were fundamentally urban renewal efforts aimed at specific neighborhoods with a goal of transforming business and industrial spaces into places where consumers could go to shop, be entertained, and cultivate experiences.
Media industries played a crucial role in promoting and transforming industrialized city space into spaces of fun to market to tourists and potential investors. Cities’ tourism boards during this time made public/private partnerships with media industries in an effort to market these new distinctive cultural quarters. As Miriam Greenberg (2008) notes, new partnerships formed between media, marketing, and tourism industries, where,

In addition to lobbying for tax breaks and the elimination of rent control, they were busy planning media campaigns to market a post-industrial “fun city” and mounting surveillance cameras to encircle new tourist and business districts. In the crush of the global marketplace, and in the face of local opposition, new media and marketing tactics, and the culture workers who devised them, were understood as essential to the growth and governance of the neoliberal city. (p. 28)

Moreover, cities increasingly entered into public/private partnerships with media companies to more directly theme and brand public space, such as in the case of Disney’s partnership with New York City in the redevelopment of Times Square (Comella, 2002; Davis, 1999; Gottdeiner, 2001; Sorkin, 1992). 19

Such policies were only possible, however, by ensuring that these spaces of fun could be cordoned off from potentially problem populations and neighborhoods. Thus, the renewal projects of this era cannot be understood outside of the complementary processes of what Mike Davis (2006) terms the “Fortress City.” While the post-war period might be thought of as the dismantling of black public space through practices of slum clearance associated with the 1949 Housing Policy Act (Haymes, 1995; Hirsch,
2000; Hoffman, 2000), the 1980’s and 1990’s might be understood as an era of re-signifying black public space. That is, during this period, those in power sought to disarticulate city space from its ties to the history of black struggle and identity and to re-signify black space as abject and criminal. Davis (2006) suggests that this process was brought about through a new semiotics of space that merged architecture with the police state, leading to new forms of privatized public space that enabled a greater degree of policing and hyper surveillance to cordon off the black population from spaces of entertainment and consumption in the city center.

In today’s era of so-called “roll-out neoliberalism” (Brenner & Theodore, 2002), the city has become entrepreneurialized and is expected to cultivate the entrepreneurial skills of its inhabitants (Hackworth, 2007; Leitner, Peck, & Sheppard, 2007). Termed the “creative cities” approach to urban planning and renewal (Abbas, 2004; Florida, 2002, 2005; Landry, 2000; Landry & Bianchini, 1995; O’Connor, 2004; Porter, 2004; Tay, 2004), art and culture, particularly those associated with racial and ethnic diversity, are today fully integrated into cities’ economic revitalization strategies, where arts, culture, and entertainment are viewed as instruments of spatial planning (Freestone & Gibson, 2006). Richard Florida’s (2002) creative class thesis is particularly influential in urban planning and policy discourses. He argues that in order to compete and attract business investment in the current era, cities must be increasingly attractive to the creative class who desire diverse and authentic neighborhoods. Creative cities strategies therefore aim to stimulate the cultural creativity of unique and diverse neighborhoods that will, in turn, attract the “hip” creative class. Often, creating neighborhood clusters (Porter, 2004) around creative industries such as art, digital media, or fashion is utilized
as a strategy for cultivating the creative city. There is widespread debate over both the potential possibilities as well as the problems created by the creative industries as a creative cities strategy of urban renewal and city branding. On the one hand, creative cities strategies provide resources, networks, and connections to neighborhoods that had hitherto largely been excluded from or bulldozed in favor of earlier forms of urban renewal projects. Local neighborhood and grassroots organizations are given greater resources and access to political power and voice in new ways that give marginalized and disempowered communities new opportunities for claiming their rights to the city and to citizenship. However, the creative cities approach is also subject to a number of critiques, including the indictment that it presents a cookie-cutter approach to urban renewal that results in the homogenization of cities (Edensor et al., 2010); propagates a middle-class ideology that excludes the creative practices of the working class (Edensor et al., 2010); commodifies cultural practices (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009); renders culture expedient (Yúdice, 2003) and produces a push toward marketable ethnicity (Dávila, 2004a); contributes to practices of gentrification (Makagon, 2010; Zukin, 2010); and produces new forms of marginalization and exclusion of the so called uncreative class and neighborhood (Edensor et al., 2010), creating a kind of new glocal ghetto (Wilson, 2007).

Although scholars have addressed the stakes of the fetishization of the local and the “authentic” in urban planning, neighborhood development, and more generally in producing the neoliberal city (Dávila, 2004a; Edensor et al., 2010; Lloyd, 2006; Yúdice, 2003; Zukin, 1995, 2008, 2010), few scholars have examined the role that media plays in the production of these spaces. On the one hand, media is more firmly solidified in
city branding efforts to represent its creative assets (Greenberg, 2008). On the other hand, however, media is valued also for its own creative capacities as well, as a special kind of creative industry that is deemed particularly valuable, especially in terms of the financial and social returns of television and film production (Christopherson & Rightor, 2010). Scholarship that addresses media’s role in the creative city overwhelmingly continues to address the first aspect of media as a primarily representational medium, one whose representations, whether from the culture industry or individual bloggers and producer/consumers, are theorized to implicate the meanings and understandings of particular city spaces through, for example, practices of branding (e.g. Greenberg, 2008; Zukin, 2010). Yet, as Christopherson and Rightor (2010) note, the solicitation of media industry (especially the film, television, and digital media industries) constitutes an overarching strategy in cultivating the creative city through aggressive cultural policies aimed to attract these industries. Two strands of scholarship have emerged that address these issues—the first on music industries’ relationship to cities; and, second, scholarship on digital media industries’ role in constituting the creative city.

Scholarship on the music industry is one exceptional strand of work on creative industry cultural policy relating to media industries and their relationship to city branding, revitalization, and renewal. Miller and Yúdice (2002) discuss specifically how Miami drew upon cultural policies to help foment the city as a Latin music capital. Through a series of public/private partnerships, Miami’s music industry had, Transformative effects on the urban fabric, from the renovation of decaying areas (often at the expense of vestigial industrial activity or of poor
communities) to the creation of new educational and cultural venues that are being touted as generators of value in their own right. (Yúdice, 2003, p. 192)

However, these practices were about more than economic rewards from the entertainment and tourist industries. They were aimed to resolve racial and social tensions in the city by providing a form of value to Latin culture. Yet, this value was “not distributed evenly, but accrues to those classes that are positioned to gain access…often immigrants and minorities, are implicated in the maintenance and reproduction of the digerati: they give life to cities” (Yúdice, 2003, p. 192).\(^{21}\)

Additionally, with regards to New Orleans in particular, Porter (2009) suggests that since Katrina, New Orleans has again turned to jazz as not only an argument for why the city should be rebuilt—i.e. because of its invaluable culture and inherent multiculturalism that can resolve the harms of Katrina—but also as a mechanism for rebuilding in and of itself, where it deploys as a practical strategy for a kind of culture-led urban regeneration. Because so much of *Treme* focuses on the city’s jazz tradition in both its narrative and in its spatial and production practices, it provides a key vehicle through which this realization of using jazz as a revitalization strategy can be implemented within the contours of a convergence culture.

In addition to the music industry, Andrew Ross (2004) details in his work on Silicon Alley what he terms “dot.com urbanism,” where he argues cities are turning to digital media industries as a mechanism for urban renewal as well. This is bound up with a creative cities strategy and the “new” knowledge economy, where cities increasingly draw upon what are considered “value-adding” niche opportunities in growth industries that can promote high end product services and generate jobs. He
notes, “the digital economy…was a high protein stimulant for zones in transition, and
the shabby chic of its boutique companies and human capital was a perfect engine for
pumping value into depreciated land assets” (Ross, 2004, p. 146). Digital workers are
understood as able to bring in a neo-bohemian lifestyle component to formerly
industrialized areas in today’s cities, thus helping to constitute a form of urban renewal.

As Ross (2004) argues, these forms of neo-bohemia and culture-led regeneration are
also bound up with the knowledge economy and the need for flexible knowledge
workers who behave and think like artists. In this sense, the aim to produce creative
spaces through the creative media industries is also a matter of producing
entrepreneurial and creative subjects.²²

Much debate has emerged around the efficacy media industry strategies to
generate economic development in cities and the effects they have culturally as well
(see for example Christopherson & Rightor, 2010; Evans, 2009; Hartley, 2004; Miller,
There is a particularly great deal of skepticism over whether or not research actually
bears out the economic benefits of these strategies (Miller, 2004; Oakley, 2004;
Christopherson & Rightor, 2010; Zukin, 2009; Ross, 2004). Other critics fear the
detrimental effects the creative city approach has on already existing local cultures.
Specifically, there is concern over the potential for these strategies to contribute to
gentrification, which ultimately pushes out the culture and people that had made these
spaces unique in the first place (Smith, 1996; Miller, 2004; Ross, 2004; Zukin, 2009). In
so doing, these strategies make culture into a commodity and produce a kind of
depoliticized form of consumer citizenship (Uricchio, 2004) that offers a ‘controlled
edge’ to middle-class citizens who desire urban novelty and diversity that is nonetheless safe for consumption (Hannigan, 2007, p. 73). Further, while the assumption is that creative cities enable consumers and local cultures to participate more democratically in the production of city life (Jenkins, 2004; Landry, 2004; Landry & Bianchi, 1995; Florida, 2002), much of the emphasis on reinvigorating local cultures is driven by elites (Evans, 2009, p. 1031). Christopherson and Rightor (2010) note that Louisiana’s particular strategy of engendering the creative city and cultural economy has failed to create any significant new jobs, spur economic development, or produce a local homegrown film production and media industry. Instead, these practices largely benefit the major conglomerates, whose production and labor practices increasingly turn to runaway production in order to reap the benefits of tax incentives and cheap labor, constituting what Miller (2001) terms “the new international division of cultural labor.” Techniques and strategies for branding and planning cities to be creative and diverse is therefore critiqued as a ruse, where “a captivating diversity is held out to attract investment…but real diversity is likely to be too messy for the narrative” (Donald, Kofman, & Kevin, 2009, p. 12). Instead, media’s role in producing creative cities is theorized as the flattening out of cities into a singular identity imposed from above.

This critique of media’s relationship to urban branding and renewal, especially by media scholars, is in many ways rooted in Horkheimer and Adorno’s (2002) critique of the culture industry. As they suggest in their landmark essay, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception” (2002), the culture industry and its mode of production is bound up with the production of space:
The town-planning projects, which are supposed to perpetuate individuals as autonomous units in hygienic small apartments, subjugate them only more completely to their adversary, the total power of capital. Just as the occupants of city centers are uniformly summoned there for purposes of work and leisure, as producers and consumers, so the living cells crystallize into homogenous, well-organized complexes. The conspicuous unity of macrocosm and microcosm confronts human beings with a model of their culture: the false identity of universal and particular. All mass culture under monopoly is identical, and the contours of its skeleton, the conceptual armature fabricated by monopoly are beginning to stand out. (p. 95)

This conception of mass culture, and of media culture in particular, is a foundational way of understanding media as a spatial practice—as a standardized commodity that imposes its stamp on individuals, spaces, and the social. In much scholarly discourse on the relationship between media, space, and branding, there has been a reliance on this culture industry approach to understanding media’s relationship to space (Davis, 1999; Edensor et. al., 2010; Gottdiener, 2001; Hannigan, 1998; Power & Scott, 2004; Scott, 2000, 2004; Sorkin, 1992; Zukin, 1995). This scholarship theorizes media as a homogenizing force, impressing its cultural stamp onto city space and thereby cleansing and evacuating difference.

Instead, I draw on Lash and Lury’s (2007) work on the global culture industry. Lash and Lury employ Deleuzian theory (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), work in cultural geography on non-representational theory (Thrift, 2008), and work on the cultural
economy (Amin & Thrift, 2004; du Gay & Pryke, 2002) that posits a shift toward a form of post-Fordist, informational capitalism. They argue,

If global industry worked largely through the commodity, the global culture industry works through brands. The commodity and the brand are largely sources of domination, of power. The commodity works via a logic of identity, the brand via a logic of difference. (Lash & Lury, 2007, p. 5)

Though industry today continues to produce products and commodities, what matters about these products, Lash and Lury argue, is less the commodities themselves than what can be done with them as well as the affects they can cultivate. The culture industry aims to produce a set of identical objects fixed in both meaning and materiality, which requires a factory like production system and formatting of cultural products. Influenced by processes of globalization and the increasing significance of communication infrastructures and informational capitalism, in the global culture industry, products move, and in that movement, “cultural entities take on a dynamic of their own” (Lash & Lury, 2007, p. 5). Whereas it is the similarity between products that produce surplus value in the culture industry, in the global culture industry, the value added in the movement and dynamism of products is productive of a surplus. The design intensive global culture industry therefore works through mass customization, specialized consumption, and the production of many different goods that circulate in and through a brand identity rather than a commodity.

Lash and Lury suggest the global culture industry is not one that works through domination and resistance in relation to representation and hegemonic ideology, but
primarily becomes about the mediation of things, or the materialization of media as a space of intensities:

Our point is that in 1945 and in 1975 culture was still fundamentally a superstructure. As a superstructure, both domination and resistance took place in and through superstructures—through ideology, through symbols, through representation…But in 2005, cultural objects are everywhere; as information, as communication, as branded products, as financial services, as media products, as transport and leisure services, cultural entities are no longer the exception: they are the rule. Culture is so ubiquitous that it, as it were, seeps out of the superstructure and comes to infiltrate, and then take over, the infrastructure itself. It comes to dominate both the economy and experience in everyday life. Culture no longer works—in regard to resistance or domination—primarily as a superstructure…hegemonic ideology, as symbols, as representations. In our emergent age of global culture industry, where culture starts to dominate both the economy and the everyday, culture, which was previously a question of representation, becomes thingified. In classical culture industry…mediation was primarily by means of representation. In global culture industry instead is the mediation of things. (Lash & Lury, 2007, pp. 3-4)

These changes affect the stakes of media branding of urban space within the contours of informational capitalism. Thus, so too, “Urban space becomes a space of intensities…of multimodal experience, not just that of vision, a space of virtualities and intensities that actualize themselves not as objects but as events” (Lash & Lury, 2007, p. 15).
The way in which *Treme* intervenes materially into New Orleans within the context of a specific neighborhood with a specific history in many ways works within this logic of a brand, both of the series itself and that of the city’s which become co-articulated, creating spaces that generate difference rather than sameness. *Treme* helps to brand the city and thus render it “revitalized,” “rebuildable,” and “renewed” by mediating things—primarily neighborhoods and the living labor within those neighborhoods, where both become constituted as a kind of always already site for potential mediation. Moreover, *Treme* also works to materialize media, and particularly the global brand of HBO, by drawing on new media interactivities as a way of connecting viewers to a particular, material space and in therefore in contributing a materialization to HBO’s brand identity. The Tremé neighborhood, both for residents and viewers, becomes a space not of representation but for doing—for actualizing experiences in which viewers and residents take part in the production of urban spatiality. *Treme* works as a branding practice that aims not at flattening out space, as a kind of culture industry invested in transforming space into a Disney experience alike every other Disneyfied space, but rather in stimulating space to generate meanings, experiences, and affects from below that are productive of difference. This project therefore seeks to understand how media, and *Treme* in particular, is bound up with a production of place and locality, and specifically neighborhood, within the context of these global shifts and changes through its located and locative practices.

Yet, the *Treme* brand does not only work as a difference generating space of intensity. As a globally syndicated television program produced by a global media conglomerate, Time Warner, *Treme* also depends upon a kind of commodification that
is perhaps overlooked by Lash and Lury. Though *Treme*’s producers argue the show is written less for distant viewers and more so for New Orleans’ residents, HBO’s profit still depends upon the show resonating with its global audiences. Thus, whatever the production does that is specific to the local, material space of the city must also be in negotiation with its global audiences. I am therefore interested both in how the series works as a brand that is implicated in the production of locality, where “localities themselves are historically produced through the dynamics of the global” (Morley, 2000, p. 11), but also in the broader dimensions of how *Treme* draws upon this locality as a way to appeal to distant viewers. *Treme* requires a kind of commodification of New Orleans and of Tremé to coherently communicate to its global audiences who are invited to participate in the production of New Orleans as ethical tourists and consumers. In so doing, I argue *Treme* positions the HBO brand as a global brand that can be the no place/everyplace that connects viewers to some place, a particular place, the neighborhood. There is therefore both a similarity and difference generating process happening simultaneously—the difference generating aspects of *Treme* on the ground in a particular locality become commodified for the appeal to global and distant viewers invited to participate in practices of tourism and interactive engagements with the city on the web. Still, I suggest this is a shift from the national appeal of broadcasting that assumed a centralized, national, and domestic TV space. It is a shift to a global appeal that plays upon the sense of placelessness and displacement in the space/time collapsing dimensions of the web by positing the global TV brand, in this case HBO, as a space of material connection between particular localities.
A particular concern of mine in relation to media’s production of locality in New Orleans is the concept of neighborhood, which has been a central focus of discussion both of creative cities strategies of urban branding as well as in the debate regarding the post-Katrina rebuilding process. Influenced by the shift toward a global economy and the emergence of new networks and institutions of globalization, the erosion of the salience of the nation-state’s influence has been coupled with the emergence of renewed and reinvigorated emphasis on the role of local governance at the subnational scale, and, particularly, the neighborhood (Sassen, 2000). Neighborhoods play an especially key role in creative cities strategies of urban renewal, rationalized as diverse, hip, “authentic,” and creatively cultural. Neighborhood communities too are expected to manage the entrepreneurial skills and maximization that is required of individuals to govern themselves in a neoliberal era of self-responsibility, not only as a means for economic development, but as a means of gaining political validation and empowerment as well (Yúdice, 2003; Dávila, 2004a; Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009). Urban renewal schemes increasingly focus on “empowering” marginalized communities, bringing into being new networks and practices at the neighborhood level that can transform neighborhood community into a site of government (Osborne & Rose, 1999).

Yet, neighborhoods are also tied to historical struggles, identities, memories, and vernacular cultural practices. Many of New Orleans’ historically black neighborhoods, in particular, might be associated with what bell hooks (1990) has termed “homeplace.” In defining homeplace, she suggests,
Throughout our history, African-Americans have recognized the subversive value of homeplace, of having access to private space where we do not directly encounter white racist aggression. Whatever the shape and direction of black liberation struggle…domestic space has been a crucial site for organizing, for forming political solidarity. Homeplace has been a site of resistance. (p. 47)

The Tremé neighborhood seems to fit this understanding of homeplace, as the historic home to Congo Square where slaves gathered to play the drum and dance, formulating the “birthplace” of jazz. It was also the space in which political organizing during the reconstruction and civil rights eras emerged, and it remains a vital center for the production of musical culture and practices that play a key role in the cultural memory of the city’s African American population (Crutcher, 2010; Elie et al., 2008). Yet, in an era in which diverse cultural practices at the level of the neighborhood have come to play a central role in cities’ broader plans for economic development as well as toward the aims of resolving social “problems,” what different struggles around the production of “neighborhood” emerge?

In her work on New York’s East Harlem, or “El Barrio,” Arlene Dávila (2004a; 2004b) suggests that shifts in rationalities of multiculturalism increasingly make Latino neighborhoods a desirable space in cities. She argues that struggles over neighborhood space reveal that cultural politics play a central role in the structuring of space, where neighborhood culture “is increasingly an instrument in the entrepreneurial strategies of government and businesses, serving both as a means of selling, framing and structuring space and as a medium for contesting such practices to reclaim space and advance alternative meanings” (Dávila, 2004b, p. 97). Yet, these aims are not always easily
separable or distinguishable, as culture is deployed both as a form of “marketable ethnicity” as well as more politicized manifestations in ways that can overlap and blur into one another. She thus suggests that struggles over space implicated in neighborhood advertising and art mediums is “less a contest over the signification of outdoor surfaces or of East Harlem’s public identity as a Latin neighborhood, and more one over who is involved in its definition, and for what ends” (p. 97). As a result, public debates over the uses of ethnic culture in urban neighborhood renewal projects need to be analyzed not on the basis of whether or not it necessarily commodifies culture, but, rather, in terms of its imbrications in a particular material and rhetorical context.

Like Dávila, then, a particular concern I have with *Treme* is how it intervenes in the production of and struggle over racialized, neighborhood space in post-Katrina New Orleans in the context of creative cities cultural policy making and neoliberal governmentality. Like the struggles over outdoor space in East Harlem, *Treme* is not easily parsed out as either constituting dominant appropriations of space by the culture industry or as a form of politicized resistance to reclaim the right to the city. Instead, *Treme* highlights how what is typically understood as resistance and domination are increasingly blurred in the neoliberal city and in New Orleans, in particular. Whereas much of the work to date that tackles these questions largely considers media in representational terms (e.g. Negra’s (2010b) collection discussed above), my work does not specifically attend to how the show represents race in the city. I am therefore less interested in what race “is,” counter-hegemonic representations of race, how watching *Treme* impacts one’s racial identity, or how New Orleans as a sense of place in the series constructs identifications of blackness. Instead, I am interested in the more
material practices of the show as technologies of governing racialized neighborhood space and citizenship in the context of the problematizations of Katrina and the marriage of “culture-as-vernacular practices, notions of community, and economic development” (Yúdice, 2003).

**Technologies of Race and Difference**

My project does not theorize race as representation but rather emphasizes a theorization of technologies of race and difference. This turn to theorizing technologies of race is due to shifts in media culture that have been influenced by discourses of the “post-racial.” As Gray (2005) notes, representations of difference are prolific in today’s media culture, and these representations tend to be diverse rather than stereotypical. Indeed, *Treme*’s home channel, HBO, plays a significant role in this history. According to Fuller (2010), cable television networks, and especially HBO, historically used blackness as a way to cultivate a brand identity that could appeal to niche audiences and differentiate them from broadcast networks (p. 287). These practices are bound up with shifts in neoliberalism, where cultural difference is considered a resource that is governed by a market logic. I draw on Banet-Weiser and Gray’s (2009) call for understanding media’s post-racialism in terms of neoliberal technologies of governing, where,

Media operates as a primary site where the defining logics is the proliferation of difference, a proliferation that operates at the level of markets, niches, identities, and experience and that functions to celebrate and encourage difference as a way of expressing one’s unique position in the cultural world. (pp. 17-18)
This project situates *Treme* in the context of post-racial media culture and considers how it works within the broader strategies of governing post-Katrina New Orleans.

In so doing, I draw on work in critical race theory that analyzes the relationship between neoliberalism and race (Duggan, 2003; Giroux, 2004, 2006; Goldberg, 2009; Mukherjee, 2006). As Giroux (2004) suggests,

Neoliberal racism is about the privatization of racial discourse…Neoliberal racism asserts the insignificance of race as a social force and aggressively roots out any vestige of race as a category at odds with an individualistic embrace of formal rights. Focusing on individuals rather than on groups, neoliberal racism either dismisses the concept of institutional racism or maintains that it has no merit. In this context, racism is primarily defined as a form of individual prejudice while appeals to equality are dismissed outright. (p. 67)

Solutions to racial “problems” in neoliberalism therefore eschew state-based welfare solutions and instead promote individual, entrepreneurial freedoms as a means of redressing economic and cultural exclusion. According to Goldberg (2009) these shifts promote a discourse that centers on *race* rather than *racism*, eschewing broader structural critiques or antagonisms. In media, the turn to the post-racial tends to celebrate racial and ethnic difference as forms of consumable lifestyles in ways that largely erase or elide the history of struggle that might contribute to seeing these identities in more political terms (Banet-Weiser, 2007).

As Grossberg (1996) suggests, cultural studies’ focus on identity as a structure of agency has tended to overly emphasize discourse and temporality while obscuring relations of affiliation and practice in space. My project seeks to rectify this and to
consider how race in *Treme* goes beyond representations on screen and some imagined identity and is instead bound up with decisions and policies that are aimed at particular configurations of racialized spaces in and through New Orleans. In so doing, I aim to consider how race is deployed as a cultural technology of governing. I look to the material practices of *Treme* in constituting race as a technology of neoliberal governance as it is deployed in cultural policy, hiring and employment practices, in eliciting the ethical responsibilities of its viewers, and broader strategies of city and network branding. I query how these spatial practices intervene into the current conjuncture where racial difference is figured in market terms as a provisionally included and marketable identity.

**Production Studies**

In considering the particular spatial practices of *Treme* within the city of New Orleans and its neighborhoods, I am indebted to emerging work in production studies (Caldwell, 2008; Gitlin, 1993; Mayer, 2011b; Mayer, Banks, & Caldwell, 2009; Pratt, 2004; Ross, 2004, 2009; Tinic, 2005; Ursell, 2000). Production studies scholars study “up and down the food chains of production hierarchies to understand how people work through professional organizations and informal networks to form communities of shared practices, languages, and cultural understandings of the world” (Mayer, Banks, & Caldwell, 2009, p. 2). As Mayer, Banks, and Caldwell (2009) note, production studies scholars,

Are interested in how media producers make culture, and, in the process, make themselves into particular kinds of workers in modern, mediated societies…

Production studies scholars, as contributors to a field of interdisciplinary
inquiry, draw their intellectual impetus from cultural studies to look at the ways that culture both constitutes and reflects relationships of power. (p. 2)

Methodologically, production studies scholars contribute a theoretical framework for how to study the media industry beyond the polarizing political economy or cultural studies approaches by looking specifically at how production cultures themselves work on the ground in specific spaces, places, and temporalities. In the context of these cultural studies’ informed production studies, Havens, Lotz, and Tinic (2009) propose a framework for critical media industry studies. They call for reinvigorating critical work on media industries that emphasizes micro level industrial practices and “midlevel fieldwork in industry analyses, which accounts for the complex interactions among cultural and economic forces” (p. 237). Vicki Mayer’s (2011b) research on below-the-line production work is a particularly important example of this kind of work. She argues television scholars tend to privilege studies of producers working above the line and thereby contribute to naturalizing definitions of creativity and auteurism that benefit the power structure of corporate media at the expense of workers. Instead, she utilizes an ethnographically inspired research agenda to address television work today—from television factories, to casting, to on-location shooting—as a means of understanding how media workers today are encouraged to draw upon their social identities and to see themselves as creative workers in today’s new production labor economy.23

The effects of media production practices on labor are also addressed by scholars studying practices of runaway production—a concern also tied to Treme because which, though not officially a “runaway” because it is filmed within the U.S., is indicative of the rationalities of moving out of Hollywood to take advantage of cheap
labor and tax incentives. Runaway production refers to when film or television
production that is intended for sale and distribution in the U.S. moves its actual
production offshore to another country in order to capitalize on tax credits and cheaper
labor (Miller, 2005). As Miller (2005) argue, runaway production has skyrocketed in
the last fifty years, where studio’s pursuit for exponential profits influence them to
purchase “facilities around the world to utilize cheap, docile labour…avoiding the cost
of renting studio space in Los Angeles and paying pension and welfare fund
contributions” (p. 133). Miller and Yúdice (2002) suggest the prevalence of runaway
film production is linked to what they term a “New International Division of Cultural
Labor.” Situating the various forms of cultural policy that lure filmmakers with the
promises of cheap labor and other financial benefits, Miller and Yúdice emphasize these
processes as constitute a new set of power relations between first and third world
nations that are predicated on a kind of cultural expropriation and exploitation of the
labor, knowledge, and skills of the global south.24

Scholarship on these practices also addresses the ways in which these labor and
production flows influence identity and local culture (Levine, 2009; Miller, 2001; Scott,
capitals suggests the need to study the media industry in a global context. His work
contributes to understanding the relationships between local places of production in an
increasingly transnational mediascape and their relationship to broader processes of
transnationalism and globalization. He suggests that global cities aim to become media
capitals by encouraging the development of their media industries. Media capitals are
“sites of mediation, locations where complex forces and flows interact” (Curtin, 2003,
p. 273). Curtin emphasizes that media capitals are neither economically determined nor solely the outcome of national policy and governmental regulation, though both of these contribute, but also a product of complex cultural flows as well.

In this project, particularly in Chapter 2 where I consider *Treme*’s production practices, I draw on a production studies inspired micro level analysis of the production practices of *Treme*, with a particular interest in how these industrial practices intervene in the production, regulation, and governance of space in post-Katrina New Orleans. I am interested in how *Treme*’s production practices are linked to the constitution of post-Katrina entrepreneurial spaces and citizen subjects in New Orleans. Following McRobbie (2002a, 2002b), Ross (2004), and Terranova (2000), I agree the media workplace has indeed shifted from the production studio to the social factory of a collapsed home/work space. In the case of *Treme*, this space is the neighborhood. *Treme*’s cultivation of creative neighborhood space is theorized as a form of cultural governance that is directed internally at neighborhood inhabitants as a form of, increasingly, neoliberal governance (Moor, 2007). I therefore look to the ways in which *Treme*’s production practices work as a spatial practice and a cultural technology of empowerment of neighborhood spaces and residents in what I refer to as the media neighborhood.

**New Orleans and Tremé**

In understanding media as a spatial practice, I want to first emphasize that I do not mean to construct a universal and generalizable theory that can be applied across time and space. Rather, theorizing media as a spatial practice requires a particular attentiveness to specificity, where the time/space and conjuncture into which media
intervenes is site specific (McCarthy, 2001). Thus, before discussing the overarching contributions this project makes to media studies by theorizing *Treme* as a spatial practice, I would first like to emphasize the specificity of time/space in New Orleans, and in the Tremé neighborhood in particular, which to a degree calls forth and makes possible *Treme*’s spatial practices.

New Orleans is famously a city of neighborhoods (Piazza, 2005), and in many ways the way in which the city has historically marketed its neighborhoods as distinctively cultural has played a special role in the imagined community (Anderson, 1991) of what it means to be an American. New Orleans is imagined as an exotic, romantic, and mysterious city. It is understood as quirky, ethnic, raced, but also politically backward and corrupt. New Orleans as this kind of Other—both romanticized and made abject—has thus played a central role in constructing a foil for definitions of American citizenship. It is a space where outsiders go to play, a space where “laissez les bons temps rouler” as they say, a space that has never been able to be fully Americanized. As a result, New Orleans is often referred to as the northernmost part of the Caribbean, as it appears to have more in common with Caribbean culture than with American culture. The ways in which the city imagines itself are products of a long history within the city to produce itself as an “authentic” city and as well as a site of tourism (Gotham, 2007a). However, its claims to what makes it “authentic” and the images on which it draws fluctuate due to historical contingencies. Throughout this history, however, a complex relationship between race, culture, and space has persisted in a struggle over how the city would be defined, lived, and practiced.
New Orleans thus has a complicated cultural and spatial history. The history of slavery had a fundamental impact on the city’s racialized geography. As Richard Campanella (2006) notes, New Orleans displays the “paradoxical yet typical” urban geography of other southern cities. It is paradoxical in that, in contrast to northern cities, southern cities tended to be more integrated and mixed through the Jim Crow era and only became highly segregated in the period following *Brown vs. Board of Ed* and the Civil Rights movement. Thus, the jarring sense of hyper segregation that was so evident after Katrina is actually a rather recent phenomenon. New Orleans was actually even more integrated than other similar southern cities (Dyson, 2006; Gotham, 2007a; Sublette, 2008). This is in part due to the tendency toward the backyard pattern of building, where slave quarters were built behind the master’s quarters in the city (Dyson, 2006). This practice produced an urban pattern of blocks within superblocks that tended to have black blocks that were enclosed by larger blocks populated by whites producing a “salt and pepper” or a “checkerboard pattern” of racial segregation where black neighborhoods were interspersed with white neighborhoods (Spain, 1979). These patterns were also inextricably bound up with the city’s unique geography and climate. Because the city was built around swamp and enclosed by the natural barriers of the Mississippi River and Lake Pontchartrain, there was limited inhabitable space to build on (Gotham, 2007a). Moreover, the city’s dense, urban population in addition to the large number of free people of color within the city’s boundaries and the political fragmentation within the city made policing the boundaries of race more difficult (Gotham, 2007a). All these factors have contributed to New Orleans as historically marked by a much greater degree of racial mixing than other cities in the U.S.
It was not until the 1950s and the so-called white flight from the city to the suburbs after the Civil Rights movement that more northern patterns of racial segregation became evident in New Orleans. Ogletree and Trout (2006) suggest that it is during this period that New Orleans emerged as two faces. The first face is that which was made visible to the promotion of the city as a site of tourism and consumption. The second face was rendered invisible and existed as the underbelly of inequality and structures of exploitation that were produced to service the first face. These two faces went beyond practices of representation, however, and were inextricably bound to the material structure of the city’s geography. New Orleans became divided into areas known as “uptown” and “back-a-town,” corresponding roughly to these two faces. Uptown—the Garden District, Uptown, the French Quarter—are those areas above sea level, the “silver by the river” (Buick, 2011), protected by the geography’s natural levees, and are primarily inhabited by middle and upper class whites. The city’s “back-a-town” are those neighborhoods below sea level, protected by the Army Corps of Engineers’ defunct levee system, and are primarily inhabited by the city’s people of color and the poor. Katrina is only the most recent “unnatural disaster” that made evident the relations between race and space in New Orleans and the ways in which these relations are bound up with possibilities for agency and, indeed, survival. The Great Mississippi River flood of 1927 created a disaster on par with Katrina, as did Hurricane Betsy in 1965, which affected many of the same neighborhoods as Katrina.\(^{25}\)

Despite these racialized spatializations and their relationships to exploitation and inequality, however, or perhaps precisely because of them, the city’s marginalized, back-a-town neighborhoods have distinct and vibrant cultural practices. People claim
roots to their neighborhoods over many generations, bound up with a strong connection to and memory of their histories as they are bound up with a history of place (Powell, 2005). Black cultural practices in these spaces, in particular, tend to signify and help to materially construct a sense of community and connection while at the same time playing out struggles over public space and the right for black bodies to inhabit that space, as is evident in the practices second lines, jazz funerals, and Mardi Gras Indians (Barrios, 2010; Lipsitz, 2001; Regis, 1999, 2001).

However, black culture also plays a central role in constructing New Orleans’ image and promotion of itself, especially to tourists, whether in the form of abject or romantic Otherness. Pointing to New Orleans’ 1884 World Industrial Cotton Exposition and the city’s bid for the 1930 Panama Exhibition, Gotham (2007a) argues that in each of these examples, New Orleans’ culture was served up as an object of consumption in ways that problematized black cultural practice as barbaric and un-American. This image of the city was further buttressed by post-war white flight from the city to the suburbs in the 1940s and 1950s. White disinvestment from the city spurred officials to new forms of urban renewal and place marketing as a means of attracting business investment and tourists to revitalize the economy. It was during this era in the 1950s that the “holy trinity” of food, music, and architecture became central to the city’s representation of its authentic cultural roots. Black culture, and jazz music in particular, became central to this representation and the marketing of the city. Advertising for the city and other cultural events in the city, for example, would utilize the second-line as a key iconic symbol, and second-lines were frequently staged in the French Quarter for tourists and conventioneers (Regis, 1999). However, as Thomas (2009) notes, the
marketing of black culture was filtered through competing discourses of desire and disaster. Black culture (especially voodoo, music, and food) was served up as an object of exotic and spectacular consumption. It was there to be consumed by whites desiring a walk on the “wild side.” Yet, this discourse of desire for black culture was complemented by a discourse of disaster that nostalgized the pre-Civil Rights era, where Civil Rights and struggles for equality that denigrate the romantic and nostalgic past were posed as disastrous. The discourse of disaster thereby erased the histories of struggle out of which black cultural practices, like the second-line, were born (Regis, 1999).

These concerns especially come to bear on the relationship between New Orleans and the jazz music industry. New Orleans has long branded itself as the “birthplace of jazz,” where this branding slogan is aimed to attract global tourism as well as investment in the city’s music industry. The city has tried to cash in on this history and the industry through various urban renewal projects like building Jazzland (an amusement park) and Louis Armstrong Park, as well as through cultural events like the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival. Yet, New Orleans’ branding around jazz culture and the music industry also goes beyond an economic dynamic and speaks to the social aims of the city as well. Its jazz branding was used to rhetorically construct the city as multicultural and free from racial strife during the Civil Rights era when the city was undergoing a great deal of racial struggle and antagonism (Souther, 2003). As numerous jazz scholars note, the centrality of jazz to New Orleans’ culture is heralded as “a visible signifier of the possibilities of multiracial democracy” where “jazz history and culture affirm the nation’s success in overcoming its racist legacies” (Porter, 2009,
However, the city’s use of jazz as a multicultural branding and tourism promotion belies the city’s duplicitous treatment of the black working class who serve as the producers of that culture for outside consumption. As Porter (2009) notes,

> The tourist economy that supports a significant amount of jazz performance in the city is both product of and engine of the neoliberal restructuring that has taken such a huge toll on black working-class New Orleans…the consumption of, and discourse about, this music produces a sense of connection across racial lines that obscures such social dynamics and produces an overly optimistic view of the state of the racial order. (p. 601)

Yet, as Souther (2003) notes, the touristification of jazz also helped to fuel a “renewed grassroots interest” as well as “creating a sustainable cultural resource that enriched the community,” all the while also furthering tourism development at the same time (p. 40). This suggests that the utilization of jazz for tourism promotion and urban development cannot be simply explained as a corrosion of local culture, but, rather, it speaks to a more complicated struggle over cultural resources, memories, and histories.

The Tremé neighborhood in many ways symbolizes and materially plays out these struggles between race, space, and culture. The neighborhood has particular significance for the city’s African American population, as the oldest African American neighborhood in America (Elie et al., 2008) a site where free people of color were able to establish a thriving neighborhood that was the center of a number of African American struggles for justice. Though a significant space for African American history and culture, Tremé’s early history is also noted for its diversity as a racially mixed neighborhood (Crutcher, 2010; Elie et al., 2008; Greater New Orleans Community Data...
Center, 2005; Osbey, 1990). The neighborhood also boasts the first integrated church, St. Augustine Church, which became so largely because of the struggles of blacks to organize around their right to worship in their neighborhood (Osbey, 1990). The neighborhood has since been at the center of a number of cultural and social justice struggles, including organizing black activism during the Reconstruction period and the home of the first black press. Much of the organizing around Homer Plessy’s resistance to segregation that resulted in the Plessy vs. Ferguson case occurred in Tremé, where Plessy also resided (Elie et al., 2008). Moreover, Tremé is often referred to as the “true birthplace of jazz,” as it is believed that jazz originated out of the practices of slaves and free people of color playing the drum in Congo Square. Congo Square, believed to have been located in Tremé, is a particularly significant space in New Orleans that demonstrates the complex relationships between race, space, culture, and communication in New Orleans. Spanish colonial policy allowed slaves to gather publicly as well as to play the drum in Congo Square, where slaves had gathered to trade. Congo Square became a space of religious practice and drumming, providing slaves a space to communicate and to express African cultural traditions in such a way that would have been dubious to the white onlookers (Ventura, 1985). The Tremé neighborhood has since been home to a number of jazz musicians, believed to be nurtured in the neighborhood’s vibrant second line and brass band traditions, and it is also the site of much activism in the local jazz community.

Viewed largely by the city as a deteriorating slum of little significance, New Orleans and state politicians have visited upon Tremé a number of egregious demolition and urban renewal policies that had tremendous impacts on the neighborhood. These
include the building of the Municipal Auditorium, routing the I-10 through the neighborhood, and the building of Armstrong Park. The Municipal Auditorium was built during an urban renewal period in New Orleans in 1926 that drew from discourses of City Beautiful movements. The Auditorium was envisioned as just one building that would become part of a whole cultural center. The aim was that the cultural center would be an economic generator for the city and would simultaneously serve to “beautify” the city and its residents through arts and culture (Crutcher, 2006). Though funding prevented the building of the rest of the cultural center matrix, the Municipal Auditorium required the destruction of whole blocks of homes in Tremé.

In addition to the Municipal Auditorium, another significant block in the Tremé was destroyed when the I-10 highway was completed in 1969 directly through the neighborhood down Claiborne Avenue, effectively severing the neighborhood in half. Like many of the highways built during this time, Tremé was chosen as the neighborhood through which the federal highway project would run because the population and its neighborhood were seen as expendable and had little political power to oppose the plan. Claiborne Avenue prior to the I-10 was an important site for African Americans in the city, as a central route for many of the social aid and pleasure clubs’ second lines, a gathering space for African Americans on the Avenue’s wide neutral grounds, and the site of a number of African American businesses, shops, and restaurants (Barrios, 2010; Crutcher, 2006, 2010; Elie et al., 2008; Piazza, 2005). In its place, a highway overpass was constructed over the Avenue.

Tremé was also the site of another urban renewal project that required the destruction the neighborhood—Armstrong Park. The development of Armstrong Park
began in 1970 and continued well into the 1980’s due to a number of financial problems that continually stalled the completion of the project. The development of the park was a continuation of the cultural center project that began with the building of the Municipal Auditorium, where city leaders still hoped for a cultural complex to revitalize the downtown. The park went through various stages, owners, and plans, but throughout, the desire to create a space for entertainment and culture remained central (Barrios, 2010; Crutcher, 2010). In each of these examples—the Auditorium, the I-10, and Armstrong Park—whole blocks and areas of Tremé were destroyed, often in the name of culture, with complete disregard for the already existing culture and community of Tremé’s residents. Moreover, residents were often cut off from the supposed cultural benefits that these renewal projects were supposed to create. For example, Armstrong Park was surrounded by a large fence to protect the “safety” of park-goers with no entry access from the Tremé neighborhood (Barrios, 2010). The message of the fence, then, was that Tremé residents were threats to the safety of the park, not potential park-goers themselves.

Following Hurricane Katrina, these racialized, spatial dynamics within New Orleans and in neighborhoods like Tremé have been the subject of a great deal of debate. Though many scholars have noted that the problematizations of Katrina led to possibilities for critiquing structures of racism and neoliberalism (Braun & McCarthy, 2005; Dyson, 2005; Giroux, 2006; Goldberg, 2009), the bulk of critical scholarship on post-Katrina New Orleans attends to how the rebuilding process offers neoliberal forms of disaster relief that privilege private, corporate rebuilding plans at the expense of the poor (see for example Dyson, 2006; Gotham & Greenberg, 2008; Klein, 2007; Powell,
2005; Peck, 2006). As these critics argue, the rebuilding reinforces the centrality of the market, rather than the government, to provide solutions to urban problems and disasters. In this sense, critics fear the city’s rebuilding strategy and plan will lead to a whitewashing of the city that privileges private business interests at the expense of the displaced black and poor. For their part, media scholars have attended thoughtfully to how media representations of New Orleans across a variety of media texts work to legitimate these practices ideologically. But, as indicated above, very little work attends to the spatial practices of media in New Orleans that have played a material role in the rebuilding of city space. Those that have considered the potential effects of media industry as a more materialist practice of rebuilding and urban renewal have tended to characterize these practices as merely another form of Disneyfication, or, in other words, rendering New Orleans into a spectacular site for tourism and consumption. It is to this lack of a more specific analysis of the material work being done by media industries in New Orleans and Treme in particular that this project most contributes. To fill these gaps, I posit a theory of media as a spatial practice and attend to the ways in which the Treme series rebuilds and rebrands city space as well as HBO in the context of post-broadcast convergent media, racialized neoliberalism, and post-Katrina New Orleans.

Treme as Spatial Practice

My dissertation has three overall areas to which it aims to contribute. First, by emphasizing the spatial practices of Treme, I aim to broaden the work of media studies of cities, and television studies of cities in particular, beyond the boundaries of textual representations. I therefore contribute to a growing body of work in media studies of
space and cities, discussed above, as well as emerging work in the materiality of communication (Bencherki, 2012; Chang, 2012; Greene, 1998, 2010; Packer & Wiley, 2012a, 2012b; Parikka, 2012; Pettman, 2012; Stormer, 2010; Wood, 2010). I argue that *Treme* is an exemplary case study for doing so, as it not only represents and narrates the city but also becomes a central facet of and partner in rebuilding that space due to its spatial practices of on-location shooting, employment/hiring, philanthropy, historical preservation, and relationships to tourism and gentrification. Moreover, it calls upon its viewers not only to contemplate its representations of place, but it also calls on them to construct their own representations by enjoining them to materially connect to the city. *Treme*’s practices within New Orleans therefore complicate media scholars have hitherto theorized media’s relationship to cities as primarily a relationship borne out of representational practices. The series thus provokes a consideration of a broader dispersion of the ways in which media might matter in contemporary cities. Again, I am not calling for an abandonment of representational analyses, but, rather, to think through how these more material practices both implicate and complicate textual representations. *Treme*’s on-location filming practices, for example, influence how the series represents and constructs an “authentic” New Orleans in the series’ text. Its hiring, contracting out for filming locations, interactions with local neighborhood organizations and individuals within neighborhoods, activists, charity events, networks with government officials and police, and so forth all very much influence, constrain, and make possible its textual representations. This means that representations matter, but how they matter must be parsed out in conversation with a broader array of the material practices that sustain them.
Moreover, *Treme* speaks to the ways in which media industries and brands are also investing themselves in particular spaces and places, even in the face of the proclamation of the despatializing processes of the time/space compression of global media space in the era of globalized convergence. *Treme* does so, however, in such a way that does not fit within current understandings of culture industries’ commodification of urban space and media based urban renewal. This difference speaks to the second contribution that this dissertation aims toward. That is, I argue *Treme* offers a poignant case study for bringing into focus new strategies of urban renewal in the creative neoliberal city that draw on media industries as instruments of “empowerment,” particularly in marginalized spaces and practices for both economic and social aims. Understanding *Treme* in these terms, however, requires moving beyond the text and understanding how media is put to work in cities in more materialist terms toward the aims of entrepreneurialization, creativity, and urban renewal. *Treme* aligns with and provides the material possibilities for realizing the city’s “creative placemaking” urban planning initiatives that position the film and TV industries as a main strategy for economic revitalization and rebuilding (City Planning Commission, 2010, p. 3). Yet, this alignment comes in the form of a show that expressly and materially invests itself in helping to sustain repressed practices that are highly bound up with spaces of cultural memory and racial and class struggle. The show enters into the terrain of culture and economy within neoliberalism, where “authentic” and “vernacular” cultural practices work in conjunction with, rather than in opposition to, the economy and the commercial (Edensor et al., 2010). My project enters into these scholarly discussions by considering how *Treme* can lend insight to the various
struggles and stakes in producing creative cities tied to media culture within vernacularly creative and historical sites. However, much of the scholarship on these questions continues to view city branding practices and media space in terms of a culture industry approach that assumes that media culture renders city space into a commodity. I instead focus on the spatial practices of *Treme* and explore how changes in media culture discussed above (e.g. global culture industry, branding, and convergence) work in conjunction with these changes in city branding and productions of neighborhood space and produce a post-Katrina rationality of governing through what I call the “media neighborhood.”

Moreover, in this context, the third contribution this project makes is in considering how *Treme* viewers are also called upon to participate in post-Katrina New Orleans’ rebuilding, facilitated through new media interactivities, as ethical, consumer-tourist-citizens. The innovation that this project contributes is in articulating how *Treme* makes use of new media interactivities and convergence culture not just by moving people online, but, rather, in positioning these technologies as vehicles for moving distant and diasporic viewers to and through New Orleans. This points to the way in which neighborhood space is significant not only for New Orleans’ urban renewal projects but also for lending materiality to HBO in the post-broadcast and convergent era. Though this is just one strategy being used by HBO, and indeed may end up as a failed strategy, it nonetheless points to the innovative ways in which media brands are putting interactive media to work not to emphasize its placelessness and despatializing properties, but to direct the engaged, material practices of viewers. It is significant, too, that HBO does so by drawing upon the diverse and creative cultures of local
neighborhood places and the interactive practices of viewers to inform its branded identity in ways that are distinct from how media industries have connected themselves to cities in the past (as in the era of Disneyfication).

Toward these aims, Treme and New Orleans offer important case studies, not just for how they symbolize broader practices of media in cities, but, rather, also in how they constitute an exemplary process through which future media industries might operate. Due to Katrina, the rebuilding and urban planning frenzy in post-Katrina New Orleans is an important site for testing strategies for how post-industrial cities will survive in the so-called new economy. The storm has, perhaps tragically, enabled the city to see its recovery as a way to overcome Richard Florida’s (2002) and other economists’ criticisms of the city as a “left behind” failure unable to keep up. Given the fact that one of the primary strategies for doing so is to invigorate its cultural economy, with a particular focus on the film and TV industries, New Orleans will serve as a model for other cities who are similarly understood as “left behind” in the new economy. Moreover, New Orleans’ particular history and geography and Treme’s attentiveness to these is another argument for the present case study. Although New Orleans may indeed serve as a model for the future development of other post-industrial cities, it is also a sort of aberration in comparison to other cities in the U.S. It is precisely its uniqueness and the struggles it has given way to that Treme tries to capture. Yet, it does so in a particular conjuncture in which cities have adopted urban renewal strategies premised on the promotion of local and “authentic” culture, where local culture is seen not only as a strategy of economic investment and urban renewal but also as a strategy for marginalized cultures to gain access to resources and validation of their
cultural history and identity (Dávila, 2004a; Yúdice, 2003). *Treme* stands as an important example for throwing into relief the stakes in this particular configuration also, then, because it helps to produce New Orleans as a space that is offered up as a model for other cities, and for HBO’s brand identity, *precisely because of* its un-reproducibility. This emphasizes that viewing media as a spatial practice does not present a universalizing theory, but, instead, calls for media scholars to attend to the specific and particular practices of media and their tactical negotiations of space and place within both spatial and historical conjunctures.

*Treme* has a clear political and social message that is in large part about paying tribute to as well as revitalizing vernacular histories and neighborhood struggles in terms that imagine the neighborhood space as a “homeplace” against the Disneyfying strategies of urban renewals past. It invites its viewers not to consume a simulated space, but to immerse themselves in New Orleans and to make connections with its marginalized neighborhoods and residents. As a result, *Treme* presents a complicated set of stakes regarding vernacular and resistive practices of neighborhood spaces and the way in which these become bound up with aims of city branding and promotion when they are taken up by a global media conglomerate. How, then, do *Treme*’s spatial practices work in concert with spatial strategies of governing the neoliberal city, and, particularly through its implication in and enactment of cultural policy, in what ways is the series offered up as a means for rectifying social injustices? To what extent can *Treme*’s production of neighborhood spatiality within post-Katrina New Orleans be understood to produce a kind of excess, or spaces in which their “developments…add up to more than the sum of their parts… to form a new distribution of the sensible
which simultaneously constitutes a living means of generating more and more invention” (Thrift, 2008, p. 49) unable to be contained within neoliberal strategies of governing? Toward these ends, I ask how this excess production of creativity, becoming, and potentiality might be considered as the production of a kind of common (Hardt & Negri, 2000, 2004; Nancy, 1991; Raley, 2009; Read, 2003; Terranova, 2004; Virno, 2004). Putting theories of the common into conversation with theories of the neighborhood as a space of ethical encounter with the ‘neighbor’ (Appadurai, 1996; Badiou, 2003; hooks, 1990; Mayol, 1998; Zizek, 2005), I consider the limits and possibilities to the kinds of encounters enabled by Treme. I ask, what of Treme’s spatial encounters can be understood to “not answer to a cultural program or project of any kind,” and if their “aim would be to answer to an unforeseeable event that escapes any instituted order or meaning and constitutes the site where the question of the very meaning of political existence is reopened” (Fynsk, 1991, p. xxvi).

I draw on a variety of primary sources including archival research; city planning and policy documents; institutional research, including trade publications and popular press on HBO and Treme; viewer comments and blogs; and site-based research including interviews, observation, and the gathering of primary documents related to the filming of the series, local neighborhood rebuilding, tourism, and local media organizations. Methodologically, I draw on Foucault’s theory of discourse as a way of tracing the rationalities that emerge in these primary documents. My research diverges from an ideological analysis of texts, which would seek the underlying meanings within these texts for the ways in which the text intervened into hegemonic power relations. As Foucault (1972) suggests, discourse analysis instead asks a different set of questions,
particularly “how is it that one particular statement appeared rather than another?” (p. 27), “what was being said in what was said?,” and “what is this specific existence that emerges from what is said and nowhere else?” (p. 28). Thus, by considering primary documents in terms of a discourse, I am not looking for the emergence of a language per se, but instead as a set of practices that,

Determine the group of relations that discourse must establish in order to speak of this or that object, in order to deal with them, name them, analyze them, classify them, explain them, etc. These relations characterize not the language (langue) used by discourse, nor the circumstances in which it is deployed, but discourse itself as a practice. (Foucault, 1972, p. 46)

I therefore consider these documents as part of a broader dispersal of governance, tracing the relationships between these documents and the various institutions, governing bodies, organizations, and practices to which its discursive formations speak to in terms of how they pose various problems and solutions to post-Katrina governance, urban revitalization, and post-broadcast television.

**Chapter Outline**

In Chapter 1, I compare *Treme* to the 1980s CBS series, *Frank’s Place*, which was also set in New Orleans’ Tremé neighborhood. The chapter considers how changes in television and media culture, so-called “post-racial” politics, and the cultural policy and cultural economy of cities positions *Treme* to intervene in the production of city space in ways that *Frank’s Place* did and could not. This chapter therefore sets the stage for the remainder of the dissertation, where I suggest that *Treme* enjoins media scholars to ask a different set of questions regarding television, race, and place than they did of
*Frank’s Place.* The spatial and material practices of the series must be interrogated beyond its textual representations and capacities.

In Chapter 2, I draw on my archival research, interviews with *Treme’s* producers, and a discursive analysis of urban planning and cultural policy documents to argue that *Treme* puts into practice post-Katrina cultural policies and urban planning initiatives that aim toward entrepreneurializing and rebranding the city through arts and culture tied to marginalized neighborhood spaces. Such practices hinge on cultivating a type of post-Katrina entrepreneurialized creative citizenship and citizen engagement made possible by *Treme*’s practices of local hiring, training, on-location neighborhood shooting, tourism, and philanthropic practices. Each of these, in turn, are made possible by an aggressive set of cultural policies within New Orleans to cultivate a film and television production industry. I attend specifically to the city’s new Master Plan, where I argue *Treme* implements its post-Katrina rationality of rebuilding that emphasizes equity, neighborhood, and creative entrepreneurialism (especially with regards to media industries).

While Chapter 2 brings into focus what is at stake for the city in its relationship to the series, and more broadly, the film and television industry, Chapter 3 considers what is at stake for HBO in its spatial practices in New Orleans. I suggest the series helps to promote HBO’s rebranding by connecting the global brand to a local space in which its viewers and fans, through the use of convergent media technologies, are enjoined to activate a form of ethical citizenship by participating in the rebuilding of New Orleans through practices of ethical tourism, consumption, and charitable giving. In so doing, *Treme* helps to transition HBO from the “quality TV”/post-network to the
post-broadcast era of convergence and interactivity. These spatially driven interactivities help to constitute a kind of “passionate engagement” that positions the HBO brand as a global, no-place/everyplace that connects its viewers to someplace in particular.

In the conclusion, I turn to a discussion of the stakes and possibilities opened up by turning to an understanding of media as a spatial, rather than primarily representational, practice in contemporary cities. I consider specifically Treme’s particular form of urban renewal in post-Katrina New Orleans, arguing that it defies any easy categorization as either necessarily productive of resistance or as constitutive of a retrenchment of neoliberal strategies of rebuilding. Instead, I suggest looking to the possible excesses that Treme might open up, particularly in terms of its possibilities for creating ethical practices of neighboring. I also discuss the possibilities for extending this analysis of Treme to other forms of media and their spatial practices, where I argue that the case study points to no universalizable or general theory, but, rather, that it calls for attentiveness to the situated and particular practices of media across a variety of sites.
Chapter 1
Space, Place, and New Orleans on Television: From Frank’s Place to Tremé

Built by free people of color in the early 1800’s, New Orleans’ Tremé neighborhood has long been associated as a key site for the city’s black culture, history, music, and traditions. In Treme, series creators David Simon and Eric Overmyer pay tribute to both these practices as well as the spaces from which they emerge. In the series premiere, the episode ends with a depiction of the first memorial jazz funeral after Hurricane Katrina. The jazz funeral was held for a notable figure associated with Tremé’s history and culture, Austin Leslie, chef of the once famous restaurant Chez Helene located in the Tremé. Leslie and his restaurant gained national and international notoriety after Chez Helene was used as the model for the short-lived but critically acclaimed series Frank’s Place (CBS 1987-1988), for which Leslie also served as an adviser. This detail makes the closing scene of Treme’s first episode significant not only for what it reveals about post-Katrina New Orleans and how it pays tribute to the city’s culture, music, and history, but also for the ways in which it speaks to and pays tribute to television’s history as well.1 Yet, despite this brief intersection between these two texts, much has changed since the days of Frank’s Place.

In this chapter, I compare Treme to this earlier television series that was also set in New Orleans’ Tremé neighborhood. I turn to an analysis of Frank’s Place as a point of comparison to Treme to suggest that in the years since Frank’s Place, changes in media culture, urban renewal and planning policies, and the role of cultural and creative industries in these practices have changed the role that television productions play in cities, and especially in New Orleans. Whereas for media scholars who critiqued
Frank’s Place, the space of New Orleans was only tangentially figured, media scholars today are enjoined to figure the city space itself as a central actor in the workings of Treme. What is at stake in the comparison of Frank’s Place to Treme is a question of the tools needed to do critical media studies of television in today’s changing cultural economy in cities. Specifically, I call for a need to move beyond analyses that center on how cities are represented on screen and to take into account the broader ways in which media participates in the production of material space in the city. To query the significance of Treme, then, I suggest viewing Treme in terms of a set of spatial practices, where the series is inextricably intertwined with the decisions and policies aimed at particular configurations of racialized spaces within the city and the material production of city and media space and citizen-subjects.

Given the relative paucity of blackness on television at the time and the long trend of stereotypical representations of blackness before then (Bogle, 1989), it is unsurprising that the politics of representation figured centrally as the pressing political struggle in Frank’s Place. Whereas the post-war era of the 1950’s and 1960’s produced a ghettoized black population through the engineering of new zoning policies and real-estate practices that explicitly problematized black bodies as a threat to property values (Hirsch, 2000), in the 1980’s and 1990’s public policy aimed to cordon off what was represented as a dangerous and pathological black culture (Haymes, 1995; Wilson, 2007). Rather than being explicitly racialized, this latter era worked in code through inferential and colorblind discourses of race. It represented a shift in struggles over the dismantling of black public space to one over the re-signification of black public space and the disarticulation of it from sites of memory and practices of black vernacular
culture and history (Haymes, 1995; Davis, 2006). Though practices of representation played a role in the previous era, during the 1980’s and 1990’s this was the primary terrain through which relations between race and space were engineered.

In the current era, however, relations between race and urban space have been altered. With these changes, the role of television’s relationship to these spaces has been altered as well. While new urban renewal strategies in the last decade aim toward the “empowerment” of neighborhoods and spaces associated with racial Otherness, television culture is moving toward what Herman Gray (2005) and others have termed the “post-racial,” where (often commodified) forms of racial difference appear as prolific and varied across a fragmented television landscape. These changes call into question whether media scholarship that posits television as a site of struggle over hegemonic productions of identity has the same purchase as it did during Frank’s Place.

In what follows, I discuss how shifts in television toward the “post-racial” have coincided with changes in the cultural policy and urban renewal strategies of cities, and within the cultural economic and policy goals of post-Katrina New Orleans, in particular. Given these changes, I argue Treme calls for a different set of questions than those that were asked of Frank’s Place. Scholars today are enjoined to query how Treme is productive of material, spatial practices that are played out at various levels of cultural policy, hiring and employment practices, and broader strategies of city and network branding that intervene into the current conjuncture where racial difference is figured in market terms as a provisionally included and marketable identity. Toward these aims, I first review scholarly debates around Frank’s Place before turning to an analysis of what has changed in television production and city policy since this series. I
then discuss *Treme*, where I consider the show’s spatial practices implicated in the production of tourism, local hiring and employment, and corporate social responsibility. This latter discussion of *Treme* foreshadows the following chapters.

**Frank’s Place**

*Frank’s Place* dealt with the daily struggles of African Americans in New Orleans as they were played out in a neighborhood restaurant—the fictional Chez Louisiane based on the real restaurant Chez Helene in the Tremé neighborhood. The show detailed the daily life of a Brown University professor, Frank (played by Tim Reid), who inherited a Creole-style restaurant in New Orleans from his estranged father. The series was noted for the lack of a laugh track and its sophisticated weaving of comedy and drama into a new genre—the dramedy—that featured compelling plots that were politically and socially relevant to the time. Popular and scholarly critics alike anticipated *Frank’s Place* as an important example of the future of blackness on TV in the post-*Cosby* era. Critics in the popular press heralded *Frank’s Place* for breaking TV’s color-line with non-stereotypical representations of blackness (Sanoff & Thorton, 1987). *Frank’s Place* received a number of awards, including nine Emmy nominations in 1988 (Hanauer, 1988) of which it won three, including Outstanding Writing in a Comedy Series (Internet Movie Database, n.d.). In this section, I review the popular and scholarly debates that emerged around *Frank’s Place*, which emphasized the show’s representational cultural politics. This review highlights the concerns and assumptions of critical media scholars of television in the 1980’s and how race and place figured into their analyses as primarily concerns about representation and identity. I aim to show that although the questions scholars asked of the show were necessary at the time,
Treme’s differing position in the city and in contemporary television production requires a different framework for critique.

In the popular press, critics overwhelmingly embraced Frank’s Place for its realistic depiction of non-stereotypical blackness and daily struggles of black life, which was part of a conscious effort of the producers to present more positive and respectful images of blackness on television. As one television critic put it, in Frank’s Place,

There are no belly laughs. No guffaws. No howls. It's not shooting for those, which is why the laugh track would never have worked. It's just a nice show that makes you smile some and care about its characters a lot…A show whose characters are eccentrics, yes, but not cartoons. A departure—though a subtle one, not a bold one. (Sonsky, 1987)

As Tim Reid, who played Frank in the show but was also a producer, explains, the lack of stereotypes in the show was part of a conscious effort of the production and writing team to present more positive and respectful images of blackness. He states,

We made a pact to do what we'd always wanted to do—to show a segment of American culture in a way it had not been done. It's black, Southern. But the blacks are not woe-is-me, downtrodden black people, and the whites are not racist, hang-'em-type white guys. It's a show that's respectful to both cultures. I think we're setting groundwork in television, showing black people in a more respectful, positive way…We're dealing with a middle ground of people—not pimps and hookers and superblacks. And there's respect for older people…The cast is different— not everyone is a blue-eyed blond. We're getting out of that
New York-L.A. mentality. Everybody doesn't have to look like they just came off the cover of Vogue or GQ. (quoted in Hill, 1987)

As this quote illustrates, the makers of *Frank’s Place* were primarily invested in practices of representation—in trying to break TV’s glass ceiling of blackness by providing realistic characters, and getting out of the “New York-L.A. mentality” and into a mentality that stemmed from New Orleans was a central mechanism for doing so.

Some critics lauded the show’s lack of stereotypical black characters as a triumph of a kind of “colorblind” TV, suggesting, “Is it a ‘black show?’ No, it's a people show. And a place show” (Shales, 1987). This suggests the show’s setting in New Orleans made it more than a “positive” image of blackness—its setting in a specific place of black culture, community, and history enabled its text to challenge dominant representations. Some critics argued that it was *Frank’s Place*’s relationship to place that made it a show about blackness. As a consultant to *The Cosby Show* argued, it was *Frank’s Place*’s “regional authenticity” that provided its serious rendering of culture. The show’s decision to center on a Creole rather than a Cajun restaurant, off the tourist map, was particularly noted as helping to bolster this regional authenticity (Waters & Huck, 1988). Though network executives had wanted the show to focus on a Cajun restaurant because of the “craze” for Cajun cooking at that time, producers secretly designed Chez Louisiane around the Afro-Creole restaurant Chez Helene to make it more authentic (Goldman, 1987; Pate, 1988). The producers thus banked on the network executives being unable to tell the difference but also on the assumption that some of their audiences would recognize and appreciate the distinction. As one article noted of the show,
Realism ran rampant. The restaurant on the series is based on a real New Orleans restaurant, copied floor plan to kitchen. Real New Orleans cooking is done on the show, and many of the lines are based on encounters Reid and Wilson had in New Orleans. (Niedt, 1987)

Chez Helene’s owner and chef, Austin Leslie, was soon asked to come to Los Angeles as a consultant for the show in order to procure this sense of the “authentic” (Severson, 2005).

Although critics in the popular press largely embraced the show, Frank’s Place stirred a significant debate in media studies, most notably between Mimi White (1991) and Herman Gray (1991; 1995) as well as Horace Newcomb (1990). Like those in the popular press, however, media scholars who took up Frank’s Place also overwhelmingly addressed the show in representational terms, particularly when considering the relevance of the show being set in New Orleans. Herman Gray (1995) noted that the opening title sequence of the show—which was the result of pictorial and video footage taken during producers’ visits to the city and set to Louis Armstrong’s “Do You Know What it Means to Miss New Orleans?”—placed,

The viewer aurally and visually into the experience of black New Orleans. In representing this space and place, the producers foregrounded African American New Orleans, thereby situating the program’s location and identity within a particular African American formation. Frank’s Place is not just Anywhere, USA, populated by anonymous folk, but black New Orleans, with its own particular history and story. (pp. 20-21)
For Gray, the power of New Orleans for *Frank’s Place* was therefore in its ability to represent—to symbolize and call forth a structure of feeling that could interpellate its viewers into a particular racial formation that was responsive to racial and class struggles. New Orleans had a productive power that made possible, through its coded visual and aural images, counter-hegemonic readings and subject positions.

Likewise, Mimi White (1991) and Horace Newcomb (1990) also took up *Frank’s Place* as an object of criticism, and they too understood New Orleans as a place of representation in the series that called forth racialized subject positions. White (1991) argued the claim that *Frank’s Place* challenged television’s norms failed to account for the power that television’s commercially driven formulas have on constructing the genre’s potentials. She suggested,

> The initial otherness of New Orleans is quickly recast as warm familiarity and familiality…It is not really different at all, but provides the title character with surroundings where he can finally secure his [Frank’s] identity in a proto-familial structure. This contrasts sharply with his life in Boston. (p. 88)

Rather than acting as a signifier to structure a feeling of memory and reminiscence of black culture and community, White argued that New Orleans figured in *Frank’s Place* as a contained and subdued foil to the Northeast (as represented by Frank’s position at a northeastern Ivy League school, Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island).

Newcomb (1990), conversely, argued that the sense of place engendered by the setting in New Orleans was essential to *Frank’s Place*. Arguing for a distinction between location (as material space made necessary for production) and place (as a set of meanings tied to locations that is necessary for narrative), Newcomb suggested that
Frank’s Place existed as “a set of cultural meanings constructed by the intersection of existing codes of place and individualized characters who inhabit that place” (p. 32). For Newcomb, then, the “place” of Frank’s Place was not about its space as material location of production (which was L.A.), but, rather, it was produced through its narrative construction of a particular sense of place. This sense of place was made possible by a complex weaving of codes that were both familiar, in that they relied on the audiences’ understanding of New Orleans and of the south, and unfamiliar, in that they drew the viewer into neighborhood specificity (p. 33). By learning these unfamiliar codes, Newcomb argued, “The show…reestabishes, with a new inflection, the regional meanings in which it is embedded” (p. 32) and viewers are instructed about what it means to live “here” (p. 35). Ultimately, however, Newcomb’s point is that this sense of place is invoked as a backdrop and metaphor for the real question—which is Frank’s, the character’s, “place.” That is, Newcomb argued that the show is ultimately about Frank coming to terms with his own place in the world, his identity, and his struggle over blackness, and the place of New Orleans is invoked as a signifier to establish this identity.

Though Newcomb, Gray, and White present differing interpretations of Frank’s Place, each invokes “place” in representational terms, where the city provides for the show a set of coded signifiers that are significant for the identifications and ideologies called forth in the audience and, especially, in how these relate to racial identity. Thus, media scholars who took up Frank’s Place were largely interested in how representations of New Orleans enabled a particular kind of representation of blackness. The city and its geography were read as primarily symbolic signifiers, which could
indeed be subject to debate, but there was little material engagement with the city itself. What I want to argue, in contrast, is that media studies’ investment in New Orleans as a “sense of place” (Newcomb, 1990) is complicated by today’s cultural economy of television. Especially in *Treme*, the space of location for production is collapsed with the sense of place in the narrative construction. Its practices of production on the ground are constitutive of and help to shape its narrative of place. This alters the set of questions media scholars might ask about the role of place in the series.

To some extent, then, it is what is absent in the debates around *Frank’s Place* that I want to draw attention to in relation to *Treme*. Although there was some discussion of the way in which particular configurations of race in New Orleans played out in *Frank’s Place*, debates around the show were not particularly invested in how the show related to the culture and geography of New Orleans. The city and its geography were, again, primarily symbolic signifiers for a broader question of black identity. Though Newcomb (1990) noted how unfamiliarity of place was invoked in the show through neighborhood specificity, none of the articles I read during the show’s airing in both local and national presses or scholarly debates mentioned the fact that Chez Helene was in the Tremé neighborhood. It was not even mentioned that it was in the Sixth Ward, the more common name by which the area was referenced during that time. References to Chez Helene’s material place in the city in the press either suggested it was a “plain-looking restaurant in a black section of town where blacks and whites mingle over reasonably priced, delicious Creole-soul food” (Maushard, 1987) or a “Creole-soul food restaurant in the middle of a New Orleans ghetto” (Sonsky, 1988). Numerous references were made in the press at the time to the increased tourist business
the restaurant received as a result of the show, especially among whites. A number of articles also detailed various potential tourist itineraries, especially culinary ones, in which Chez Helene had been made into a definitive, though very lonely, stop, as the only notable stop in the neighborhood on the map (Lind, 1987; Pate, 1988). Clearly, if there was only one place go to, actually naming the neighborhood seemed to be unnecessary, or worse yet, would serve to detract tourists through the neighborhood’s association with drugs, crime, and other incendiary activity. Thus, even the discussion of the show’s relationship to tourism was limited—it centered almost exclusively on Chez Helene and in neither the discourse of the city nor of the show’s producers or executives did this tourism seem to figure into any kind of broader strategy of attracting tourists to Tremé or other cultural spaces of blackness in the city.

Debates around Frank’s Place also showed no discussion of broader questions of cultural policy or the city’s relationship to cultural production. Although producers visited the area to get a feel for the show and to ensure its authenticity, the show was filmed on set in Los Angeles rather than on location. Hence, the specific political struggles going on in the city at the time did not play a role in either affecting the show’s narrative or its production practices. Though Frank’s Place was committed to maintaining a black crew, filming in L.A. meant that there was no commitment to a local New Orleans’ crew. There was therefore no discussion of Frank’s Place in relation to television production and its significance for the New Orleans labor base and economy. Moreover, neither scholars nor critics writing in the popular press seemed particularly interested in the debates and struggles over the I-10 and the Claiborne bridge and the new efforts at renewal and revival that had been taken by the city and
local community organizations concurrently with the running of the series. These are debates that would have affected the fictional *Frank’s Place* in its real-life material form. Though one article referencing these renewal efforts notes that Chez-Helene had brought tourism to the area, such a note was not brought into any kind of meaningful dialogue with the other efforts to beautify the area through planting, park benches, and other anti-blight amenities (Marcus, 1988). It is clear that there was no framework for seeing this kind of media, i.e. a television show, as a force of renewal and an anti-blight amenity in itself. The same cannot be said for the discourse surrounding *Treme* today.

Likewise, these debates brought up no link between *Frank’s Place* and the particular struggles of musicians at the time. Though *Frank’s Place* was heralded by Gray (1995) and Reeves & Campbell (1989) for its commitment to authentically black music, and New Orleans’ music in particular, in such a way that it helped to both promote these genres and to engender an aesthetic structure of feeling of blackness, neither these scholars nor the show directly engaged with the ongoing struggle of New Orleans’ musicians to find work and a paycheck. In an article published during *Frank’s Place*’s airing, Dr. John expressed his mixed feelings about having to play “jingles” for commercials in order to pay for his kids’ education. As the lead-in to the article states,

> The media tell us we’re in the midst of a huge Louisiana love affair, a mainstream revival of New Orleans’ music and culture. Movies gave us *The Big Easy*, TV has *Frank’s Place* and the music industry is swamped with the insinuating rhythms of zydeco. Yet Dr. John, the personification of voodoo charm—heck, the rightful heir to legendary brothel pianist Professor Longhair—hasn’t been able to cash in. (MacInnis, 1988)
Thus, Dr. John was forced to “sell out” his music for a commercial cash-in through writing advertising jingles. This run-in between the commercial and vernacular New Orleans culture seems very different to me than that which *Treme* provides—both offer a commercial value to a cultural practice through mainstream media, but the former is a sale through a commercial advertiser and the latter is a chance for Dr. John to play himself on an HBO production. While both shows represent an increased interest in New Orleans culture at a particular conjuncture, they each represent divergent mechanisms through which that culture is engaged and practiced within the media industry.

Although it could be argued these are issues that could have been taken up by media and television studies at the time, it is also the case that to take up these as central issues to understanding *Frank’s Place* would not have made that much sense. Given that *Frank’s Place* aired before the landmark 2002 tax incentive legislation that helped establish New Orleans as “Hollywood-South,” questions about local hiring, city policies, urban renewal and so forth would not have helped scholars to understand the significance of the series for the city. Or, at the very least, the entrance into these debates would have necessarily taken place through the text and not through the broader spatial practices of the series. This differs significantly for *Treme*, however, where the show not only commentates on urban renewal efforts after Katrina through its text but is also heralded by the city as a component to that very same revitalization through stimulating the economy through TV production. These practices seep into the narrative, as the show’s ability to hire and contract out local performers, extras, and personalities help to create what producers hope is an “authentic” representation of
everyday life in post-Katrina New Orleans. Therefore, I argue that there are differences between the kinds of questions that are required of media scholars today than of the past, and what stands between them includes two decades of changes in policies, culture, and economics in both cities and in media that distinguish *Treme* from its predecessor.

**Between Frank’s Place and Treme: What’s Changed?**

I suggest there are three significant cultural, economic, and political factors that have intervened between *Frank’s Place* and *Treme*: the emergence of “post-racial” and post-network media culture; cultural policy changes in city policy; and cultural economic policy in New Orleans.

As I discussed in the Introduction, television today, and indeed American culture more broadly, is imbued with a discourse of the “post-racial,” where America has apparently overcome racism and people of color are enjoined to enter into the marketplace on supposedly equal footing. In the media, we now witness a proliferation of media representations of racial difference, with whole channels or multiplexed channels devoted to niche audiences in the racial minority. In part, this is a result of the struggles of people of color in the 1980’s, such as those evidenced in debates around *Frank’s Place*, over the invisibility and stereotypical representations of minority identities in the media. But it is also the result of economic shifts in the industry, where the rise of cable networks, brand culture, and lifestyle marketing that began in the 1980’s to render racial and ethnic difference a marketable commodity have been extended and deepened in the neoliberal era of global television (Banet-Weiser, 2007;
Gray, 2005). With regards to the relevance of blackness for contemporary television production, Gray (2005) argues,

In purely economic and marketing terms, television shows about blacks continue to appeal to networks to the extent that they add value to the brand identity of their networks…At the same time, despite their domination by Western corporations, a broader range of service delivery options and the rising importance of television programs as sources of product identity for global media companies promise greater possibilities for black and minority representations to circulate more in market niches. (p. 86)

As a result, as Banet-Weiser (2007) notes,

Popular discourses of race and images of nonwhites have become cultural capital in the contemporary marketing world, so that, as Gray discusses, there is a proliferation of difference rather than an absence of diversity…The definition of diversity that has the most economic potential in the current climate is one that relies on a hip, cool, urban, “‘postracial’ style.” (p. 214, emphasis in original)

Banet-Weiser thus argues that we are witnessing a shift in media culture to representations of ethnic and racial differences that are in large part “positive” representations across a wide array of diverse media sites. These practices of including people of color in the mediascape, however, tend to elide historical struggles over racial justice and instead posit racial identity as a commodified and consumable lifestyle (Banet-Weiser, 2007; Giroux, 2004; Goldberg, 2009; Gray, 2005; Hasinoff, 2008; Mukherjee, 2006). Indeed, as George Yúdice (2003) argues, racial and ethnic Others are
increasingly called upon to see their difference as a cultural and economic expedient rather than as a barrier to entry into the market.

What scholars have referred to as the “post-network” era of television (Leverette, Ott, & Buckley, 2008; Lotz, 2009) has played a central role in the production of these shifts toward a “post-racial” media culture. Whereas the network’s cancellation of *Frank’s Place* left the series with nowhere to go since producers saw cable networks as unable to support the series’ high cost of production, *Treme’s* on-location filming and cinematic quality of production can essentially only air on a cable network like HBO. *Treme* is marked by its relationship to the HBO brand and identified with “edgy,” “quality” programming and an attentiveness to the cultural creativity of its auteurs. Being further articulated to the David Simon brand that was solidified in his critically-acclaimed series *The Wire* (HBO 2002-2008), *Treme* is associated with HBO’s market for politically charged social commentary, often associated with issues of race, aimed at an educated liberal audience (Fuller, 2010). This is, after all, the network that produced Spike Lee’s *When the Levees Broke* that critiqued governmental failure in the Katrina crisis. Essentially, there is now a potential “market” for a show like *Frank’s Place*.

This new “market” is bound up with shifts in the discourse of diversity and its unhinging from the politics of racial justice to a politics that is more bound up with discourses of corporate social responsibility and the marketing of culture as a means of profit. In today’s deregulated media landscape, diversity is defined not in relation to an ethics of racial or sexual justice, but, rather, through a managerial discourse that posits diversity in terms of its potential for producing profit (Amaya, 2010). Such a discourse
of diversity is made possible in an era of deregulation where compliance with anti-discrimination and Civil Rights legislation is made dependent not on what are perceived in mainstream culture as “coercive” standards of compliance, but, rather, on voluntary acts of socially responsible corporations. As Hector Amaya (2010) details in his work on *Ugly Betty*’s (ABC, 2006-) links to a discourse that values diversity in terms of profit rather than social justice,

Legal remedies enacted during the civil rights movement were meant to change the way industries, including media, reconstituted themselves and had the goal of avoiding conscious discriminatory labor practices. But something was lost in translation between civil rights law and corporate structures. Beginning in the 1980s, the Reagan era of neoliberal policies and the language of diversity management transformed the discourse of diversity from one connoting racial justice to one connoting profit. Following the logic of this discourse, media corporations have created many diversity initiatives, all with the goal of fitting the legal environment of compliance with EEO/AA prescriptions, but only when this compliance can be translated into economic success. (p. 814)

In order to be compliant with existing Civil Rights legislation, media corporations need only show they are making “good faith” efforts at improving diversity. As a result, diversity is defined by corporations in broad terms—from race to dress style—and is utilized in visible marketing efforts to show that its media content is diverse. This, however, is all circumscribed by a discourse of profit—diversity is utilized as a marketing strategy that aims toward reaching a wider market for its products. As such, diversity is not posed in the media as a racial justice effort, as it was for *Frank’s Place*, 


but as the voluntary efforts of well-meaning corporations in search of more successful and more profitable media content in a global media economy. Hence, it is not at all clear that *Treme’s* and the broader television industry’s increasing visibility of diverse programming has become more conducive to counter-hegemonic representations or that “post-racial” and post-network media culture is a victory for racial justice. Instead, what it suggests is that the stakes of the debate have changed. Media scholarship that posits television as a site of struggle over hegemonic productions of identity may not have the same purchase as it did during *Frank’s Place*. Instead, critique might attend to how proliferations of racial difference on television are put to work as technologies of power that are productive of citizenship and practices of governing in broader terms (Banet-Weiser & Gray, 2009, p. 18). Indeed, this kind of critique is my aim in the following two chapters.

There is a close link here between “post-racial” media culture, which has produced a proliferation of consumable sites of difference, and changes in city policy that have shifted urban renewal priorities to areas that had hitherto been cordoned off as excluded ghetto spaces. As Leitner, Peck, and Sheppard (2007) argue, the neoliberal city is expected to be an entrepreneur of itself and to cultivate entrepreneurial skills of its inhabitants. As the economy increasingly turns to one of service rather than industry, labor and production must be flexible and customized. Cities are expected to compete with each other on a global scale to attract investment and tourism to maintain their labor base. For New Orleans, this has manifested in a shift from oil-based industry to tourism as well as in branding the city with the promise that New Orleans can provide a
memorable and meaningful experience, especially with regards to its holy trinity of food, music, and architecture.

Moreover, as cities compete for investment, tourism, and the production of a viable labor pool in the “new” economy, they have turned to urban branding campaigns and urban renewal projects that focus on the revitalization and promotion of local culture at the level of the neighborhood. As Sassen (1991, 2000, 2006) argues, globalization has made the subnational sphere the most significant site of economic production and activity because business and financial centers are located at the city level, and household, community, and neighborhood have re-emerged as key sites of economic activity. Richard Florida’s (2002; 2005) work on the creative class thesis, discussed in the Introduction, has been highly influential in policy and planning circles toward these aims to maximize the productive potentiality of local neighborhood spaces. Many city planners have embraced Florida’s thesis and utilize branding techniques that promote their city’s local culture, and in order to do so, much of the focus has been on revitalizing particular neighborhoods through creative cultural practices.

As Dávila (2004a) and Yúdice (2003) argue, these forms of renewal call upon neighborhoods to mobilize not only for economic reasons—i.e. to help be an economic regenerator for the city or for their own communities—but also for cultural and social reasons. That is, neighborhood cultures and communities are called upon to self-maximize and enterprise their creative capacities as a means of gaining political validation and empowerment for marginalized cultures in a way that is understood to resolve racism and injustice. Given these changes, the representations of local and
vernacular cultures and neighborhoods on television have different stakes today than it did during \textit{Frank’s Place}. These changes point to a complex imbrication of culture and economy that complicates questions media scholars might ask regarding the potential for representational practices of vernacular culture to produce counter-hegemonic aesthetics and challenge dominant ideology, as they become bound up with market logics and governing rationalities in the neoliberal city. This makes it difficult to understand \textit{Treme}’s representations on-screen outside of its broader relation to these cultural policy changes in cities, and, especially, to the cultural economic and policy dynamics within New Orleans.

Prior to Katrina, New Orleans had started to enact specific policies that would help to stimulate its cultural economy. Film and television figured as central pieces in this puzzle. In 2002, the state passed the 2002 Louisiana Motion Picture Tax Incentive Act, a landmark legislation that gave sweeping tax credits to film and television producers to encourage on-location filming. The City of New Orleans had already been aiming at cultivating a local film and television infrastructure since at least the 1980’s (Mayer and Goldman 2010). City policies, public/private partnerships, and incentives aimed to spur education and employment in the film and TV industries as well as the building of infrastructures for pre- and post- production services. (Blumenfeld, 2007; White, 2008). Since the enactment of these policies, there has been much debate as to their efficacy and, especially, of the tax incentives’ ability to produce a local, home grown film and TV sector, to provide meaningful employment, or to produce an economic return for the city (Christopherson & Rightor, 2010; Mayer & Goldman, 2010).
Regardless of the efficacy of this strategy, however, the cultural economy, and particularly the creative and cultural industries that support film and television production, have become even more a guiding rationality and strategy of revitalization since Hurricane Katrina. One difference the Katrina event made is in the role to be played by marginalized forms of culture and neighborhood spaces. Cultural economic policy documents after the storm, in contrast to those before, put neighborhood spaces and diverse creative and culturally vernacular practices at the forefront of the city’s cultural economic strategies—as the key sites in which the city’s cultural and economic future will be staked. This is likely due to how Katrina problematized the deathly consequences of the city’s racial, class, and spatial politics of exclusion. These changes also reflect the enormous upsurge of neighborhood organizations in the city following Katrina, especially in marginalized areas, and the efforts of city government to incorporate these neighborhood organizations into a system of governance. The city’s new Master Plan, which I discuss in more detail in the following chapter, poses a strategy for revitalization of the city that banks New Orleans’ future on the film and TV industries. The film and TV industries are called forth to work as a revitalization strategy in conjunction with the activation of creative and entrepreneurial spaces in the city’s most marginalized and historically black neighborhoods, including the Tremé. It is not surprising, then, that whereas Frank’s Place made no mention of the particular neighborhood that served as its setting, Treme takes its namesake from that very same neighborhood. Such a shift speaks to how television in the current era is imagined as both a potential for the celebration of local and vernacular culture and as an economic generator for these spaces.
Given these shifts, the stakes of television’s uptake of New Orleans has changed, and the questions that critical media scholars need to bring to *Treme* are different than those that Gray, White, and others brought to *Frank’s Place*. *Treme*’s title foregrounds the fact that this place is not just any city in America, nor is it just any black neighborhood in New Orleans; it is the Tremé neighborhood—a historic neighborhood that is little known to much of white America but that has much significance for the city’s, as well as the broader nation’s, African American struggles for racial justice (Crutcher, 2010). While it is possible to analyze this relationship between the show and the Tremé neighborhood in terms of Gray’s (1995) African American “structure of feeling,” the fact that *Treme* is filmed on-location means that the city has a relationship to the show that goes beyond what it provides aesthetically and ideologically. Instead, *Treme* takes an active role in rebuilding efforts, and city policies are directly aimed at trying to solicit and promote these practices through tax incentives, city planning, and other forms of cultural policy. *Treme* becomes an active agent, working on the ground, to literally, not just symbolically, produce and plan city space in ways that have implications for the racialized constitutions of city space. It is in this sense that I refer to *Treme* as a spatialized, material practice. In *Treme*, race, and blackness in particular, does not figure primarily as an identity struggled over through the construction of a sense of place (Gray, 1991, 1995; Newcomb, 1990) in the show’s narration. Rather, racial difference is presented as a set of cultural practices that are marketable resources that can be put to work toward the aims of city renewal and citizen empowerment through the show’s material practices of production and through
viewer interactivity. *Treme’s* utilization of marginalized and vernacular signifiers of racial identity and history are put to work in more material terms to promote and manage the entrepreneurial and creative capacities of New Orleans’ citizens. In other words, race, and black cultural practice in particular, is drawn upon to make possible both the production of an “authentic” show as well to enable the renewal and rebuilding of the city and, especially, the Tremé neighborhood. In the remainder of this chapter, I emphasize how *Treme’s* relationship to racialized city space in its practices of tourism, employment, and social responsibility differ significantly from *Frank’s Place*, and therefore call forth a different framework for media critique that will be explored further in the following chapters.

One of the ways *Treme* works as a spatialized, material practice is through re-drawing the city’s tourist map. Whereas the possibilities for *Frank’s Place* to rewrite the tourist map were relatively limited given that it featured a limited set of locations that were all filmed on-set in L.A., each episode of *Treme* to some extent works as a kind of advertisement that offers a different kind of tourist map—one that continues to feature some of the old standards and the city’s holy trinity of food, music, and architecture, but it adds to this spaces that had hitherto been excluded for their association with the black underclass and spaces of danger. This happens both on and off-screen. On screen, the show’s narrative revolves around certain places in the city, inviting the viewer to become familiar with many places that were not on the tourist maps during *Frank’s Place*. For example, an episode in which the character Davis MacAlary, a white D.J. and musician that lives in Tremé but has Garden District roots, meets some Wisconsin missionaries in New Orleans to help “save the city” by
rebuilding in the Lower Ninth Ward, makes this point poignantly. The missionaries ask Davis—who had recently been fired from his DJ position and taken a job as a desk clerk at the Inn on Bourbon Street—to provide them with information on where to go to hear music. He sends them to discover “the real New Orleans” and, more specifically, Bullet’s Sports Bar, located in the Mid-City neighborhood. As viewers, we too are invited, through the show, to discover “the real New Orleans” that is “off the beaten path” in a “ghetto” area of New Orleans at a bar whose name speaks to its potential “dangers.” Numerous other examples of this kind of “insider’s view” of New Orleans proliferate throughout the show’s existing two seasons, where particular neighborhood bars, restaurants, and other sites are foregrounded and highlighted for astute viewers. This rewriting of the tourist map continues off-screen in the show’s various intertexts and paratexts, such as on the HBO website, columns in the *Times Picayune’s Treme* blog, official and unofficial *Treme* blogs, and so forth. A number of more explicit means of drawing tourists to Tremé have also emerged since the show’s airing as well in the form of various Tremé walking tours.

It is clear from these examples that the power *Treme* has to spur tourism is imagined to be at a much greater scale than *Frank’s Place*. Whereas the latter was noted largely for generating tourism to a single place, Chez Helene, *Treme*’s embeddedness in a multiplicity of lived spaces in the city, and in the neighborhood in particular, make its production of a kind of “television tourism” at a much greater scale and magnitude than was ever possible for *Frank’s Place*. What is significant is that *Treme*’s rewriting of the tourist map resonates with, but perhaps more importantly helps to give life-force to, efforts by city and state government that aim to entrepreneurialize and render more
resourceful neighborhoods like the Tremé. The series’ very emphasis on the Tremé neighborhood helps to give value to that space in the city, and through its various practices that help to spur tourism, it becomes imagined as a vital force for helping capitalize on that value as a means of revitalizing the area. Here, the significance of the series for issues of race goes beyond its representations of racial identity on screen and amongst its viewers and instead is also bound up with its material and productive capacity to reconfigure the spatialized production of race at the local level. The vernacular practices and spaces associated with the history of racial struggle are reproduced as sites of television tourism that promises both social and economic benefits in the wake of receding social welfare and city, state, and federal funding for revitalization efforts.

In addition to efforts to revitalize the area through tourism, *Treme’s* employment practices also promise a cultural and economic boon to the neighborhood. The producers have stated that they are committed to a local production team, and there are efforts to make use of the various infrastructures of pre-and post-production provided locally in the city (Vandelay, 2010). Most visibly, though, *Treme* provides employment to a range of cultural workers, especially musicians, whose difficult struggle to make a living in the city began well before Katrina. Many locally based musicians play themselves in the series, often playing at venues or on streets where one can regularly see them play if one was in New Orleans. These efforts to hire not only black but local cultural workers make *Treme* significantly different from *Frank’s Place*. *Treme* is directly productive in its aims to both promote and revitalize the New Orleans music scene. Going beyond just featuring this music on the show, as *Frank’s Place* did, *Treme*
is hiring these practitioners, providing them with regular employment and helping them to network into other potential gigs. *Treme* plays a material role in the production of a key segment of the labor force, and in so doing, is also playing a role in the production of spaces of vernacular creativity (Edensor et al., 2010) that aligns with the city’s aims of entrepreneurializing these city spaces.

Finally, *Treme*’s spatial practices in the city are also bound up with the prevalence of discourses of “corporate social responsibility” that employ material practices of corporate philanthropy and volunteerism as primary means of rectifying social injustices. For *Frank’s Place*, corporate social responsibility was not a widespread discourse. Instead, its relationship to racial politics and social justice struggles was undergirded by its proximity to Civil Rights discourses on equal representation and affirmative action. Televisual responsibility for rectifying social injustice was understood largely in terms of representational practices as well as in diversifying production and writers’ rooms. At the time, “quality” television was considered a responsibility on the part of producers and writers, as indicated by Tim Reid, who saw *Frank’s Place* as having a responsibility for representing blackness more ethically as a matter of racial justice. This too was tied to a politics of labor and production, where the show’s black cast and black production crew was understood as central to its representational politics. The ethic of responsibility that the creators of *Frank’s Place* held is best summarized in the following quote from an interview with Reid, where he argued,

> Television has a responsibility to “uplift values around the country and instill moral respect…If we don't dream, create fantasies, motivate, activate, then
who's job is it?” he asked. “If creators are allowed to take shows like 'Frank's Place'...who knows what we can come up with.” (Hanauer, 1988)

The responsibility for racial and political struggle thus defined therefore lends credence to media scholars’ attentiveness to the show’s text—it was the primary avenue through which one could make sense of the kind of political work the show aimed toward.

*Treme* in contrast is implicated in a thoroughly deregulated television industry, where diversity is a means of branding and cross-market promotion (Amaya, 2010). Thus, while *Treme* makes efforts to hire diverse crew and to construct complicated representations of racial identities, it does so within the context of a media industry discourse that utilizes these representations and efforts at diversity for the purposes of maximizing HBO’s brand value and profits rather than as explicit attempts at rectifying racial injustice. In fact, HBO has done little in the way of explicitly tying the series to issues of racial justice and, especially, blackness in its promotions. Instead, in congruence with the network’s history of programming around issues of blackness (Fuller, 2010), HBO tends to downplay *Treme*’s significance for struggles over blackness and for black audiences. The network instead circumscribes the series’ racial signifiers back into its broader discourses of diversity branding and broad-based appeals to citizenly responsibility in New Orleans.

Although *Frank’s Place* is credited with helping to produce an alternative representation of New Orleans, one that was potentially counter-hegemonic as Gray argued, the producers of *Frank’s Place* did little, or at least did not publicize, what they did for the city materially. This was not seen as a responsibility on their part.

Conversely, *Treme*’s producers, in concert with HBO, engage in numerous practices
that are philanthropically aimed at material spaces in the city. While I have no doubt that producers hope that these charitable practices will pay-off with favorable views of neighbors about filming practices in their neighborhoods and to less irritation over the inconveniences it engenders, what is interesting about these practices is that they are rationalized in terms of the show’s responsibility as a corporate citizen and member of the community who have benefitted from the good-will of these neighborhoods (L. Schweigman, personal communication, March 16, 2011). Moreover, in addition to offering their own charity to the city, *Treme* enjoins its viewers to also participate materially and charitably in the city as well. Orchestrated through inviting viewers to interact with material spaces in the city in ways that are facilitated through new media convergences, *Treme* calls forth viewers to enact forms of ethical citizenship to benefit New Orleans through their practices of tourism and consumption. It also provides a platform and ambience through which viewers are called upon to form real, material communities in New Orleans. HBO’s and the series’ investment in the city demonstrates a rationality of responsibility to not only its representations, but they also claim to be acting as a responsible corporate citizen by helping to fund the city’s rebuilding. Again, this differs significantly from *Frank’s Place*, where neither the network nor its viewers were expected to materially engage with the city beyond its textual representations. It speaks to shifts in strategies of network branding that are tied to the elicitation of spatial practices in ways that were perhaps unimaginable in the *Frank’s Place* era.

Ultimately, in the chapters that follow, I aim to throw focus onto *Treme’s* participation in city space. I hoped to have shown in this chapter that *Treme’s*
relationship to city space is quite different from that of *Frank’s Place*. As such, it calls upon media scholars to consider *Treme* not only as a practice of representation but also as a spatialized, material practice whose off-screen practices are just as, if not more so, important than its material on screen. Critical media scholarship needs to take seriously how the show is bound up with the production of city space through hiring practices, filming practices, on-location shooting, tourism, practices of branding, corporate-social responsibility, charity, viewer interactivity, and other spatially materialist concerns. As such, I argue for viewing *Treme* as a set of spatial practices bound up with the material production of city space as well as its citizen-subjects, in historically contextual terms at this neoliberal moment, where vernacular, cultural practices meet global media production in the neighborhood. It is to these specific concerns that I now turn, where in the next chapter I discuss how *Treme* is implements a form of post-Katrina urban planning, renewal, and cultural policy through its spatial practices.
Wyatt Mason’s (2010) review of *Treme* in *The New York Times* compares the series to *The Wire*, suggesting that,

Because so many of *The Wire*’s story lines dramatized the futility of any of [its] characters’ attempts to break through social and economic ceilings, the image of contemporary urban America that the show offered was one in which character wasn’t fate so much as a fait accompli: in the land of the free market, Simon was arguing, free will wasn’t going to get you very far. In *Treme*, Simon seems to be arguing for the very opposite idea: the triumph of the individual will despite all impediments, a show about people, artists for the most part, whose daily lives depend upon the free exercise of their wills to create—out of nothing, out of moments—something beautiful.

*Treme* emphasizes the everyday practices of individuals who are indeed caught up in institutions, but who, through their cultural practices, find a way to navigate the city and their lives with a particular kind of artistry. In this sense, whereas *The Wire* might be said to offer a kind of Foucauldian critique of post-industrial cities, which attends to post-industrial institutions within the context of disciplinary and networked power (McMillan, 2008), *Treme*’s narrative offers a somewhat more de Certeauian tactical resistance in the form of a spatial practice. De Certeau (1984) suggests, “Space is a practiced place. Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers” (p. 117). In contrast to the strategic urban plan that imposes its
rationality of space upon residents, *Treme* seems to offer viewers an experience of the street from the pedestrian’s point of view, and in so doing, to tactically transform how viewers and residents alike navigate the city. Significantly, *Treme*’s intervention into the tactical navigations of New Orleans’ city streets goes beyond what it represents on screen. The production also has a material role that it plays in the city, becoming productive of a spatial practice in itself in ways that transform city streets in more material ways.

Urban planning, particularly in post-Katrina New Orleans, however, is also increasingly becoming tactical. Post-Katrina urban planners have turned to a “creative placemaking” (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010) strategy that tries to capture the tactical encounters of the city’s pedestrian in order to transform city space and culture. So too, radical urban planning movements agitating for more democratic participation and inclusion of local cultural practices in planning processes have also influenced a more tactical and grass roots effort to reorganize modern urban planning strategies (Freestone & Gibson, 2006; Miles, 2010; Sandercock, 1998; Young, 2006). Neighborhood space plays a particularly significant role in these efforts, where New Urbanist theories of neighborhoods as the building blocks of community (Leccese & McCormick, 2000) and creative city urban renewal strategies (Florida, 2002; Landry, 2000, 2004; Landry & Bianchini, 1995) increasingly influence urban planning efforts to focus on cultivating and entrepreneurializing potentially creative neighborhoods. Media industries also play a particularly important part of this creative cities strategy, both in terms of their capacity to market cities as unique and cultural to potential tourists, investors, and laborers as well as in terms of the media industry’s role as a creative industry in itself.
Both of these aims for media industries have come into play in New Orleans’ post-Katrina rebuilding plans. Indeed, in many ways the city is banking its future on the cultural economy, and film and television production are slated for a central role in helping to bring about this future.

Drawing on an historical and discursive analysis of cultural policy and urban planning documents both before and after Katrina, this chapter contends that the rebuilding of New Orleans hinges on a tactical approach to urban planning constituted by what I call a “post-Katrina rationality” of rebuilding. This post-Katrina rationality ties together discourses of creative placemaking, neighborhood culture, and equity in such a way that makes an argument for the right for every neighborhood to return and rebuild. This post-Katrina rebuilding rationality presents both an economic strategy—i.e. one that carves out the rationalities of space and culture that will transform the city into an economically viable space for investment, tourism, and labor—as well as a social strategy aimed at rectifying the racial, class, and spatial antagonisms made manifest during the Katrina event. More specifically, I argue that Treme, the television production, works as a kind of cultural technology (Bennett, 1998) that materially puts a post-Katrina rationality of urban planning and cultural policy into practice through its own spatial practices, producing what I term the “media neighborhood.” Treme’s spatial practices include on-location shooting, local hiring, tourism, gentrification, and what I call “neighborliness” in reference to the ways in which Treme is implicated in the production of the embodied practices of neighborhood as locality (Appadurai, 1996) and habitus (Bourdieu, 1984). Suggesting that the spatial practices of the series helps to put into practice the tactical approach to city space in post-Katrina urban planning and
cultural policy, I conclude with a reflection on the significance of this reconfiguration of power relations in the city. I contend *Treme* presents a particularly interesting and complicated case study because the series indeed navigates between the more strategic approach to urban planning that draws on the culture industries, which assumes media and culture industries impose a top-down commodifying and homogenizing branded space (addressed in the Introduction), and the more vernacular and tactical spatial practice that is often associated with resistance. *Treme’s* production of the media neighborhood thus plays a role in navigating between a propagation of a creative cities approach that favors film, television, music production, and digital media as creative industries, but it also highlights, makes possible, and brings into visibility and policy making discourse vernacular forms of everyday and banal creativity that are often excluded from the creative cities literature, such as standing on a street corner, Mardi Gras Indian sewing and handiwork, as well as forms of cultural creativity that receive the brunt of police and governmental repression in New Orleans because of their association with deprivileged blackness.

However, it is important to note that the relationships between neighborhood, media, and vernacular and racialized practices that I discuss cannot be understood by any broad or general theory, but, rather, must be grounded in the specific histories and particular practices of individual cities, neighborhoods, and productions. In other words, it requires what Anna McCarthy (2001) refers to as “site specificity.” In her research on how television is designed for specific places, she suggests screens inhabit local power structures and adapt to them, but also “take up a position within, the immaterial networks of power” within those spaces (p. 2). Similarly, I am interested in how *Treme,*
through its production practices, adapts to and takes up a position within the post-Katrina neighborhood and the influences the series has on spatial practices within the city, more generally, the neighborhood, more specifically, and on forms of post-Katrina citizenship.

The chapter is divided into three parts. First, I chart out a broad history from the *Frank’s Place* era to *Treme* that demonstrates the increasing significance of neighborhood space in the cultural economy and in the production of the creative city more generally, and in New Orleans and Tremé in particular. I thus first consider the broader ways in which neighborhood has been rationalized in relation to creative culture and cities, and the role of media industries in these efforts, before turning to New Orleans’ and Tremé’s particular histories within these broader shifts. I suggest that prior to Katrina, the Tremé neighborhood was particularly marginalized in New Orleans’ cultural economic policies and city branding strategies. It was understood as primarily a problem space, infected with black criminality, concentrated poverty, and blight, making it subject to various interventions to either gentrify or rehabilitate its populations.

Second, I analyze how the Katrina event affected the rationalization of neighborhood and culture in New Orleans. I argue that the devastation borne out by city, state, and federal neglect of the city’s most impoverished and black neighborhoods made manifest a complex interweaving of race, class, and space in the neoliberal city. I suggest that these problematizations of city policy’s relationship to particular neighborhoods were not easily quelled and reinscribed into a neoliberal rationalization of whitewashing space or disaster capitalism, but rather, created what I call a post-
Katrina rationality. In this section of the paper, I analyze the city’s new Master Plan, *The Plan for the 21st Century: New Orleans 2030* (City Planning Commission, 2010). I focus on how the Plan is productive of a distinctly post-Katrina discourse of neighborhood, equity, and entrepreneurial culture and media, which I refer to as a post-Katrina rationality. I suggest the goals of the Master Plan’s various spatial policies aim to create the potential for media productions that can represent the city not as a disembodied caricature of the French Quarter and romanticized Creole culture, but, rather, they are aimed at materially pointing media productions to represent those ethnic identities and cultural heritages that are “off the beaten path,” such as the Tremé.

Third, drawing on my interviews with *Treme*’s producers, writers, and crew, I discuss how *Treme* intervenes into the post-Katrina moment and provides a mechanism for implementing the post-Katrina rationalities of the Master Plan. I look specifically at how the series’ production practices—including on-location shooting, local hiring, relationships to tourism and gentrification, and neighborliness—are implicated in the rebuilding of neighborhood space in the city and the implications these have for neighborhoods and the production of post-Katrina citizenship. I suggest that *Treme* provides a mechanism for post-Katrina rebuilding in an era in which the resources that are assumed to support local vernacular culture within neighborhoods do not come through public financing for the arts and culture, but, rather, through private investment—i.e. through the film and television industry as a creative industry that can generate entrepreneurial culture.
Culture, Urban Planning, and the Neighborhood

…the big story about America today is the way that millions of confident, caring people -- those extraordinary “ordinary” Americans who never make the headlines and will never be interviewed -- are laying the foundation, not just for recovery from our present problems but for a better tomorrow for all our people. From coast to coast, on the job and in classrooms and laboratories, at new construction sites and in churches and community groups, neighbors are helping neighbors. And they've already begun the building, the research, the work, and the giving that will make our country great again. I believe this, because I believe in them -- in the strength of their hearts and minds, in the commitment that each one of them brings to their daily lives, be they high or humble. The challenge for us in government is to be worthy of them -- to make government a help, not a hindrance to our people in the challenging but promising days ahead.

Ronald Reagan, State of the Union Address, January 25, 1983 (emphasis mine)

The cynics were wrong; America never was a sick society. We're seeing rededication to bedrock values of faith, family, work, neighborhood, peace, and freedom—values that help bring us together as one people, from the youngest child to the most senior citizen… For us, faith, work, family, neighborhood, freedom, and peace are not just words; they're expressions of what America means, definitions of what makes us a good and loving people.

Ronald Reagan, State of the Union Address, January 25, 1984

During the 1988 Republican National Convention held in New Orleans, a group of Republicans took some Soviet friends to the restaurant Chez Helene in the Tremé neighborhood, the real-life model for Frank’s Place’s fictionalized restaurant Chez Louisiane. Mistakenly thinking the Soviets had seen Frank’s Place on Soviet television, one of the Republicans concluded the trip was still worthwhile, stating,

It's a wonderful juxtaposition…When people usually come here from other countries they just see the plush. Here, they see another kind of neighborhood . .
. the little people. Where they live, where they come for entertainment. And until
we get the little people involved, the world won't change. (Sonsky, 1988,
emphasis in original)

But there is more going on here than the potential gumbo-fying of Americans and
Soviets over a plate of fried chicken with persillade (Chez Helene’s specialty). The
conventioneer foreshadows the neoliberal agenda in which cities have had to take
responsibility for themselves in the global market to brand themselves as unique and
creative to attract global business, investment, and tourism.¹ What has changed since
the days of Frank’s Place, and what we are now experiencing with Treme, has indeed
been the solidification of the rationality put forth by the conventioneer—that the
solution to global problems are not global answers, but, rather, they are found at the
table of the so-called “little people,” or, in other words, in culturally diverse and
vernacular neighborhoods like Tremé and in the neighborly practices of neighbors.

Though the construction of neighborhood as a category of governance and
technology of urban renewal has a longer history, it was perhaps not until the Reagan
era when it became most clearly a prevalent rationality and discourse amongst a broad
dispersion of political, social, and cultural actors. The quotes from the conventioneer
above thus strongly resonate with the two excerpts from Reagan’s second and third
State of the Union addresses. Reagan’s speeches extol the virtues of community groups,
of “neighbors helping neighbors,” where individuals’ neighborhoods are refigured
alongside faith, family, work, freedom, and peace. Though not as famous as Margaret
Thatcher’s notorious statement that there is no society, only individuals and their
families (Thatcher, 1987),² Reagan’s statements similarly summarize the rationality of
neoliberal governance, and, more importantly, point to the role that communities, and neighborhoods in particular (not just individuals and family), play as categories of governance. Reagan era political rationality thus transformed neighborhood into something capable of producing moral citizens tasked with the responsibility of caring for themselves and their neighbors without the need of government intervention or assistance. In this section of the chapter, I first outline the broader rationalities of the creative cities approach to urban planning with particular emphasis on the role of neighborhood culture in these efforts. Next, I draw on archival research that traces the increasing significance of culture, art, and creativity to New Orleans’ city branding, planning, and renewal efforts, attending to how they help produce the creative neighborhood as a strategy of governing. Next, I discuss how the Tremé neighborhood, in particular, fits into this calculus. I aim to provide the historical context that precipitated the Katrina event as a way of demonstrating how that event influenced the discourses of neighborhood, race, and culture that inform the present day Master Plan and, consequently, make possible a production like *Treme*.

Although most prevalent in the last thirty years, the focus on local neighborhood culture in American city planning has a much longer history. Osborne and Rose (1999) suggest the concept of neighborhood emerged at the end of the 19th century. During this time, there was an abandonment of thought about the city as a space of potential degeneration and an adoption of a more idealized interpretation of the city as a potential site of happiness. This produced the eudaemonic diagram, a vaguely panoptic diagram of the city that envisions it in terms of visibility and transparency (Osborne & Rose, 1999, p. 747). The eudaemonic diagram promoted an idealized vision of a city of
happiness as a perfectly administered city. There emerged a whole network of practices and bodies whose aim was to ensure the proper administration of city space and functioning. Through these practices, it was understood that the appropriate social character of place could emerge in order to produce happiness. Thus, the eudaemonic diagram was not about administering spaces with a previous social character that needed to be maintained, but rather, it promoted the notion that the social character of place could be produced through technical and practical administration. It was during this period that the neighborhood emerged as a distinct concept and space (Osborne & Rose, 1999, p. 749). The neighborhood was a product of the zoned city, and it was figured as a space that needed close monitoring to ensure that the proper moral and social character could be cultivated and maintained.

The focus on local culture and the desire to cultivate neighborhoods with a particular social character can therefore be traced to a variety of historical urban planning efforts. These efforts include the City Beautiful and Garden City movements at the turn of the 20th Century, cultural zonation plans in the early to mid 20th Century, and flagship city plans in the 1960s and 1970s (Freestone & Gibson, 2006). In each of these urban planning efforts, culture was utilized and targeted as a mechanism for revitalizing particular neighborhoods within the city while also serving as a way to govern spaces and populations. These modernist urban plans were also undergirded by a racialized conception of space, guided in large part by Lockean and colonial theories of space that, as Barrios (2010) notes,

Conceptualized social norms…through the creation of architectural forms that regimented and optimized human bodies in biopolitical terms. Modern
urbanism, then, emerged as a science of urban planning intent on the production of a national race; *race*, in this case, being a collective social body shaped through life experiences in architecturally engineered disciplinary spaces. (pp.593-594, emphasis in original).⁴

These efforts did not go uncontested, though, as activists and scholars alike advocated for more democratic and diverse voices to have a stake in what Lefebvre (1996) termed the right to the city (see also Freestone & Gibson, 2006; Gans, 1991; Jacobs, 1961; Mitchell, 2003).

As I discussed in the Introduction, urban planning initiatives at the contemporary conjuncture have increasingly focused on diverse neighborhoods as part of a creative cities strategy. Richard Florida’s (2002) creative class thesis, in particular, has been highly influential on urban planning and renewal discourses to attend to cultivating creative neighborhood spaces. He suggests that this new creative class is savvy and bohemian, and they desire spaces that cultivate diversity and a sense of tolerance; they want authentic neighborhoods. The strategies of “neo-bohemia” and “culture-led regeneration,” subsets of the creative cities strategy, focus largely on the revitalization of creative and cultural neighborhood spaces (Hannigan, 2007). Both of these strategies depend on investing in already existing sites of cultural vibrancy and diversity in order to maximize the entrepreneurial possibilities of that cultural space. The creative city does not call for “one-off” urban entertainment and cultural destinations, but, rather, for a more fully integrated and holistic approach to cultivating cultural and creative practitioners and spaces within the city (Freestone & Gibson, 2006, p. 36).⁵
Florida and others have deemed New Orleans a “failure,” suggesting that it has been unable to stimulate the kind of creativity necessary to transition it into the post-industrial economy. However, there is much evidence that since at least the 1980’s New Orleans has drawn upon the arts, music, and the film and television industries as means for cultivating the kind of creativity embodied in a creative cities strategy. Clearly influenced by Florida’s and others’ discourses, New Orleans has therefore embarked on numerous efforts to reinvent itself as a creative city. In the next section, I trace this history of the relationships between culture, creativity, and urban planning in New Orleans and in the Tremé neighborhood. I aim to highlight the rationalities and discourses through which neighborhood, race, and culture figured into this understanding of creative culture for the city. This analysis shows that the Katrina event significantly impacted the logic through which race and neighborhood culture and creativity were figured in post-Katrina urban planning and cultural policy.

**New Orleans**

In congruence with the history detailed above, New Orleans too has shown an increasing emphasis on the creativity of neighborhood culture in its city promotions, branding, and cultural policy over the last thirty years. In this section, I draw on archival research that details this history in terms of discourses of urban planning, urban renewal, and cultural policy in New Orleans. I first consider the broader ways in which neighborhoods that had previously been more marginalized in urban renewal efforts—including the Warehouse District, the Riverfront, and the French Market area—were turned to as spaces for cultural revitalization and renewal through the arts and as spaces of fun and leisure. I then turn to consider some of the specific cultural policies that were
utilized for entrepreneurializing the city’s arts and culture, including the Arts Tourism Partnership, the 280th Anniversary event, the Jazzland Project, and the Urban Arts Training Program, lending specific attention to the ways in which these projects intersected with discourses of diversity and multiculturalism. Finally, I discuss the emergence of the film and television industry in New Orleans, where I consider specifically the city’s tax incentive legislation and the implementation of a film commission. This research demonstrates how the film and television industry were rationalized as agents of branding the city’s neighborhoods and culture to attract tourism, but only specific neighborhoods and specific cultural practices were deemed valuable and worthy for the city’s brand. Each of these examples reveals the increasing significance of culture to the city’s brand identity and urban revitalization strategy. They therefore demonstrate the rationalities through which New Orleans first began to enter into a creative cities strategy. This section therefore provides the pre-Katrina context to the current Master Plan for how neighborhood and culture were hitherto rationalized in the city’s cultural policy, urban planning, and branding efforts.

It was during the late 1970’s and early 1980’s that the marketing of New Orleans began to broaden beyond the French Quarter, Garden District, and Uptown—which had become solidified as the main distinctive cultural neighborhoods marketed to tourists—and began to expand to other neighborhoods. Completed in 1976, urban renewal efforts expanded into the Warehouse District when it aimed to transform the run-down area into an artistic and cultural center through the building of the Contemporary Arts Center. Through various tax incentives and subsidies, the city hoped that the Arts Center would help to transform the neighborhood by attracting additional
artists and other cultural workers to set up shops and galleries in the area. The neighborhood has since been renamed to the Arts District (Brooks & Young, 1993), though it is still regularly referred to as the Warehouse District. These efforts were furthered in preparations for the 1984 World’s Fair in New Orleans, which brought with it “smaller scale developments and adaptive re-use of existing warehouses” that helped to transform the neighborhood for commercial and residential use (Brooks & Young, 1993, p. 263). These projects “left in its wake condominiums and hotels in place of what had formerly been flophouses and abandoned warehouses” (Gladstone & Preau, 2008). Gentrification thus continues to be a major concern in the area.

During this time, other urban renewal efforts more aligned with a Disneyfication strategy were deployed in New Orleans as well, with aims to transform the urban center into a space for fun, leisure, and experience. Disneyfication refers to how public space, public life, and social objects and experiences are transformed into a Disney experience—how they are sanitized, homogenized, and made to simulate a nostalgic experience (Bryman, 2004). For example, New Orleans undertook two festival marketplace-style urban renewal efforts indicative of Disneyfication: Riverwalk and the transformation of the French Market. The French Market has a longer and more complex history, as it began as a trading space for Native Americans and, later, various immigrant populations. It was seen primarily as a market that catered to locals. During Maurice “Moon” Landrieu’s Mayoral administration, urban renewal efforts aimed to “clean up” the Market, which was characterized as “falling into disrepair.” These efforts transformed the French Market into a festival marketplace and tourist destination with mostly enclosed shops that sold primarily clothing and souvenirs (Reeves, n.d.; Souther,
Riverwalk Marketplace, which was built for the 1984 World’s Fair, is a shopping and entertainment destination along the Mississippi River in the Central Business District. A number of other tourist oriented amusement venues opened up along the riverfront in conjunction with Riverwalk as well, including Jax Brewery, Canal Place, Aquarium of the Americas, and Harrah’s Casino (Souther, 2007).

In the 1980’s and 1990’s, with the rollback of the social welfare state and the increasing instrumentalization of arts and culture into discourses of neoliberal city policy, an intensification of the efforts to market and brand New Orleans as a city of culture (both high and low) is evident in a number of the city’s urban renewal and planning policies. These efforts were aimed at transforming the post-industrial city to one that could compete in the “new” service economy. Although a number of scholars have noted the ways in which these and other urban renewal efforts were aimed at transforming New Orleans culture into a space for touristic consumption of culture (Gotham, 2007a; Powell, 2005; Souther, 2007; Thomas, 2009), few scholars have considered how city renewal efforts were also aimed internally during this time to entrepreneurialize New Orleanians as cultural and artistic citizens. In many of New Orleans’ archival documents related to the city’s arts, culture, and tourism at this time, there was expressed concern, particularly in the Marc Morial mayoral administration (1994-2002), that tourism could not be the sole industry of the city. In response, the administration sought to generate a greater entrepreneurialization of the city’s artists and culture, which was indeed aimed to attract tourists, but it was also rationalized as helping to generate what was seen as a more sustainable economic development strategy beyond tourism. Moreover, the city rationalized these aims in not only
economic terms, but they were also rationalized in cultural and social terms as well. The city’s cultural policies around arts, culture, and tourism were also aimed at resolving social antagonisms, producing civically engaged citizens, and rehabilitating youth. I discuss four significant programs initiated during the 1990’s—the Arts Tourism Partnership, the 280th Anniversary event, the Jazzland Project, and the Urban Arts Training Program. Each of these programs are suggestive of these broader governmental aims in the city’s efforts at entrepreneurializing arts and culture, and they are also suggestive of the increasing significance of culture, the arts, and multiculturalism in urban planning, renewal, and economic development. In other words, they help to identify the contours and rationalities through which New Orleans embarked on its efforts toward a creative cities strategy.

A particularly prevalent example of this shift toward a governmental entrepreneurializing of arts and culture and a creative cities strategy was the Arts Tourism Partnership/Project initiated in 1992 and formed in 1995 by the Arts Council of New Orleans and the New Orleans Tourism and Marketing Corporation. In archival notes from the Mayor’s Office on the proposed Arts Tourism Partnership, it is noted that tourism and casino gaming were unsustainable industries and that “big corporations will not set up business in New Orleans.” Instead, the city needed to foster “entrepreneurship,” specifically that it should “focus on arts and culture” (Arts Tourism Partnership, n.d.). As a report on the Partnership noted, “In today’s world, cultural tourism is a marriage of necessity” (Glickman, 1993, p. 1). Tourism was envisioned as a way in which New Orleanian artists could end their dependence on receding state “welfare” and grants, suggesting that tourism could provide artists with “the key to
financial independence through earned income” (Glickman, 1993, p. 2). Ultimately, the
goal for artists was clear—to “develop self-sufficiency in the arts and cultural
community” (Arts Tourism Partnership, 1997a). In order to facilitate the production of
entrepreneurial artists, the Arts Tourism Partnership held on-going trainings and
workshops “to assist artists and cultural organizations in marketing their products to
visitors” (Arts Tourism Partnership, 1995). These techniques for rendering artists into
enterprising subjects are constitutive of a form of neoliberal governance, in which “the
injunctions of the experts merge with our own projects for self-mastery and the
enhancement of our lives” to constitute self-governing and enterprising citizens (Rose,
1993, p. 298; see also Rose, 1992).

In addition to the Arts Tourism Partnership, in 1988 the city’s 280th Anniversary
initiative also aimed to heighten the artistic and creative awareness and skills of New
Orleans’ citizens. A yearlong calendar of events was planned, where promotional
literature for the Anniversary events suggested that the arts were the key components of
the city’s culture and history that would be celebrated. Although this event, like the Arts
Tourism Partnership, was to some degree aimed at attracting outside tourists and
investment, it was also aimed at residents as a key community-building event. As an
announcement for the Anniversary suggested, “The arts are essential to the life of the
community. They provide opportunities for diverse expression and bring the community
together in celebration of our rich multi-cultural heritage…[and] increase pride in our
city through the arts” (Corey, 1997). The emphasis on “multi-cultural” offerings is
significant here, as there is an attempt to include and diversify the city brand and to
encourage residents to utilize art and culture as a mechanism for taking pride in multicultural heritage as well as to forge community.\textsuperscript{10}

Other initiatives that were aimed toward helping to both educate and entrepreneurialize New Orleanians with regards to arts and culture included the Jazzland Project and the Urban Arts Training Program. Jazzland was built as an amusement park, completed in 2000, which brought together the city’s heritage and artistic creativity with the kind of Fantasy City (Hannigan, 1998) strategies of urban renewal and entertainment destinations discussed in the Introduction. Although the park was aimed primarily at tourists, it was also rationalized as a potential employer to the city’s musicians and other cultural workers. Proposals were made to coordinate with the Arts Council of New Orleans to utilize Jazzland as space for training and workshops for musicians as well (Jazzland Project, 1997). The Arts Council of New Orleans was also responsible for initiating the Urban Arts Training Program, a school-work project aimed to train low-income urban youth to become future artists and cultural workers and to draw on their local cultural heritage to do so. The program was initiated with the rationale that it could help keep “at-risk” youth away from crime and the juvenile justice system, where it was understood to be a “youth intervention and education program” (Urban Arts Training Program, 1997). As a summary of the project stated,

\begin{quote}
In a city known for its rich and diverse multi-cultural heritage, this program takes advantage of the community’s resources (people, organizations, facilities, and businesses) and uses them to present learning in an innovative setting. At the same time, it encourages and reinforces expressions of local culture. (Urban Arts Training Program, 1997)
\end{quote}
Again, this emphasis on multi-cultural and local cultural heritage is significant, as it points to the ways in which New Orleans was becoming increasingly invested in entrepreneurializing the creative practices of diverse and local culture for both economic and social purposes.\footnote{11}

Another significant strategy New Orleans’ city government utilized to entrepreneurialize arts and culture, and one that clearly suggests a shift toward a creative cities approach, was the creation of cultural policies to attract film and television production. As Miriam Greenberg (2008) notes, “by the late 80’s, urban tourist agencies…worked increasingly with filmmakers, TV producers, and commercial location scouts to promote their destinations as possible shooting locations” (p. 30). It was during the 1980’s, then, that a number of cities began to open film commissions, often as part of tourism boards. Film commissions were created under a dual rationality, where cities saw film and television production as a way to market the city as an interesting and unique destination to potential tourists and investors as well as an economic generator that could bring in dollars to the local economy through production and spillover investments.\footnote{12} New Orleans first formed its own film commission, the New Orleans Film and Video Commission, in 1986. In its earliest conception, the benefits of a film commission for the city were rationalized largely in terms of employment and economic benefits rather than those of tourism and marketing, as evidenced in the minutes of the original steering committee: “The primary objective for the commission should be…to bring the city a diversity of business and employment opportunities” (New Orleans Film and Video Commission Steering Committee, 1986). In an endorsement of the proposed resolution for establishing a film commission, it was
stated that the commission was a key component of diversifying New Orleans’ economy (Martens & Korsak, 1986). Yet, there was no funding for staff or operations provided to the commission until 1991, at which point it was funded in the form of $100,000 per year grants from the New Orleans Tourism and Marketing Corporation (Economic Development Trust Fund Application, 1994). The commission was also housed under the Tourism, Arts, and Entertainment Office within the Mayor’s Office. This suggests that while the commission’s role was not initially seen in terms of its relationship to tourism, it soon created a tight connection, seeing the potentials for the local tourism board to market the city to potential film producers and, in turn, for producers to market the city back to potential tourists.

Although the city promoted film production through various incentives since at least the 1980’s (Mayer & Goldman, 2010), it was not until the state passed the landmark 2002 Louisiana Motion Picture Incentive Act—which, in its current form, grants up to a fully transferable 30% investor tax credit based upon the total in-state expenditures of a motion picture production and an additional 5% labor tax credit for the hiring of Louisiana residents—that film production really took off in Louisiana and in New Orleans in particular. In order to receive the tax credit, productions must spend at least $300,000 of their budget in the State of Louisiana. Cultural economic policies like tax incentives play a significant role in determining location choices, even when the location plays no role in the narrative (Christopherson & Rightor, 2010, p. 338). When cities began to implement tax incentives for film and television production,

The rationale behind these incentives was to promote business development in general and tourism business in particular: they wanted to have scenes from their
region appear in films and television shows and to be identified in the credits, as an instrument of civic pride and a promotional device to attract visitors and conventions. (Christopherson & Rightor, 2010, p. 339)

This dual purpose behind the incentives—civic pride and tourism promotion—is evident in New Orleans’ tax incentive legislation. For the city, offering the 5% labor credit helps to filter in money, training, support, and infrastructure for building up a local film production community that it sees as essential for the city’s economic and entrepreneurial future. Simultaneously, these technical structures of support toward creating a local production culture also help to resolve various social ills; they bring youth “off the street” and into meaningful and gainful employment, and they produce the city as a creative space full of people from the creative class that will help to draw in investors and other creatives by creating a vital culture. Today, then, the tax incentives provided by New Orleans are also part of the city’s aims at a creative cities strategy. As Christopherson and Rightor (2010) suggest, the film and television industry are particularly attractive to cities because they are perceived as “creating ‘clean,’ knowledge-intensive jobs and bringing additional benefits to the economy in the form of multiplier effects, audio-visual trade and spin-off benefits in terms of tourism and image” (p. 336).

The primary job of New Orleans’ film commissioner is less about cultivating a film production economy within New Orleans, however, than it is about attracting Hollywood and New York productions to the city for on-location shooting. The commissioner thus plays a role in helping to “sell” the city and its locations (New Orleans Film and Video Commission Steering Committee, 1986), which, in turn, the
New Orleans Tourism and Marketing Corporation help to “sell” back to film and TV viewers of those productions. The commission devised numerous methods to attract Hollywood productions to the city in its early years, including partnering with the New Orleans Film Society to begin the New Orleans Film Festival. This annual festival highlighted the cinematic qualities of the city’s neighborhoods and locations as well as the array of resources available to potential productions (Economic Development Trust Fund Application, 1994).16 Yet, the locations that New Orleans aimed to sell were relatively limited. For example, in the Commission’s first printed resource directory, the pamphlet includes photos and descriptions of choice neighborhoods the Office suggests would render optimal filming locations. The neighborhoods included are unsurprising—the French Quarter, Garden District, and Uptown. The brochure suggests the city includes “many other interesting neighborhoods” but fails to list them (New Orleans Office of Film and Video, 1993). Though it lists Armstrong Park, which is formally located in the Tremé, it fails to mention its location, suggesting only it is “appropriately located near the city’s Cultural Complex.” It lists the practices of Mardi Gras Indians as a potential draw to filmmakers as well as the connection of these practices to their neighborhoods, but, again, fails to list these neighborhoods. Thus, until Katrina and particularly until Treme, the Tremé neighborhood and other areas of the city typically associated with deprivileged blackness have received scant attention from the film commission and, consequently, Hollywood.

After the inauguration of Mayor Mitch Landrieu in 2010, The New Orleans Office of Film and Video was renamed as Film New Orleans and moved from the Tourism, Arts, and Entertainment Office to the newly created Mayor’s Office of the
Cultural Economy. Film New Orleans today still sells its neighborhoods as the cornerstone of film production in the city, stating on its website, “We believe that our unique neighborhoods are a large part of what makes New Orleans attractive to the entertainment industry” (Film New Orleans, 2012). The city’s neighborhoods have therefore long been the site of city branding efforts to market and commodify the city’s culture to the entertainment industry.\(^{17}\)

But not all of New Orleans’ neighborhoods have been treated by the film commission and Hollywood in the same way. While the French Quarter, Garden District, Uptown, and, more recently, the Warehouse District (Arts District) and the Marigny\(^{18}\) have been featured in glossy tourist pamphlets for their unique culture and marketed as potential filming locations to Hollywood, other neighborhoods have been marked out as targets of exclusion, renewal, and management. The cultural practices of residents in these neighborhoods are figured as a problem and an obstacle to overcome in order to make those spaces saleable. So too, however, neighborhood space has been a space of resistance, akin to what bell hooks (1990) has termed homeplace, as spaces of exclusion by dominant forces where the marginalized forge communities of memory, struggle, and resistance. Neighborhoods as homeplaces are often linked to creative cultural and artistic vernacular practices through which the marginalized communicate resistance. Indeed, this is the case with Tremé, often noted as the birthplace of jazz and the black press, born out of the practices and struggles of slaves, free people of color, and African-American activists during and after slavery. Yet, in the recuperative post-Katrina moment, the city has shifted its relationship to these neighborhoods from one that targets their cleansing and exclusion to a strategy that aims at their inclusion and
entrepreneurialization. In so doing, it sets up the context for a new approach to urban planning and for new relationships between media industries and these hitherto marginalized neighborhoods.

**Tremé**

As discussed in the Introduction, the Tremé is a historic neighborhood adjacent to the French Quarter built primarily by free people of color with a long history of struggle for social justice. It is also a neighborhood that has seen much destruction as a result of various urban renewal policies aimed at cultural revitalization in ways that had complete disregard for the existing culture in the neighborhood. Thus, while the cultural economic policies and practices of New Orleans more broadly in the 1980’s and 1990’s, discussed above, spoke to the efforts of the city to entrepreneurialize neighborhoods through arts and culture, it is relatively unsurprising that Tremé during this time was mostly subject to various neoliberalizing programs that targeted blight, crime, business and real estate development, and investment. This was characteristic of most of New Orleans’ “other neighborhoods,” i.e. those outside of the spaces of tourist consumption and promotion, during this era. In this section, I again draw on archival research and discuss the ways in which the Tremé neighborhood was framed in the context of the city’s turn to neighborhoods and culture in its branding and revitalization strategies. I discuss specifically how it was targeted as a space for cultivating an “empowered” ownership society. Homeownership programs and Empowerment Zone legislation were rationalized as able to entrepreneurialize the area and thereby cleanse it of “problem” elements like crime and poverty that were seen as constituting the neighborhood as “deteriorating.” In these examples, existing Tremé culture was seen as a threat rather
than an asset to its “empowered” future. These efforts did not go uncontested, however, as Tremé residents rallied for affordable housing and drew upon cultural practices as a means of contesting the dominant discourses through which the neighborhood was constituted. Finally, I discuss the ways in which the Katrina event problematized the dominant discourses and rationalities through which Tremé was constructed, in part by manifesting the racial, class, and spatial antagonisms on which the city’s claim to unique and distinctive culture was built.

The Neighborhood Planning Office, a subset of City government whose role it was to “service low-income neighborhoods,” stated that its mission was “to increase the capacity of neighborhood residents to improve their environment and residential life” (Wright, 1990). The goal for these neighborhoods, in other words, was to increase their capacity, self-responsibility, and self-reliance—to become spaces of neoliberal governance and citizenship—and to excise those parts of the neighborhood deemed threatening to these goals. These aims were facilitated through a number of homeownership programs targeted at low-income communities like the Tremé, including the Neighborhood Development Foundation (NDF), a public-private partnership initiated by James Rouse (a developer known for his shopping mall and festival marketplace projects). The NDF acquired, rehabbed, and resold houses to low-income families, but the emphasis was almost exclusively on homeownership, where it aimed toward “judicious use of the client’s resources and on encouraging self-reliance” (Neighborhood Development Foundation, 1986). The NDF is characteristic of neoliberal efforts to encourage homeownership, what George H. Bush termed the “ownership society,” as a vehicle to good citizenship (Béland, 2006, 2007; Kosterlitz,
The requirement of investing in “sweat” equity, where homeowners finished their own houses, assumedly helped to embody the neoliberal principles of self-reliance and responsibility within the individual homeowner’s body. While the goal was to provide affordable housing, potential residents were required to have stable employment and good credit histories, producing a highly exclusionary process. Similarly, Marc Morial’s administration initiated the Neighborhood Revitalization Trust Fund, which was aimed at creating public/private partnerships for housing, economic development, and social services to neighborhood communities. Echoing the Moynihan Report’s (1965) discourse that black communities no longer faced racism but, rather, the deterioration of black culture wrought on by matriarchal families, the goal of the Fund was to reduce “violence, crime, and other social ills related to the breakdown of the black family” (Modus, Inc., 1994).

Tremé was frequently constructed as a problem neighborhood that was “deteriorating,” often legitimating further destruction beyond the I-10 and Armstrong Park, discussed in the introduction, in the name of “empowerment.” One example of the kinds of discourses through which Tremé and its residents was made subject in this era, in particular, is in the New Orleans’ Empowerment Zone application in which Tremé was proposed (and finally accepted) as an Enterprise Community. The Empowerment Zone Program was a cornerstone piece of federally initiated neoliberal policy in the 1990’s, whose aim it was to make cities, and impoverished neighborhoods in particular, self-regulating, self-governing, and self-sustaining. Neighborhoods were targeted as the appropriate sites to cultivate moral, neoliberal citizens, and rehabilitate those in poverty toward “empowerment.” The emphasis of New Orleans’ Empowerment Zone plan was
on capacity building, sustainable activity, prosperity and productivity, connectedness, and citizenship. Thus, it is clear that the aim for the Empowerment Zone was both economic as well as social, toward broader forms of neoliberal governance and citizenship. In its application, the city stated that it aimed to provide “an environment that empowers individuals to become full citizens, capable of exercising rights but also able and willing to take responsibility for themselves, teach their children well, and support those around them” (Empowerment Zone Application, 1994). Proposing Tremé as a potential candidate to be an Enterprise Community, the report describes the neighborhood as a “picturesque area of 19th Century Creole and Greek Revival Cottages,” in which, “because of its poor location…the city put many of its undesirable necessities—the prison, a soap factory” (Empowerment Zone Application, 1994, p. III-4). In stating the neighborhood’s assets, the only organizations included in the “community-based organizations” section are those related to real-estate development and homeownership and rehabilitation programs. It also cites a number of non-profit service providers who provide housing for the homeless, youth development, and health care as potential assets as well, whereas the city’s musical and cultural heritage organizations and traditions are noted as “other potential neighborhood based partners” (Empowerment Zone Application, 1994, p. III-7). As partners, rather than assets, these cultural organizations appear to be more tasked to facilitate the neoliberal restructuring of the neighborhood by getting their members and neighbors to cooperate with these structural adjustments—not as assets of empowerment themselves.

The Empowerment Zone legislation was a key component that continued the efforts of the city to gentrify the Tremé neighborhood. Though the neighborhood had
long resisted gentrification, largely due to its proximity to the Iberville and Lafitte public housing projects as well as resistance and agitation by residents who fought for affordable housing (Crutcher, 2010), significant efforts toward gentrification were made in the 1990’s. Though noted as attempts to ameliorate the problems wrought by previous eras of urban renewal, developing the Tremé Villa, which now houses the New Orleans African American Museum of History, and making Tremé into a historic district in 1998 both were initiated by Mayor Marc Morial with the aim of attracting the black middle class to return to the city as gentrifiers (Barrios, 2010; Crutcher, 2010). The Villa was constructed to attract the black middle class as cultural tourists, and the historic district legislation largely aimed to preserve architectural structures rather than culture, history, memory, or people. Additionally, efforts like the Tremé Community Special Purpose Grant initiated by the Tremé Development Corporation, which—while citing problems of displacement of residents and the desire to preserve the “cultural lifestyle” that such displacement destroys—again were aimed at homeownership, sweat equity, and other efforts that fit squarely within a neoliberalizing rationality for the neighborhood and aided in gentrification (Mills Consultant Services, Inc., 1994). A similar rationality can be gleaned in a number of initiatives in the 1990’s that were detailed in a series of articles that ran in the Times Picayune and spotlighted revitalization and renewal efforts in the Tremé during this time. According to the articles, these efforts promised a “turnaround” to a neighborhood characterized as “long neglect[ed]” (“Toward bringing Tremé back,” 1997). These programs, in large part public/private partnerships, were aimed to “stabilize the area,” by decreasing blight with the hope to decrease crime, especially by soliciting residents to participate in the
homeownership process to become more actively engaged in their neighborhoods (Donze, 1996; Gray, 1997; “Tremé rehab finished,” 1996). The programs these articles highlight are indicative of neoliberal policies aimed to produce neighborhoods and communities who could “help themselves” rather than depending upon the state. Yet, distinct from the broader entrepreneurializing neoliberal policies around the arts and culture, these policies aimed at the Tremé fail to account for or provide a rationality in which the culture of Tremé is anything but a threat to the kinds of culture the city sought to forefront at that time.

Despite the city’s best attempts to gentrify the Tremé neighborhood, however, many Tremé residents actively resisted these efforts, often through cultural practices like second line parading and Mardi Gras Indian masking (which, as Regis (1999, 2001) notes, demonstrate struggles over the right to public space), music, the formation of social aid and pleasure clubs, and other more direct forms of political and social action. In the 1970’s, for example, after the destruction of over 175 homes that were cleared for Armstrong Park, Tremé residents formed the Tremé Community Improvement Association and agitated for the building of a Tremé Community Center to provide a space of recreation and community building for low-income residents (Greater New Orleans Community Data Center, 2005). In 1993, the Committee to Save Tremé and Armstrong Park held a press conference opposing the housing of Harrah’s Casino in Armstrong Park, citing the historic demolition of the neighborhood, police harassment, and other forms of denigration of the black community as incitements to action against what was viewed as another attempt to exclude African American voices from debates over the future of their own neighborhood. The list of questions and points that were to
be brought up at the press conference strongly emphasize concerns over displacement, gentrification and rising rents, the destruction of black cultural practices, and displacement of black cultural events (Committee to Save Black Tremé and Armstrong Park, 1993). Though the Casino was eventually temporarily housed in the Park, it was never granted a permanent place there. Additionally, the Tremé Street Festival, initiated by the Dirty Dozen Brass Band in 1991 in an effort to give back to their neighborhood, represents struggles within the neighborhood to resist gentrification and displacement by celebrating the neighborhood’s African American culture through music, food, and crafts. As a Dirty Dozen band member stated, Tremé,

Is where it really got started for us…That’s an area where I grew up and an area that provided a lot of work for the Dirty Dozen. So I wanted to go back and say thank you now, not thank you 20 years from now. (quoted in Aiges, 1991)

Later the festival moved beyond featuring primarily music from Tremé and included literary workshops as well (“Big sounds take to the streets,” 1993). The Tremé Street Festival, which became an annual event, was a way for members of the Tremé community to resignify the neighborhood as a space of community and cultural practice that resisted its negative significations by the city, development corporations, and so forth as well as to keep neighborhood traditions like the brass band alive.

Since Katrina, there is a great deal of concern over the future of the neighborhood. Many of Tremé’s residents are still displaced and scattered across the country, unable to return home (Elie et al., 2008). Further, many critics note that the rebuilding process has prioritized neoliberal solutions that continue to displace the poor, emphasizing real estate development, gentrification, homeownership, and other forms
of private investment. Michael Eric Dyson (2006) suggests these strategies point toward a “whitewashing” of the city, while Gotham (2007a) warns New Orleans could become further entrenched in a touristic culture, where local culture is produced solely for the consumption and pleasure of tourists. Powell (2005) suggests New Orleans is a “new Pompeii” that will never return, and Souther (2007) contends that the rebuilding process is further aimed toward Disneyfication. Naomi Klein (2007) argues that post-Katrina New Orleans has been made subject to disaster capitalism that has utilized displacement of the city’s poor people of color to initiate a set of aggressive neoliberal policies to transform the city into a fully neoliberalized and cleansed space (see also Gunewardena & Schuller, 2008; Johnson, 2011; Peck, 2006; Reed, 2008).

Yet, scholars also argue that the Katrina event made visible the gross class and racial inequalities in the U.S. that were of such an undeniable magnitude that even conservatives could not deny the unequal effects of the storm (Braun & McCarthy, 2005; Giroux, 2006; Harris & Carbado, 2006; Ogletree, 2006). FEMA’s and the Bush administration’s neglect of the black and poor of the city, vocalized by Kanye West’s claim that “George Bush doesn’t care about black people,” became speakable and even aired in mainstream news reports. Rather than speaking about race as the product of individual biases and prejudices, or better yet, not speaking about it at all, structural racism became laid bare for all to see. Dyson (2006) suggests that what was made visible was our own complicity in these structures. That is, he calls out the ways in which we are all culpable for allowing the neglect of the black and poor across the U.S. Giroux (2006) argues that the structures of racism made evident in the aftermath of Katrina exposed what he terms a biopolitics of disposability, where neoliberal policy
has intensified the division between those who must be made to live and those “failures” who must be allowed to die for the greater good of the population, opening up the possibility for a deeper structural critique. In the next section, I analyze how this debate over the future of New Orleans and the Katrina event’s problematizations of racial, class, and spatial injustices implicates the rationalities of the rebuilding process. I analyze urban planning documents and argue that the rebuilding of New Orleans must contend with the racial, class, and spatial antagonisms made manifest during and after Katrina. Thus, while critics fear that the city’s strategies for rebuilding are indicative of a kind of whitewashing of the city, I argue that instead what are being produced are a new configuration of racial, class, and spatial politics in the city that I refer to as a “post-Katrina rationality” of city space and rebuilding. This post-Katrina rationality takes the creative cities strategy to another level—creative placemaking—and implements a kind of tactical approach to urban space that depends upon entrepreneurializing local and vernacular neighborhood practices.

**Post-Katrina City Planning: Neighborhood, Equity, and Media**

By way of arguing that New Orleans’ new master plan, *Plan for the 21st Century: New Orleans 2030* (City Planning Commission, 2010), orchestrates a post-Katrina rationality of governing space that ties diverse neighborhoods to creative culture and media industries, I first consider how the Plan rationalizes the city through a principle of inclusivity and equity and the role that culture and creative cultural practices in particular play in producing that equity. Second, I discuss how this rationality of equity and creative culture is tied to the entrepreneurialization, networking, and affiliation of neighborhoods to networks of power. Finally, I turn to the
role played by media industries in the Master Plan, suggesting that these industries are tasked to facilitate the entrepreneurialization of creative culture and neighborhood space. Emphasizing how these examples illustrate a peculiarly post-Katrina rationality, I compare these discourses from the new Master Plan to that of the city’s previous Master Plan, the *New Century New Orleans* Master Plan (City Planning Commission, 1992) which was proposed (but never actually adopted by the City Council) in 1992. I aim to demonstrate three interrelated points: 1) although the rationalities of equity, neighborhood culture, entrepreneurialism, and media industries do not arise out of nowhere, the Katrina event nonetheless significantly impacted the discourses through which city space, and neighborhood space and culture, in particular, was understood in these terms; 2) the rationality of creative culture and media industries, neighborhood, and equity make possible a production like *Treme*; and 3) *Treme* plays a significant role into putting into practice the connection between neighborhood entrepreneurialization, creative culture, and media industries that is laid out in the rationality of the 2010 Master Plan.20

Before turning to the details of the city’s Master Plan, however, it is important to note that the planning process following Katrina was long, complicated, and oftentimes contradictory. The devastation borne out following the event made the city a panacea for planners, and the city was soon flooded with the glitterati of the planning community, all vying for a role in imagining and planning for a new New Orleans. As Kristin Ford (2010), former City Planning Commissioner in New Orleans from 1992-2000, notes in her book *The Trouble with City Planning*, New Orleans soon became “a place where [planners] could win contracts to write plans for recovery from the disaster
based more on their pet planning theories than on what they knew about the city” (p. 29). Urban planning following Katrina was therefore a significant space of innovation and testing for the urban planning community more generally. Thus, while the rationalities engendered by these plans are specific to New Orleans, they also have implications for the broader rationalities through which urban planning is understood as a discipline and practice.

New Orleans’ neighborhoods constituted central components to each of the three major recovery plans proposed by urban planners following the storm. In post-Katrina New Orleans, neighborhood was a term made synonymous with the citizen, where citizenship was predicated not on national or city-based affiliation, but, rather, on neighborhood. To some extent, this was a factor that government and city planning aimed to overcome—it spoke to the spatialization of long-standing antagonisms and inequities over the allocation of resources, rights, and privileges. Yet, at the same time, neighborhood affiliation also became a fact that government and city planning attempted to mobilize in its efforts to rebuild and to solicit citizen participation in the rebuilding process.

Perhaps no other event solidified more clearly the sense that neighborhood was the central rationality that held together the antagonisms over race, class, space, and the right to the city in post-Katrina New Orleans than the Bring New Orleans Back Commission’s (BNOBC) “green-dot” map (Krupa, 2010). Funded by the Urban Land Institute as well as by other private philanthropic donors, the BNOBC returned with the first report that offered a comprehensive plan on how the city would be rebuilt. The report begot widespread criticism and controversy largely around its argument that a
post-Katrina New Orleans would have to be a city with a “smaller footprint,” or, in other words, that not all residents would be able to return home and not all neighborhoods, particularly those vulnerable to future flooding, would be rebuilt. The report’s findings were published in *The Times Picayune*, along with the so-called “green dot” map that depicted which areas of the city would not be rebuilt by covering them with large green circles, denoting their future as green spaces (Krupa, 2010; “Plan shrinks city footprint,” 2005). According to the Brookings Institute’s *The New Orleans Index at Five* report, the “green dot” controversy ensured that “the debate from this point forward focused on issues of race, income group, neighborhood identity, and who would be allowed to rebuild and who would not be allowed to rebuild” (Collins, 2010, p. 3). In response, subsequent recovery plans, including the Lambert Plan and the Unified New Orleans Plan, all emphasized neighborhoods as central bedrocks to the rationality of the future of New Orleans with a focus on the right to return for every neighborhood.23

While these efforts represented a short term plan for recovery, there was pressure by the state and federal government to have a longer plan for the city’s future, and federal funding dollars were made contingent upon the approval of a comprehensive master plan (Olshansky & Johnson, 2010). The City Planning Commission thus began efforts at drafting a comprehensive master plan that would outline the city’s goals for development and management for the next twenty years. Informed by the various debates over the recovery plans, citizen participation formed a central component of the Commission’s planning process, creating what some have suggested is an unprecedented partnership between local citizens, expert planners, and
government in urban planning (Olshansky & Johnson, 2010). Completed in 2010 and
subsequently ratified by the City Council (Eggler, 2010), the Plan for the 21st Century:
New Orleans 2030 includes a new Land Use Plan that influenced the subsequent
drafting of a new Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance as well, which many have argued
is the most significant portion of the plan as it “translates the broad land-use categories
and principles of the master plan into specific rules about what is and is not allowed on
each piece of land in the city” (Eggler, 2010).

The Master Plan foregrounds the significance of neighborhoods as the central
framework for understanding and organizing the Plan’s three main principles: livability,
sustainability, and opportunity. The Plan details how each of these three principles can
be put into action, and the space as well as ideal of neighborhood and neighboring serve
as fundamental building blocks to each principle. Significantly, it imagines
neighborhoods as integrated into a kind of whole (not a one), where cooperation and
equal participation outstrips the history of neighborhood antagonism and inequality. As
the executive summary states,

In 2030 New Orleans is a city of unique historic character and ethnic and
cultural diversity. The hard work of recovery and resettlement has restored the
city’s neighborhoods. Rehabilitated and new homes fill once-empty lots in “dry”
and “wet” neighborhoods alike…In 2030 the city will offer a choice of
neighborhoods. (City Planning Commission, 2010, p. 14)

Before arriving at what the Plan terms a “shared destiny” that is founded on a sense of
“equity,” however, there is a recognition that not all neighborhoods come to the table
equally in the status quo. Thus, the Plan creates a new rationality of space that replaces
the antagonism between wet and dry, uptown and back-a-town, neighborhoods with that of stable, recovering, and revitalization with the aim of ensuring the right of return for all neighborhoods and all citizens.²⁴

**Equity**

A central discourse in the *Plan for the 21st Century: New Orleans 2030* is that of equity. The plan states, “equity means fairness, equal opportunity, and treating everyone with respect and dignity” (City Planning Commission, 2010, p. 9.47). Going beyond a conception of equity that is figured in only economic terms, it notes, “achieving equity takes many forms” (p. 9.47). These forms include concerns for fairness, equal opportunity, and respect and dignity in issues of employment, entrepreneurship, economic development initiatives, rebuilding, civics, creative culture, and environmental justice, and the Master Plan outlines strategies for achieving equity in each of these areas. Within each of these areas, moreover, a sense of racial and ethnic inclusiveness is evident. For example, with regards to entrepreneurship, the Master Plan commentates on the strategies that might be utilized to increase minority owned businesses. In terms of rebuilding, the plan makes a commitment to addressing “disparities among neighborhoods” (p. 9.47), and stresses the importance of supporting the cultural creativity of every member of the New Orleans community. As stated in the executive summary, the plan makes a commitment to “the principle of ‘every place and every person’ in the future of the city” (p. 10). The Master Plan imagines itself, as well as future planning processes, as not only working from within the principles of equity and inclusiveness but also in helping to produce the contexts that make equity possible by creating an inclusive planning process. The Plan suggests that by putting into place a
system that makes possible broad-based citizen participation in the planning process, the city is now equipped with mechanisms and techniques to ensure more widespread democratic participation and, thus, in ultimately cultivating a sense of shared destiny and equity. As the executive summary suggests,

Historically New Orleanians have competed in the political arena along lines defined by race, neighborhood, income, and other differences. The process for creating the Master Plan was itself a tool for inviting people to cross these lines to find shared solutions based on data, technical analysis, trade-offs, and similar qualities in place of the politics of affinity. (City Planning Commission, 2010, p. 19)

Contrast these recognitions of the chasms between race, neighborhood, class, and so forth with that of the New Century New Orleans Master Plan, which primarily drew upon a discourse of tolerance rather than equity and affinity. The Plan suggests that New Orleans’ “historical diversity of its neighborhoods” is one of the unique aspects of the city, where “a wide variety of ethnic groups in New Orleans have lived in harmony—in the same neighborhoods and often on the same streets” (City Planning Commission, 1992, p. 40). Marked by a clear historic amnesia of the perspectives of New Orleans’ ethnic and racial Others, the Plan nonetheless deploys a discourse of multiculturalism through a rhetoric of tolerance that celebrates a kind of racial and ethnic harmony characterized by a repression of the history of social struggle and a silencing of existing struggles and inequalities. As critics of discourses of tolerance note, tolerance is largely deployed as a means of containing diversity and multiculturalism rather than promoting it (Brown, 2008; Goldberg, 2009). In other
words, tolerance is invoked as a discourse that serves to regulate and manage power relations rather than contest them.

The *New Century New Orleans* Master Plan does acknowledge what it understands to be an increasing sense that this “historic tolerance” is wearing thin due to the “deterioration of our inner city” and the “lingering local and national recession” (p. 40). The planners, however, stop short of suggesting that it is the role of the Plan to cultivate this sense of tolerance. Instead, they suggest,

> The solution lies not in City Hall, but within us as individuals…[to]…set aside prejudices and grievances…work together to end the economic and social isolation of *any* New Orleanian. We must work toward a stronger sense of community among all of the people of our city. (City Planning Commission, 1992, p. 40, emphasis in original)

This is a significant point that is steeped in a racialized neoliberal rationality of individual self-responsibility for ameliorating social injustices. Though it points out some structural forces in cultivating social injustice, e.g. the lingering recession, it nevertheless suggests that individual mindsets are central to altering those injustices, not structural, institutional, or spatial adjustments. This is not the case with the post-Katrina Master Plan, which sees urban planning as necessarily intervening to solve for racial injustice by promoting equity. Further, the statements of the 1992 Plan are significant also for the emphasis on the word “any” New Orleanian. This works in contrast to the 2010 Master Plan’s emphasis on the word “every” New Orleanian. This is a significant distinction, one that marks a transition from a rationality of the city in more individualizing terms to one inflected by a post-Katrina rationality of inclusiveness,
equity, and the right to return.

**Neighborhood**

Producing neighborhoods as productive and creative sites of citizenship and culture are at the forefront of putting into practice these goals of equity, inclusiveness, and return. The centrality of neighborhoods as a rationality of the *Plan for the 21st Century* is evident in how the Master Plan discusses housing, a bedrock concern for the Plan and most New Orleanians who continue to face a housing shortage since Katrina. The plan proposes a “reinvention” of the city’s approach to housing and blight, suggesting a “housing policy focused on building neighborhood and neighborhoods rather than projects or developments” (City Planning Commission, 2010, p. 5.5). In this sense, housing is seen not only as an object of individual development, but rather as a matter of neighborhood development, and it is not just buildings that are being referred to here. Rather, the culture of particular neighborhoods is understood as just as central to the rebuilding of that neighborhood as are the material buildings. In part, this rationality of neighborhood culture put forth in the 2010 Master Plan is steeped in both Richard Florida’s (2002) rationality of creative cities and the centrality of diverse neighborhoods as sites of creativity as well as in the New Urbanist (Leccese et al., 2000) principles of neighborhoods as the building blocks of community. However, the Master Plan also inflects these broader, more general principles with a very localized attention to the specifics of New Orleans in the context of a post-Katrina shaped by what is referred to as “creative placemaking” and a “holistic” approach to historic preservation. These discourses differ significantly from *The New Century New Orleans* Master Plan, where marginalized neighborhoods were figured as problem spaces and
their cultures as dangerous. The new Master Plan instead aims to network these neighborhoods into technologies of governing, through which they can entrepreneurialize their existing culture.

As the Executive Summary of the 2010 Master Plan makes clear, the Plan was constructed and is to be implemented within the principles of “creative placemaking.” According to the White Paper in which the concept was formed and from which the 2010 Master Plan draws, creative placemaking builds on the concept of creative cities but adds to it a more distinctive appreciation for the uniqueness and diversity of individual cities and practices (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010, p. 5). Creative placemaking efforts therefore often attend to specific neighborhoods, where revitalization is aimed not at a creative cities “me, too” replica but rather to “nurture distinctive qualities and resources that already exist in the community and can be celebrated to serve community members while drawing in visitors and new businesses” (Marcuse & Gadwa, 2010, p. 4). It thus makes clear that the intent of creative placemaking is not only aimed outwardly but also inwardly, at entrepreneurializing and putting to work the creative culture already existing within particular spaces within the city. This too has governmental aims, as the paper suggests, “Cultural participants are more likely to be civically engaged in their communities” (Marcuse & Gadwa, 2010, p. 7). Moreover, creative placemaking is infused with a kind of causal governmental reasoning (Huxley, 2007) that suggests that nurturing creative places can help to produce creative citizens. The paper suggests, “Places are the spatial setting for arts and cultural production and consumption” (Marcuse & Gadwa, 2010, p. 9), and “the more residents make art, the more likely they are to become creative entrepreneurs” (Marcuse & Gadwa, 2010, p.
New Orleans 2010 Master Plan puts creative placemaking into practice by linking together the seemingly competing forces of preservation and innovation. That is, the Plan argues, “New Orleans’ unique character and timeless quality should be enhanced, not changed” (City Planning Commission, 2010, p. 16). It aims to “draw people from every walk of life together to enjoy the city’s natural setting, renewing the city’s tradition of landscape design and leadership” (City Planning Commission, 2010, p. 17), where, Preservationists have been joined by people just as committed: entrepreneurs who celebrate cultural diversity…neighborhood activists who say no to the wrong buildings and developers who work with them to make these buildings right…The kind of partnership between city and community [that] holds the key to building successful 21st century cities. (City Planning Commission, 2010, p. 18)

Noteworthy here is the emphasis on cultural diversity as central to entrepreneurial endeavors, as well as the newfound significance of neighborhood activists who can partner with culturally sensitive developers and preservationists. In effect, the Plan draws from the events of Katrina to produce a rationality that places new value on the participation of neighborhoods in city government as well as in the potential of the cultural diversity of hitherto marginalized communities who had been pushed out of the way by both preservationists and developers in the pursuit of real estate profits and economic development, as discussed above. Historic preservation, in particular, has long been a dividing issue in the city, pitting preservationists against developers and
business. Furthermore, preservationists have also been criticized for fetishizing architectural history over the history of peoples and communities and thereby neglecting, and often driving out by driving up rents, poor and marginalized populations (Hodder, 1996). In Tremé, historic preservation efforts are widely disputed. As Mike Crutcher (2010) suggests, Tremé was long excluded from efforts of historic preservation because it was deemed expendable, deteriorating, and not worthy of preservation because of its proximity to public housing projects. It was only later in 1988, when gentrifiers increasingly saw the neighborhood as a space of real-estate speculation in light of increasing rents in the French Quarter that the neighborhood was deemed worthy of historic district status—not for its cultural history but for its architectural value and development possibilities. Clashes between the neighborhood’s African American working class residents and new gentrifiers often revolve around historic preservation, where long time residents argue, “For outsiders, the most important thing here are the buildings. For us, it is our culture, for us, that is what we consider community, not the buildings” (quoted in Barrios, 2010, p. 601).

Significantly, the 2010 Master Plan attempts to soothe relations between neighborhood residents, preservationists, and developers by, as planning consultant David Dixon argues, “demonstrating that New Orleans' cultural heritage is its most potent weapon in attracting investment and talent” (quoted in Eggler, 2010). Taking what is termed a “holistic approach” to historic preservation, the 2010 Master Plan calls for “looking not just at historic structures in isolation, but also preserving the cultural traditions, community and social structures, and socioeconomic diversity that characterize beloved New Orleans neighborhoods” (City Planning Commission, 2010,
p. 6.13). Significantly for the Tremé, the Plan calls for the removal of the I-10 and the Claiborne Avenue overpass as a way to restore and ameliorate the effects of what it understands as failed urban renewal efforts and to further promote the cultural traditions and practices within the neighborhood (City Planning Commission, 2010, p. 20, p. 100; Elie, 2009).

Although much of the Plan suggests that tourism is a problematic industry to pin all of the city’s hopes on for its future, it aims to couple these new forms of historic preservation of culture with cultural and heritage tourism in areas like the Tremé (which, it is argued, the removal of the I-10 might help to promote as well). The Plan calls for a promotion of tourism to areas beyond the already existing popular sites, those areas “off the beaten path” not only for the potential tourism dollars that can flow into the city as a result, but also because of the potential that tourism has to foster a cultural economy conducive to a creative entrepreneurial culture, “generating jobs, and enhancing quality of life” (City Planning Commission, 2010, p. 64). The Plan specifically calls for investing in “heritage tourism, such as in the Tremé district as a center of African-American history and cultural tourism” (City Planning Commission, 2010, p. 9.22). The Plan states that the Tremé, in particular, is the “birthplace of jazz” and “cultural traditions that are integral to New Orleans identity” (City Planning Commission, 2010, p. 6.6). These efforts, then, are rationalized to link tourism with cultural and historic preservation under the guise of a creative arts culture. In so doing, expanding tourism to new cultural heritage destinations off the beaten path is envisioned as a new kind of historic preservation initiative that is central to rebuilding and revitalizing post-Katrina neighborhoods (City Planning Commission, 2010, p. 6.5).
The difference constituted by a post-Katrina rationality can in part be gleaned in the differences between the 1992 and 2010 plans. In the 1992 Master Plan, neighborhood also provided an undergirding rationality of the plan, but within the Plan what is valued in terms of vital and distinct neighborhoods is historic architecture and the creative cultures that are linked to the city’s white and tourist areas such as the French Quarter, Garden District, and Uptown. Though the Plan notes the significance and importance of “a broad mix of ethnic backgrounds and income levels,” neighborhoods that are characterized by this element of culture and value are made subject to strategies aimed to ensure that they are “safe places to live and raise families” and are “clean and well-maintained” (Citizen Advisory Committee, 1992, p. 8). Racial diversity is not commented upon; it is assumedly included in the “ethnic” mix. Thus, although this earlier plan includes a sense of the possible value served by the creative cultural practices of racially and ethnically diverse communities, the concern with these neighborhoods was much more so with regards to implementing safety and security policies, eradicating blight, and creating reinvestment through enterprise zones, capital improvement investments, tax incentives for reinvestment and development, and various design guidelines that would ensure a sense of safety and cleanliness in ways that problematized black bodies and the black underclass as dangerous criminals (Citizen Advisory Committee, 1992, p. 10).

Although the 2010 Master Plan is not free of these elements of criminalizing, policing, resignifying, and cleansing black space in New Orleans, there is also an advancement of what George Yúdice (2003) has referred to as the “expediency of culture,” where spaces of racially and ethnically diverse cultures are characterized as
economic and social expedients within a marketized framework, rather than as largely
criminal and in need of cleansing. Central to this is the attempt to create an
entrepreneurial creative culture. The Plan states,

Under the new paradigm…jobs follow people…Key human capital building
blocks include high quality education and workforce training at all life stages,
cultural and recreational amenities, and vibrant, safe, convenient, and
environmentally sustainable neighborhoods. Similarly, cities that develop a
strong entrepreneurial culture can attract and retain footloose entrepreneurs
seeking to exploit new product and market opportunities. (City Planning
Commission, 2010, p. 9.2)

The Plan thus proposes “Rebuilding the economy on the city’s cultural legacy” (City
Planning Commission, 2010, p. 21) by emphasizing the city’s potential to cultivate the
creative industries and cultural economy. Creative workers and artists are valued for
“their propensity to create neighborhood clusters of activity,” where it is emphasized
that “In New Orleans, many traditional arts and cultural expressions are historically
rooted in neighborhoods” (City Planning Commission, 2010, p. 5.32). Thus, the Master
Plan aims toward a rationality of city space that helps to cultivate and nurture the
creativity of diverse neighborhood spaces and to entrepreneurialize them for both
economic as well as cultural and social aims.

There are four different techniques called forth in the Master Plan that aim to
produce neighborhood as a site of governing creative and entrepreneurial post-Katrina
subjects of equity: The Neighborhood Participation Program (NPP), neighborhood
audits, district planners, and the construction of design guidelines and zoning policies.
Neighborhood Participation Program (NPP). Initiated through the City Council and the City Planning Commission, the NPP provides training and capacity building as well as financial resources to those neighborhood organizations that undergo a process of recognition to become part of the Neighborhood Participation Program. The program aims to effectively bring neighborhoods into a network of governing. It is argued in the Master Plan that creating an NPP will not only help to create more active forms of citizenship and citizen engagement, but, in so doing, it will also help to resolve the social inequities and injustices that were made manifest during Katrina.

District Councils and the Planner. The Master Plan’s new spatialization of the city envisions the city as separated into new districts, governed by district councils and a district planner that work in concert with neighborhood organizations participating in the NPP. Thus, the district council and planner play key roles in mediating the interests of city government, business, neighborhood organizations, and individual residents. In so doing, the district planner plays a technical role in constituting the neighborhood as a site of governing as well as in weaving that neighborhood into the larger city whole.

Neighborhood Audits. Another key component of creating neighborhood as a site of governing in the Master Plan is its recommendation of neighborhood audits to be conducted by neighborhood groups and residents on a voluntary basis. These “audit walks” include neighbors walking a particular route and noting issues of concern, which they would then forward to the District Councils and/or the City Planning Commission to facilitate targeted resources and improvements (City Planning Commission, 2010, p. 23). The rationale behind the audits is that they will engage residents to take a more active role in neighborhood improvements and will help the City Planning Commission
to become aware of needed improvements that are specifically desired by neighborhood residents themselves, or, in other words, to foster citizen engagement. What is interesting about the New Orleans’ Master Plan’s neighborhood audits is that they make residents the “experts,” or at least quasi-experts, in creating techniques and calculative regimes for managing their neighborhoods (with guided support from the city and district and, particularly, digital software to aid in the audit). They are constituted as self-responsible liberal subjects of the neighborhood. Again, this governmentalizing move must be understood within a post-Katrina rationality—it draws in those neighborhoods that had hitherto been excluded, marginalized, and left to waste (Bauman, 2004) and reaffiliates them into networks of power (Osborne & Rose, 1999).

Design Guidelines, Zoning, and “Quality of Life.” Though the Master Plan does not mandate specific aesthetic design guidelines, it includes very detailed suggestions for such guidelines. A key discourse running throughout the Master Plan that underpins the proposed design guidelines is that of “quality of life.” As the Master Plan states, “Good neighborhoods are the foundation of urban quality of life, and quality of life is the foundation that makes cities successful in the 21st Century” (City Planning Commission, 2010, p. 5.2). The Master Plan’s suggestions are all tinged with a post-Katrina rationality—they aim at producing active citizens and a community that overcomes its racial, class, and spatial disparities. It includes specifications for standards aimed to “extend the walkability, treelined streets, lively facades on public sidewalks, mixed used energy” of neighborhoods. The Plan suggests that such design and zoning will help to “build community in the midst of diversity,” where “the city can
take advantage of the proximity in which people of different races, incomes, and ethnic backgrounds live…to create a renewed sense of community” (City Planning Commission, 2010, p. 14.23).

Neighborhood in these four examples above is working as a technology of governing not in a disciplinary sense, as in Foucault’s (1995) understanding of disciplinary power but rather more in terms of his (1990) conception of biopower. That is, neighborhood is figured as a technology for producing and managing the life of a (neighborhood) population in a productive and creative sense. It constitutes a kind of spatial power that is more aimed at structuring and organizing the movements of free, self-regulating, liberal subjects than at disciplining space and citizens (Bennett, 1995; Foucault, 1990, 1995, 2003b; Joyce, 2003; Rose, 1999). They aim toward the production of the species, life, and healthy populations by helping to guide particular behaviors, actions, values, and lifestyles through carefully designed and zoned space. In so doing, however, there is also the potential that those behaviors, actions, values, lifestyles, and individuals who threaten the health of the population in this sense are also being zoned out as well. As Dianne Harris (2005) notes, post-war suburban architecture also drew heavily on a discourse of “quality of life.” Harris suggests that these were code words for a particular classed and raced conception of space that assumed quality of life was constituted by the exclusion of racial Others from an ostensibly white space (pp. 25-27). The quality of life discourse invoked by the Master Plan is perhaps also code for constituting a particular kind of raced and classed geography, however it aims explicitly at bringing together bodies from different races, classes, and neighborhoods. It thus inflects the spatial dynamics of quality of life with a
kind of post-Katrina multiculturalism and discourse of equity and diversity. On the one hand, this is a kind of neoliberalization of racialized space—it turns cultural spaces of racial struggle and history into “character” studies indicative more of lifestyles and consumption patterns than of politics (Giroux, 2004; Goldberg, 2009). On the other hand, however, there is also the cultural memory of Katrina subsisting within these spaces that creates the potential for a kind of politicized excess that infuses quality of life with the events of political struggle over racial justice. It is precisely the tension between these two potentialities that I argue _Treme_ navigates. Before turning to the series, however, it is necessary to highlight the ways in which the Master Plan’s construction of neighborhood as a site of governing and its discourse of equity intertwines with its promotion of the media industry as a key industry through which the city might plan its neighborhoods’ equitable futures.

**Media Industries**

A major component of the 2010 Master Plan is a section on “how we prosper.” This section includes principles and guidelines that lay the groundwork for the urban planning side of business promotion and economic development, where a future 2030 New Orleans is envisioned as “a prosperous city with an entrepreneurial edge” (City Planning Commission, 2010, p. 3). The cultural economic practices of New Orleanians are central concerns, and these practices are envisaged as bound up with neighborhood spatiality. The Master Plan stresses the significance of a neighborhood based arts approach, where “City support for the arts can be most effective at the neighborhood level, nurturing the grass-roots cultural and artistic expression unique to New Orleans and ensuring its continuation into the future” (City Planning Commission, 2010, p. 78).
The 2010 Master Plan’s treatment of the cultural economy is significantly different than that of the *New Century New Orleans* Master Plan. Though the latter also acknowledges the importance of “arts, recreation and culture,” these are tied primarily to community welfare and opportunities for the city’s children—“arts, recreation, and culture are not only vital to the welfare of our community, they are essential to the development of our future—our children” (City Planning Commission, 1992, p. 15). The value placed on culture here is indicative of a kind of cultural and urban planning policy that is bound up more with high culture and “the arts” in a state-based patronage system that views art as worthwhile in itself (Miller & Yúdice, 2002). This is not to say that arts and culture were rationalized as devoid of economic value altogether in this earlier Master Plan—it called for drawing on the arts to produce cultural tourism. However, this is a more limited sense in which New Orleans’ cultural and artistic assets are seen as potential capital. There is a notable difference in how the 2010 Plan refers to culture as “a way of life,” invoking Raymond Williams’ (1958) treatment of the term. This broader, more anthropological sense of culture thus places a value on a much wider and diverse array of artistic and cultural practices beyond those conceived by the earlier Master Plan. Indeed, it values life itself as a cultural practice that can be converted into capital value.\(^{30}\)

The promotion of the film, television, and digital media industries constitutes a guiding strategy of the 2010 Master Plan’s vision of how to maximize the entrepreneurial potentials of New Orleans’ citizens. Noting the significance of the city’s burgeoning television and film industry, the Master Plan suggests that the city will need to provide a full range of production services in order to develop a sustainable local
industry. It problematizes the city’s tax incentives as a short-term fix, and it calls for expanding media industries through “marketing, incentives, workforce development programs, and professional contacts” (City Planning Commission, 2010, p. 9.33). In other words, the plan is to entrepreneurialize the local population to service the needs of the media production industry. In this sense, it echoes the calls for many local activists—calling for a local, homegrown industry not just “Hollywood handouts” (Mayer & Goldman, 2010), as it suggests “Without home-grown production and its own large-scale production studios, the film industry will not become rooted in New Orleans” (City Planning Commission, 2010, p. 9.17).

Zoning policies and urban planning of space as a means of creating, attracting, and maintaining these creative entrepreneurs are key strategies proposed for embedding the film industry in New Orleans. The Plan calls for the need to “ensure that there is adequate space for affordable commercial property for start-up companies throughout the city” and to “Promote the development of ‘cool spaces’ in lively areas of the city, preferred by young, tech-savvy entrepreneurs” (City Planning Commission, 2010, p. 9.41). This creative cities mentality points to how space is imagined as capable of being engineered to produce entrepreneurial and creative subjectivities. Specifically, the Plan invokes the “best practices” approach of other creative cities by calling for the creation of creative clusters (Porter, 2004). Centered largely in the Warehouse District and the Lower Garden District, the Master Plan promotes further developing the area to link already existing media industries in these neighborhoods and to cluster them together to create productive sociality for innovation and invention. This is evident in the recent building of “Tech Quarter,” which was subsequently renamed to the Intellectual
Property Building, a creative media building that houses primarily digital media services. The aim is for the building to extend into and network with the film quarter, which is primarily located on Prytania Street in the Lower Garden District (this is where *Treme*’s production headquarters is located) to create a new cluster that Greater New Orleans Inc. president Michael Hecht proposes calling the “New Carre” (“Welcome to Greater New Orleans 2.0,” n.d.).

Like the discourse of neighborhood, the entrepreneurialized creative workers needed to service the emerging media industries are rationalized in biopolitical terms, where “human capital” and “entrepreneurial culture” are posed as “building blocks” to creative subjectivities. Again, creative subjectivity is highly tied to neighborhood spatiality, as suggested by the way in which the “human capital building blocks” depend upon linking education and workforce training to cultural and recreational amenities that are produced within “vibrant, safe, convenient, and environmentally stable neighborhoods” (City Planning Commission, 2010, p. 77). So too, the building blocks of entrepreneurial culture depend on creating “appropriately designed and priced physical space” that can create “opportunities for networking and collaboration” and thus foster “a risk-oriented community” (City Planning Commission, 2010, p. 77). Nigel Thrift (2008) identifies these architectural spaces as performative buildings that are intended to manipulate time and space to intensify social interaction that promotes innovation and invention (p. 44).

Media is also envisioned as serving another essential function in the 2010 Master Plan—city branding. The Plan suggests that historic neighborhoods and cultural practices can be marketed to film and TV production industries, which, in turn, can help
to market the city to potential tourists and investors. Again, a post-Katrina rationality is invoked here to rebrand the city in terms of its cultural and ethnic diversity—

New Orleans’ historic elements should be marketed to the film and media industries. Images of New Orleans in media such as TV and film will in turn serve to further advertise the city’s unique historic character. New Orleans’ *ethnic and cultural heritage is as much a part of its uniqueness and identity today as its physical and architectural heritage.* (City Planning Commission, 2010, p. 6.11, emphasis is mine)

Thus, the goals of the Master Plan’s various spatial policies aim to create the potential for media productions that can represent the city not as a kind of disembodied caricature of the French Quarter and the well-worn representational taxonomy of its romanticized Creole culture; rather, they are aimed at pointing media productions to represent those ethnic identities and cultural heritages that are “off the beaten path,” those cultures that go beyond those that have been valued by historic preservationists, developers, and the like in the past. In other words, they aim to literally and materially point media industries precisely to areas like the Tremé. I thus now turn specifically to the spatial practices of *Treme,* where I endeavor to elucidate how the complex intertwining between these rationalities of neighborhood urban planning, equity, and the practices of media operate as a spatial practice to rebuild the city within a post-Katrina rationality.

**Treme and Tremé**

The 2010 Master Plan lays the groundwork for gathering discourses that produce a rationality of neighborhoods tied to a post-Katrina discourse of equity and hinged on the entrepreneurial and creative capacities of media industries. It is thus to an
extent this rationality that makes possible a production like *Treme*. More so, however, I argue in this section that *Treme* is also a central node holding together a whole network of relations that brings together the three crucial areas from the 2010 Master Plan—equity, neighborhoods, and media industries. Ultimately, it offers one mechanism through which the principles, rationalities, and spatiality of the Plan are put into practice. Below, I focus on five of *Treme*’s significant spatial practices that work toward accomplishing these aims: on-location shooting; local hiring; relationships to tourism and gentrification; philanthropy and charity; and what I am calling neighborliness.

**On-Location Shooting**

The *Treme* production’s on-location shooting is a form of spatial practice that implements each of the Master Plan’s three aims of equity, neighborhood, and entrepreneurialization through media and creative industries. In this section, I argue *Treme*’s aim to shoot in every neighborhood in New Orleans both demonstrates and actualizes an equitable approach to the city that privileges the right of every neighborhood to return. The production’s shooting practices bring previously marginalized neighborhoods, like the Tremé, into a network of affiliation that provides resources and techniques for neighborhood governance and participation that makes rebuilding realizable. The on-location shooting practices also encourage entrepreneurialization by providing the resources through which neighborhoods, and neighbors, can become potential sites of mediation. Taken together, these spatial practices render *Treme* a technology for producing New Orleans and its neighborhoods in terms of the post-Katrina rationality that is embodied in the Master Plan.
When I spoke to location manager Virginia McCollum about where *Treme* filmed, she showed me a map in the main production room that had a pin in each of the locations they had filmed so far. Admittedly, the map was impressive, revealing that there was filming in almost every neighborhood in the city as well as in many surrounding parishes. Gesturing to the map, McCollum suggested she hoped to shoot in every area in the city, stating, “We’ve taken this show into neighborhoods in the city that I think probably a lot of New Orleanians have never been to” (personal communication, March 15, 2011). Her comments suggest she sees it as a kind of responsibility to represent each and every part of the city, where doing so makes not only those outside of New Orleans aware of these spaces and places and the practices contained within them, but the production also renders them visible to other New Orleanians. This desire to include every neighborhood echoes the Master Plan’s desire for an equitable approach to city planning, where each neighborhood becomes valued for its distinctiveness. In filming in these neighborhoods, *Treme*’s emphasis on equity in terms of neighborhood representation also works toward implementing the post-Katrina rationality of neighborhoods within this equitable rationality of inclusiveness and diversity. *Treme*, in filming in each and every one of these locations, helps to make possible the Master Plan’s aim of every neighborhood returning. It serves as a reminder that these neighborhoods are still here and that they have potential value. But it also provides some degree of an economic stimulus as well as a promotion to potential investors, tourists, and, significantly, future media productions, that helps bring that value into fruition.
Although on-location shooting plays a tremendous role in how the producers understand the series as being able to maintain a commitment to representing an “authentic” New Orleans, this desire for authenticity also provides effects that help to renew and revitalize the neighborhoods in which they film in more material ways as well. Significantly, within the contours of the post-Katrina rationality of the Master Plan, it does so not by imposing a particular cultural creativity on these spaces, but, rather, in trying to capture the creativity that is already there. Writer and story editor for the show Lolis Eric Elie, elaborates on the centrality of on-location shooting to creating an “authentic” show, suggesting,

There is this sense that if you get it right, it will ring true even if people can’t explain why they are attracted to it, and that’s why being in New Orleans is so crucial. Certainly, if you moved us to L.A., we’d remember some things, get on the phone, Google fly back, but I think it adds in ways that even we as writers don’t even understand or articulate how…small but immeasurable…ways.

(personal communication, March 15, 2011)

Elie suggests that these immeasurables are borne in the crew living, breathing, and experiencing New Orleans through their daily interactions. That is, he suggests, “Our crew leaves set, they are going eating in New Orleans restaurants, going to New Orleans clubs, going to New Orleans churches, going and saying hello to a New Orleans cab driver, all of that informs the show” (personal communication, March 15, 2011). While this creates real-life experiences that the writers and crew members can bring to their role in creating each episode, it also has an impact on the communities and neighborhoods in which they film. As Overmyer explains, there are “some really
concrete positive….effects from being on the show and being connected to the show—it’s been good for their business, been good for their work, their reputations, all that sort of thing” (personal communication, March 15, 2011). Hence, *Treme* rationalizes its on-location shooting as providing the resources for more equitable rebuilding of the city’s marginalized neighborhoods.

Besides for the resources assumed to funnel back into these neighborhoods through the production’s contracting and populating of their services and businesses, *Treme’s* commitment to filming a diversity of neighborhoods throughout the city on-location plays a significant role in helping to promote these areas as potential filming spaces to future media productions as well. These practices speak more specifically to the relationship between *Treme* and Film New Orleans (formerly the New Orleans Office of Film and Video). Film New Orleans has recently been reclassified as part of the new Mayor’s Office of Cultural Economy, a move that demonstrates the city’s commitment to the cultural economy in the post-Katrina future of the city and the central role that film and media industries will play in these endeavors. Despite the Mayor’s stated commitments, however, Film New Orleans still only boasts two full time employees, the same as it had when it was first formed during the Barthelemy administration in the 1980’s. Virginia McCollum, *Treme*’s location manager notes, “They are a small office. I’ve been to small towns that have larger film offices than this.” Nevertheless she suggests, “they have been very, very responsive” (personal communication, March 15, 2011). Film New Orleans provides filmmakers with assistance in permitting, a guide to local crew and resources, help navigating tax incentives, and filming location services. It serves as a liaison mediating between
production crews, city government, police, and neighborhood residents and organizations (Film New Orleans, 2012). As discussed earlier, the Film New Orleans website highlights the city’s neighborhoods as key components to any future and present production in New Orleans. And it is to this end that *Treme*’s desire to film in any and every location that proves to be particularly useful. As McCollum noted in our interview, she in fact knew more about the filming industry than the new director of Film New Orleans, Katie Gunnell, who has relatively little experience in the industry. McCollum, born in Louisiana and a former filmmaker herself who worked as a location manager for a number of Hollywood productions in and outside of the state, thus also serves a role in sharpening the services the commission provided, particularly in relation to finding filming locations and negotiating film production practices. In her liaisoning with the Film Commission, McCollum brings this insight along with *Treme*’s sense of responsibility to filming any and every neighborhood into the Film Commission’s practices and rationalities. In so doing, it expands the scope of the areas in the city that can be sites of potential mediation and entrepreneurializable through this form of media production.

*Treme*’s on-location shooting practices are therefore key spatial practices that implement the Master Plan’s goals of utilizing media industries to entrepreneurialize formerly marginalized neighborhood spaces. By transforming these neighborhoods into valuable sites for potential media production, *Treme* networks these neighborhoods into Film New Orleans and the Mayor’s Office, producing the neighborhood as a potential site of value for future production. By affiliating neighborhoods in this way, media industry therefore is also helping to connect neighborhoods to these broader techniques
and institutions. On-location shooting is a kind of resource provided by *Treme* to marginalized neighborhoods in ways that bring them into a network of affiliation and, hence, provides an “equitable” future by making it possible the means through which every neighborhood can possibly return. Involving neighborhoods in shooting is a form of eliciting a kind of neighborhood engagement, rendering *Treme* a technology for constituting neighborhood governance in ways that are similar to those of the Neighborhood Participation Program discussed above.

Again, this is not about media imposing cultural significations from above or conjuring an existing mediated taxonomy of the city and imposing it on these neighborhoods, but, rather, trying to harness the culture that is already there and making that culture a site for potential mediation. *Treme’s* commitment to authenticity proves central here—capturing the cultural practices tied to these neighborhoods depends upon a kind of insider knowledge and connection. Location Manager Virginia McCollum’s hiring, for example—though I am certain she is more than a competent location manager—is therefore also a product of this desire for authenticity. The producers are banking on precisely this inside knowledge about the city and its potential filming locations. This therefore speaks to another of *Treme’s* spatial practices—local hiring.

**Local Hiring**

McCollum is not the only local member of the crew, but, rather, *Treme* claims to hire a variety of local crew both above and below the line. Wendell Pierce (Antoine Batiste) and John Goodman (Creighton Bernette) are the two most visible local actors, as well as Phyllis Montana LeBlanc (Desiree), who was featured in Spike Lee’s documentary *When the Levees Broke* (Lee et al., 2006). A variety of other locals also
appear as special guests, often as themselves, in various episodes. The writing team includes locals Lolis Eric Elie (who resides in Tremé), Tom Piazza, George Pelecanos, and Mari Kornhauser. In addition to these above the line workers, production manager Laura Schweigman indicated in our interview that they tried to hire as much of a local below the line production crew as possible, such that “the majority of the crew is local hires” (personal communication, March 16, 2011).

_Treme_’s local hiring practices are bound up with a post-Katrina rationality as they coalesce around the state’s cultural policy of tax incentives and the producers’ desire to create a socially responsible production and an “authentic” representation of New Orleans that responds to Katrina’s problematizations. I argue in this section that the convergences of these forces position _Treme_’s local hiring to implement the equity, neighborhood, and entrepreneurializing rationalities of the Master Plan. _Local_ hiring is rationalized as a mechanism for producing inclusiveness as a form of equity. It provides resources to the marginalized in ways that are rationalized as rectifying the exclusions made manifest during Katrina. _Treme_ participates directly in producing the local labor force through workshops and trainings that aim toward entrepreneurializing de-skilled and under-skilled labor. These efforts are rationalized in terms of corporate social responsibility where the market (i.e. media production) provides the resources to those who have been most thwarted by the Katrina event. Hiring locally therefore implements the Master Plan’s aims for the media industry to serve as a post-Katrina entrepreneurializing strategy for the marginalized through spatially informed cultural policy. _Treme_’s local hiring and training provides marketized solutions to revitalizing the neighborhood in light of the lack of governmentally supported funding,
infrastructure, and technical support. So too, this equitable inclusiveness is aimed at entrepreneurializing not just individual laborers, but also at harnessing the living labor of the neighborhood as a whole. This is carried out through the hiring of extras, musicians, local politicians, and other real-life and recognizable (within those “in the know,” at least) New Orleanians whom the producers call forth to embody the “authenticity” of the neighborhood. It is precisely this kind of vernacular living labor of Treme’s media neighborhood that the Master Plan aims to cultivate as a post-Katrina alternative to the creative city—i.e. one that is directly productive of meaning and value from the cultural and creative practices indigenous to the neighborhood.

Louisiana’s motion picture tax incentive program provides an additional 5% tax credit to the 30% filming credit for local hires. Lolis Eric Elie suggests “I am certain HBO is saying, yes I want that 5%” as a reason for why the production aims toward local hiring (personal communication, March 15, 2011). The total tax incentive credits claimed by Treme for its first season of filming are listed below.

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<th>Louisiana Expenditures</th>
<th>Louisiana Payroll</th>
<th>Louisiana Expenditures Tax Credits</th>
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Table 1 Total Tax Credits Claimed by Treme (Louisiana Entertainment, email communication, 2011).

As the table shows, Treme claimed over $9 million in tax credits, over $500,000 of which was for “payroll tax credits,” or local hiring. Executive Producer Eric Overmyer, however, argued that, “I don't think the tax incentives have anything to do
with [HBO’s] support for the show. Yet, he followed up that comment with, “[tax incentives] make it good for us, our ratings haven't been sky high...[HBO] would have made this anyway...It didn't hurt, it's a plus...It might get us an extra year, it might keep us out a little longer” ” (personal communication, March 15, 2011). Thus, Overmyer’s sense is that HBO would have supported the show anyway, but that the ratings nevertheless perhaps played an important role in ensuring the series was renewed in its second and third seasons.

What remains significant, though, is that for *Treme*, perhaps more so than other productions in the city, the political economic motivations spurred by the state’s tax incentive program more clearly align with its cultural agenda as well in terms of the producers’ commitment to creating an “authentic” representation of New Orleans within a post-Katrina rationality (i.e. one that they hope will counter to be what they and many others believe is a long history of negative, stereotypical, and inauthentic representations of the city in other film and television productions as well as the depiction of the city after Katrina in journalistic accounts). As Lolis Eric Elie stated, local hiring is also an aesthetic practice that services the story, such that if “for day players, for cultural folks, you know you've got some Mardi Gras Indians, we are gonna try to find Indians, gonna try to find musicians, real carpenters” (personal communication, March 15, 2011). But these are practical and not only aesthetic concerns as well, as Laura Schweigman suggests that since *Treme* is “making a show about a city...you want people that have local relationships, that know how to work on a team, know their way around the city, know vendors” (personal communication, March 16, 2011). Eric Overmyer suggests that local hiring is also a matter of social
responsibility, stating, “I think there is a sense of obligation also to the community in terms of hiring the crew” (personal communication, March 15, 2011).

Yet, even *Treme* feels the crunch for trained professionals. Schweigman noted that the amount of filming in the city makes it difficult to find trained production crew that is local. Thus, *Treme* has initiated training efforts to bring up crew. For example, they held a production assistant training in coordination with Film New Orleans and other local media production organizations in the city that provide training. As Schweigman sees it, this is not only beneficial to *Treme*, but it is also a contribution that *Treme* makes to the community. She suggested that *Treme* does what they can to ensure the crew “have all of the tools they need to be good at their jobs…You want to extend the crew base…to have quality crew…to just keep expanding that so people have an opportunity, especially youth” (personal communication, March 16, 2011). It is precisely in providing this kind of “socially responsible” job training and opportunity for rising through the ranks that makes *Treme*’s production practices play such an integral role in putting into practice the goals of the Master Plan. It stimulates as well as makes possible the production of local creative workers the city is banking its future on in an era in which education and state funding for that education, particularly higher education, is increasingly out of reach for much of the population.

In addition to providing training and bringing up production crew that entrepreneurializes individual laborers as media workers, *Treme* also helps to entrepreneurialize, as well as harness, the living labor of the neighborhood as a whole. It does so through its outreach to local neighborhood groups, individuals, and locations to appear on the show as extras, special guests, as well as recurring characters to play
themselves or characters similar to their own. These practices in a sense harness the collective potentiality of the neighborhood, helping to implement the tactical approach to urban planning embodied in the creative placemaking rationality of the Master Plan. They both stimulate and capture the authenticity and distinctive cultural practices—even as they are played out in the quotidian aspects of daily life—that can generate both meaning and value for the neighborhood. *Treme* does so not in a way that imposes a culture or media image from above, but rather aims to stimulate the cultural creativity of the daily practices of residents in the neighborhood *habitus*. These practices make clear a kind of distinction from previous eras of urban planning and renewal that depended upon media industry. In *Treme*, the media industry is calling upon, as well as helping to provide resources to, the everyday and living labor of neighborhoods to effectively brand and render the neighborhood as both socially and economically productive rather than media imposing a set of meanings (whether in the form of characters or storylines and so forth) or aiming to cleanse or exclude particular neighborhood spaces.

Echoing the rationalities of equitable inclusiveness of the Master Plan, location manager Virginia McCollum suggests, “We try to be very inclusive. I think it is absolutely wrong to go into somebody’s neighborhood and exclude them…none of us tolerate that. We all welcome the relationships we have with neighborhoods and the people there” (personal communication, March 15, 2011). In these efforts, *Treme* has created a unique position, titled “specialty casting,” whose job it is to find, connect, and negotiate with the local community for casting and other purposes. Karen Livers, a local
actress and historical theater activist, holds the position of specialty casting director. In our interview, Livers stated,

First I’d like to say that my title as specialty casting, I don’t know if any other film company has ever had a title like that, but when Treme came they knew that they really needed a connection, a liaison from their production company to the city. (personal communication, March 15, 2011)

Livers very much sees her position in ethical terms, as a social responsibility to the community to “guarantee that people from New Orleans will be connected and involved” in Treme (personal communication, March 15, 2011). Again, this is also related to the aim for authenticity, as she suggests that the experience of Mardi Gras Indians and “the whole Creolization of culture” is something that can’t be faked, “you have to get the real thing.” Her job, then, is to ensure that in each scene, they have “the real thing.” Livers’ job seems to be similar to that of the district planner, as outlined in the Master Plan—to enlist the engagement, knowledge, affects, and so forth of neighborhood residents, organizations, and practices and to solicit their engagement in the media industry in ways that are imagined to transform, or at least impact, to a degree, the culture of production.

One example of how Treme aims to capture “the real thing” is in its hiring of extras. Livers suggests, for example, that she ensures that “if we’re going to Bullet’s, [we] use the people that go to Bullet’s every Tuesday that hear Kermit [Ruffins] play.” She views this also in terms of a social responsibility to provide jobs. As she notes, This neighborhood, I know very well and I know that we should leave twenty slots for extras blank because there are twenty people somewhere around who
will need a job and when we walk the neighborhood…you get them and they come out. (personal communication, March 15, 2011)

This too, has made *Treme* seem more palatable, more neighborly, in the eyes of residents, whom Livers suggests feel they have a part to play in the series. Initially, she noted, residents were concerned the series only represented a part of the city, not its whole. Her job, then, is also to ensure that it is the whole that makes its way on screen. Hiring and networking with neighbors to provide extras is one way in which she aims to achieve that goal. The specialty casting of extras is thus one way the series helps to produce a kind of post-Katrina rationality of equity.

In addition to hiring extras, *Treme* also networks with local cultural organizations to capture “the real thing” in the form of distinctive, and especially racialized and neighborhood-tied, cultural practices. A myriad of examples of the local and vernacular cultural practices embodied in these cultural organizations are on display in any individual *Treme* episode. From brass bands to Mardi Gras Indians, Baby Dolls to social aid and pleasure clubs, *Treme* makes an effort to hire the real individuals and groups behind these neighborhood based New Orleanian traditions. On the day I visited the set, they were filming in the Tremé at Mother’s Lounge. It was supposed to be Mardi Gras Day, and Karen Livers had made sure that many of the people at the Lounge were the people that would have been there on that Mardi Gras day. In particular, she had ensured that the Baby Doll group in the scene that day was the actual Baby Doll group that would have been at Mother’s Lounge on that particular Mardi Gras, stating “there are other Baby Doll groups, but only these Baby Dolls will be at this club” (personal communication, March 15, 2011).³⁹ Livers told me how the head of
this particular Baby Dolls club in the 7th ward had passed away just around the time that the scene was supposed to be filming. Though this history was not part of the narrative of the story, she argued having the Baby Dolls here at this place and this time, being part of the scene, obliquely signifies this story, this history, and pays tribute to the significance of this cultural practice.

In addition to extras and these kinds of vernacularly creative neighborhood groups, *Treme* also draws heavily on musicians in its local hiring efforts. *Treme’s* promotion of New Orleans’ musicians and music aligns with the city’s strategy to utilize jazz revival as a way to rebuild the city. As Porter (2009) notes, jazz has been harnessed as a practical vehicle for using culture as a resource to generate the funds and will to rebuild, with both potentially hopeful forms of resistance to dominant rebuilding strategies as well as more insidious, neoliberal consequences. As perhaps the primary and most visible mechanism for promoting New Orleans music and musicians at the present conjuncture, *Treme* represents a significant mechanism for helping to implement this strategy. Moreover, *Treme* helps to create convergences between the film/TV industries and the music industries as well. This implicate the way in which musicians understand their work, and, consequently, expands the ways in which music can be employed in the rebuilding and rebranding of the city. In so doing, it helps to entrepreneurialize musicians in ways that align with the Master Plan’s aims for drawing upon media as an entrepreneurial engine of equitable and creative neighborhood culture. But it also harnesses the living labor embodied in “authentic” New Orleans music for these purposes as well.

An article in New Orleans’ *Offbeat* magazine that covers the music scene in the
city refers to the effect of *Treme* on local musicians as being “touched by *Treme*” (Rawls, 2011). The article suggests that though the series might not get each individual artist featured on the show new gigs, it has been valuable in connecting them to networks of relations that have “intangible” effects. *Treme* producers work specifically to ensure that musicians featured on the show reap financial benefits and that the money does not go instead directly to labels. As a result,

Those who want to be touched by *Treme* have become more business-conscious. One artist cut an album hoping to have a song licensed from it by the show. Others now have incentive to get their publishing in order, which represents a consciousness shift in a city that has treated albums like souvenirs to sell off the bandstand. (Rawls, 2011)

This speaks to the way in which the series invokes a shift in how artists understand their relationship to cultural practices and begets a possible shift in how individuals understand the possibilities for entrepreneurializing these practices. In other words, it helps to constitute a post-Katrina entrepreneurial subject. As Karen Livers noted,

Art got better here, jobs got better for artists here I think after Katrina…artists…had never understood the Art Council’s grants. Now [they] understand the importance of filling out an application and getting one because it helps them get gigs…I think it helped the artists become more aware of other possibilities outside of just gigging and other ways to gig. (personal communication, March 15, 2011)

No doubt, one of those other ways of gigging is to network into the television and film industries—to utilize one’s skills in the great deal of film and television production
happening throughout the city. Given *Treme*’s desire to cast a wide net to cultural workers and neighborhoods throughout the city, it offers a particularly significant vehicle for helping to bring artists into this rationality and it also connects them up to and networks them into the relations of film and television production happening in New Orleans. In so doing, *Treme* helps to bring extras, creative practitioners, musicians, and neighborhoods as a whole into a network of relations that furthers the entrepreneurializing aims of the Master Plan. *Treme* might be understood as providing the technical resources, for example, of implementing a particular way for the media cluster between digital and film/TV industries to be connected up to these more marginalized neighborhoods by networking with the music industry. Again, it is significant that it does so not by imposing industries onto these spaces or places, but in trying to harness the interconnections (through, for example, its cultural mediators like Karen Livers) that are made possible by the “authentic” cultural practices and creative placemaking already at work in these neighborhoods.

In addition to musicians, extras, and cultural practitioners, *Treme* also hires local individuals who often play themselves, or characters close to themselves, in the series. Jacques Morial (son to New Orleans first African American Mayor, Dutch Morial, and brother of former Mayor Marc Morial), for example, appears sporadically in the series where he plays himself. In one episode, he serves as an advisor of sorts to DJ Davis MacAlary who is considering running an ironic campaign for City Council. In the episode, Morial voices many of the same concerns that he did in his real life activism, including criticisms of the city’s closure of public housing and Charity Hospital, the lack of affordable housing, and permanent displacement (Donze, 2010). Additionally,
Oliver Thomas, who is a former City Councilperson forced to resign in disgrace after being convicted on corruption charges, plays a character close to his own in a recurring part on the show in Season 2 (Elie, 2011a). Though he goes by a different name and his corruptions are slightly different than those in real life, Thomas essentially lives out his own disgrace on the series, perhaps in an effort to make amends for his wrongdoings. Various other examples like these abound, and even each of the main characters based on a real-life New Orleanian, many of whom often make special appearances on the show (such as Davis Rogan, who serves as the model for the Davis MacAlary character) or are contracted out to consult for the series to ensure the authenticity of the characters (D. Walker, 2010a).

According to Livers, the authenticity that is provided by the local hiring of extras, musicians, cultural practitioners, consultants, and local personalities produces something “magical,”

You can get extras to go in there and they’re going to have a fantastic time, but it’s not going to be like the people who sit in Bullet’s every Tuesday, and when I say every Tuesday, I mean every Tuesday in the same spot to hear Kermit play. That’s magical…some nights you can be there and the whole club is on the same rhythm and the same, same everything, and you just know people, this is their ritual…if we’re filming at a club…I’ll go and visit that club and talk to people and ask them if they want to be extras. (personal communication, March 15, 2011).

Virginia McCollum echoes these sentiments, suggesting getting folks who live in the neighborhood where they are filming to be involved,
Lends a reality to it that you might not get otherwise, like taking somebody from someplace else and saying, “stand on this corner and look normal, look natural.” You get somebody used to standing on that corner and they really look natural, and they are happy to be a part of it. (personal communication, March 15, 2011)

*Treme*, in effect, aims to capture the living labor (Hardt & Negri, 2000; Marx, 1973; Read, 2003) and the affects of everyday life in the neighborhood. As Jason Read (2003) notes, Marx defines living labor in rhetorical opposition to the dead, abstract labor made compulsory by capital, but also as “activity, as creative power, as the pure power to create the new…This labor produces not only things—objects—it is also productive of needs and sociality…It is this power that capital must utilize” (p. 80). Though capital depends upon living labor, they also exist in an antagonistic relationship, where living labor always threatens to disrupt and overflow beyond that which capital can harness and measure to produce value. The desire to capture this creativity, as living labor, and put it to work not only for economic value but also for social purposes to rectify the harms of Katrina can be gleaned in the aim of the creative placemaking rationality of the Master Plan. It aims to find a way for capturing the creative vitality of living labor that is indigenous to neighborhoods, and the productive sociality that these neighborhoods embody, rather than trying to impose an already existing form of valued creativity onto that space. *Treme*’s local hiring offers up one technique for capturing this living labor—it instrumentalizes and harnesses living labor by entrepreneurializing it, enabling its creative potential to be transformed into value by the media industry as well as city government. Again, this creative placemaking produced out of living labor embodies a post-Katrina rationality—it is not a spectacular
creativity that is being captured, but the daily, embodied practices of those raced bodies most affected by Katrina. In this context, media as a strategy for urban renewal is not being drawn upon to invest space with an imposed meaning and logic that comes from above, i.e. from the culture industries themselves. Rather, *Treme* works biopolitically to cultivate a logic of space that emerges from the local itself, extracting value from the living labor of social life itself (Hardt & Negri, 2000; Lazzarato, 1996; Terranova, 2004).

Although *Treme’s* desire to hire locally and to include those living within their neighborhoods and to give them a voice and a stake in the production are no doubt laudable efforts that stand in stark contrast to many media productions, including many in New Orleans, there is also an undoubtedly neoliberal element here where culture—whether in the form of everyday practices of extras, musicians, or in other kinds of creative work—is being harnessed as a resource for profit in a post-Fordist market. Though the individuals who get the work profit to some degree from this work through a paycheck at the end of the day, it is largely the industry that capitalizes on this labor—i.e. HBO has much more to gain from its representations of authenticity than those authentic individuals (as I discuss in the following chapter). Still, Karen Livers suggests *Treme’s* efforts to locally hire have spillover effects, arguing,

The show has helped up the game financially…we pay extras better than any other venue around…Second liners and brass bands weren’t making as much as they make now because we set a standard…because now you are hiring a group that has been on *Treme*. (personal communication, March 15, 2011)
Appearing on *Treme* thus helps cultural workers network into other potential avenues of employment by featuring their talents, but it also provides them with a steady paycheck that allows them to say no to other gigs they might otherwise be forced to take to survive (Rawls, 2011). This opens the potential that these subjects might take their checks and use them not to further entrepreneurialize but, rather, to refuse work. This kind of mentality is captured in an exchange between DJ Davis and Kermit Ruffins in Season 1, where Davis asks Ruffins, who is a trumpet player, “Do you mean all you want to do is get high, play some trumpet, and barbecue in New Orleans your whole life?” to which Ruffins responds, “that’ll work” (Season 1, Episode 1).

As Lolis Eric Elie noted in our interview, however, the salary provided to most of the cast that Karen Livers connects with the series—whether as extras, cultural practitioners, consultants, musicians, or special guests—will not be a sustainable one. He suggests, “We want to strengthen the culture by hiring people to do what they do, [but] ain’t no Mardi Gras Indians getting rich by being extras on this show, but they’re getting a couple of extra dollars and they are getting some praise” (personal communication, March 15, 2011). Elie followed up this with the argument that, What is incredible about the community, particularly the Mardi Gras Indians is that they don’t rely on no white folks or no middle class black folks to…get what they’re doing, and because they have been so oblivious to the outside taste, the culture remains strong and *the outside has come to them.* (personal communication, March 15, 2011)

*Treme* therefore does not merely provide financial means to stimulate these cultural practices, but rather, it plays a broader role in connecting the vernacular cultural
practices of Baby Dolls, Mardi Gras Indians, local brass bands, and so forth to a
Hollywood production that, in turn, connects these practices up with a wider and more
dispersed network of actors and institutions. In so doing, it *Treme* plays a role in
making materially possible the persistence of these practices in the post-Katrina city in
ways that are consistent with the tactical urban planning rationality embodied in the
Master Plan. *Treme* acts as a technology for encouraging creative placemaking by
entrepreneurializing vernacular cultural practices already embedded in neighborhood
culture, networking them to structures of power, and harnessing the neighborhood as an
economic and social space of potential value.

Elie’s latter statement, above, in this context rings as particularly poignant—
“the outside has come to them.” What are the implications of this fact, that indeed, the
outside finds value in and aims to network with the vernacular practices of Mardi Gras
Indians, Baby Dolls, and so forth in New Orleans’ city streets and neighborhoods? One
of the ways to approach this question is in considering how *Treme* calls forth spatial
practices in its relationship to tourism and gentrification, where the embodied
spatialities and mobilities of tourism and gentrification speak to the particular ways in
which the outside comes in.

**Tourism and Gentrification**

*Treme*’s relationship to tourism also constitutes another significant spatial
practice that works to implement the aims and rationalities of the Master Plan.
Encouraging tourism to spaces off the beaten path is a key goal of the Master Plan. So
too, the Plan aims to utilize heritage tourism to entrepreneurialize local creative
practices tied to specific neighborhood spaces and histories in a kind of holistic form of
historic preservation that targets culture. As I argue in Chapter 3, the series itself positions HBO as a kind of travel agent, connecting viewers to specific places in New Orleans and facilitating their navigation to and within the city. For the purposes of this chapter, however, I want to address more specifically how the television series helps to implement the aims of the Master Plan by promoting tourism to places beyond the well-trodden tourist map. In conjunction with its on-location shooting and local hiring within these neighborhoods, the series helps position individuals and their neighborhoods to be able to entrepreneurialize themselves and their culture, through the media industry, for this new kind of “equitable” tourist industry. However, this also risks the potential for further gentrification.

Since the airing of the series, a number of tours emerged that seek to expand the benefits of tourism beyond the beaten path to self-enterprising, diverse, and potentially creative neighborhoods that had previously been marginalized in the city’s tourism literature and promotions. This is evident especially in the tours of Tremé that emerged since the series. For example, the Preservation Resource Center in coordination with the New Orleans African American Museum (the latter of which is located in Tremé), now advertises a “Faubourg Tremé Walking Tour,” where visitors are given a map and a detailed walking guide to important current and historical spaces in the neighborhood. Visitors can choose between self-guided or guided walking tours, and organized private groups can schedule a bus tour (“Presenting the New Faubourg Tremé Tour,” 2011; Waddington, 2011). The Guardian also published a version of a walking tour of the neighborhood after the premiere of the series. Similar to the Preservation Resource Center’s tour, The Guardian’s tour directs tourists to places of historical significance in
the neighborhood but adds to these sites that are featured on the show, such as the restaurant Lil Dizzy’s (Shoard, 2011). A new, broader media themed tour, called New Orleans Movie Tours, takes visitors to sites in the city featured in various Hollywood films and television series. Modeled after similar tours in Los Angeles and other cinematic cities, the “multimedia tour...takes passengers to locations where famous movie scenes were filmed and shows them a clip from the film on site” (“Tour offers glimpse,” 2012). *Treme* and Tremé are featured on the tour, where its inclusion takes visitors beyond the spaces of most Hollywood productions in New Orleans. As a review of the tour notes, “Besides the tourist-heavy French Quarter, New Orleans Movie Tours includes stops in lesser-known neighborhoods such as Tremé and the Faubourg Marigny” (“Tour offers glimpse,” 2012), promising viewers a kind of behind the scenes look at the city that, like *Treme*, is posed as “authentic” and off the beaten path. This and the other walking tours lend insight into the specific ways in which *Treme* is a vehicle for implementing the Master Plan’s aims to expand tourism to previously marginalized neighborhoods as well as to use tourism to entrepreneurialize the creative capacity, and in this case especially the cinematic capacities, of these neighborhoods.

Additionally, following the airing of the series, Tremé emerged as a central feature of tourism promotion for the city in its various websites, magazines, and promotions in tourism-oriented magazines. For example, the 2011-2012 Official New Orleans Visitor Guide lists Tremé as fifth in “Neighborhoods and Streets of Interest,” where it references the filming of the series as a point of interest and suggests a guided tour to “fully appreciate the history of this neighborhood” (New Orleans Convention and Visitor’s Bureau, 2011). While the Official Visitor’s Guide points tourists to
relatively well-known places in the Tremé such as the Mahalia Jackson Theater in Louis Armstrong Park and the African American Museum, Delta’s Sky Magazine (Nixon, 2011) features spaces off the beaten path in the Tremé in an issue that includes a spotlight on New Orleans. The article includes highlights of neighborhoods authored by creative individuals (an author, artist, designer, television producer, and musician) from New Orleans who discuss places in their own neighborhoods. The neighborhoods highlighted include the Garden District/Uptown, French Quarter, Downtown/Warehouse District, Tremé, Marigny/Bywater, and Mid-City. These last three are relative newcomers to New Orleans’ tourist promotion (though the Marigny has a longer history of inclusion), thus reflecting a kind of post-Katrina rationality of inclusive and equitable tourism. Jazz musician Donald Harrison discusses Tremé, directing tourists to hitherto largely invisible sites of interest, such as the location of the former J&M Recording Studio (where early black soul and rock artists recorded) and the Golden Feather Mardi Gras Indian Restaurant, where the focus appears to be on the creativity of the neighborhood and its links to African American culture and history.

Moreover, the two biggest tourism marketing agencies in the city—the New Orleans Convention and Visitor’s Bureau (NOCVB) and the New Orleans Tourism and Marketing Corporation (NOTMC) now feature Tremé as a key destination site on their websites along with the French Quarter, Garden District, the Marigny/Bywater, Downtown, and the Warehouse District. The NOCVB’s page on Tremé makes specific reference to the television series, heading the page as “Tremé: History to Hollywood,” and suggesting to potential visitors, “Long before the neighborhood had its own popular HBO series, the Tremé was already heralded as a vital American landmark for African-
American and Creole culture’’ (New Orleans Convention and Visitor’s Bureau, 2012). The NOCVB’s and NOTMC’s Tremé pages both highlight the diversity of the neighborhood and its significance for black New Orleans, and they encourage visitors to go beyond Armstrong Park to discover other historically significant sites. NOTMC’s Tremé page speaks specifically to the significance of the neighborhood for the struggles of black America for social justice, suggesting Tremé is “the site of significant economic, cultural, political, social and legal events that have literally shaped the course of events in Black America for the past two centuries” (New Orleans Tourism and Marketing Corporation, 2012). Both sites emphasize black creativity, in particular, discussing the neighborhood’s musical tradition as well as links to African American crafts and artistry. These descriptions mark discourses of tourism with a distinctly post-Katrina rationality, or, in other words, with an aim to emphasize racial diversity and creativity in ways that are imagined to speak to the harms of Katrina through an equitable inclusion of creative cultural practices tied to the racialized history and memory of the marginalized.

The tourist promotions on Tremé cited here are notable not only for their seemingly post-Katrina motivated highlighting of racially diverse and creative culture of a marginalized neighborhood, but also for their absence of reference to neighborhood crime and risk. Contrast this to a 2004 copy of a Fodor’s guide to New Orleans, where Tremé (somewhat to my surprise) receives three pages of discussion that clearly states in its introduction, “Unless you are familiar with the area, visit only during the day, follow the recommended walk, and stay alert, as this is still a low-income and thus somewhat risky neighborhood” (Travis, 2004). Though some of the sites mentioned
above recommend guided tours, this is reasoned as necessary so that visitors can fully appreciate what the neighborhood has to offer, not because of their safety. This is an important distinction that marks Tremé and its residents in the post-Katrina context not as a space of danger with low-income residents but rather as a place of creativity and rich, diverse culture spawned by its diverse and creative residents.

The increases in tourism that result from the show are not something that either the city or Treme’s producers are tracking. However, the latter are paying attention to many anecdotal stories that suggest that various spaces and places, particularly within the Tremé neighborhood, are receiving a higher influx of tourists, both local and from outside the city, populating their venues. This is rationalized as beneficial to these communities because it provides them with resources to maintain their culture. In other words, Treme inspired tourism is posed as a post-Katrina strategy for neighborhoods and residents to garner the resources to rebuild and revitalize through their racially diverse cultural creativity and distinctiveness. Treme tourism is thus offered up as a spatial practice that implements the aims of the Master Plan by drawing upon the media industry to entrepreneurialize diverse and creative culture in neighborhoods that are off the beaten path. Tourism spurred by Treme therefore becomes a mechanism for putting into practice the holistic kind of historic preservation that emphasizes cultural practice aimed for in the Master Plan. Karen Livers noted,

There are places that now have tour buses pulling up to them, so that, even if it is just one night out of the week, that’s important. And if we helped to make that happen and make it better, great, and I think because I kind of know how the film industry works for our tourism, the longer this show is on the better it is
going to get for everybody and the better it gets for everybody and the show helps to say this is New Orleans, so we don’t lose that too, so we maintain that too, so we maintain some of the culture while also progressing and moving forward into the future. (personal communication, March 15, 2011)

The vision of tour buses rolling through the Tremé is likely, for some, to cause a kind of shudder in the fear that this will turn the neighborhood into a site of spectacular consumption with detrimental effects on the local culture. However, Eric Overmyer suggested that the criticism that Treme will bring in busloads of tourists to the Tremé neighborhood and consequently “ruin” it is just false. He suggested,

It’s just not true, it’s not happening, they are getting a few more visitors and I think it’s all to the good and the more people show up and these musician’s, they are more able to tour, they get more offers to tour out of town. (personal communication, March 15, 2011)

The Tremé residents I spoke to seemed to tell somewhat of a different story than Overmyer, largely in terms of the number of white faces that now seem to show up at local venues, clubs, music shows, and second lines. As Lolis Eric Elie noted,

The easiest way to count the number of tourists, and its an inaccurate one for a lot of reasons, you look at the number of white faces…at the Candlelight [Lounge] or the second lines…A friend of mine was at the Candlelight last week and she said most of the faces in there were white. (personal communication, March 15, 2011)

Likewise, Tremé resident Greg Osborne, who also runs tours in the city on the weekends, noted, “Sometimes for second lines, we get invaded.” He too admits to
helping to contribute to some of this, as on his tours if he knows there’s a particular second line, he will take the tour there. He suggests,

I bring the tour there because you know this is unique to us, I mean unique to the country, but you know this might be your only opportunity to see this…because some people are afraid of losing those traditions, especially post-Katrina because a lot of people have died or moved away so I think there is a group of local people that are like you’ve got to hang onto it even more…a lot of indigenous culture that you can’t just manufacture. (personal communication, March 15, 2011).

Elie too notes that this influx of tourists (both local and global) is part of the reality for maintaining local cultural practices in the current era, arguing, “It is difficult for business to thrive…on its local audience…the question is that in this era, how do you manage to keep these things alive and a whole lot of it is really contingent on finance” (personal communication, March 15, 2011). In the status quo, he argues, white tourist investment seems to be one of the only options. This is especially the case according to Elie because of the “disdain that New Orleans and Louisiana politicians have for our culture and the fact that they have done nothing to help people maintain their own historic neighborhoods” (personal communication, March 15, 2011). Elie makes a significant point here with regards to the city’s and state’s lack of investment in local culture—a waning of support detailed above—but it also seems to be the case that the city and state are depending upon individual, private investment through practices such as tourism and media production to take the place of this support. Politicians may indeed show a disdain for African American cultural practices, but their rhetoric also at
this moment seems to hinge on it as well in order to respond to Katrina’s problematizations of the city’s race, class, and spatial antagonisms. But the resources that are assumed to support local culture are not going to come through—and indeed for Tremé, which was seen as unworthy of investing in its local culture, never came through—public financing for the arts and culture, but, rather, through private investment—i.e. through the film and television industry and through the tourism that the industry can generate. In other words, *Treme* is working in this context as a kind of neoliberal technology of governing—an industry who, through a set of public/private partnerships (i.e. through HBO’s and Fee Nah Nay’s (*Treme*’s production company) permitting with the city, working with Film New Orleans, and so forth) helps to stimulate and make marketable forms of cultural practice that can resolve both economic and social exigencies by promoting them as sites of tourism.

This kind of private investment in local, diverse culture through heritage tourism is constitutive of what critics of tourism term “the devil’s bargain” (Rothman, 1998). As Pezzullo (2007) argues,

> Tourism is often born out of desperation and disaster, where alternative economies are scarce, historical legacies of colonialism remain grossly palpable, and oppression persists…the idea is that tourism usually promises local jobs and revenue; yet, in transforming a community or place into a “tourist attraction,” that community and place are inevitably altered, and not necessarily for the better. (pp. 36-37)

Critics of tourism and its “devil’s bargain” often cite as a major risk the potential for the commodification of culture (Pezzullo, 2007). Overmyer, however, suggests that the
things within New Orleans that will get commodified and “touristified” have already been so. Moreover, it is precisely this kind of tourism that the series aims to critique, where producers suggest that because of the production’s commitment to “authentic” culture and every neighborhood in an equitable sense that the possible benefits from the kind of tourism that *Treme* can help to spread outstrip the dangers. As Livers notes,

> With this show there is much respect for whatever, no matter what the situation or who the person is, the writers/producers are so sensitive to other people…They don’t want to you know take advantage of anybody in any kind of form or fashion. (personal communication, March 15, 2011).

As a result, in Karen Livers view, Tremé tour buses going through the neighborhood pose substantially different stakes than something like the Katrina tour, which brings tourists through neighborhoods hit hardest by the storm to show them “disaster.” She suggests,

> The Katrina tour…was a total turn off especially when you are trying to rebuild and you are sitting there in a trauma with yourself trying to just deal and you have a tour bus pulling up every day or every couple of hours saying ‘and this is a devastated house. (personal communication, March 15, 2011).

This, in fact, was a key storyline in a Season 1 episode of *Treme*, when Albert “Big Chief” Lambreaux and members of his Mardi Gras Indian tribe held a ceremony for a fellow tribe member in the Lower Ninth Ward after Lambreaux had found him dead in his house, his body having been there since Katrina. As he and his tribe chant and give a sort of funeral ritual, a bus with a “Katrina Tour” sign pulls up alongside them. The driver says, “How you doing sir? What’s this about?” in a gesture to ask Lambreaux to
give an insider’s view of New Orleans’ culture to the tourists on board. Lambreaux replies sardonically, “What’s this about?” and the driver responds, “People want to see what happened.” Disappointed, disgusted, Lambreaux commands, “Just drive away!” After hesitating for a moment, the driver, clearly recognizing that he had committed a serious offense, replies, “I’m sorry, you’re right. I’m sorry,” and he drives away. As the tour bus drives away, the camera focuses on the backs of the Indians, looking away into the distance as the bus drives on. Discussing this scene, David Simon noted,

There was overwhelming, almost pornographic curiosity about the lower ninth ward, as if it was the only place drowned by the waters. New Orleanians, black and white, recognized that the focus on a singular narrative—the poor people got left behind to drown—was very satisfying to outsiders who wanted to make a particular political point. (quoted in Poniewozik, 2010)

This suggests that the scene is less about the touristification of New Orleans’ post-Katrina neighborhoods and more particularly about the ways in which particular types of tourism position subjects in relation to the city, its devastation, and consequently result in a particular, singular, political point. Simon’s concern seems primarily with the way in which these tours fail to account for every neighborhood, and instead play into, as he says, a kind of “disaster pornography” that focuses on one particular neighborhood. His aim, then, with the series, as well as with the kind of tourism that results from the series, is to provide a more complex and complicated picture of the city as well as the effects of the storm’s devastation. In many ways, this dovetails with the aims of the Master Plan, to direct potential tourists to neighborhoods off the beaten path whose residents are then encouraged to tell their own individual stories.
Furthermore, Overmyer suggests that because *Treme* is not mainstream—it in fact averages fewer than 500,000 viewers per episode (Walker, 2011a)—it is also not likely that the kind of tourism that is emblematic of the French Quarter is likely to spread to Tremé. Rather, they are more likely to get niche tourists, similar to the niche audience for the series. However, like the kind of niche audiences solicited by today’s television executives, the contemporary tourism industry is also invested in producing niche tourism (Donald & Gammack, 2007; Morgan & Pritchard, 2006; Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2007; Novelli & Butterworth-Heinemann, 2005). Tourism boards today aim their promotions at target markets, which they solicit to tour more specific and targeted areas of cities that align more directly with tourists’ lifestyles, identities, and interests. This is linked to contemporary practices of place and destination branding, where place brands do not reflect a logic of Disneyfication, i.e. a mass homogenous branded identity, but, rather aim to cultivate a distinct and unique place brand that can captivate a specific target market (Morgan & Pritchard, 2006). Although it is likely that *Treme* is not likely to elicit swaths of tourists that the city has historically tried to attract to the French Quarter, it does seem likely that the neighborhood, especially given the new interest generated by the TV show, has a very specific role to play in new tourism efforts by the city to better target and attract niche tourists.

This suggests that the stakes of the tourism elicited by *Treme* are different than those historically tied to, for example, the French Quarter. That is, the stakes of *Treme* tourism seem to be less of a kind of Disneyfying commodification and homogenization of culture and space and more linked to the creative placemaking and post-Katrina rationalities of the Master Plan. In this sense, *Treme* tours help to constitute tourists,
neighborhoods, and residents alike in terms of their individual identities, lifestyles, and distinctive cultural practices—in other words, by their differences and uniqueness. Though I do not want to discount the significance of the potential for commodifying cultural practices and identities, what seems to be more significant about the stakes of *Treme* tourism is how it works to produce a post-Katrina subjectivity and strategy of governing. In other words, *Treme* tourism works to implement the governing aims of the Master Plan that draws upon the media industry to refigure marginalized neighborhoods as affiliated, entrepreneurial, and creative. *Treme* works to implement aims, then, that are not only economic and aimed toward commodifying cultural practices, but also in invoking cultural practices, histories, and memories that can be put to work toward particular social aims as well. The tourism spurred by *Treme* is envisaged as helping to rectify the exclusions, invisibilities, and deathly consequences made manifest by Katrina by “empowering” the local cultures that are imagined as the keys to the neighborhood’s future. These tourist practices are rationalized by *Treme*, and the Master Plan, as necessary tactics to ensure the future of local culture in post-Katrina New Orleans.

However, *Treme* tourism also poses a potential risk of gentrification. As tourists both in and outside of the city are made aware of and help to finance the vitality of these local cultural practices and their significance in relation to neighborhood space, so too does the desirability of that neighborhood go up in terms of real estate speculation. When neighborhood practices are tied to creative and artistic culture, a major risk is in driving up neighborhood rents and consequently driving out those who had made the culture unique in the first place (Sze, 2010; Zukin, 2010). Significantly in this context,
a major concern over gentrification is that it further prevents those displaced after Katrina from returning because they can no longer afford to live there. Sharon Zukin (2010) suggests, “These new spaces of consumption are powerful because they move longtime residents outside their comfort zone, gradually shifting the places that support their way of life to life supports for a different cultural community…a different kind of sociability” (p. 4).

As discussed above, Tremé has several disincentives to gentrification, and neighborhood activism around housing affordability has also helped to curtail the gentrification seen in other neighborhoods like the Marigny (Crutcher, 2010). Yet, Tremé has not been devoid of gentrification, especially in the portion of the neighborhood closest to the French Quarter, as discussed above (Barrios, 2010, p. 599; Crutcher, 2010, p. 102). The increasing influx of middle-class residents with little to no connection to the historical culture of Tremé has resulted in a number of conflicts over neighborhood character. Many of these are played out in conflicts over zoning and permitting, particularly for parades, bars, and music venues. Many of these concerns, in fact, are part of Treme’s narrative. While many Tremé residents see these cultural practices as crucial to the neighborhood’s character and preservation of local culture, many of the newer residents see these as disruptive, crime-inducing nuisances (Barrios, 2010, pp. 600-601; Crutcher, 2010; Reckdahl, 2010). Since Katrina, many of the older, poorer, and mostly African American residents have been unable to return to the Tremé, and, as a result, there has been an increase in gentrification. Thus, conflicts over neighborhood space, quality of life, character, and local cultural practices have only increased in light of these changes (Barrios, 2010, p. 601). Before Treme’s premiere,
many Tremé residents were hopeful that the show could bring positive attention to the neighborhood, but they were also fearful that such attention could also have gentrifying effects that would drive up rents (Reckdahl, 2010). Louis Charbonnet, owner of the Charbonnet mortuary, a key institution in the neighborhood with deep roots and connections to the neighborhood’s jazz culture, was quoted in *The Times Picayune* stating, “I just hope it’s not a landrush…if the show’s a success, then the neighborhood will be popping” (Reckdahl, 2010).

Those working with *Treme* that I spoke with, however, seemed relatively unconcerned about the potential for gentrification in the Tremé neighborhood. When I asked Lolis Eric Elie about the potential for the series to influence gentrification, he argued, “people keep asking me if it’s becoming more gentrified. I think it’s been going on for the past fifteen years.” He also suggested,

> A lot of reasons these houses have been redone is basically because I have a job that allows me to borrow money, and more money…at a certain point you need major work. So I don’t really see any way forward but gentrification. But then in a broader sense this is all cyclical, white flight is followed by white return, which will be followed by black return eventually…because white return helps to make areas trendy and hip. (personal communication, March 15, 2011)

Elie seems to acknowledge the creative cities strategy for urban renewal, suggesting that such a strategy can be useful to post-Katrina New Orleans who must struggle so hard for residents to return and to rebuild. But his argument hinges on a rationality that this kind of investment in hip local culture, which he acknowledges is somewhat as a
result of the series, will attract whites but more importantly, eventually, the black middle class.

But what happens to the poor? Especially as public housing projects are being razed and in their place new mixed income housing is being built? *Treme* is highly invested in these questions in its Season 1 narrative, where Chief Lambreaux eventually decides to occupy the St. Bernard housing projects in protest to the failure of the city to agitate against the federal government to reopen the city’s public housing projects. His narrative symbolizes the widespread protests by citizens after the storm to have the city’s housing projects reopened. As the Chief states, it “don’t make sense for the city to shut down 5,000 housing units when most people can’t come home” (Season 1, Episode 7). This leaves a huge gap of available housing in the city with few plans for how to meet the disparity of available affordable housing.

However, I contend that this is not entirely true. There is in fact a rationale of how these needs will be met—it is just not in actually building affordable housing. Rather, the solution that both *Treme* and the Master Plan provide is in entrepreneurializing the poor so that they can afford to live in their neighborhoods. And it is thus to these ends too that *Treme* operates as a kind of vehicle for individuals to return and rebuild; *Treme* offers one potential mechanism through which individuals can entrepreneurialize their culture, heritage, and individual skills. While this might be a laudable goal, it also seems particularly precarious, as it no doubt leaves a huge shortfall in housing for those who fail to entrepreneurialize and provides no safeguards against gentrification. Indeed, it works along a neoliberal logic of philanthropy and charity that aims to provide a so-called “hand up” rather than a “hand out.”
Philanthropy and Charity

*Treme*’s spatial practices are also carried out in the production’s acts of charity and philanthropy, which are often aimed at nurturing or cultivating creativity or at aiding individual neighborhood organizations that have the capacity to do so. Again, these charitable practices have implications on the spatiality of the city in ways that work to implement the core components of the Master Plan’s commitment to equity, neighborhoods, and entrepreneurialization through media and creative culture. In numerous instances, *Treme*’s charity is aimed at creating a sense and network of community in ways that elicit neighborhood identification, pride, and engagement. The production’s philanthropic acts work as a source of alternative funds, networking, and capacity building that provides resources and strategies for neighborhood governance. Furthermore, *Treme*’s philanthropy implements a post-Katrina rationality of equity by funneling these resources into marginalized communities and neighborhoods, as a form of “empowerment.” The particular charities to which *Treme* donates, most of which are tied to the city’s musical culture, are largely aimed at helping to cultivate and maintain local creativity. Otherwise, donations are largely funneled directly to neighborhoods and neighborhood organizations in the interests of neighborhood culture. In so doing, *Treme* helps to bring about the shift in the discourse of historic preservation from architecture to culture that is called for in the Master Plan. This kind of philanthropy speaks to how the media industry is being posed as a private form of investment in local culture, and, especially, in neighborhoods, as a different kind of rebuilding organization that facilitates entrepreneurialized citizen engagement and community based rebuilding.

Laura Schweigman is in charge of much of the community outreach, charity,
and philanthropy for the show. She suggests that the work they do in these areas is geared toward “keeping the community together,” of which she sees *Treme* as a part—kind of like a neighbor (personal communication, March 16, 2011). Since they’ve begun filming, they’ve held major events to donate to the Roots of Music program and the Musicians Clinic. The Roots of Music is a free music education program for middle school aged children in New Orleans whose goal it is keep children off the street, bring children from different neighborhoods together, and to support economic development through investing in the cultural economy and creative practices of individuals (Roots of Music, 2012). The Musician’s Clinic is “dedicated to keeping New Orleans’ performers alive in body, mind, and spirit by providing comprehensive health care and mental health/social services” (Musicians’ Clinic, 2012). These charitable endeavors show the rationality of *Treme* is in nurturing the creative practitioners that constitute such a huge part of their show. As Schweigman notes of the Musician’s Clinic benefit, *This is a direct person-to-person impact to people that we work with everyday, people that come on our set and perform, the people that work for us day to day, they go to the clinic, the artists and musicians…Its just really important to support them in any way they can.* (personal communication, March 16, 2011) Funding the Roots of Music program is also part of this aim, as it helps to support the youth in the city that are the future practitioners of the trade the show invests itself in preserving. This resonates with the new rationality of historic preservation aimed for in the Master Plan—*Treme* is invested in a kind of holistic cultural preservation. In addition to these larger charitable events, *Treme* has also engaged in numerous other smaller projects with the aims of both cultural revitalization as well as
neighborhood support for rebuilding. For example, they held an Are you smarter than a 5th grader benefit in Pontchartrain Park, Wendell Pierce’s childhood neighborhood that his development non-profit is working to rebuild. From this event, Schweigman argues, It was really fun for the community and it got people into that neighborhood…They are really trying to bring back…It creates awareness…and there are people now that are buying and building houses there that are interested in the community because they came for the fundraiser there…We wanted to raise money but we really wanted to raise awareness of what’s happening in this neighborhood. (personal communication, March 16, 2011)

This example reveals the direct impact that the series can have on rebuilding neighborhoods, as its decision to invest in this particular neighborhood resulted directly (at least anecdotally) in people’s decisions to invest, buy, and rebuild there. This too can no doubt be said about the Tremé neighborhood, as it brings that kind of awareness to people on a weekly basis.48

Treme also donates to or attempts to give back to each of the individual neighborhoods and communities in which it films, whether it is in the form of holding a crawfish broil, barbeque, or donating to a church organization, social aid and pleasure club, or a local rebuilding organization. Virginia McCollum stated that, in her job as location manager, she’s worked out ways for Treme to donate to many different neighborhood organizations, including neighborhood associations in Tremé, Uptown, the Marigny, Central City, Esplanade Ridge, and countless others, in an effort to “channel funding to the people of New Orleans” (personal communication, March 15, 2011).49 In all, the series has raised over $700,000 for various organizations and
charities in the city (L. Schweigman, personal communication, March 16, 2011).

McCollum also notes that each time they have to purchase a permit from the city, they are, in effect, making a contribution, which, she argues, “On an ongoing basis, that really adds up, and it helps a city that’s foundering economically” (personal communication, March 15, 2011). Though there is significant debate over whether or not this is the case—i.e. whether or not film production does indeed economically benefit cities, especially in terms of whether or not it evens out with the state’s generous tax incentives (CEIDR, 2006; Egan, 2010; Finn, 2011; Mayer & Goldman, 2010; Pope, 2010; Saas, 2006; Tannenwald, 2010; Yerton, 2005)—what is most interesting to me here is less the economics than the *rationality* that these efforts are aimed at a kind of socially responsible neighboring to benefit the communities they work with.

*Treme*’s sense of being a socially responsible neighbor plays a role in strengthening the neighborhood organizations it works with, thereby working as a conduit for facilitating the kind of neighborhood participation called forth in the Master Plan. There is a sense among the producers that these efforts make a significant contribution to the rebuilding of the city, such that their socially responsible giving plays a key role in meeting the shortfall between governmental funding for rebuilding projects and what is needed by neighborhoods to actually return and rebuild. Thus, as McCollum notes,

> Each time we go in [to a neighborhood] we make a contribution to a neighborhood association that they can make use of…park improvement, collective gardening, getting a placard…many things…After Katrina, one of the failures of the federal government and somewhat of our city government, that
failure brought about another success which was the organization and the strengthening of neighborhood organizations and the establishment of...centers that I can get in touch with a whole neighborhood...[There is] this tremendous organizing principle for these neighborhoods after Katrina. (personal communication, March 15, 2011)

Her comments resonate very much with the goals of the Master Plan—to strengthen neighborhood organizations’ capacities to facilitate citizen engagement, and, indeed, to carry out the work of rebuilding. In other words, Treme helps to implement the aims of the Master Plan to harness the potentiality of these neighborhood organizations by bringing them into public/private partnerships that facilitate post-Katrina governance and rebuilding.

Moreover, Treme helps to connect neighborhood organizations to other media institutions, actors, and agencies of government in the city. Treme also plays a role in bringing these spaces and entities into an economic rationality—it essentially creates a potential value that they might then be able to trade in on through other partnerships with future film crews or other vendors looking to make connections with those neighborhood organizations. This happens quite literally—as Treme’s filming has been linked to at least one neighborhood organization (in the Garden District) putting a $500 price on all future filming in the area that must go directly to the neighborhood organization (Filosa, 2010). Treme therefore also helps to implement the goals of entrepreneurializing and creating a measurable value to neighborhoods, a goal understood as crucial for media industries in the Master Plan. Yet, it is a rationality that is somewhat beyond measure (Negri, 2004), as the goals too are about “creating
community” and making Treme, and indeed media production as a whole, a part of that community, where media production is embedded within the cultural rhythms, practices, and everyday movements of neighborhoods. It is about making media a kind of neighbor and neighborhoods into media spaces, or what I call the media neighborhood.

Neighborliness

Treme’s spatial practices within the city, as I suggested above, all seem to point to the fundamental importance and significance of the neighborhood, both as a space from which it enters into its practices of production, as well as a space into which it makes its own appropriations and transforms that space into a site for potential mediation, or a kind of media neighborhood. However, according to Eric Overmyer (personal correspondence, March 15, 2011), Treme is not really only about the neighborhood, but, rather, the title takes the name of the neighborhood to stand in for, as a kind of synecdoche, the broader city space and, especially its relationship to Creole culture. Responding to my question on “why Tremé?” Overmyer suggested,

We felt like we wanted to focus on the, not entirely but primarily, on the downtown Creole neighborhoods which are the Tremé, the Marigny, and the Bywater and that just seemed like the best…it’s the best name…It is important historically because of Congo Square, we felt like it stood for the city and for the way culture in New Orleans kind of starts from the bottom up which is different from a lot of places…It’s a little bit of a synecdoche…It stands for the city, but…we’re not confined to the Tremé. (personal communication, March 15, 2011)
Indeed, few characters in the show actually live in Tremé. Davis MacAlary, the white DJ and amateur musician with Garden District roots has a house there, and many real-life Tremé residents are featured on the show including jazz musicians Kermit Ruffins and Troy “Trombone Shorty” Andrews. Filming is done throughout the city and its surrounding areas, not only in the Tremé. Although this may serve as an argument against my contention that the show highlights local spaces in the city and helps to revitalize and rebuild them, I argue it actually accentuates these differences. The synecdoche is meant to work such that a particular part, Tremé, stands in for the whole, New Orleans, rather than the whole standing in for the part. This serves to produce a logic of the city that emphasizes its diversity and inherent localness, one that starts from “the bottom up”—a logic that is also evident in the principles and rationalities of the Master Plan—even as it attempts to weave these pieces together into a greater whole. Thus, the space of the neighborhood and the idea of neighboring are central to *Treme*. It is in neighborhood spaces where the series suggests creative moments are born, where quotidian practices and struggles are played out, and this is evident not only in the reasons why the producers chose to name the series *Treme* but also in terms of the series’ own material practices and the way in which it approaches the city.

In this section, I discuss how the rationality of neighboring informs *Treme*’s own spatial practices as a kind of practice of neighborliness, where global media industry both enters into the neighborhood as a locality as well as takes up a position in it and transforms it into what I refer to as “the media neighborhood.” *Treme* seems to suggest that it is in the space of the neighborhood where one becomes capable of practicing a neighborliness—treating each other as neighbors—in such a way that the
harms of Katrina might be overcome. This is an ethic that is also embodied in the Master Plan’s emphasis on neighborhoods and equity. Taken in this context, Treme’s spatial practices are offered up as biopolitical technologies of governing through which a cultivation of such an ethic is made possible. Media becomes a mechanism for eliciting neighborhood engagement, bonds, ties, and identities, especially in the ways in which Treme, in particular, focuses on an equitable practice of highlighting every neighborhood and the diverse and marginalized practices of their residents. Treme offers itself up as another neighbor, but, in so doing, it also helps to constitute the neighborhood habitus and locality as a site that is always already a potential site of mediation. The media neighborhood is offered up as an implementation of the Master Plan’s post-Katrina rationality that stands in contrast to the creative city—as a space not of flagship projects or disembodied stimulations of creative clusters, but, rather, as an embodied and practiced space of indigenous creativity that serves as the creative life-force for producing creative industries.

Treme’s efforts to cultivate a neighborly partnership have not been without hardship. McCollum notes, “Sometimes neighborhood organizations are very much in step with filming and what’s going on, sometimes they have different grievances that they you know make us aware of…We’re climbing the learning curve along with them” (personal communication, March 15, 2011). Much of the discord between film producers and neighborhoods has centered on the nuisance of the trucks and street blockages. Neighborhood complaints about filming question if the promises of Hollywood South are indeed worth the price of their disruption of the daily rhythms and temporalities of the street and neighborhood (Filosa, 2010). Treme solicits feedback
forms to get a sense of these grievances, which, McCollum contends, the producers are responsive to. At times, for example, they will change the day of a shoot if it interferes with what’s going on in the neighborhood.

Yet, these struggles point to the most significant factor in *Treme*’s becoming neighborly—how it impacts the everyday rhythms of the street and daily life in the city. As Mayol (1998) notes, “The neighborhood is a dynamic notion requiring a progressive apprenticeship that grows with the repetition of the dweller’s body’s engagement in public space until it exercises a sort of appropriation of this space” (pp. 10-11). *Treme* might be understood, then, as undergoing this kind of progressive apprenticeship, where its repetitive shooting, research, and overall existence in the neighborhood come to take part in and appropriate that space. Perhaps more so than other productions in the city because of its desire for authentic representations, commitment to on location shooting as well as its ongoing shooting and research schedule, and its aim to film in every neighborhood, *Treme* establishes itself as a somewhat permanent inscription on the landscape. It does so in the Tremé, in particular, where it films regularly, affecting and disrupting traffic patterns, resident movement, as well as the business of the establishments in which it films. It affects significantly the ways bodies move in space, constituting and cultivating the neighborhood *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1984), by affecting how and where people can walk, their potential encounters, as well as how they might comport their bodies and present themselves. In so doing, *Treme* is implicated in the production of neighborhood as locality, where, “as local subjects carry on the continuing task of reproducing their neighborhood, the contingencies of history, environment, and imagination contain the potential for new contexts (material, social,
and imaginative) to be produced...neighborhood as context produces the context of neighborhoods” (Appadurai, 1996, p. 185). *Treme* is therefore an example of the ways in which media as a spatial practice creates new sets of everyday rituals and experiences, where media practices and mediation become normal everyday experiences themselves, not disruptive of everyday life, but as everyday life itself.

Though there is not filming in any given neighborhood or in Tremé everyday, it presents itself as a constant potential. There is a chance that Karen Livers, the specialty casting director, could be riding her bike and looking for extras. There is always the potential for a chance meeting with cast, writers, researchers, producers, or crew members, whether they are filming or when they are learning about the culture at the local bar. One might run into Virginia McCollum while she is scouting potential locations, and, as she notes, “I’m always listening, oh I always listen...we are there, we are in the places where life happens in the city, not just in the boardrooms, or the fancy restaurants, but the corner store” (personal communication, March 15, 2011). On the one hand, this rings out as a kind of warning—a kind of acknowledgement of how the media industry works to govern space through surveillance, disciplining bodies and minds (Foucault, 1995) through the warning, “be careful what you say, it might end up on TV!” But it is meant as more of an invitation, more as a kind of governing through freedom, an invitation that is not about “you must,” but “you may” (Arvidsson, 2005; Bennett, 1995; Lury, 2004; Rose, 1999). It is an invitation to residents to tell their stories, to become involved, to take part. And people do—McCollum recounts,

They’ll shout storylines to us on the street...There used to be a van full of people who walked into a very close neighborhood who all hopped out and
looked around looking rather foolish…but now, its like, “you’re Treme.” And people…start talking to us or telling us they want to be in it, be an extra…We try to get folks who live in the neighborhood to be involved. (personal communication, March 15, 2011)

This kind of rendering the neighborhood into an always already site of mediation is more than just a simulation of the neighborhood—it is a reconstitution of the neighborhood *habitus*. In constituting the *habitus* as a kind of media neighborhood, *Treme* works as cultural technology of governing and citizenship in ways that produce neighborhood space and neighborhood residents in terms of the post-Katrina rationalities of the Master Plan—as creative potential, entrepreneurial, and inherently local with potential links to industries who can put that creativity to work.

Further, *Treme’s* desire to make media a good neighbor, and consequently in producing the media neighborhood, extends beyond just the *Treme* production. For, as Virginia McCollum indicated, *Treme* has an investment in cultivating a partnership with neighborhoods such that it can lead to a lasting and sustainable film industry in the city. Thus, though she suggests that there’s not much of a possibility for changing the “culture of production,” *Treme* can potentially impact how neighborhoods expect film producers to interact with them and vice versa (personal communication, March 15, 2011). She suggests, she is a,

Liaison…between the production company—and not just the production company I am working for but for production in the city and in the state. If a guy comes before me and does it wrong, that hurts all of us, so I mean I think that everybody’s got to operate from the same set of high standards if we want

Perhaps more so than any individual practices of production, then, *Treme* affects the city and the neighborhood most significantly in its embedding media in the quotidian practices and daily spaces of New Orleans’ neighborhoods through its efforts to cultivate neighborly relations. In so doing, neighborhoods are transformed into sites of potential mediation, or into media neighborhoods. The media neighborhood, in turn, is a space that can be valorized by the city as garnering the entrepreneurial capacities that will ensure the (precarious) right of every neighborhood and every citizen to return.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I hope to have brought into sharper focus three points. First, *Treme* participates in the post-Katrina rebuilding process by putting into practice the post-Katrina rationality of the Master Plan through its spatial practices, especially through its training and supporting the entrepreneurialization of New Orleanian citizens and spaces on the basis of their cultural difference and authenticity. This marks a technique whereby the right for every New Orleanian and every neighborhood to return is not based upon providing affordable housing or publicly funded structures to return citizens home, but, rather, to encourage private funding and technical expertise, through the media industry, that can finance the poor and their culture to ensure their return. Second, this suggests that *Treme* is bound up with contemporary cultural policy practices within New Orleans that bank its future on the media industry. In so doing, *Treme* provides one potential mechanism for people to rebuild their homes and their neighborhoods, but at what price? Finally, I hope to have illustrated that these cultural policies in effect shape a tactical approach to urban planning that cannot be understood
by contemporary critiques of urban planning and the culture industries. *Treme* does not flatten neighborhoods into sites of factory based media production, nor does it produce sites of spectacular and disembodied tourism. Instead, it both depends upon and helps to produce a Disneyomatic (as opposed to Disneyfied) space—a space aimed at the inclusion of racial and regional difference and the “empowerment” of marginalized spaces that are generative of creativity and difference toward the aims of neoliberal self-governance.

It is in this sense that I want to distinguish *Treme* as constituting a media neighborhood from the creative media city. Whereas the latter are often critiqued for the ways in which cities’ cultural policies prioritize more spectacular forms of creative culture and the creative industries, *Treme* speaks to a shift in media based urban renewal and branding practices that emphasize more inclusionary practices, focused on local and vernacular, and sometimes uncreative, practices. To an extent, *Treme* does focus a large amount of screen time to the spectacular and romanticized images of Mardi Gras Indians, second line parading, Baby Dolls, famous musicians, chefs, and so forth. But it also accords a significant emphasis on activities like sitting on a bar stool, standing on a street corner, or the handiwork that goes into sewing an Indian costume. Perhaps this is why the series has been criticized by some viewers as painfully slow and even boring. These are not practices that are usually included in creative cities strategies, but for *Treme*, they are part and parcel of constituting their sense of an “authentic” neighborhood. Moreover, all neighborhoods, not just those that are already viewed as creative, are incorporated into a kind of new map and plan for the city where all neighborhoods are made potential sites of mediation. I think the producers are right
in saying that they are not going to produce New Orleans as a spectacular site of consumption akin to Disneyland, but their production does nonetheless play a role in helping to institute a new post-Katrina place branding strategy that will implicate the city’s cultural practices and neighborhood spaces. The particular mechanisms through which *Treme* enacts the principles and goals of the Master Plan—neighborhood, equity, and entrepreneurialization through media culture—through its relationship to local hiring, tourism, and spatial practices and struggles over city space thus appears to be something more of a media neighborhood than a creative city. My aim for this chapter, however, has been less to chart the answers to more normative questions regarding the ethics of *Treme*’s spatial practices and more so to map the rationality by which the tensions between vernacular cultural practices of resistance and commercial culture are brought into alignment to produce such ethical quandaries, the latter of which is a question I take up in the Conclusion.

In the next chapter, however, I turn to the relationship between *Treme* and place branding and the role of HBO’s own branding. Whereas in this chapter I’ve considered the ways in which *Treme*’s spatial practices put into practice the rationalities and techniques of the Master Plan toward the aim of rebuilding and rebranding post-Katrina New Orleans, in the next chapter, I consider how these practices, in turn, serve to benefit and produce new kinds of brand value for HBO.
Chapter 3
“It’s HBO”: From Quality anti-TV to Passionate Engagement in *Treme*

In an interview for the trade publication *Broadcasting & Cable*, HBO co-president Eric Kessler explained HBO would be moving its brand forward to reflect new media’s effects on the cable subscription network. Since its adoption in 1996, the network’s ubiquitous brand, “It’s Not TV, it’s HBO” has been the subject of much discussion, both within the industry and the academy, for the way it captures HBO’s desire to brand itself as distinct from the usual network fare. Yet, as Kessler notes, branding HBO as the antithesis of TV no longer seems to be necessary, as the television medium itself seems to be evolving, and so is, according to Kessler, HBO. He suggests, “It is not just about television anymore…it’s the content…It’s time to reflect the fact that we are on multiple devices and always will be going forward” (quoted in Grego, 2010). Thus, in conjunction with its launch of a multitude of new media ventures, Kessler announced the new simplified and streamlined branding slogan, “It’s HBO.”

Much of the literature on HBO branding situates HBO’s “It’s Not TV, its HBO” brand in terms of the production of “quality” television in the post-network era. As the contributors to Leverette, Ott, and Buckley’s (2009) collection *It’s Not TV: Watching HBO in the post-television era* contend, HBO’s “quality” anti-TV branding to some extent defines post-network television. Through the creation of a sense of “quality” programming that emphasizes and promotes the HBO brand as facilitating creative autonomy and auteurism (Auster, 2000; Edgerton & Jones, 2008; Jaramillo, 2002) and its anti-network television industrial practices (Lotz, 2007b; McCabe & Akass, 2008; Santo, 2008), HBO claims to serve an intelligent and distinct audience invested in
practices of interpretation of “quality” texts. As such, HBO’s brand and its marketing
practices are synonymous with the kind of “water cooler buzz” that generates value for
the HBO brand through viewers invested in discussing and interpreting the texts that are
the products of, largely, HBO’s Sunday night line-up of original programming.

However, a number of critics, both from within the television industry as well as
within the academy, question whether HBO still “has it,” or if, in other words, HBO is
still really “not TV” as its branding slogan “It’s Not TV; It’s HBO” insinuates. If, as
John Hartley (2009) contends, the post-broadcast era is one of productivity rather than
one of representation—where television is streamed, downloaded, mobile, do-it-
yourself, and consumer co-created—then HBO’s quality branding looks strangely like a
broadcast model—one that is expert made, aimed toward the semiotic, and, to a degree,
choice restricted (p. 25). Though, in my view, Hartley’s claim goes a bit far in
estimating the effects of the post-broadcast era (as it is indicative more of a specific
classed, raced, and gendered social formation), his view is nevertheless indicative of the
rationalities expressed within much of the television industry and its trade publications.
It thus provides an important discourse that influences how HBO must articulate its own
position within the industry at the present conjuncture. Although HBO might be
credited with moving television to the post-network, multi-channel transition (Lotz,
2007b), it is considerably less clear what role HBO plays in television in this current,
post-broadcast era described by Hartley. As a result, HBO is in somewhat of what I am
calling a post-Sopranos’ crisis, where competition from other networks and providers
producing “quality” programming along the HBO model, the perceived lack of buzz
around HBO’s original programming, and the perception that HBO in the post-
broadcast era looks suspiciously like TV lead HBO to have a sense of anxiety around its brand.

It is into this conjuncture that *Treme* intervenes. *Treme* coincides with the roll out of a number of new strategies that HBO is adopting to look more like the post-broadcast model of televisual productivity rather than one of broadcast based representationality. These strategies include the introduction of its online streaming service HBOGo and social media service HBO Connect concurrent with its rebranding to the streamlined “It’s HBO” tagline. In this chapter, I suggest HBO’s attempt to become not just “not TV” but instead *more than TV* in a post-broadcasting, convergent media era is facilitated by *Treme*’s ability to create what HBO co-president Eric Kessler terms “passionate engagement.” *Treme* calls forth an affective and emotional investment in the series by viewers in a way that facilitates interaction and active engagement not just with the text and with other fans through interactive media but, rather, on a material level in the city of New Orleans and in the Tremé neighborhood in particular. The series situates the HBO brand, through a multitude of new media convergences, to enable material and spatial practices by viewers that play a role in the rebuilding of post-Katrina New Orleans. These include practices of ethical tourism, consumption, and the creation of emplaced material communities and connections through new media interactivities. These are material, spatial practices that constitute what HBO means by passionate engagement. They exemplify one strategy HBO is using to shift its brand from a medium of representation that invites viewer interpretation and water cooler buzz to a medium that facilitates active participation in
material communities. In so doing, they help to catapult HBO beyond quality not-TV to
the “It’s HBO” post-broadcast brand.

Thus, I suggest that reading HBO’s branding strategies and the role that Treme
plays in facilitating these through a theory of media as a spatial practice is important for
understanding how the series participates materially in the rebuilding of the city as well
as in how this participation enables the rebuilding of television, and particularly HBO,
in the post-broadcast, convergence era. Ultimately, I argue that if the network era was
suggestive of a TV space based on a broadcasting model of national, domestic space
and centralized distribution, and the web supposedly enables the collapsing of
space/time into a global no-place, passionate engagement constitutes a potential shift in
not only HBO’s branding strategies but also in media space: it positions the media
brand, in this case HBO, as a global brand that can be the no place/everyplace that
connects viewers to some place, a particular place, the neighborhood. Although this is a
strategy that can be drawn upon by other media brands and in other contexts, it is also
context and conjuncture specific. The deployment of passionate engagement as an
emplacing and material community building spatial practice depends upon the site-
specificity of the post-Katrina New Orleans context, where anxieties over displacement
and placelessness make the material connectivities and communities that emerge out of
Treme particularly poignant. It is also just one strategy being put forth by HBO in its
quest for passionate engagement branding, the results of which are still uncertain.

Nevertheless, Treme’s facilitation of HBO’s re-branding to this passionately
engaged “it’s HBO” has different consequences than its ideologically infused “quality”
branding that aimed to distinguish its viewers through a high pop aesthetic and the
encouragement of refined interpretation around the water cooler (Leverette et al., 2008). Although *Treme*’s forms of passionate engagement still capitalize on those hierarchies, they also call for evaluating the productive qualities that these branding practices have on the constitution of citizenship, and, especially, of city-space in New Orleans. I suggest *Treme*’s form of passionate engagement facilitates the production of ethical, consumer-tourist-citizens out of TV viewers both within and outside of New Orleans who are invited to take part in the production of creative neighborhood space. In what follows, I first consider how HBO’s branding is typically understood in debates about “quality” television, where I suggest that the emergence of discourses about HBO’s post-*Sopranos* crisis and its irrelevance in a post-broadcast television-escape create a sense of anxiety over whether HBO’s “quality” branding is enough. In the following section, I discuss the ways in which *Treme* intervenes into this context by producing “passionate engagement,” and drawing upon new media interactivities as a way to move people not just online, but to and through New Orleans in a way that HBO hopes can be productive of new forms of brand value.

“Quality” Television & HBO’s “Post-Sopranos” Crisis

HBO first began broadcasting in 1972. Initially, the subscription-based network was known for its sports programs, especially boxing, and second-run Hollywood films. In the 1980s, the network shifted to developing original programming (Mair, 1988). The reasons for the emergence of HBO’s original programming are varied but primarily stem from HBO’s reaction to competition from other networks, new technologies such as the VCR, and the desire for independence from movie studios and sports programming suppliers (Jaramillo, 2002, p. 62; Johnson, 2007, pp. 8-9). Original
programming continues to constitute a major part of HBO’s business rationality, scheduling, and branding. Much of the academic scholarship on HBO’s original programming and its role in the HBO brand is devoted to the explication and interpretation of particular texts and series and how these series help to constitute the network’s “quality,” anti-TV brand. However, the emergence and prevalence of new and convergent media in the post-broadcast era complicates HBO’s reliance on “quality” anti-TV branding tactics. Some critics suggest that HBO is on the decline, in what I am calling a discourse of HBO’s “post-Sopranos crisis.” I argue that one way to understand Treme is as a reaction to these discourses and anxieties and as a strategy for the network to remake its brand to propel it into the post-broadcast era.

HBO’s original programming has been crucial to building the “It’s Not TV, it’s HBO,” “quality” brand (Johnson, 2007, p. 11). Scholarship on HBO’s “quality” branding notes its relationship to the “quality” television programming genre typically traced to new forms of prime-time programming that appeared in the 1970’s. At this time, the rise of independent studios, new competition to the networks, the rise of target marketing, and the political and social upheavals of the 1960s influenced new kinds of television programming (Feuer, Kerr, & Vahimagi, 1984; Lentz, 2000, p. 47). Jaramillo notes, the term “quality” is typically associated with “innovative visual style, the use of film over video, actors with training in improvisational work…and a high degree of creative freedom,” but there is also an industrial rationality that attributes “quality” to “programs…that appeal to young, urban adults from 18 to 34 years of age” (Jaramillo, 2002, p. 66). In other words, “quality” not only defines the aesthetics of the show itself, but also the nature of the desired audience. Grant Tinker’s MTM Enterprises’
productions like *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* (CBS, 1970-1977) and *Hill Street Blues* in the 1980s (NBC, 1981-1987) are often noted as exemplary texts that helped to define the “quality” genre.

Historically, however, “quality” television was a term first used to promote public funding for PBS. As Laurie Ouellette (2008) notes, PBS was proposed as a niche channel that would appeal to a specific, targeted audience, well before the kind of audience targeting and niche cable programming that would appear decades later. Ouellette suggests that the debate over the founding of PBS fomented in a rationality that pitted the idea of “quality” against mass culture, such that “quality was thought to be incompatible with ‘large numbers,’” and thus PBS would “serve a selective ‘fragment’ of the audience with tasteful and substantive fare” (p. 59). “Quality” programming for PBS typically meant educational and high cultural programming targeted at the intellectual and social elite. “Quality” for PBS, then, was aimed at bringing social and cultural “uplift” and providing “quality rather than quantity” amidst what Newton Minnow, FCC chairman, famously referred to as television’s “vast wasteland” in 1961 (Ouellette, 2008).

As Lynn Spigel (2004) notes, “quality” today is largely linked to branding and “has new instrumental uses and commercial ramifications” (p. 18), many of which are evident in HBO’s articulation of its brand and programming to the “quality” moniker. Though, as Jaramillo (2002) and Feuer (2007) note, HBO’s claim to produce “quality” original programming indeed draws from the history of the “quality” prime-time genres and of PBS discussed above, HBO also inflects its own usage of the quality genre by distinguishing its fare, and consequently its viewers, from network programming. This
distinction, encapsulated in the “It’s not TV” slogan, serves as a means to define HBO by what it is not, i.e. bland, unoriginal, commodified network TV, and to suggest that what one gets on HBO cannot be gotten elsewhere on TV (Jaramillo, 2002; Lotz, 2007b; McCabe & Akass, 2007; Ott, 2008). Moreover, the “It’s Not TV, it’s HBO” branding slogan emphasizes the fact that HBO is supported by subscription and is not competing for viewers’ eyeballs to sell back to advertisers. The network aims more at selling the network rather than any individual program, and it largely does so through creating a kind of buzz, something that people will talk about, that will lend interest and credibility to the network brand and therefore a greater desire for subscription amongst existing and potential viewers (Lotz, 2007b, p. 92). It is this buzz factor that renders the “It’s Not TV, it’s HBO” branding so effective, as it encapsulates the programming into a broader whole that aims to create an identity and affective character to the network that will connect with viewers.

Santo (2008) notes that the “It’s not TV” slogan not only serves as a brand aimed to orient viewers about what to expect on the network, but it also influences the corporate culture at HBO to be undergirded by an ethic and philosophy of commitment to creativity as well. He suggests, “HBO has absorbed the cultural values it believes subscribers are seeking into its own culture of production, even to the detriment of its supposed bottom line” (Santo, 2008, p. 20). Edgerton and Jones (2008) note that, “HBO’s legacy is also characterized by an unusually supportive relationship between the network’s programming executives and the creative talent they nurture and work with time and again” (p. 320). HBO’s subscription-based format permits greater risk-taking and creative freedom because they are not susceptible to advertising pressure,
which enables them to offer an outlet for experienced producers, directors, and writers to work on projects that they are passionately committed to (Edgerton & Jones, 2008, p. 12; Lotz, 2007b). HBO’s brand is therefore infused with this sense of creative autonomy and integrity, which HBO utilizes when selling its brand back to its audiences. Moreover, it helps to characterize HBO’s “not-TV” style as more cinematic, as it articulates its original programming to the creators as artistic “auteurs” (Auster, 2000; Jaramillo, 2002, p. 66-7; McCabe & Akass, 2008).

Many scholars, however, also note that the term “quality” refers as much to a desire to flatter a particular demographic by distinguishing them from the mass of network viewers as cultured, exclusive, and distinct (Feuer, 2007; McCabe & Akass, 2008; Nelson, 2007; Santo, 2008). In other words, HBO’s branding schemes offer up a kind of distinctive cultural capital to its viewers which, in turn, they hope will appeal to a wealthier demographic who can afford to subscribe to the network. In so doing, HBO appeals “to values that it imagines its audience will share, and hence playing on the bourgeois devaluation of television as a cultural form” (Johnson, 2007, p. 11). As Kelso (2008) notes, this appeal to audiences is distinct from that of advertiser-supported television, as it constitutes a “direct transaction with audiences rather than in a relationship centered on selling their attention spans to advertisers” (Kelso, 2008, p. 50). HBO must therefore spend a good deal of time convincing its viewers that it is a brand that is indeed worth being bought. And so far, its claim to “quality” anti-TV has served them well.

Since HBO does not rely on advertising to support its’ programming, it also does not measure its success in ratings (Nelson, 2007; Jaramillo, 2002; Reeves, Rogers,
& Epstein, 2007; Santo 2009). Instead, measuring HBO’s success is a much trickier and murkier affair, as it is in some ways beyond measurement. Though one might measure their success in the amount of churn, or subscription drops, in any given month, it is impossible to attribute the loss of any individual subscriber to any individual program. Therefore, the value or success of any one program may or may not be attributable to the number of viewers watching the program. Rather, HBO rationalizes the value of any individual program more in terms of how those programs contribute to the overall brand, and, in particular, to their ability to generate “buzz” (Kelso, 2008; Santo, 2008). However, this leads to a great deal of anxiety and tension amongst HBO executives, who, according to Santo (2008), “must justify mounting production and marketing expenses without concrete evidence that branding efforts are responsible…for subscriber growth” (p. 40). Thus, HBO’s commitment to a corporate cultural ethos of creative freedom and integrity and its aim to produce “quality” non-TV are continually under pressure to innovate and take new risks but within an environment that makes it difficult to determine whether or not those risks are working.

These tensions and anxieties have come to a head in the past few years. The perception publicized in trade publications, within the industry, and by academics that the network is in what I am calling a “post-Sopranos” crisis leads many to question whether or not HBO can still offer up its version of “quality” TV, or if “quality” is enough in the current era. As an article in the New York Observer titled, “Is HBO’s Luck Running Out?” suggests, “Having seen its longstanding identity—as the home of quality entertainment for grown-ups—adopted by so many upstarts, the channel seems to have lost its bearings” (D’Addario, 2012). Hence, a major factor in HBO’s post-
*Sopranos* crisis is that many other networks seem to have caught up and are producing their own form of “quality” drama to compete with HBO (Kelso, 2008; D’Addario, 2012). It is not only other pay subscription networks that are competing, either, both advertiser-supported cable and network programs have taken on HBO’s formula of high production value; experienced producers, directors, and writers; fewer episodes; and strategic release timing in ways that rival the HBO. Examples such as Showtime’s *Homeland* and *Dexter*, FX’s *Nip-Tuck*, and AMC’s *Mad Men* and *Breaking Bad* detail just a few of the original series that adopted HBO’s formulas. Even before the ending of *The Sopranos*, critics were prognosticating the demise of the network, suggesting “Let’s face it: HBO is in a slump, and the demise of *The Sopranos* will only make matters worse” (Berman, 2006). Thus, faced with a dial oversaturated with original programming from a variety of fronts, many critics decided that HBO was not likely to ever see again “the type of water cooler success that *The Sopranos* enjoyed” (Frutkin, 2008). As one writer for the trade press *Broadcasting & Cable* put it, “The slogan ‘It’s not TV, it’s HBO’ no longer works. These days, even HBO is TV and a lot of other cable networks offer series that have the sheen and ambition normally associated with HBO” (Bianculli, 2008).

But perhaps more so than competition from other networks, HBO also faces the problem that perhaps offering “quality” programming is not enough in the post-broadcast, convergence era. The post-broadcast era, as discussed in the Introduction, refers to the influence of new and convergent media on television. As a post-broadcast medium, television shifts from appealing and delivering content to a mass audience at an appointed hour to what Curtin (2009) refers to as a matrix medium, “an increasingly
flexible dynamic mode of communication” that focuses on accumulating audiences across multiple circuits of matrix media (p. 13). More than just focusing on niche programming for a target audience, as was typical of the cable era and what Lotz (2007a) refers to as the multi-channel transition, the post-broadcast era invites audiences to participate online interactively. This allows networks to gather information about viewers to offer customized content and direct marketing (Andrejevic, 2009, p. 40). Moreover, what matters for post-broadcast era television is less any individual piece of individual content and more so the way in which each piece of content can be synergistically woven into a larger brand identity. As Spigel (2004) argues, “net convergence also enhances opportunities for…‘branding’—the increasing attempt of networks, program producers, and advertisers to stamp their corporate image across a related group of media products, thereby creating a ‘franchise’” (p. 5; see also Caldwell, 2006). Yet, as these and other scholars note, these shifts in television industry and practice, emergent technologies, and the rise of convergence culture also create new anxieties and instabilities for the conglomerates that have historically dominated the industry.

HBO occupies a sort of curious and interesting position in the trajectory of post-network and post-broadcasting television, as its strategy as a pay-based subscription network played a crucial role in moving television from the network era to a multi-channel cable transition (or TVI to TVII). Reeves, Rogers, and Epstein (2007) suggest HBO helped to move television into the cable era by shifting from a broadcast, mass marketing model toward more niche marketing strategies. They suggest, “HBO’s satellite transmission of the ‘Thrilla in Manilla’ [boxing match between Muhammad Ali
and Joe Frazier on October 1, 1975] can now be seen as the watershed moment that marked the dawn of the cable era” (p. 88). In some ways, HBO has also been at the forefront of capturing the possibilities of new media technology and convergence. It was the first pay channel to scramble its signal to prevent piracy, to multiplex, and to provide on-demand programming (Edgerton & Jones, 2008, p. 10). HBO’s position in the Time Warner conglomerate enables them to synergistically take advantage of a multitude of media platforms for its publicity and branding (Nelson, 2007, p. 25).

Moreover, at a time when diversification of revenue has become the key buzzword for sustaining a profit, HBO also succeeds in maintaining a broad base of DVD sales, syndication, and online program downloads through iTunes (Edgerton & Jones, 2008, p. 14).

What role HBO will play in the post-broadcast era (TVIII), however, is less clear and helps to contextualize the role that the network intends for Treme to play in terms of its future. HBO’s relationship with Netflix especially brings these tensions into focus. HBO is notorious for denying licensing to Netflix (a subscription based provider of both DVD rentals and online streaming content) to stream its original programming and failing to discount its DVD’s for the provider as other content providers do (Bond, 2012). Further, as Netflix and Hulu (another online streaming content provider) release their own first round of original programs, HBO finds itself competing not only with what we typically understand as “TV” but now with something else that emerges as having a claim to being “Not TV” more so than HBO (Cocotas, 2012; Coyle, 2012).

While Catherine Johnson (2007) notes that, “both in terms of its own status as a branded network, and in its branding of its original programming, HBO epitomizes the industrial
changes in the era of TVIII” (2007, p. 8), it is nevertheless questionable that HBO’s reliance on branding itself through “quality” original programming that is “not TV” will in fact bear out to be the epitome of TVIII or post-broadcast television. As Kelso (2008) argues, “For years, HBO cultivated considerable brand equity through its production of quality programming. But this approach, no doubt, will not be enough to sustain it into the future” (p. 58). According to Kelso, since 2005, HBO tried to ensure itself a place in the future by diversifying its revenue streams, including syndication, DVD sales, international growth, and movie investments as ways to extend its brand beyond its programming. But will this be enough to propel HBO into the next era?

Edgerton and Jones (2008) argue the characterization of HBO as “in crisis” is perhaps overstated, as it still outperforms all of the newcomers and, “in fact many [of the shows] were still artistically challenging and were averaging more viewers per episode than just about any other cable and satellite series on TV” (p. 318). Nonetheless, the proliferation of a buzz around the network’s post-Sopranos crisis and unfamiliar competitors in the likes of Netflix and Hulu no doubt play a factor into the calculus of the network’s shift to the “It’s HBO” branding slogan as well as its rollout of a variety of new media convergences and diversifications of revenue. As the post-Sopranos’ crisis discourse indicates, it is unclear as to whether or not HBO’s reliance on its “quality” branding and water cooler buzz will be enough to see it through to the other side of the transition. It seems network executives too, such as Kessler, question if the “not TV” mantra and the “quality TV” rationality it provides to its programming decisions are enough in today’s media age.
It is into this conjuncture that *Treme* enters and provides what I argue is a post-*Sopranos* branding strategy that draws less on the history of HBO’s “quality” brand and more so on a kind of updated “relevance” programming and socially responsible corporate brand for the new media age. What distinguishes *Treme* for the network is the role it plays in producing a passionate connection between the viewer and the program that materializes itself in more than just interpretation of complicated, quality texts around the water cooler and instead invites viewers to actively engage in spatial practices and material community building in a particular place—New Orleans. In the remainder of the chapter, I consider how the series, through the HBO brand, moves the network away from cultivating a “quality” brand toward one that involves “passionate engagement,” which I argue demonstrates the necessity for media scholars to go beyond textual and representational analyses of HBO’s original programming and to consider its branding as a more material, spatial practice as well.

**Passionate Engagement**

At the Cable Television and Marketing (CTAM) Summit in 2010 in New Orleans, the only panel that featured HBO was a panel featuring *Treme*. The panel, titled, “*Treme*: The Art of Building Audience and a Community,” promises conference attendees that executive producers David Simon and Eric Overmyer along with HBO co-president Eric Kessler will share the secrets of how “storytelling and marketing create neighborhood-to-national reach as well as emotional impact” (Multichannel News, 2010). Although it is curious that there was only one panel at the Summit to feature HBO given that it supposedly represents the epitome of what cable has to offer, it is even more curious that this sole panel featured *Treme*, since it is not one of the
network’s leading series either in terms of viewership or in terms of the network’s self-promotion (which at that time tended to emphasize series such as *True Blood* and *Boardwalk Empire*). Though it is likely that CTAM chose *Treme* because the Summit was held in New Orleans, the proceedings from the panel also suggest that there is more to the story. The choice of *Treme* because of the location is also part of the story of the network’s claim, and consequently the Summit’s claim, to a kind of philanthropic corporate social responsibility, where both see their participation and promotion of the city as playing a role in helping to spur the city’s rebuilding. As the panel participants’ comments go on to elucidate, this factor of corporate social responsibility and the significance of acting ethically within a local, material place, is also intimately tied to the role that *Treme* plays in the network’s branding and marketing strategy that hinges on creating a passionate engagement to beget neighborhood to national reach. In this section, I first draw on the comments of the participants on the *Treme* panel at the CTAM Summit to define what is meant by passionate engagement and how it works as a post-broadcasting branding strategy by drawing on “relevance” programming and discourses of corporate social responsibility. I suggest passionate engagement elicits more material forms of engagement than just interpreting texts around the water cooler, virtual or otherwise. I then turn to the specific means through which *Treme* elicits passionate engagement as spatial practices in the city, including specifically practices of ethical tourism, consumption, and the utilization of interactive technologies to build emplaced and material communities.

When asked by panel moderator Dave Walker, a the media critic for the New Orleans’ local daily newspaper *The Times-Picayune*, how *Treme* fits into the network’s
programming menu, Kessler responded by suggesting that he always asked himself two questions about each program: first, does the show reflect the HBO brand, and second, does the show elicit passionate engagement on the part of the audience? He went on to state that *Treme*, as well as the previous works of David Simon, meets the bill on both accounts. On the one hand, *Treme* and Simon reflect the kind of quality programming that HBO is known for. Kessler extolled *The Wire* as “the greatest work of art produced on television,” and, laughing, suggested “David [Simon] has become the brand of HBO” (Cable Television and Marketing Summit (Kessler), 2010). Kessler’s comment makes very clear that it is precisely the qualities bound up with the David Simon brand and his creative auteurism that define the identity of the HBO brand. Moreover, Kessler’s comment situates *Treme* familiarly into this “quality” brand, again emphasizing the creative work of the auteur, high quality writing, an emphasis on character depth, storytelling and characters that one would be unlikely to view on other networks, and complex issues dealt with in an entertaining way, lending themselves to viewer interpretation and water cooler buzz.

However, the panel discussion was largely devoid of these kinds of discussions. Little discussion revolved around the text of the series at all. Instead, it is Kessler’s statement regarding passionate engagement that served as the crux of the discussion of how *Treme* facilitates the branding and marketing of the network. As the panel description suggests, passionate engagement forms the basis for explaining how HBO works to build an audience with “neighborhood to national reach” and to create an “emotional impact.” Passionate engagement imbibes the HBO brand with a renewed identity that serves to resituate and redefine it in the post-broadcast era. The panel
discussion made clear that the way in which HBO aims to create passionate engagement goes deeper than just getting audiences to be invested in the show’s characters, storytelling, and so forth, or even in utilizing new media technologies to more actively engage with the story as a kind of virtual water cooler. Instead, the panelists characterized passionate engagement as about eliciting audience interaction and engagement on a more physical and material level as well, as citizens. Passionate engagement in *Treme* means encouraging viewers to engage and interact with the city and neighborhoods of New Orleans. Specifically, viewers are invited to become ethical tourists, partake in forms of ethical consumption, and utilize interactive technologies as ways to build material, not just online, communities in a kind of network of neighborhoods. Emotional impact, then, is cultivated not just through storytelling, but it is also built through the material experiences that the series can help provide to its viewers. The “audience” the series helps to build, then, becomes something more than a virtual and placeless entity and instead is transformed into a community with material connections from “neighborhood to nation.” New media technology facilitates these spatial practices of viewers, but the emphasis is on what the media enables in terms of engagement at the local and material level. In other words, it is not merely about moving HBO content and viewers to the web, but, rather, utilizing web-based technology to move people to and through New Orleans’ neighborhoods. This kind of material engagement in a situated community is quite different from HBO’s “quality” branding. Instead, passionate engagement draws upon discourses of corporate social responsibility and “relevance” programming to rebrand HBO for the post-broadcast era.
The forms of passionate engagement elicited by *Treme* are bound up with HBO’s aims at branding itself as a socially responsible corporate neighbor. As David Simon noted, “There is a responsibility… if you are pulling from the real, I think there is a necessity both moral and practical of getting in there and being connected to the community” (Cable Television and Marketing Summit (Simon), 2010). Simon’s comment seems to suggest that *Treme* is responsible not only for its representations and storytelling, but they also claim to be acting as a responsible corporate citizen, neighbor, and community builder. The series itself is discussed as a kind of “charity” to the city, where such charitable efforts are aimed to help define HBO’s brand in terms of its ethical and neighborly acts. An article on HBO’s branding even defines the series in these terms, where it describes *Treme* as part of HBO’s “noble if ignored charity efforts” (D’Addario, 2012).

HBO is not alone in these efforts. Since Katrina, Hollywood has marketed much of its filming in New Orleans in terms of charity, where the state’s generous tax incentives are elided in favor of a narrative that filming there was a matter of social responsibility to help bring the city back. Like these other Hollywood productions, *Treme* as charity is part of a broader branding strategy that rests upon a discourse of corporate social responsibility, where the ethics of filming in the city and shining a spotlight on the city’s continuing struggles is assumed to also translate back into dollars for HBO. That is, as in any form of corporate social responsibility, this charity effort must also render a profit, where acting virtuously is a business strategy (Ouellette, 2012, p. 62; see also Barry, 2004; Vogel, 2005). Because *Treme* results in relatively few dollars for HBO because of its comparatively small audience, the particular aim of its
virtuous business strategy, then, is in helping to define the HBO brand as ethical, responsible, and politically engaged. The hope is that this brand identity will translate into future subscriptions and various forms of diverse revenue through DVD sales, interest in future content, syndications, iTunes sales, and so forth. Treme’s filming, philanthropic practices (as discussed in the previous chapter), and its narrative emphasis on the city’s existing struggles are thus imagined as a kind of social service to the city in such a way that can be translated back into brand value for HBO. The relevance this has for HBO’s brand identity is evident in Kessler’s comments on the CTAM panel, where he suggested, Treme represents “one of the shows that HBO people take pride in not just because of the quality of entertainment but because they feel like this is working, getting things done” (Cable Television and Marketing Summit (Kessler), 2010). His comment makes evident that Treme is envisioned not as just “quality” anti-TV, but as engaged action—as actually doing something in the real world, and this doing something is assumed to help define HBO’s brand identity as an ethically engaged citizen.

In this sense, Treme is drawing less on the discourses of “quality” TV and more so on a discourse of “relevance” programming associated with the racial politics of sitcoms in the 1970’s as well as the discourse of corporate social responsibility as a kind of alternative to public service programming. Like the “quality” TV genre, the discourse of “relevance” programming also stems from a particular conjuncture of television changes in the 1970’s. “Relevance” programming, however, was defined by its attention to pressing social and political concerns of the day in a realist manner, especially those associated with the racial politics of Norman Lear’s and Tandem/TAT’s productions,
such as *All in the Family* (CBS, 1971-1979).\(^5\) Lentz (2000) notes that while TV was criticized by critics for its baseness as a “window to the void,” “relevance” programming was elevated for how it promoted television as a “mirror on the real world” that could reflect the social and political real. As she notes, the “real” was in particular accessed through a racialized politics, where television was imagined as a political mirror for reflecting the realities of racial struggle and injustice in 1970’s America.

So too, HBO provides socially and politically relevant content, and race figures prominently in these aims. Cable television networks have historically used blackness as a way to cultivate a brand identity that could appeal to niche audiences (Fuller, 2010; Smith-Shomade, 2008), and HBO too has a history of infusing its brand with a sense of “quality” (and I would argue “relevance”) by taking on politically salient racial issues (Fuller, 2010, p. 287). This is evident in its many comedy specials, such as the *Def Comedy Jam*, which frequently feature black comics who use politicized racial humor, but it can also be seen historically on the network in its original films, documentaries, and miniseries (Fuller, 2010, p. 295).\(^6\) David Simon’s previous work on the racialized politics of post-industrial urban decay in *The Wire* and as well as his mini-series’ *The Corner* (which draws from his novel on Baltimore’s drug trade) and *Generation Kill* (on the politics and realities of the Iraq War) are central to the “relevance” aspect of HBO’s programming as well. Moreover, HBO has taken a special interest in New Orleans, airing Spike Lee’s documentaries on Katrina and post-Katrina rebuilding in New Orleans, *When the Levees Broke* (2006) and *If God is Willing and the Creek Don’t Rise*
(2010), both of which utilize television as a medium for socially and politically relevant programming and focus extensively on the politics of race.

HBO’s commitment to a kind of “relevance” programming is also bound up with its aims to brand itself in terms of discourses of corporate social responsibility that serve as a kind of alternative to public service broadcasting. Focusing particularly on HBO’s attention to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the 1980’s, Pepper (2011) suggests that as tensions over the future of funding for PBS mounted in the 1980’s climate of Reagan era deregulation, HBO posed itself as a possible (profitable) alternative to public service broadcasting by offering instead voluntary forms of socially responsible programming (see also Santo, 2008). Hence, although this programming was originally driven by a need to fill the network’s twenty-four hour programming schedule in a relatively inexpensive way (Pepper, 2011) and is not primarily how HBO reaps a profit, it is also harnessed as a form of producing brand value.

Situated within the context of HBO’s “relevance” programming that is tied to racial politics and socially responsible corporate branding, *Treme*’s evocation of Kessler’s “passionate engagement” can be understood as updating these branding strategies for the post-broadcast era. Drawing on its convergences with new media, *Treme* helps to facilitate a set of spatial practices of its imagined viewers that is not just a matter of creating a mirror that reflects the racialized “real” for its viewers to interpret and discuss around the water cooler but, rather, toward a passionately engaged viewer-citizen who is invited to intervene directly in raced relations in New Orleans. The appropriate metaphor here for what TV in this sense becomes is less a window or mirror and more of a vehicle—where TV is imagined as transportation (Sterne, 2006), or at
least as a kind of travel agent, rather than a medium of representation. These branding practices constitute mediated spatial practices within the city that position HBO and its brand in two ways: first, as a socially responsible resource for enabling the enactment of ethical citizenship; and second, as a kind of global conduit, existing in the no place/every place of the web, and facilitating the movement of its viewers to *someplace* in particular.

In addition to delivering their own “charity” to the Tremé neighborhood and to the city, then, HBO and the series also call forth the charity of its viewers through eliciting their spatial practices in the city. It is in this way that HBO’s brand works as a kind of productive vehicle for helping their viewers to enact practices of good citizenship, and, in so doing, to demonstrate a committed form of passionate engagement that HBO hopes will translate into new forms of brand value. These spatial practices are played out largely in terms of practices of tourism and ethical consumption but also in terms of engaged, interactive forms of social media such as blogging that help to connect individual spaces and places through the HBO brand.

**Ethical Tourism & Consumption**

Television was initially marketed as providing a kind of “window to the world,” facilitating armchair tourists who were invited to become mobile through viewing the world in the privacy of their own home (Spigel, 1992; Williams, 1974). Instead likening broadcast television to the guided bus tour, David Simon credits subscription based cable for enabling a “real kind of tourism,” where you can go to the level of the street and the bar and experience the real life of a particular place. Television, therefore, he argues can be a “healthy form of tourism,” where viewers can be immersed in a culture
that they would not have experienced otherwise (Cable Television and Marketing Summit (Simon), 2010). It is precisely toward this kind of tourism that Treme aims, where the viewer is given a view into the street-level life of the city, and they are encouraged to engage at an in-depth level with the city’s culture. But this in-depth engagement, passionate engagement, is not aimed at merely interpreting the city’s culture around the water cooler, but, rather, in encouraging viewers to get up off the couch and go on down to New Orleans to experience the culture themselves, but through the new eyes, rhythms, and senses provided by show. In this sense, HBO and the series are transformed from the representational medium of the tour—e.g. a “window to the world”—to instead a kind of transportive travel agent or vehicle that facilitates ethical tourism practices in material places through various forms of interactivity. This ethical tourism is a passionately engaged spatial practice that HBO hopes will bear out in brand loyalty and a sense of connection to the HBO brand.

Simon’s comment on Treme and street-level tourism elicits reminiscences of Michel de Certeau’s (1984) discussion of spatial practices, exactly the kind of antithesis to the strategic rendering of the city that was on display in The Wire. In the latter, viewers were made privy to how Baltimore is strategically rendered into a panoptic and disciplined space by multiple forces at a micro-political level, in large part facilitated through sophisticated media technologies (e.g. the wiretap from which the series takes its name). In contrast, Treme celebrates the struggles of those who take to the streets on an everyday level; it makes the viewer privy to how everyday people tactically negotiate the city streets in order to survive, celebrate, reap pleasure and pain, and how to live in a city that faces its own unique set of problems that are both similar to, but
also distinct from, those of Baltimore in *The Wire*. Streets compose a major part of the visual cinematography of the series. In almost each episode, the characters participate in a second line parade, where the tactical negotiation of city streets is navigated often with close-ups that display street signs and intersections. The streets also become a site of protest in the second season, dramatizing the real protest where thousands of individuals from different neighborhoods took to individual streets from their neighborhood and converged together at City Hall to call for an end to the post-Katrina crime wave (Season 2, Episode 5). Much of the action of the story also takes place out on the street. Street musicians’ Annie and Sonny play out much of their drama through their music in the streets of the French Quarter, also the site of police brutality in an episode in the first season involving the musician Antoine Batiste (Season 1, Episode 3). Batiste’s character also demonstrates the significance of the street-level view of the series in a number of episodes in the first season where he is shown arguing with cab drivers over the best streets to take to arrive at his back-a-town destinations. Ultimately, the street becomes the privileged view for the series’ imagined viewers.

But the street-level tourism that Simon speaks to also enjoins viewers to take to the streets off-screen, where the series’ street-level view becomes a guide of sorts that helps direct these more material navigations. In many ways, this kind of de Certeauian tourism becomes much more possible an age of convergent media. Similar to the aims of the Master Plan, media companies today attempt to capture the tactical negotiations of daily life, the street-level view of the pedestrian, not to deliver them the guided bus tour or media menu. Lev Manovich (2009) suggests de Certeau’s original distinction between tactics and strategies has been reversed, such that “the logic of tactics has now
become the logic of strategies” (p. 324). Media companies, he argues, are focused on flexibility and constant chance, designed for “hackability” and “remixability” in order to get users to input as much information of their lives into these platforms as possible. In so doing, the “ephemeral, transient, unmappable, and invisible become permanent, mappable, and viewable” (Manovich, 2009, p. 324). *Treme*, as both a textual aesthetic series as well as its implication in a variety of intertexts and interactive media technologies is offered up as a hackable, remixable form of interaction for viewers to put to use in navigating the streets of New Orleans. *Treme*’s narrative of the character’s spatial practices is complemented by a variety of intertexts that help to explain and give deeper insight into the particular places and cultural practices featured on the show. Viewers are invited to provide their own insights into these spaces and places as well by participating in the discussion in comments sections, on HBO’s and *Treme*’s Twitter feed, on their Facebook wall, and by utilizing these mediums to participate in podcast discussions. Thus, the seemingly oblique symbolism of the streets is brought to life for the viewer through their engagement with the broader histories, meanings, and significances of individual streets and neighborhood places. Without the series’ intertexts, most viewers would likely remain oblivious to the nuances of the street-level view and neighborhood cultural practices embedded in the show. Significantly, through viewer participation, it is not only the privileged street-level view of the show’s creators that then get communicated to other viewers, but the seemingly more grassroots and organic view from other viewers, down below, is communicated as well.

*Treme*’s intertexts include official HBO material on the HBO website and elsewhere as well as unofficial blogs and other web-based intertexts of viewers who
interact with the show. The HBO.com website offers an abundance of extra material, much of which is also available through iTunes and the weekly *Treme* podcast. These media offerings as well as blogs, social media, and the rollout of a number of new media strategies by HBO such as HBOGo and HBO Connect all position the series to facilitate passionate engagement by the viewer at this street-level view. Through these interactions, viewers are invited to view New Orleans differently as well as to take part, in a very real and material sense, in the reconstruction of the city through this viewpoint. This kind of interaction is quite different from that of the armchair tourist. Rather than providing a window to the world, HBO as post-broadcast television on a multitude of platforms facilitates a real kind of tourism that assists in getting people out of the living room and literally helps them navigate the street. But it does so in such a way that still aims to manage those interactions on the street in ways that will translate into brand value for HBO.

One way these touristic possibilities are facilitated is through HBO’s website, which offers material that deepens the plot and characters but also provides users insight into the city, the cultural practices, and musical performances featured on the show in ways that go beyond the textual and interpretive concerns of the show. Taken together, these extras provided by HBO go further than marketing the show to viewers or enticing them to gossip about the show’s plot and characters around the water cooler. Instead, they position HBO as a kind of travel agent, one that is capable of providing an insider’s guide to the city, a tourist map of sorts that promises an authentic and real experience of the city, highlighting the key spaces and places that the viewer can go.

“Behind-the-Scenes” extras, for example, feature a special series called “Walking with
Wendell,” where viewers tour the city at the level of the street and neighborhood with Wendell Pierce, the New Orleans’ born actor who stars as Antoine Batiste. In the “Walking with Wendell” series, Pierce makes it clear that the cultural practices displayed in the series are bound up with the neighborhoods and streets from which they arose. Giving viewers an insider’s guide to these spaces, Pierce’s tour emphasizes the significance of particular places and spaces, such as Congo Square and the Backstreet Cultural Museum. These spaces, at times only obliquely referenced or displayed on the show, take on new meaning and significance as Pierce enjoins the viewer to see clearly why these spaces are worthy of both preserving and visiting. Another “Behind-the-Scenes” extra, titled “Beyond Bourbon Street,” provides context to the history and culture of the Tremé neighborhood and various off the beaten path spaces in the city at the level of the street, which as the title indicates, promises a view of the city that is not normally offered on the guided tour bus. In addition to these extras, viewers can purchase extended music videos from the musical performances on the show through iTunes. Since the performances are recorded live on set, these purchases are unique opportunities for viewers to engage and immerse themselves in New Orleans culture and its unique places of interest.

In addition to extra material provided by HBO, Dave Walker’s Treme blog on nola.com, the online site for The Times Picayune, is particularly intriguing in how it draws in viewers to engage with the city on a more material level in ways that facilitate street-level tourism. The portion of his blog titled “Treme Explained” focuses entirely on Treme’s text, but not in the sense of unearthing an interpretation of the character’s motives and underlying themes, meanings, and symbolisms of the text. Rather, his blog
meticulously details each of the references in the series that may be oblique to viewers, such as the particular musicians or local personalities; bars, clubs, and local spaces; cultural practices; and political, social, and historical events that are either a part of or underlie each individual episode. Moreover, Walker’s blog invites viewers and readers to leave comments regarding anything he may have missed, and his posts are edited and reposted to include these comments and insights. A significant portion of his entries detail the spaces and places featured in the show that are hyperlinked so users can link to maps, websites, or other articles that can help viewers materially navigate New Orleans culture on the ground. These examples of tourism made possible by the show’s intertexts are also facilitated by a number of more explicit means of drawing tourists to Tremé that have emerged since the show’s airing as well, such as the emergence of various Tremé walking tours, as discussed in the previous chapter.

On the one hand, these examples are not so different from the ways television has always sought to provide armchair tourists their unique window to the world. Yet, they are distinct in that the expectation for viewer engagement and interaction goes beyond the living room. Kessler suggested, “When I watched Treme, I felt like I had never been to this city before” (Cable Television and Marketing Summit (Kessler), 2010). He stated that the show enabled him to learn about the second line, Mardi Gras Indians, funeral processions, culture, and music all in ways that was an “eye opening experience.” Thus, when he arrived in the city for the CTAM Summit, he looked at the city differently and navigated it differently as well. His comments are very telling regarding what the expectation is for viewers—Treme’s creators hope viewers will also come to see New Orleans through new eyes, not just on the screen, but when they come
to New Orleans as tourists well. This sense of seeing the city through new eyes is directed not only at potential tourists outside the city, but also internally at New Orleanians as well who are enjoined to see their own city through new eyes, or at least through a vision of the city that residents rarely see depicted on TV or film. In these ways, *Treme* helps to situate the HBO brand as facilitating a kind of ethical tourism in ways that help to produce the creation of a viewing community that goes beyond relationships borne out on screen or online. But HBO is situated in between its audience and the city (whether they are from the city or not) as the key mechanism that enables viewing the city through these new eyes. In so doing, HBO positions itself as a mechanism in overcoming the divisions and exclusions borne out by Katrina—its brand becomes emblematic of providing a connective tissue that helps bind people together by bringing them to new, previously excluded and marginalized spaces of racialized and cultural difference, in ways that ensures they will be “ethical” tourists. That is, the HBO brand guarantees viewers can enact their tourist sensibilities in ways that are distinguished from the “bad” kind of tourism chastised in the series denunciations of Bourbon Street or disaster tourism, such as in the episode where Batiste finds himself embarrassed to be playing a gig on Bourbon Street despite various characters assurances that “there is pride on Bourbon Street” (Season 1, Episode 2) or of its negative depictions of Katrina tours (discussed in the previous chapter).

Viewers who become tourists are thus enjoined to visit the sites featured on the show through their careful scavenging for its brand of “authentic” New Orleans provided through its texts and intertexts. Visiting these places and spaces of media production only makes that experience more intense, as being in the sites of production
might help to imbibe them in a kind of “aura” (Benjamin, 2008). These visits to media locations can become what Nick Couldry (2000) refers to as a “media pilgrimage,” where “spatial, symbolic, and imaginative boundaries overlap” (p. 55). The website, The A.V. Club, actually features a video segment on *Treme* in its series, *Pop Pilgrims: A Travel Show for Pop Culture Enthusiasts*, where the hosts travel to sites of media fame as “not just tourists” but rather as “pop pilgrims.” In the segment, the hosts go on a walking tour of the Tremé neighborhood with David Simon, where they note, “Really the only proper pop pilgrimage for *Treme* would be to move there” (The A.V. Club, n.d.). This statement is indicative of the ethics of the show that privileges an “authentic” view of the city as one that is fully immersed in the daily life of neighbors. On the *Treme* pop pilgrimage, the hosts travel to sites featured on the show, including St. Louis Cemetery, the Backstreet Cultural Museum, and the WWOZ radio station. While the overlap between spatial, symbolic, and imaginative boundaries evoked in these kinds of media pilgrimages might in one sense cause a rupture in the distinctions and hierarchies between the “ordinary” world of everyday life and the privileged “media world,” Couldry (2000) suggests it is more likely that these visits serve to reinforce those hierarchies and contribute to a sense that sites of media production are special. In directing viewers to become street-level tourists, then, viewers create a more intense and affective connection not necessarily to the spaces they visit, but, rather, their connections to these spaces are mediated through a stronger affective connection to *Treme* and the *Treme* and HBO brands which are now inextricably intertwined with these “special” places of media production.
In addition to inviting viewers to become ethical tourists, viewers are also called upon to engage in practices of ethical consumption when they tour spaces. Online interactivity is used as a tool in this sense toward the aim of directing the more material interactivities of viewers, rather than as an aim in itself. As Kessler explains, “Walking with Wendell” was aimed at getting the audience to engage not only with the show but also with the actual residents of Tremé. One of the goals, he suggests, was to get viewers to “purchase goods from these shopkeepers, buy the music” of the musicians featured on the show so that viewers could “not only engage with the show, but also engage with the residents of Tremé” (Cable Television and Marketing Summit (Kessler), 2010). *Treme* is thus offered up as a vehicle for building real, material communities through new forms of ethical consumption in the wake of Katrina. It is significant here that HBO claims that *Treme* enables viewers to consume things that they are not otherwise offered on the tour bus. The street-level tourism of the show enables viewers to consume local cultural products that are assumedly more “authentic” and hence more ethical. Moreover, since these material practices are aimed at those spaces and places that are otherwise underserved by the city’s and state’s networks of tourism and economic development, such practices of consumption become ethical activations of good (neoliberal) citizenship. In this sense, it is HBO that is the arbiter of ethics and authenticity—viewers must trust *Treme*, but perhaps more specifically David Simon, that what he will deliver to them fits within his branded ethos as invested in the plights of the marginalized, which he cultivated for himself as celebrity auteur in *The Wire*. By working to help to constitute these political forms of engagement in post-Katrina New Orleans, these spatial practices in turn serve to legitimate and bring into
fruition the ethical and politically relevant brand identity desired by HBO. The hope is that these material interactions at the level of the street will help to define HBO’s brand identity as something ethical and trustworthy, and, thus, that these forms of passionate engagement will translate into future brand loyalty.

Constructing *Treme*’s viewers as ethically engaged citizens means that passionate engagement is therefore also constructed as a technical means for addressing the entrenched social problems made manifest during Katrina. The ethical practices of viewers are put to work both as a way of addressing the shortfall in both public and private efforts to rebuild and revitalize these neighborhoods, which, in turn, produces brand value for HBO by associating it with a sense of ethical practice, trustworthiness, and responsibility. Tying the HBO and *Treme* brands to these spaces and places in the city, and the broader form of passionate engagement they help to constitute, therefore brings together the aims of cultural governance with those of the profit motive of the market.⁹

*Treme* therefore renders the HBO brand a platform for viewers to enact good citizenship and to participate in the rebuilding process not only as TV viewers, but also as ethical citizens. In so doing, HBO depends upon *Treme* to help constitute a kind of “citizen brand.” Ouellette (2012) defines the citizen brand through a case study of ABC’s launching of the Better Community initiative and branding strategy in the context of communitarian governmentality. She argues ABC’s constitution of a brand community is the interface through which citizens are instructed and directed on how to enact their ethical responsibilities to the appropriate community. She suggests that,
ABC brands an ethical disposition and suggested mode of civic conduct, not a product. To create this intangible commodity, it must move TV viewers beyond a passive engagement with the text (ABC programs) to the investments and actions that produce brand value. Because the value of the Better Community campaign is linked to the civic good, this means that performing one’s duty as a citizen within the ABC interface also produces an ethical surplus that can be recuperated as brand value. (Ouellette, 2012, pp. 69-70)

Similarly, *Treme* helps to imbibe the HBO brand with a kind of ethics and virtuosity not only through its text and the representations of politicized and ethical perspective on post-Katrina New Orleans, but in and through the forms of ethical conduct that are enjoined to take place through viewers’ relationships with the program that result in particular kinds of ethical practices in the city. The aims of the market (i.e. producing profit for HBO in the post-broadcast era) are thus brought into alignment with the aims of neoliberal governance—where television is instrumentalized as a vehicle for producing ethically engaged citizens and thus becomes a technical resource for both the city and HBO.

*Treme* & Interactive Media

In addition to street-level and ethical tourism and consumption facilitated by the socially responsible HBO corporate brand, *Treme*’s new media convergences in the form of blogs, social media, and coordination with HBO’s rollout of its streaming platform, HBOGo, also works to solicit passionate engagement as a spatial practice. These particular forms of engagement might be best understood as helping to provide the interfaces that enable HBO to recuperate the ethical surplus created in the engaged
spatial practices of viewers in terms of brand value. *Treme*’s new media interactivities enable spatial practices of viewers who move beyond the passive viewing of the street on their television screens to a more active engagement with the show’s writers, producers, actors, as well as with people on the level of the street in the city by creating affective connections with place-based communities. On the one hand, these practices feed into the production and promotion of ethical tourism discussed above because they offer further guides and maps of the city. But on the other hand, they also provide both virtual and actual connections between spaces and places both distant and near through linking them to New Orleans and Tremé as a kind of conduit of connection. The series and the HBO brand therefore provide resources for individuals to understand themselves as citizens and subjects in geographical terms, but in ways that are significantly distinct from how television has constituted the domestic and national subject in the past. Instead, the way in which HBO solicits passionate engagement in the form of blogs and social media suggests that new media convergences are being harnessed to situate HBO as a conduit that enables people to connect as global citizens who nonetheless have an investment in a particular, local place. This suggests that the new media interactions and convergences provided by HBO and *Treme* do not serve to collapse time/space or implode the local in the global, but, rather, work as a reconfiguration of global and local space and place. A global media brand is put to work towards the production of a sense of connecting people from various locales through a particular place. This helps HBO to materialize its brand in meaningful ways to viewers through their enactments of passionate engagements that create geographically intertwined communities. In aiming to be a platform for the production of community,
HBO seeks to exploit what Arvidsson (2005) refers to as the ethical surplus of community, “making the productive sociality of consumers evolve on the premises of brands; to make it unfold through branded consumer goods in such ways that makes it produce measurable (and hence valuable) forms of attention” (p. 251). In other words, HBO aims to direct and manage the interactive participation of individuals in building their communities in ways that can capture the experiences, emotions, and shared values as a form of passionate engagement that unfolds as part of the immersive HBO experience.

Together with *Treme’s* direction of individuals to ethical practices of tourism and consumption, *Treme’s* enjoinment of viewer interactivities responds to anxieties over new media’s placelessness by acting as a platform not for displacement (a poignant term in the post-Katrina context) but rather for emplacement. New media technology is often credited as a space-shifting technology (Graham, 2004). Particularly when applied to television, mobile viewing technologies have helped to un-tether television from its groundedness in domestic (or any particular) space and place (Dawson, 2011; Groening, 2010; Newman & Levine, 2012). This has led television to be imbied with properties of a kind of ephemeral placelessness, enabling both spatiotemporal fluidity as well as ubiquitous monitoring (Dawson, 2011). On the one hand this possibility for placelessness is held up as a savior of freedom through mobility, but, on the other hand, it is also posed as a ruse for new forms of subjectification to panopticism through constant monitoring (Andrejevic, 2007; Jenkins, 2006).

But television’s placelessness is also cause for anxiety of another sort—an anxiety over the loss of one’s ties to material communities and neighborhoods. Robert
Putnam’s (2000) now familiar claim that we are “bowling alone” suggests that community has been lost in postmodern society, as we now “bowl alone” online rather than together in our communities. Putnam contends that “bowling alone” produces a lack of social capital and a consequent diminishing of the democratic structures of society. He suggests that we have lost our real material connections to each other and our place-based communities. Indeed, it is precisely this kind of placelessness and consequent lack of structures of community and social capital that various scholars and policymakers fault for the effects of Katrina (Munasinghe, 2007; Procopio & Procopio, 2007). In the context of these rising anxieties over the loss of community and our connections to place, *Treme* might be viewed as offering up a solution by helping to connect dispersed communities through a particular material place. In so doing, it offers up a potential response to the anxieties over the placelessness and displacements following Katrina. Again, this seemingly charitable act of corporate social responsibility in creating communities and resolving the harms of Katrina, however, is filtered through the HBO brand. HBO positions itself as a “platform for action” (Arvidsson, 2005; Lury, 2004) for individuals to build material communities through the immaterial and virtual space of the web, but these material communities unfold in ways that are directed and managed by HBO.

As stated in the *Treme* panel at the CTAM Summit, HBO views viewer expression as a more organic and valuable form of engagement. Viewer expression is thought to represent strategies of marketing that germinate from the viewers themselves, from below, rather than by the network (Cable Television and Marketing Summit (Walker), 2010). They work in terms of what Henry Jenkins (2006) calls “expressions,”
rather than impressions, such that they demonstrate how the network and the series invites viewers to express themselves and their passion for the show rather than trying to impress upon them in a repetitive manner what the show is all about. On the one hand, these expressions are facilitated and managed officially through HBO. HBO “reaches out to the community” through Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and through their own social networking site, HBO Connect. Blogs, in particular, constitute a major part of these efforts to elicit passionate and active engagement amongst viewers. In contrast to the many blogs devoted to HBO’s earlier series’, the Treme blogs are somewhat unique in that the engagement they call forth takes place not through eliciting viewer interpretation of the text, but rather, through offering viewers an opportunity to actively engage with the city.

The official Treme blog, Inside Treme, is maintained by writer and story-editor, Lolis Eric Elie. Almost all of his blog entries serve as cultural and historical context for the series to provide more of an in-depth understanding and view of the city’s streets, culture, and history. Such an approach is perhaps indicative of his roots as a journalist at The Times Picayune, a job that produced the kinds of stories that he suggests were precisely why Treme wanted him in the first place (personal communication, March 15, 2010). His entries on the Inside Treme blog include, for example, discussions of the Vietnamese fishing community in New Orleans and how this impacts city space and its culture; the background and current status of the Danziger Bridge shootings case; and an interview with the disgraced former city council member Oliver Thomas. Each of these occupy central story lines in the show, and, in the case of Oliver Thomas who plays himself on the show, the characters, but Elie’s entries are not about interpreting
the texts of these particular scenes, storylines, or unearthing the characters’ motives. Instead, his entries provide the viewer with greater insight into the material realities in which these storylines are situated. For example, in his post on the Vietnamese fishing community, his lead paragraph opens with a brief discussion of the episode in which it first appears followed by an explanation that the “story of this small trade mirrors a much larger development taking place between fishers of various races. GO FISH, Gulf Organized Fisheries in Solidarity & Hope, has emerged as one of the most important organizations advocating on behalf of them” (Elie, 2011b). The remainder of the blog post is devoted to detailing these advocacies. Elie concludes with a discussion of the significance of the Vietnamese community to New Orleans culture, history, and particular neighborhoods, and he provides links to help readers further engage these cultural intricacies.

In addition to Elie’s official blog, viewers are also invited to passionately engage with Treme by writing their own blogs, many of which are linked to the official HBO blog, as well as commenting on the blogs of others. A number of viewers launched their own blogs, and numerous media and television bloggers include Treme as a regular blog theme, such as Salon.com, NPR, and the more academically oriented blog Antennae. Though there are only a few viewer blogs that are either devoted entirely to the series or have a significant portion of the blog devoted to the series (with Watching Treme, Sound of Treme, and Back of Town being the most visible), a variety of bloggers on television, popular culture, urban politics, and other topics have taken to blogging the series as well. Various media organizations in New Orleans (e.g. Offbeat Magazine, Nola.com, and Basin Street Records) also regularly blog the series. Although
many bloggers blog the series episodically with an emphasis on the textual and
symbolic elements of the series, readers’ responses tend to hinge on the extra-textual
elements that link the show to the materiality of New Orleans. Moreover, a number of
bloggers displaced by Katrina blog *Treme* as a way to reconnect to the city via the
series. Such is the case for Maitri Erwin, a blogger born in Kuwait of Indian descent
who lived in New Orleans and left shortly after Katrina (Erwin, n.d.). Now living in
Houston, TX, Erwin suggests she writes her *Treme* blog, Back of Town, “for writers
and readers who know and love New Orleans” (Erwin, n.d.). In this way, *Treme* has
become a kind of mechanism for connecting those in New Orleans’ diaspora back to
home. Whether through reading others’ blogs or writing one’s own, viewers are able to
connect with and ponder over, in a passionately engaged way, issues central to the city
from an insiders’ perspective with others in their community. Other bloggers, such as
the blogger who created the Watching *Treme* from Seattle site, have never been to New
Orleans (Cable Television and Marketing Summit (Walker), 2010). The Watching
*Treme* from Seattle blogger instead began with an interest in the show and then only
visited the city after the end of season one. As the blog’s title suggests, there is
something very important about the geography of the show, especially in how it elicits
making connections between distant spaces and places with New Orleans. It calls forth
an investment in movement, in mobilizing viewers from these distant spaces and places
to connect with each other in New Orleans.

Passionate engagement might also be elicited by the promise of these blogs to
connect viewers with the series’ producers. Maitri’s blog in particular boasts a large
readership that includes David Simon and Eric Overmyer (Walker, 2011b). Thus,
through the comments section on Erwin’s and others’ blogs, viewers can voice their opinions and can likely know that writers, producers, and other people involved in the show are reading them and sometimes respond to them. Through these blogs, then, viewers are able to move beyond the passive viewing of the street on their television screens to a more active engagement with the show’s writers, producers, actors, as well as with people on the level of the street in New Orleans who are also commenting on, or writing, these blogs.

Though Watching *Treme* from Seattle is certainly distinct from the Back of Town blog, both blogs share an important characteristic—they both draw on *Treme* as a kind of conduit to link people from various spaces through the no place of the web to a very particular someplace. Ultimately, through each of these blogs, viewers are able to engage with the city beyond what they are offered as mere viewers of the show. These blogs become a place of connection, of community making, but they link to a real place. They link to a city through which the series and its intertexts offer an intimate view and map, where viewers can meet and realize these connections in real, material form. One place in which bloggers can meet to realize these real material connections, made through their relationship to New Orleans, is at the Rising Tide Conference. Rising Tide is a conference of bloggers who began blogging about New Orleans in the aftermath of the Katrina event. As its website explains, Rising Tide aims to be “a ‘real life’ demonstration of Internet activism as we continue to recover from a massive failure of government on all levels” (“Rising Tide,” n.d.). The 2010 conference featured a panel on *Treme*, where bloggers were invited to engage with producer Eric Overmyer, writer
Lolis Eric Elie, Davis Rogan (the inspiration for the DJ Davis character), and Times Picayune columnist Dave Walker (Erwin, 2010).

The *Treme* blogs therefore go beyond creating the kind of expected interactivities of any television show in creating online and virtual communities. Instead, they help to constitute interactivity as passionate engagement that is bound up with creating actual, material communities—in connecting real people to real, material places. But that connection is predicated upon *Treme* as the vehicle for making those connections possible. It is in and through the TV series that individuals are connected and material communities are built. HBO becomes a platform for materializing communities and thus for resolving anxieties over the potential placelessness and disconnection that is imagined to be produced online and from the Katrina event. But that community unfolds within the contours of the *Treme* series. HBO is thus banking on this unfolding as translating into a more intense connection to the series, and hence, more intense and loyal connections to the HBO brand.

In addition to blogging, HBO’s testing of its new social networking site, HBO Connect also demonstrates HBO’s desire to serve as a conduit for connecting people through the web to lived, material space. Billed as a “social TV experience” (Bergman, 2011), HBO Connect enables real-time visualizations and connections between users, viewers, and HBO content. Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of HBO Connect, however, is the “pulse” section of the site, which visually maps users discussions by connecting their location in physical geography (by city, state, and nation) to the HBO programs they are discussing on the web. By clicking on the image of the individual program, the user can then view what was said by whom and from where, and users can
then connect to those conversations elsewhere on the web. Though *Treme* thus far rarely makes it onto the “pulse” section (though perhaps HBO believes there is hope for it to do so in the future since *The Wire* still makes it occasionally), this feature nonetheless very clearly demonstrates HBO’s desire to understand itself as located not only in the virtual world of the web’s non-place/everyplace but also as situated as a technological vehicle for connecting people from somewhere to other places.

It might also be useful to consider here the role of HBO’s new streaming platform, HBOGo. Introduced in the spring of 2011, HBO offers HBOGo free to subscribers where they can stream HBO content in a way similar to what the online streaming and DVD rental entity Netflix offers for its online subscription (Duffy, 2011). Given that HBO has done its best to hold out its content from licensing to Netflix in order to encourage subscriptions, HBOGo is a significant attempt by HBO to stay relevant to the ways in which people are watching TV today on multiple platforms, and, as its name suggests, on the go. HBO subscribers can access HBOGo on their home computer, laptop, or XBox as well as on their mobile device, iPods, or iPads. HBOGo thus demonstrates the network’s foray into convergence through cross-platform industry cooperation and collaboration as well. As an article in *The Economist* explains, HBOGo is one way for HBO to hedge its bets on the future of television, as it provides one possible way that the network might be able to circumvent the entire pay-TV cable system in the future by enabling online subscriptions to its content (“HBO and the Future of Pay TV,” 2011). *Treme* was one of the featured offerings in HBOGo’s launch, along with Simon’s other series, *The Wire* and *Generation Kill*. One can imagine that the hope is that the Simon brand, who Kessler claims HBO is in the business of, will
help to draw viewers into using the new platform as well as to watching Simon’s new series. What I want to emphasize here, though, is the way in which HBOGo hinges on new media convergences’ reconfigurations of space and place. While the platform very clearly depends on a conception of the mobile subject “on the go,” perhaps untied to any place in particular, a global citizen of sorts, the possibility of HBOGo for *Treme* viewers is also distinct. HBOGo enables viewers to play episodes on their mobile device as they navigate the streets of New Orleans. In this sense, the series text is reconfigured through this new media device as a map which viewers can interact with on the ground, at the level of the street and neighborhood, in the city.

Thus, HBOGo, as well as HBO’s and *Treme*’s other forms of new media convergences and interactivities offer *Treme* viewers the possibility of mobility, but it also enables them to become more attached and tied to a particular place. It offers an opportunity to navigate the city as a kind of de Certeauian pedestrian who defies the disciplining nature of Google’s or New Orleans Convention and Visitor Bureau’s maps. This seems to be very different from the kind of mobile privatization Raymond Williams (1974) discussed in relation to the advent of television in the early 1950s, where television responded to new desires to have both privacy and forms of mobility to stay connected to the outside world. Yet, *Treme*’s new media geographies also seem different from what Lynn Spigel (2001) terms privatized mobility, where middle class ideals of transport, personal freedom, and citizenship inverted the ideal of mobile privatization by imagining television as able to create a privatized space while being mobile as well. As Williams and Spigel argue, these aspects of televisions’ mobile privatizations and privatized mobilities helped to shape a sense of national and domestic
citizenship in the wake of shifting and expanding senses of global life, domesticity, and gender and sexual norms in post-WWII society.

What, then, is the implication for constructions of contemporary citizenship indicated by the mobility, placefulness, and localness that are offered by *Treme* in its convergence with new media? It seems as though *Treme’s* form of passionate engagement provides an antidote to the criticisms engendered by new media’s virtuality and its supposed collapse of time/space and the virtual/actual. The communities borne out through viewer interactivities are offered up as solutions to the displacements of Katrina and respond to anxieties regarding the erosion of public space and public life as it is replaced by private life in the virtual. Passionately engaged interactivity transforms the virtual into a mechanism for connecting people in the material and public realm and thus a solution to the problematizations of Katrina. Demonstrating how the aims of governance and the market come together, these enactments of citizenship and community building are also productive potentiality that can be harnessed for HBO’s bottom line in the form of brand value. Here, the description for the CTAM Summit panel that suggests *Treme* has something to teach cable marketers about creating an audience “from neighborhood to nation” (and I would add, to globe, given that the series is globally syndicated to the UK, Indonesia, and beyond) becomes quite telling of the way in which post-broadcast television participates in constructing imaginings of the global/local space and its mobilities at the contemporary conjuncture. It suggests that *Treme* offers up a vision of television in the post-broadcast era that enables individuals to be both and at the same time mobile and in place, both global and local, both public and private, and in both the virtual and the actual.
How this translates into brand value, however, is a tricky matter. For, as Arvidsson (2005) notes, the ethical surplus created out of the interactivities of engaged and active viewers must be transformed into something measurable and mappable in order to be exploited in the form of brand value. He suggests that this is orchestrated through brand management,

The purpose of brand management is precisely to anticipate the ways in which consumers use goods; to inscribe certain ways of acting and relating in them. This way, managerial power becomes an immanent component of the very environment in which consumers act. As they become subjects, brands become valuable. (Arvidsson, 2005, p. 248)

Absent brand management, audience interactivities can be unpredictable and even damaging to the brand. Brand management therefore works to direct interactivity in “appropriate” ways to ensure a profit.

HBO and Treme deploy brand management techniques in a couple of different ways that capture the productive sociality, ethical surplus, and community borne out through the spatial practices and interactivities of its viewers. A key technique of brand management is the use of auteurism, and particularly the David Simon brand, as a way of directing, shaping, and managing viewer interactivities. Newman and Levine (2012) note that showrunners like Simon (who often simultaneously create, produce, and write) are today’s television auteurs, and their status as creative auteurs helps to define the televisual brand. This auteurism extends beyond any individual text “to the promotions and ancillary products made to sustain transmedia properties as branded franchises, to the critical sites so central to the shaping of the popular imagination of television as a
newly respectable medium” (Newman & Levine, 2012, p. 55). Auteurism thus ensures that viewer interactivity, and in this case spatial practices as constitutive of that interactivity, are also understood as inextricably intertwined with the branded franchise associated with the creative auteur. David Simon’s status as a television auteur was captured in the success of *The Wire*, and the cultural cachet attached to that status was further solidified when he won the MacArthur Genius Award in 2011 in the midst of filming and promoting *Treme* (Associated Press, 2010). *New York Times Magazine’s* review of *Treme* titled the article, “The HBO Auteur,” where the series was attributed almost entirely to Simon’s creative genius (Mason, 2010). The article details how Simon’s creative vision circumscribes the entirety of the production, as he has his hands in every scene, every shot, and often rewriting entire scripts. Simon’s auteurism is often part of the story of HBO in defining its brand (as evidenced in Kessler’s statements above regarding Simon being the HBO brand) as a special place to incubate creative talent, innovation, and the world of the creative mind. This kind of auteurism seems to stand in stark contrast in a sense to *Treme*’s articulation to the roll-out of HBO’s interactive technologies, which invite viewers to become authors in a sense through their own interactions with the series. Simon even notes at the Cable Television and Marketing Summit that, though he likes interacting with fans, he is ultimately going to do what he wants to do with his project. He was chastised in the press for saying that he was “wearying” of new fans of *The Wire* who took up the series to debate what he saw as insignificant issues (e.g. who’s cooler—Stringer Bell or Omar) rather than engaging with the series’ broader political statements (Dibdin, 2012; Pappademas, 2012). Simon therefore is notorious for taking a hard stand on not curtailing to fan pressure. This
seemingly contradictory position on fan communities in light of HBO’s increasing emphasis on interactivity and material and spatial interaction in New Orleans is made more consistent, however, when considering the deployment of auteurism as a technique of brand management. Simon’s authorial position and his cultural status and own brand value help to reel-in potentially unpredictable and un-*Treme*-like interactivities and forms of community building. As auteur, he becomes the sole author of the text,$^{12}$ and as the sole author, the interactivities of viewers unfold within the contours of his vision. From the forms of ethical tourism and consumption to the material communities built through interactive technologies, Simon’s authorial vision and ethics helps to guide, shape, and ensure that this community building unfolds within viewer’s affective sentiments about Simon’s own politics and his vision. Viewer responses and interactions are therefore more easily stitched back to HBO and to *Treme*, as they are shaped by the controlling trope of the creative auteur.

In addition to Simon’s auteurism, the *Treme* text as well as its practices of production in the city (as discussed in the previous chapter) provides what Arvidsson (2005) refers to as “ambience,” or the backdrop for interaction in which materializing communities takes shape by providing an environment which helps to anticipate the agency of consumers (p. 245). Taken in conjunction with Simon’s auteurism, the text and production create an ambience that helps to define viewers’ interactivities and spatial practices as ethical. The series thus acts as the arbiter of what defines ethical interactions in New Orleans, both drawing from and helping to reproduce HBO’s brand as politically relevant and ethically engaged, socially responsible, corporate citizenship. The series’ implication in the racial politics of the city is therefore less about its
representations of racial realism, and more about the ways in which “race” is deployed as a technology to create brand identity and, consequently, brand value. That is, the text and production practices that invest themselves in a particular politics of race become the ambience through which viewers are enjoined to view themselves as politically and socially engaged citizens. Both the text and the series’ spatial practices like on-location shooting help to reorganize space in the city that, though it invites creative and tactical negotiation of city space, aims to also anticipate those interactions as a means of deriving value. As Arvidsson suggests,

Brand management makes use of biopolitical governance: a governance that works from below by shaping the context in which freedom is exercised, and by providing the raw materials that it employs. In the case of brand management this occurs mainly through the construction of particular ambiences that aim to shape what consumers produce. There are many ways of doing this. Physical space is one medium that has gained in popularity recently. (2005, p. 246)

Thus, the series’ text and spatial practices of production can be viewed as forms of creating this kind of ambience that shapes the context in which viewer interactivity can unfold in anticipated ways. In the text, this might be seen in the way in which it upholds certain forms of New Orleans culture as “authentic” and its decisions about which places to highlight specifically. The text therefore becomes a kind of arbiter regarding whether or not viewer interactions and spatial practices in the city are ethical and “authentic.” In so doing, it reinforces the centrality of HBO and the Treme brands as the key connective glue that makes material connections and expressions of community meaningful. For HBO, the hope is that this sense of community can translate into Treme
having a “long tail” (Cable Television and Marketing Summit (Kessler), 2010) in ways that are similar to the kind of brand work done by *The Wire*. Like *Treme*, *The Wire* had few viewers, and its relevance for the HBO brand was realized later with DVD sales, syndication, merchandising, and, most significantly, brand identity. Similarly, the hope is that the ethical surplus of material community and spatial practices produced by *Treme* will translate into a brand identity that will lead to future streams of revenue.

*Treme*’s roll-out of its own forms of interactive technologies play a significant role in managing the interactivities and spatial practices of its viewers in order to transform passionate engagement into brand value as well. HBO Connect and HBOGo provide forms of interaction that are directly shaped by HBO and can therefore help to ensure that interaction unfolds in ways that are productive for HBO. Moreover, by providing those platforms, HBO more directly positions itself as the key arbiter of community building. Furthermore, in viewer interaction on these sites, HBO can mine users’ data to more directly market future content to its subscribers. HBO Connect is particularly significant in this regard especially because one does not need a subscription to participate. Mining the non-subscribers’ use on this site can therefore become a way of learning how to ensnare these users into future subscriptions.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I argued that viewing *Treme* as a spatial practice helps to elucidate the work it does for HBO’s brand in ways that go beyond its textual representations and production of HBO’s signature “quality” anti-TV brand. Instead, I suggested that by acting as a form of corporate social responsibility and community building and by eliciting the spatial practices of viewers in the forms of ethical tourism,
consumption, and interactivity in more material terms, *Treme* helps to reconstitute the HBO brand in the form of passionate engagement. As I hoped to have emphasized, passionate engagement depends upon a refiguring of HBO’s “relevance” programming and sense of corporate social responsibility for the new media era. *Treme*’s viewers are enjoined to not only participate in online discussions and interactivities, and the series itself is expected to elicit more than viewer interpretation about racial politics and urban decay around the water cooler. The HBO brand and *Treme*’s convergences with new media technologies instead invite viewers to participate as platforms for not only *interaction* but literal and material *engagement* in city space.

It is hopefully clear by these examples that these spatial practices go beyond the ideological interpellation of viewers regarding space/place within the text. It is a material engagement of media that hinges on a particular connection between the brand, the city, and its viewers that enables spatial practice and production in a particular, local place and neighborhood. *Treme* and HBO’s solicitation of viewers’ passionate engagement therefore suggest the need to go beyond the ideological and representational critiques that are the standard for HBO’s programming. In contrast to the arguments put forth by Ethridge (2008) who, in discussing *The Wire*’s relationship to the city of Baltimore, criticizes the “moral appeal” made by the series because it “lacks an articulation of an affirmative political project” (p. 163), it is clear that the same cannot be said of *Treme* when one looks beyond its representations on screen. When viewed as a spatial practice, *Treme* does in fact offer a political project through its moral appeal. Whereas Ethridge (2008) suggests that *The Wire* does not give viewers “direction in using their agitation for action,” *Treme*, especially through the gateway of
the HBO brand, does provide viewers with such possibilities for political action. Viewers are invited not only to engage with the moral politics of the show’s text through practices of interpretation, but they are also invited to become active and ethical citizens engaged in the politics of the city through practices of ethical consumption, tourism, and materializing community connections, and HBO provides multiple venues for facilitating these practices.

In so doing, *Treme* points to a merging of the aims of neoliberal governance with the aims of HBO’s profit in the post-broadcast era. On the one hand, HBO benefits from these engagements in the form of brand value by managing the interactivities and spatial practices of viewers through bounding them to the creative auteur, creating an ambience, and providing certain new media platforms of interaction like HBO Connect. In so doing, the passionate engagement elicited in the material practices of viewers can be measured and therefore harnessed in helping to produce HBO’s future identity (i.e. what they mean when they say “It’s HBO”) as well as future potential sources of revenue in the form of diversification of sales and subscriptions. On the other hand, however, these ethical surpluses of community building and direct, material engagements in the city are also productive in the aims of neoliberal governance. That is, the communities created by and through *Treme* can be instrumentalized as ways of resolving the harms of Katrina. They are offered up as new forms of creating social capital, of eliciting more direct and ethical involvement in the city. Again, the particular ways in which these interactions and engagements with the city, its space, and citizens is in many ways directed and managed through the ethical politics of *Treme* so that
these more governmental aims also then unfold in and through the HBO brand and can therefore be harnessed as an ethical surplus in the form of brand value.

This could in some sense be viewed as a progressive form of political engagement that uses the market as a way of pushing through a more radical political agenda—Simon’s (2007) anti-capitalist politics as demonstrated in his talk at Loyola College on “The End of Empire” and the series’ emphasis on issues of affordable housing and police brutality are perhaps welcome ways to manage how viewers interact with the city. However, because Treme is also inserting HBO as the arbiter of constructing community, the interactions of viewers in the city space become mediated in and through the HBO brand. Connectivity to the spaces, places, and communities therefore occurs not as a form of uniting neighborhoods across dispersed decaying cities around issues of police brutality and affordable housing but instead as uniting individuals and neighborhoods as communities through HBO. This risks drawing us away from building collective activist solidarity and instead redeploy and instrumentalizes those potential affective connections through a commercial medium in ways that are likely to generate a profit. Viewers are perhaps therefore more likely to build affective communities that celebrate New Orleans “authentic” culture rather than collective actions to demand entitlements. In the concluding chapter, I delve further into these more normative and ethical stakes of the series and its production of spatial practices. I query, what are the consequences of these potential elisions of more activist forms of collective solidarity and, how, if at all, might Treme be harnessed in more directly politicized and activist terms?
Conclusion

In the preceding pages, I hoped to have made the case that *Treme* brings into focus the broader and more material questions media scholars might bring to the work of media in contemporary cities. Considered in the context of the shifting terrain of post-broadcast and post-racial television and the increasingly tactical approach to entrepreneurializing the creative city, I proposed theorizing media as a spatial practice, where scholars are enjoined to interrogate the dispersed and material ways that media participates in the production and reproduction of urban space. *Treme* brings these factors into focus as it is a production shot entirely on-location, invests itself in the city as a socially responsible corporate neighbor, and invites viewers to materially engage in the city as well. It is therefore not only its text that instructs viewers or city residents on how to conduct themselves as citizens in the city, but it is also its material practices that are emplaced in the city of New Orleans that enact these practical and technical means for residents and viewers alike to participate in rebuilding post-Katrina New Orleans. Theorizing media as a spatial practice therefore brings attention to the ways in which *Treme*’s practices in the city are embodied and embodying practices, and, in particular, how it participates directly in not only representing space but also in governing, regulating, and organizing neighborhood space as *habitus* and locality.

Though this does not mean that theories of representation no longer matter, the way in which they matter is perhaps distinct from how media, and particularly television, scholarship tends to theorize media’s relationship to cities. As I argued in Chapter 1, New Orleans’ aim to become Hollywood South along with shifts in post-
broadcast and “post-racial” television and neoliberal creative cities strategies position
*Treme* to participate in New Orleans in ways that were unimaginable during *Frank’s Place*. The “place” of New Orleans for *Treme* is not just a symbolic signifier that makes its way on screen and invites viewers to contemplate racialized forms of identity and ideology. Rather, *Treme*’s material interactions with and participations in New Orleans significantly influence what happens on screen. What happens in New Orleans matters in a way for *Treme* that it did not for *Frank’s Place*. Specifically, in Chapter 2, I highlighted some of the ways in which this mattering comes into play in the production process, such as in *Treme*’s spatial practices of on-location shooting, local hiring, tourism and gentrification, philanthropy and charity, and neighborliness. In each of these examples, I demonstrated how these are indeed practices tied to creating an “authentic” representation of New Orleans on screen, but these practices also participate in the production of the “authentic” city itself by implementing the post-Katrina rationalities of the New Orleans’ new Master Plan. Moreover, *Treme*’s viewers are called upon to do more than contemplate and interpret representations of New Orleans around the water cooler as well. In Chapter 3, I argued viewers are called upon instead to also actively participate and engage with the city through tourism, consumption, and interactive community building. The HBO and *Treme* brands are positioned as vehicles for enabling that participation to be material, “ethical,” and “authentic,” where the series provides not just a “window to the world” but instead positions the HBO brand as a kind of travel agent or vehicle of material community building. Taken together, Chapters 2 and 3 demonstrate how the aims of governing the post-Katrina city and those of the profit making media industries are brought into productive alignment. That is,
Treme’s spatial practices of production and those of its viewers are productive for both rebranding and rebuilding New Orleans in the wake of Katrina’s racial/class/spatial antagonisms as well as for rebranding and producing brand value for HBO in the post-broadcast era.

These spatial practices of Treme, both in the form of engaged viewer interactivities and in the practices of production, call upon media scholars to ask a different set of questions of Treme than those that were asked of Frank’s Place, questions that necessitate analyses that go beyond the text. Again, this does not mean that Treme’s text and its representational signifiers don’t matter. What it means is that Treme’s representations are also inextricably intertwined with its more material spatial practices. In order to discern the work of Treme’s text, then, I suggest that its representations must also be contextualized in its broader and more dispersed spatial practices in the city. I thus hope that in proposing to consider media as a spatial, rather than solely a representational practice, this dissertation contributes to a sharper focus on the relationships between media, race, and space at the current conjuncture, and in New Orleans in particular, where vernacular practices of the neighborhood are brought into alignment with the aims of global media industries, urban planners, cultural policy, and agents of city government. Nevertheless, Treme represents just one example of HBO’s new branding efforts as well as the way in which New Orleans is utilizing media industry to rebuild and rebrand itself. Treme is perhaps an exception in the way in which media interacts with cities and in HBO’s line up. It is indicative of an immersion in city space that is perhaps unlikely to be replicated in other cities and in other programs. However, as I argued in the Introduction, it is precisely Treme’s
reproducibility that is of significance. In an era in which cities are starting to eschew the “best practices” approach of the creative city in favor of more indigenous forms of entrepreneurializing creative neighborhoods as creative placemaking, and the TV industry too is looking for new ways to revolutionize its potentials for unique and immersive experiences, Treme emerges as perhaps the leading example of how these aims can be brought into alignment. Whether or not it will in the long run produce brand value for HBO or the city is still as yet to be determined. Therefore, it is still also up for debate as to the implications of Treme’s dispersed interventions, both in its production oriented practices and in the practices it calls forth from viewers, into post-Katrina New Orleans.

On the one hand, Treme demonstrates a continuity with the ways in which media industries have been called upon as agents of urban renewal in the past, as with the 1980’s and 1990’s urban planning and branding strategies of Fantasy City and Disneyfication. Similarly, the turn of post-Katrina New Orleans to jazz as well as the emerging industries of TV and film are also a continuation of the city’s past efforts to utilize these industries to revitalize neighborhoods, rebrand the city’s image, and to constitute forms of urban and cultural governance that contend with the tensions in the city. Yet, Treme also points to a shift in how media is imbricated in spatial planning and city branding. Treme is called upon not as a culture industry that can impose meanings on space but, rather, as a direct and active force for creating local space as meaning generative. Treme works on the ground, as a spatial practice of production, toward entrepreneurializing the neighborhood to generate its own meanings and representations. In this sense, Treme helps to employ what Power and Scott (2004) refer
to as a second generation of place-marketing policy approaches, where,

The objective is less the construction or redevelopment of facilities that will entice visitors to flock into a given center, as it is to stimulate the formation of localized complexes of cultural industries that will then export their outputs far and wide. (p. 8)

But *Treme* aims for New Orleans and the Tremé to export not the spectacular practices and cultures of representations past, but, rather, the more local, vernacular, racialized, and differentiated practices that have for so long been excluded and denigrated in the cultural policy of the city in the past. As a result, *Treme* points to a different set of stakes than the way in which media scholarship has addressed media branding and urban renewal practices in the past.

It is in this sense that I want to distinguish *Treme* as a spatial practice that constitutes what I referred to as a media neighborhood rather than the creative, or media, city. This shift in terminology aims to point to the increasingly intensive qualities of today’s cities, where the focus is not on the city as a whole but, rather, on the direct productivity and potentiality of very particular places, spaces, and neighborhoods. *Treme*’s constitution of the media neighborhood points to the coming together of local, vernacular, resistive, and tactical practices and global, commodifying, and dominating strategies of the culture industry. The ways in which these seemingly oppositional forces align in post-Katrina New Orleans speaks to new spatial forms of governance in the city. The creative or media city is often critiqued for the ways in which cities’ cultural policies prioritize more spectacular forms of creative culture and the creative industries, marginalizing and excluding forms of vernacular creativity and
uncreative practice (Edensor et al., 2010). *Treme’s* media neighborhood speaks instead to a potential shift in media based urban renewal and branding practices that emphasize inclusionary practices, where all neighborhoods, not just those that are already viewed as creative, are incorporated into a kind of new map and plan for the city. In *Treme*, each neighborhood is made into a potential site for mediation, not just a particular neighborhood. This is all carried out through an emphasis on helping to spur and cultivate the productive and creative qualities that are assumed to be embedded in the neighborhood and its inhabitants—both vernacular and uncreative practices—as the series helps to entrepreneurialize neighborhood inhabitants toward both economic and social ends in their neighborhood. Further, the entrepreneurialized media neighborhood is aimed to extend to viewers as well. Viewers are not assumed as passive or even armchair tourists, but rather, as active and interactive consumer/producers. They are invited to carry out embodied practices not only through practices of spectatorship and social practices of watching, but also in their more direct and material connections and interactions in the city. Again, *Treme* is perhaps more of an exception and an experiment, but it nonetheless offers a potential testing ground for how media industries and cities might look to creating future interconnections. Moreover, because its production practices make all neighborhoods in New Orleans into sites for potential mediation, *Treme* in particular implicates how New Orleans approaches the ties between media as a creative industry and vernacular neighborhood spaces and practices. As a result, it is important to ask, what are the consequences of this shift for the production of local space, local culture, and the right to the city, and perhaps more aptly, the right to return, in New Orleans, in particular? What are the stakes of its
enlistment of viewers’ “ethical” community building and interactions in these spaces as well? In other words, what are the ethical implications of Treme’s spatial practices and the media neighborhood? It is these more ethical questions that the remainder of the Conclusion considers.

Toward an Ethics of Neighboring

As Treme just finished up filming its third season, it is as yet unclear what the consequences of Treme’s material practices will mean for the Tremé neighborhood, New Orleans more generally, and for the future of HBO in the long term. I first consider some of Treme’s possibilities and limits, particularly taking up its emphasis on vernacular and marginalized cultural practices. Suggesting that Treme’s understanding of its political and ethical responsibilities is largely circumscribed by a precarious subscription to corporate social responsibility, I ask to what extent the series’ spatial practices might be politicized to invoke an ethics of neighboring and neighborhood that can make a call for the right to return. I examine specifically Treme’s involvement in debates over historic preservation and demolition, suggesting ways in which this example speaks to how Treme might be harnessed to produce this ethical call.

On the one hand, Treme’s entrepreneurialization of neighborhood space, local culture, and indigenous practices through its spatial practices of production provides vital resources to residents and business owners that has, in the past, neither been given readily by the city and state nor by private corporate investment or philanthropy. Cultural institutions like the Backstreet Cultural Museum, local meeting places, restaurants, bars, and music venues therefore receive both financial benefit and cultural validation through their connection to the show. The series therefore has played a role
in rebuilding vernacular neighborhood space in ways that would have otherwise been excluded or denied by the dominant rebuilding strategies by corporate and governmental agencies. Likewise, *Treme* has played an important role in cultural revitalization, especially of the music industry (Rawls, 2011). These practices perhaps present a welcome shift to an emphasis on indigenous forms of local culture from the more spectacular and commodified cultural promotions of Bourbon Street and the like. Moreover, the *Treme* production team’s commitment to socially responsible practices of production, at least in theory, demarcate it from many of the Hollywood productions that have moved into New Orleans. In the case of productions like *Memphis Beat* (TNT, 2010-2011), which staged New Orleans as Memphis, for example, these productions have little at stake in terms of how they are seen by residents in the city. They are thus less likely to feel the same kind of responsibility toward the particular spaces and places in which they film than does a production like *Treme* who depends upon these spaces and its individuals to help promote its “authentic” narrative of space, place, and culture.

Yet, *Treme*’s spatial practices also pose some serious problems as well. It is unclear whether the benefits that go along with the show’s hiring and labor practices of local cultural workers, for example, is something that will extend beyond the show to benefit a larger portion of musicians and other cultural practitioners in the city. Even now, it is largely the musicians that are employed by the show who are offered more gigs both in and out of the city. Though there may be greater desire for New Orleans-based and -styled music, the show has not produced many tangible benefits but for a few select musicians (Rawls, 2011). Moreover, though the series has hired a number of local crew workers, the majority of the above-the-line workers remain non-New
Orleanians. Producers also state that they have a difficult time finding experienced below-the-line local workers because there is so much production going on in the city. This points to the need for expanding the educational and training opportunities for local film production, but in the face of sweeping cuts to higher education programs throughout the state (Moller, 2011) it is unclear how this could be achieved. Though the producers’ charitable donations to training and technical programs to help fertilize local film production might be admirable, I am doubtful that relying on this kind of corporate “social welfare” will provide any long-term or meaningful solution to employment shortages or a lack of educational opportunities. In this sense, there seems to be few meaningful ways that the series helps to promote the establishment of the kind of local, homegrown film production culture that can benefit a broader array of individuals and organizations both financially and culturally rather than returning most of the profits back to Hollywood. This is further exacerbated by the fact that Treme has not built any permanent production facilities in New Orleans, but, rather, has only built temporary facilities for staging its own scenes which it takes down after production (E. Overmyer, personal communication, March 15, 2011). Thus, while producers claim that giving back to the community is important and that one of the significant ways that they can give back is in helping to bring up crew and facilitate future production in the city, they provide few tangible or sustainable means for doing so. Indeed, this is the hallmark of neoliberal philanthropy, as it provides a “hands up” to entrepreneurialism rather than a “hand out” to social entitlement.

Moreover, in the particular case of the Tremé neighborhood, a concern is that the show’s relationship to practices of tourism and both its promotion of and
implication in materially cultivating and entrepreneurializing vernacular cultural practices will contribute to gentrification. This is especially a concern in light of the series’ links to the city’s urban planning strategies that aim not at providing more affordable housing but rather in entrepreneurializing the poor into creative artists. As Zukin (2008) notes, culturally and artistically based strategies for urban renewal are often implicated in driving out the kinds of local culture that made neighborhoods like Tremé distinct in the first place (pp. 732-735). This becomes a particular concern in light of Treme’s subscription to a discourse of authenticity, where it might give way to practices that aim to “consume authenticity” (Zukin, 2008) through television inspired tourism and ethical consumption evoked by HBO. These practices risk erasing the histories and struggles out of which authentic culture is borne by posing culture as a marketable commodity and lifestyle choice (Banet-Weiser, 2007; Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009; Dávila, 2004a; Yúdice, 2003; Zukin, 2010). Thus, while Treme’s desire to create authentic and inclusive representations suggests a laudable effort toward arguing in favor of the right for all citizens to return, it also risks preventing that very same return by participating in the practices that can potentially make those spaces to return out of financial reach to the displaced. This potential is precisely a key reason why going beyond analyses of representations are essential to assessing the critical implications of the series. We must also question to what extent the text’s “authentic” representations are bound up with the series’ material spatial practices that have other, potentially more insidious, consequences and might directly impact the possibilities that residents have to claim a right to the city and a right to return.

Additionally, the show’s emphasis on local and vernacular forms of culture
aligns with recent policies both nationally and in New Orleans that assume entrepreneurializing local culture will be key to new phases of urban renewal. This emphasis has the tendency to view culture through the lens of an economic rationality, where cultural practices are assumed to be worthwhile because they can produce a return on investment (Yúdice, 2003). A key question that emerges from this logic is what happens to those forms of culture that do not seem to create a return on investment? Though the show seems to aim at showcasing forms of cultural practice that had hitherto been left out of this calculating logic, it nonetheless participates in the rendering of culture as valuable through a kind of economic rationality. Indeed, the show very much depends upon the capacity for these cultural practices to produce an economic value in terms of the production of audiences and brand value for HBO. *Treme* to some extent subsumes, or at least extracts, value from the local, cultural practices it features on the show. These practices are linked to a neoliberalization of space that plays a role in constituting what Sharon Zukin (2010) has called the “hybrid city,” where big box stores exist alongside immigrant street vendors and more vernacularly local forms of culture. *Treme* seems to be precisely this kind of hybrid, as a global media corporation invested in preserving the very local vernacular practices of a culturally ethnic and diverse neighborhood. To an extent, then, the media neighborhood as hybrid city is constitutive of a neoliberalizing of city space into a set of intersecting zones, where Bach (2011) notes that these forms of intra-national, and I would add intra-city, zoning “institutionalizes differential treatment of the population” and is henceforth “one way for states to regulate the (bio)political as well as the economic” (p. 104). Thus, while *Treme* might lead to the incorporation of some new
cultural practices and spaces in the city, like Tremé, as places of value and cultural export, it also threatens the further exclusion and displacement of the poor who fail to entrepreneurialize. Yet, it is perhaps in these spaces of failed entrepreneurialism where elements of the possibilities for excess might also exist. That is, the spaces and practices that cannot promise a return on investment are also thus not easily captured and made monetizable by HBO. It is perhaps therefore in these spaces where new forms of contestation to the neoliberal city and the media neighborhood might be formulated. However, as these exclusions are also immanent exclusions, these spaces also risk capture as sites of potential for the extraction of future value, and future mediation.

Nevertheless, it is also worthwhile asking to what extent Treme’s production of a media neighborhood and its spatial practices might be politicized toward alternative ends. The series’ claim to authenticity is indeed itself political—claims to authenticity are never innocent, but they presume a particular and located view of what and who is and is not authentic. New Orleans has a long and complicated history of utilizing rhetorics of authenticity to sell its cultural assets for consumption, and, more often than not, those claims serve the interests of those in power rather than the poor (Gotham, 2007a). The question is, then, to what extent can Treme’s spatial practices be made to make a claim to authenticity that inaugurates an alternative claim to the city and neighborhood spaces in ways that carry forth its textual arguments regarding affordable housing and the right for all residents to return? In other words, in what ways might authenticity, as a spatial practice, also be deployed for social justice? Zukin (2010) argues,
If authenticity is a state of mind, it’s historic, local, and cool. But if authenticity is a social right, it’s also poor, ethnic and democratic. Authenticity speaks for the right of a city, and a neighborhood, to offer residents, workers, store owners, and street vendors the opportunity to put down roots—to represent, paradoxically, both origins and new beginnings. (p. 26)

Can *Treme* participate in producing authenticity not as a state of mind, i.e. as a lifestyle to be consumed, and instead as a right? A right to return, not just for some, but for all? Can *Treme*’s media neighborhood therefore also be productive of an ethical practice of neighboring, not to protect the sanctity of the neighborhood culture for its inhabitants, but for those who have no neighborhood, no culture, to speak of, a neighborhood that has an infinite claim (Badiou, 2003; Zizek, 2005)?

Again, looking more concretely at the series’ spatial practices in the city is significant—if we only look at its representations, then the only possibility that the series has is in producing authenticity as a mindset, even if that mindset is grounded in arguments about affordable housing (as in the storyline of Chief Lambreaux and the agitation over the demolition of the city’s housing projects). As a spatial practice, in contrast, the series can participate more concretely in struggles over a rhetorically materialist deployment of authenticity. It can play a role in making a claim for whose authenticity matters when, where, and how. In other words, the spatial practices of *Treme* can play a role in struggles over the right to return as well as in broader struggles over the right to the city and the neighborhood.

To date, however, *Treme*’s producers have shied away from taking more direct forms of intervention in social struggles, perhaps because many of them see themselves
as outsiders. Instead, they see their role primarily as storytellers who communicate the active struggles of communities and neighborhoods fighting for social justice. These are communicated through representations of struggles over second lines gaining permits to the city, racism and police brutality, agitation over the closing of the housing projects, fights for keeping open Charity Hospital and efforts to secure health care for all, as well as the ongoing and underlying narrative communicating a right to return for all New Orleanians. Materially, *Treme* largely seems to only see its role in these struggles on the ground in terms of its ability to intervene through practices of philanthropy and charity within the rubric of corporate social responsibility. But this kind of understanding of its spatial practices and its political implication in the city primarily as a kind of privatized social welfare is incredibly precarious and fails to account for the ways in which the series’ spatial practices have already implicated it in these struggles over city space.

David Simon’s response to critics of *Treme*’s producers’ involvement with historic preservation groups that attempted to prevent the demolition of blighted houses in the Central City neighborhood (used in the series’ season one opening credits) demonstrates very clearly the precariousness of its form of social welfare. However, it also offers lessons for how *Treme* might reposition itself in more politicized terms in ways that can be harnessed toward a more active engagement in the city and in constituting an ethics of neighboring. Originally contacted by historic preservationists regarding the issue, David Simon, Eric Overmyer, and Nina Noble (an executive producer of *Treme*) sent a letter to the Mayor asking the houses not be demolished, suggesting they were significant in part because they had achieved iconic status by being linked to the television series. They argued,
It has come to our attention that the city plans to demolish these buildings. Our hope is that a way can be found to renovate and not destroy them. These houses have appeared around the globe in advertisements for the show and the DVD set. In that way, they have attained something of an iconic status. New Orleans has successfully restored other similarly dilapidated rows of shotguns (see the 600 block of Gen. Taylor for but one example). What a powerful message it would send about the resiliency and recovery of the city for this block to be restored and transformed into desirable homes for returning residents. We urge you to work with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Builders for Hope or a similar organization to rebuild these houses and return them to commerce.

(quoted in Krupa, 2011a)

Mayor Mitch Landrieu claimed he did not receive the letter until a day before demolition was scheduled, and he went ahead with the demolition, arguing,

And so people show up at the last minute and say, “Oh, please don't”… We're moving on in the city of New Orleans. We’re making action. We’re making decisions that we think will restore the vitality of the neighborhood and, at the end of the day, the safety of the neighborhood. (quoted in Krupa, 2011b)

_Treme_’s involvement in the issue spurred a significant debate amongst policymakers, historic preservationists, and residents regarding the role of Hollywood and film production in city policy. In response to this debate, Simon suggested, “We were in no way trying to insert ourselves into policy…We were just saying that if this could have a better outcome than a vacant lot and some housing units could have been saved and rehabbed, we were ready to help,” again restating that the houses were
significant to *Treme* only insofar as they helped to tell the story of “the burden and the promise of this great city, the threat of collapse and the hope of renewal” (quoted in Krupa, 2011b). He thus emphasized the point that the producers were not trying to “get into a political fight” (Krupa, 2011b). Yet, *The Times Picayune*’s readers disagreed, posting comments such as “If HBO wants these houses saved, they should spend their money and efforts on renovating the buildings” (quoted in Krupa, 2011c). Readers’ comments seemed to suggest that the city’s support for the film industry already implicated *Treme* in city politics and therefore in having a responsibility to the city. One reader argued, for example, “Take some of your film tax credit money and donate it to the city if you care so much…This compelling story, our collective lives, are fodder for ratings and profit” (in Krupa, 2011c), suggesting that *Treme*’s burden to the city was more than to tell a story. Other readers took the opportunity to suggest that *Treme* should also be contributing to the city’s production resources, suggesting “Hey HBO: Soundstage, ever heard of such a thing? Build your own; you charge enough for your television services to be able to afford it!” (quoted in Krupa, 2011c). Another reader argued, “You want blighted homes? Go build some on a sound stage. We've built dozens of those for your use. And you can also get Louisianans some work by starting such a project” (in Krupa, 2011c). While most readers disagreed with *Treme*’s actions, some defended them, arguing, for example, “Instead of talking about how the show is getting rich off all their ‘tax credits,’ try taking a look at all the money that production brings to the city” (in Krupa, 2011c), which still suggests that *Treme* is implicated in the city in ways that go beyond its story telling.

Moved to respond to these comments, Simon posted his own comment, arguing,
With *Treme* as with *The Wire*, the producers decided that because the subject matter deals with actual urban dynamics, it would be worthwhile if we could figure out ways to leverage the presence of the production to raise funds and awareness for charities and non-profits. It is often fun to do so. And considering that the film industry is indeed an industry for profit like any other, it often feels pleasantly subversive to do so. But…It is not our primary purpose and certainly no responsibility. (quoted in Krupa, 2011c)

Though Simon claimed that the series had no “responsibility” to the city, the number and vehemence of the comments on the website very clearly demonstrated that residents thought otherwise, regardless of whether they embraced or chastised *Treme’s* impacts. Nevertheless, despite efforts of both historic preservationists and critics alike to hold *Treme* accountable and responsible for its broader practices in the city, Simon’s comment demonstrates that corporate social responsibility is a voluntary effort that takes place at the whims and fancies of particular producers. So, what happens when *Treme* leaves? Will its hiring practices, emphasis on rewriting the tourist map, and practices of corporate social responsibility be enough to make its impact on the production of city space and the revitalization of neighborhoods like Tremé last beyond its finale? Or will it only linger in the city long enough for it to glean a profit, at which point it will pack up and take all its resources with it, leaving Tremé to fend for itself and hope that the show’s temporary “social welfare” was enough of an entrepreneurial stimulant to make it on its own?

The response to *Treme’s* involvement in the historic preservation and demolition issue, however, also points to the potential for *Treme* to reconsider its relationship to the
city, the neighborhoods in which it films, as well as its relationship with its neighbors. Although I am not arguing either in favor of or against historic preservation—as it is often implicated in both practices of gentrification as well as tactical responses to corporatized development to preserve culture—what I am arguing for is the collective response by viewers, readers, and citizens to call forth a broader accountability and responsibility for filmic production and spatial practice in the city. Although some of the reader’s comments in response to the historic preservation and demolition issue seemed to subscribe to a kind of neoliberal rationality or privatized response to social problems (i.e. if *Treme* wants historic preservation, they should do it themselves), the comments also suggested that *Treme* should be accountable to the city and its residents (i.e. it should not merely tell stories and profit from those stories), particularly by building infrastructure and taking its role as a neighbor seriously. Rather than not trying to get into a political fight, *Treme* might instead take up the political fight, and neighborhoods might harness their newfound potential as sites of mediation and visibility as mechanisms for holding Hollywood and its productions accountable for their actions.

In so doing, *Treme* might participate in the production of neighborhood as a site of not only neoliberal governance, but also as a site of an ethical encounter, where one encounters the Other as a neighbor (Ricoeur, 1965) and in the production of neighborhood as a space of locality (Appadurai, 1996). According to Appadurai (1996), neighborhoods are “the actually existing social forms of which locality, as a dimension or value, is variably realized. Neighborhoods, in this usage, are situated communities characterized by their actuality, whether spatial or virtual, and their potential for social
reproduction” (pp. 178-179). Neighborliness, as Mayol (1998) contends, is governed by both propriety as well as tactical appropriation; it is thus productive of precisely the kind of pedestrian rhetoric referred to by de Certeau. Thus, like the media screens studied by Anna McCarthy that take on site specific purposes, *Treme* too must be analyzed for the specific way in which it, as a kind of neighbor in itself, must adapt to the propriety, contexts, and practices of the neighborhoods into which it intervenes and the specific ways in which it tactically appropriates that context. The series’ commitment to authenticity, social responsibility, and to being a good neighbor distinguishes the production from many others in the city. These aims significantly impact the alliances it makes with its neighbors and other members of the community. It creates possibilities for creating spaces for solidarity between the production and its neighbors, where the possibility for tactical alliances over issues of concern might be formed, such as with the struggles of Mardi Gras Indians, Baby Dolls, and so forth. I am arguing for *Treme* seeing these alliances as potential political alliances, not only as potential places for philanthropy and charitable forms of corporatized social welfare.

Moreover, *Treme*’s invitation to its viewers to do more than endlessly contemplate the character’s motivations around the water cooler and instead immerse themselves, physically, in New Orleans might also hold potential as well. The producers have stated that the show is not meant to be easily deciphered by its viewers—it is written more with residents of New Orleans in mind. This means that viewers have to do quite a bit of work in order to follow the show. Indeed, as the *Pop Pilgrims* note, to really get *Treme* you’d have to move there (The A.V. Club, n.d.). The series therefore makes demands on its audiences that are infrequently a component of everyday
television viewing. They perhaps point to a kind of ethical obligation on HBO’s predominantly white, affluent viewers to step outside of their comfort zones and materially immerse themselves in an unfamiliar culture. Although the kinds of interactions and forms of community that *Treme* builds might be circumscribed by their filtering into brand value for HBO, as discussed in the previous chapter, so too is there a potential for an ethical surplus that cannot be captured by the series. When viewers, both in the city and outside of the city, navigate the streets of New Orleans’ neighborhoods to seek out those connections, there are also potentials that those connections can be translated into political lines of solidarity.

If considered in the context of acting within the neighborhood as a neighbor, I do not think it is easily assumed that these alliances can only benefit HBO or *Treme*, where individuals and neighborhoods are merely duped into handing over forms of “hip” racialized and ethnic culture for profit or in consuming authenticity. Alliances can also be put to work toward constituting the neighborhood as something like the common,³ where the multitude, in effect, take the power that capital seeks to harness to create new spaces and temporalities to constitute an “ever more common context” (Negri, 2004, p. 185). According to Antonio Negri (2004), the common imposes a resistance to measure, or a “negation of the limit that exclusion imposes on the common…the unlimited (*apeiron*), against the limit (*peras*) of exclusion and of measure; it is an absolute opening against the closure of the common and the pervasion of its teleology” (Negri, 2004, p. 202). Negri refers to a kind of opening or dilation of the common. Such an opening might be glimpsed in the networks of care that emerged in New Orleans directly after Katrina, in, for example, the revitalization of
neighborhood organizations. These alternative structures of care respond to the lack of governmental support in helping survivors to return and rebuild. In effect, they represent the multitude taking its constitutive power and putting it to work elsewhere, and it is precisely this power that programs like the Neighborhood Participation Program as well as HBO seek to harness.

Yet, the resources, networking, and alliances that can be formed between these organizations as well as to other neighborhood organizations and viewers, both locally and globally, through spatial practices provided by *Treme* can also be harnessed by neighborhoods and viewers in building the common. Neighborhoods can appropriate their common existence as media neighborhoods and sites of potential mediation to make demands for new spaces for collectivization. As Hardt and Negri (2000, 2004) argue, what is particularly difficult in the present culture and economy is precisely the lack of any outside to which to escape to, as the totality of social life becomes constitutive of an immanent form of biopolitical production. What is needed is not to find spaces outside, i.e. in vernacular and uncreative spaces and practices (e.g. Edensor et al., 2010) or in resisting mediation altogether—because, indeed as *Treme* shows, these spaces are spaces for potential and future extraction of value—but, rather, to find spaces of contestation and critique from within. So too, viewer interactivities and the production of a kind of ethical responsibility of viewers to New Orleans can evolve in unpredictable ways that are not easily harnessed by HBO. *Treme* might also therefore produce an excess that is indeed produced within the culturally economistic logic of neoliberal expediency, but it might also offer something of a potential subjectivity and space from which a critical standpoint (Weeks, 2011) might be formed.
Further research, particularly ethnographic research, on the impacts of *Treme* on the daily lives of residents, neighborhoods, neighborhood organizations, and viewers might bear out a further extrapolation of what some of the political potentials and excesses of *Treme* can be. Nevertheless, the producers I spoke to were all rather modest with regards to the show’s potential impact on the city, practices of production in the city, and on its viewers, both good and bad. As Elie noted,

I think we’d be delusional to think that one show that comes on 3-4 times a week for 12-20 weeks a year depending on re-runs, we can’t win that battle, we are hoping to stem the tide, and hoping to help create a new paradigm that may grow…our job is to tell stories. (personal communication, March 15, 2011)

The emphasis on this job, as telling stories, was echoed by Eric Overmyer, who suggested, “We are good for the city, but that’s not our mission…I think it would be giving us too much credit to say more than that” (personal communication, March 15, 2011). Yet, to realize the full potential of their impact, they will need to go beyond getting viewers to “take out their wallets” for a good cause, and get their hands dirty, where they might see themselves as taking responsibility to do more than just represent struggles for justice and partake more directly in actively participating in them.

In raising these ethical quandaries and potential stakes of *Treme*, I hope it is clear that I do not mean to suggest that *Treme* merely exemplifies another form of neoliberalism that commodifies culture. Rather, what I hoped to have emphasized is that the case of *Treme* points to just how nuanced and complicated the practice of cultural production is in the current era. *Treme*’s spatial practices bring into focus the tension between the collapse of more vernacular, tactical practices of resistance with the more
commercialized strategies of creative industries and the consequences of drawing upon
the global culture industry to support and revitalize local cultural practice. Indeed, the
series does not merely commodify culture, but rather works from, with, and through
some of the same logics, discourses, and signifiers that have rendered culture as a space
of resistance. I think it would be remiss to argue that the vernacular practices of the
Tremé are merely being co-opted into or subsumed into a creative cities strategy that
must be struggled or resisted from the outside. Yet, *Treme* is also circumscribed within
an industrial logic of public-private partnerships and the marketing of these spaces of
resistance for the purposes of both profit and empowerment. Given the complexity of
how these forces of culture as resistance and culture as market intertwine, the show
does not easily lend itself to either being criticized for how it perpetuates the
commodification of culture or heralded as a space of struggle for counter-hegemonic
resistance. Rather, it sits somewhere at the crux of an intersection between these forces,
perhaps signaling the need for a shift in how we conceptualize both commodification
and resistance at this conjuncture.

**“Useless” Criticism?**

*Treme* suggests that in order to come to terms with these shifts and intersections,
media scholars need to look beyond the text and representations of space, place, and
race to fully come to terms with the complexities of media’s relationship to
contemporary cities and geographies of difference. Media is doing more than creating a
sense of place and concomitant identities generated on screen, and it is also implicated
in the production of city space and urbanization beyond the modes of gendered and
raced spectatorship created in the sites and social practices of viewers. Though both of
these threads of scholarship on media and urban space have important contributions for how we understand the mutual constitution of media and modern and postmodern cities. *Treme* speaks to imbrications of media practice in the space, culture, and everyday life in cities. Moreover, it speaks to the ways in which the global space of the web is not merely a means of despatialization, but that it can also be harnessed as a technology of emplacement as well. An important contribution that this project has made, therefore, is in calling attention to the need for media scholarship on urban space to consider a broader array and diversity of sites, encounters, actors and so forth as well as the broader aims, institutions, and sites of power often considered outside of the purview of media studies. The broader institutions, practices, and aims I argue for considering include discourses and practices of urban planning, zoning, land use, tourism boards, historic preservation, cultural policy, philanthropy and corporate social responsibility, city and network branding, and global and local activism. I also call for considering how these discourses and practices are implicated in local cultural practice, identity, struggles over city space and the right to the city, gentrification, and other site specific issues that emerge in relation to specific places, histories, and cultures when media comes to town.

Theorizing media as a spatial practice therefore means attending to the everyday, quotidian practices of media in specific sites, places, cities, and neighborhoods, as an everyday production of and progressive appropriation of place. In calling for these broader analyses of media practices in space and place, it is important for media scholarship to also attend to the way in which media becomes implicated in how space is regulated, governed, and practiced as well as how it brings into contact,
and sometimes alignment, a variety of institutions, forces, and powers. In so doing, media’s spatial practices can also be understood as technology of governance. *Treme*, in particular, calls attention to how these spatial practices in cities implicate racial identities and politics not only through its representations, but also through the ways in which they work to govern, regulate, and intervene in city space and geographies of difference and forms of, and contestations of, neoliberal citizenship.

In arguing for considering media as a spatial practice, I am not calling for the end to representational analyses of media texts and their relationships to space and place altogether. Rather, I contend that it is important to consider the way in which media’s spatial practices in today’s cities are also intertwined with and complicate those representational analyses. In the case of *Treme*, its representations are bound up with practical concerns that are inextricably intertwined with its more material practices of production as well as in the more material practices of marketing and brand promotion by HBO. These practices influence, constrain, and make possible its textual representations. What is called for is therefore not an abandonment of representational analyses, but, rather, in complicating how representations interact with the more material practices of media within particular spaces and places. This project therefore draws attention to the ways in which media implicates city and neighborhood space, cultural governance, vernacular culture, racial and ethnic identity, media and city branding, and the material practices of viewers and residents alike. As cities globally, from Detroit (Michigan) to Suva (Fiji), aim to become what Michael Curtin (2003) has termed “media capitals,” my hope is that this particular case study and call for theorizing media as a kind of spatial practice might help to throw into focus the more
material ways in which media has become imbricated in the material geography of everyday life in the city.

So too, *Treme* calls upon me to be self-reflexive about my own imbrications in these issues in terms of academic scholarship and its political and material commitments. Creighton Bernette, a character in the series who plays an English professor at Tulane University, criticizes the University for, in the wake of budget cuts, supporting “useless” cultural studies programs at the expense of supporting programs in Engineering. He argues, “Let's not learn how to actually do anything…Let's just sit and contemplate the glory of me in all my complexities. Who am I? I am black, Jewish woman, hear me roar!” He suggests to a graduate student, who is fearful that the English department might face cuts as well, “We're useless. We're safe” (Season 1, Episode 2). Perhaps *Treme*’s production team might make similar criticisms against this project as well—as useless contemplation that doesn’t actually do anything. And, to be fair, they would have a point. I suspect too that many of its writers were indeed English majors and that therefore Creighton’s comment is also a moment of their own self-reflexivity. But my hope too is that this project has also gone beyond the kind of self-referential media criticism that has so often pervaded media studies, endlessly contemplating the meanings of various texts for how it impacts our own identities and place in the world. I do not mean to discount this work as useless. My feelings are actually quite the contrary to those of Creighton Bernette—I think this is important work that has real, material impacts for how we understand ourselves as social and political agents. It is precisely this kind of work that fomented my critical consciousness as an undergraduate and influenced my interest in cultural studies. Nevertheless, I too
wonder if our criticism might ask additional questions, to consider, as Grossberg (2006) contends, “That the ways in which culture matters are themselves changing” (p. 17) and to therefore “look at the relations among the various actors, institutions, practices and discourses at the intersection of political, economic and cultural life” (p. 22). My hope, then, is that this project will enjoin media scholars, producers, and policymakers alike to question the broader and more material ways in which media is a practice that does in fact, for better or worse, “actually do something” in the cities they inhabit and represent.
In referring to the “Katrina event,” I am drawing on Fleetwood’s (2006) use of the term as the “host of activities and processes surrounding the hurricane and its aftermath, including the reportage during and afterward, the ensuing flooding of New Orleans, the displacement and evacuation of thousands of people stranded in the city, and the ongoing and contested reconstruction process. The Katrina event refers to the material and social impact of the storm as well as the complex set of social, technological, and economic narratives and processes reported by the news media and through governmental reports” (p. 768). The “Katrina event,” then is a term utilized to recognize the critique that Katrina was the outcome of social and political decisions, a human-created catastrophe, rather than a “natural disaster.”

Though, as in the case of Katrina, each of these claims is highly contested as to the media’s potential in revealing social injustices.

The main characters are all independent entrepreneurs, many of them working in a creative or knowledge industry—a chef and restaurant owner (Jeanette Desautel), musicians (Antoine Batiste, Delmond Lambreaux, Annie Talarico, Sonny, Davis McAlary), writer (Creighton Bernette), bar owner (LaDonna Batiste-Williams), civil rights lawyer (Toni Bernette). Albert Lambreaux’s character also celebrates creative practice as his story line centers around his responsibilities as Big Chief of a Mardi Gras Indian tribe.

The series, for example, demonstrates the difficulty musicians face in getting gigs (through especially Antoine Batiste’s character), the lack of access to affordable health care and basic services for creative workers, and the structural causes and effects of post-traumatic stress (especially through Creighton Bernette’s character, who commits suicide as a result at the end of the first season), police brutality, and crime. Moreover, it depicts a City government as steeped in corruption that has little regard for its city’s creative artists and is instead invested in making quick money and willing to sell entire neighborhoods to developers without consulting its residents. This latter theme is particularly emphasized in Season 2 with Jon Seda’s character, Nelson Hidalgo, a developer and venture capitalist from Dallas, and Oliver Thomas, former City Council person who was forced to resign in disgrace on corruption charges. Thomas, who plays himself in the series, makes a deal with Hidalgo to connect him to black leadership in the city (inviting him, for example, to ride on the Zulu float, which is generally populated by influential leaders in the black community, on Mardi Gras day), thus making it possible for Hidalgo to proceed to raze entire neighborhoods for the benefit and profit of outsiders looking to transform Mid-City (a historically black and poor back-a-town neighborhood) into a medical research center. This narrative makes a poignant critique of the entrenched power relations and complex interactions between race, class, and power that constitute the dominant rebuilding projects in post-Katrina New Orleans.

Audience studies, in particular, perhaps more so than the study of media texts and political economy has been historically invested in issues of space. Here, too, however, the emphasis is on audience interpretation of representations—space is taken into account in the context of how the sites of media viewing influence interpretive practices. In television studies, David Morley’s (1986) work is exemplary on these issues, where he considers the impacts of domestic space and cultural difference on interpretive practices of television viewing.

See also Doel & Clarke, 1997, Harvey, 1989; Davis, 1992; Wakefield, 1990 who also take up the relationship between Blade Runner and the post-modern city.

For example, Gold and Ward’s (1997) and Enticknap’s (2001) studies of documentary filmmaking engage how media represented urban planning to film audiences in its early formation. These films tended to focus on the problems of urban housing. Such is the subject of Enticknap’s (2001) study of the documentary film The Way We Live (Jill Craigie, 1946) in which he argues that the film played a pedagogical role in educating audiences about town planning and negotiating debates over how to imagine housing after the WWII. Gold and Ward (1997) argue that the need to present town planning to audiences became pressing with the onset of the war in terms of thinking about how reconstruction would
take place (p. 66). They suggest that British documentary filmmaking produced strategies of presentation of planning to audiences that were more “vivid and readily intelligible” to their audiences (p. 66).

In Couldry and McCarthy’s (2004) collection, Hay and Packer’s essay on the Segway as governing mobility and Dávila’s essay on outdoor marketing in East Harlem are notable exceptions. Both of these essays emphasize the more material aspects of media as opposed to the purely symbolic or representational. In Berry, Kim, and Spigel’s (2010) collection, Yoshimi’s essay on the construction of Tokyo as a kind of global media city is also an important exception that takes up more material rather than symbolic issues related to media and urban spatial dynamics.

I am referring here to the event in which Yahoo! News displayed two similar pictures from the Associated Press of individuals wading through the flood waters in New Orleans in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina on its home page. One picture showed a white woman and white man with the caption “two residents wade through chest-deep water after finding bread and soda from a local grocery store,” whereas the other image showed a black man with the caption “a young man walks through chest deep flood water after looting a grocery store in New Orleans” (Kinney, 2005). The photos sparked widespread controversy over the racialized assumptions undergirding the distinctions between white “finding” and black “looting,” and the long history of stereotypical criminalization of blackness. For further discussion on this controversy see Dyson, 2006; Kaufman, 2006; Stabile, 2007; Berger, 2009; Johnson, Dolan, & Sonnett, 2011.

Streible’s (2010) and Scheible’s (2010) essays do not take up representational questions directly. Streible details the life of Helen Hill, an animation artist and activist working with the production community in New Orleans who was randomly killed during a crime wave after Katrina. Her murder is a storyline in Season 2 of I. Scheible considers how new media technologies were put to use in the aftermath of Katrina. These two essays stand as exceptions in the collection that do not take up issues of representation. Neither, however, takes up media’s production of space in New Orleans directly, however, in the way that I am calling for either.

Vicki Mayer’s (2011a) analysis of I is a unique example of a departure from the text. Mayer instead calls attention to the potential problems associated with I, as a Hollywood production, on local culture in terms of gentrification and the commodification of culture. On the one hand, my analysis here extends her criticism of I for how its practices of production are bound up with broader issues of cultural policy that implicate local culture. On the other hand, however, I am more hesitant to value these as commodifying and instead turn to theories of governmentality as a way to understand I’s more normative impacts on the city.

The Wire chronicled and critiqued the institutional bureaucracy of the illegal drug trade, police, journalism, education, and the seaport in post-industrial Baltimore.

Much scholarly work on The Wire celebrates the show’s politicized potentials due to its focus on institutions and structures of racism, crime, and urban injustice in post-industrial capitalism (Ethridge, 2008; Kinder, 2009; McMillan, 2006; Parker, 2010; Potter & Marshall, 2009; Quinn, 2009; Schaub, 2010; Sodano, 2008; Sheehan & Sweeney, 2009; Quinn, 2009; Wyly, 2010). In large part, this work relies primarily on textual and representational analyses of how the show represents Baltimore and urban America more generally.

The Wire can also be credited with drawing a great deal of interest and intrigue into Baltimore, and is even credited with increasing tourism despite its seemingly negative depictions (Pinckley, 2010).

It might also be true for The Wire as well that a critique of its spatial practices would reveal an enacted political agenda for its viewers, but that is not the subject of this project.

Vicki Mayer’s (2011a) analysis of I is a unique example of a departure from the text to consider these broader issues. Mayer instead calls attention to the potential problems associated with I, as a Hollywood production, on local culture in terms of gentrification and the commodification of culture. On the one hand, my analysis here extends her criticism of I for how its practices of production are bound up with broader issues of cultural policy that implicate local culture. On the other hand, however, I am more hesitant to value these as commodifying and instead turn to theories of governmentality as a way to understand I’s more normative impacts on the city.

It is a (re)birth, rather than a birth, in the sense that this is not the first time the neighborhood has been posed as a solutions to the problems in the city, which I discuss in Chapter 2. However, I argue
that the solutions put into practice by I position the neighborhood in new and innovative ways that reflect the particular context of post-Katrina New Orleans.

18 A clear example of these efforts is Frank Ghery’s building of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, where city policymakers brought in a famous architect to design a museum to be a cultural center, or hub, with the aim of rebranding and revitalizing the entire area (Evans, 2003; Guasch & Zulaika, 2005). This strategy has since been replicated in a variety of cities globally (Evans, 2003).

19 These efforts had both economic and cultural aims—on the one hand, they aimed to revitalize the area by bringing in a familiar brand that could help attract investment and tourism; but, on the other hand, this revitalization also depended upon imposing the media brand’s image on public space in order to resignify its meanings, cleanse it of “problem” elements, and reconstitute it into an experiential place of consumption (Comella, 2002).

20 As Garnham (2005) notes, as media becomes part of a creative cities strategy, it has become constitutive of a discourse of creative, rather than cultural, industries. He suggests the shift is not a neutral one, but, rather, is part of a broader rhetorical shift that unreflexively legitimates arts and cultural policies as mechanisms for shifting industry to an informational economy with a promise of future employment and export growth (Garnham, 2006, p. 25). There is a significant strand of scholarship that debates whether cultural economic changes can be adequately expressed in suggesting a transition of media from a culture industry to a creative industry or if the term culture industry is a more apt term (Garnham, 2005; Mato, 2009; Miller, 2009; Hesmondhalgh, 2002; Hartley, 2004). Here, I utilize creative industries, agreeing with Garnham that the term creative industries is a rhetorical trope that has persuasive force in legitimating a particular discursive rationality of the city. I do not aim, however, to justify or valorize this particular rationality, but, rather, I find that the term “creative industries” helps to identify the specific distinctions between the kind of spatial and identity work being done by I in contrast to earlier forms of media led urban renewal and branding that were more aptly identified as a culture industry approach.

21 The case of Miami speaks to a larger concern of scholars invested in the music industry’s relationship to urban space and place, which is an attentiveness to the cultural geography of the global and local flows of musical culture and the ways in which capital, national and international policy and regulation, as well as cultural and affective practices influence these movements. At issue here, especially, is the way in which the global flows of music influence the production of and struggles over racial, ethnic, regional, and global/local identity in the context of global capitalism and the power relations of the corporate music industry (Balaji, 2009; Bennett, 2001; Colista & Leshner, 1998; Hebdige, 1976; James, 2005; Lipsitz, 1994; Power & Scott, 2004; Rodman, 2006; Russell, 2009; Yúdice, 2003). A particularly fertile and interesting thread of scholarship that addresses the cultural geography of the music industry and its attendant power dynamics especially as they are related to race and struggles over identities and place occurs in studies of reggae music and its flows into and out of Jamaica (see especially de Araujo Pinho, 2001; dos Santos Godi, 2001; Gilroy, 1982; Hebdige, 1996; Power & Hallencreutz, 2004; Stratton, 2012; Toynbee, 2007).

22 The consequences of this new knowledge and creative economy of labor practices has been widely critiqued by cultural economy and media scholars. Ross (2004, 2009) suggests that the new knowledge spaces in creative urban neighborhoods collapses the division between home/leisure and work, constituting a kind of social factory (Terranova, 2000, 2004). McRobbie (2002a) contends this collapse encourages individual workers to see themselves as his or her own enterprise and constitutes a kind of despatialization of the workplace that makes it difficult to organize around a politics of the workplace. Workers are expected to be flexible and take on an increased risk with the promise that such work will be autonomous, creative, and cool. As a result, workers are encouraged to accept an individualized and collective form of glamorized risk, which provides “a model for destabilizing work and denigrating workers’ quality of life” (Neff, Wissinger, & Zukin, 2005, p. 331). Ultimately, the creative economy benefits large companies, who “need to innovate and to develop a more experimental youth-driven image and this is provided by the second wave of young cultural entrepreneurs hiring out their services on a contractual basis” (McRobbie, 2002a, p. 525). As a consequence, “what is squeezed out in this process is independence and socially engaged, critical creativity” (McRobbie, 2002a, p. 525).

23 Ross (2009) suggests these new labor economies are bound up with a global turn to creative industry policies. His work compares these policies across various locales, suggesting that they are
constitutive of a dispersion of precarity and thereby contribute to an increasing connection between the working class and knowledge class who both find themselves in precarious labor conditions.

Nowhere are these practices more evident than in Hollywood’s practices of runaway production, where offshore filming in Canada, New Zealand, Mexico, and elsewhere have drawn criticism for their exploitation of cheap labor. See, for example, Miller et. al.’s (2005) discussion of the filming of Titanic in Fox’s Baja Studios in Mexico, where workers “reported horrific levels of exploitation and mistreatment, as the state forced out a leftist union in favour of management stooges. Mexico’s new film ‘union’ even maintains an office in Los Angeles to reassure anxious industry mavens of its cooperativeness and to remain up to date on US pay rates—in order to undercut them” (p. 164).

In the former, elite businessmen and city officials decided to bomb the levees in order to prevent the Central Business District and French Quarter from flooding. Thus, when rumors circulated that the levees were bombed during Katrina, residents had good reason for thinking that might be the case.

For further discussion on the complex racial antagonisms in the jazz music industry and jazz performance, especially as it relates to discourses of multiculturalism and resistance to assimilation, see Jones, 1963; Lipsitz, 2004; Murray, 1976; O’Meally, Edwards, & Griffin, 2004.

Though historians argue that the space was used by slaves before the Spanish colonial period, it is likely that it was not called Congo Square until that time because it is during the Spanish period that large numbers of Kongo slaves inhabited the city (Sublette, 2008).

During British colonization, slaves were prohibited from gathering at Congo Square, and the site was turned into a slave auction site, an ironic and painful turn of events that, as will become clear, is all too characteristic of how the city has historically dealt with the neighborhood. In more recent years, Congo Square has been resurrected as a memorial in what is believed to be its approximate location in Armstrong Park (Sublette, 2008).

The I-10 was proposed in 1960 but not completed until 1969 as part of the Federal Highway Act (Crutcher, 2010).

Notes in Chapter 1

1 The series pays tribute to Frank’s Place on other occasions as well. Tim Reid, who produced and starred in Frank’s Place as Frank, makes a cameo appearance in season 1 of Treme as a judge. Treme also held two annual benefits where they screened episode from Frank’s Place to benefit the New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts, a high school in New Orleans devoted to the arts which a number of Treme’s actors, writers, musicians, and other crew attended (Walker, 2010b)

2 The particularities of New Orleans’ racial hierarchies, for example, were discussed in an episode where Frank was asked to attend an exclusive club of light-skinned blacks as the token member whose skin was “darker than a paper bag,” which referenced the city’s infamous paper bag parties where blacks were denied entry if their skin was darker than a paper bag. For further discussion on “paper bag parties,” see Dyson, 2006.

3 Whereas documents detailing the cultural economic agenda for the city before the storm make scant mention of the role of particular neighborhoods other than the French Quarter, Garden District, and Uptown and include perhaps a paragraph or two about the need to incorporate African American cultural and creative practices into the city’s cultural economic agenda (Mt. Auburn Associates, 2005; City Planning Commission, 2010), policy documents after the storm clearly forefront these as the key sites on which the city’s cultural and economic future will be staked (City Planning Commission, 2010; Townsend, 2007; Transition New Orleans Task Force Report, 2010).

4 The city’s change in policy also likely stems from the debates about which neighborhoods to rebuild and the widespread uproar that emerged when former Mayor Nagin’s Bring New Orleans Back Commission returned with large circles over the city’s predominantly and historically black neighborhoods (Olshansky & Johnson 2010). I discuss this further in Chapter 2.

5 The City passed a resolution to establish a system for Neighborhood participation after Katrina (The Neighborhood Participation Program, 2010) that provides training and funding to organizations that undergo a process of being “recognized.” See Chapter 2.
Notes in Chapter 2

1 For a discussion of the competitive and entrepreneurial expectations of cities in the neoliberal and global economy see, for example, Hall & Hubbard (1998); Sassen (2000); Brenner & Theodore (2002); Hackworth (2007). For a discussion on how practices of branding relate to the entrepreneurialization of cities, see, for example, Morgan & Pritchard (2006); Monclús & Guàrdia i Bassols (2006); Greenberg (2008); Donald, Kofman, & Kevin (2009).

2 Thatcher is quoted specifically as stating, “They are casting their problems on society and who is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first” (Thatcher, 1987).

3 I am indebted to Ronald W. Greene for drawing my attention to the significance of neighborhood as a category of governance as laid out in Reagan’s State of the Union speeches.

4 For further discussion on the racialized dimensions of biopolitics see Foucault, 2003c; Stoler, 2002. For the relationship between governing, cities, and race see also Boyer, 1983; Haymes, 1995; and Wilkins, 2007.

5 Lloyd’s (2010) work on Chicago’s Wicker Park provides a good example of the various policies implemented within a creative cities strategy. A traditionally working-class neighborhood that housed a number of artists because of its cheap rents, the area became populated by a number of galleries and night spots. Recent efforts to attract creative classes has led to renewed emphasis on this neighborhood, with an attempt not to clear what is there for new white middle-class yuppies to move in, but, rather, to maximize the potential of the businesses and local culture that is already there.

6 Bryman (2004) explains, “Disneyfication is typically associated with a statement about the cultural products of the Disney company. To disneyfy means to translate or transform an object into something superficial and even simplistic...a process of sanitizing culture or history...rendering the material world being worked upon...into a standardized format that is almost instantly recognizable as being from the Disney stable” (p. 5). For more on Disneyfication and city and public space see Baudrillard, 1994; Comella, 2003; Davis, 1999; Giroux, 1999; Gottdienr, 2001; Sorkin, 1992; Warren, 1994. For further discussion of the Disneyfication of post-Katrina New Orleans, see Morgan Parmett, 2012; Souther, 2007.

7 The final Partnership was comprised of five partners—the Arts Council of New Orleans; the New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation; the Mayor’s Office of Tourism, Arts and Entertainment; the New Orleans Metropolitan Convention and Visitor’s Bureau; and the Greater New Orleans Black Tourism Network.

8 Trainings were also held for those working within the hospitality industry to familiarize workers with the cultural and artistic offerings in the city. In the 1997 Interim Report on the Partnership, additional techniques were proposed in order to develop artistic and cultural entrepreneurship, including mentorship programs that utilized marketing and planning experts and establishing a network/forum for artists and cultural executives.

9 Another component of the Arts Tourism Partnership was the proposal of “host kits,” which were aimed at New Orleans’ residents who could act as “hosts” to visiting friends and relatives. It was argued that the host kit would allow residents to “take pride in” showing the insider’s view of New Orleans, where they could show off the “real New Orleans” (Arts Tourism Partnership, 1997b). Thus, it was not only artists who would become better entrepreneurs, but the aim of the Partnership was also to help residents become more tied to culture and the arts as well—to become better consumers of the arts. As Nikolas Rose (1992) notes, “through this loose assemblage of agents, calculations, techniques, images and commodities, consumer choice can be aligned with macro-economic objectives and business advantage: economic life can be governed and entrepreneurial aspirations realized, through the choices consumers make in their quest to fulfill themselves” (p. 155). In the Arts Tourism Projects aims for both artists and consumers, then, the project can be considered as working governmentally in that the goal is to help produce forms of neoliberal cultural citizenship.

10 One of the events planned for the 280th Anniversary included a “Discover New Orleans” television show that would air on a local TV station and would be shot entirely on-location, celebrate New Orleans arts and culture, and feature specifically “our greatest natural resources: food, music, art,
and architecture” (280th Anniversary, 1997). Here, again, the holy trinity of food, music, and architecture along with now art is invoked as a “natural resource,” helping to constitute and solidify the city’s branding aims. This television series is interesting again, however, because it is aimed primarily at residents to discover their own city’s “natural resources,” and thus it is suggestive of the ways in which branding is also internally aimed at the production of citizenship and applied toward social aims as well (Moor, 2007).

11 Students of the programs were taught not only about artistic skills and heritages, but also about basic reading, writing, and math skills as well as job training skills like planning, time management, and teamwork (Urban Arts Training Program, 1997).

12 Following a 1992 report that displayed movie induced tourism data, film commissioners and city tourism, convention, and tourism boards began to work together to synergize the relationships between the two industries (Riley, Baker, & Van Doren, 1998). Prior to this time, film production was valued largely in terms of employment and local investment dollars, which appears to be the case in terms of the establishment of the New Orleans Office of Film and Video based on their initial draft documents.

13 The State of Louisiana’s tax incentive program also generates critical concerns over runaway production. Though Louisiana’s and other state’s incentive programs don’t officially fit within the context of a runaway production because they are still produced in the United States, its tax incentive legislation nonetheless draws many of the same criticisms of those of runaways who set up shop outside of the filming capitals of Hollywood and New York. Namely, these include criticisms that such practices run the risk of the exploitation of cheap labor and have adverse effects on local culture and production. The practices constitute what Miller (2001) refers to as the new international division of cultural labor, where off shore and off-Hollywood shooting takes advantage of cheap and exploitative labor conditions. As a right to work state, Louisiana does not require that productions go through labor unions, therefore garnering much concern over the potential exploitation of cheap local labor (Christopherson & Rightor, 2010; Mayer & Goldman, 2010).

14 See also the Center for Entertainment Industry Data and Research Year 2005 Production Report (CEIDR, 2006), where they conclude, “the proliferation of production subsidies around the globe has been one of the most significant factors affecting the choice of production venues for a significant volume of production” (p. 1).

15 A key concern with the city’s tax incentives and its links to runaway production is the criticism of the impact of Hollywood production on local and independent production practices. These critiques are typically waged in relation to Hollywood’s offshore productions in Mexico, Canada, New Zealand, and elsewhere, whose many incentives and favorable exchange rates have borne the brunt of much of the criticism and concern over runaway production to begin with, but who has also billed these incentives as beneficial to the local production economy in order to garner support amongst its citizens (Levine 2009; Tinic 2005, 2009). Toby Miller (2006) argues state funding of state and city film commissions essentially amounts to subsidizing Hollywood, providing “hidden subsidies to the film industry via reduced local taxes, free provision of police services, and the blocking of public wayfares, Small Business Administration financing through loans and support of independents, and State and Commerce Department briefings and pleni-potentiary representation” (p. 103). Critics fear in particular the way in which incentives for big Hollywood productions de-incentivize small and independent local productions (Miller et. al., 2005). Such is especially the case in Louisiana, whose incentive program requires a $300,000 minimum budget in order to receive incentives. This kind of legislation adversely impacts local production, as local and independent film producers unconnected to Hollywood or New York are unlikely to ever be able to claim the credit. Therefore it provides little incentive for the kind of “home-grown,” local production culture that the City claims will be the result of such policies to flourish (Christopherson & Rightor, 2010; Mayer & Goldman, 2010).

16 In addition to supporting the Film Festival, the film commission engaged in a number of other efforts to “sell New Orleans as a location and to sell local production professionals as crew members. These projects include, publication of the first film resource directory;…direct mail campaigns to industry decision-makers and participation in key trade shows and exhibitions;…eliminating the ‘red tape’ and facilitating the permit process for production on location; and advertising in major trade
publications;...[and] supporting educational and training opportunities which afford technical expertise to citizens” (Economic Development Trust Fund Application, 1994).

17 These efforts have also long begotten criticism for the ways in which selling the city’s culture threatens its most vital asset. As Flake (1994) questions, “How could they capitalize on the quaintness of their culture without destroying it? How could they sell their cake and eat it, too?” (pp. 25-26). Today, Film New Orleans has various policies that govern film producer’s relationships to neighborhoods to try to reduce these impacts.

18 The Marigny has a large gay population, and as a result, it has received increased attention from city planners and policy makers as a “bohemian” neighborhood that fits within Richard Florida’s (2002) creative class and city strategy because it has a high “gay-index.” It is also home to a number of music venues on Frenchman Street, which is often described as the “locals’ Bourbon Street.”

19 Community centers were being built in a number of cities at this time, as part of the efforts of local residents who agitated against earlier forms of urban renewal in order to combat youth and structural unemployment and urban regeneration policies that had destroyed neighborhoods (Evans, 2009, p. 21).

20 Although Sharon Zukin (2010) is right to critique Jane Jacobs for faulting urban planners in the destruction of her “authentic” city rather than the twin forces of money and power embedded in global capitalism, real estate development and investment, and marketing, urban planning discourse is nevertheless useful for understanding the rationalities through which space is constructed, maintained, and struggled over at a particular conjuncture. In suggesting this, I am not arguing urban planning in New Orleans is to “blame” for either creating or resisting turning the city into a neoliberal corporatized space of global consumption, and, indeed, I recognize fully that the politics of spatial production, governance, and regulation are extremely complex and often go beyond as well as circumvent the guidelines of the urban plan. However, the Master Plan is particularly insightful in elucidating the discourses that make possible particular rationalities of space at a given moment. Urban planning seeks to orchestrate myriad and diverse interests, institutions, and practices, including housing, business, ecology, arts and culture, transportation. The plan is therefore useful for tracing the emergence of a post-Katrina governmentality, and it lends insight into the ways in which space is engineered, imagined, and practiced toward the aims of producing post-Katrina citizens and demonstrations of citizenship.

21 Three significant plans were put into place for the immediate post-Katrina recovery before the City Planning Commission turned to the task of forging a city-wide Master Plan—the Bring New Orleans Back Commission, the Lambert Plan, and the Unified New Orleans Plan. As Olshansky and Johnson (2010) note, each of these efforts at planning for recovery were vociferously debated, contested, and in emerged in competition with the others.

22 This rationality is evident in early urban planning documents, such as those related to the Bring New Orleans Back Commission (BNOBC), where discussions regarding citizen participation all hinged centrally on neighborhood participation. As the American Planning Association report argues, a central need for the BNOBC was to develop a formal neighborhood planning program to ensure citizen participation and an inclusive voice in the planning process. The document suggests, “There is consensus among neighborhood groups that they lack a voice in the planning process at all levels...One highly successful mechanism involves taking a neighborhood approach to presenting proposals to citizens” (American Planning Association, 2005, p. 14-15). This recommendation was soon followed by each subsequent planning body, including that of the Master Plan.

23 The City Council commissioned the Lambert Advisory to devise a competing city plan to the BNOBC based on the right of all neighborhoods to return rather than one based upon neighborhood “viability.” The plan, termed the Lambert Plan, was focused on neighborhood participation in the planning process, where neighborhood organizations and leaders galvanized residents to devise their own plans for their own neighborhoods. The plan was criticized for failing to address all neighborhoods and instead only those that flooded (Collins, 2010, p. 4) as well as in creating a confusing planning atmosphere of competing plans. The City Planning Commission thus sought funding from the Rockefeller Foundation in order to create a unified plan that addressed all neighborhoods, termed the Unified New Orleans Plan (UNOP), which was later merged with the Lambert Plan.
I want to emphasize here that the Plan’s goal for the right for all to return is highly contested. Many doubt that is the goal, and there is still much debate in the city as to whether that is or should be the goal. My point here, then, is not to laud the Plan for the goal, but rather to emphasize that this is the rationality and rhetoric that serves as a crux for how the plan was proposed to residents and the City Council.

In so doing, it is not so much that the Master Plan aims to co-opt these organizations for the purposes of governing, but, rather, as Nikolas Rose (1999) argues in relation to the ways in which community is made into a technology of governance, “a sector is brought into existence whose vectors and forces can be mobilized, enrolled, deployed in novel programmes and techniques which encourage and harness active practices of self-management and identity construction, of personal ethics and collective allegiances” (p. 176).

The Plan suggests the NPP will create a new process for making land-use decisions that will be “seen as fair, transparent, and free of racial, class, or other considerations that would undermine its credibility…Greater public trust will arise from practice and from a growing confidence that City government works with residents and other stakeholders…This outcome will represent a substantial cultural shift” (City Planning Commission, 2010, p. 15.9).

The Bureau of Governmental Research released a report before the Master Plan’s finalization, criticizing the Plan’s proposal for district councils and planners to mediate between neighborhood organizations and government because it creates unnecessary bureaucracy that is disempowering to neighborhood organizations. They suggest, “The proposed community participation program does not fulfill the city charter’s directives with regard to neighborhood participation. Indeed, it risks diminishing, rather than enhancing, the neighborhood-level participation in planning and land use decisions envisioned in the city charter. The proposed structure would insert an extra layer of bureaucracy between the neighborhood and the City Planning Commission; it could give disproportionate weight to the views of certain institutions and undefined stakeholders; and, unless the planning district decided to devolve decision making on neighborhood specific matters to the neighborhood level, it would give entities unaffected by a land use proposal a larger voice than that of the affected neighborhood” (Bureau of Governmental Research, 2009).

According to Nikolas Rose (1996), audit is a technological feature of advanced liberal governance; it is part of the new “calculative regimes of accounting and financial management” that produce “new techniques for exercising critical scrutiny over authority” (p. 54). Through the process of audit, “entities to be audited are transformed: they have to be ‘made auditable,’ producing a new grid of visibilities for the conduct of organizations and those who inhabit them” (Rose, 1996, p. 55). In rendering the neighborhood “auditable” and therefore produced through a new grid of visibility, New Orleans’ neighborhoods are governmentalized, made governable, through the active subscription of neighborhood residents and organizations’ participation. This governmentalizing move challenges arguments regarding the rebuilding process as primarily disaster capitalism (Klein, 2007) or whitewashing (Dyson, 2006) of the city. Citizens are not only driven out (though certainly some are), they are also drawn in, called forth to become post-Katrina subjects that play a role in reconstituting post-Katrina neighborhood space.

The Master Plan includes detailed character studies of each of the city’s neighborhoods, and it outlines design guidelines and zoning policies specific to neighborhood character that it aims toward both maintaining and improving this quality of life under the rationale that doing so will help to produce more economically productive forms of citizenship by nurturing culture.
These arguments regarding the benefits to local businesses are frequently used to justify cities’ and states’ generous tax incentive programs, arguing in favor of the benefits to the local economy due to local spending that is said to outweigh the costs of the incentives. After *Treme*’s first season, it was estimated that the production spent 85% of its total expenditures in the State of Louisiana (Baxter, 2011). Still, it is unclear and debatable if these expenditures made up for the costly tax incentives.

As Lieutenant Governor while Ray Nagin was mayor, the city’s new Mayor, Mitch Landrieu, was noted for his attentiveness to creative culture. In addition to bringing the World Cultural Economic Forum to New Orleans, he is also credited with starting the Mayor’s Office of Cultural Economy, the Cultural Economy Initiative (“which supports individual artists and artisans who are active in their disciplines, cultural originators applying as small businesses, and galleries, museums, collectives and nonprofit cultural organizations” (Landrieu, 2010)), championing film industry tax credits, and initiating the Cultural Products Districts Legislation (which “creates hubs of cultural and economic activity and supports indigenous businesses in neighborhoods by offering smart tax incentives” (Landrieu, 2010)). Indeed, many saw Landrieu’s inauguration as Mayor as a sign that the administration would give more attention to culture and creative culture than that which had been given in the past—though culture has long been viewed as a key city asset, many New Orleanian politicians in particular have been chastised for their mistreatment, disinterest, and neglect of these assets. Thus elected, Landrieu promised to “be a true partner for artists,” suggesting that “New Orleans has one of the world’s more unique and exciting cultures” and that he “will ensure that we invest in this precious asset through city, state and federal grants” (Landrieu, 2010). The attention given to the Film New Orleans office in terms of increased funding and priority are thus a piece of this demonstration of the City’s partnership with artists in the post-Katrina context. Indeed, in the 2012 city budget, promoting the cultural economy is listed as one of three key budget priorities (in addition to business/retail development and equal business opportunity programs) and the only cultural economic activity highlighted is film. The budget proposal recommends over $1 million to be accrued to the Office of Cultural Economy, an increase of almost $200,000 (City of New Orleans, 2012).

This factor perhaps explains why, throughout my research, I was consistently unable to get in touch with anyone from Film New Orleans. Despite repeated phone calls and email messages, I unfortunately was never able to get their perspective on *Treme*’s relationship to the Commission, the city, and its practices in neighborhoods. I have thus had to rely primarily on newspaper articles, the Commission’s website, as well as other second hand sources to glean an analysis of Film New Orleans. This is admittedly a shortcoming of this study, for which future research is certainly called for.

A difference between the first Film and Video Commission brochure and the Film New Orleans website today is in how it addresses potential producers in relation to filming in these neighborhoods. The current website has a guide to filming in neighborhoods that includes a set of guidelines requiring notification, permitting procedures, how to negotiate with residents, and how to reduce the impact that the filming will have on these locations. Concern for neighborhood reactions is evident in the statement that the Commission cares about both the producers and the neighborhoods, recognizing the filming can have adverse effects on these neighborhoods. This is no doubt in response to the many complaints neighborhood organizations and residents have raised over the years regarding the inconveniences and problems created when Hollywood takes over the neighborhood. No such statement is evident in the earlier brochure, which assures producers that the Commission will go above and beyond what is necessary to ensure they have an excellent filming experience, emphasizing to producers that the Commission is there solely to “serve you” (New Orleans Office of Film and Video, 1993).

The State’s definition for local hiring, however, is fairly fuzzy, as, according to the 2002 Louisiana Motion Picture Incentive Act, a person is defined as “local” if they are a “resident” who maintains a home in the state for more than six aggregate months per year. Given that *Treme* typically films for about six months of the year, this means that many of their New York and Hollywood crew could make a claim as a local hire.

Livers has over 30 years of experience working with artists in New Orleans, particularly African American artists (but not exclusively), in the city, and, as an artist and art administrator herself, she was positioned particularly well to liaison with the community.
Baby Dolls are women, usually African American women from Tremé, who dress as “belle-epoque babies,” with satin bonnets, pacifiers, and bottles in tribute to the history of the women who worked in Storyville—the city’s former red light district located within Tremé and later razed to build the Iberville housing projects—and dressed similarly. Thomas also created and starred in a play where he dramatized his story of political downfall as well (MacCash, 2011).

I am drawing on Virno’s (2004) discussion of Marx’s theory of the general intellect as a way to define the neighborhood as a site of productive sociality. Drawing on Marx’s (1973) oft referred to “Fragment on Machines” in The Grundisse, Virno (2004) argues that capital is parasitic on the productive potentiality and labor power of the multitude that is embodied in the general intellect. Virno defines the multitude in opposition to political theories of the people, suggesting the multitude is a category that redefines the meaning of the One and of immanence: its unity is no longer the State (or God), but, rather “language, intellect, the communal faculties of the human race…The many must be thought of as the individualization of the universal, of the generic, of the shared experience” (2004, p. 25). This common language, intellect, and communal faculty is “the general intellect.” The general intellect, then, is a kind of productive sociality.

When I was embarking on my own walking tour of Tremé, stopping specifically at sites I had seen on the show, I encountered a tour group on Segways, mobile electric scooters. Notably, Eric Overmyer, creator and producer of Treme, is the authoritative voice chosen for the Marigny/Bywater, where he has had a home for the last twenty years. Almost all of the sites he mentions would be unknown to most New Orleans tourists, though a few would be known to Treme viewers.

For example, Eric Overmyer relayed a story to me regarding a woman from Cleveland coming up to Wendell Pierce at Jazzfest explaining that she had never been to New Orleans before but felt compelled to go after seeing the show.

These aims represent the changing conceptions of the “post-tourist” who is seen as savvy, self-reflexive, and a playful poacher (Campbell, 2005; Edensor, 1998; MacCannell, 1992; Urry, 1990).

A quote from Barrios’ (2010) ethnographic research is particularly poignant on these issues, where he notes, “In the summer of 2007, Cheryl Austin, a prominent Treme grassroots organizer, spoke about the contestations over the use of urban space between Treme’s lifelong African American working-class residents and recently arrived gentrifiers, saying: ‘We have cultural differences. I like walking out of my house and having a beer. A lot of them think it’s bad...That is happening right now, with gentrification. They don’t want no bars open, they don’t want young men walking around with t-shirts and their jeans pulled down, they don’t want anyone hanging out. These cultural things are beginning to change. People that have been here a short time, and I mean twenty years is a short time, twenty years or less. They want the Second Lines to clean up after themselves...Growing up in Treme, you had a bar, a church, and a funeral home, so you knew where your family was! For me, if you did not grow up here, you cannot appreciate living here. People who think like that, people who want Treme transformed, could go anywhere and dismantle what was there and build what they wanted.’” (Fieldnotes 2007)” (p. 601).

The projects had been slated for demolition before Katrina by the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO), which is run by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD’s official policy under the HOPE VI program is that cities’ post-war housing projects are a failure, and they intend to replace those that are determined to be “distressed” with mixed income housing built through public/private partnerships (Demolition or Disposition of Public Housing Projects, 2006; Hanlon, 2012). Katrina created the potential to move forward with HUD’s plan, and though there was little damage to most of the projects, they refused to reopen them claiming that they were a health hazard due to potential mold (Filosa, 2007; Flaherty, 2010). In January of 2007, protestors occupied the public-housing projects protesting their closure and demolition plans (Walker, 2007), but HUD and HANO went forward with demolition plans anyway.

When I asked Schweigman and Overmyer about Treme’s and HBO’s involvement with the House of Blues benefit for Brad Pitt’s Make it Right Foundation, they had little to say. Overmyer suggested that that was something HBO was doing, and that the folks involved with Treme were not really involved in these efforts, though the benefit featured music from the show and used the Treme
brand in its marketing. The difference here between these producers’ acknowledgement of the work they do in Pontchartrain Park vs. in “Brad Pitt’s” neighborhood is interesting. It perhaps speaks to the way in which the show’s ideology about the kind of attention that the Lower 9th Ward has received in contrast to other parts of the city interacts with their own desires for materially investing in rebuilding the city as well. This, again, points to the significance of thinking through the interconnections between the show’s representations and its broader spatial practices in the city.

It can also no doubt be said that it helps these organizations to become more aware of Treme as well, and increases the likelihood that they will be able to film there, return to film there, or can solicit potential talent from the neighborhood as well. Producers from the show make efforts to show up at the events, such as the barbeques, both to say thank you to the community as well as to hear their concerns or praise for the series and its work in the city (Schweigman, personal communication, March 16, 2011).

Notes in Chapter 3

1 These new media ventures include HBO’s new iPhone application; a social networking site HBO Connect; a relaunch of the HBO.com website; and the rolling out of its new online and mobile streaming application HBOGo.

2 Johnson (2007) argues that the particular form of cultural capital it offers is best described as “high pop,” or tastefulness that has been massified where “high cultural rarity becomes a part of mass cultural production” (p. 10).

3 The title of the article is referencing the HBO original program Luck (aired January 2012-March 2012), which included an ensemble cast (headed by Dustin Hoffman) and was created by HBO veteran David Milch (Deadwood). The series, which dealt with the inner culture of horseracing, was cancelled after three of the horses used for the series died. The article suggests that Luck is quintessential HBO—with its ensemble cast and creative auteur showrunner—and its demise therefore speaks to HBO’s own downward spiral and the fact that its usual algorithms for success seem to be losing traction.

4 In addition to rival networks and programming, HBO’s reliance on subscription fees as its primary revenue has also been threatened by Netflix and other online streaming services as well as the consolidation of distributors who have the power to deny carriage and therefore force HBO into unfavorable negotiations.

5 While often considered part and parcel of the “quality” television genre, Lentz (2000) notes, that though “quality” and “relevant” programming emerged out of many of the same conditions, the two are also distinct and actually posed contrasting visions for television reform in the 1970’s. Whereas the “quality” programs of Tinker and the like often focused on the politics of gender and were aimed less at social critique and more at what she refers to as a “politics of the signifier” invested in liberating television from its lower status through stylistic and self-reflexive textual aesthetics, the “relevant” comedies of Norman Lear were more often invested in the politics of race and what she refers to as “the politics of the referent.”

6 However, most of the original series on the network have featured almost exclusively white casts, and network executives have tended to downplay the racial elements of their other programming, claiming that it is a reflection of the network’s commitment to “quality” rather than an intentional commitment to racial politics. Thus, Fuller (2010) argues that while HBO’s brand signifies blackness, it does not openly court black viewers so as not to exclude whites (p. 295).

I am drawing here on Jonathan Sterne’s (2006) theory of communication as transportation, where he argues, in dialogue with James Carey, communication is not always symbolic action. Instead, he suggests, “social reality is made not only at the level of symbols. It is also built and organized, a world of motion and action” (p. 118). Linking the history of the telegraph to the history of train transportation, communication, Sterne argues, is also an instrumental and constitutive process of transportation where communication is a movement that is “also a constitutive physical phenomenon” (p. 118). Treme as a spatial practice therefore might be understood less as a form of symbolic action that produces ideologies and a semiotics of space and more so as an instrumental form of transportation that moves bodies and objects in space, as a constitutive physical phenomenon.
Pierce heads a rebuilding and development organization, the Pontchartrain Park Community Development Corporation, that is rebuilding and revitalizing the neighborhood in which he grew up. This speaks to the way in which “branding is often less about commodification and more about the effort to reorganize markets and direct them according to ‘emotional,’ affective or broadly cultural means…as a technical means to address entrenched social problems” (Moor, 2007, p.68). As James Hay (2010) suggests, in the neoliberal stage of government, “It is important to understand how media such as television operate within this governmental arrangement and rationality as a perspective as much about current liberal government as about the current convergence of media…how television (in its relation to other media) is instrumentalized as technology and network of everyday government and through rationalities and programs oriented to governing everyday life, producing and authorizing particular forms of citizenship” (p. 156).

Faulted were the lack of material ties to neighborhood communities as reasons why individuals were not able to get the help they needed. Moreover, this lack of ties to space and place in this more material sense was also faulted in environmental terms, as not leading to the ethics of environmental stewardship to protect the wetlands in ways that could have prevented Katrina’s devastation.

Spigel (2001) suggests, “Rather than experiencing the domicile as a window on the world that brought public life indoors, the resident experienced the home as a vehicular form, a mode of transport in and of itself that allowed people to take private life outdoors. (p. 392)

Possibly, Simon would disagree with the attribution of him as the sole author, and certainly, the writers and producers I interviewed would likely disagree as well. In our conversations, it was clear that they all felt they had a role to play in constructing the text, especially Eric Overmyer. However, many, like writer Lolis Eric Elie, also suggested that Simon’s vision guided the overarching story arc and direction of the series in ways that are evocative of an auteurist rationality. As Newman and Levine (2012) note, however, television production, in particular, is an effort that requires the labor and input of multitudinous (although often invisible) authors.

I am indebted in these insights to Laurie Ouellette’s work on the stakes of ABC’s Better Community branding and activation of neoliberal citizenship (Ouellette, 2012).

Notes in Conclusion

The potential benefit for musicians associated with the show is also bolstered through a cross-promotional tour, organized by Danny Melnick of Absolutely Live, where musicians featured on the show tour the country under the HBO and Tremé brand names (Gallo 2011).

See also Mayer and Goldman (2010) for a discussion of the problems and failures of film and TV production in New Orleans in terms of labor and hiring practices, especially as they are related to the failure of tax incentives to produce a home grown local production culture.

See also Mayer and Goldman (2010) for a discussion of the problems and failures of film and TV production in New Orleans in terms of labor and hiring practices, especially as they are related to the failure of tax incentives to produce a home grown local production culture.

Formulated through the Autonomia movement in Italy in the 1970’s, “the common” emerged as a way to theorize the collective potentiality embodied in what Marx (1973) referred to as living labor and the general intellect. Capital, as Mario Tronti (1966) suggests, is parasitic on this collective potentiality, and as labor becomes increasingly flexible and service-based, it depends more and more on the immaterial, creative, and communicative capacities of social individuals in an attempt to subsume and harness these potentialities for the benefit and profit of capital (Lazzarato, 1996; Hardt & Negri, 2000, 2004; Terranova, 2004; Virno, 2004). The common, which reemerged in recent years as a response to the increasing flexibilization of post-Fordist capital, theorizes how political movements can resist capital’s harnessing of collective potentiality to create new forms of collective life.
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