The background of the slide is a dark, slightly blurred photograph of a building. A prominent sign on the building reads "FRENCH" in large, white, block letters. The sign is partially obscured by the text overlay. The overall tone is dark and artistic.

PAINTING THE TOWN FRENCH
Art, community-building
and language activism in
rural Louisiana

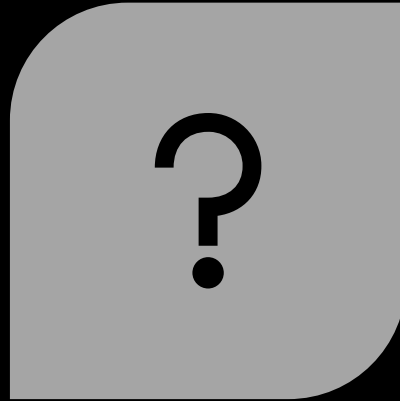
Oliver Mayeux

University of Cambridge / NUNU Arts and Culture Collective

Some questions



**WHAT IS LANGUAGE
REVITALIZATION *REALLY*?**



**WHY IS LANGUAGE
REVITALIZATION DIFFICULT?**



**WHERE DOES ART COME
IN?**

Revitalising Language in Provence: A Critical Approach

James Costa

Language revitalization: A critical approach

“although language is of course the central rallying point, the actions that we are referring to are primarily not about language but about people: people coming together to act in the world, people articulating opinions about how society should be ordered and about who should take part in that order’

(Costa 2017:4)

“In **creative placemaking**, partners from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities. Creative placemaking animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired.”

(Markusen & Gadwa 2010)

THE PROBLEM

AMERICAN CITIES, SUBURBS,
AND SMALL TOWNS CONFRONT
STRUCTURAL CHANGES AND
RESIDENTIAL UPROOTING

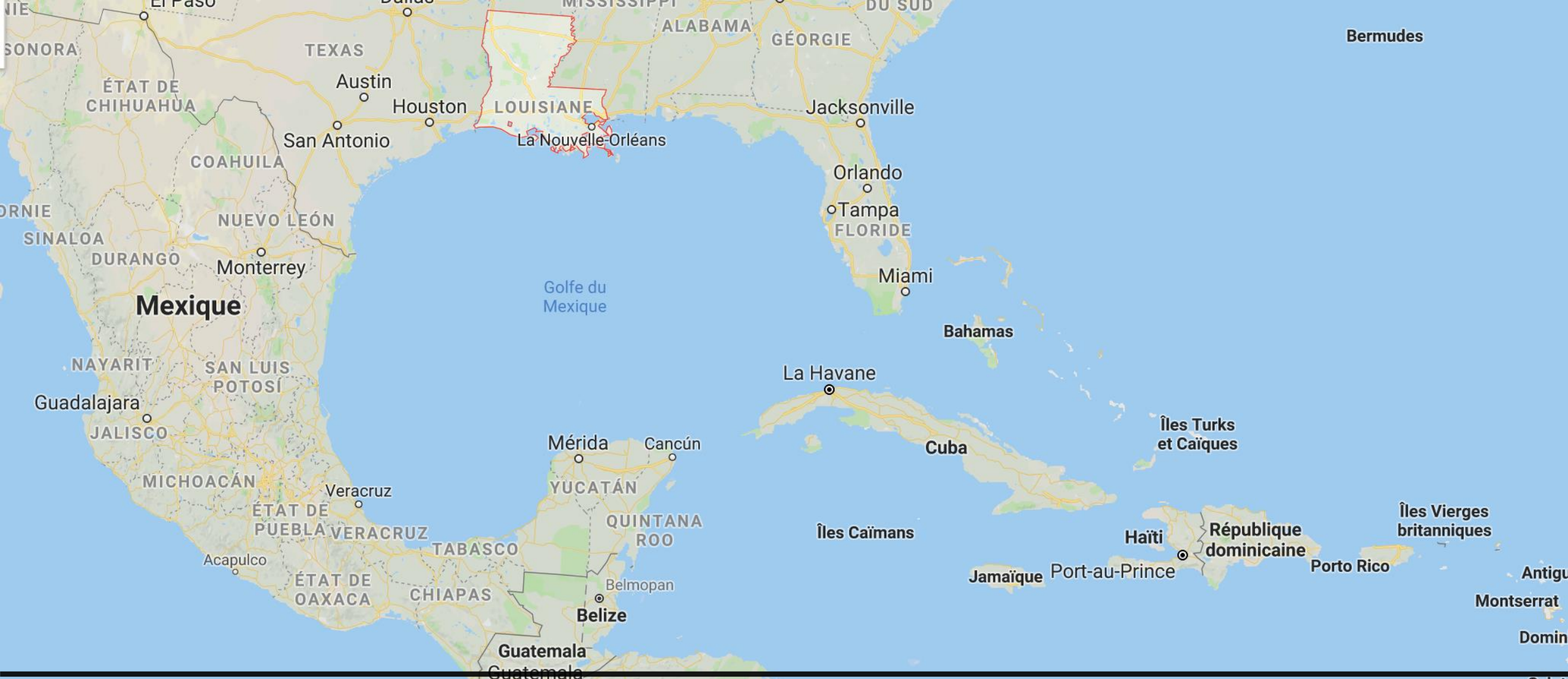
THE SOLUTION

REVITALIZATION BY
CREATIVE INITIATIVES THAT
ANIMATE PLACES AND SPARK
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

THE PAYOFFS

GAINS IN LIVABILITY, DIVERSITY, JOBS
AND INCOMES

INNOVATIVE PRODUCTS AND SERVICES
FOR THE CULTURAL INDUSTRIES



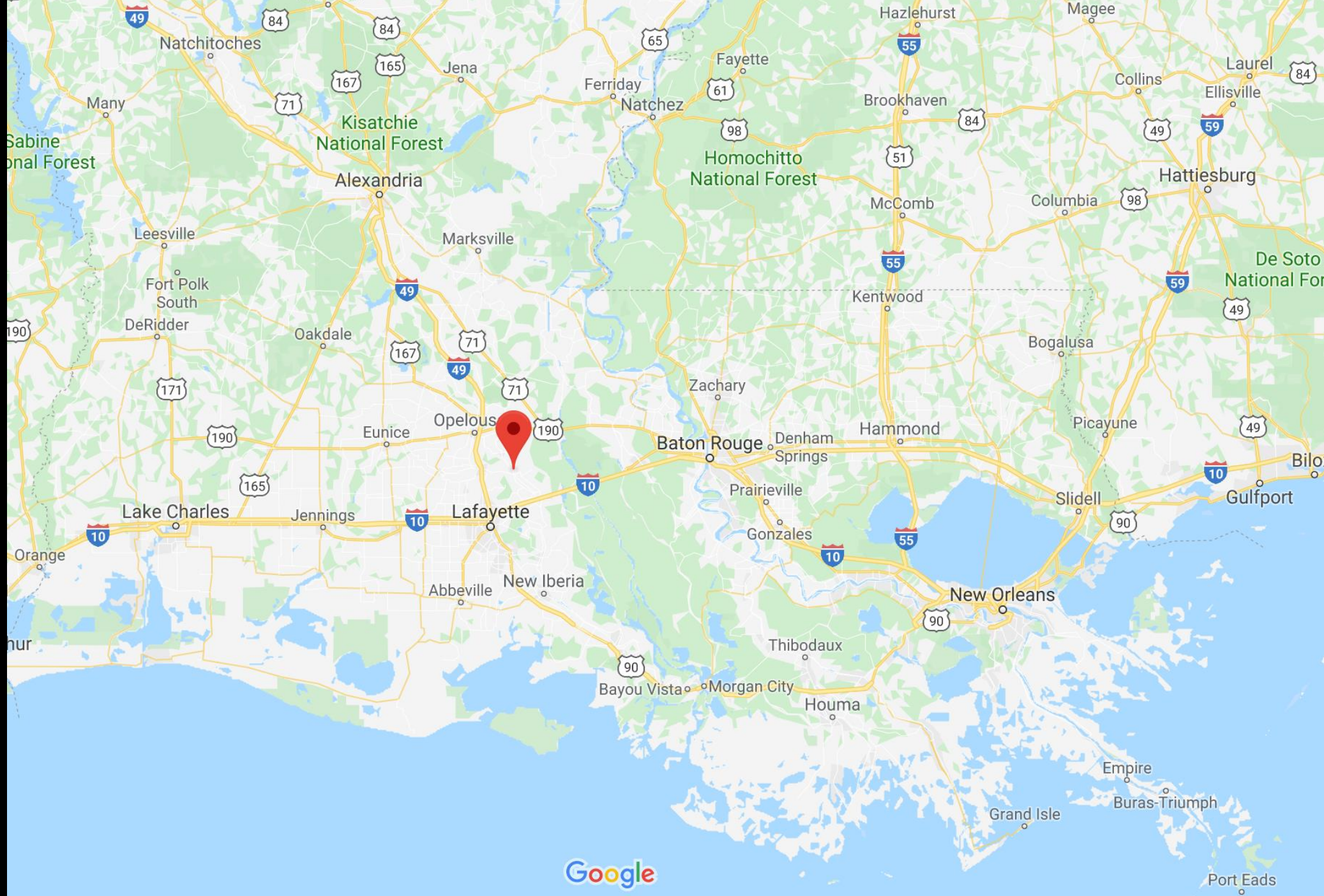
Language endangerment in Louisiana



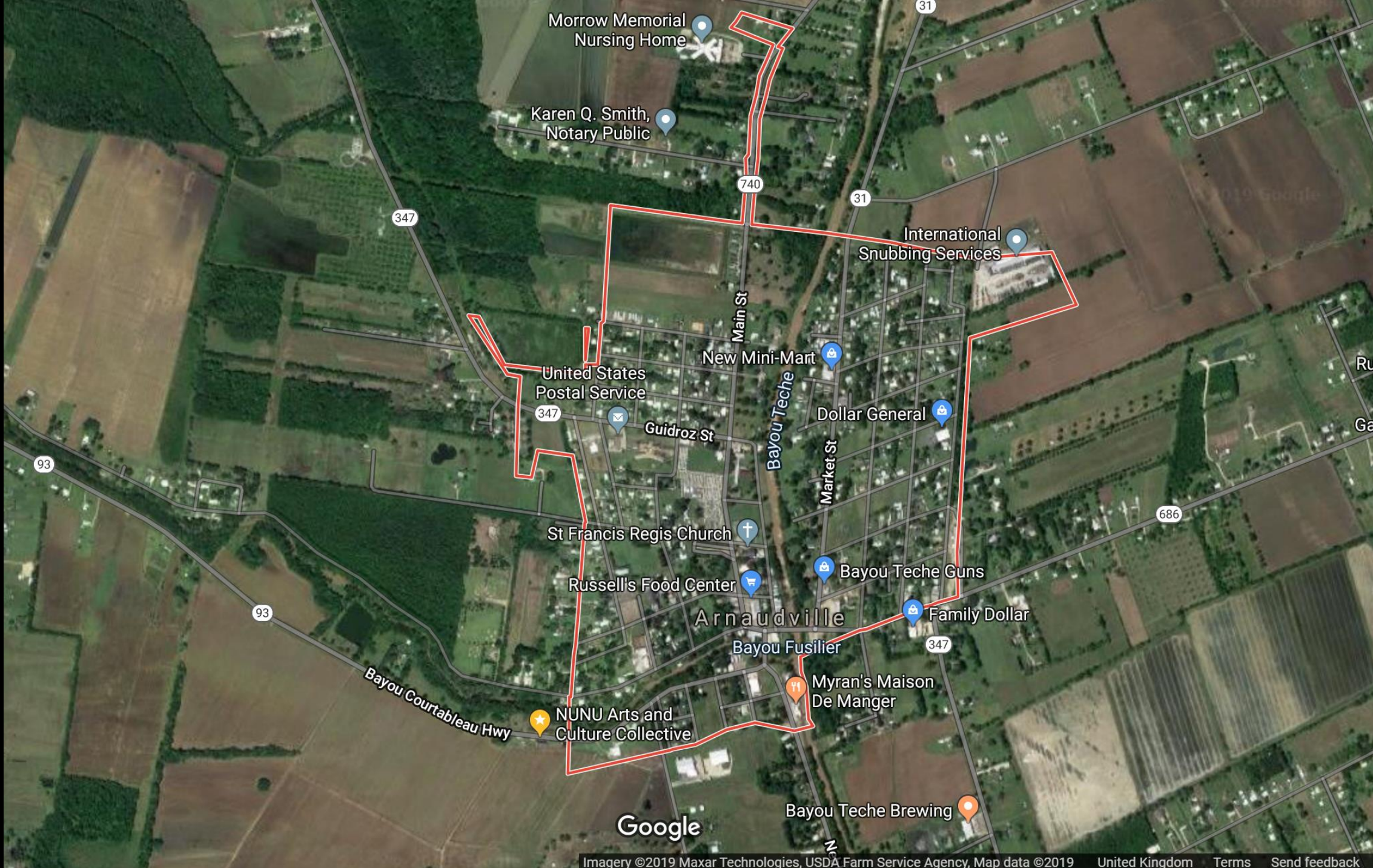
Challenges of language revitalization in Louisiana

- Rural life and urbanization
- Class and poverty
- Racial segregation
- Climate change
- Political polarization
- Decline in social capital (Putnam 1995)





Google



Morrow Memorial Nursing Home

Karen Q. Smith, Notary Public

International Snubbing Services

United States Postal Service

New Mini-Mart

Dollar General

St Francis Regis Church

Russell's Food Center

Bayou Teche Guns

Arnaudville

Family Dollar

Bayou Fusilier

NUNU Arts and Culture Collective

Myran's Maison De Manger

Bayou Teche Brewing

Google



Bienvenue
chez NUNU!



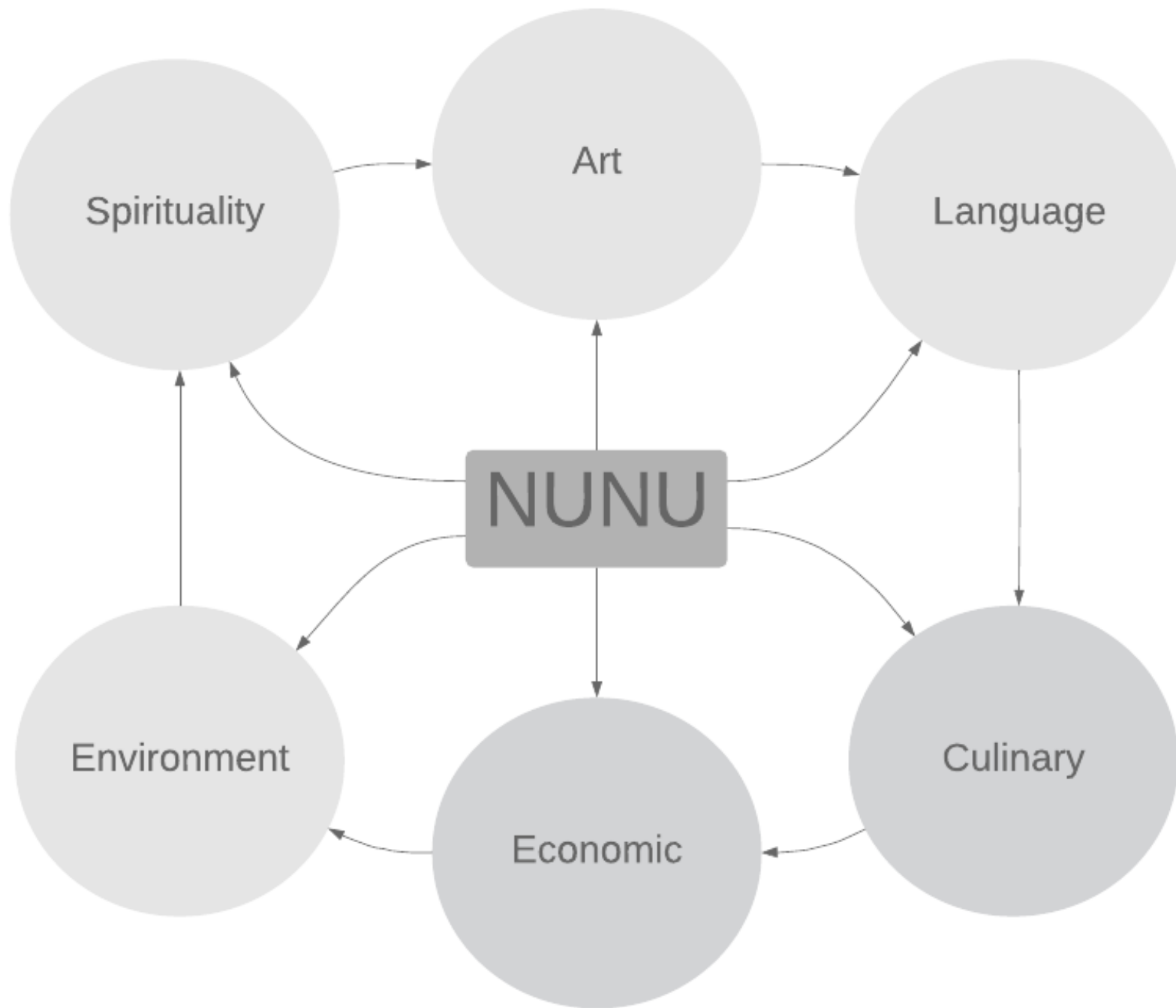


Who is NUNU?



“Art is our newest crop”

Paintings by George Marks



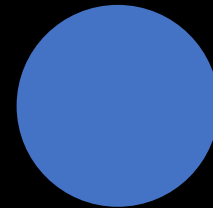


Creative placemaking for a 'civic community'
(cf. Putnam, Leonardi, Nanetti 1994)



WHEREAS The French, Cajun and Creole peoples of Arnaudville are of a proud, humble heritage and culture, imparting an overwhelmingly decent, welcoming and compassionate good nature, maintain the ability to override social, class, economic, race and religious distinctions, proving to provide The Town of Arnaudville, world wide recognition, appreciation, admiration and economic opportunities of which “The Saint LUC French Immersion and Cultural Campus” would serve to maintain, protect and to promote...

Tensions:
'Tradition and Progress'



Challenges



- French as a colonial language
- Beyond French
 - What about Creole?
 - Indigenous languages and communities
- ‘Artists are a tool for gentrification’? (Rich 2017)
- Creative placemaking outside of ‘Middle America’

Conclusions



What is language revitalization really about? Why is it so difficult? How can art help?



Creative placemaking has socio-political implications (Salzaman & Yerace 2018), including in social movements centered around *language*.



A pathway to success?

Engage in the wider socio-political struggle and bring together different groups

... many of whom may not be interested in language!

References

- **Costa, James. 2017. *Revitalising Language in Provence: A Critical Approach*. Publications of the Philological Society 48. Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.**
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- **Putnam, Robert D. 1995. "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital." *Journal of Democracy* 6 (1): 65–78. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.1995.0002>.**
- **Putnam, Robert D., Robert Leonardi, and Raffaella Nanetti. 1994. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.**
- **Rich, Meghan Ashlin. 2017. "'Artists Are a Tool for Gentrification': Maintaining Artists and Creative Production in Arts Districts." *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, September, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2017.1372754>.**
- **Salzman, Ryan, and Marisa Yerace. 2018. "Toward Understanding Creative Placemaking in a Socio-Political Context." *City, Culture and Society* 13 (June): 57–63. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ccs.2017.10.004>.**



Merci!
Come and
visit us!