

Creative clusters in rural, coastal and post-industrial towns

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Supervision

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Despite the strong tendency for creative and cultural industries to concentrate in the largest metropolitan areas, a growing number of studies in many different countries have reported that some of these industries are growing rapidly in small towns and in post-industrial regions. This expansion has been partly attributed to technological change and digitisation, partly to lifestyle choices, partly to the re-use and reinvention of older industry and craft traditions, and partly also to local policy support. Not surprisingly, policy-makers have seized on these findings to argue that creative clusters can act as a tool for regeneration and inclusive growth in struggling towns.

This project would develop a critical examination of these trends and arguments. These debates are beset by many unanswered questions and uncertainties. How do creative clusters vary between different categories of small, peripheral and 'left-behind' towns and do they share common constraints? How strong are growth dynamics in different industries and what is the balance between growth and decline in different sectors and places? In recent years in the UK, levelling up funds have been spent on revising 'place imaginaries', increasing place attachment and stimulating cultural activities. However, there has been little evaluation of whether these activities are both meeting industry needs and boosting inclusive employment. This project would therefore look carefully at local developmental outcomes of creative support initiatives. It would draw on international evidence and generate new data on creative clusters in peripheral towns.

We are looking for PhD students to co-design a project around this broad topic. Both quantitative and qualitative methods may be used and students are encouraged to develop an approach which reflects their own interests and connections. Potential questions could include:

- What explains the growth of different creative industries in peripheral towns and why has this process been so uneven?

- What are the developmental outcomes of these types of growth and where and how are they inclusive?
- How should levelling-up policies best support these clusters and is the contemporary emphasis on place-making and pride in place supporting these clusters effectively?

Funding Details

Three years of funding will come from the South Coast Doctoral Training Partnership scheme (SCDTP). In addition to covering the costs of programme fees, the SCDTP studentship also provides a basic annual maintenance grant of £18,622 (2024/25 UKRI rate). This is not classed as income so is therefore not liable for tax. Students will also have access to a Research Training Support Grant (RTSG) to fund attendance at other training courses, conferences or to purchase essential equipment for your research.

Application Details

For entry in the 2024/25 Academic Year, the deadline for the receipt of applications will be 19 January 2024 (17.00 GMT).

For all studentships, students must have qualifications of the standard of a good honours degree at first- or upper second-class level, from a UK academic higher education institution. Degree qualifications gained from outside the UK, or a combination of qualifications and/or experience that is equivalent to a relevant UK degree, may be accepted.

The South Coast DTP is able to accept applications from UK and International applicants to all of our accredited disciplines/pathways, however due to UKRI funding conditions, awards to non-UK residents are capped at 30% of our overall allocation.

To be classed as a home/UK student, candidates must meet the following criteria:

Be a UK National (meeting residency requirements below), or

Have settled status, or

Have pre-settled status (meeting residency requirements below), or

Have indefinite leave to remain or enter

If a candidate does not meet the criteria above, they would be classed as an International student.

To apply for funding you will need to complete 2 applications forms. You will need to complete an online application form for your programme of study via your chosen institution's website. You will also need to complete an SCDTP Funding Application form. Further details can be found on the '[Apply](#)' page.

For more details please see the SCDTP website (<https://southcoastdtp.ac.uk/>). Informal enquiries may be made to the project supervisors.