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Practice the Creative Economy

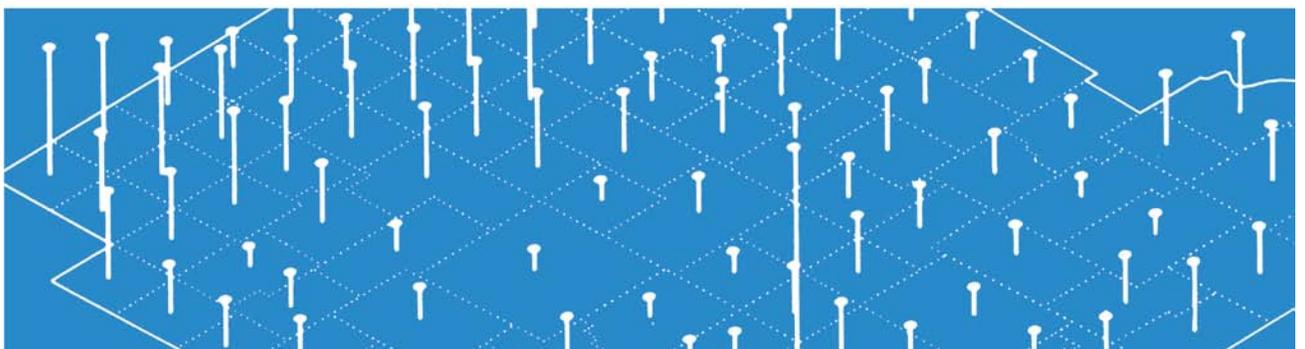
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Abstract

The creative economy and creative class has received substantial attention the last few years. By academics, policymakers, and media the theories on creative class has been developed, criticised and put in to use. In this paper the practise of doing research on the creative economy is illuminated from different methodological and geographical levels by a group of scholars with first hand experience in the field. This paper seeks to show the value of a multi-disciplinary approach to the question in field, and what different method has to offer. We will show how different context can inform the research strategy, how research is played out, and last but not least what we have learned.

Introduction

Innovation and creativity are key concepts in the understanding of today's economy. In an economic situation where the wheels are turning faster and competitive advantages shifts rapidly, one need to comprehend innovative and creative modalities to understand economic dynamics. The reason is the widespread understanding that all economic activities are based on learning and knowledge. One analytical framework for understanding the innovative saturated economy is the creative class (Florida 2002, 2004, 2008). This approach is by no means un-controversial as it has met critique on methods (Glaeser ?), conceptual approach (Peck ?).... The authors behind this paper is a group of scholars which the creative class theory has inspired and informed our research to a bigger or lesser extent. We have struggled with it, tested it and even in some cases expanded it. As such, as a group, our first hand experience can give valuable contribution in the often vocal debate on the creative class.

The main questions behind this paper how do we manage research on the creative economy with a time and space specific sensitivity. Or in other words, how is different contextual settings managed? In addition we want to share our first hand experience on what we have learned from different research approaches and designs. Is it something that join the different approaches to the creative economy, or are they just different pieces in a messy mosaic of individual case studies?

The reminder of this paper is divided in two main sections: (a) methods and methodology in studies of the creative economy and (b) research approaches on different geographical levels. However, we will start out with a theoretical section where we clarify and define how we understand some central concepts.

Conceptual framework

In economic geography and related disciplines, innovation and knowledge as drivers of the economy has reached a paradigmic status. 'Everyone' agrees that innovation and learning is the key for firms' long-term competitiveness (c.f. Porter 1990; Lundvall 1992; Scott 1995; Edquist 1997; Storper 1997; Asheim 1999; Maskell and Malmberg 1999; Cooke 2002; Gertler 2003). This mirrors the widespread belief that continual improvements are the basic elements required to maintain dynamic competitive advantages. Dynamic competition is qualitatively different from just producing cheaper than your competitors – it must be supported by innovation and the exploration of strategic disparity from rivals (Porter 2000). The innovation literature is broad and abundant (Malmberg and Power 2006), but a common feature in most of this literature is the notion that few good ideas develop in a vacuum; innovation is an interactive process and involves different kinds of social interaction (Asheim 1999). With this departure point, competitiveness is conceived as related to the ability of firms to continuously upgrade their knowledge base and performance (Porter 1990;

Lundvall and Johnson 1994; Maskell and Malmberg 1999). Hence, knowledge is a fundamental asset for competing firms and, consequently, learning is a key process. At the same time, production and distribution of this knowledge is viewed as socially situated (Lundvall 1992). Innovations are in most cases less the product of individual firms than of the assembled resources, knowledge, and other inputs and capabilities that concentrate in specific places.

Innovation is defined by novelty, either a new product, organization, process and/or a new way of combining old knowledge. With this novelty aspect as a fundamental building bloc, we want to define today's economy as a creative economy. Florida (2002, 2004, 2008) argues that the major force that differentiate certain places from others is to be found in the creative class.

Methods and methodology to analyse the Creative Economy

The creative economy is complex concept that can be handled with a wide variety of research tools. In the next section we will briefly go through some of the approaches we have found to help us. However, these approaches are not mutually exclusive. Quite the contrary, a combination of methods can give the study depth that can be hard to gain with only one set of research tools.

Agent based modeling

Research on creativity and the knowledge economy in general is notoriously problematic when it comes to identifying specific dependent variables that directly measure 'creativity' or 'knowledge'. A common research strategy for dealing with this issue is to undertake case-studies of certain contexts in which creativity is an important element, for example specific occupations (Florida 2002), industries (Caves 2000), and city-regions (Scott 2006) are used to focus attention on the particularities of creative activity. In addition to the case-study approach, research that employs more traditional regional science methods often aims to quantify where creativity activity tends to be spatially concentrated and identify traits common to such locations (Florida 2008). While these two approaches often compliment one another, it is often difficult to observe direct connections between the specific micro-foundations that case-studies tend to provide and the broader generalizations that regional science techniques offer. The use of agent-based models however, presents an opportunity to bridge the ontological divide between the actions of creative agents and the contextual factors that influence creative activity.

Agent-based models (ABMs) are essentially dynamic simulations of social and environmental processes (For related examples please see: Axtell and Florida 2001; Page 2007). The researcher builds an ABM by setting up a goal for (often heterogeneous) agents to achieve, the key micro-foundations that determine influence their actions, and the initial setting. 'Agent' modelling can however be a misleading term in that it suggests agency is privileged over structural factors, when in actuality structure is equally represented. One of the most promising aspects ABMs is how they are able to demonstrate ways in which agency and

structure can evolve over time. In this respect the processes within ABMs involve a certain degree of path-dependency in that the actions of agents are not only influenced by their own previous actions, but are also influenced by all the previous actions taken by each of the other agents. A benefit of this is that ABMs can be effective at demonstrating how socio-economic inequalities tend to build and persist over time between individuals as well as between groups and locations.

An agent-based modelling approach to the study of creativity enables researchers to better understand the social dynamics of the creative process itself. If creativity is conceived of as involving learning from social interaction, adapting what is learned, and disseminating new ideas (Lubart 2001), then agent-based models can be constructed based on theoretical micro-foundations that deal with social interaction, learning, and adapting knowledge. Much of the supporting literature for these types of activities is found in social psychology, which has a long history of creativity research (for examples see: Amabile 1996; Csikszentmihalyi 1996; Sternberg and Lubart 1999), and social network theory which focuses on patterns of social interaction and subsequent knowledge flows (for examples see: Granovetter 1973; Burt 1992; McPherson, Smith-Lovin L. and Cook 2001). Such models allow researchers to test notions about the role of social context and network position in the creative process. If creativity is essentially about making new combinations of what is already known (Jacobs 1969; Weitzman 1998) then being in a position that enables a multitude of learning opportunities is paramount to producing novel ideas. These models can also highlight the spatial dimension to the creative process if the importance of face-to-face interaction is taken into account (Storper and Venables 2004). The reasoning behind this notion is that if F2F interaction has a facilitating effect on the quantity and quality of knowledge exchange, then there is a creative advantage to being physically situated in a location that is economically and socially diverse.

By highlighting the spatial dimension of the creative process researchers are also able to examine the role of jurisdictional policies that have potentially beneficial or detrimental effects on the actions of constituent agents. One of the general advantages of an ABM approach is that researchers can perform normative experiments by changing underlying assumptions and initial conditions. This can be applied to the testing of public policies by assigning different policy inputs to each 'jurisdiction' in the model. For example, various talent attraction and retention (TAR) strategies can be put in competition with one another in order to gauge how they may tend to affect local outcomes. The possibilities for such enquiries is only limited by the researcher's imagination, and the quality of the model overall, which tends to be determined by the strength of the component micro-foundations. While it is still an emerging approach, ABMs have the potential to open up many avenues of research that make connections between creative agents and the contexts in which they operate. Like any modelling approach however, it is always important to compliment it with other approaches that involve making observations in the 'real' world.

Quantitative approach

While the initial work by Florida (2002) on the creative class to a large extent is based on both qualitative and quantitative research, the research after this point has been dominated by qualitative studies. However, there are some lines of quantitative research on creativity, carried out both before and after *The Rise of the Creative Class*, often in relation to the development of city regions.

The groundbreaking work by Jacobs on the role of diversity in cities for economic development has had the most impact on our way of understanding the dynamics and creativity in modern cities of today. Already in the 1960s, Jacobs stressed the role of diversity and new combinations in cities for economic growth (1961, 1969), and the role of cities as open places that attracts a diversity of people with different backgrounds and how this stimulates creativity among those. In line with Jacobs, Vernon (1963) and Thompson (1965) both showed the relation between concentration of human capital and longstanding economic growth. Andersson (1985) showed how the returns to investments in creativity spill over to others in the society besides the actual investors. Lucas (1988) was awarded the Nobel Prize for his work on the role of investment in human capital for economic growth.

The introduction of the creative class measure provided an alternative way of measuring human capital. Instead of focusing on the role of education, the focus was on what individuals were being paid for at work. The creative class was the individuals who were being paid for their creativity; a group attracted by lifestyle factors and regional tolerance levels when choosing where to locate. This measure was criticized by e.g. Glaeser (2004) who said that the creative class was nothing else than the traditional group of highly educated, and that the role of tolerance and lifestyle factors had little to do with their location patterns. Florida et al (2008) showed how this is a sequential procedure, using path analysis and structural equation modeling.

The major criticism towards the quantitative research is the lack of causality clarity, in other words what came first, the chicken or the egg. Is it creative and open regions that attract the creative class, or do regions that inhabit this group becoming more open and creative? The other major controversial is whether there actually is a difference between the creative class and the traditionally used human capital measure, based on educational levels. To a certain extent the research is being troubled by the lack of data over time. The use of tolerance indices, such as the gay index, are not provided for a time period long enough to test properly, e.g. in a Granger or Vector Autoregressive context. This means that the causality still is in the assumptions. The second object, if the creative class and traditional human capital is the same group of individuals, is being tested in several countries where micro data exist, e.g. US, Canada, Sweden and Denmark. The results show that groups are overlapping but not identical.

Network analysis

Since the early literature on the creative economy and in particular on the work of artists and creative practitioners (Becker 1974; Becker 1982) the importance of networks was strongly advocated. Any creative product that reaches our markets is ultimately the result of a collaborative effort between not only different creative skills and jobs but also between creative industries and the commercial and larger business sector. These early insights came back in the literature and in contemporary research in different ways. Networks are not only looked at as part of the creative ecology (Jeffcutt 2004) and provide more explanatory power than supply-chain approaches (Pratt 2001), but they can provide a different picture when trying to address issues such as the role of localities and regional production systems in the creative economy but also relationships of power and gender within different career patterns.

In the recent literature, social network analysis has allowed researchers to unfold some of the hidden dynamics in the creative economy. For example, social network analysis can map the interconnections, which are often not only an economic transaction but a casual knowledge sharing or informal collaborations. In particular, in a sector like the creative economy, where small companies and freelance workers work alongside large corporations and where the commercial sector thrives with interconnection with the public cultural sector and the numerous not for profit organization, mapping and understanding social network dynamics can reveal a very complex picture.

Can networks then become a new key to enable the development of creative economies? Although these networks are central to the success of the local system of production and in enabling companies to emerge in different contexts, they are very informal and unstructured and public policy interventions often fail to capture the grassroots networks that support them.

Similarly when we move from the business relation's perspective to what goes on within companies, social networks can provide powerful explanation in the career development and working patterns of creative practitioners.

It has been generally confirmed by social network researchers that social contacts are an effective source of getting jobs or upward mobility in labour markets (Granovetter 1995; Lin 1999; Lin et al 2001). Other scholars have explained the importance and prevalence of social networks within the new economy and in particular, within project organisations where the boundaries of the firm have been blurred with the project (Ekinsmyth 2002, Grabher 2002). These studies are important in that they have shown that personal networks are important for recruitment and advancement within this sector. However, there are several gaps in this research, they assume that social networks impact men and women in similar ways and that the benefits of networks are distributed equally.

Although there is extensive literature on social networks, there is little empirical research that has shown the differences between men's and women's networks.

These networks are important in that they can direct the flow of power, information, and resources. For example, these networks can help workers obtain jobs, advance in the workplace and acquire legitimacy. However, the benefits of social networks may not be similar for men and women workers. More research is needed in investigating this, so we can see the varying work patterns and experiences of men and women working in this sector. So how do workers in this sector, advance, manage insecurity and organize their working lives. These industries are regarded as egalitarian and creative but more work needs to be done on the specific ways in which gender impacts on the experiences of project based work in the new economy.

Qualitative Case Studies

Much of the work in the creative economy has been in the form of a case study. Case studies are often employed when the researcher has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real life context (Yin 1994: 1). Case studies are beneficial if one goes into depth and details, but scope is often sacrificed. In other words, case studies are useful if 'why' and 'how' questions are raised. Case studies can be theory building exercises, and intensive case studies offer means to explore causal connections under different local contingent conditions (James 2006).

Yin, suggests that case studies can lead to analytical generalisability. This means that previous theory can be used as a template for comparison with the empirical findings (Yin 1994: 31). One example on how case studies can be applied in the creative economy is Pilon's (2008) comparative study of the video games clusters in Montreal, Los Angeles and Lyon from a cultural perspective in anthropology. The main conclusion is that the cultural capital of urban regions may act as centripetal forces towards anchor firms, create a favorable context to the emergence of creative clusters, and act in their evolutionary patterns. She also suggests that the hierarchy of creative clusters (measured by the density of creative workforce at the city level) are positively linked to cultural hierarchy. The cultural capital of urban regions matters in explaining the geography and evolution of creative clusters, and subsequently, why the world remains 'spiky'.

Silverman (2005: 107) argues that research questions are inevitably theoretically informed. Social theories are a prerequisite for social research and are reflected in considerations of methodology. Case studies often has a focus on theory building and refinement of existing theory, for how we 'carve up' and define our objects of study tends to set the fate of any subsequent research (Sayer 2000). One approach to theory building is through conceptualization, in which "to theorize" means to prescribe a particular way of conceptualizing something (Sayer 1992). With this understanding, theory is understood as a set of concepts used to define and/or explain some phenomenon (Silverman 2005). To identify the most important aspects of a research object abstraction is used as a tool. The study objects of the social sciences are always part of complex, open systems. Some of the natural sciences have the possibility to isolate causal forces of objects or events, but we very seldom have the option to analyze our study objects in

controlled environments. Hence, the social sciences have to rely on abstraction to identify essential or substantial sides of an object or phenomenon. Without a sophisticated conceptualization one can easily dedicate importance and explanatory powers to the wrong mechanisms or events. In other words, one needs concepts to comprehend the world. One very good example of conceptualization as a building block for theory and better understanding of current development is "the creative class". Notwithstanding the controversies and the critique this has met, judging from the response from academia and policy makers this concept has caught something notable about the economic development. The concept has been developed and refined through several case studies. However, theory building research has to be combined with empirical testing. Concrete and abstract researches are not two separate processes; one has to have a double movement from the abstract to the concrete and back again. This iterative approach is necessary to refine our concepts so they can "grasp the concreteness of their objects" (Sayer 1992: 87).

The Creative Economy on different geographical levels

The creative economy, with innovation as a key process and knowledge as a key resource (Lundvall and Johnson 1994), is today omnipresent. No firm, region or nation that wants to compete in the global market can avoid these "rules of the game".

In the next section we will discuss how the creative economy can be analysed and understood on different geographical levels.

The Individual

"As a musician, artist and creative person, my compensation is getting to make art with other people. That is what I get out of it and that is what interests me... it is all about that artistic stimulation, that is what nurtures me...Somewhere there has to be some kind of endorphin like a rush that we get from making sound, the physical act of playing instrument and making sound. It is a rush." (Violinist, Toronto, 2008)

The creative economy is the result of the collective creative production of many individuals organized into projects, firms, industries and regional economies. Despite earning annual incomes of \$23,500, or 75% less than the national average (Canada, 2004), the number of artists in the Canadian workforce tripled between 1971 and 2001. Moreover, as these artists were twice as likely to hold a university degree than the average Canadian worker, and could presumably earn higher incomes in other sectors of the economy, the factors which motivate these individuals to pursue creative work is critical to understanding the creative economy. According to Amabile et al, (1996), however, the existing research on the psychology of creativity focuses on the characteristics and innate abilities that enable individuals to be creative, yet much less attention has been paid to *why* people choose to pursue creative endeavors. Moreover, "in contrast to the large volume of studies on the influence of educational environments, there is almost no research on the effects of work environments on creativity" (Amabile et al,

1996, 210). Therefore, a more nuanced investigation into the working lives of creative workers, the obstacles that they face, and the intrinsic and extrinsic factors which motivate them is needed to understand the decision-making process of individual workers and the sustained growth of the creative labour force.

The motivation behind the high skill, low wage choice is seen to be the result of a set of push – pull incentives where the creative urge plays a major part in the size of the push away from institutional work and the pull toward creative occupations. It is possible that intangible or non-monetary forms of compensation are gained from the exercising and fulfilling of an artists creative urge. This becomes more likely when the amount of emotional energy expended in the creative process, be it painting a picture or performing live, adds to the costs born by creative workers.

In essence the sum of all the different factors that contribute to the high skill, low wage choice that an artist makes can well be termed an individual's *propensity to create*. Similar to an individual's propensity to consume, as defined by Keynes in his "General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money" (1935), the propensity to create describes the force behind an individual's choices. In the case of Keynes' 'propensity to consume', the choice that an individual faces is whether or not they will use their income on consumption. In the case of an individuals propensity to create the choice faced by the individual is a time allocation problem. An individual's propensity to create dictates the force behind one's creative urge and thus is elemental in their decision about how they wish to spend their time. Many different occupations, with their varying degrees of creative input, proximity to the creative process, and stability of income (both short and long term) allow an individual to tailor their work life to suit their own propensity to create. For instance the manager of a band is an occupation suited for someone with a higher propensity to create than a financial analyst, but a lower propensity to create than the band they manage. At a different scale, the crew in the motion picture industry often hold occupations that are viewed as being less creative (i.e. extras and construction workers) than the more creative occupations (i.e. screenwriter and director). The decision to pursue creative work is also apparent as people move between occupations in the creative economy. For example, many actors in the motion picture production industry transition from their acting roles into positions where they have more control over the creative aspects of the production, such as directing. Similarly, musicians choose to make music independently because it affords them the maximum creative and structural freedom.

What becomes apparent from these examples is that the *propensity to create* may reveal similar motivations amongst these individual creative workers, but their ability to engage in these activities is constrained by the scope and scale of the project work being undertaken. This *propensity to create* also appears to vary from project to project depending on the costs and benefits of each engagement. Put simply, if the propensity to create motivates individuals to join the high skill

– low wage creative occupations, then a deeper understanding of the rewards that people gain from satisfying their creative urge can, in part, explain the growth potential and future configuration of this emerging sector of the knowledge-based economy. “For me, it hasn’t been about the money and I don’t think it ever will be, just because music does something inside me...being in a band is not a rational economic choice, it makes no sense whatsoever...but I know, I am gonna do this because it is making me happy.” (Singer and Bassist, Toronto, 2007)

Firm and Industry

Often studies within economic geography and beyond take a firm and industry approach to its objects of study. This counts for both traditional industrial sectors and for the more specific group of cultural industries.

The industry approach has several specific strengths and weaknesses. The main strength of a categorization into industries is the ability to apply theories and hypotheses onto an operationalized part of the economy. Breaking the economy down into industries or groups of industries with common product groups, production characteristics, and consumption patterns makes the economy more comprehensible. Furthermore, there is a long and well established tradition for this categorization by industry, and hence it is easy to quantify and measure size, impact, etc. when using an industry approach. Because of the tradition and the international agreement on the NACE codes for measuring industries it is also easy to conduct comparative analyses – of firms within or across industries, or of industries within or across regions or countries.

One example of how such an approach may facilitate comparisons across industries is the identification of copyright based industries and analyses of the differences in performance between these industries and the economy in general. By applying an industry perspective analyses show that copyright based industries have twice the value added per employee than the economy in general (Andersen 2006).

Along with the advantages of applying an industry approach there are also disadvantages. One of the weaknesses of a categorization of the economy into various industries is the extreme simplification of reality that this implies. Categorizing by industry implies applying an artificial framework for understanding the economy. An industry approach disguises nuances within the categories such as the effect of individuals and specific capabilities. Furthermore, the categorization into industries is a static approach with little focus on dynamics and the ongoing transitions and dynamics of the economy. In this regard there is a mismatch between international consensus on industry classifications and standardizations on the one hand, and the ever changing economy on the other. When the economy changes and the basis for categorization of firms change with it, it takes a long time to reach international consensus on updates of the industry classifications. Through the maturation and implementation of various generic technologies into existing industries, e.g. ICT, biotech or green technology, one sees an emergence of new forms of economic

actors that often appear at the edge of existing industrial borders. Innovation often takes place at the intersection between established industry or company borders. In this sense an industry approach is not always the most appropriate way to grasp the evolutionary and dynamic nature of the economy.

One of the difficulties associated with an industry approach may be exemplified by the rapid growth of what is termed the 'experience economy'. In their seminal book Pine and Gilmore (1999) promoted the experience dimension as an add-on for further development of traditional products and services. However, when measuring the size and economic impact of the experience economy using the traditional industry categorization is problematic because the experience dimension still makes up a diminishing part of for example bars or beer production. Though some micro brewery brands put a relatively larger share of the production costs in non-material assets such as branding, story-telling and packaging, the majority of beers sold are standard commodities.

More recent inter-industry or cross-sectoral approaches such as constructed regional advantage (EU 2006), industry platforms (Cooke 2007), a related variety approach (Frenken et al. 2004), knowledge bases (Laestadius 2000; Asheim and Coenen 2005; Moodyson, Coenen, and Asheim 2006) and an individual and an occupational approach (Vinodrai 2006; Florida 2002; Markusen 2004) may be regarded as ways to supplement the dominant position that the industry approach is in possession of. This work constitutes an alternative way of perceiving how various forms of competencies function in the economy to the industry approach.

Regional – qualitative methods

Region is a contested concept, first of all there is no common definition, and there it is often used with prefixes ("learning region", "the creative region", "city regions", "cross-border regions", "bioregions") indication different foci. Paasi (2002) notes the conceptual struggles that have emerged since the late 1980s with the revival of regional geography. He expresses that the current theme of 'regional geography' is used more as an umbrella term for research reflecting how regions/place could be constituted by and constitutive of social and economic life, relations, and identity, which leave the researcher with a wide berth of interpretation and delineation. One of the most successful examples where a regional approach proved useful in explaining innovation, competitiveness and corporate culture is Saxenian's (1994) work on Silicon Valley and Route 128. However, with the region as a centre of attention, the different scales are often deflated. Paasi (1991; 2004) expanded on this notion of scale, but also emphasized the role that history and culture play towards the construction of regions, and the fact that a region is in perpetual transformation due to the fact that the attributes that contribute to a particular notion of a "region" are in a constant state of evolution. Even recently, Rantisi et al. (2006), in their editorial on placing the creative economy, also make a plea for the notion of scale when studying the creative economy. It should be noted that although the notion of

local, national, and international scale were considered in this recent work, the notion of a “regional scale” was absent.

Moving from the region to the topic of qualitative methods in a regional setting, Markusen (1994) argues that the interview proves most useful when seeking to probe firm strategy as well as examine how particular firms have responded to geographical restructuring. Much of this particular argument is based on Shoenberger’s 1991 work on the benefits of the corporate interview as a research methodology in economic geography. Despite the strengths of interviewing over quantitative data when seeking to understand economic regions and their resident firms, Markusen argues for clear structure and transparency (1994) and rigorous research methodologies and policy relevance when studying the region (Markusen 1999). Markusen (1999) argues in this particular piece that since the 1980s, there has been a growing uncontested and increasingly obtuse dialogue, relying on what Markusen calls ‘fuzzy concepts’ – characterizations that are absent conceptual clarity and difficult to operationalize (p. 870). In many cases, evidence is scant, or carefully selected, and methodologies are seldom discussed in detail. Markusen closes by stressing that although fuzzy concepts may be useful in the ‘groping’ toward a better understanding of the world (and the region), there is still a need for greater conceptual clarity, increased rigor in the presentation of evidence, and a more concerted effort to make work in regional studies more relevant to the world of politics and policy and planning. However, it is part of the researcher’s imperative to be able to confidently and professionally improvise, by allow for flexibility when various parts of the research methodology do not line up perfectly. By acknowledging these imperfect research designs, but moving ahead with a research project in a flexible and open style, we, as a body of researchers, might eventually be able to better able to understand and articulate this “messiness” over time. Thus, being able to have a level of working comfort between Markusen’s demand for rigidly constructed research methodologies (1999) and Peck’s (2003) notion of contented fuzziness might prove useful¹.

By allow for flexibility and openness, I realized that in my study of Vancouver based biotechnology firms, executives and human resource managers saw the “region” of talent that they *attracted from* as spanning from Vancouver to San Diego, California, and situated west of U.S. Interstate 5. However, in an effort to bolster and sustain the robustness of the growing “regional” Vancouver biotechnology sector, there was a conscious effort on the part of human resource managers *to retain* this “talent” within the Vancouver “region” even if a firm was downsized. Thus, the notion of “region” when it came to seeking and attracting talented individuals had a much greater longitudinal geographical span, and was determined by a cultural and behavioral feature called “Westcoastness”. However, the “region” shrank considerably when the firms had to downsize and

¹ It should be stressed that Peck (2003) provided a well-argued rebuttal to Markusen’s 1999 critique of his methodologies. As well, Peck (2003: 737) did provide useful grounded recommendations for deepened and extended case study approaches in economic geography and related disciplines of study.

were forced to lay off this highly sought after talent, but wanted these people to remain in the greater Vancouver region. When this happened, human resource managers in Vancouver's biotechnology cluster worked collectively to ensure that any laid off "talent" was able to find a new job within the greater Vancouver area, which would continue to support the growth of the overall cluster. Thus, the notion of a "region" when it came to retaining talent resembled a much more traditional regional labour market, but was sustained by the creative collective collaborations of dedicated human resource managers. Perhaps it is best to close with Paasi (1991), who stated that the notion of a region is always in perpetual transformation.

Trans national

One of the lesser explored areas of creative economy research is the mobility and migration patterns among the creative and talented labor force. This research area is crucial in understanding the dynamics of the creative economy for several reasons. First, if regions seek to attract and retain talent we need to have an idea of what propels or repels talented people. Second, the creative class thesis argues that the creative class is highly mobile, however, only a limited number of studies have systematically addressed mobility of talented people (see, for examples, OECD 2002; Raunio 2007; Hansen and Niedomysl 2008; Houston et al. 2008). Third, an increasing lack of labor – high, medium and low educated – brings a growing international competition for talent.

The transnational or international migration patterns of creative class may be approached from three different spatial formulation methodological approaches: 1) international comparison of national migration patterns; 2) attractiveness of certain place or country in an international perspective; or 3) international or global flows of creative class. However, in most cases the lack of occupational data forces researchers to use educational level as a nominator of talent. According to the OECD (2002) the valid definition of Human Resources in Science and Technology (HRST) should be based on both occupation and education as either singularly provides an incomplete picture. Data availability for the first approach, comparison of national patterns, is often better in this sense, than in case of the second and third.

In the following section examples are given in order to illuminate the approaches that have been used:

Thus far the most convincing attempts have used a combination of register data and questionnaires or semi-structured interviews. Hansen and Niedomysl (2008) combine register data with questionnaires on a population close to 5000 individuals that made a move of more the 20 km in Sweden collecting information including age, education, primary motives for migration, and residential location. Hansen and Niedomysl found migration patterns among talents in Sweden is driven by job opportunities and social relations and less by cultural amenities with the highly educated people moving down the urban hierarchy. Further in Finland, Raunio (2007) and Forsander et al.(2004) have

addressed migration of highly educated people in ICT and biotech sectors from an international perspective. In Raunio (2007) foreign ICT- and biotech experts were surveyed (n=556) and interviewed (n=102) to reveal the motives and dynamics of highly-skilled experts to Finland. The focus of the study was how to attract talents to by studying the attractiveness of people to certain places and/or countries.

Canadian studies of the international dimensions of migration and the mobility among highly educated labor have taken similar approaches. For example in the Canadian context, transnational migration has been examined on several dimensions such as identity, family, education, housing, and entrepreneurship (see, for examples, Mitchell 1998,2001; Waters 2002,2003; Kelly 2003; Ley and Kobayashi 2005), primarily through qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and focus groups. In the Canadian context, the mobility of the highly educated has been examined through the outmigration of individuals often explored as a 'brain drain' or 'brain circulation' (see, for examples, Lam 1994; Helliwell 1999; Iqbal 2000; Devoretz 2006; King and Newbold 2007, 2008).

Data availability issues concerning the flows of foreign talent in Canada are common to other parts of the world. International migration examination is a relatively difficult task given typical data restrictions that record the entry of immigrants, but not their departure. Canada, like many other countries, does not track when people leave the country, or where they migrate to. Therefore, estimation of the magnitude of out-migration or international migrations is difficult, and typically relies either upon "residual methods" or focus upon specific periods, cohorts or origins. While there is uncertainty about the rate at which individuals leave, there is even more uncertainty about their characteristics. The potential magnitude and the socio-demographic and the economic and selectivity of international migrations has thus far been little understood.

Thus it is appropriate to use statistics, surveys, qualitative data, and documents for triangulation to make explanations concerning the motives and dynamics of highly-skilled mobility more reliable. In particular, when examining the connections between international migration and regional development, statistical analysis needs to be complemented with qualitative and case-study based approaches. Using mixed methods or triangulation helps to address the crucial questions in terms of creative economy. Why do people move to certain places? What is the impact of international migration on regional development? What are the roles of diversity and tolerance, study and work in the context of international migration?

Macro level studies of global flows of talent are becoming increasingly important for understanding the economic dynamics in the knowledge economy (Florida 2005). This area of research is however in its emergence. Case studies are the most promising studies that illuminate the phenomena (Sotarauta and Raunio 2005; Saxenian 2006). Due to difficulties in data gathering at international level,

most attempts so far has taken form as international collaborations between research teams.

Conceptual; expanding the framework

As the previous chapters have shown, creativity is a key contributor to a modern economy's production and innovation systems. However, creativity plays an important role even after the actual product is finished. Often we see the most creative input occurring in the branding and marketing of products. This reflects, and is reflected in, the growing importance of intangible features like symbolic value, and is illustrated by the simple fact that the book value of intangible assets compared to raw materials has shifted from 20:80 in the 1950s to 70:30 in the 1990s (De Laurentis, 2006; Cooke et 2007). The growing importance of symbolic value (i.e. value grounded in more than just the utilitarian assessment) impacts not only upon how firms conduct their business, but has also spatial outcomes, since it is not only products that compete with symbolic value as an asset - even places increasingly try to promote themselves through immaterial qualities. We have seen the importance of individual perception from some of our previous creative class research, in terms of spatially-defined images and experiences (both positive and negative), and how these can vary from place to place (see for example Raunio et al 2007).

The race for innovation that has defined the post-Fordist economy has given us high quality products. Increasingly, we take the functionality of products for granted, and our consumer choices are determined by the symbolic value of the product or the company behind it. The strength of a brand stems from a combination of how it performs and what it stands for. When a brand gets the mix right it makes us as consumers believe that it adds something to the idea of ourselves (Olins 2003:16). Much of the same process happens when we "shop" for places to live and work. We are looking for places where we can be who we want to be to the fullest extent (Florida 2008). Even though we try to evaluate different criteria in a balanced way, the symbolic representation of a place is important in our decisions on where to work and live. This is maybe most evident in the location choices of the creative class – a wealthy and powerful group increasingly seeking places with a reputation for a first-rate people climate.

Symbolic meanings have always been related to the consumption of goods and experiences (Veblen, 1899; Simmel, 1905; de Certeau, 1980; McCracken, 1988). Indeed, because consumption has an internal autonomy and several symbolic meanings, goods have not only an economic value but also a social and cultural one (Codeluppi, 2002). This means that material culture and artefacts rests on socially constructed symbolic value (Breward 1995). However, it is important to realise that in developed economies social status is now generally defined very differently to how it was in the past; wealth is now less important than income in sustaining the lifestyles and consumption habits of the 'social elite'. Moreover, even to the most casual observer, it seems apparent that the 'anti- bourgeois' values of creativity, difference and individuality dominate modern popular cultures. For example Brooks (2000), describes an emerging social elite in which

the bohemian and bourgeois value systems have merged, the people he terms the 'Bobos' are prosperous yet eschew conspicuous consumption, entrepreneurial yet socially aware, and so on. Heath and Potter's (2006) central thesis takes this much further; they suggest the idea that bohemian values are somehow not compatible with capitalism always *was* mistaken. What this essentially means is that when something becomes popular, its ability to serve as a marker of social distinction declines. This they argue is the essence of consumerism; it is that constant search to distance oneself from 'the masses' that drives purchasing behaviour. At the same time consumption is in most cases a balancing act of showing one's distinct and unique taste, and yet following a larger trend. As Walker (2008) argues, even the most rebellious subcultures are on some level consumption based

The culture of consumption is often seen as something that undermines social togetherness, but often it is the opposite. One example in which individual consumption goes hand in hand with the symbolic representation of places is the growth of *green* consumption – a practice shared more or less by most of the creative class (Walker 2008). The pursuit of a sustainable life-style is typically explicated by 'alternative' choices and consumption behaviours. Making green choices is a part of these consumers' personal narratives, along with where they choose to live and work. The habits of an environmentally-friendly life-style can be accomplished thanks to the relationship between places, products and people. As such there is an iterative movement back and forth between how people act (both as consumers and as social citizens) and the representation of a place. As such, the symbolic value of place is intrinsically interwoven with the consumption culture of that place.

Conclusion

This is complex, but extremely important. The field needs more work, and generous funding! (That was a joke, just to see if you have read through the whole document. We will reach a clever and enlightening conclusion when we have all the contributions).

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Contributing Authors

- Markus Bugge - Uppsala University - markus.bugge@nifustep.no
- Karenjit Clare - University of Cambridge - kc331@cam.ac.uk
- Nick Clifton - University of Cardiff - cliftonn1@Cardiff.ac.uk
- Roberta Comunian - University of Southampton - R.Comunian@soton.ac.uk
- Elizabeth Currid - University of Southern California - currid@usc.edu
- Hogni Kalso Hansen - University of Lund - hogni.kalso_hansen@circle.lu.se
- Atle Hauge - University of Toronto - atle.hauge@ostforsk.no
- Brian Hrats - University of Toronto - brian.hrats@utoronto.ca
- Karen King - McMaster University - kingk2@mcmaster.ca
- Sue Lucas - University of Pennsylvania - slucas@edinboro.edu
- Charlotta Mellander - Jönköping International Business School - Charlotta.Mellander@ihh.hj.se
- Lars Pettersson - Jönköping International Business School - lars.pettersson@sjv.se
- Sylvianne Pilon - Université du Québec à Montréal - pilon.sylvianne@uqam.ca
- Naomi Pope - UCLA/ University of Victoria - npope@ucla.edu
- Mika Raunio - University of Tampere - Mika.M.Raunio@uta.fi
- Kathrine Richardson - University of British Columbia - kathrine@interchange.ubc.ca
- Greg Spencer - University of Toronto - greg.spencer@utoronto.ca
- Kevin Stolarick - University of Toronto - Kevin.Stolarick@rotman.utoronto.ca
- Irene Tinagli - Carnegie Mellon - tinagli@cmu.edu
- Kristina Vaarst Andersen - Copenhagen Business School - kva.ino@cbs.dk
- Tara Vinodrai - University of Waterloo - tvinodra@fesmail.uwaterloo.ca

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