The ‘Creative Class’ in the UK: Research Briefing

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Introduction and Research Questions

The replacement of raw materials or other natural endowments with human capital and creativity as the crucial wellspring of economic growth means that in order to be successful in the emerging creative age of the knowledge economy, regions must develop, attract and retain talented and creative people. Such people are not spread equally across nations or places, but tend to concentrate within particular city-regions. Richard Florida (2002a; 2002b) thus argues that regional economic outcomes are tied to the underlying conditions that facilitate creativity and diversity. Consequently the ‘Creative Class’ thesis suggests that the ability to attract creativity and to be open to diverse groups of people of different ethnic, racial and lifestyle groups provides distinct advantages to regions in generating innovations, growing and attracting high-technology industries, and spurring economic growth.

An important research task is therefore to explore the factors that are hypothesised to attract talent, and its effects on regional economic outcomes. In this paper we provide a brief overview of our investigation into the extent to which there are similar processes concerning the relationship between creativity, human capital, and prosperity at work in the UK as reported for North America by Florida and colleagues (Florida and Gates, 2001; Gertler et al 2002).

The basic research questions are:

1. Where is the creative class located in the UK\(^1\)
2. What is the potential impact of quality of place upon this dispersion?

Beyond the scope of this brief overview are questions relating to the connection between the location of the creative class and inequalities in technical and economic outcomes within the UK; these are discussed elsewhere (see Cooke and Clifton, 2007).

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\(^1\) At present data from Northern Ireland and Scotland is absent from our analysis. This will be addressed during subsequent iterations of the analysis.
Methodology
The key variables for the quantitative analyses relating to quality of place are the Bohemian Index (employment in culture and media occupations), and the Diversity Index (overseas-borne residents); these mirror directly variables employed in North American research. We also include a Cultural Opportunity Index (relative employment in restaurants, bars, museums and so on). In order to reflect the European context of our research, to these are added the Public Provision Index (healthcare and education) and Social Cohesion (unemployment). In turn (though not discussed here), regional prosperity is gauged through examining population and employment change, concentration of high-tech industry, and entrepreneurial activity (new firm formation).

Finally, with respect to the ‘Creative Class’ themselves; these are essentially people who as a key constituent of their work are involved in the creation of new knowledge, or the use of existing knowledge in new ways. In the absence of a primary data set relating to the actual engagement in such activities, this is proxied by the use of Occupational categories. We subdivide the Creative Class into the Creative Core (scientists and engineers, architects and designers, academics and teaching professionals), and the Creative Professionals (associated professional and technical occupations of the Creative Core, managers, financial and legal professionals).

Results and Analysis

Mapping the Creative Class in the England and Wales
The Creative Class accounts for some 37.3% of the workforce; the total figure is split between the Creative Core (9.7% of the workforce), the Creative Professionals (25.5%) and the Bohemians (2.1%). There is, unsurprisingly, significant variation in concentration across England and Wales; this is highlighted in Table 1.

Table 1: Creative Core Location by Unitary Authority / County

As might be expected, localities in the west-of-London M4 corridor area (Wokingham, Reading, Oxfordshire, Windsor and Maidenhead) feature heavily in the
The top ten Creative Core Location Quotients (LQs). In addition to London, ranked at number seven Cambridgeshire completes the third facet of the ‘Golden Triangle’ of the UK’s knowledge economy. What is perhaps more interesting is that in addition to those areas which might be expected to feature, a number of less obvious regional centres of creativity emerge – Cardiff in the West, Manchester in the north west (Trafford lying just to the west of the city centre with Manchester itself ranked only 4 places below at 14), and Newcastle in the north east. Finally, our rankings confirm the position of Brighton and Hove as a creative.

Turning attention to the bottom ten UAs, a number of these are places suffering the protracted after-effects of the loss of heavy industry, either as distinct localities (Blaenau Gwent, Stoke on Trent, Barnsley) or the de-industrialised areas of large cities e.g. Tameside (Manchester), Knowsley (Liverpool) and Sandwell (Birmingham). In addition, places associated with old-style ‘bucket and spade’ holiday resorts also make an appearance (North East Lincolnshire, Blackpool).

The Creative Class and Quality of Place

Table 2: Quality of Place- Bivariate Correlations

As shown in table 2, the indicators for both diversity and the bohemians are positively correlated with the localisation of the Creative Class and both its sub-groups. This means that the Creative Class in England and Wales tends to live in places that also have high levels of bohemians and diversity. Both relationships are quite strong, particularly so for the bohemians. The openness index is a fairly simplistic measure of tolerance and as such might not be sufficient. However, from the above we can tentatively conclude that the Creative Class and tolerance (measured as diversity, and the presence of bohemians) do correlate in the same way that Florida and his associates found in the North American analysis.

With regard to cultural opportunity, a positive and statistically significant relationship exists between the presence of the Creative Class in a location, and that location’s cultural and recreational offer. This finding is again compatible with those of the North American research. This relationship is quite strong for the Creative Class as
whole and the Creative Professionals, but somewhat puzzlingly weaker for the Creative Core.

For public provision, a significant and positive (but weak) association is observed for the Creative Core only. For unemployment, the relationship is consistently negative, although moderate and weak with respect to the Creative Core, meaning that municipalities with high levels of unemployment tend to have a low concentration of the creative class.

**Conclusion**

The Creative Class in England and Wales appears to show a similar pattern of distribution with respect to quality of place, as is observed in North American cities. High concentrations are found in places which are diverse, bohemian, socially cohesive and which offer higher levels of cultural opportunity. However, while these observations are consistent with Florida’s theories, they do not themselves imply any causal relationships; to this end further research involving tools such as multivariate models and qualitative case studies is ongoing.

**Acknowledgment**

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**References**


Table 1: Creative Core Location by Unitary Authority / County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top 10 Localities</th>
<th>LQ</th>
<th>Bottom 10 Localities</th>
<th>LQ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Wokingham</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>1. Barnsley</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Reading</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>2. Tameside</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Cardiff</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>3. N.E. Lincolnshire</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Oxfordshire</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>4. Knowsley</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>London</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.33</strong></td>
<td>5. Kingston upon Hull</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Newcastle</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>6. Sandwell</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Cambridgeshire</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>7. Thurrock</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Brighton &amp; Hove</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>8. Blackpool</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Windsor &amp; Maidenhead</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>9. Blaenau Gwent</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Trafford</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>10. Stoke on Trent</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of Population 2001
* Combined NUTS1 region

Table 2: Quality of Place- Bivariate Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Correlation with Creative Class</th>
<th>Correlation with Creative Core</th>
<th>Correlation with Creative Professionals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Openness (Diversity)</td>
<td>0.52**</td>
<td>0.44**</td>
<td>0.50**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bohemians</td>
<td>0.72**</td>
<td>0.58**</td>
<td>0.71**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Opportunity.</td>
<td>0.52**</td>
<td>0.29**</td>
<td>0.56**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Provision</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.21*</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>-0.31**</td>
<td>-0.21*</td>
<td>-0.33**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* significant at the 95% level
** significant at the 99% level

3 This statistic should not obscure the fact that massive variation exists within London, with some very low Creative Core LQs found therein for example Barking and Dagenham, at 0.51 the third lowest and England and Wales.