The Geography of the Creative Economy in Europe's Northern Periphery: A Case Study from the West of Ireland

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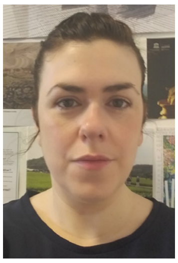

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ABSTRACT

Our intention here is to contribute to the growing body of work that is shining a light on the nature of creative economies in non-urban settings. By focusing on the west of Ireland, a predominantly rural region, we first gauge the presence of the creative economy through an analysis of the creative industries working out of the region. Concentrating on the geography of creative activities at the regional level helps highlight the complex and nuanced inspirations and narratives behind location decisions and working conditions in the creative sector of a peripheral European region. Our findings provide evidence of a significant creative sector in this region, sharing traits with how rural creative industries have been characterized in terms of the active role of place. We identify a diverse sector, composed of more traditional sub sectors such as craft, but also digital and technologically driven creative sub sectors. The evidence indicates a creative sector with complex spatial and socio-economic dynamics exists in this region. This complex relationship is explored by understanding how creatives in the west of Ireland use their location as an inspiration as well as how they transcend peripherality through networking and more communal approaches to production.

Keywords: Creative economy, Place, Peripheral regions, Spatial patterns, Policy, West of Ireland

1. INTRODUCTION

The dominant narrative in relation to the geography of the creative economy and, in particular, the location of creative industries is an urban one. Such is the nature of its output, from fashion to games, the creative economy is imagined as an urban animal, one that relies on young, well educated, highly networked, and place sensitive workforce. Considering the inception of the creative economy/creative class debate, it is far from surprising that focus has tended towards the urban. Richard Florida's (2002) work has spawned innumerable policy responses from cities across the globe. The message filtered through to industrial policy and cluster formation, with projects and policies being realized at a quickening pace in what Keane and Wen (2013, p. 19) termed 'policy on the run'. While not without its critics (see for example Peck, 2005; Pratt, 2008) Florida has helped identify the creative economy as something that is urban and only present in those lucky urban settlements, usually across the developed world that attract a young, dynamic and creative population[1]. It is not our intention here to dismiss the urban narrative, we recognize the fact that the world's cities, and indeed a small number of them (think Paris and Milan for fashion, LA and Mumbai for Film, San Francisco and London for Tech) account for vast output and employment shares in the global creative economy. Rather, we attempt to make the case that creative industries locate themselves outside of these cities (and the tight agglomerations within them) and contribute not only to the creative economy but also to the economic, social and cultural make-up of the place they inhabit.

This last point can be considered unique in the broader context of modern economic and commercial change. From the technology to the pharmaceutical sector, industries have being undergoing a process of place dislocation for the past forty years. Technological advance in the form of communications and transportation innovations has opened up the world to industrial interests. Firms locate in a ways they never did before, location choices, more often inspired by returns on investment, are creating a new geography of dislocation, where economic interests reside in parallel to the social and cultural guise of its place. This is part of the reason that the creative economy is appealing to economic geographers. Much of the exemplary work carried out by theorists such as Allen Scott (2004; 2010); Dominic Power (2002; 2009) Ann Markusen (2006); Andy Pratt (2004; 2008; 2014) has highlighted how creative industries have a unique relationship with their place. Terms like 'buzz' and 'scene' are often used alongside hard statistical analysis of high levels of concentrations of particular types of creative industries in particular locations. Urban creative industry clusters can generate a local buzz that enhances the vibrancy of cities, attracting further creative talent and entrepreneurs (Murphy et al., 2015).

In what follows we set out to demonstrate that creative industries[2] located in more peripheral areas are also embedded in their place in a way that is unique and differs from their urban counterparts. Our case study assesses this from the reality of producing creativity on the west coast of Ireland. In what follows we will describe the nature and the extent of the creative industries operating out of one of Europe's most peripheral regions. We will consider how the industries there connect to and are inspired by their location. We point to elements that replicate exactly what occurs in the urban context (agglomerations of creative sub sectors) while also considering realities that are unique to more remote settings. Our hope then is to add to the growing literature that is making the case for different approaches to the development of the creative economy in rural settings in terms of policy approaches and a move away from their consideration as urban industries yet to be fully formed.

[1] Much of the recent focus of UNCTAD 2013; and contributors to this Journal have proved that the creative economy is vibrant in most nations regardless of their stage of development.

[2] We consider the creative industries as residing in different sub sectors of the broader creative economy.

The paper starts by considering the nature of the creative economy in the broadest sense where we briefly reflect on the fact that it is subject to many different definitions. We then look at the broader theoretical context before considering the more recent literature that has shifted the focus towards a recognition of distinctly different urban and rural creative economies. The following section outlines our approach by making clear our methodology and framework of defining creative industries in the region. We then introduce the region and the extent of creative industries operating out of it. Prior to conclusion we consider the role played by geography in the production of culture in the West of Ireland[3].

2. THE RISE OF THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

Judged in terms of global exports and imports of creative goods and services, the creative economy has experienced steady growth in recent years. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) data shows that from 2002 to 2008 world trade of creative goods and services had an annual growth rate of 14%, reaching a value of US$592 billion in 2008. This is in a context where global trade declined by 12% in 2008 (UNCTAD, 2016). In Europe, available evidence also indicates job growth and resilience in times of economic decline. From 2000 to 2007 creative economy job creation had an average annual growth rate of 3.5%. From 2008 to 2012 there was an average annual growth of 0.7% while jobs declined in the wider economy by 0.7%. Data from Eurostat suggests the creative economy employs approximately the same number of people as the food and beverage service industry, nearly twice the automotive industry and five times the chemical industry (EY, 2014). These trends reflect a pattern of increased trade, production and demand. This reconfirms that the creative industries have been one of the most dynamic sectors of the global economy in recent times. The creative economy is a broad concept that has multiple definitions (e.g. Freeman, 2004; Higgs and Cunningham, 2008; Throsby, 2008; DCMS, 2015; Lazzeretti and Capone, 2015). The UNCTAD figures relating to the growth of creative goods exports by no means offers total coverage, but does give us a worldview of performance in the creative economy (UNCTAD, 2016).

In 2003 the level of world exports of creative goods equated to US$223 billion, this figure rose to US$473 billion less than ten years later. The 2012 figures when compared to those for 2003 tell an interesting story of the transformation of the creative economy. Such is the nature of the goods being traded on the international markets, evolution occurs quickly. For example, new media more than doubled its share of the value of all creative goods exports, while publishing's share almost halved in this time period. Undoubtedly the creative economy both influences and is influenced by technology. A breakdown of the headline figures for the respective years points to the dynamic nature of production and consumption in the creative economy (Table 1).

Table 1. Value of global export in creative goods (2003 and 2012)

	2003 (US $ million)	Percentage of total	2012 (US$ million)	Percentage of total
All Creatives Goods	223,795	100%	473,791	100%
Art Crafts	21,315	9.52%	34,339	7.25%
Audio Visuals	12,165	5.44%	32,054	6.77%
Design	127,989	57.19%	284,888	60.13%
New Media	9,386	4.19%	40,873	8.63%
Performing Arts	2,841	1.27%	5,052	1.07%
Publishing	33,613	15.02%	38,260	8.08%
Visual Arts	16,487	7.37%	38,325	8.09%

Source: UNCTAD, 2016

[3] West of Ireland defined here as seven counties (Donegal, Sligo, Mayo, Clare, Leitrim, Galway and Roscommon).

The creative economy has also been described as a valuable catalyst of wider economic growth. A study emerging from the European Commission on the economic potential of culture and creativity for achieving the goals of the EU's Lisbon Strategy showed that creative industries were not only important economic drivers in their own right (responsible for 2.5% of job creation) but are growing at a higher rate and have a greater potential for creating growth outside the sector (KEA, 2006). Creative industries stimulate marketing, communication, human resources and product development. The reality is that the shape of the global economy is changing; expenditure on culture, recreation goods and experiences has increased nine fold in the UK over the past 30 years (ONS, 2011). It is these immaterial goods that have the greatest multiplying, spill-over effect (Andersson, 2011).

The wider impact of the creative economy is also seen in its reach beyond its own sectoral boundaries. For example, assessing the Swedish case of IKEA, Power (2002) notes how it retains a presence in the rural area it began which has stimulated a design and media cluster around furniture and household goods production. Another broader impact is how the creative sector has been found to support the competitive advantage and innovation capabilities of other sectors of the economy. For example, Cunningham (2013) argues the sector contributes positively to economic growth and productivity of creative and non-creative industries through generation of ideas, processes, products and talent. Bakhshi, McVittie and Simmie's (2008) study finds that innovation in the wider economy is positively related to having supply chain linkages with creative industries.

3. THE RURAL CREATIVE ECONOMY IN PLACE

A salient feature of the creative economy is its place-based nature. This runs contrary to much of the accepted wisdom regarding globalization and mass manufacturing. Urban creative industry clusters can generate a local buzz that enhances the vibrancy of cities, attracting further creative talent and entrepreneurs (Murphy et al., 2015). The urban environment with its 'buzz' is vital for artists, city locations offer access to wider cultural infrastructure, creative networks and formal and informal learning opportunities. Cities also provide a wider range of job opportunities and contracts, essential for young creatives and the project-based nature of their work. The vital role of place in rural creative industries has also been observed, however the role differs in nature. In rural creative industries place can be a source of inspiration and provide creative freedom. For example, based on research with craft and design workers, Drake (2003) finds that location inspires creativity in a number of distinct ways. Location can be a source of visual inspiration; local social and cultural activities can stimulate creativity; and the creative traditions and heritage of a locality can inspire further nuanced interpretations of tradition. In addition, while rural landscapes and nature can be a source of creative inspiration, the rural environment has also been found to provide creative practitioners with a feeling of creative freedom (Andersen, 2010; Daniel, 2015).

The urban bias of the creativity script is also part of the impetus behind this case study. Previous work on the West of Ireland (see Collins and Fahy, 2011) has followed the line of others (Cunningham, 2002) in attempting to move the lens of inquiry of the creative economy in place away from world leading cities towards smaller cities and towns. This work goes further and follows that of Bell and Jayne (2010) and Woods (2007) for example in expanding the spatial focus to predominately rural regions. The increased focus on creative activities in rural areas includes the work of more recent reflections on Australian case studies in MacDonald and Mason (2015) while the work of Bennett et al. (2015) and Bertacchini and Borrione (2013) highlight European instances of creative economies in non-urban regions. This is part of a growing tradition of using case studies to identify the presence and key characteristics of the creative economy in these unique settings and follows on from the work of as Warren and Evitt (2010), Mayes (2010) and Andersen (2010) in identifying it as distinct and separate from its urban form.

For the purposes of better understanding the nature of the creative economy in place we see the literature touching on two key strands that are relevant to our case study. The first of these refers to literature that considers place as an active agent of inspiration for creative pursuits in rural settings. The second strand is more concerned with what we might describe as the different approaches of creative industries located in peripheral areas, this explores their role as community agents, important here is the depth of social ties and an approach to social networking that is evident in many instances of non-urban creative economies.

The idea of place as inspiration for creative workers was explored by Drake (2003), in an analysis of UK based creative industries, he spoke of locality as a resource, providing specific prompts and signs in the local environment. Visual artists are most liable to take their prompts from their locale, Andersen (2010) highlights how artists had 'fallen in love' with the landscape and the magic light of the remote region of Broken Hill in Australia. Luckman (2012) goes further by highlighting how non-urban creative workers differ from their urban counterparts in their awareness of place and the central role that an 'emotive link' to their locality plays in the creative process. Flew and Cunningham (2010) state that policy makers (and academics) have ignored the role of place (and especially, natural places and the environment) as a driver of much creative practices.

The celebration of places, inspired by their natural environment is also important for the health of the broader creative economy. According to Curtis (2010) rural towns are more likely to use their natural assets (mountains, rivers, beaches) to create a sense of distinctiveness and market their location as appealing physical, cultural and social landscapes. Our intention here is to use the West of Ireland example to add to the broader understanding as to how places and their creatives inspire and affect each other. We see this as a positive feedback loop, with creatives taking from their locality and through their output contributing to the symbolic and cultural significance of their place (Felton et al., 2010).

The second area of relevance relates to the idea of the extra-economic impacts of a vibrant creative economy in rural areas. Theorists such as Anwar McHenry (2011) and Wilson (2010) highlight the growing recognition that cultural capital has a vital role in rural community development. This is part of the realization that the creative economy can be seen as more inclusive in the sense of a representation of non-capitalistic value; or as Pratt (2010) terms it, a humanistic counterbalance to economic accumulation. As we will see below this is particularly true of certain parts of the creative economy (usually more associated with artistic endeavor, what we term creative expression) in more rural settings.

For Bennett et al. (2015) and their study of craft enterprises in rural Wales, they highlight how rural areas (and their lower cost of living) facilitate more 'bohemian' lifestyle choices. Similarly, Collins et al. (2011) identified affordability as one of the main reasons for artists and musicians to choose to locate in rural regions, affording them the opportunity to pursue creative work from home-based studios. The prevalence of small micro enterprises acting as the new cottage industries has brought with it the adoption of a new raft of business approaches in the creative economy, ones that tend to rank commercial success and economic competitiveness as secondary (see Collins and Cunningham, 2017). Primary in these approaches are the social and sharing dimensions as well as community building initiatives. In her work on creative practices in rural Australia, Mayes (2010) explores creative practice as a means to an end for local producers, a medium in which people can socialize and foster a sense of community. As we will see below, this is something that can be appreciated across the breadth of the creative economy industries in the West of Ireland. Sometimes more associated with the artistic and cultural endeavors we see how social entrepreneurship and community development is prevalent across the creative sector.

We consider the nature of place in the rural creative economy of the West of Ireland by examining the role of networking. For Herslund (2012) this relates to extra economic impacts of a vibrant creative economy but is distinct in that it sees rural creative practitioners create networks across their industrial sector to co-ordinate, mobilize and learn from each other. The geography of these networks in rural Denmark is relatively diffuse, not impacting significantly at the village level rather adding organizational energy to the regional level. Much work has been carried out on the geography of these networks in the urban setting, usually these are geographically tight, often formalized and sub sector specific (see Pratt, 2004). For rural based networks, geographic remove is a factor in the creation of more formalized networks, while lack of concentration means broader networks of association across different creative economy sub sectors.

Daniel (2015) highlights social structure as particular feature of creative industries in non-urban areas and cites respondents referring to collaborative networks to which they feel a sense of belonging as well as a supportive and passionate community of peers. Felton et al. (2010) focusing on creative networks in the suburbs of Melbourne cite tangible outcomes in the form of place based activities and events contributing to the symbolic and cultural significance of place. The outer suburbia networks were found to be strong and horizontal differing from the more vertical networks associated with urban based industries. In our case study we attempt to better understand the nature of networking in the West of Ireland and highlight examples of how existing networks can set the focus beyond sectoral or commercial success and actively contribute to place-making and place promotion.

Critiques of the creative economy in a rural context have focused on how policy and theoretical understanding have been transplanted from an urban setting to a rural one with little or no respect paid to the fundamental differences between the two (for example see Gibson and Kong, 2005; Bell and Jayne, 2010; Ström and Nelson, 2010; Harvey et al., 2012). It is our intention to use the case study of the West of Ireland to add to the growing literature (Banks, 2007; Gibson et al., 2010; Bertacchini & Borrione, 2013; Bennett et al. 2015) that seeks to differentiate the rural creative economy from its urban counterpart and by so doing make clear the distinctly different policy needed to promote creativity in peripheral regions.

4. MAPPING THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE WESTERN REGION'S CREATIVE ECONOMY

A database of creative industries was constructed in 2013 as part of the Creative Edge project[4]. Data mainly came from the Fame database – a searchable database of over 9 millions companies located in Ireland and the United Kingdom with detailed accounts and history (Bureau van Dijk, 2016). NACE (*Nomenclature des Activités Économiques dans la Communauté Européenne*) codes, a pan-European classification system, which groups companies according to their business activities were used to identify companies. This data was also supplemented with the Craft Council of Ireland's online directory of craftspeople. Web searches for other publically available information were carried out and permission requested to add data to our database as necessary. The NACE code list of approximately 120 four digit NACE codes aimed to cover the categories of craft, design, advertising, printing, publishing, digital media, software, gaming, TV, radio, film, architecture, engineering, photography, arts, music, theatre, technology, scientific research and retailing. Sec-

[4] The Creative Edge project sought to put in place a number of measures to promote creative industries in peripheral regions. It also worked to identify the current breadth and future scope of the creative economy in peripheral regions. A database of creative enterprises was constructed. Most of the location addresses logged in the database were the company's place of trade, but in some cases were the company's registered address. The project was funded under the Northern Periphery Programme (2007 -2013).

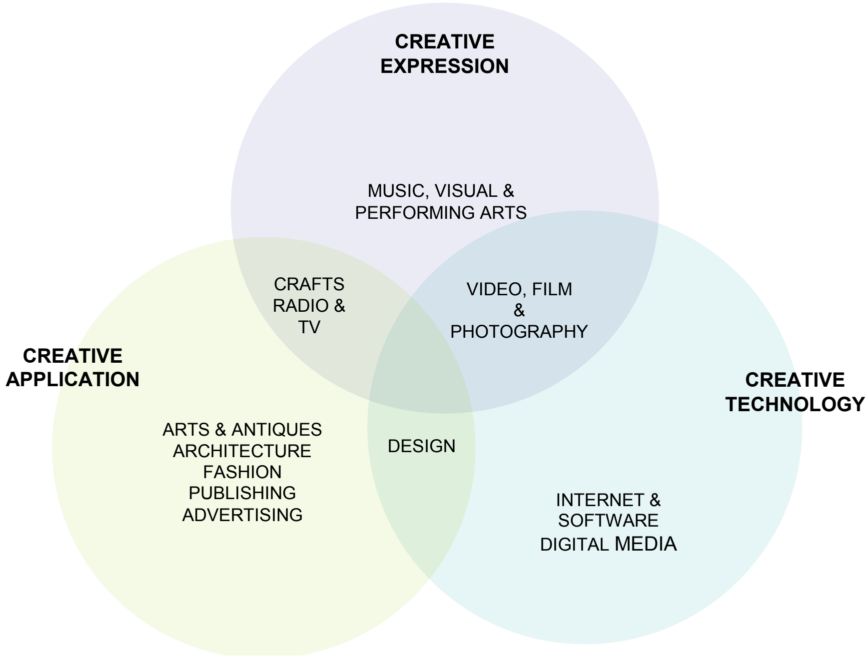

Figure 1. Creative sub sectors
Source: Creative West, 2009

tors and businesses that can be understood as core to the creative economy, as well as related and support businesses were included. These are further broken down into three broad groups/categories; Creative Expression, Creative Application and Creative Technology. Figure 1 shows a degree of overlap in this categorization.

Primary data referred to below was gathered through a questionnaire sent to a representative sample of 232 companies in 2014. Questions were divided into four sections, company profile; employment and revenue; approach to business and geographical context. The survey received 92 responses, 78 of which were deemed useful for analysis. Face-to-face interviews were carried out with 16 members of the sector between June 2014 and December 2016. Again a representative sample was sought, ensuring a response across sectors, geography, scale and length of operation (see Table 2). These interviews were semi-structured in nature, and abided by similar categorization focusing on the company profile, employment and revenues, approach to business and location in place. Interviews were transcribed and subjected to a thematic analysis.

5. CREATIVE SECTOR IN IRELAND'S WESTERN REGION

Our case study region comprises of seven counties that stretch across the western seaboard of Ireland (counties Clare, Galway, Mayo, Roscommon, Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal). Home to a population of over 820,000 the region is characterized by its rurality, a population density of 31 persons per square kilometer places it as one of Europe's most sparsely populated regions. Settlement patterns are unique to the region, with nearly two thirds of the population living in settlements of less than 1,500 persons. The socio-economic traits of the region have much in common with other EU peripheral regions. There are high dependency rates, lower than national average incomes, a greater share of the workforce employed in agriculture. In terms of commercial make up, the region suffers from the lack of benefits such as low density of markets, greater distance to markets and to information, labor and most other resources. Yet, the region is home to nearly 30,000 active enterprises, in 2012, the Western Development Commission characterized over 90% of these as micro enterprises, employing fewer than 10 people (WDC, 2016).

Table 2. List of interviews

Company	Role	Sub sector	10 years plus in operation	10 employees or more
Theatre Company 1	Founding Member	Creative Expression	Yes	**Yes**
Arts Festival	Founding Member	Creative Expression	Yes	Yes
Musician	Sole trader	Creative Expression	Yes	No
TV Production Company 1	Managing Director	Creative Expression/ Application	Yes	Yes
Photographer	Sole trader	Creative Expression/ Technology	No	No
Local Authority 1	Manager	Local Government	NA	NA
Local Authority 2	Manager	Local Government	NA	NA
TV production Company 2	Producer	Creative Expression/ Application	Yes	Yes
TV Production Company 3	Managing Director	Creative Expression/ Application	No	No
Gaming Company 1	Managing Director	Creative Technology	No	No
Gaming Company 2	Co-founder	Creative Technology	No	Yes (current project)
Visual Artist 1	Sole trader	Creative Expression	Yes	No
Visual Artist 2	Sole trader	Creative Expression	No	No
Festival	Producer	Creative Expression	No	No
Film Company	Sole trader	Creative Expression/ Technology	No	No
Craft worker 1	Sole trader	Creative Application	Yes	No
Craft worker 2	Sole trader	Creative Application	Yes	No

Artistically and culturally, the region is well renowned. Harder facts such as a tourism spend by overseas tourists of €596 million (US$647.5 million) point to the regions attractiveness. While being home to Nobel laureates in literature (W.B. Yeats), Tony Award winning theatre companies (Druid Theatre), and being the location for a number of high grossing box office Film productions (Quiet Man; Braveheart and more recently, Star Wars) means that the region has good international recognition in cultural consciousness. Cultural produce from the region is sold internationally, be that the tweed of Donegal, the jumpers of Arann or the plays of J.M. Synge. The region is also home to the largest Gaeltacht region in Ireland (county Galway) and enjoys the cultural infrastructure of hosting the national language TV and radio broadcasting stations. Traditional Irish music has vibrant traditions across all counties in the region, most notably in Clare, Sligo and Donegal. The largest city in the region is Galway, which is home to the nation's biggest and longest running Arts Festival and well as being the site of the internationally acclaimed film festival the Galway Film Fleadh. The strength of its cultural portfolio has been recently recognized by the dual declarations of Galway as a UNESCO City of Film and the European Capital of Culture for 2020.

The particular traits of the creative economy are discussed elsewhere (see WDC, 2009; Collins et al., 2011; Collins and Cunningham, 2017; Collins et al., 2017), for the sake of this work we can state that the creative economy of the West of Ireland is relatively vibrant. It supports close to 11,000 people and contributes in the area of €270 million (US$293 million) in terms of gross value add (Collins et al, 2011; White, 2010). There were 2,466 creative industries recorded by Collins et al. (2011) as working out of the West of Ireland. Figure 2 gives the breakdown by broad sub sector, with the largest share of companies operating out of the creative application sector. Within this, companies categorized as architectural and engineering services and those in the publishing sub sector were dominant. Other sectors of significance include, computer programming, film and television (see Collins and Power, forthcom-

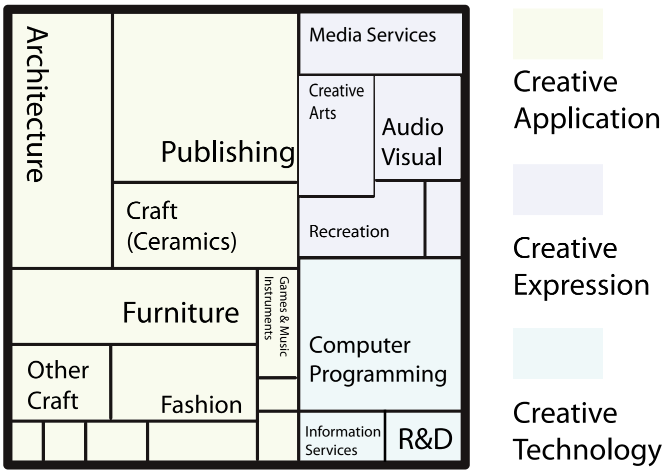

Figure 2. Creative Industry Make-up – Percentage breakdown of 2466 creative industry in the West of Ireland
Source: Collins et al., 2013

ing on the evolution of a Film and TV cluster in Co. Galway), craft, creative arts and music.

As has been highlighted by other case studies on creative industries a substantial diversity exists between individual operations (see Felton et al., 2010; Daniel, 2015; Bertacchini and Borrione, 2013). Approaching it by using our current definition allows us to account for the disparities that exist between individual artists located in very peripheral areas and a technology company that works in the center of a small size city like Galway. Overall the creative industries in the west are small. Close to two thirds are classed as single person operations. Businesses with more than 10 employees account for less than 15% of all companies. The largest of these are found in the creative technology sector, a sector that enjoys the highest average of turnover per company.

Figure 3 shows the relative concentration of the three creative industry sub sectors across the region. The most marked trend is that of creative technology industries. Likely the most 'commercially oriented' of the creative economy industries, those involved in creative technology demonstrate a tendency to locate closer to the urban entities in the western region. The majority of industries operating in the gaming, internet and software sectors are located within less than three kilometers of the region's biggest urban settlements (Galway city, population 76,778; Ennis, 25,360 and Letterkenny, 19,588). The primary reason for this location pattern is to access to customers, though in a couple of instances we see evidence of some lower level agglomerations in a number of sub sectors in Galway city:

> *We have what are called Game Dev meet ups in the city and that attracts about 30 or so people. That is healthy and growing and providing another outlet for some of these guys that are working by themselves on a lone project... Altogether in the city we have about seven companies, we all know what the other is up to, its close knit... I think it's ready to grow (Interview Gaming Company 1, 2016).*

Small agglomerations of creative industries is not the sole domain of the larger urban settlements in the region. Indeed, the most significant cluster of companies is seen in the Film and TV sub sector that has grown up around the town land of Indrebhan on the Atlantic coast line of rural county Galway. This is explored further by Collins and Power (forthcoming), but is considered as a highly interconnected network of 20 small (and in

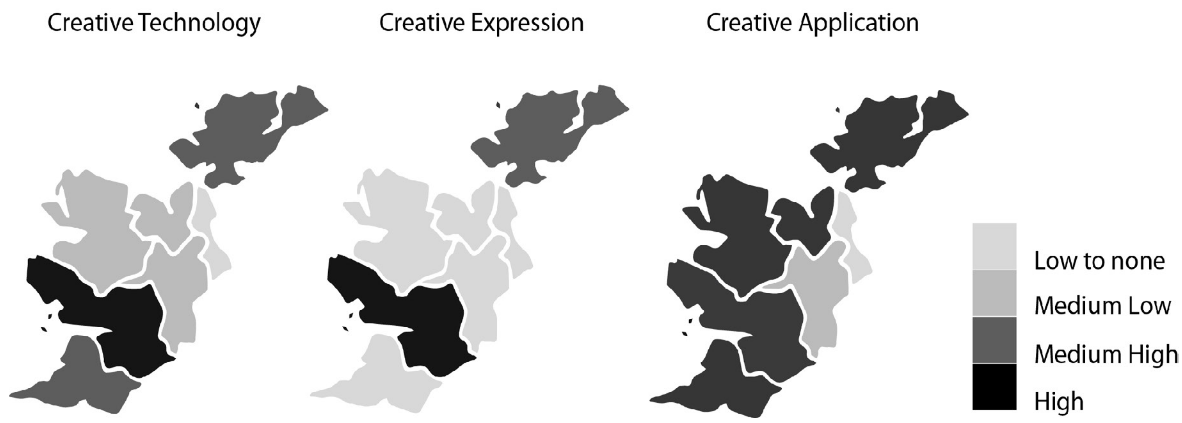

Figure 3. Geography of Creative Industries in the West of Ireland

the case of three medium sized) independent production companies operating out of a part of the region that was home to a small fishing industry.

> *When you look at the sector here now, you are talking about 200 odd people employed between ourselves, TG4 [national broadcaster in the Irish language], before us it was the Italian manufacturing company, before that it was fishing. Now you have creative and talented people keeping this region going (Interview TV Production Company 2, Spiddal, Co. Galway, 2016).*

In more traditional artistic endeavors, Irish traditional music and craft production, we also see evidence of collocation of artists and craftspeople. This is as much to do with historical tradition than any overt policy to support the creative industries in place. Donegal has a rich history of tweed production dating back to the 17th century, while the traditional Irish music of west Clare dates back further and remains a destination of choice for music makers.

The case of County Leitrim is interesting in terms of the relatively new micro agglomerations that have developed in recent years. This can be traced back to a policy endeavor, an overt effort by the local authority to attract 'creatives' during a period of economic boom in Ireland:

> *At the time [circa 2002 - 2008] the economic boom was forcing people out of the cities. House prices were going crazy, and we began to see that our county was becoming attractive to a certain kind of people. Simply put we had the lowest house prices in the country, and we began to see that people involved in the creative arts were choosing to set up here. It was a case of one or two setting up here, and then we realised that we could make it work, so we set about building supports for creatives in terms of things like the Dock [an integrated Arts Centre, exhibition and studio spaces] and improving our broadband provision (Interview with Local Authority Representative, Carrick-on-Shannon, Leitrim, 2014).*

The outcome of this and other initiatives has seen Leitrim emerge as the county with the highest concentration of 'creatives' across the region. Relatively cheap housing has been highlighted by others (Bennett et al., 2015; Harvey et al., 2012 and Herslund, 2012) as an important attractor building up the creative economy of peripheral regions. In the case of Leitrim it was crucial to the start of a cultural agglomeration in the county, one that was recognized by policy makers and built upon.

Beyond the above examples the general trend as seen in Figure 3 is that individuals and industries involved in the more 'artistic/cultural' pursuits of the creative economy (better associated with the Creative Expression and Creative Technology sub sectors) have much more diffuse location patterns. There is little surprise when considering the incentives behind location patterns as explored in the following section. Artists and creatives in both these sectors tend to pursue artistic merit over commercial gain. For this reason access to market is less pressing than with those associated with creative technology. Many locating their Creative Expression business are driven by location as inspiration or collocation with other creatives. For those involved in Creative Application sub sector, smaller urban settlements can act as sufficient enough markets. Indeed, our survey of the sector showed that over two thirds of respondents (this being higher in both Creative Application and Creative Expression sub sectors) deemed their local / domestic market as sufficient.

This final point relates to another aspect of geography further explored in Collins et al. (forthcoming), the relative tightness of supply chains in the creative economy of the West of Ireland. Here again, the commercially oriented technology sub sector differs from the more artistic sub sectors by sourcing more of their outputs internationally. For the Creative Expression and Application sector, inputs are mostly sourced within the region itself. This speaks to the unique relationship that creative industries tend to have with geography as referred to in the opening section of this paper. More than other modern businesses, they rely more on their location, not only in regards to the number of factors listed below (inspiration, community values, social networks) but also in terms of the physical or harder aspects of doing business (sourcing intermediate products).

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 Place as Inspiration

Geography in terms of distance from the major markets and the inadequate provision of infrastructure is highlighted by many as a barrier to more effective commercial competition when operating out of the West of Ireland. Yet, geography in the sense of landscape and geomorphology sees this remote region rank as a top destination for people to visit and live in. Home to the dramatic Cliffs of Moher, the haunting beauty of Connemara, the rugged Atlantic coast (and its successfully marketed Wild Atlantic Way), the region attracts close to 2 million overseas visitors annually. As noted elsewhere (Curtis, 2010) a vibrant tourism industry acts a strong complimentary activity to the creative economy. In the West of Ireland we see this happening in a number of ways. The first is how tourists act as a market to support the creative industries and the second is how creatives actively celebrate their place (in the form of festivals and events) that in turn attracts these tourist numbers.

A more direct way in which locality inspires is by it acting as a direct input into the production process. While this is more obvious from companies operating out of the Creative Expression sub sector, it remains important for those involved in areas like gaming: "We can trade on being located here, our current title in development is directly inspired by our region, it is set in the region and all the background art is directly inspired by it" (Interview, Gaming Company 2, 2016). Place as inspiration is obvious in the area of Visual Arts, but in the broader sub sectors of application and expression, elements such as remoteness, landscape, water and light were highlighted by respondents as key in their decision to locate their creative operation in the West of Ireland. (See WDC, 2009 on photographers' reflections on the unique light in the West of Ireland).

The heritage and culture of the place also acts as a direct inspiration to others in the West. No where is this more obvious than in relation to the Irish language and traditional Irish music:

> *I am proud of my language, I speak it every day at home and as much as I can at work. Coming*

> *to the west was important for that reason, not only for me to speak it but for it to be my working language as well. That I get to celebrate it with every production I do through the medium of Irish is fantastic, it feels like we are ensuring its future. (Interview TV Production Company 3, 2014).*
>
> *To me it is obvious that music of this place could not be from any other place, it is as undulating at those hills over there (Interview, Traditional Musician, 2015).*

The above obviously chimes with what Drake (2003) considers place as inspiration, but in the West of Ireland, owing to a particularly unique cultural heritage, aided in a large part by its relative remove, we see non-physical place factors playing an equally important role in supporting the creative activity of the region.

6.2 Ways of Working, Ways of Networking

Our survey of creative industries provides interesting insights into how they consider their own way of working. It is understood that creative industries display many more social attributes than typical non-creative attributes. Work carried out under a creative momentum project has shown that more than half of creatives in the region work from home, while one in five operate out of a shared space. At a sub sectoral level, those involved in Creative Expression pursuits are most likely to work from home, while members of the technology sub sector are as likely as their expression counterparts to locate in shared spaces (creative hubs and shared studio spaces). The collaborative nature of working out of the creative economy is reflected on elsewhere (see Belk, 2014) and this more social approach to business is reflected in respondents' approaches to networking and place contribution, in the form of them acting as community agents and place promoters.

All respondents to our survey considered networking as either important or very important to the future of the operation. 60% felt that their location (remoteness) as compromising the ability to network effectively. While this can have an obvious impact on the amount of networking carried out within the region, of the 72% of companies that do network, three quarters do so with other companies in support bodies within the region (beyond that the location of the other networking partners is predominantly Dublin, the national capital). While a range of different types of networking takes place, from formalized events hosted by local, regional and national development bodies to less formal meet ups (Game Dev, 'Start-up' gatherings) respondents overwhelmingly favored less formal networking opportunities. Interestingly more respondents favored networking opportunities with others in the broader creative economy, than within their own sub sector or industry.

Reflecting on the possibilities for future networking opportunities there was a general cross sectoral consensus that more opportunities for networking would be of benefit to the sector in the region. When prompted participants disagreed that networking would in any way compromise their competitiveness into the future. For some future forms of networking would be better enhanced by greater access to shared spaces while others citied the potential benefits of online networking (all of whom were located in area of good broadband provision), those in more remote areas saw little opportunity offered by online networking. For others (the majority of whom hailed from the Creative Technology sub sector) more structured networking sessions were favored where leaders could "share their war stories", followed by a discussion, and structured matching with possible founders were preferred.

In terms of the outcomes from networking across the creative economy of the West of Ireland, most saw the value for their own commercial and artistic concerns. That said, many reflected on networking and the coming together of different creative agents under the banner of promoting the region. This was best reflected by festival organizers and others in the Creative Expression and Creative Application sub sectors. One example of this comes from one of the region's marquee festivals, the story of how a disparate group of creatives collaborated in celebrating the artistic offering of the region has now become part of the folklore of the region:

> *Free second level education and the grant system for third level was a big thing. That meant by the 1980s there were a load of people like me in University, lads and girls who were the first in their families to get the experience. When we finished [University] we looked around, there was nothing to do. We thought of anything that we could do to make a living for ourselves to stay in the place we wanted to be. So we got together artists, theatre makers, musicians, any latchico [slang] and said let's celebrate what this place has to offer. And we did. (Interview, Arts Festival 1, 2015).*

The idea of celebrating place has not just led to the formation of an international festival, but a national leader in terms of theatre production as well:

> *We formed a group in University and we quickly realized that everything in Irish theatre was about Dublin. So we set out to absolutely avoid that trap. We thought of Synge and the rich theatrical tradition of this place and celebrated it...* ***in its place*** *(Interview, Theatre Company 1, 2015; emphasis added)*

What is obvious from the above experiences is the pursuit of more social and communitarian means through networking instead of purely commercial gain. It can be claimed as something that is more prevalent in peripheral creative economies because of the positive feedback that is evident in creatives seeking to reflect the nature of their place, thereby creating and unique and creative place (see Curtis (2010) for similar reflections from rural Australia). Place promotion does not run contrary to commercial gain, the economic impact of Galway International Arts Festival was far from the original impetus some thirty years ago but is cited by leading commentators on the impact of the Arts in Ireland on an annual basis.

A recent example of this in the region was evidenced by Galway's successful bid for European Capital of Culture (bid phase 2014-2016). A highly competitive process for a serious cultural accolade, bidding for European Capital of Culture requires the complete engagement of creatives and citizens of the bidding regions. For Galway (supported officially by all western region counties) the collective communitarian agreement proved decisive in its designation. "There is strong evidence of community engagement and high motivation. This is demonstrated in the projected programme with its focus on accessibility and inclusiveness... The volunteer programme has already attracted a high number of active members." (ECOC, Selection Panel Final Report, 2016). As a peripheral European region, the West of Ireland has a strong tradition of collective action in pursuit of cultural recognition (see Hourigan, 2001 on the revival of the Irish language). Alongside other remote regions (Basque region in Spain, the Sammi People of Northern Finland) it has leveraged the culture of its place to promote a more vibrant creative economy alongside a more cultural society.

7. CONCLUSION

Here and elsewhere we have made the case for the existence of creative economies beyond the urban core. In this paper we set out to examine how geography and the connection to place that is evident in a peripheral regions like the West of Ireland enables a creative economy that is different in many ways from urban counterparts. We recognize the fact that while the geographic barriers of peripherality can be relatively uniform, be they access to major markets or the lack of physical infrastructure, the benefits are less even: not all peripheral regions benefit equally in terms of geography, some are beautiful in the ruggedness and their unspoilt landscape attracts visitors from across the globe, others are desolate in their isolation. The West of Ireland is fortunate to benefit from its peripherality, and as we pointed out above, the robust tourism industry acts as a complimentary activity to the creative one.

Our work does point towards the benefits of distance from the core as key touchstones in the development of peripheral creative economies. Less subject to land speculation and general tenets of foreign direct investment means that peripheral regions remain closer to the traditional, to the authentic. These are fundamental to the success and difference of creative economies in their place. The relative proximity to tradition acts as a key differentiator from urban creative economies and also consolidates creative activity in its place. Important here is how this filters across the creative economy from its natural home in more traditional forms of Creative Expression to be evidenced in the innovative activities of others in same sub sector and beyond (Creative Technology in close proximity, but in other related industries such as tourism and food).

We explored these two facets above by trying to better elucidate the geography of creative activity in our case study region by looking at place as inspiration and place as a space of creative activity. It is our hope that this case study has gone some of the way to responding to Gibson's (2010, p. 7 - 8) call to "suggest new ways in which creative industries research can be enlivened and made social, by not assuming a capitalist-oriented language of firms, growth, employment and export and instead valuing the communitarian purposes to which creativity can be put". Looking at creative economies in peripheral regions seems to necessitate this. As we look further into the creative activity of the West of Ireland and other peripheral regions we recognize that it is by adopting a non-economic lens that we better appreciate the contribution of creative and cultural activity to a place.

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