Artists’ Choice of Geography: Exploring Urban-Rural Dynamics

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The objective of this paper is two-folded. Firstly, the paper aims at identifying and presenting the variables of the geography of artists, i.e. the parameters which interactively takes part in deciding the geography of an artist. Secondly, the paper aims at presenting how different geographies are chosen for different phases of the artistic production cycle, hence explaining how the combination of city life and countryside becomes a way of promoting creativity. The paper is based on two different qualitative interview studies, carried out during 2008 and 2009, covering different categories of artists and creatives. One study focuses on artists early in their career paths; the other on artists later on in life. Both studies have sampled artists by education and professional title with connection to West Sweden.

1. Prologue and Introduction – questioning the portrait of the artist as an urban dweller

"Her name is Johanna Kindvall. She is rather young in her career but has already found her places in life. The first time I see her, we meet in the Scanian countryside in the very south of Sweden. I visit her in the midst of a house restoration; this interior designer is renovating and designing her second home. This is where she plans to spend the summer months together with her husband. She treats me with lunch and newly baked cottage loaf. I squint in the sunlight that glitters in the creek below the plot. I listen attentively as she tells me about her life, love, career and about the countryside vs. the city. It is beautiful, peaceful, quiet... For me as a visitor, it is almost complicatedly quiet. The provincial bus that only passes by every second hour has to be changed into another bus in the nearest village, in order to be connected further to Lund, Malmö and the more densely populated urban areas. In the middle of rural nowhere, my cell phone suddenly stops working. I hope for the bus to show up. I am however not completely alone. I can hear a bunch of lowing cows and watch them wave away flies with their tails. Other than that, it is peaceful, very peaceful.

Half a year later, we meet again. During one of New York City’s coldest winter nights. This time, I visit Johanna in her primary home; in the apartment in East Village where she lives together with her American husband, also an artist. The apartment is airy, feels very Manhattan and inhabits a space for creation. This is her working space on the days she does not spend at the office downtown. Her work is multi-faceted; thanks to her settling in the City, this interior designer has had the chance to work exteriorly with the facades of skyscrapers. We however first meet up at the opening of an exhibition at a gallery in Chelsea. Then, we move on to Williamsburg, Brooklyn, to visit yet another opening in one of the innumerous
artist collectives that nowadays are hosted by that district. The evening is full of people, glasses of red wine, art works, impressions, pace, impulses... We are in the city that never sleeps.”

Today, cultural and creative industries are very much debated and economic geography are contributing with important research in the field. This paper questions the notion of the city as a taken-for-granted platform for artistic and creative production. Contrary to statistic evidence, suggesting that Swedish artists group in the three larger cities, this paper show – by interviewing different categories of artists and creatives – that artists actively alter between different geographies. Shifts between urban buzz and rural silence are particularly evident. The active choice of place by an artist is often based on the appropriateness of different milieus according to the various phases of the production cycle. The combination of urban and rural hence becomes a way of stimulating creativity. This paper identifies and presents the variables of artists’ geography, i.e. the parameters that effect artists’ choice of geography.

At a first glance, artists’ choice of geography appears straight forward; artistically active individuals cluster in the three largest cities in Sweden. At a second glance, however, a more diverging pattern emerges as different forms of artistic work show different needs of geographical location. Furthermore, the individual artist might demonstrate diverging needs of localization depending on where in the production cycle the individual is. This paper aims at nuancing the image of the artist as a city person and to elaborate on the question of when the buzz of the metropolis vis-à-vis the tranquility of the countryside are best suited for creative work. Different groups of artistic professionals will be considered as well as an age parameter to compare early with established career paths.

The inclination of artists and creative professionals to chose urban before rural has been asserted by a number of outstanding researchers during the 21st century. For example the notion of cities as creative epicenters during specific time-periods in history attracting artists, bohemians and talented individuals (Janik & Toulmin 1973; Andersson 1985a; Jacobs 1992; Hall 2000; Florida 2004; Törnqvist 2004). The importance of pinpointing artists and creative individuals has also meant giving advice on policy and planning in order to build the ‘creative city’ (Landry 2000; Smid-Jensen 2007; Long 2009; Wenz 2009). Connecting the urban milieu (Currid & Williams 2010) and the creative individuals (Florida 2004) have for a long time been understood as something positive and important from a growth perspective (Jacobs 1992; Hägerstrand 1999; Florida 2004).

The work and everyday life of creative individuals in big cities has been scrutinized in a number of different ways regarding the work situation (Gill 2002; 2007). Creativity and the creative economy are currently considered such important aspects of society that the topics are now firmly established within politics and regional policy making. The circumstances revolving work place and residence diverges significantly today from previous historical patterns (Florida 2004). This new situation puts less significance on the stamp watch in the factories due to the changed nature of the services that we perform today; service production does not always need to be connected to a certain location, i.e. an office or a plant. Improved means of communications also requires increased accessibility; hence the division of the day into work and leisure time becomes blurred. As a consequence we are witnessing for example changed opening hours in the local grocery store or at the local gym. The perhaps most influential contribution during the 21st century has been the discussion regarding Flori-
da’s theory on the rise of the creative class whose work routines are characterized by a blurring of former time and space divisions (2002; 2004; 2005; 2005b). The idea of Florida’s theory was originally inspired by the observations Florida had made during his childhood of the slow but steady decline of American manufacturing due to the inability of corporate management to harvest the creativity of its employees on the factory floor. One example of the negligence was an inability to finalize suggestions on technical improvements made by the blue-collar workers. Florida’s observations later became a vital part of the theory of a new division of society, hence the foundation of the creative class theory was laid down. A theory which states that a group of creative individuals are scattered along most of the sectors of the knowledge economy based on their occupation represented within the creative class. The emergence of the creative class theory has in a way meant that the previously established service class (Goldthorpe 1995) has been given a somewhat diverging content and a new position in the social hierarchy.

The super-creative core within the creative class consists of for example artists, entertainers and designers by occupation (Florida 2004; Clifton 2008). In the interpretation made by Florida of the creative share of the population, artists are labelled “bohemians” and function as markers for those parts of the city next in line for gentrification, speculation and expansion (Atkinson 2003; Christophers 2008; Evans 2009). According to Hansen et al, there is a place competition place occurring on two levels. Firstly, regarding policy goals and methods used to attract more creative and artistically professional individuals. Secondly, regarding the development of business friendly environments. Put bluntly, decision makers and planners try to insert influence on of artists’ choice of geography.

The “packaging” of artists and especially the cultural economy in a “Floridian” manner has been criticised for being a narrow way of observation which only takes into account consumption patterns (Pratt 2009). Pratt argues that production of cultural goods and commodities is equally important as its consumption and exemplifies with the notorious borough of Hoxton in northern London, where the last years have seen the establishment of galleries in what was previously an epicentre of crime. Hoxton consequently becomes too expensive to live in for the producers of cultural goods as the establishment of art galleries triggers gentrification effects (Smith 1979; Bridge 2006). The creative class of Florida which partially involves artists and cultural workers becomes, according to its critics, an indicator and promoter of consumption which risk placing other values in the shadow. By studying both the places of cultural and creative production characterised by lofts or studios, as well as the arenas for exposure exemplified by galleries, exhibitions, theatres and art centres, production and consumption becomes observable. This implies the sketching a more holistic understanding of the geography of artists which otherwise would not have been accessible.

The leaving out of the production perspective can therefore be explained by Florida’s focus on the contribution to society given by output from the cultural economy. According to Florida, this function will be fulfilled by the bohemians as they contribute significantly to the attractiveness of the city in the eyes of other occupational groups, which in turn generate technological innovations and economic growth (Florida 2002). It then becomes interesting to ask how the rest of Sweden can, respectively should, handle the statistical fact that a vast quantity of the bohemians cluster in the three largest metropolitan regions (Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmoe). In a recent study of Sweden using a Florida-model of occupational groupings, results showed that 43 percent of professional artists and entertainers lives in Stockholm (Tinagli,
Florida et al. (2007). 70 percent were to be found in the three largest metropolitan regions; the West Sweden region and the South Scanian Region beside the Stockholm region.

Another restrictive aspect of packaging and categorising the functions of bohemians in society according to Florida’s theories is in the argument itself, partly found in the Swedish interpretation of Florida in regional policy discussions. The discourse has led to less interest in the potential within the cultural economy itself when it comes to innovation and direct contributions to economic growth. Instead, attention has been put on the indirect contribution of the cultural sector on the larger economy via the place related attraction created to be a magnet for people within other sectors of the economy. A consequence of caring less for the cultural sector’s internal potential is that we lack out in understand the cultural sector’s intrinsic prerequisites, opportunities and obstacles. The discussion regarding the place of artistic professionals has therefore been presented in two polarised ways. Beside the statistics based urban oriented studies, there exist several qualitative case studies regarding how art and culture is being used to try to stimulate rural economies (Wood & Taylor 2004; Burns & Kirkpatrick 2008; Avery 2009).

This paper presents a more nuanced and less polarised picture of artists’ choice of geography. Starting from the statistical observations and mappings, albeit confirming the argument of the artist as an urban dweller, we have made samples using the same criteria for qualitative studies with different groups of artists and creative professionals and found a significantly more diversified and varied picture. Often missed in statistical examinations is the fact that the individual, and perhaps most notably the artist, is mobile. Being mobile means being able to benefit from the best of different places – a propensity found among individuals within the arts. The need to change milieus and “trade” places from time to time will be demonstrated. Since this paper highlights the preferences of the artistically active individuals’ choices of geography, it can therefore be regarded as an attempt to complement prevailing policy discussions with the artists’ personal stories and opinions.

2. Interviewing artists

The following section presents two interview studies, labeled study 1 and study 2, conducted at the School of Business, Economics and Law at the University of Gothenburg during 2008 and 2009. Artists and creative professionals are interviewed during different phases of the career. Study 1 follows relatively recent art graduates. Study 2 follows artists and creative professionals which have been active in their profession since the 1980s. The combination of individuals with newly started professional careers within the creative field and individuals with a longer experience in the same business forms an interesting ground for observing differences between generations regarding the urban vis-à-vis the quiet of the countryside. It therefore becomes possible to study a more holistic depiction of the choices of geography made by Swedish artists.

The creative activity of the individuals interviewed in study 1 and study 2 thus becomes the core object of attention. It is therefore reasonable to point to the difference between creative activity and creativity as a personal attribute. Creativity as a personal attribute has been examined by most notably Amabile, resulting in the comple-
tion of a number of factors that need to be considered within psychological research in order to label an individual as being creative (1996). The individuals in study 1 and study 2 of this paper have not been subject to any psychological test or examinations in order to confirm or deny the amount of creative effort. The formal education, occupation and identification as an artist however, form the basis of the creative individual in these two studies.

Study 1 constitutes of respondents with a few years of career development after graduation from HDK or Valand at the Faculty of fine, applied and performing arts, University of Gothenburg. The individuals interviewed in study 1 are of a fairly young age and in the initial phase of their professional career. Five of the respondents are designers\(^1\), three of the respondents have graduated within crafts\(^2\) and four of the respondents have a degree within the fine art. Two designers, specialised in patterns and furniture, lived in Gothenburg. Two of the interior designers lived, at the time of the interview, in a gentrified (Atkinson 2003) part of Stockholm where they were employed by architectural agencies. A third interior designer lived and worked during most part of the year in Manhattan, New York, while the summer months where spent in the countryside in the south part of Sweden. Among the respondents with a degree in crafts, one where located in a relatively rural suburb of Gothenburg, one in an apartment in the southwestern part of Gothenburg known for housing artists and one in a house in the medium-sized Swedish town of Växjö some 250 kilometers east of Gothenburg. The four respondents with a degree in fine art lived in Gothenburg with the exception of one who was living in Lappland, in the very north part of Sweden. One of the respondents living in Gothenburg with a degree in fine art was in process of moving to Berlin when the interview was conducted.

The result of interview study 1 results in a much more varied and scattered geographical picture than does our comparable statistical studies (Wahlqvist 2009). In a statistical analysis of students with a corresponding degree between 1989 and 2002 from the Faculty of fine, applied and performing arts at the University of Gothenburg the following geographical spread was identified: 58 % of the individuals residing in Gothenburg, 9 % of the individuals residing in the VGR region. 7 % residing in Stockholm and 3 % in Region Skåne in the south of Sweden. See figure 1. The fact that the interview study revealed a more multifaceted geographical image can partially be explained by the fact that the individuals sometimes does not live where they are formally registered. Another explanation is the short time span of two years from the date of graduation to the execution of the statistical research. As a point of reference, the graduating classes of 1995 were followed during a longer period of 10 years. This reference group spread relatively evenly between the three largest metropolitan areas over the 10-year period.

\(^1\) 1 patterndesigner, 1 furnituredesigner and 3 interior designers

\(^2\) Their respective fields were: 1 Jewelry, 1 ceramics and 1 textiles
Study 2 follows a sample of creative professionals born between 1953 and 1960 and residing in Gothenburg in 1990. In comparison with study 1, these individuals are further into their professional careers and creative occupations. Hence they hold degrees that are issued earlier than the corresponding degrees in study 1 and they have had time to develop their art during a longer period of time.

Study 2 is based on interviews with six creative and artistically active individuals. Two of them where working as translators/authors, two where working as dancers/choreographers, one as a sculptor/artist and one as an architect at the time of the interviews. Due to the age of the respondents in study 2, degrees were normally issued during the first half of the 1980s. However, the time of graduation does not coincide with the beginning of the creative activity. As a rule, the start of the creative
activity dates back to the early teens, which corresponds to the early 1970s for the respondents. All of the respondents in study 2 have for a long time been creatively active and working in Gothenburg, with some shorter and longer sessions abroad or in other parts of Sweden.

At the time of the interview, all but one respondent were living and working in Gothenburg. Typically there has been a number of different occupations functioning as “breadwinners” for the respondents when it has been difficult to make a living on the creative profession alone. For example, the authors in study 2 have had other occupations in parallel with the writing and one of them was currently working as a teacher. One of the dancers also worked during periods as a teacher at different colleges and was training to become a masseuse to further extend the possible income base as well as her interest in health related issues. The sculptor has been employed in the health care sector throughout her creative career taking part-time jobs. It can therefore be argued that the respondents in study 2 constitute a group of professionals whom are not easily defined using occupational statistics, especially not if certain time-periods is under scrutiny. They are most of all united by their identity as artists and creatives.

In combination with the multifaceted choices of work from a longitudinal perspective, which characterizes the individuals in study 2, they also hold eventful residential careers. Typically they make their first own move during the 1970s to a small rental apartment in Gothenburg. Several of the respondents grew up in peripheral areas of Gothenburg which underwent significant residential expansion during the 1960s (Jörnmark 2005; Göteborg 2010) in line with a large-scale political housing project called the Million Homes Programme (Bråmå 2006) that was launched during that period and lasted until 1974. When the respondents reached adulthood they move around in the central and western part of Gothenburg or live abroad for a period of time. The architect and one of the authors have continued uneventful residential careers after the childhood. One of the dancers states that it is quite difficult to map the exact location of residence during a few years in the 1980s. An attempt to sort out all of the respondents residences proves unfruitful because of the high frequency of moves. The respondent highlights the importance of staying with friends, colleagues and family during certain parts of the creative career.

3. The variables of the geography of artists

From the results of the interviews, it was possible to depict a number of basic prerequisites. Different attributes serve as explanatory ground for the understanding of artists’ choice of geography, i.e. places were artistically performing individuals chose to live and work. The interviews has rendered an understanding of more or less deliberate choices of geography and also served to highlight the changing preferences. The basic prerequisites behind artists’ choice will be listed below and followed by a discussion:

- Production space
- Stillness, silence, space
- Visibility on the art scene
3.1. Production space

A primary function and a basic attribute in the everyday life of the artistically active individual is the space for production. Hence, a space in its most physical representation where creative production takes place. This space was often termed studio or artists loft among the respondents in study 1. The space for production among the respondents in study 2 was a quiet and empty stage or an isolated cabin in what was perceived as a boring and uneventful environment. The external impressions should be as few as possible according to the respondents in order to, as described by one respondent, “let the other out”. Production space is in its essence not necessarily attached to an urban environment. The most important components are as possible to attain in a rural environment or in a middle-sized Swedish town as it is in a large metropolitan area. Thus, the supply of these studios and the cost for maintaining them becomes crucial. It is rather at the side of the creative process, during the respondents’ free-time or when he or she is indirectly searching for inspiration, that the need for meeting places, people and well-running infrastructure is observable in the answers. It is a question of an indirect production as ideas are born for new projects.

An interesting aspect of the physical form of the space of production is that it, for some artists, ought to be a space in which one can forget about time and place and instead focus on the creative processes as well as perhaps also the creative flow. Sometimes, the physical conditions, for example spacious surroundings and light, matter more in order to accomplish certain phases of a project. Within study 1, a geographical difference was discovered between the spaces of production; the artists and designers who lived in a larger city at the time of the interview often lived in a small residence and were therefore motivated to rent a separate studio (alternatively if an employer offered space). Those who instead lived in a rural location, in a smaller city or in a suburb were more often working from a studio located in their living residence or within close proximity. Aspects influencing are thus silence, amount of physical space and cost. Creative professionals sometimes interact between urban and rural dwellings in order to enjoy silence and space and sometimes to receive stimuli which will be elaborated further in a later section. Added to the aspect on stimuli, it was moreover found that certain creative professionals choose to share studio or loft with others, will other creative professionals want an individual space for the creative activity, something which also may vary between different projects.
3.2. Stillness, silence, space

Closely linked with the previous prerequisite are stillness, silence and space. The studio or loft often serve to incorporate these characteristics on a spatial scale. However, we would like to point out the geographical aspect of the stillness, silence and perceived space that are to be found in a rural environment. The most extreme choice of alternating geography is described in the prologue, where a young female designer alternates between the intensity of Manhattan and absolute countryside in the south part of Sweden.

In study 1 there is also an example of a young female artist who after graduation had chosen to live in the mountains in the northern part of Sweden. This very example illustrates a constant, rather than a temporary, need for space, stillness and silence. She was therefore inclined to turn down proximity to the art scene due to the remoteness of her permanent residence. Study 1 also includes a number of creative professionals within crafts who have chosen to live in a medium-sized Swedish town or in a suburb of a city. These respondents indicate a willingness to compromise the interactive life between large city and countryside, trying to capture the best of two worlds in one place. An interesting observation was the designer whose patterns for interior decoration where inspired by animals and nature. Thus her need for nature was less related to the place of production and more related to place of inspiration which will be further elaborated under the section ‘stimuli’. Several of the respondents found that walks and bicycle rides nurtured their creativity. In the freedom of physical motion, thinking is allowed to flow without restraint. Hence, the walk becomes a simpler form of finding space for the generation of new ideas.

At a first glance, bohemians appear as rooted urban dwellers that have either lived in big cities their whole life or are immigrated from the countryside at an early age. Andersson (1985b) for example, describes this group of people as most definitely city people. The interviews with sculptors, authors and choreographers working in Gothenburg proved to point in opposite directions. These creative individuals lived and worked with few exceptions in sparsely populated parts of the West Sweden region during periods of their most intense creativity. Concurrently it turned out that the individuals who did not live rurally during parts of the year yet sought to find quiet, still and desolate places to “let the other out” as one respondent put it.

The artistically active professionals continuously persisted that peace and quiet were important prerequisites in the creative work. The authors needed clear markings between workplace and residence; the dancers were searching for forgotten and low-rent premises with an ‘empty stage’; and the sculptors pointed out the need for space to accommodate studio and workshop. The need and search for alternative spaces to the urban residence was a general trait. This eventually led to a 200 km migration northeast of Gothenburg in one case, where an “own creative milieu” was created in what was a “non-cultural landscape” on the countryside according to the respondent. Several of the interviewed respondents had connections to second homes or rural retreats which functioned as both places of relaxation and also as important nodes of reflection about ongoing or future projects.

There was, with only one exception, no expressed reluctance towards the sparsely populated parts of the West Sweden region or to corresponding environments anywhere else in Sweden. Hence a periodical need for quiet and peaceful environments
can be depicted among the respondents in study 2. It was nevertheless common that the respondents had chosen to distancing themselves over time from the place of childhood. The distribution between urban and rural upbringings was fairly evenly distributed among the respondents. Several of the respondents in study 2 experience a certain decrease over time in their interest for the urban environments in Gothenburg. An important reason for the changes over time is the advent of children and family growth which will be highlighted further in a section below.

3.3. Visibility on the art scene

Visibility on the art scene is about everything from spreading one’s name among artistic networks and audiences to the possibility of earning money. Hence, we are highlighting the consumption side, alternatively the client side, of the arts which is primarily found in the big cities. Thus one has to, as a creative professional, relate to the art scenes in the cities independently of whether you live and produce in an urban or rural location. This was an observation that stood out in clarity among the respondents in both study 1 and 2. It was further unveiled that the degree of awareness of the urban art scene was higher among the respondents who had chosen to live in a rural location or in a smaller city. The respondents least aware of this connection were the ones living in the Stockholm region. In study 1, there were a number of interior designers who both live and work within the creative cluster in the city district of Södermalm in Stockholm, but who appear to be blind to the unique local conditions. The awareness of the importance of the city-based art scene grew the further away from the urban environment the artist lived. To live in Växjö (a medium-sized Swedish town 250 km east of Gothenburg) or Abisko (a small village in the northernmost part of Sweden) presupposes that the creative professional applies for exhibitions in Stockholm, Gothenburg or Malmoe. It should be mentioned that even the creative professionals based in Gothenburg deliberately profile themselves to Stockholm which is the premier node for art scenes in Sweden. The furniture designer and the pattern designer who reside in Gothenburg appreciate the less pretentious and more accessible creative scene in Gothenburg. They nevertheless do make sure to exhibit their products and brand at fairs and conventions in Stockholm where the market is bigger. The respondents who graduated with a degree in fine art in 2003, spoke of the fact that Gothenburg finally had developed a scene for contemporary art which is worth mentioning. Only ten years ago, they argued, it would not have been possible to live and work as an artist in Gothenburg.

Both of the authors in study 2 had to position themselves open-mindedly and creatively to the term visibility. Because of the dependence on readers and purchasers of books it becomes important to be receptive for the various forms of media that presently are the most effective tools for visibility. Thus both of the authors had well-functioning personal web pages and contacts with different networks who communicated their work to wider audiences. To lecture at libraries and teaching at colleges in Sweden is an extension of the network building and of the visibility making. Mobility was of significant importance together with the regular visits to Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmoe. One of the respondents with a degree in fine arts in study 1 also shared the same lifestyle; an internet platform with a global range and lecturing around the country. His art scene had in a way expanded from the city to the world, from a physical to a corresponding virtual place.
3.4. Income

The various sources of artists' income need to be considered when studying the economic situation of the respondents. Certain creative activity has proved to be profitable, others not (Wahlqvist 2009). Hence some artists can live out of their art, whereas others cannot. In study 1, the different income sources were mapped out. If the creative profession proves to be unaffordable, it is common to take a part- or full-time job which does not necessarily correspond with a degree in fine arts in order to make ends meet. A way of working in relevance with the profession, is to become a teacher within the studied field of art or design. Besides working in a different field or teaching, there is also a range of scholarships and grants to apply for if the respondent wants to work full-time within a field that for various reasons is not profitable. A rough but functioning generalisation observed from the results of study 1, is that as designer one can make good money on and hence focus time and energy on a relevant job position. As a creative professional within the fine arts or within the crafts it is much harder to financially benefit from the artistic activity (Wahlqvist 2009).

Another aspect of income relates to the previous point; visibility on the art scene. As already mentioned, the creative professional needs to, irrespective of whether the residence and place of production is located in an urban and/or rural context, position him or herself to the urban art scene. Visibility and brand are important factors that could lead to assignments which generate income. The place of production of art and the visibility of one's products respectively could hence vary geographically. Specifically for certain categories of designers, proximity to the market is not only important at the time of the deal but also during the process of designing the product.

In study 2, it was found difficult in the early stages of the creative career to work full-time as sculptor, dancer or author due to the economic situation. Therefore, it became relevant at an early stage to look for alternative forms of income. The respondents does not experience this as a problem for the identification as an artist and creative professional, meaning that they did not enter into artistic work under false expectations. Thus, the relation of place to income has changed over time and has not played a significant role. The architect in study 2 differs slightly because of the group of high income earners he belongs to. The five remaining respondents in study 2 have during periods been forced to adapt their choices of place due to the economic situation at the time, for example working part-time in the harbour or within health care in order to pay for rent. It can also mean starting a firm and using the residence as workplace to save on expenses, alternatively working and staying in a second-home belonging to relatives (Müller 2007). Consequently, being able to earn a living as an artist is difficult. Hence it is, according to a respondent, important to quickly develop the ability to spot alternative financial sources. The forms and terms of these alternatives are virtually unlimited; however, residing in the city of Gothenburg simplifies the process and increases the individuals chances of finding a temporary job.

3.5. Stimuli
Since silence, and what is termed by one respondent as “boring settings”, is a prerequisite for several of the respondents, periods of intense creative activity needs to be preceded, alternatively interacted with, inspiration. Stimuli becomes a necessary condition in order to generate further creativity. In accordance with some of the earlier findings described in this paper, social and human interaction constitutes one of the most important components behind the creative processes of the respondents. The most solitary respondents considering the nature of the work, i.e. the authors, call attention to meeting places with its social interaction functioning as valves and providing necessary fuel and energy for continued periods of concentrated work. Regarding the dancers and choreographers in study 2, the need for longer periods of solitude is not as central. The nature of work is instead shaped by co-operation and rehearsal of plays and performances. One of the respondents highlight the stimuli that originates in the collective practice of a play on stage.

Among the respondents in study 1, the urban environment is often an object of inspiration and stimuli; ranging from the impressions during a walk or bicycle ride to meetings with other forms of art or other artists. One exception was the woman with a degree in fine arts residing in the northernmost parts of Sweden who moved to the mountains because these specific surroundings constituted her primary inspiration and stimuli. The native Sami population clearly recognized her, giving her the name of “Fjällöga” (eye of the mountain). In this case inspiration was geographically very distant from the art scene. One of the furniture designers residing in Gothenburg had found that observing animals generated the most inspiration. One of the respondents with a degree in fine arts was at the time of the interview about to move to Berlin in order to enjoy inspiration and stimuli among other artists and creative professionals.

3.6. Family and friends

The results of the interviews conducted in this paper highlight the importance of nuancing the notion of the artist, i.e. the notion based on society’s preconceived opinions on stimuli, inspiration and processes of creation. On several occasions in both of the studies, respondents stated that their choice of place was influenced by friends or the residence of the extended family. In some cases in study 1, the location of friends and family has been the main determinant behind the choice of geography. The effect of the family situation is strongest on the creative professional when the concerned individual has formed her own family. Thus the situation of the family varies depending on which phase in life the creative professional currently is in.

As mentioned earlier, in study 2 several of the respondents state that they experience saturation in the interest of the urban environments in Gothenburg. An important aspect on the changes over time is the advent of children and family. Suddenly, the fact that the apartment located in downtown Gothenburg lacks an elevator becomes painfully obvious and completely different considerations starts to influence the residential preferences of the creative professionals. The life of the creative professionals has entered a new stage and taken the form of a puzzle. Some of the creative professionals endure for a while a new apartment on the ground floor in close proximity to a playground in a continued downtown location. However, the majority choose to look for a new residence in the suburbs of Gothenburg. Once again it becomes obvious that a place of one’s own on the periphery of the city is desirable. For
a number of the respondents the problem of new residence is solved by taking over a second home from relatives; others rent a house for a while before making the residence permanent.

On certain occasions, family plays an important part and it is sometimes friends who are crucial in the creative profession. As stated earlier, one respondent in study 2 describes a wandering period in her life which includes residing temporarily with friends and family due to lack of a residence of her own. Both the direct and indirect importance of friends and family in the context of vulnerable social situations cannot be stressed enough in this case. Another respondent highlights his father’s background as a book collector and critic as an important inspiration at the time of making the decision to become an author. Yet another respondent grew up in a typically artistic home where both of the parents were artists and hence experienced an early creative schooling. A talent test undertaken during childhood told another respondent that the concerned individual should either pursue a career within the creative arts or in technical employment. The result of the test, which was initially encouraged by the respondent’s parents, was a career as an architect which can be regarded as a compromise between an interest in technical and creative work.

3.7. Residential situation

One of the most important external factors behind the respondents’ choice of residence and work place, which also influences their creative activity significantly, is the current residential situation. For the respondents in study 2, born during the 1950s, certain particular circumstances characterise the time of the first move and hence continue to do so throughout the studied residential period. The respondents depict an image of Gothenburg where an interval of shortages in the residential supply is altered with periods where it is easy to find spacious and centrally located rental apartments. One respondent describes the residential situation in Gothenburg during the 1970s as a milieu where different social groups co-existed because of the mixed sizes and types of residences with various levels of rent. Hence the residential situation contributes in the making of a creative milieu according to the respondent.

One of the main benefits of a downtown residential and work place location in Gothenburg proves to be the rich supply of public transport. This is a comparative advantage considering how many of the creative professionals that lacks a driver’s license. Several of the interviewed respondents point to the significance of adequate and well functioning public transport since the negative experience of traffic congestion and delays appears to hamper creativity.

3.8. Ideology

Ideology originates most of all from the attitudes of the respondents towards residential policy. As the respondents in study 2 grow older and, in some cases, make sev-
eral moves; the supply and demand of the residential market changes. The respondents highlight, among other aspects, an increased share of owner-occupied flats due to deregulation of public rental apartments. The reaction to this transformation is mixed. The reaction is so strong in one case that the respondent sees no other alternative, from an ideological point of view, than to move out of Gothenburg to a rural residence, hence also moving the creative activity. It is obviously a drastic stance to leave with the quote: "the, since 1994, acultural city of Gothenburg" and never to return. The example, however, tells quite a lot of the changed constitution of the residential market which has been highlighted above, as well as about ideology vs the artists’ choice of geography.

Regarding owner-occupied flats vs. rental apartments in Gothenburg it is possible to trace a pragmatic attitude among the remaining five respondents in study 2. In some cases, the inheritance of money or property has simplified the residential situation which after a number of years has been quite stressing. To inherit money, shares in a second home or a house are by some respondents regarded as a solution to something that by then had become a problem. The ideological positions behind artists’ choice of geography may thus be altering and subject to a slight change over time.

4. Concluding reflections regarding the geography of artists

This paper has introduced the various parameters which the two studies have identified as the basic mechanisms driving artists’ choice of geography. The starting point has been to draw upon the creative professionals personal descriptions of preferences and choices they have made in life regarding geography. It has clearly emerged that the creative professionals most definitely make active choices and that they are open towards the pros and cons of various geographies. The high mobility is striking. Could it possibly be that this is a more mobile occupational group, geographically speaking, in relation to others?

An important conclusion of both studies is the obvious need of artists and creative professionals to alternate different geographies, hence having various options of residence and work places. In some cases it is a matter of interaction where, for instance, the year is divided into different phases according to the creative production which in turn is adjusted in line with the different geographies. In other cases, it can be a question of years before the creative individual finds herself forced to find a new geography in the shape of a new place. In parallel with the changing geographies, regarding residence and workplace, there is also a geography relating to the consumption of art. For example art galleries, theatres, websites, college classes or lectures at firms and libraries. The artist hence has to relate herself to two different geographies in two different contexts: Residence and workplace on the one hand; the changing arena for consumption on the other. We can therefore discern how different geographies are better suited for different parts of the production cycle: In the initial phase, it varies between individuals if inspiration is found in urban or rural settings, while the benefits of the countryside becomes evident for the work intense phase of the creation cycle, whereas the large city becomes important in the final phase as it
is essential for the exposure and visibility of the art. This is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

![Diagram]

Figure 2. The variation of geographies in an artists’ production cycle.

There are several reasons for why there is contextual differences between study 1 and study 2 which should not be neglected as e.g. the age and generational difference which prevail among the respondents. A person born in 1953, will most likely have been affected by different influences in society than what a person born twenty years later would have been. Moreover, the development of the welfare society is a factor which should be taken into account since a large share of the demand for art is governed by the general condition of the economy and partly by the orders made by the public sector. Besides being a significant purchaser of art and culture, the public sector is also a large potential employer. The most evident difference between the age groups in study 1 and study 2 is the effect that family formation has on the choice of place. The new identity as family supporter competes with the identity as artist and creative professional. Moreover, the similarities between study 1 and study 2 highlight that the choices of geography is controlled by the relation to the arenas of production and consumption. It is interesting to note that the artist or the creative professional already in the beginning of the professional career actively chooses geography and hence continues to do so later on into the career.

The dogma, generated by the many readings of Florida’s theory, which automatically places the artist in the large city, could be questioned and nuanced using the results presented in this paper. This paper has highlighted the complexity which is hidden in the otherwise commonly occurring notion that creative professionals flock in the big metropolises. The intention has been to sketch artists’ choice of geography by highlighting the considerations and choices stated in the interviews. Claiming that artists and creatives are attracted to the big city is a partially, and during periods of the individuals professional life assuredly, verified fact. The result of our studies question the connection between the taken-for-grantedness of ‘urbananism and creativity’ since the two studies repeatedly have shown how the rural environments are considered a safe haven. This haven could be termed a secondary creative space of production where the forms of creation are not bound to the same frames which would otherwise be applicable in the primary creative space of the individual. Put in another way, it could be that the studio located in the city constitutes the primary creative space whilst the potato patch by the second home constitute the secondary creative space. Maybe the difference is simple and consists of the creative professional’s personal expectation of where and when production is supposed to happen.

The fact that the artists and creative professionals during certain periods require alternatives to the urban existence, raises a couple of interesting questions for further research and studies. Perhaps the most current issue is whether the result can be highlighted from a city and countryside perspective. In this paper, it has been noted
that the significant part played by the rural areas in the productive processes of the creative professionals should not be neglected despite the statistical dominance of the urban locations. Economic forces in the city obviously play a part, whether one is able to make a living on the creative profession or not. The city is often the scene for financial transactions. However, it cannot be denied that parts of the production take place in the rural environment. We find that it would be most interesting if further research would focus on the more precise merit of the countryside in the production cycle of creative professionals.

Seeing opportunities instead of limitations lie in the very nature of creativity. Finally, it is therefore interesting to point out how artists, as individuals embracing their creativity in work and lifestyle, also have a creative attitude towards geography. They chose to actively combine places they need and wish for. In the aspects that the metropolis is not enough, the countryside plays the part. It may also be noted that perhaps it is not only the attributes of different places that generate creativity; perhaps it is also the variation in the change of environment which spurs creativity.

To sum up, this paper has:

- accounted for relevant theory on and discussion about how economic geography often treats artistic and cultural creativity as primarily an urban phenomenon.

- presented qualitative findings on artists' geography, e.g. describing the active combination of urban and rural life, which furthermore has been put in comparison with the authors' statistical findings on artists' geography demonstrating different pictures.

- argued that even if the economic exchanges of artistic production occur in cities, the artistic production is characterised by a wider geography.

- presented of how different geographies are chosen for different phases of the artistic production cycle.

- accounted for the different variables that have been identified through these interview studies as determinants for artists' choice of geography.

References


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