

DISCUSSIONS AFTER THE CREATIVE ECONOMY SEMINAR

The creative economy: Fact and fiction

Dr. Betsy Donald, Queen's University, January 26, 2010, 12-1 pm

Seminar Abstract

The Creative Economy is one of the most hotly contested economic development terms in academia today. Despite its widespread use in public policy, the term attracts attention from both naysayers and proponents alike. What exactly is the creative economy? How is it different from the knowledge-intensive, innovative or entrepreneurial economy? What have been some of the methodological, theoretical and public policy critiques? Why has it been separated out from a class (i.e., service, working and creative) and geographic (i.e., urban and rural) perspective?

The purpose of this talk is to introduce the concept but also provide a rigorous analysis of its use in both theoretical and practical terms. To provide context, the talk will also draw upon a five-year empirical study of the Canadian food economy to illustrate and debate the concept in economic development terms. The seminar will lay the foundation for the Monieson Centre winter series on the Creative Economy, assessing its contribution to key conversations about the economic future and sustainability of Canada.

Key Discussion Points

- Opportunities exist to influence industrial activity when manufacturing firms ask for input (e.g., how to introduce "clean manufacturing"). Creative manufacturing involves advanced manufacturing and green technology.
- To obtain funding for creative initiatives, leverage existing funds (e.g., via applying to programs which expect matching funds) and/or "ride" on other important initiatives (e.g., include the creative aspects as minor add-ons).
- Consider bundling in arts initiatives with social responsibility initiatives. Sell cultural packages, not isolated elements.
- Give politicians "boasting" material. Ensure that there will be political visibility (e.g., growth that can be measured/reported) when requesting support for creative initiatives.
- Emphasize that value exists for the broader citizenry (and not just the creative class) when investments are made.
- Recognize that creative initiatives look very different in different communities. It is not "one size fits all".
- While Prince Edward County has a rich industrial and agricultural history that can fuel creative activity, Kingston is limited by its institutional focus on the penal, military and educational systems. Kingston has 23 museums that have no organizing narrative.
- A cultural plan is being developed for Kingston. The challenge will be how to translate cultural assets to economic activity.
- Kingston is part of a bigger community/hub. We need greater connectivity (e.g., with improved train service) so that we have a more connected space. Kingston does not need to be a final destination for visitors but can be a stopping point as visitors are en route to other locations.