

Where to live? The residential preferences of Canada's creative class

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Introduction

It has been stated that members of the Creative Class are attracted to the bright lights of the big city, they enjoy the economic and lifestyle opportunities afforded by larger metropolitan centres and they increase economies through their creativity and innovation. Their presence is a driver of economic development (Florida 2002a). However, research on residential preferences and counter-urbanization has indicated that people would rather live in smaller centres or in rural areas within close proximity of larger urban centres (Bollman & Biggs, 1992; Brown *et al.* 1997; Fuguitt & Zuiches 1975). Both the literature on the Creative Class and on the attraction of rural areas suggests that amenity and lifestyle choices are the driving force behind residential preferences. Therefore, many rural areas, particularly those with a rich abundance of natural amenity should be well placed to attract members of the Creative Class. The retention and attraction of young people is a problem for rural and small town Canada and therefore, the residential preferences of the young, educated Creative Class will have a significant impact on the survival of communities in rural Canada.

In an attempt to clarify this dichotomy of viewpoints between urban and rural attractiveness, this research examines and links what have otherwise been two separate streams of research: the literature on the Creative Class and the literature on residential preferences, rural-urban migration, counter-urbanization and the attraction of amenity. Through this examination, a model is created for assessing the residential preferences of Canada's Creative Class. Future use of this model will clarify the relative attractiveness of rural areas and urban areas to the Creative Class and reveal the factors behind their residential decision-making process. The potential results from the use of this model should help decide whether

rural and small town Canada can compete in the attraction of the Creative Class and whether Richard Florida's creative (human) capital theory can be used as a model for economic development.

Who are the Creative Class?

For those who have not heard of the Creative Class, it is the brainchild of Richard Florida at Carnegie Mellon University. Florida (2002a) states that in the new economy desired human capital includes scientists, engineers, doctors, and hi-tech business people among many other highly educated and creative occupations, such as artists, musicians, and entertainers. According to Florida (2002a) people who take advantage of their knowledge and creativity are at a premium. The Creative Class drive the economy with their use of knowledge and their creativity. Their ideas create wealth. It is estimated that the Creative Class makes up thirty percent of the United States workforce, doubling in numbers since 1980. Creativity is a highly prized commodity that "is now the decisive source of competitive advantage" for local economies (Florida 2002a, 6).

However, the idea of a creative economy is not new. The importance of culture and the arts to rural and small town economic growth has been recognized, particularly in the United States, for over 30 years. Organizations such as the New England Foundation for the Arts founded the Creative Economy Initiative which partners New England businesses, government and cultural and educational leaders in an attempt to stimulate the creative economy (NEFA 2006). The importance of the arts has also been recognized in urban regions. The economic value of the arts is supported by research on cultural economics (Towse 2003) and creative industries (Hartley 2005). Florida's works re-focus the creative economy on the attraction of creative human capital rather than the attraction of creative industries. According to Florida (2002a), not only are artists and artisans important to a growing creative economy but so too are creative professionals. This combination of creative professionals and artists has come under criticism. In a study of creative communities in the Northeastern United States, Florida's melding of artists and creative professionals is merely a representation of highly educated members of the workforce and, rather, those people who recognize that their job requires a high degree of creativity but do not necessarily equate with the occupations represented by the Creative Class (Gabe 2006).

Still, Florida's (2002a) interpretation of human capital theory adds two new dimensions to the idea of a creative economy: first, the idea that

creativity and innovation are the most important factors in economic growth and second that the geography of place is becoming more important. Florida states that creative people “don’t just cluster where jobs are”, but cluster in places that are “centres of creativity” (Florida 2002a, 7). These places provide an environment in which to work and play. There is a movement away from so called standard industrial location sites to axes of creativity. If cities can generate a ‘creative climate’ they will be able to attract the Creative Class and in turn attract industry (Florida 2002a). At the same time, members of the Creative Class are post-modern consumers of place, and want a “life packed full of intense, high-quality multidimensional experiences” (Florida 2002a, 166). For the Creative Class the importance of experiences is replacing the importance of goods and services. These experiences stimulate and enhance the creative process. Knowledge workers are becoming very sophisticated consumers of place (Kotkin 2000), and because of this, quality of life issues are becoming more important than market factors when selecting a place to live.

So far research on the Creative Class has focused on large cities (see Gertler *et al.* (2002) for work on Ontario). Florida’s research has centred on the major metropolitan cities of the United States (Florida 2000, 2002a, 2002b, 2003). These cities are seen as providing a variety of economic opportunities, a stimulating environment and amenities for every possible lifestyle. Metropolitan centres are seen as evolving into entertainment machines in order to attract creative human talent (Clark *et al.* 2002).

There have been criticisms of Florida’s methodology and that there is nothing new about Florida’s work; that it merely supports traditional pro-urban sentiments (Milligan 2003). A city or town serves as a container for a collection of site-based experiences that, when brought together, adds to an individual’s perception of the place in which they live. It is what the individual wants in a place that makes them choose a location to live (Milligan 2003). Also, choices made by the Creative Class are seen to widen the geographic split between rural and urban regions. Areas are pulling away from each other economically and politically (Donald and Morrow 2003). When competing for talent, cities are using Florida’s blueprint for growth – attract the Creative Class and you will create economic growth – as an economic cure all. However, other non-economic issues need to be considered. Attracting creativity may only be a band aid solution for much deeper social problems such as social barriers to participation by all community members and economic barriers that exclude participation (Donald and Morrow 2003). It must be remembered that the “creative economy is not a one-size-fits-all panacea. In fact, creative economies... vary from city to city, town to town” (Dobelle 2005, 8) and experience difference levels of success and failure. Despite much criticism

the Creative Class is still perceived as a significant road to economic development for communities of all sizes.

The Creative Bandwagon

Recent interest in the creative economy has been prolific. Richard Florida's *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002a) has seen a re-focusing on the creative economy and led to a 'creative bandwagon' effect. It is now thought that if communities, especially rural, can compete in the creative economy then they might not be reduced to Florida's (2002a) grim downward economic spiral. The attraction of the creative economy has many researchers and policy makers reviewing and changing policy concerning economic development strategies. Governments at all levels are investigating and implementing policies that promote their creative economy and attract the Creative Class. These initiatives cover the whole rural-urban continuum. This section, briefly, reviews some of the initiatives set in place at varying levels of governance

At the national level, the importance of creativity to national economies has been recognized. Australia has a *Culture and Recreation Portal* on its government website that recognizes that there is a need to provide strategic business management and advice to the creative sector in Australia (Australian Government 2006). The British Council identifies the increasing importance of the creative sector. The creative economy is the only sector that every region in the United Kingdom has identified as a priority area for economic growth (British Council 2006). In 2005, the United States National Governors Association (NGA) commissioned a report, *Strengthening Rural Economies through the Arts*. This report identified that an "arts-based economy can enhance state efforts to diversify rural economies, generate revenue, improve the quality of life, and attract visitors and investment" (NGA 2005, 1).

At a regional scale, the NGA (2005) report on strengthening rural economies recognizes the importance of creativity to over 25 states. The creative economy truly is alive and well across the United States. While these initiatives have concentrated on mainly arts-based development, many localised economies have focused on creating the required creative climate needed to attract the Creative Class. Two such economies are represented by the major metropolitan centres of Memphis and the Silicon Valley. These two urban areas have seen interested parties present creative strategic plans for the development of their cities (Memphismanifesto 2006; CI-SV 2006). In Canada, the City of Calgary, Alberta, had Richard

Florida give the keynote address at its 2003 annual city forum and in the same year Kamloops, BC hosted a forum on creativity and culture. The keynote speaker for the Kamloops forum was a Florida disciple from Seattle, and in 2004 the City of Kamloops hired an arts and cultural development supervisor (Creativecity 2004). A brief look at Richard Florida's website identifies new organizations, institutions, and cities that are climbing aboard the creative bandwagon (creativeclass.org 2006).

The creative bandwagon, despite Florida's thoughts, may not have left rural areas behind. Artistic enclaves exist throughout Canada (Bunting and Mitchell 2001). Chemainus, British Columbia is a community that has utilized its arts community and arts festivals to evolve from a forestry dependent community to a thriving arts-based community (Barnes and Hayter 1992). Perhaps the best example of a rural area's attempt to attract Florida's Creative Class in Canada is that of Pinawa, Manitoba. Pinawa is a community of 1,500 people and is located about an hour or so east of Winnipeg on the border of Whiteshell National Park. Pinawa is located on Winnipeg River and has incredible natural amenity value. In 1963 the Atomic Energy of Canada Limited established a research station in Pinawa, which was recently decommissioned. Many scientists and researchers still reside in Pinawa, and with its natural amenity and proximity to the major metropolitan centre of Winnipeg, it should be well placed to attract the Creative Class. The Pinawa website clearly advertises to the needs of the Creative Class:

Today, Pinawa is an attractive and diverse community, home to scientists, entrepreneurs and their families, all enjoying the advantages of Pinawa's unique high-tech lifestyle. Newcomers to Pinawa work effectively with broadband internet access, technology and business resources all conveniently located in a recreation paradise. (Pinawa 2006)

Pinawa's success in retaining and/or attracting young educated people is evident in the fact that in 2001 the percentage of the population aged 20-34 with a university certificate, diploma or degree was 27.3% as compared to the provincial average of 18.7% (Statistics Canada 2001).

The creative economy is viewed as a panacea for economic development across North America. The creative economy is an attractive proposition. Creativity has positive connotations, such as freedom, innovation and surprise. The concept of the creative economy conjures up "images of life and work beyond boredom, repetition and poverty" (Gibson & Klocker 2005, 95). Thus, the creative economy has been accepted as an important economic development strategy. However, if Richard Florida

is right, in order for communities to be successful in the creative economy, creative people – the Creative Class– are needed. Yet, no one apart from Richard Florida has asked the Creative Class where they would like to live. Therefore, it is important to determine the factors that drive the Creative Class' residential preferences and to determine the type of community in which they want to live.

Creative Class: Urban vs. Rural

Simply put, urban areas have an aggregation and agglomeration of economic and lifestyle opportunities that make them the major players in the market for the members of the Creative Class. They provide the jobs and wages at the same time as providing the entertainment and experiences desired, while rural areas, particularly those which have been reliant on resource based activities, will find it hard to pull out of what Florida calls a grim-downward spiral. And yet despite this comment, there might be light at the end of the tunnel for rural communities.

The Creative Class are attracted by natural amenity, outdoor recreational opportunities and a higher quality of life (Florida 2002a; 2002b). In the new economy amenities sought by the Creative Class typically revolve around outdoor recreation activities and lifestyle choices. Members of the Creative Class are active, not passive, and they want to experience the city and the great outdoors. Outdoor recreation is seen as a release and another activity to be experienced. It can be argued that the best place to experience natural amenity and outdoor recreation is outside of the city in rural areas. Furthermore, rural areas have consistently been associated with a high quality of life, and this is often times linked to anti-urban or pro-rural sentiments, or both.

Why Not Rural?

So then, why are rural areas not preferred as a destination for the Creative Class? The Creative Class are potentially very important to rural areas. Human capital issues in rural areas are very complex (Statistics Canada 2004) and include issues such as education, economic activities, migration and broad social concerns (Davis 2003; Swanson & Luloff 1990; Summers *et al.* 1995; Teixeira 1995; Galston & Baehler 1995). Creative Class Rural human capital issues have focused on mainly economic concerns, in particular, the supply and demand for human capital, with human capital

seen as a necessity in the means of production. What is important about the 'creative capital theory' is that there is an emphasis on the importance of amenity in the attraction of human capital. Indeed, amenity could be the light at the end of the tunnel for many rural areas because they have the ability to provide the natural and lifestyle amenities that the Creative Class seek.

The Attractiveness of Rural Areas

Literature over the last 30 years has examined the attractiveness of rural areas. There has been an evolution in the research literature leading from residential preferences to urban-rural migration, from counter-urbanization to amenity driven migration. These areas are not mutually exclusive, rather they are intimately linked and in many ways they are used synonymously. What follows is a brief look at first the residential preference literature, second urban-rural migration literature, third counter-urbanization literature and finally literature on the attraction of amenity as it relates to the potential attractiveness of rural areas to the Creative Class.

Residential Preferences:

First it must be stated that early work on residential preferences refers to where someone would like to live *not* the actual location of their residence. Both popular opinion polls and early academic work on residential preferences of the general population showed that people do not want to live in major urban centres (Lewis 1972; Fuguitt & Zuiches 1975). People would prefer to live in less dense and smaller communities. As Lewis stated in 1972, it seems that the glamorous city has lost much of its glamour. Crime and congestion are pushing people from the city.

In 1975, Fuguitt and Zuiches identified that although 20 percent of the population live in cities over 500,000 only 9 percent state that they want to live there. Smaller centres are seen as having better social and environmental qualities. In Canada research into residential preferences mirrors that of the research completed in the United States. The level of dissatisfaction with current residences among urban core residents is not apparent in Canada's population. Forty one percent of urban core residents desired to stay in their current location; the remaining fifty nine percent prefer to move down the urban-rural hierarchy to less urbanized areas (Bollman and Biggs 1992). Bollman and Biggs (1992) also add that more

than 85 percent of Canadians living in remote rural regions want to stay in rural Canada.

There are many reasons for the desire to live in less urban areas. Early work on residential preferences identified anti-urban sentiments (Blackwood & Carpenter 1978) as the reason for the preference of people to live down the urban-rural hierarchy, though this is not necessarily the only factor at work. More recent research has shown that other factors are at work. Examples of these attractions are shown in the research by Eser and Luloff (2003) and Walker and Fortmann (2003), who examine the attraction of rurality in areas of Pennsylvania and California respectively, and Power and Barrett (2001) and McGranahan (1999) who indicate that counties with an abundance of natural amenity are attracting migrants in the United States at the national level. Research on residential preferences is now linked more with the movement of people to their desired location rather than just a preference for a desired location

Urban to Rural Migration:

Movement of people to rural areas was first noticed in the 1970s. Since about 1910 the movement of people in North America was toward urban areas. However in the early 1970s research identified that rural growth was outpacing urban growth (Brown *et al.* 1997; Fuguitt & Beale 1996; Fulton *et al.* 1997; Johnson & Fuguitt 2000). The major factor in this growth was in-migration (Johnson 1993). Rothwell *et al.* (2002) identify that the greatest proportion of migrants were educated and in the 25-34 age cohort. This rural growth has been dubbed the rural turnaround. However, Joseph, Keddie and Smit (1988) argued that in Canada rural growth was due more to urban spillover than any other factor, and that much rural growth can be attributed to the re-drawing of census boundaries. Whether this is the case or not, it is generally accepted that people were moving to rural areas both near and far from major urban centres.

In the 1980s the trend reverted back to one of urbanization – but in the 1990s there was evidence again of rural growth (Fulton *et al.* 1997; Johnson & Beale 1995). Although in-migration was important the major factors contributing to this growth, so were natural increase and population retention (Johnson 1993). These trends were not just a United States phenomenon. In the period between 1966 to 1996 rural and small town Canada experienced decline in the 1960s but saw a turnaround between 1971 and 1981. The loss of people from rural Canada returned again in the 1980s but again saw another turnaround in the early 1990s (see Table 1).

Proponents of residential preferences argue that these periods of growth were due to a mixture of anti-urban and pro-rural sentiments. There is however evidence that these migratory streams follow macro-economic

Table 1: Migration between Larger Urban Centres (LUC) and Rural and Small Town (RST) areas for individuals aged 15 and over, 1966 to 1996.

	1966-1971	1971-1976	1976-1981	1981-1986	1986-1991	1991-1996
Non-movers RST	4,889,295	5,583,510	5,378,435	4,548,210	4,663,105	4,907,775
Migrants RST to LUC	711,595	582,700	599,905	563,965	554,505	469,985
LUC to RST	349,170	633,090	647,150	451,475	552,450	545,665
Total Net Migration to RST	-362,425	50,390	47,245	-112,490	-2,055	75,680
RST In migration rate	6.2	10.3	10.8	8.8	10.6	10.1
Out migration rate	12.7	9.4	10.0	11.0	10.6	8.7
Net migration rate	-6.5	0.8	0.8	-2.2	0.0	1.4
Note: RST In migration rate = (LUC to RST) / (RST non-movers) + (RST to LUC) * 100 RST Out migration rate = (RST to LUC) / (RST non-movers) + (RST to LUC) * 100						

trends. Rural areas were booming in the 1970s, there was a recession in the 1980s and the recovery from this recession again allowed people to potentially relocate to rural areas. It is fair to say that people are more able to act on their residential preferences during economic upturns (Brown *et al.* 1997).

Counter-urbanization:

The movement to rural areas or the movement of people down the urban-rural hierarchy is called counter-urbanization (Dahms & McComb 1999). Literature on counter-urbanization seems to have replaced literature on residential preferences. While traditional literature on residential preferences examined the desire to move, counter-urbanization examines residential preferences as people move down the urban-rural hierarchy. Counter-urbanization literature generally examines why people move to less urban areas rather than the number of people moving or the potential desire to move. Like most concepts counter-urbanization is complex and has been used by many in a cavalier fashion. Mitchell (2004) tried to bring some clarity to the concept in her article, “Making Sense of Counter-urbanization”. In this she identifies three types of counter-urbanite: 1) the exurbanite – who seeks the bucolic countryside but retains economic ties to the city – primarily through the process of commuting to work; 2) the displaced-urbanite – who moves for economic considerations regardless of city size – and reacts to employment, lower costs-of-living and/or

available housing; and 3) the anti-urbanite, people move beyond the rural-urban fringe to escape crime, high taxes, congestion and pollution. The push and pull factors of urban and rural variables lead to a joining of anti-urban and pro rural sentiments (Mitchell 2004). It can be argued that within these three types there are further complexities, but the important factor here is the spatial dimension. Though our discussion so far in this paper has been set in the context of an urban-rural dichotomy it must be remembered that rural and urban are not distinct entities but there is a continuum of spaces and places between major metropolitan areas and isolated rural areas, and the different types of counter-urbanite will settle somewhere along the continuum depending on their perceptions of rurality, their demand for natural amenity, and their need to be close to an urban centre among many other factors.

Recent Trends:

Recent trends in rural-urban migration streams show that urban growth is outpacing rural growth. However, some non-metropolitan areas are experiencing in-migration and growth. There is a wealth of literature on the Mountain West of the United States, where the pull of natural amenity and high order services in rural communities is a major attraction to migrants who wish to live in an area where they can both work and recreate (Beyers & Nelson 2000; Booth 1999; Power 1996; Power & Barrett 2001; Smutny 2002). Drabenstott and Smith (1995) have identified remote counties in the Ozarks region of Missouri that are experiencing rapid growth due to scenic beauty.

In Canada work by Bunting and Mitchell (2001) and by Mitchell *et al.* (2004) has identified that artists are attracted to rural locales because of the natural beauty which is also often a 'tool' for the artist to use in their work. Dahms and McComb (1999) documented the growth of rural areas in Southern Ontario due to in-migration and Lovett and Nelson (2003) identified that the chance for a higher income is not the pull factor it once was; people are moving to areas of high amenity value in British Columbia for lifestyle reasons. With the increasing efficiency of technology related to the transportation and communication of goods, services and ideas, Johnson and Fuguitt (2000) argue the friction of distance is weakening and allowing people to locate where they want to and more freely.

Why are People Moving to Rural Areas?

In summarizing why people are moving, and why the Creative Class may move to rural areas, the literature indicates the following major reasons: natural amenity, sentiments, attachment to place, and economic opportunities. Natural amenity is clearly a lure for the Creative Class, including artists, as shown in the work cited here by Bunting and Mitchell (2001) and Mitchell *et al.* (2004). At the same time, McGranahan (1999) has shown that in the United States the attraction of natural amenity is a nationwide phenomenon. As already stated, pro-rural and anti-urban sentiments are strong factors in the counter-urbanization process and serve to entice more members of the Creative Class to the countryside. Attachment to place is also important. Galston & Baehler (1995), for example, state that a young person's attachment to place may have a bigger impact on whether they stay or return to that place than economic opportunities, and Davis (2003) in her study of Newfoundland fishing communities found that the filial relationship was important to whether youth returned to their community once educated. Finally, access to economic opportunities is often related to the commuter who wishes to experience rurality but still work in the city, but there are an increasing number of cases where people are moving further from the city while still retaining access to the urban market for business purposes (Kotkin 2000; Mitchell *et al.* 2004; Renkow & Hoover 2000).

Who is Moving to Rural Areas?

If rural areas are attractive, then who is moving to them? The picture is unclear, but research has identified that in the West there are two major types of migrant (Nelson 1999; Salant *et al.* 1997). First, there are retirees, who have the ability to act upon their residential preferences. Second, there are the young and educated. It is widely accepted that the young are more likely to act on residential preferences but usually do so because of economic opportunities. The young and educated, then, can somewhat act on their residential preferences. Regardless of their motivations for movement among both groups, they have been identified as educated and have access to capital (Nelson 1999). Are these seniors or young people members of the Creative Class? Well that is unclear also.

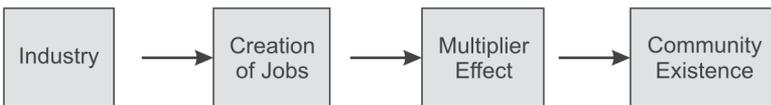
There is some evidence of the Creative Class in rural areas in Canada. In a study on knowledge workers it was shown that there are indeed knowledge workers in rural areas (Beckstead & Vinodrai 2003). The absolute numbers are, not surprisingly, lower than that of their urban counterparts,

but the proportion is similar to the urban proportion and the growth rate is also similar (Beckstead & Vinodrai 2003). If we add artists into the mix – as they are part of the Creative Class– Bunting and Mitchell (2001) identified a number of artist enclaves in rural locales and Mitchell *et al.* (2004) identified that visual artists are acting as counter-urbanites in Ontario. So, the Creative Class do populate rural areas, but will more come?

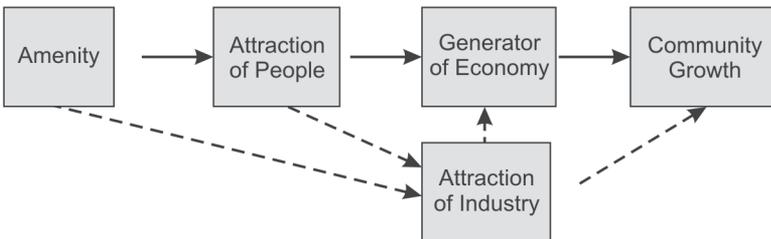
Some Models

We offer four graphical representations of why the Creative Class may be important to rural areas. In the traditional economic model, rural areas were driven by a local industry that supplied the jobs (Figure 1). Often the community existed due to the existence of the industry. In the amenity led model, amenity attracts people and, as Florida argues, will attract businesses because they are now realizing that if they locate in areas of high amenity they will be able to attract and retain employees. The attraction of the Creative Class in turn also attracts industry; the Creative Class can also be a generator in the economy as the footloose capital they bring into an area is often spent in the community allowing for not only community existence but community growth. This economic model is the model of the Creative Class. Therefore it is important that we know the residential preferences of the Creative Class.

Traditional Economic Model



Amenity-Led Economic Model



(Adapted from Power 1996)

Figure 1: Traditional and amenity-led economic models.

The Creative Class are attracted to urban centres. However the literature has demonstrated that amenity, anti-urbanism and/or pro-rural sentiments and attachment to place are factors that attract people to rural areas – *amenity* is specifically identified as something the Creative Class seeks and rural areas provide (Figure 2). However

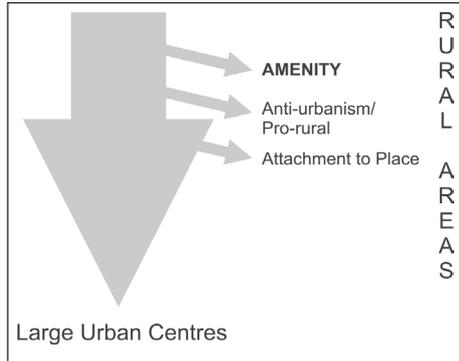


Figure 2.

if the Creative Class are attracted to rural areas it has to be recognized that there is a rural to urban continuum (Figure 3). Therefore when choosing a place to live it should be accepted that there are a multitude of options.

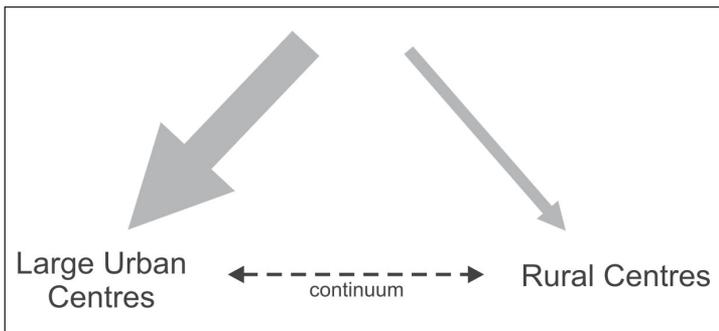


Figure 3.

With the rural to urban continuum in mind, and noting that the literature has identified a wide number of factors that drive residential decision making. This research suggests a model which should be tested in the field to determine the residential preferences of Canada’s Creative Class (Figure 4). The model begins with the Creative Class and asks where would these people prefer to live? The model recognizes that various decision making filters come into play. For example, one needs to be aware of: job opportunities and wages; health care and education facilities; family and friends; recreational services; and, of course, natural amenity. The residential outcome could be, depending on various factors, anywhere from a small isolated rural place to a major metropolitan region. This model

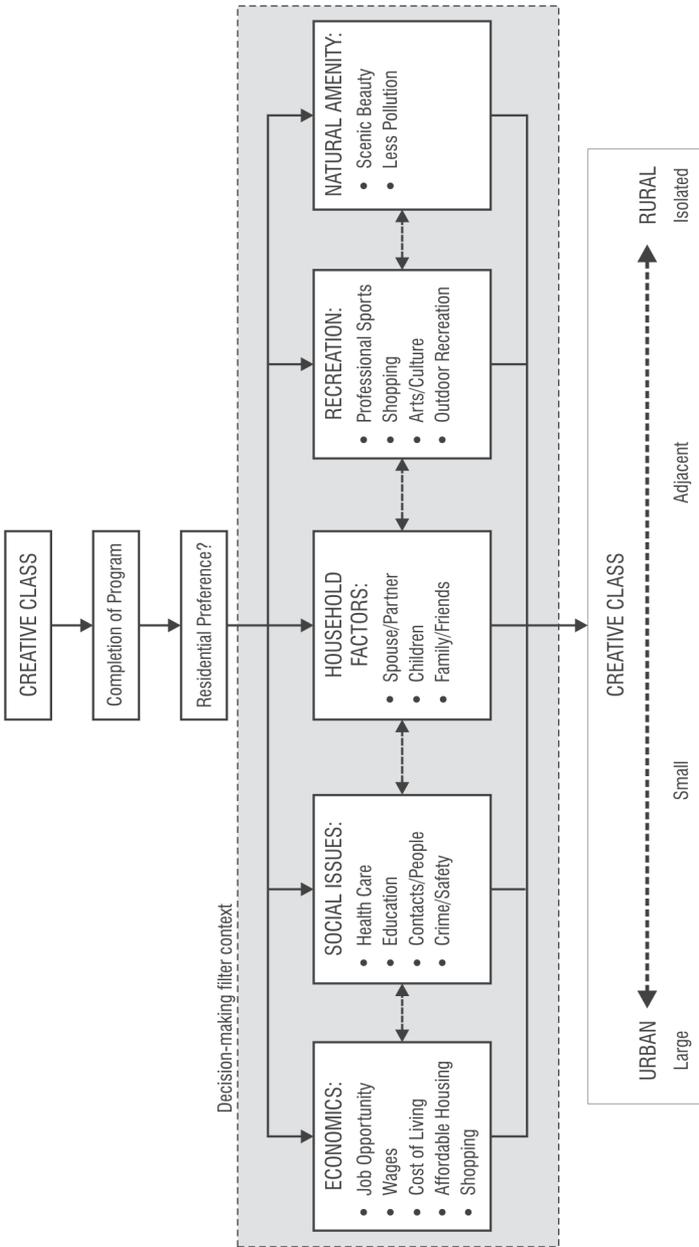


Figure 4.

can be used to identify the residential preferences of both the existing members of the Creative Class, people who are currently employed in creative professions, and the residential preference of the future Creative Class, for example, people who are currently enrolled in graduate programs that lead to future employment in creative professions.

Conclusion

The Creative Class can play an important role in economic development in rural areas. The supply of human capital has been a major barrier to economic development. If rural areas with high amenity value position themselves in the market for the Creative Class they may (1) attract people who in turn will attract industry or (2) at least attract people to their community who will require services which in turn should allow for some economic development. Should this model be tested, the results will be of great importance to rural and small town policy decision makers. First, policy makers will be able to determine whether their specific region or community can compete for the Creative Class. Second, if it is determined that the Creative Class desire to locate in a region or community the variables deemed favourable by the Creative Class when selecting a place to live can be marketed by the community in order to attract this form of human capital. If the model indicates that the Creative Class do not wish to settle in rural and small town Canada in significant numbers then resources should be directed toward other economic growth strategies. The model will allow rural policy makers to decide whether they can ride Florida's 'creative bandwagon' to potential prosperity.

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