

Creatives and creative industries in peripheral areas

We aim to study creatives and creative industries in peripheral areas of Poland. Creatives and creative industries include jobs and businesses that use creativity, culture, and heritage to produce and share goods and services. This group includes artists, cultural workers, designers, and people working in traditional and new media. They are now considered important drivers of economic development. Most of these people and businesses are concentrated in large cities, especially in artistic and creative districts. This is why many studies focus on urban areas, with fewer studies done on peripheral locations. Peripheral areas are remote, hard to reach, have low population density, declining populations, and lower levels of development. Recently, some researchers have highlighted the imbalance between studies on creativity in urban areas and those in small towns and rural areas. This imbalance leads to public policies that mainly focus on large cities, or urban-based solutions being applied to peripheral areas, even though these areas have different needs and require adapted solutions.

In our study, we want to understand how creative people work in environments that are different from urban areas, where they are more dispersed. First, we aim to understand why these individuals and companies choose to live and work in these areas, despite being more isolated and having fewer potential customers, which could pose obstacles to their creative careers and business development. Some creatives may have grown up in these places and decided to stay, while others have moved from elsewhere. Their reasons for staying in or choosing these areas may vary, such as looking for a better quality of life, closeness to nature, or family connections. Some studies show that even though creatives benefit from the qualities of more peripheral locations, they still invest in building networks and often travel to bigger cities to stay connected with other professionals and institutions. However, we do not yet know which types of networks and movements are most common and beneficial – whether it is regular back-and-forth travel, longer stays in cities before returning to the peripheries, travel for specific events, or relying on virtual connections.

Additionally, little is known about creatives' connections to peripheral areas and communities, and whether the strength of these connections influences in what way and to what extent they contribute to local social and economic development. It is also unclear whether, and how, local communities and economies influence their creative work. Some creatives may be deeply rooted in their communities, feeling a strong sense of belonging, with their creative outputs reflecting local cultures and identities. Others might function to a greater extent as creative nomads, moving between places and focusing on consumers and markets in larger cities.

Finally, we know little about policies aimed at attracting or retaining creatives and creative industries in peripheral areas in Poland. If such policies exist, it is unclear whether they are perceived positively or negatively by these individuals and businesses.

We aim to explore these issues through case studies from Poland, expanding on existing research that predominantly focuses on cases from Australia, North America, Western, and Northern Europe. Peripheral areas in this country are also quite diverse and have developed differently in the past due to geographical, historical, cultural, social, and economic factors, so studying them could provide a range of interesting and varied insights.

In order to find answers to the above questions we will use various research methods. First, we will analyze statistical data and create maps to identify areas in Polish peripheries with the relatively high concentration of creatives and creative businesses. We will then examine national, regional, and local strategic documents to see if there are any policies aimed at attracting and supporting these people and businesses in such regions. Next, we will select two smaller areas and two types of creative companies for a more detailed study. We will gather information from different sources to learn about the companies operating in these areas and conduct interviews with creatives and representatives of supporting institutions. Finally, we will invite two creatives to work together in a peripheral location for one month, encouraging them to use local resources and reinterpret local culture and heritage in new ways. We will also observe their creative processes during this time.

By the end of the project, we hope to gain a better understanding of how creatives and creative industries operate in peripheral areas, their impact on local social and economic development, and whether public policies have played a role in retaining and attracting them to such areas. Such findings could also contribute to the formulation of better support policies for peripheral areas, which face many challenges related to demographic, economic and environmental changes.