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*Making Connections: Creative Industries Networks in Outer Suburban Locations*

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**ABSTRACT** The role of networks and their contribution to sustaining and developing creative industries is well documented (Wittel 2001; Kong 2005; Pratt 2007). This article argues that although networks operate across geographical boundaries, particularly through the use of communication technologies, the majority of studies have focussed on the ways in which networks operate in a) specific inner-urban metropolitan regions or b) specific industries. Such studies are informed by the geographical mindset of creative city proponents such as Florida (2002) and Landry (2000) in which inner-urban precincts are seen as the prime location for creative industries activity, business development and opportunity. But what of those creative industries situated beyond the inner city? Evidence in Australia suggests there is increasing creative industries activity beyond the inner city, in outer-suburban and ex-urban areas (Gibson & Brennan-Horley 2006). This article identifies characteristics of creative industries networks in outer-suburban locations in Melbourne and Brisbane. It argues that supporting and sustaining creative industries networks in these locations may require different strategies than those applied to inner-city networks. The article thus contributes to the growing understanding of the cultural economic geography of creative industries.

**KEY WORDS** networks, outer-suburban, creative industries, spatial proximity, business development, clusters

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## **Introduction**

The creative industries are commonly associated with innovation and entrepreneurship. For organisations that are SMEs (small medium enterprises), spatially-based local clustering is considered important for networks to facilitate knowledge integration and business development (Florida 2002; Pratt 2007; Scott 2006). Close proximity of businesses enables networks to operate effectively in a value chain relationship which consists of team members, clients, suppliers and stakeholders (Pratt et al. 2007; Adkins et al. 2007; Lazaretti et al. 2008). Moreover, as commercial sectors that are often dependent upon project-based, contractual work and subject to the volatility of market economies, the creative industries are high risk industries (McRobbie 2002). Self-employment and job insecurity are common, and the experience of risk is intrinsic to those working in the sector (Banks et al. 2000). The management of risk, while acknowledged as a feature of late modernity in general (Beck 1992), impacts on organisations to differing degrees, but is central to the experience of many creative industries workers (Banks et al. 2000). According to Kong, such risk is “often countered by relationships of trust, a form of social solidarity” managed by networks

of social relations (2005, p. 64).<sup>1</sup> In this context, networks support not only knowledge, creative energy and industry development, but also function in several other ways for the creative industries worker: as a method for finding continual employment, managing unease related to job insecurity and for enabling new cooperative endeavours (Coe 2000).

This article explores professional networking practices, types, and scales in an often-overlooked field: creative industries situated in outer-suburban Australia.<sup>1</sup> Despite the fact that Australia is highly suburbanised, there is little research on the creative industries workforce in suburban locations. Given that the topography and culture of outer-urban areas is distinct from inner-urban regions, with different infrastructure, amenities and population distribution, what are the implications for networking activity? As networking is critical for business development, how does it work in low-density outer-suburban areas? Can effective creative industries networking occur in geographical sites which are neither dense ‘precincts’, ‘hubs’, or ‘clusters’? While technology enables a virtual space for communication and collaboration, creative industries literature repeatedly points to the importance of locality: local place impacts on the types of creative industries and creative industries networks which emerge in specific sites (Gertler 1995; Bathelt et al. 2004; Lange et al. 2008). Most creative industries network studies tend to focus on inner-city sites, where the focus of creative industries policy and analysis remains (Kong 2005, Pratt et al. 2007; Wittel 2001). This focus is explicable: much creative industries activity is indeed urban, and the key drivers of economic growth as defined by classical economic geography—“production resources, skills, and institutions of coordination”—often concentrate in urban areas

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<sup>1</sup> The article focuses on creative industries workers who work in outer suburbia, not on creative industries workers who live in outer suburbia but work elsewhere.

(Storper & Scott 2009, p. 64). To date, there is little research that addresses the impact of outer-suburban local places on creative industries, or on the impact of creative industries on outer-suburban places (for exceptions see Gibson & Brennan-Horley 2006).

As urbanisation intensifies, redistribution of land use and zoning continues to change the morphology and use of cities and their suburbs. The ways in which people live and work across many suburbs has changed significantly in the period of urban consolidation since the 1980s. For instance, only 14% percent of jobs are located in Melbourne inner-city and central business districts, with the remaining jobs located in suburban and outer suburban localities (Davies 2009). Because creative industries are “embedded in networks and institutions that are socially-constructed and culturally-defined” (Coe 2000, p. 394), an understanding of the specific geographies and networks in which they are embedded provides insight into the factors that shape the development of the sector when located some distance from the urban core (see also Brennan-Horley, this issue).

### **The shifting suburbs**

Australian outer suburbs are no longer strictly locations of domesticity and a retreat from working life. The outer suburbs now tend to be places of demographic plurality and social and economic complexity (Gibson & Brennan-Horley 2006; Gleeson 2002; Randolph 2004; Salt 2006; Turner 2007). Processes of urban consolidation have contributed to structural shifts in the suburban landscape – low density suburbs have

been in-filled and mixed-use development has enabled the growth of large-scale multipurpose buildings--changing the structure and experience of the suburbs (Gibson & Brennan-Horley 2006, p. 456). Consequently, what people do and how they live in the outer suburbs has changed. Studies of creative industries in the outer suburbs in Australia's largest city, Sydney, find that exurban Statistical Local Areas (SLA) such as Wollongong and the Blue Mountains experienced the highest rates of creative industries employment growth in Sydney between 1991 and 2001 (Gibson & Brennan-Horley, 2006, p. 467). Similarly, the exurban areas of Wyong, Camden and Wollondilly achieved higher rates of growth in creative work in the last 20 years than did inner-city SLAs such as Sydney City and Marrickville (2006, p. 465). Gibson and Brennan-Horley account for this growth pattern in part, because outer suburban areas are the fastest growing areas in Australia, so it is not surprising that their creative industries workforces are also growing quickly (2006, p. 468). When paired with real estate trends, for many in the precarious employment typical of the creative industries, the inner city is simply now too expensive a place in which to work and live.

## **Method**

This research draws on the findings of an Australian Research Council project investigating the experience of creative industries workers in four outer suburbs of Brisbane and Melbourne. This study focuses on two locations, Redcliffe in Brisbane and Frankston in Melbourne, because they present the most activity and share similar demographic and physical characteristics. Frankston has the larger number of creative industries workers at 646, while Redcliffe has 251 according Australian Bureau of Statistics data (2006)<sup>ii</sup>. While identifying creative industries activity relies on

quantitative data, identifying and understanding the operation of networks requires ethnographic and qualitative research methods (Brennan-Horley & Gibson 2009; James 2006). Findings are based on 82 in-depth interviews with creative industries workers. Interviews averaged forty-five minutes and used open-ended questioning to canvass a range of issues in relation to networking. While the research is location specific, we argue that the study's findings are indicative of network characteristics that can be applied across creative industries located beyond inner-city regions. This is because the networking issues identified are intrinsically geographical, that is, they operate within an outer peripheral – inner metropolitan relationship, and in a relationship to the outer-suburban location and the surrounding regions.

This study attends to three types of networks: 1) those developed and maintained amongst participants with colleagues who work in the same industry or creative practice but work in other companies or elsewhere; 2) professional and informal networking associations which contribute to professional development and business opportunities; 3) those developed between clients and potential clients.

Network analyses identify numerous types of professional networks and studies such as Coe's (2000) acknowledge that any organisation or individual is simultaneously involved in multiple network types and geographical scales. As Coe argues, professional networks span across international, national, regional, and local boundaries (2000; see also Grabher 2002). A comprehensive network analysis would identify all types of networks—and might employ Brown and Keast's (2003) "continuum of connectedness" to define the strength of each network type—and would also identify the organisation's embeddedness in various geographical scales of

network. But this article focuses on a diverse industrial sector—the creative industries—rather than on a single organisation or a single industry, and thus a comprehensive network analysis is not feasible. While we acknowledge the importance of regional and international networks, a focus on the local adds insight into the growing literature which attends to “creative places” (Gibson & Luckman 2009, Kong et al. 2005, Luckman 2009). Locality-based ethnographic observation provides insight into less formal aspects of networking, through observations about where people met, who met in those venues and what types of encounters and exchanges took place. Ethnographic observation and informal encounters in various venues within the locality enabled some degree of understanding about how tacit knowledge was shared by participants in each location.

Definitions of creative industries vary across regional jurisdictions and national boundaries. This article uses the Creative Industries National Mapping Project’s (CINMP)<sup>iii</sup> six-category definition of creative industries, which is itself derived from the British Department of Media, Culture and Sport’s foundational definition<sup>iv</sup>: film, television and entertainment software; writing, publishing and print media; advertising, graphic design, and marketing; architecture, visual arts and design; music composition. Yet in conducting the research, two identifiable and distinct groups emerged from the larger entity of ‘the creative industries’ as defined by the CINMP: these groups are shorthanded in this article as ‘commercial’ and ‘artisan’ creative workers. While it is clear that there are overlaps between the two groups, it is useful to differentiate between the two in order to account for the complex dynamics of the creative industries: as Drake notes of creative industries research, “it is important that empirical research focuses on specific sub-sectors ...[in order to] reflect the enormous diversity and eclectic character of the creative industries as a whole” (2003, p. 516). Some studies perform this



detailed accountancy by focusing solely on one sector--Pratt (2002), for example, focuses on the new media sector, and Kong (2007) and O'Regan and Ward (2008) attend to the film industry—while other studies attend to the entire 'creative industries' sector (for example Luckman 2009), accounting for its broader dynamics. Like Drake (2003), this article uses two groupings of creative industries workers in order to highlight differences and similarities between the two. 'Commercial creative workers', for the purposes of this article, are defined as multimedia designers, graphic designers, architects, advertising workers, entertainment software designers, and publishers. 'Artisans' here comprise the categories of writers, musicians, visual artists, illustrators and performing artists. While these are not standardised categories in the field of creative industries research, they are simply a refinement of the existing CINMP definition—a refinement driven by the empirical data itself—and they thus articulate to the wider scholarly field (see James 2006 for discussion of the importance of transferability and dependability in cultural economic geography).

Parallel to the business development model of networking is the relationship between networks and sociality. Kong's study of networks in the Hong Kong film industry identifies the ways in which networks impinge on the local communities in which they operate, emphasising the connection between sociality, culture and economics (2005, p. 73). Creative industries networks, in other words, both rely on and add to a community's social capital. The symbolic value of culture and creative industries more broadly, in contributing to the symbolic value of place identification, is widely acknowledged (Zukin, 1995; Harvey 1992). Redcliffe and Frankston are both bayside suburbs with a strongly-articulated sense of local identity, and both suburbs have well established arts-based communities. The creative workers in this study living and

working in these suburbs tended to be known throughout their local community, either through their businesses or as local artists. In tacit ways, their presence added to the local identity and to the symbolic capital of place (Brecknock 2009). The creative industries contribution to the symbolic value of their outer-suburban places parallels the similar role that creative industries play in adding to place identity in inner cities (see for example Adkins et al. 2007).

## **Locality and Networks**

This study's interview data indicates three principal concerns that delineate networking patterns and issues confronted by workers in the outer suburbs. One of the key findings, corroborated by other studies with creative industries participants trans-geographically (Wittel 2001; Kong 2005), is the value placed on face-to-face interaction, despite participants' wide use of technology (see also Gibson & Luckman, this issue). This had broader ramifications in several ways, but most importantly for the solvency and development of businesses for commercial creative workers. We have grouped the three concerns as: 1) distance from the inner city, 2) technology versus personal contact, 3) places for networking.

### **1. Distance from urban centre**

I used to belong to the Design Institute of Australia but then I just found I wasn't getting enough out of it... I think a lot of the events are very city-focused. I don't think it caters for businesses outside of that central city hub.

Tracy, graphic designer, Frankston

Distance from the inner city's CBD (central business district) was articulated most commonly by commercial creative participants as an obstacle to attending networking events organised by professional associations. Most participants also acknowledged that distance from the CBD limited the potential growth of their business, through lack of informal networking opportunities. The location of their businesses in outer-suburban localities entailed particular trade-offs which will be addressed in this section.

Redcliffe and Frankston are both situated approximately 40 kilometres from their capital city centres of Brisbane and Melbourne, linked by arterial roads which make accessibility by car to the city or regions beyond relatively easy. Public transport to Frankston is good, with train and rail connections. Redcliffe has greater limitations with only a bus and no train connection. Among the design-based industries of architecture and advertising, 37% of participants cited the relative ease of driving to the city via the highway and cheap airfares as a positive feature enabling them to meet with clients and to attend occasional city-based networking opportunities. The majority of design-based SMEs--75%--however, regarded distance as both a perceptual and geographical barrier for connecting with professional networking organisations; and for the artisan group, for showcasing their work at city venues which attract wider audiences. The barrier created a two-way negative relationship between the inner city and the outer suburb. For outer-suburban workers the distance made attending formal professional networking activities less likely and appealing; it also meant that clients and perhaps more importantly *potential* clients from the inner city were less likely to conduct business with one located in the outer suburb.

Furthermore, the perception of the outer-suburban locality as an obstacle in attracting

city-based clients by potential clients was articulated by several participants, as graphic designer Jacinta observes:

we have had calls up in the city region but then quite often I find because people discover we're in Frankston, because we don't advertise that on our website, when they discover we're down here sometimes they shy away.

Devoid of the symbolic cachet and amenity of inner cities, both Redcliffe and Frankston were seen to suffer from image problems, although both localities have established arts communities and are attractively situated on bays, they do not rate highly on the cultural radars of their respective cities. Both localities endure somewhat negative legacies informed by historical associations with the suburbs' traditionally low socio-economic profiles and with the historical Australian antipathy to suburban communities (Kinnane 1998).

Not surprisingly, SME participants recognised there were more significant business opportunities in the inner city, and that networking there would facilitate greater work opportunities. Yet the cost of locating a business in the inner city was far greater than costs of running a business in the outer suburb. This recognition was dealt with by a level of compromise which was informed by both *lifestyle* and *lifecycle* concerns. In relation to lifestyle, participants had weighed up the financial, physical and other costs of business location, and reached a compromise in which a trade-off between income and lifestyle was acknowledged. In their outer-suburban locations, participants felt they could enjoy a more relaxed and for some, a family-friendly lifestyle (see also Luckman 2009), while accepting the financial limitations for business development.

Participants who observed and commented on this trade-off tended to be middle-aged, and many of them prioritised family considerations. Indeed, as Mommas observes, “it is not the case that all members of Florida’s ominous ‘creative class’ prefer the conviviality of the inner city. Some groups...prefer to live and work in more homogenous suburbs” (2009, p. 53). The extent to which establishing a creative industry in an outer suburb is both a lifestyle and lifecycle motivation is illustrated by advertising director, John, now based in Redcliffe. In his early fifties, John ran a successful inner-city based agency for two decades, while living in and commuting from Redcliffe. Keen to purchase business premises rather than renting, his outer suburb offered more affordable property than the inner city. By purchasing his premises John was able to obtain greater financial security, and, increasingly important at this stage of his life, time for leisure and family:

...when you get to my age you think you may as well make the last five years comfortable years rather than the stress. Every time I go to meetings in the city, because we still go to our client meetings you know...you sit in traffic and you think yeah, I know why I moved.

The value of the bayside locations of Redcliffe and Frankston was frequently cited as enabling creativity, particularly among the artisan group, but with recognition of the financial trade-off, as Grant, a Frankston illustrator, notes:

I'm more creative here but I would get more work because of the contacts if I lived in the city or near the city... I miss a lot of networking... the distance impacts on your work... if I lived closer to the city, you might find people dropping in or they know you're close so you can pop around... and you talk about work and you may get a job.

Grant reiterates what is already widely known about the clustering effects of creative industries workers, that spatial proximity is critical for new knowledge creation and business growth. In many outer-suburban areas where creative industries are nascent, with a widely and thinly distributed population, coupled with business premises that tend to be scattered throughout commercial precincts and industrial estates, obstacles to networking are greater than for creative workers in the high-density inner city.

Several participants articulated the obstacles to attending professional networking events in terms of time and distance, as these are inevitably inner-city based.

Advertising manager John stated that when he moved his company out to Redcliffe, "it was difficult to go to monthly meetings and things like that. So I do most of my networking through client groups". Similarly, Gavin, a Frankston-based illustrator, identifies the potential job losses associated with not attending networking events:

I miss a lot of networking. I missed one last night and I missed one last Friday... Friday night traffic and I'd been working in a school all day, I was too tired to make the trip. But had I made the trip I'd have met the publisher of ABC books, the new publisher, and could have got a job out of it, but I couldn't make it. So the distance...impacts on your work.

The importance of face-to-face networking for the acquisition of potential clients is a recurrent theme among creative commercial participants. Without the critical mass of people with whom to network, new business opportunities are more limited than if their SMEs were inner-city based. Most participants maintained some networks in their outer-suburban locality, although these were seen to have limited value for creative workers. Although all participants had attended events organised either by local councils or business organisations, part of the perceived limitation was the lack of understanding or interest in the different ways that commercial creative people worked. Judy, a fashion designer in Redcliffe, articulates the difference between her approach to business and those of a local business networking group:

...they don't work the way I work basically...everybody had to stand up and say what their five year plan was and what they do...and how they got to this point. Very business focussed. I'm not in the slightest like that so when I stood up and said well actually it grows depending on my clientele and depending on where I want to take it. So when I stood up and said that's how I work, I was shot down.

The lack of focus on creative industries business styles and models made local business networking activities potentially dull for several participants, coupled with the fact that participants did not see the value in developing further networks within the localities because of their small scale. Simon, owner of a Redcliffe-based graphic design SME, said that while he enjoyed being connected to the local community

through informal networks, he'd been disappointed by his lack of success at obtaining local start-up business grants through his council.

The artisan group, by comparison, tended to be very well networked within its communities and surrounding regions, maintaining several types of networks. This group is connected through local galleries, markets and arts-based practice groups and is perceived to add symbolic and cultural value to its communities (Brecknock 2009).

## **2. Personal contact versus technological communication**

Technology's capacity to bridge spatial boundaries is frequently at the forefront in discussions of contemporary business development and creative industry networking activity. Questions are raised about the relevance of place in a borderless, global network of technological relations which enables communication and the conduct of business online (Castells 1989). Creative industries such as multi-media, graphic design and advertising are heavily reliant on technology for production, distribution and communication. Despite an increasingly globalised knowledge economy in which technology plays a central role, claims that technology has foreshadowed the death of geography have been laid to rest. Research in the fields of new suburbanism, creative industries and networking activities have reasserted the power of place (Gertler 1995; Kong 2005; Scott 2001; Thrift 1995). One of the points here is that the spatial clustering of producers is seen to facilitate "unstable, finely grained, frequent and mediated face-to-face contact" (Scott 2001) in which self presentation, face-to-face negotiating and interpersonal skills are crucial (Thrift in James et al. 2006, p. 10). Moreover, the importance of socio-cultural determinants of economic success and the



specific epistemological communities in which each has its own vocabularies, knowledges and practices are factors most effectively transmitted through personal encounter (ibid).

Research with new media workers and filmmakers in Britain and Hong Kong (Pratt 2002; Pratt 2007; Wittel 2001; Kong 2005) indicates that face- to-face contact provides tacit forms of knowledge irreplaceable by technology, and the sociality of encounter is highly valued by creative workers. Thus for creative workers beyond the urban core where spatial clustering occurs less and businesses are more thinly scattered across geographical areas, face-to-face interpersonal networking presents specific challenges. Our research asked participants to what extent technology bridges a spatial divide for creative workers who are located beyond the inner city? To a large extent, findings corroborate other research on the role of technology and networking (Wittel 2001; Kong 2005), that is that while technology facilitates communication and business practices in many productive ways, it does not enable the same opportunities that face-to-face interaction provides (compare with Warren & Evitt, this issue). For people living and working beyond the inner city, this has specific implications. All participants used technology for communicating with colleagues and doing business with clients, yet the value placed on interpersonal networks was repeatedly articulated. The following comments from Peter, a theatre manager in Frankston, are representative of the views and ways in which participants used technology, with the exception of one group of creatives that is musicians, many of whom found technology valuable for networking<sup>v</sup>. Peter emphasises that technology does not replace the value of face- to-face interaction saying, “you need to get out there and see what they’re doing and know what they’re about...I mean it’s more an informal

talking”. The type of tacit knowledge referred to here is dependent on the spatialised proximity of firms, in which “sticky non-articulated, tacit forms of knowledge between firms” is enabled by their close proximity (Bathelt et al. 2004, p. 32). Peter uses the example of sharing knowledge by talking with other directors about the details of production design such as “how did you make the witch melt when you did the Wizard of Oz?”, the type of knowledge gained through informal conversations between people with whom there is regular interpersonal contact. Similarly, Greg, an illustrator from Frankston, stated that “the most information I get on what I’m doing and who to talk to is other illustrators.”

Amongst the participants with design-based SMEs, technology is used to maintain contact with clients and to conduct some aspects of business online. The typical pattern among participants in advertising and graphic design is that initial business is conducted with face-to-face meetings where ideas and concepts are pitched, and once a relationship is established, a significant component of work is then conducted online. The significance of personal contact is evident in the ways in which clients are found. Participants across both commercial and artisan groups consistently asserted that they gained their work through personal contact and word of mouth. Tim, an architect in Frankston, echoes what other Frankston and Redcliffe based architects say: "it’s all word of mouth. We’ve always worked on that sort of a basis.” Similarly, Justin, an architect in Redcliffe states that “I don’t actively go out and seek work. Basically it comes to me through informal networking and word of mouth.” The extent to which participants networked within their local communities was reflected in the types of clients and in the way business is developed. Redcliffe graphic design SME owner Joshua, who is an active networker, saw an advantage in being situated in a small

community with a strong sense of local identity. He observed that the value people placed on their community worked well for his business because he gained a lot of local support, commenting that Redcliffe was an asset for his type of business. However, views on local business support were not uniformly seen this way across all industries. Redcliffe architect Joanna thought that when coveted large-scale design jobs came up along prime real estate waterfront precincts, developers invariably looked for architects from beyond the outer suburbs. The implication here is that developers have a perception that outer-suburban architects are perceived by developers as unable to deliver the quality design of architects located in inner-city practices.

The development of networking activities through personal interaction is more pronounced among artisan groups at both study localities, with evidence of networking activity impacting on the communities in which creative workers live. Most artisan participants were well networked through formal and informal networks, with high levels of personal interaction through their participation in place-based practice and professional support groups - teaching and community activities such as holding positions on local committees and running skills development workshops. Among the artisan participants in Redcliffe is a group of very active networkers who are attempting to positively reshape the identity of the suburb through their creative practices. Predominantly in the 21-35 year group they have staged several local festivals and one participant, Samantha, has developed a locally-based creative social enterprise which connects older women in the community with younger women to make design-based craft products.<sup>vi</sup> Their networking activities have resulted in a type

of creative collective, one member Katrina describes the motivation and activities of the group:

My friends and I have an organization called the Red Revolution...we're trying to cause a cultural revolution in Redcliffe... to try and get the culture to fester a bit more...we organise festivals in Redcliffe and we're organising one fairly soon, all locally produced music and product...

Tangible outcomes of artisans' networks are evident in place-based activities and events such as those described by Katrina, contributing to the symbolic and cultural significance of their locales. In Redcliffe and Frankston, regular cultural events such as exhibitions at local galleries, markets and festivals are held and products and performances are displayed and distributed. Scholars have offered many accounts of the ways in which economic cultural markets are connected to place, symbolically and materially, through the production, distribution and consumption of place based products (Zukin 1995).

### **3) Places for Networking**

Venues or 'hubs', places where interpersonal networking can occur, are paramount for the social dimension of networking in which information, tacit knowledge and relationship building are developed through personal encounters (Gertler 1995).

Formal networking events such those organised by professional associations, are largely city-based because this is where many of their members are located. Local business networking groups in Redcliffe and Frankston were regarded as having mixed value for participants, but generally their use was limited. In inner-city regions

such exchanges often occur in local service-oriented amenities such as cafes, restaurants, galleries and at professional networking events.

In their study of social capital in Adelaide's suburbs, Baum and Palmer (2002) identify a lack of amenities and facilities where people could meet and a concomitant dissatisfaction amongst residents. Arguably, the limited availability of public and quasi-public amenities such as cafes is a feature of many Australian outer suburbs, unless a large shopping centre exists. This is borne out in Redcliffe, while Frankston has slightly more public facilities such as a TAFE college, which function as creative industries hubs. The quasi-public hubs such as cafes along the waterfront at Redcliffe are not well patronised for networking, perhaps because they are seen as places for tourists or visitors from out of the suburb. Rather, across both research locations, participants used public facilities and commercial premises for informal networking, such as libraries, art galleries, the local TAFE College, community arts hall, and commercial premises such as bookshops, music stores, pubs and sound and dance studios. During fieldwork in Redcliffe and Frankston, we observed many casual networking encounters that occurred in commercial places. Fashion designer Lydia who has a shop in Redcliffe notes how her shop functions as a hub for many locals, wondering whether this would happen to the same extent if her shop was located in the inner city:

people use this very much as a drop in centre. They always know when I'm getting new things or I'm getting something new. They always know when they come in that it's going to be different. If I was in New Farm (inner city), would that happen? You know, people have probably got a little bit more time on their hands here...

A lack of diversity, as well as the scale of hubs in comparison with the inner city, means that for some people, outer-suburban meeting places do not cater for their needs. This may be related to Bourdieu's idea of "habitus" (1984) in which a set of socialised dispositions predispose people to feel more comfortable in certain environments and not others. Factors such as ambience, décor and style of venue convey symbolic meaning and may function as barriers or enablers to participation. For members of the networking group Red Revolution, the lack of appropriate places to meet means they meet regularly at each other's homes. Samantha, the founding networker, describes how their meetings began:

And we just met them at the local...hey, come along on Sunday night (to Sam's house). ... so slowly ...we've just been gathering people....we had these little signup sheets to join our revolution...and I sent the email out to people so it's just been this slow kind of gathering of people. Yeah, more and more I'm amazed at who does live in suburbia.

The group's weekly networking meetings have produced larger community based networking events such as markets and festivals, bringing together people from across the Redcliffe peninsula and beyond.

Overall, despite the reduced availability of facilities for networking in the outer suburbs, participants were nonetheless active and resourceful about how and where they networked. The extent to which some groups and individuals pursued networking activities such as the artisan group above, points to importance of sociality (Banks et al. 2000; Kong 2005) and of social trust for creative entrepreneurs.

## Conclusion

Networking is a complex activity using multimodalities in which both tacit and codified knowledge is shared and relationships built. While geographers and other scholars have articulated the importance of networking and spatial proximity for business development, little attention has been paid to networking activities among creative workers beyond inner-city areas. This article lays the foundations for understanding how creative industries networks function at a local level in outer suburbs, demonstrating that the dense proximity cluster networks of the inner city are not the only environment in which creative industries operate. In the outer suburbs studied in this research, artisan local networks were found to be strong and horizontal (comprised of close relationships between individuals), while local networks at the more commercial end of the creative industries spectrum tended to be weaker, and more vertical (with firms contracting other local firms and drawing on the local labour pool to assist in business processes). While some networks connected the outer suburbs to the nearby inner city, network relationships were not purely the 'hub-and-spoke' configuration assumed in thinking which privileges the inner-city as *the* locus of creative industries activity. As this study of the local networks of outer-suburban creative industries demonstrates, the geography of creative industries is more complex than simple concentric circle models—in which inner cities are the hub of creative industries activity, and in which that activity diminishes with distance from the inner core—supposes. The cultural economic geography of creative industries—and of cities—is more complex, and less spatially-concentrated, than much creative industries thinking assumes.

For ethical reasons, names of participants have been changed.

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<sup>i</sup> See Coe 2000 on the difference between social, cultural, professional, familial, networks.

<sup>ii</sup> The data is combined with the CINMP categories of creative industries, see p.5 for categories.

<sup>iii</sup> Higgs, P., Cunningham, S., & Pagan, J. (2007) *Australia's Creative Economy: Basic Evidence on Size, Growth, Income and Employment*, ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries & Innovation, Brisbane, available from <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/archive/0008241/> (accessed 20 March, 2009).

<sup>iv</sup> [http://www.culture.gov.uk/what\\_we\\_do/creative\\_industries/default.aspx](http://www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/creative_industries/default.aspx)

<sup>v</sup> Most musicians made use of the internet networking site MySpace, for collaboration, networking and marketing.

<sup>vi</sup> The enterprise Bidybags, employs young female designers who create designs for retro style bags, dresses and tea cosies and elderly women in the community with craft-based skills such as knitting and crocheting, make the products. The profits are split between the two groups of women.