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## **Changing employment dynamics within the creative city: exploring the role of 'ordinary people' within the changing city landscape**

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### **Abstract**

This paper is about creative cities and their largely invisible and largely neglected workforce, the 'ordinary people' who provide the work- and life-place services upon which creative workers depend. The paper considers the nature of creative cities, their labour markets and the precarious nature of much employment within them. The ambiguous relationship between different employment groups within the creative city is illustrated. The analysis forms the basis for reaching conclusions and helping to formulate advice for policy makers in developing approaches that are inclusive and accessible. The paper is set against and acknowledges the importance of the rising tide of populism as a real challenge to an elitist mainstream creative city discourse.

**Key words:** Employment, gentrification, low skills work, precarious work, creative cities

## 1. Introduction

We live in an era where ‘populism’ has confounded conventional expectations at the ballot box in Europe and the United States, challenging received wisdom across a range of political, economic and socio-cultural dimensions, particularly traditional left-right dichotomies (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2012), government by narrow elites (Gifford, 2014) and in reaction to extended austerity regimes in many countries (Thomas and Tufts, 2016). The impact of populist change will, undoubtedly, be evaluated against a wide spectrum of themes and issues over the next few years. In this paper, we will assess the position of low skills work and workers within the creative city narrative, recognising that such notions of cities (which some might see as elitist and excluding – see for example, Peck, 2005; Oakley, 2006) and how they aspire to develop, may well be challenged by this populist narrative. Inglehart and Norris (2016, p.2) talk about populism from the perspective of both economic inequality and cultural backlash, highlighting, in terms of the former, “the rise of the knowledge economy, technological automation, and the collapse of manufacturing industry, global flows of labor, goods, peoples, and capital (especially the inflow of migrants and refugees), the erosion of organized labor, shrinking welfare safety-nets, and neo-liberal austerity policies.” The cultural dimension goes somewhat further, focusing on the notion that populism is born “in large part as a reaction against cultural change”, representing “a new cultural cleavage dividing populists from cosmopolitan liberalism” (Inglehart and Norris, 2016, p.3). In employment terms, both the economic and cultural backlashes of populism are represented in an increasingly xenophobic and anti-immigration narrative, designed to protect ‘traditional values’ (Hogan and Haltinner, 2015) and retain job opportunities for ‘local’ workers (Ince et al, 2015). We shall retain sight of this twin-pronged proposition relating to populism throughout the narrative that underpins this paper, highlighting the

anonymity of “ordinary people” (Hollands, 2015) and the widespread neglect of their needs and, perhaps, thwarted aspirations by political, economic, social, cultural and technological visionaries and planners in the creative city.

This paper is intended as a critique of the creative city narrative from an employment perspective, questioning the widely articulated vision, attributed to Florida (2002; 2005; 2014) and others, of city workforce futures that are dominated by a class strata of a super-creative core and a larger group of creative professionals, working in media, the arts, finance, science, technology, medicine and education. This combined group, according to Florida (2002), already comprises close to 40 million people in the US, or over 30% of the work force and is at the heart of both the economy and the culture of the creative city. Using Florida, this paper extends the stratified employment environment that surrounds Florida’s super-creative core, with two outer cohorts that are ignored in his creative city narrative (see Figure 1).

[Figure 1 here]

Furthermore, we recognise the precariousness of much creative work (Ross, 2009a) and a reality which sees many ‘creatives’ competing with ‘ordinary people’ for economic opportunity in both traditional personal service work (McDowell et al, 2009; Rozen, 2016) and in emergent shared economy work (Jarvey, 2014) when employment opportunities in the arts, media and technology are not available. The conditions within which this employment cross-over occurs and its consequences for those involved are explored in this paper, perhaps challenging the simplicity of the Florida model. Figure 2 depicts the incursive relationship between precarious creative employment and routine, front-line work in the

service sector. 'Precarious' creatives move between their core and peripheral economic activities in an opportunistic but necessary way, abandoning work in cafes, retail and the like at the first hint of creative opportunity. This precarious relationship, exacerbated by the growing use of unpaid internships and very low starting salaries for many seeking opportunities in the creative sectors, will be further elaborated later in this paper.

[Figure 2 here]

Florida's creative class theory has been influential in presenting the seductive argument that "diverse, tolerant, 'cool' cities do better" (Nathan, 2007, p.433). Nathan (2007), however, challenges Florida, using empirical evidence from the UK, and concludes that this data are strongly counter to Florida's panaceaic assumptions about the impact of a creative class on the wider economy of a city. This analysis is supported by Van Holm (2015, p.204) in arguing that "the creative class is simply not a unique subset of the population, with different desires than working and service class workers", although this view may require revisiting in light of the rise of the populist agenda.

This paper focuses on a neglected dimension of work and a workforce that is not readily identifiable with the conventional employment narrative relating to the creative city. It echoes DePillis (2016) in relation to Silicon Valley in California when she raises questions as to "what we know about the people who clean the floors in Silicon Valley. And serve the food, mow the lawns, drive the buses, guard the grounds, do the laundry etc. etc....." These workers are Hollands' (2015) 'ordinary people' undertaking jobs that may be low skills, often 'invisible' (Working Partnerships USA, 2016) or 'anonymous' (Thurlow and Jaworski, 2014)

and located predominantly in personal services. Academically they are largely ignored within the creative city narrative but they play an important if changing role as providing crucial services to contemporary 'creative workers' without which they could not function at work or during their down time – today's urban 'hewers of wood' and 'drawers of water'. They may be local to the city communities in which they work, facing the increasing cost and cultural pressures of gentrification around them or they may be incomers or migrants. In both cases, the work they undertake exists with various degrees of precariousness in terms of job security and is largely unrecognised and unheralded by advocates for the new city forms that are emerging. Of course, at the same time as raising this as an emergent and problematic issue of the creative city age, we are also mindful that cooks, cleaners, carers and servers have always been the underclass or invisible in society, whether in the metropolis or beyond. Likewise the incomer and other marginalised groups are not new in themselves within urban communities. What we hope to demonstrate in this paper is that the context of the 'ordinary' or invisible adopts a new and challenging focus within a creative narrative that positions itself both conceptually and strategically as about its elites. This translates, by design or serendipity, into the adoption of social and economic policies that exclude rather than incorporate a vital cog in the economy and culture of creative cities.

The paper is organised along the following lines. We start with a brief discussion of definitional issues when considering today's cities – are they creative cities, Knowledge Cities, SMART Cities, Global Cities or Future Cities? What do such distinctions mean, if anything? The changing nature of cities, creative and otherwise, is then considered. Discussion subsequently moves to a consideration of employment in such cities and how

this is affected by the changing physical, technological, political, economic and cultural face of modern urban living. A three-fold and overlapping contrast is highlighted between high profile core 'creative' jobs, creative work at the edge of precariousness and, finally, the work of 'ordinary people' who work to support working and life styles of the creative community. Conclusions are drawn which highlight the challenges that cities face in accommodating and meeting the needs of such divergent constituencies and consideration is given to the future of low skills work in the creative city. Finally, we consider the policy implications that this may raise as a consequence of this analysis.

## **2. Creative cities, Knowledge Cities, SMART Cities, Global Cities**

In embarking on this discussion, we are, of course, confronted by definitional challenges with respect to widely but loosely used terms that have a common urban context and overlap to varying degrees. In this space, we can include creative cities, knowledge cities (based on the knowledge economy), SMART cities and global cities and combinations of them all. Let us start by addressing definitions of each.

The politicised and economic notion of the creative city is widely depicted as a child of Tony Blair's New Labour in 1990s/ 2000s UK (Pratt, 2010) as a vehicle for urban regeneration and the social re-engineering of the city. Creative cities draw on the wider notion of a creative economy which "represents a distinctive regional economic imaginary with a complex assemblage of spatial, economic, social and political characteristics." (Taylor, 2015, p.363). In sectoral terms, the UK Government's definition is inclusive and encompasses advertising, architecture, the art and antiques market, crafts, design, designer fashion, film and video, interactive leisure software, music, the performing arts, publishing, software and computer

services, and television and radio (Department for Culture, Media and Sport 2008).

Elaborating on this, Costa (2008) identifies three core components to the creative city.

These are creativity at the forefront of both urban development and regeneration, building on this wide array of creative activities and, finally, acting as a magnet by which to draw creatives into the city. At a policy level, Edensor et al (2009) note that creative has become central to the language of regeneration experts, urban planners and urban policy makers, reflected in the planned emergence of the creative city as a complex and linked amalgam of the private, non-profit and public sectors (Pratt 2009). Related to this, Hollands (2015, p.61) argues that “the creative city is currently being constructed as the solution to many urban problems, including crime, traffic congestion, inefficient services and economic stagnation, promising prosperity and healthy lifestyles for all. In short, the creative city symbolises a new kind of technology-led urban utopia.”

Related concepts all closely align with the notion of creative but in differing ways. In many ways pre-dating this idea of creative but closely allied to it, the knowledge economy (and from this the knowledge city) is one “where economic value is found more in the intangibles, such as new ideas, software, services and relationships, and less in the tangibles like physical products, tonnes of steel or acres of land” (Scottish Enterprise, 1998, p.3). From this, work in the knowledge economy or city is about more than the types of jobs offered by knowledge-based industries. Edvinsson (2006, p.7) focuses on the intentionality that underpins the knowledge city, it is not something that just emerges but “is purposely designed for encouraging and nourishing the collective knowledge, i.e. intellectual capital, as capabilities to shape efficient and sustainable actions of welfare over time.” The significance of this intentionality cannot be overstated as city policies appear to focus



deliberately on the elite who thrive in this environment to the potential neglect of others. Thus, according to Thompson et al (2001, p.926), knowledge work “requires employment relationships and task structures that allow for creative application, manipulation or extension of that knowledge. However, the ‘knowledge’ here is not a collection of abstract theories and facts but resides in part in the person (it is ‘embrained’ to use Blackler’s (1995) term), and partly in a profession or occupational community that polices its content and boundaries.”

Batty et al’s (2012, p.483) starting point is useful in helping to understand the SMART city. They note that “the concept of the SMART city emerged during the last decade as a fusion of ideas about how information and communications technologies might improve the functioning of cities, enhancing their efficiency, improving their competitiveness, and providing new ways in which problems of poverty, social deprivation, and poor environment might be addressed.” Kourtit et al (2012) take this conception further in seeing the SMART city as one whose economy is driven by technically inspired innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship, enacted by people described as creative, thus linking SMART to creative in a city context. Hollands (2008) highlights five elements of a SMART city: widespread embedding of ICT into the urban infrastructure; business-led urban development and a neoliberal approach to governance; a focus on social and human dimensions of the city from a creative city perspective; the adoption of a creative communities agenda with programmes aimed at social learning, education and social capital; and a focus on social and environmental sustainability.

Finally, global cities are, largely, portrayed in terms of their economic and geographical characteristics (Abu-Lughod, 1999; Curtis, 2016; Toly, 2017). These focus on their trading patterns and their 'openness' to the movement of capital and labour between such cities, other comparator locations and the wider global economy. However, global cities also have a cultural dimension in terms of their multiculturalism and capacity to attract diverse visitors on a global scale and signature events that have international recognition. Little is elaborated in the literature in terms of the labour market that separates global cities from their creative city cousins, indeed use of global city is frequently interchangeable with these terms.

In a sense, debating definitions here does not contribute much – suffice to say that the discussion in this paper encompasses ground attributed to all five concepts, drawing on catholic definitions that include clear cultural, technological and knowledge dimensions which certainly speak to both current reality and possible future vision. In the interests of utility, therefore, we use the term 'creative city' in this paper in an inclusive sense. This interpretation links well with the views of both Carlvaho (2015) and Kitchen (2014) and the latter's argument (p 1) that creative cities, "on the one hand, are increasingly composed of and monitored by pervasive and ubiquitous computing and, on the other, whose economy and governance is being driven by innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship, enacted by creative people." Kitchen (p 2) goes on to argue that "what unites these two visions of a creative city is an underlying neoliberal ethos that prioritises market-led and technological solutions to city governance and development". It is this neoliberal underpinning, "market triumphalism", as Gibbs et al (2013) call it or the "corporate creative city" (Hollands, 2015,

see also Söderström et al, 2014), which, arguably, lies at the heart of any populist backlash against aspirations for an elitist understanding of the creative city.

We cannot look at any of the above city concepts without a level of criticality, particularly relating to any perceived elitism which may underpin their use. There is a danger of being seduced by these labels and looking to apply their consequences without due consideration of a city's actual starting point. Very pertinent to this paper, Hollands (2015:63) cautions that "really creative urbanism needs to start with the city itself and its attendant social problems, rather than looking immediately to creative technology for answers." This includes the existing workforce and its skills profile. Linked to this, Sennett (2012) suggests that the "danger now is that this information rich city may do nothing to help people think for themselves or communicate well with one another" while Anttiroiko (2013:13) questions aspects of the creative city which, "... is in its fragmented mode a new way of building functionally sophisticated enclaves into society, which tends to serve mainly high value adding activities and high income people?" In topical UK terms, Toly (2017:145) locates the 2016 referendum vote to leave the European Union in city terms when he argues that "Brexit is a vote of no-confidence in the very technological and political economic shifts that have propelled global cities from bit parts to leading roles in the drama of global politics." Likewise, the 'drain the swamp' narrative that featured strongly in the election campaign of President Trump in the United States (Sheehan et al, 2017) offers a challenge to the perceived remoteness of Washington DC society from that of the lives of 'ordinary Americans'.

### **Becoming creative – the changing face of cities**

It is self-evident that the face of major cities worldwide is unrecognisable from that of a few decades ago and these changes represent the consequences of a wide range of drivers, from the local to the global and encompassing economic, political, social, cultural and, increasingly, technological considerations. Mega cities of a size unimaginable just a few years ago are commonplace in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Global cities operate with high levels of real and virtual connectivity and are far less dependent on their traditional hinterlands, except for labour. The growth of the service sector to replace primary and secondary production has had a highly potent impact on the modern cityscape. This is the context within which we can locate the planned emergence of the creative city or creative/cultural quarter within major cities, as a response to the challenges faced by cities through economic transition. It is beyond the scope of this paper to explore these and a myriad of other changes from the wide range of disciplinary and applied policy perspectives that engage with them (including, *inter alia*, the contexts of local government, urban planning, social policy, housing, economic development, transport and education). Here, we are searching for a proxy by which to engage with this change and the contested notion of gentrification (Glass, 1964) appears to fit this bill. While recognising its limitations in that, according to Marcuse (2015, p.1264), “‘Gentrification’ as it is often used confuses four distinct processes: demographic displacement, physical upgrading, economic upgrading and social upgrading”, we also note that these are the very processes that commonly occur as a consequence of the planning and evolution of creative cities.

There is increasing recognition that gentrification reflects a more complex and inter-dependent amalgam of phenomena and processes that impact significantly beyond the residential focus that spawned Glass’ original concept. For Marcuse (2015) gentrification is a

matter of direct public policy concern and requires active engagement from government at a local if not a national level. While housing may be at the heart of this, in reality gentrification extends to a range of adjacent policy areas, notably social engineering and social mobility, population diversity, economic opportunity and development, urban space and the environment, transport, education, culture, leisure and, of course, employment opportunities which are at the heart of this paper's narrative.

Turning to the specific attributes of creative cities, gentrification may foster artistic endeavour which further contributes to the reframing of neighbourhoods in cultural but also economic terms. Grodach (2016, p.23) highlights "the power of an arts presence to attract new development, generate consumption (and sales tax), and boost real estate values." Likewise he notes that organisations in the arts field shy away from areas of deprivation (Grodach, 2013; Foster et al, 2016; Grodach, 2016:22) but also highlights a policy shift which specifically sees the arts "as drivers of economic development or place-based revitalization." Ross (2009a:17) proffers a note of caution in arguing that one of the main consequences of creative city policies has been the impact on rising land values and rent accumulations, describing this as a "parasitic side effect". Gentrification, thus, can be seen as inimical to a move to the creative city, expressed by Bounds and Morris (2006, p.100) in recognising that "it is the social and cultural phenomenon of gentrification that underpins the attraction, social composition and success of the redevelopment of the area by private capital and the state."

### **3. The changing nature of work**

The changing nature of work itself is a key consideration in any discussion about creative cities and employment. Work has always been in a state of flux, it is just that the pace of evolution, languid and meandering in past generations, has accelerated as never before in recent years and will continue to do so at increased velocity into the future. Technology was and remains at the heart of so many changes to work (Cascio and Montecallegre, 2016) although other factors also contribute - for example, demographic drivers in terms of fewer young people entering the workforce, new expectations of work among those young people who are seeking employment and the anticipation of elongated working lives for older employees in their 70s, even 80s may create markedly different conceptions of work. Globalisation and the increasing mobility of the workforce at all skills levels, creating greater multiculturalism in the workplace, is also a factor in this narrative, impacting on who does what work, at what cost and where and, in some situations, acting as an inhibitor to change as cheap, often migrant, labour justifies the retention of old skills and technologies. The growing presence of robotisation as a form of technology substitution across all forms of work is also pertinent here (Kaivo-oja and Roth, 2015). Codagnone et al (2016) explore the future of work within the 'sharing economy' which they describe as digital labour markets where labour-intensive services are traded by matching requesters (employers and/or consumers) and providers (workers). They focus on the demographics of 'sharing economy' workers, primarily young. In a similar vein, the blurring of boundaries between employment and notional self-employment models in the gig or platform economy (Katz and Krueger, 2016; Horney, 2016), operating in disruptive industries, for example Uber (Hall and Krueger, 2015), are creating new forms of employment relations that provide both flexibilities and vulnerabilities or precariousness within work (Maes and Vanellander, 2012; Haidinger, 2015; Eisenbrey and Mishel, 2016; Eichhorst et al, 2016). In a more general

sense, Gershon's (2017) analysis of the expectations of work among young graduates positions each as an individual, seeking to build a relationship with other businesses (employers).

In a contemporary context, however, technology remains the 'big money' driver of change in work. As Covert and Thompson (2014) rightly note, technology can both enable and suppress employees in the workplace. Levy and Murnane (2013) argue that the computerisation of tasks has been a direct contributor to the hollowing out of middle class jobs. Indeed, technology is arguably a key progenitor in the conceptualisation of CREATIVE cities as reflecting new technologies, new industries, new jobs and, perhaps, new people, one component of which are, arguably, Richard Florida's (2002) creative classes. At the same time, Freeman's (2015) warning that control of the robots is the key to dominance of the political economy is salutary and recognition that technology does not provide a panacea for the reduction or elimination of inequalities with respect to life opportunity and life quality.

#### **4. Employment in creative cities**

What, then, about the workplace and the workforce in creative cities? Who are the people required to make up the workforce of the future in creative cities? McAdams (2013 online) provides a partial answer in that "... It would seem obvious, but a "creative city" must be inhabited by 'creative people'" and this is at the heart of the Florida thesis. By adding an additional outer rim to Florida, Figure 1 responds to his failure to recognise those who work in creative cities or districts, fulfilling roles that are not directly creative or supportive of creative roles. Figure 2 further illustrates the fractured relationship between many creative

workers, whom we call 'precarious creatives' and the wider personal service-sector labour market that exists in creative cities, whereby many workers move regularly between two working environments, one creative and the other outside of the creative orbit and in direct competition with 'ordinary people'. Discussion here now moves on to explore who these 'creative people' are, the nature of their employment relationship and whether conceptualisations of 'creative people' can deliver the full range of skills required to meet the needs of the creative city.

Labour market and wider employment research that highlights workforce themes (talent identification, development, rewards) relating to the specific context of creative cities or within knowledge or creative economies is emergent (see, for example, Thite, 2011; Vivant, 2013; Vanolo, 2014) and can be classified as that which addresses the nature of creative work itself, the working conditions of creative workers in terms of the precariousness of their employment relationships and the impact this has on ordinary people within the community.

A key body of the extant narrative appears to build on Florida's (2002) conceptualisation of the creative class as the driver of future economic prosperity. For example, Bakhshi et al's (2013:33) focus is primarily on the need to foster creative talents when they note that "our analysis of creative employment in different sectors of the economy, and the argument that the creative industries are highly specialised users of creative workers, points to a renewed focus on creative talent in the creative industry definitions." Thorsby (2001) recognises this spread in classifying the cultural sector from an employment perspective into 'core', 'other' and 'related' industries. 'Core' sectors include traditional conceptualisations of the creative



arts, including visual and literary arts, live theatre, music, etc. 'Other' cultural industries involve areas where there is overlap between creative and non-creative activities - printing and publishing, in production and distribution and photography, to which we might add aspects of the technology sector (computer games, for example). Finally, 'related' sectors include more peripheral areas such as advertising, architectural services and tourism. Thorsby (2001, p.257) thus acknowledges the wide skills spectrum that goes to make up creative economies when referring to the 'non-creative' occupations in the artistic workforce which "comprise those other types of workers whose input is necessary to production processes in the arts, including technical personnel working with opera and theatre companies, *front-of-house staff, cleaners, accountants, gallery guides, literary agents, and so on*" (our italics).

One of the challenges to Florida's optimistic articulation of his creative city thesis is the inherently precarious nature of much creative work, particularly in relation to those beyond the creative core and seeking access to it. Banks and Hesmondhalgh (2009:416) recognise the complexity of the creative economy when they argue that "many organizations also contain other low-paid, low-status and menial jobs that are closely linked to (or seen in the service of) the artistically directed labour identified at the hub of cultural and/or creative industry production" These job holders frequently include 'precarious creatives' (Fig 2) who are not new to the arts and related sectors (see, for example, Hanners, 1993) but the contemporary extent of insecure, impermanent employment within the creative sector is illustrative of the wider rise in precarious work (Ross, 2009a), a phenomenon that Florida largely ignores. Morgan et al (2013:410), however, see that young people "far from seeing insecure creative employment as perverse, accepted it as endemic to the creative

industries, tacitly acknowledging insecurity as a condition of youthful working life". Indeed, Gill and Pratt (2008:3) describe creative workers as "the poster boys and girls of the new 'precariat'. This is manifest in a number of ways, including insecurity of contract (Bridgstock and Cunningham, 2016:11) in creative careers which "involve chronic unemployment and underemployment". Ross (2009a:46) notes the lack of opportunity for many in the creative economy with "little chance of upward advancement". Gill (2002) extends concern for pervasive insecurity in referring to low pay, and long hours as well as the widespread gender inequality, a theme echoes by Allen et al (2013). Pratt (2011) and others focus on issues in creative work that include the preponderance of social class divisive internships, both paid but frequently unpaid (Siebert and Wilson, 2013; Allen et al, 2013); a lack of trade union organisation (McRobbie, 2011); short term contracts; as well as age and ethnic discrimination (Allen et al, 2013). This is well summed up by Banks and Hesmondhalgh (2009:415) who describe creative work as marked by "insecurity, inequality and exploitation (including self-exploitation)" as well as O'Connor and Shaw's (2014:169) reference to creatives who face "persistent low-pay, long-hours, insecurity, un- and underemployment and self-exploitation are key characteristics of the creative sector labour". As a consequence, 'precarious creatives' are forced into alternative employment, frequently in the personal services sector (restaurants, bars, cleaning services etc.) which may remunerate at rates significantly below their expectations of creative sector work (Gill and Pratt, 2008) ", living the life of what Pratt (2000) depicts as the bulimic creative career, characterised by a sequence of gorge – fast, gorge-fast. As McRobbie (2011:32) notes, "the creatives themselves come to rely on a second job which is in effect a real job, even though it may be on a project or on a casual contract".

There is a clear irony then that, notwithstanding these issues, “jobs in the UK’s creative industries sector are popular, high value and appear glamorous” (Siebert and Wilson, 2013:712). As a consequence of high demand for opportunity, the creative economy has seen a significant growth in unpaid internships, volunteer work, underemployment and low pay for graduate entrants in some sectors (Feldman, 1996; Comunian et al, 2010; Frenette, 2013), effectively illustrated by Miège’s (1989:72) reference to ‘vast reservoirs of under-employed artists’ that are central to the functioning to the creative economy with further reference to artistic labour markets that are characterised by “workers ready to work without the need to pay them wages” (p. 30). Ross (2009b) also notes the growing tendency for creative workers to be de facto amateurs (for example, reality TV actors), arguably taking time and opportunity away from professionals. Volunteers working in cultural heritage locations may be seen to pose a similar challenge to creative sector employment opportunities (Holmes, 2003).

Alternative narratives that give greater recognition to the role of what Hollands (2014) describes as "ordinary people" or the ‘anonymous’ (Thurlow and Jaworski, 2014) or ‘invisible’ workforce (Working Partnerships USA, 2016) in the creative city are scarce, particularly from an employment perspective (Barresi and Pultrone, 2013). Mazzolari and Ragusa (2013, p.74) do note that “more-skilled workers, with their high opportunity cost of time, should be net buyers of home production substitutes, while less-skilled workers should be net sellers”. Manning (2004, p.603) links this directly to the cost of labour in arguing that “if wage inequality is large enough the rich will always want the poor to do mundane tasks for them thus providing a natural demand for their labour”, and applies this

specifically to areas of work that are non-substitutable by machines while also acknowledging that such work “may also be vulnerable in the long-run to further technological developments” (Manning, 2004, p.581). Manning (2004) highlights the dependence of unskilled employment opportunities on the physical proximity of skilled workers, because the latter are more likely to buy such low-skills time-intensive personal services. However, both Williams and Smith (1986) and Rose (1989) address a Marxist interpretation of the ‘spatial division of labour’ in cities and the rise of a new middle class that stimulates gentrification, thus challenging employment opportunity in existing low-income communities faced with the combined challenges of gentrified work, technology substitution (Autor and Dorn. 2013) and the increasing aestheticisation of even low skills personal service work (Nickson et al, 2003). This gentrification of work and skills creates a “middle-classness” (Nickson et al, 2012:79) that is inherent in interpretations of soft skills (MacDonald and Merrill, 2009), potentially further excluding segments of the population from the labour market.

Zheng and Kahn (2013:, p.26) suggest that low skills work does not disappear with processes of urban change such as gentrification but that residential displacement is a consequence - “poor people do not leave Beijing because they can find jobs here, but they have to commute longer distances from the city fringe to work places” – while both Amster (2004) and Choi (2016) highlight the challenges of street dwellers within modern urban spaces and the predominance of the informal, insecure employment of the displaced. This affirms Taylor (2105, p.363) when he notes that, despite the emergence of models of post-neoliberalism, it is also important to recognise “the persistence of the informal economy and

historic forms of spatially grounded cooperation”, both within and beyond the gentrified economy.

The notion of “ordinary people” may not sit in comfort with McAdams’ depiction of ‘creative people’ as they are currently over-represented in what is seen as low skills employment in sectors such as retail, hospitality and construction (see Shaw and Williams, 1994; Wood, 1997; Westwood, 2002; Ladkin, 2011 among others). What is further complicating in this narrative and is not recognised in discussion is the increasing competition that ‘ordinary people’ face within, primarily, the personal service sector for employment from ‘precarious creatives’ (as well as others, such as students), challenging the traditional hegemony that they have preserved for such low-skills work. Competition, arguably, extends beyond the employment space to encompass areas such as housing and social services as well as leisure and cultural space within creative communities (Martin et al, 2015). Table 3 depicts, conceptually, the impact through time upon the low-skills services labour market as part of creative gentrification of communities and cities. Such competition, within a process of gentrification, is a result of the increasing significance, from an employer perspective, of aesthetic skills in delivering many of the low skills services within an increasingly creative community (Warhurst et al, 2000; Nickson and Warhurst, 2007; Mears, 2014), creating socially excluding barriers to workforce participation for many ‘ordinary people’.

[Table 3 here]

The nature of and high demand for such work does not accommodate easily within the policy rhetoric of the creative city. Some researchers challenge the received wisdom of low skills work by highlighting the low-skills designator as western-centric (Baum, 1996, 2002, 2006; Burns, 1997; Nickson et al., 2003) as well as those whose analysis identifies significant value-added to service work in the form of both emotional (Seymour, 2000; Bryman, 2004) and aesthetic labour (Nickson and Warhurst, 2007). Notwithstanding the debate over skills, personal service work is generally accepted to be low paid (Lacher and Oh, 2012). In this context, then, living and working in creative cities for service workers raises issues of social and economic exclusion as measured across a range of indicators - including, inter alia, the gentrification of neighbourhoods (Lees, 2012), affordability and availability of housing (Ross et al, 2011), access to education/training, and provision of appropriate transport options (Neirotti et al, 2014).

Silicon Valley in California is one creative location where the uncreative workforce is well-researched. Goldman (2015, p.4) highlights the characteristics of the Silicon Valley labour market as bifurcated “with many wealthy and many low-income, but few in the middle, and an income disparity greater than that of the Bay Area and the State of California as a whole.” Much earlier, both Carnoy et al (1997) and Benner and Dean (2000) had highlighted the increasing range of non-standard working arrangements in Silicon Valley, including sub-contracting at all levels and the general insecurity of employment in the area. There is significant evidence of economic marginalisation of low-skills employees in Silicon Valley, despite the overall prosperity of the region (Zlolski, 2006).

‘Ordinary people’ in the creative city largely undertake work that is invisible or anonymous and generally low skills, service-sector located, at least to those who script the dominant

narrative, such as Florida. Invisibility or anonymity, in this sense, should not be confused with hidden work (unpaid, in the home) (see, for example, Livingstone, 2003; Rodriguez, 2007) but accords rather with Böhning's (2013) use of the term relating to low skilled positions or with Lee-Treweek's (2008, p.107) reference to social care when highlighting that "the way that homes are organised leaves those with the least training to undertake the physical care work. This work is often bedroom-based work. It is physically hard and dirty. Also it is hidden." Scholliers (2004) provides an historical perspective on anonymous roles which demonstrates clearly that they pre-date creative cities by at least a century but, perhaps, face growing invisibility in the contemporary context. Liminality is also a useful descriptor for such work. Garsten (1999) uses liminal work in the context of temporary, flexible employment where people are in between, neither belonging to a location or being real outsiders.

## **5. Discussion**

This paper explores the utility of Florida's approach to creative cities and the creative classes as a model to explain the structure of the workforce in the creative city. It highlights the apparent neglect of Holland's 'ordinary people' in this narrative and the impact that a growing creative focus within urban economies has on opportunity for those outside of the creative 'bubble' as a result of creative gentrification. It also assesses the arguably exploitative precarity that characterises much creative work outside of Florida's super-creative core and the ambiguous relationship that 'precarious creatives' have with the wider, generally service-oriented labour market, traditionally the domain of 'ordinary people'. Their competition extends beyond work into areas such as housing, cultural and

leisure space. This competition for personal service work in bars, restaurants, retail, fitness and cleaning, as examples, is exacerbated by, on the one hand, the increasingly aesthetic demands of employers, catering for a changing consumer profile in the gentrified creative city and, on the other, by demand for creative employment opportunities, meaning that employees in the sector will accept unpaid, low paid and short-term, sporadic work in order to 'try their luck' in a range of creative sub-sectors. This can place a traditional workforce of 'ordinary people' seeking employment at significant disadvantage.

A core argument in this paper centres on the widespread failure to acknowledge the role that low skills personal service workers play in supporting the development of creative cities. This widespread (but not universal) neglect is evident in the policy framing of the creative city that features in strategic thinking and planning of city and national governments, in practical planning for the development of creative attributes within cities and in the conceptualisation by cultural and social theorists of what constitutes the creative city. The neglect is evident in the way in which cities accept 'gentrification drift' without any real critical consideration of its consequences for those who may be displaced, physically, economically or culturally. In employment terms, this manifests through an almost blinkered focus on creative people and creative jobs, with little or no reference to the new personal services sector which develops alongside the gentrified or creative city and neighbourhood, located both within the workplace and the leisure space. In planning for city change, it is clear that such consideration is essential if the resulting creative environment is to function effectively.



It is important to recognise the tripartite consequences that creative can have for 'ordinary people'. They may be required to move physically to new neighbourhoods, perhaps remote from their community of origin, because of re-development and the rising price of real estate. Their remuneration, at just a fraction of that of their creative counterparts, may exclude them from full participation in the social and cultural life of the community within which they work, indeed there is growing evidence that those working across the range of personal services roles in both the public and private sectors are frequently close to or below the poverty line (Brown-Saracino, 2017). As well as economic exclusion, they may also face the consequences of a changing educational and cultural landscape which does not resonate with them or their interests (Watt, 2013). The move of the English Premier League football club, West Ham United, from their traditional roots within the London East End community to the Olympic stadium illustrates this from a cultural perspective (Oliver, 2016).

These tripartite effects are not really accommodated within the policy and planning narrative and are certainly absent from the promotional and marketing 'hype' that surrounds the development of creative in a city context. Given the ever changing nature of work, there is clearly potential for further change in the structure of the creative city workforce through technology substitution and robotisation and yet the creative future, as narrated within the policy space, makes scant reference to how this may shape the low skills workplace. Silicon Valley highlights the challenge of accommodating the interface between high earning and low earning communities within the same space against both economic and cultural criteria. What is evident is that this interface creates a climate that is ripe for populist reaction. Fundamentally, not enough is known about 'ordinary people', the low-

skills workers in the creative city and there is clearly a need for equivalent studies to those undertaken in Silicon Valley in creative city contexts as a guide to policy in this area.

Key policy issues that arise, therefore, relate to

- The affordability and availability of key services (housing, transport, social services) to allow low skills workers to be attracted to and remain within creative cities.
- In response to the above, developing approaches to affordable housing and transport that allows for the maintenance of diverse communities within creative cities.
- The implications of minimum wage rates for creative cities and the potential to recalibrate this for specific areas in order to protect workers, especially minorities and migrants.
- The challenge of meeting the needs and protecting the rights of those tied into alternative working models within the gig or disruptive economy in a way that offers decent work opportunities to creative city outsourced workers.
- Recognition of the need for inclusiveness in the creative city employment narrative in a way that demonstrates that this is about more than 'creative people'.
- Facilitating the development of culture across a broad and catholic spectrum in the creative city in a way that is inclusive and accessible.
- Politically listening to all voices in creative communities in order to avoid alienation and disenfranchisement across a wide range of areas, including environmental, cultural, economic and representational concerns.

The message that looms over the narrative in this paper engages with the heart of policy relating to creative cities. It is about recognising that creative cities need more than an elite of creative people and acknowledging these others and their rights beyond a parody of cowering and compliant Orwellian proles. It is also about recognising the labour-market and leisure/ cultural competition that they face as a result of creative incursions into their space. The creative city narrative can no longer afford to allow 'Ordinary people' to remain invisible or anonymous. The reaction against the political establishment and the economic elite in Europe and North America poses serious challenges to an exclusively creative (and, arguably, elitist) narrative and the mountain for policy makers to climb, now and into the future, is how they can reconceptualise all dimensions of creative so as to be inclusive in a way which ensures that all stakeholders, living and working in in creative communities, have a real and proportionate 'bit of the action'.

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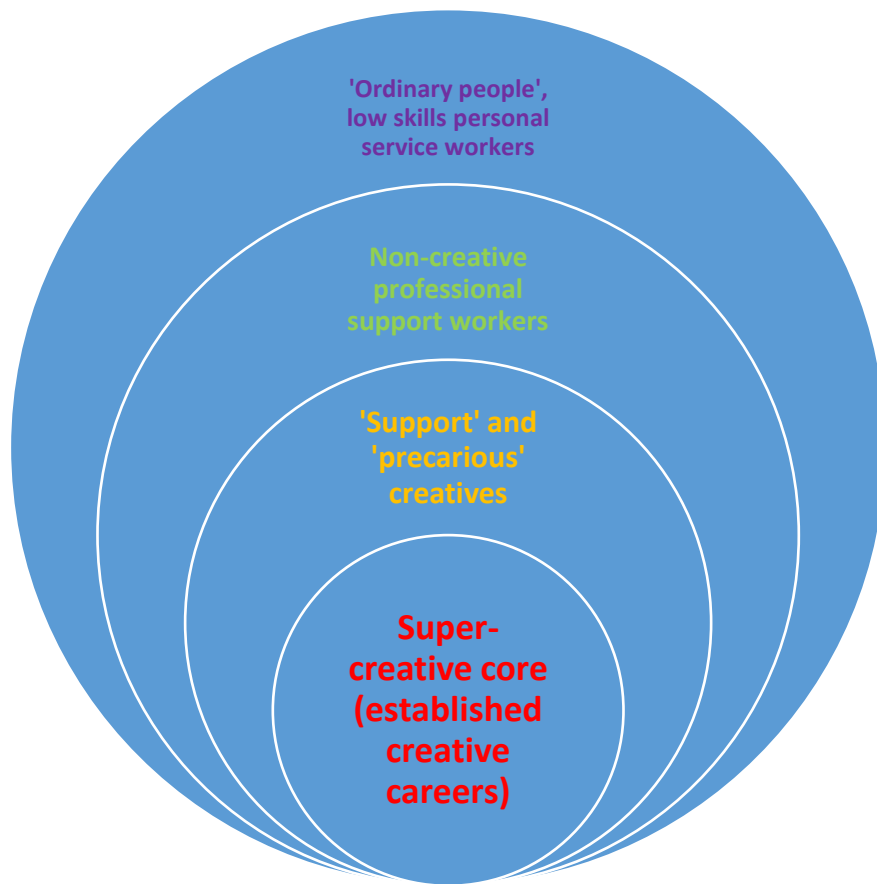
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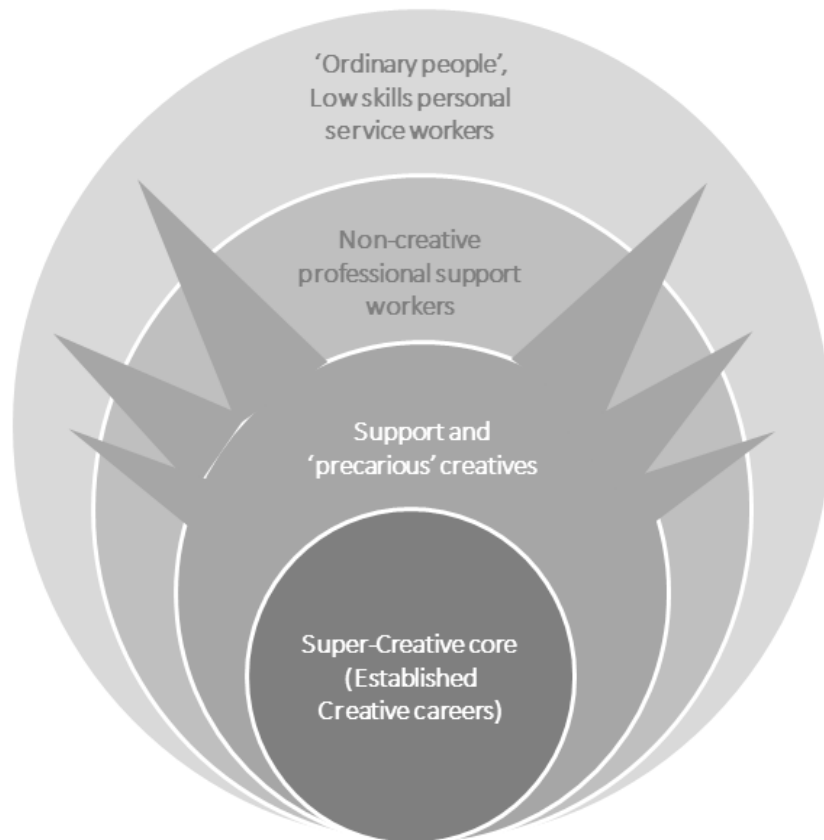
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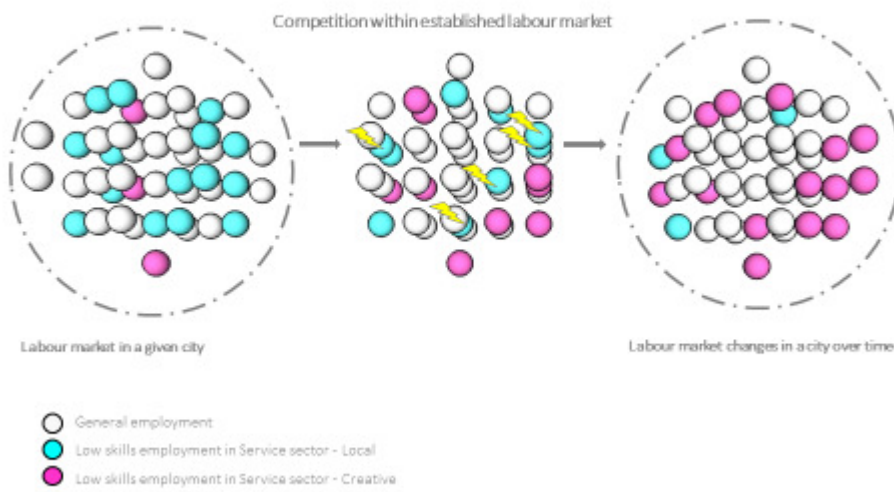
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**Figure 1: A representation of employment in the creative city** (elaborated by the author from Florida)



**Figure 2: Precarious employment in the creative city – competing for the same service work** (author's original diagram)



**Figure 3: Changing labour market profile in a community undergoing creative gentrification (author's original diagram)**