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‘Conceptual export and theory mobilities: exploring the reception and development of the ‘creative city thesis’ in the post-socialist urban realm.’

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Conceptual export and theory mobilities: exploring the reception and development of the 'creative city thesis' in the post-socialist urban realm

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Introduction

The previous 20 years have been characterised in urban studies as a time of great debate about ways of thinking about cities (Scott and Storper 2015; Storper and Scott 2016). It is a period which has been typified by a diversification in approaches to the urban with a proliferation of theoretical perspectives – eg. post-colonial, global/world-city, just cities, nested-cities, assemblage thinking, ordinary cities – and the development of new thematic perspectives, such as gendering, urban mobilities, sensing the city, urban soundscapes, and – central to our argument here – notions around the 'creative city'. Perhaps, then, we are in a time of increasing diversity in which we are witnessing the beginnings of a breaking down of hegemonic theoretical perspectives originating from a limited (predominantly Anglo-American) experience and perspective. And yet, the argument explored in this theme issue relates to a persistence of an unequal production of geographical knowledge about the urban. Specifically, the way that Anglo-American inspired and developed theoretical frameworks continue to dominate at the expense of both knowledge about 'other' contexts and theory generation from within those contexts, in this case specifically the 'post-socialist' urban arena.

In our article we seek to engage with this presumption and explore it through the specific example of academic literature focusing on the 'creative city' in a post-socialist context. We consider literature on the 'creative city' thesis, creative industries, creative class and creative producers which has a focus on the post-socialist urban arena. As a subject that has generated a vast and ever increasing body of literature at a global scale – and one which has become central to many approaches to urban policy in the last two to three decades – it forms a highly pertinent and contemporary focus through which to examine the arguments at stake. Soviet and state-socialist cities had different sectoral foci with regard to what we might now term cultural production, and these often had a specific urban basis, such as cities which were famous for opera, music, film etc. production. However, the notions of 'creativity', the 'creative class' and 'creative/cultural industries' that are the subject here became more prevalent in the Western world from the 1980s and have subsequently been adopted very rapidly in post-socialist contexts as particular discourses shaping urban policy and development.

In the analysis that follows we will consider literature on the creative city in the post-socialist context. At first glance, it would appear that this body of literature

confirms many of the key assumptions underpinning the argument of the theme issue as a whole, particularly that the concepts applied have been imported from the West and *applied to* 'creativity' in the post-socialist context, with relatively little development or mutation of theory *in situ* and relatively little export of new or refined theory. This, again, would therefore seem to be reflective of the unequal power relations inherent in the academic production of knowledge, ie. that such theory development is considered the prerogative of a dominant Anglo-American academic complex and (peripheral) post-socialist urban studies on this topic struggles to 'speak back' to that hegemonic 'core'. Certainly the volume of studies on this topic in the post-socialist region is far less than that in various 'Western' contexts.

However, in this paper we seek to problematize this perspective in a number of ways. To do so we trace the interaction of three forms of global mobilities to present a more nuanced argument – the 'creative city' thesis as globally mobile urban policy, the neoliberalisation of universities as a globally mobile restructuring of the context in which these inequalities in knowledge-production are produced, and urban studies theorising itself as a set of globally mobile concepts and practices. We argue that it is the complex interaction of these three global mobilities that shapes the nature of urban studies/urban geography focusing on the 'creative city' in the post-socialist context, and this allows a more nuanced view than attributing the situation only to an Anglo-American dominance of these subjects. By taking this perspective we can explore the dynamic interaction of the development of a particular urban phenomenon ('creative city' policy) with academic knowledge production, and how one affects the other.

Moreover, adopting this perspective also allow us to focus on the role of path dependencies within the post-socialist areas (such as academic traditions and practices) and to give due emphasis to agency *within* the region and how these interact with (but are not determined by) global processes of neoliberalising academia. At the same time, it is possible to show that scholarship is emerging from such regions which challenges or modifies the unequal knowledge/theory production or that may over time make a contribution that 'speaks back' to Western-dominated perspectives. Throughout our paper, then, we seek to explore the complex interactions of these three major global mobilities to suggest that the cause of this geographically uneven production of knowledge is more complex than just resulting from the actions of a hegemonic Anglo-American urban studies.

As we develop our argument, it is important for us to keep in mind our own positionality. While both authors have for decades worked 'on' and 'in' post-socialist areas, often in collaboration with scholars from within these areas, neither of us originates from there and we have developed our academic careers in institutions in countries in Western contexts (Sweden and England respectively). While we have faced challenges in developing our careers (and yes, Western scholars also face a particular set of structural constraints, as we will return to below) we speak from a particular position, one which the basic

argument of this theme issue would argue is particularly privileged (and hegemonic?).

Nevertheless, it is important for us to point out is that we are not inclined to do 'armchair geography' and we would generally shy away from "geopolitical remote sensing" (Paasi 2006), but rather prefer to base our research on empirical work *in situ* and also trying to develop perspectives and arguments that are sensitive to the various historical and geographical contexts of these cities and places. In a sense, then, we try to contribute to the 'decentering' of urban studies, although our work on post-socialist cities (primarily in Russia, Poland and Romania) is only cited in relatively limited terms in the Anglo-American 'core' of urban studies, whereas our work on Western places seem to get cited and reflected upon more.

In this paper, we build the arguments from analysing academic literature and our own experiences in a type of auto-ethnography.¹ The perspective draws upon 'Capitalism as we live it' – a method developed in the art project (2012-ongoing) of the same name by Andrea Creutz, Liv Strand and Elisabeth Ward (see <http://livstrand.com/capitalism-as-we-live-it-2/> last accessed 30 June 2016) that investigates and highlights the experiences of living within an all-embracing system that one is also, whether one likes it or not, contributing to sustaining, the system in our case being academia. Regardless of this, we would of course have to remain open to criticism and debate from scholars working within post-socialist areas about how we represent them, and we do not claim some kind of complete and perfect knowledge of the situation. Therefore, throughout our paper we must maintain a constant reflexivity with respect to our own positionality and role in situated knowledge-production.

Analysis of the post-socialist 'creative city': globally mobile urban policy, analysis and theory

The first of our three global mobilities that we explore is the way that notions of the 'creative city', 'creative class' and 'cultural industries' have spread around the world. The phenomenon that we explore here is not that cultural production or creative industries are necessarily new in themselves – culture has long been a part of urban development and many cities (including under conditions of Soviet and state-socialist centrally-planned urbanisation) have been significant cultural centres. What we analyse here is the globalisation of a particular set of discourses around notions of culture and creativity which have impacted on urban imaginings, policy and practice around the world since the 1980s. These notions arose particularly in the context of the UK's New Labour regime (1997-2010) during which culture and creativity were pushed to the forefront of government thinking on knowledge-economies, urban regeneration and re-branding Britain as 'Cool Britannia' and in the USA as creativity and culture similarly became much more significant in attempts to revitalise decaying ex-industrial urban communities from the 1990s onwards, particularly driven by the writings of theorists such as Charles Landry (2000) and Richard Florida (2002, 2005). In other words, these particular imaginings and conceptualisations

of culture and creativity were initially quite historically and geographically specific, but they have become increasingly globally mobile, or 'fluid' (Prince 2013), spreading from an Anglo-American core and impacting urban policy in a number of international contexts (Evans 2009),² but notably for our purposes being adopted across the post-socialist world, from the former communist countries in Eastern Europe, through Russia and including China.

What, then, is significant about this adoption of notions of 'creativity' and 'culture' as key facets of urban policy making in the post-socialist context for post-socialist urban studies? The first point to make is that these conceptualisations of these processes are relatively recent. Arising in the UK and USA in the 1990s they overlapped with the end of state-socialism in the former Eastern Europe in 1989 and the Soviet Union in 1991. As such, they offered cities searching for new policy solutions to manage post-socialist urban transformation a set of attractive policy solutions (cf. Buček 2016: 12). Not only had these strategies been developed in post-industrial urban contexts (thus addressing the rapid and catastrophic de-industrialisation of ex-socialist cities) they also had important symbolic value – if leading Western cities were using such strategies did they not represent the 'cutting-edge' of innovative urban policy, which major post-socialist cities wished to be identified with? And which city would not like to be 'creative'? In addition to these policies being relatively recent in the Western context there was also a time-lag in their adoption in the post-socialist world. So, looking at the post-socialist context these are quite recent concepts which have only really taken root strongly over the last 15 years. For example, Tallinn had its first creative policy in 2004 (Lassur, Tafel-Viia, Sunnatavet and Terk 2010) and Becuț (2016) writes that the first major reports on creative and/or cultural industries were published in Romania in 2008, Bulgaria (2001), Hungary (2002), Lithuania (2003) and Latvia (2005).

It would be overstating the case to argue that the result was a straightforward and rapid importation of these policy models, as mobile policy is open to resistance, mutation and modification (McCann 2011; McCann and Ward 2011; Hirt, Sellar and Young 2013). However, there was a tendency to adopt very similar policy approaches to using creativity and culture as economic resources that had been pioneered in Western contexts such as the UK and the USA (Lassur, Tafel-Viia, Sunnatavet and Terk 2010; see also Bontje, Musterd, Kovács and Murie 2011) and implement them "top down" (Tafel-Viia, Terk, Lassur and Viia 2015). And this has been further emphasized through processes such as European Union (EU) expansion, the rise of European inter-urban competitions focused on the use of culture (eg. European Capital of Culture) and the growth of trans-European knowledge sharing networks and projects such as the EU-funded Creative Metropoles Project.

Global institutions also play a role in the diffusion of creative city/industries policies, eg. the UNESCO Creative Cities Network founded in 2004 which, among others, Krakow joined in 2013, Sofia and Prague (2014), and Budapest and Lviv (2015). This network has several sustainability and knowledge sharing goals but also aims to "to make creativity an essential component of urban development".³ These processes have tended to spread European and international standard

norms and 'best practices' about how culture and creativity should be understood and operationalized in an urban policy context. So this is an important second point – creative city policy in the post-socialist context often looked very similar to and drew on Anglo-American practices and theories.

This is not to deny, however, that when implemented in various local contexts in different post-socialist cities there will not be a number of variations (eg. see Tafel-Viia, Viia, Terk and Lassur (2014) on variations in how creative policies are organized and put to action in the post-socialist context). Neither do we wish to intend to relegate post-socialist cities to the status of mere copycats (Robinson 2011). Obviously, cities have a number of choices to make when implementing policies and they do not always simply adopt policy models developed elsewhere. In addition, as Bontje, Musterd, Kovács and Murie (2011) argue, different cities will follow different pathways drawing upon their differing strengths and legacies. Some cities will have a diverse cultural scene to start with, others might be technological knowledge-hubs and the differing local contexts on which creative policies are implemented are likely to influence both the choices made by the cities and the respective outcomes of these policies as they develop over time. There is scope for great variation since the background of cultural and development policies in state socialism was quite different from countries with more mature capitalism (see eg. O'Connor 2004; Buček 2016). And these variations will in turn give rise to different experiences, that in turn will give rise to further variations as these practices 'organically' mature in context. This is thus a third key point – these variations should provide a good ground for studies to develop new concepts and urban creative theory and 'export' them back to global urban studies.

Analysis of the literature on the post-socialist 'creative city'

Accompanying this global rise in notions of the 'creative city' in urban policy – Peck (2012) speaks of it as a 'paradigm' – is an associated rise in academic interest. From an early focus on the 'creative industries', there has been an enormous growth in the literature on urban creativity considering different contexts around the world, not to mention specialist journals and conferences. In this section we analyse the characteristics of this literature as it has reported on the post-socialist context. It is fair to say that, despite a growing literature on some post-socialist contexts – notably China, this literature displays the characteristics which underlie the criticism of urban studies inherent in this theme issue, ie. that the literature remains predominantly focused on the Anglo-American experience.

In this journal (EGE), for example, with its clear post-socialist regional focus and history of publishing on and from the region, there are five articles during the last ten volumes (47–56, 2006–2015) that focus on the 'creative city' discourse. All were published in vol. 53 (2012) and all concern China or Hong Kong. In another key journal characterised by a strong thematic focus on the discourse at hand - *City, Culture, and Society* - the overall picture is the same. There are two articles on the creativity discourse in cities in former communist countries in

Europe (one on Riga by Rozentale and Lavanga 2014 and one on Berlin by Jakob 2010) and six articles on cities in China out of a total of 167 articles in volumes 1-6 (2010–2015).⁴ *City, Culture, and Society* publishes research from all over the world but relatively little on the former Eastern Europe and Russia during the period. There is, however one more article in volume 7, 2016 (on Romanian cities). *Geografiska Annaler, Series B: Human Geography*⁵ which is a broad society-owned journal that publishes all kinds of human geography research and has a record of publishing research from the region and also has published a number of very influential articles highly relevant to the creativity discourse (mainly in themed issues in 2008 and 2010). However, it has only published one article clearly related to the discourse directly connected to the region, which was on Berlin (vol. 92, 2010 by Heebels and van Aalst), and one more loosely connected to the discourse on St Petersburg (vol. 96, 2014 by Trumbull).

Analysing journals from within the region itself, in the Czech journal *Geografie* (also society-owned and with a broad focus) there were no articles clearly focused on the creativity discourse in vol. 111-120 (2006-2015) whereas another Czech journal *Moravian Geographical Reports* in vol. 14-23 (2006-2015) had two articles (in 2014-15). Both publish on the region in English, as does the Serbian journal *Geographica Pannonica* in which there were no articles in vol. 10-19 (2006-2015) concerned with creativity.⁶ In Poland, in a review of specialist literature on 'revival', ie. the revitalising and restructuring of Polish cities (Rogotka 2011), culture and the new economy are mentioned but not in relation to the creative city/industry discourse which suggests a lack of research literature on creativity within the country before his article was published (but see Brown and Męczyński 2009 on Poznań). In support of this conclusion, the English language Poland/Netherlands-based journal *European Spatial Research and Policy* has only one book review (vol. 20, 2013) clearly about the creativity discourse and a couple of articles that can be related to the discourse but that do not position themselves explicitly in relation to it in vol. 15-22 (2008-2015). There is, however, one article in vol. 23 (2016) that discusses the Creativity Index in Slovakia. In the Polish journal *Questiones Geographicae* in vol. 29-34 (2010-2015), however, there is one article (Marková 2014) and two themed issues (2012, 2015) with research clearly positioned within the creativity discourse and a number of articles on related themes.

Thus although there is an emerging literature on post-socialist creative city/industries, research from the region is a small component of overall urban scholarship on this topic. However, this is not solely explained by a marginalisation of post-socialist urban scholarship. Following Sjöberg, we recognise "the fact that students of post-socialist urbanism are but a small subset of the universe of urban scholars" (2014, 301). In turn, it is likely that few are engaged with the rather specialised area of urban creativity discourse, a point that is highly influential in terms of what research actually reaches the "academic market". If, out of 1000 researchers there are perhaps 100 that, considering all possible restraints (like getting grants), manage to publish regularly and get cited by others, and ten that get cited a lot,⁷ then in the 'small subset' (say 100) of scholars doing research on post-socialist cities, then there would be ten that, considering all possible restraints, manage to publish regularly and get cited, and

only one that will get cited a lot. Furthermore, the proportion of funds available for research will create uneven conditions for knowledge production around the world. Money spent on social science in general, and social science urban studies in particular, would in the final count be decisive regarding the number of researchers involved.

This is an obvious point that needs to be brought to the debate and it might also partly explain why China's share of publications on the creative city discourse is higher. China has many urban researchers and spends huge amounts of money on developing research. The number of researchers that can sustain themselves will be one of the most crucial factors in explaining the number of research outputs.

However, despite the points made above, it is important to highlight that within the creativity research in and on the region, there are a number of examples of studies that have managed to address some general features of the creativity discourse and subsequently have had an impact, or have the potential to have one, in shaping the broader development of the topic. In this section we therefore analyse the nature of this literature within the framework of Sjöberg's (2014) notions of import, export, and re-export of theory and concepts, to get beyond the numbers of articles to their potential impact. Import relates to theory and concepts being used to explain developments in the region that originates elsewhere. An export is a theory or concept produced within the region that is picked up and employed outside of the region. A re-export is an import that gets refined or mutated within the region and then get used in its new form outside the region.

We will restrict the account here to a few examples – or 'crucial cases' (Eckstein 1992) – that aim to nuance the overall conclusion that the experience of creative city/industry policy in the region is not sufficiently considered within the general research discourse on creativity. Johannes Novy and Clair Colomb's (2013) study on Berlin and Hamburg is arguably one of the most influential papers from the region on the creativity discourse. Berlin, of course, is a special case being post-socialist (the major part of it at least) but situated in the 'West' (although not in the 'Anglo-American core') and being a world leading cultural capital with extensive cultural scenes of various kinds. It is thus not an 'ordinary city' (cf. Robinson 2006) although it does represent a different context from cities in the Anglo-American core. Nevertheless, Novy and Colomb's study of artist protest against the cities' creative policies is a contribution that can be regarded as discourse shaping within the creativity literature and we therefore count their work as an 'export'. The study has 72 citations according to Google Scholar (26 June 2016), many of which are in very influential journals, and taken together those studies in turn are cited hundreds of times. The article is focused on a few qualities (artist protest) but with extensive relevance to all, or most, of the cities world-wide that engage in creative city policies. The study also relates to discourses of urban social movements and to 'spaces of hope', which might contribute to its impact on the international scene. Maybe the article could be said to be 'theoretically extensive' as well since it combines several discourses,

meaning that it holds relevance for even more researchers (not only creativity researchers) around the globe.

The second article is by Bontje, Musterd, Kovács and Murie (2011) and is a comparative study of Amsterdam, Birmingham and Budapest. The study is cited 16 times according to Google Scholar (26 June 2016). Ten of the citations are in English language international journals of which a number have long publishing records. We would classify this as an 'export' since the results are contributing to an enhanced general understanding of the issues at hand even if the article does not articulate its main results in strict conceptual or theoretical terms. The article includes a broad review of literature and synthesis of this literature into six hypotheses about what conditions are essential for "the development of creative and knowledge-intensive city-regions" (2011, 88). They then compare the three cities with these hypotheses and conclude that:

Rather than assuming the movement toward a common type of creative city, policy makers would do best to encourage the development of distinctive and locally embedded, knowledge-intensive, and creative industries that reflect the strengths and assets from the past that can be extended. (Bontje *et al.* 2011, 99)

A result they stress is that creative cities will not fall into a "single archetype" or "develop in accordance with a linear and universal model" (2011, 99). The article is therefore intensive in its focus on 'pathways' (a quality of development) and extensive since the objects referred to are creative-knowledge city-regions. The results are thus made significant beyond these three cities as special cases to those with an interest in creativity and knowledge-based urban development, making it relevant for many researchers. Also this article might be said to be theoretically extensive because it synthesises a number of perspectives on the creative city.

Obviously there are many more articles than the two discussed above but the point being made here is that the experience of cities from the region is being taken on board on a wider geographical basis. In addition, a lot of research is reported on in other ways than in the 'leading' international journals, eg. in conference proceedings (eg. Wiktor-Mach and Radwański 2013) or project reports (eg. CM 2010) or in journals from the region, or in chapters in books (Murzyn-Kupisz and Działek 2015) or in books (eg. Švob-Đokić 2007). Often accessible online, these results are available to a larger audience and quite a few of them are also referred to in the articles on cities in the region published in the more influential journals. This further strengthens the argument that the experiences of some cities *and* some researchers involved are included and not marginalised in the broader creativity discourse. It could also be emphasized that research in general often develops over a long time period, and certainly before it reaches leading international journals. It normally takes years from conceptualising a project, getting funding, doing the research and then writing it up (and then getting it accepted and finally published).

The analysis of this literature reveals a complex picture in some ways. There are examples of literature on post-socialist urban creativity which derives novel results and which has the potential for theory-export. At the moment, however, the overall characteristics of the literature would appear to confirm the argument at the heart of this theme issue ie. that the post-socialist urban experience and post-socialist urban studies are marginalised and making less impact on global urban studies theory formation.

However, if we now combine this analysis of the literature with the opening points about understanding creative city policy as a form of globally mobile policy with a particular history and geography, we can begin to problematize this picture. Here we would raise two issues. If these particular discourses about creative cities have a relatively recent history in Western urban discourse and planning, and have then spread to post-socialist contexts where they have been even more recently adopted, it follows that we should not necessarily expect to see a massive outpouring of literature on this topic from this region. In fact, what we do see is that literature on this topic in the post-socialist urban arena is now increasing, suggesting that the timing of these global developments plays a role in defining this pattern of the production of academic knowledge. Research into creative cities is growing in relation to this boom and is thus also fairly new. Even now, some 15 years later, it would be difficult to state that theories regarding creative cities have matured. Rather, they are rapidly developing. The creative city thesis is, scientifically viewed, still a new theory in the sense that concepts have not been fully tried out, causalities are still being tested, its limits and generalizability not fully known, and relatively little is known about its actual impact. In short: "the creative city thesis is 'in the making'" (Romein and Trip 2012, 27).

Even if the basic concepts originate in the West and most research has been and is done in the Anglo-American core, experience from various regions around the world is in a rather good position to contribute to this evolving theory since the field for this lies open – it is not yet occupied by mature theory developed (solely) in the West. The experience of cities in the post-socialist arena have good potential to contribute not only 'just another case study' but are in fact well positioned to contribute to a more general understanding of the issues at hand based on the variegated experiences of these cities.

A second point relates to the majority of this literature not being theory exporting. Before we proceed on this point it would, however, be important to bear in mind that geographic research in general in and on the region has a short history of theorising. In 1990, Michael Bradshaw wrote that "geographers of the Soviet Union (in both the West and the Soviet Union) are as guilty as anybody for not trying to think theoretically about the nature of Soviet society" (Bradshaw 1990, 318) and it was only at the end of the 1990s that things started to change (see Pickles and Smith 1998; Lynn 1999; Dingsdale 1999; Borén 2005/2009).

More generally, as post-socialist societies went through differing processes of transformation, many of them followed paths and models very much derived from contemporary Western forms of capitalism in terms of economic, social and

urban change, particularly in the context of EU-accession. This is not to argue that there was just a simplistic serial reproduction of such forms of capitalism, but there were important overall similarities. In such a context, then, to what extent would it be expected that there have been major advances in theory-exporting scholarship? And this point is further complicated by the fact that academic theory is itself globally mobile and theoretical analyses have tended to follow urban policy developments, particularly when it is academics from Western institutions who are doing the analysis. This suggests that as creative city policy approaches mature then there may be more scope for academic analyses to develop theory-exporting approaches if urban policy and practice in this area develops in different ways. Certainly there is scope for analyses which focus more on grass-root, non-state-led forms of creative urban development to develop an original contribution here.

This is not to deny global inequalities in academic knowledge-production, but analysing the actual global mobility of the policy formations which are the subject of study does introduce a new perspective which in part contributes to explaining the relatively small contribution of post-socialist urban scholarship (so far). In the next section we seek to further this complexity by considering a third global mobility.

Globally mobile norms of academic knowledge-production and the neoliberalisation of academia

So far we have argued that the literature on the 'creative city' in the post-socialist context is characterised by being relatively limited and, despite some research which could contribute to the export of theory, predominantly import-led in its analysis and/or speaks of a local or national context. However, in the section above we explored why this might be the case with reference to the nature of 'creative city policy' as a form of globally mobile urban policy. Since the notions of 'creativity' and the 'creative city' are discourses which have inflected urban policy making only over a relatively short recent period, and since many of those policies are 'imports' themselves, then this is one further explanation for a relatively paucity of literature emanating from within post-socialist areas on this topic and a lack of theory generation. If the policy is very similar to that in Western developed nations' cities is it so surprising that new theory is not arising from the post-socialist context?

In this section we further complicate the analysis by introducing a further set of globally mobile concepts and policies by reflecting on the role of norms and expectations in academia and how such norms and practices are being impacted on by the neoliberalisation of the university itself. Again, we would not simply see this as a hegemonic imposition of norms and neoliberalised academic practices but as the interplay between global neoliberalisation and institutional and national responses, but we argue that these processes are powerful in shaping the context of academic knowledge production.

One of the problems with current explanations of the lack of engagement of post-socialist scholarship with global urban studies and the lack of theory export is that it potentially places too much emphasis on the hegemony of Anglo-American academia at the expense of acknowledging the impact of structural factors and norms within post-socialist academia and the potential agency of actors within these areas. While we struggle to keep these factors in proportion we are also wary of an argument that involves casting academics within post-socialist regions as being without power and which ascribes the limited post-socialist engagement with global urban studies as underpinned by the 'inability' of scholars to 'overcome barriers' to international engagement. The danger which is inherent here is the reproduction of an Othering which portrays academia within post-socialist areas as 'lagging' and needing to 'catch up' with 'Western' norms and expectations, precisely the kind of conceptualisation which has been heavily criticised as an inaccurate and power-laden representation of post-socialist areas as undergoing a linear, post-socialist 'transition to capitalism' (Ferenčuhová 2012). This point is explored below (though we are deeply mindful of that fact that we have never worked in such contexts ourselves – or only temporarily). We then, however, go on to complicate this further by considering the neoliberalisation of the university as a third form of global mobility and how that is impacting upon norms, practices and expectations in academia.

Therefore, we do not seek to deny that the international inequalities and power structures which shape knowledge production are important, but we would argue that it is also important to look at the dynamics of knowledge production operating at different scales and as differently located and not just the imposition of some kind of all-powerful Anglo-American knowledge-centre. Power structures operate *within* post-socialist areas which might deny agency to scholars within the region who act according to multiple institutional/local/national as well as international stimuli and structures and demands. In addition, academics are often quite individually focused in their professional lives (by necessity and often by personality), even if they engage in collaborative work, and this means that they must also respond to their institutional and national frameworks of what constitutes appropriate academic performance and 'success' (though of course some academics may also seek to reject and subvert such expectations). And of course this is not something unique to academics within post-socialist areas, but pretty much all academics world-wide who are often quite individualistic and personally-driven individuals who may respond to personally held norms and beliefs (eg. 'all knowledge should be shared') or personally held goals (eg. 'to be promoted in my university sector I need to do X, Y and Z...').

Here, then, the structures and expectations of institutions (departments, universities) and national higher education sectors play a role in the engagement of post-socialist urban studies with its global counterpart. A triple hermeneutics may operate, combining an academic's own understanding and personal goals, the ways in which national and international subject paradigms influences their research, and the ways in which institutional expectations affect their practice. In short, if none of these prioritise international engagement and speaking back to

international urban studies or exporting theory, there is little encouragement here for an individual academic to do so. Fulfilling expectations within an institutional or national framework may be the (personal) priority (though as we will return to below this potential context is now changing with the neoliberalisation of academia). Certainly this institutional/national context is also about barriers to international participation, such as the path-dependency of the institutional/national research context, language, costs, access to journals and also developing the necessary skill-set to be able to publish in English-language journals which have certain expectations based on mainly Western academic norms. And we need to come back to a central point – how much can we expect one person to do to go beyond such expectations and structures?

National strategies in the post-socialist world towards this may vary. No doubt more research is needed on the various routes these countries may take – are they striving to get ‘in’ to the international system, or are they ‘opting out’? In China, internationalisation of academia seems to be a general goal pushed by the authorities, whereas in Russia, the picture is more complex. Both countries are large enough to sustain their own academic universes should they wish. The countries in the former Eastern Europe on the other hand are in a different position with regards to this and, it should be noted, have very different conditions depending on if they are part of EU or not.

We do not wish to discount in any way the undoubted frustration of scholars within post-socialist areas who do wish to engage internationally but have to overcome these barriers. However, what we are arguing here is that we really lack detailed research on how structures and agency *within* the region contribute to the overall picture (but see Ferenčuhová 2016). Again, as two scholars who have not had to develop their careers in this context, we are wary of reaching any grand conclusions about this aspect of academic life, but we do wish to draw attention to it as a potential part of the complex dynamics involved. What do academics within such regions think? What are their goals, motivations, desires and professional expectations and indicators against which they may be measured in an increasingly competitive and metricised academic environment? Is the expectation to engage internationally and contribute to international urban studies not something that ‘we’ (as in Western scholars) are imagining as the optimum position and imposing as a value-judgement or norm, thus further strengthening the very power structures and attributions of value to scholarship that we seek to critique and break down? Research on these kinds of questions would open up these debates more to the role and importance of institutional and national contexts and individual agency within post-socialist academia. It would allow us to evaluate to what extent these processes may *contribute to* but *not necessarily be the result of* inequalities in knowledge-production – in other words, because of these factors this knowledge does not get exported out of the post-socialist context and does not influence urban studies but this is not necessarily due entirely to hegemonic relationships.

To further complicate the picture, there are powerful processes at work which are changing the nature of these institutional and national frameworks and their expectations about international engagement and theory export –

Europeanisation, internationalisation and the global mobility of the neoliberalisation of the university. These three inter-connected processes have involved a complex global roll-out of norms, practices and expectations which are reshaping academic practice at a national and local level, though they themselves are open to local resistance or mutation. The incorporation of a great deal of the former Eastern Europe into the European Union (EU), for example, has led to a spread in Europe-wide academic standards and an increasing engagement with the expectations of European funders, such as Horizon2020. Both within and outside of the EU post-socialist states have become increasingly open to internationalisation including in their higher education systems. One outcome of this has been changes in national regulation governing performance within higher education, for example in linking promotion criteria to publishing internationally in English-language ISI journals, whereas as previously institutional and national standards may have accepted publication in national journals and languages (though, again, this is not unique to the post-socialist world).

Linked to this, more and more is being written about the neoliberalisation of the university and “academic capitalism” (eg. Passi 2005, 2013, 2015). Again, this is a process which has largely originated in the Anglo-American core but is increasingly impacting on universities and academics in other national contexts. Leaving aside the fact that much of this neoliberalisation of universities is driven by state policy which is increasingly intrusive of academic practice, rather than the state being rolled-back, universities and individual academics are expected to become more entrepreneurial and competitive. Universities have to compete for students, who are increasingly being seen as ‘clients’ or ‘consumers’ (in the UK context at least), they have to become more business oriented – not least to attempt to secure industrial funding for research – and they are expected to compete in an ever-more competitive environment for external research funding. A key part of this is also success in publishing in ‘highly-ranked’ academic journals (largely English-language), with individual performance increasingly being benchmarked against metrics and universities being evaluated on European and global rankings, with implications for student recruitment.

These globally mobile processes are rolling-out in a diversity of ways across different national and academic contexts. However, what is significant about them is that they are altering the kinds of institutional and national frameworks and expectations which were considered above. The question here is what will be the impact of these processes on the marginalisation of post-socialist urban studies and its ability to contribute to international scholarship? On the one hand they push individual scholars to engage internationally and publish in English-language journals (with a burgeoning set of Open Access journals emerging) which might boost the frequency and impact of theory export. They also may provoke more international collaboration with, for example, the requirement for large-scale trans-European networks to apply for European funding, a process which might produce more knowledge production which is informed by the post-socialist urban arena (with the Creative Metropolises Project mentioned above as a case in point).

On the other hand, increased competition is increasingly the outcome, which may push academics to be more ruthlessly self-oriented and to care less about sharing ideas, overcoming academic power structures and adhering to norms about knowledge being something which should be universally shared. Pressures on the academic journals where the results of post-socialist urban analysis may reach international audiences is now enormous as a variety of countries, both post-socialist and otherwise, become much more metric-driven. In the UK, for example, journal metrics, impacts and citations have become fundamental to the evaluation of academic performance and promotion and also success in the national Research Excellence Framework (REF), the state-led periodic research evaluation which has impacts on state research funding to institutions. But countries as diverse as Sweden, Romania and China are also being driven to publish internationally in English. The result of this is that some of the barriers for academics within post-socialist areas – such as playing the game of successfully publishing in such journals – become even harder to overcome as journals are swamped with submissions and a decreasing proportion of papers get selected for publication. Grant funding is competitive and increasingly hard to obtain, with winners and losers, and knowledge becomes more guarded, particularly with respect to Intellectual Property and individual academic promotion.

So these processes, and especially the neoliberalisation of the university, represent a third global mobility which is impacting on the engagement of post-socialist urban scholarship with global urban studies and making the process of this engagement (or lack of engagement) ever more complex. On the one hand it could drive increasing international engagement and deliver consortia in which post-socialist research is more prevalent, or, on the other hand, the increasingly competitive situation arising could exacerbate existing barriers and power structures, reinforcing the marginalisation of post-socialist urban scholarship. Again, this is a set of processes whose impact is unfolding right now and more research should explore the implications for these geographies of knowledge production. Certainly the context is highly changeable and leaves individual academics in a variable power dynamic, intersecting with their personal, institutional and national demands, in which post-socialist urban scholarship may or may not gain more purchase.

Conclusion

In this paper we have focused on one important topic within urban studies – that of debates around the global mobility of notions of ‘creativity’ and the ‘creative city’. We have chosen to do this because these discourses and practices have become ever more central to urban policy making and they are a major area of research within urban studies in many contexts. Through analysing the literature on this topic in post-socialist urban contexts, we derived an overview of the characteristics of this literature. It is rather limited in terms of volume, and it tends to be theory importing rather than generative of new theory which is then (or could be) exported, though we also found examples of publications which

were theory defining and could 'talk back' to the predominance of Western-centred research and theory production. So, rather than placing the region in post-colonial terms – as struggling to speak back, nodding to the Anglo-American hegemony, we would argue that because it is a relatively new theory also in the West, there are particularly fertile grounds for it to be able to contribute on equal terms to the continued formation of that theory.

On the face of it, the example of 'creative city' literature seems to provide another example of the kinds of patterns that are the concerns of this theme issue ie. that research from within post-socialist areas struggles to 'get out' and make an impact on global theory production which remains dominated by an Anglo-American core. However, by exploring this situation through the lens of three intersecting global mobilities – creative city urban policy, urban studies scholarship and the neoliberalisation of the university – we sought to introduce a more nuanced argument which also takes into account constraints at institutional and national level within the regions in question but also allowed for motivation and agency within those regions as part of the explanation. This we feel allows for a more nuanced analysis of the patterns in academic knowledge production which are at stake here.

Furthermore, it allows us to link these points with the overall issues at stake in this theme issue because it raises the question of what we desire for post-socialist urban studies (and urban studies in general), keeping in mind again who 'we' are. If we are to be critical of the lack of impact of post-socialist urban scholarship, is that not simply a critique from 'our' perspective. Most importantly, what do we want, why do we want it and does this merely represent yet another hegemonic imposition of expectations in knowledge production?

At the same time, and as part of this, we also need to reflect on what 'we' – as part of this theme issue - are assuming as the norm to which 'we' aspire and question whether this dovetails with the aspirations and expectations of other scholars in other contexts. There is an implicit assumption that there is a problem here ie. the external imposition of constraints on the ability of theory and research to 'get out' of the post-socialist areas. However, is there also a danger here that 'we' (the editors and authors of this theme issue) are imposing our vision and desires around knowledge production onto others ie. that universities and researchers in post-socialist areas *should* be aspiring to export knowledge and theory? In fact, as discussed above, those scholars may be operating to a whole different set of (personal, institutional and national) pressures and expectations, albeit pressures which the global neoliberalisation of the university sector is modifying. If so, are 'we' not simply reproducing the expectations of Anglo-American hegemony and a neoliberalised university sector? Are we not again Othering the formerly Communist areas as lagging, backward and needing to 'catch-up'? In short, are we not in danger of reproducing much discredited notions of expectations of a linear transition towards Western standards and practices, expecting the rest of the world to be 'like us'? An approach which has been thoroughly debunked in post-socialist scholarship.

The central position of this theme issue seems to be a tacit argument that there is some ideal which Urban Studies is failing to reach. We concur with the view that research from within post-socialist areas is not gaining the recognition, or having the impact, that it should. However, we still feel that there is a problem here, and that is that this ideal is not as clearly articulated as it could be and the argument could be clearer about what the ultimate goal is. Can we really aim for a state of perfection and equality, some academic utopia where everyone is equal and everywhere in the world gets an equal voice? Perhaps we should, but perhaps it is fruitless to attempt this.

However, striving for a more equitable, non-insular and cosmopolitan production of knowledge and the ability to contribute to it does not seem to be a fruitless endeavour that should be abandoned. Academic work may be under pressures of neoliberalising change but we would still hold the flag of the academic communitarian ideals high and believe in the open discussion these brings for an enhanced understanding of the urban. In this debate we therefore side with Storper and Scott (2016) and the spirit of their universalist approach to hope for a more sensitive, cosmopolitan urban theory generation. The big question which still remains is, how do we get there?

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Notes

1. Auto-ethnography is an established tradition and style of writing in social anthropology. Given that this is geographic journal and article we are tempted to suggest 'auto-geography' as a term that better captures the relational and global interdependencies in knowledge production that we attend to here and that we are ourselves part of.
2. The very harsh academic critique by Peck (2005), Markusen (2006) and many others, and also from within the post-socialist region (eg. Wiktor-Mach and Radwański 2013), of these policies seems to have gone unnoticed. For an overview of the critique, see Borén and Young (2013).
3. On the UNESCO Creative Cities Network and their Mission Statement, see <http://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/> (visited 23 June 2016). See also Rosi 2014.
4. For this analysis we have made an 'informed' selection of journals and chose journals that we believe would be sympathetic to articles either on and from the region, or on the topics at hand, or both, but in the English language. All titles of articles published in the journals were checked and sometimes the abstract as well. If an article was concerned with the creativity discourse, then it would have

been clearly signalled using words like creativity, culture, creative cluster, art, art scene etc. All place names that we were not familiar with were checked as to their geographical location. The last ten volumes (2006–2015) (where available) were analysed this way.

5. This journal was chosen since one of its editors, Örjan Sjöberg, is highly sympathetic to research from and on the region at hand.

6. There was one in vol. 19 (2014) about 'quality of life' and theatre but it was not clearly connected to the discourse and it was about Teheran.

7. To get cited is not a primary goal in itself for research (although, we would argue, sharing results are) but is nevertheless indicative of contributing to and influencing the general understanding of the issues at hand.

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