CultureCase

Understanding ‘place’ in arts-driven urban development

This research was conducted by **Carl Grodach and three other people** at **Queensland University of Technology, Australia; University of Southern California and University of Texas at Arlington, USA**

Summary

Do location factors such as affordable rent, neighbourhood aesthetics, and demographic diversity always predict the formation of artistic clusters in the United States? This paper argues not, and that previous research is limited by its focus on prominent metro areas with pre-established cultural industries, places like New York or Los Angeles. The researchers analysed census data at a highly detailed geographic level to search for patterns across a wide array of US cities of varying sizes. They conclude that rather than looking for generalisable trends, we should instead be thinking ‘local’, since every arts cluster is necessarily place-specific.

The authors found different results depending on whether they looked at the metro (bigger) or neighbourhood (smaller) level

Not surprisingly, the arts tend to be prevalent in urban areas with strong economies. The arts, however, are not so well integrated into so-called ‘innovation districts’ (clusters of knowledge-based industries such as media, technology, and finance, in addition to nearby amenities such as cafes). On the neighbourhood level, the opposite is true: the arts do not drive neighbourhood-level economic growth, but they do cluster around innovation districts.

Policymakers need to think differently about neighbourhoods than they do about metro areas

Location patterns of arts clusters cannot be generalised because different cities have different arts industry strengths – such film in Los Angeles, or country music in Nashville. While artists seek out dense metro areas with diversity and amenities, they use a different set of criteria when choosing neighbourhoods to live and work in, selecting neighbourhoods that are attuned to, and beneficial for, their specific artistic industries. In short, the authors argue that local attributes matter when developing arts-driven economic policy at any level.

This summary is by Matt Nelsen and first appeared in Issue 5 of *The Digest* from the Cultural Policy Center at the University of Chicago

Keywords

policy **census** **neighbourhood** **USA** **innovation**

Title	The location patterns of artistic clusters: A metro- and neighborhood-level analysis
Author(s)	Grodach, C., Currid-Halkett, E., Foster, N., Murdoch III, J.
Publication date	2014
Source	Urban Studies, Vol 51, Iss 13, pp 2822-2843
Link	**http://usj.sagepub.com/content/51/13/2822.short**
Open Access Link	**http://arts.gov/sites/default/files/Research-Art-Works-Arlington1.pdf**
Author email	**carl.grodach@qut.edu.au**

By **Culture.Case** | 24 March 2015 | **Neighbourhood impacts of arts and culture** |

King's Culture
© Copyright 2026
Designed, developed and maintained by **King's Digital Lab**
Originally built by **weheartdigital Ltd**
Accessibility Statement