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Location and spatial clustering of artists

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ABSTRACT

Surveys of artists' location choices show that they disproportionately reside in large cities. This paper introduces a model that attempts to explain this urban preference. The model includes four factors: access to other artists; access to consumer demand; access to service jobs; and housing affordability. These four factors are combined in a spatial equilibrium model. An equilibrium spatial distribution of artists is derived from the model and is correlated with the actual distribution among Swedish municipalities. Subsequently, the model is used for an econometric estimation of factor effects. The results show that access to other artists and local access to service jobs are important localization factors. Educated labor used as a proxy for consumer demand has a significant effect on artists' location choices.

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1. Introduction

Artists have always been associated with great creative cities. Renaissance Florence was known as a Mecca for artists and other creative individuals, as were Amsterdam and London in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Andersson, 2011). It seems as if artists benefit from agglomeration economies as much as—if not more than—other accessibility-dependent occupational groups such as scientists and stockbrokers (Glaeser and Mare, 2001). In the post-industrial era, this urban orientation remains operative in the location decisions of individual artists, although there are of course now *more* creative agglomerations to choose from. The occupational restructuring that has accompanied de-industrialization has among other things resulted in a greater demand for creative work, including artistic work. Agglomerations of creative workers have become more numerous than in the past. Even so, three quarters of the global value of fashion design, to take one example, is still created in the four leading cities (Wenting, 2008).

In Sweden, a similar centripetal process has made about half of the country's artists choose to move to—or remain in—the Stockholm

region, which is home to less than one quarter of the general population. What factors have made Stockholm so much more attractive than other, less costly, Swedish regions? We shall attempt to answer this question by deriving a spatial equilibrium model and by means of an econometric analysis of the location of Swedish artists. The two definitions of artists we use include visual artists, performing artists, writers,¹ musicians, designers, and architects.

The paper is organized as follows. In Section 2, we provide a brief overview of the location patterns of artists, with a focus on Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Section 3 discusses the main location criteria with the help of suitable empirical illustrations. There are four such criteria: accessibility to other artists; accessibility to consumers; accessibility to employment opportunities; and affordability. Section 4 formalizes these criteria in the form of an accessibility-based location choice model. In Section 5, a spatial equilibrium model shows how accessibility-based choices may result in an equilibrium spatial configuration. The following three sections are devoted to an empirical analysis of the location choices of Swedish artists. The analysis is based on an econometric adaptation of the location choice model. A discussion of the implications of the empirical results concludes.

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¹ Writers are included in our occupation-based definition of artists only.

2. The location pattern of artists

The world of artists is spiky rather than flat, and in that way it resembles the world of inventors and scientists (Andersson, 1985; Florida, 2005). Like other creative people, artists benefit disproportionately from regional knowledge externalities (Gabe, 2011). They do so in three principal ways. First, much of the knowledge that artists can learn from other artists is tacit, and thus requires face-to-face contact rather than disembodied information transmission channels (Palmberg, 2012). Second, knowledge transmission is facilitated by an atmosphere of trust, which is more likely to be forthcoming among people who know one another personally (Leamer and Storper, 2001). Third, creative breakthroughs are often the result of finding what one is not looking for, that is to say that serendipitous discoveries are especially important for people who work in creative occupations (Chesbrough, 2003). All of these three causes of knowledge externality creation are associated with large and dense concentrations of creative workers.

In the United States, most artists live either in large metropolitan areas or in smaller regions that specialize in a subset of artistic work. Official statistics from 2005 reveal that the ten primary metropolitan statistical areas (PMSAs) with the greatest shares of artists in the workforce include both large and small PMSAs. San Francisco had the greatest share, at 3.71%, but this was followed by the much smaller conurbation of Santa Fe (3.36%) (National Endowment for the Arts, undated). However, the same source also reveals that Santa Fe specializes in hosting writers and fine artists, whereas New York (PMSA) is the only city to feature among the top ten cities (ranked by workforce share) in each of the four main categories (New York ranks 5th for musicians; 2nd for actors; 4th for writers; 5th for fine artists). Moreover, it is clearly the case that a city such as New York hosts a much greater number of writers or fine artists than Santa Fe, and thus large metropolitan areas are where most new artistic output is being produced.

Looking at the distribution of artists (exclusive of architects and designers) in the largest 29 metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) in the United States, Markusen and Schrock (2006) find that artists made up a much larger share of the workforce in Los Angeles, New York and San Francisco-Oakland than in the other large metro areas in 2000.

To a considerable extent, the artists living in Los Angeles, New York and San Francisco have moved there from somewhere else. For example, out of the 96,000 artists who lived in the New York metro area in 2000, 21% had moved there in the preceding five-year period (Markusen and Schrock, 2006). The total migration in and out of New York over the same period amounted to slightly over 36% of the total stock, which implies that there is a great deal of locational churn. This is indeed typical of most knowledge-intensive activities (Florida, 2002).

Turning to artists and designers, the overall spatial distribution is similar to that of artists (narrowly defined), but there are two main differences. First, architects and designers reveal an even greater preference for large cities as compared with (other) artists (Markusen and Schrock, 2006). This is no doubt related to their somewhat lower rates of self-employment as well as on their greater reliance on sales to businesses rather than individuals. Second, industrial and commercial designers exhibit a location pattern that bears no resemblance to the other surveyed occupational categories. Indeed, the highest employment location quotient—at a staggering 9.34 in 2000—is found in Detroit, with its heavy concentration of automotive designers. Perhaps industrial designers make up the only subcategory where the traditional principle of “people following jobs” is still more important than “jobs following people” (Markusen and Schrock, 2006).

Comunian and Faggian (2011) offer a somewhat different approach to analyzing the spatial distribution of artists. They compare the locational choices of arts-related students, graduates and workers in the United Kingdom. The empirical data reveal a centripetal life-cycle effect, with London's West End as the center of gravity. The district Inner London-West hosted 10% of all British arts students, but 15% of

Table 1

Location quotients for different categories of artists in Sweden's three largest metropolitan areas, 2008.

Category	Stockholm region	Gothenburg region	Malmö region
Performing artists	2.41	.91	.94
Visual artists	2.14	.94	1.04
Architects	1.84	1.53	1.37
Designers	1.81	2.01	1.07
Media producers	1.79	1.40	.59
Musicians	1.63	1.16	1.30
Craftspeople	1.09	3.28	.50
All artists (education-based)	1.89	1.37	1.13
All artists (occupation-based)	1.74	1.06	1.04
Total population	2,353,000	1,072,000	1,048,000

all arts graduates and more than 22% of all employed artists in 2007. The same area accounts for only 1.7% of Britain's overall population.

The British results allude to the importance of intra-regional location; Inner London-West is clearly a sub-region within London's metropolitan area, if that area is delimited according to the degree of labor or housing market integration. And there are good reasons for why this should be so. Within-industry knowledge agglomeration effects tend to have very steep distance gradients, especially in creative and knowledge-intensive industries. For example, the quantitative effect of site-specific industry employment on new firm formation within the IT industry has been found to be about eight times greater within 1.6 km of the site than at a distance of between 1.6 and 8 km (Rosenthal and Strange, 2003).

The location pattern of Swedish artists resembles the British one with one dominant agglomeration. The City of Stockholm, which is the core of the Stockholm labor market area, hosts the greatest concentration of artists of Sweden's 289 cities, towns and other municipalities. One third of all Swedish artists live there, as compared with less than one tenth of the total population.

Using a definition of artists that is based on having received a specialized arts education, Table 1 presents the location quotients for seven categories of artists in the three largest Swedish metropolitan areas.² Table 2 gives the corresponding location quotients for the most centrally located municipality within the three metropolitan areas (Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö). Taken together, these tables show that artists cluster in the largest metropolitan areas and, additionally, that artists are even more over-represented in the core than on the periphery of these large conurbations. Considering all artists, they also show that the location quotients are somewhat higher when applying an education-based as compared to an occupation-based definition of artists—a difference that may be related to the spatial concentration of arts education in the metropolitan areas.

The location quotients tend to be greater in Stockholm than in the other two cities both at the metropolitan and the core municipality level. In spite of its slightly smaller size, the location quotients in Malmö are quite close to those in Gothenburg, which probably reflects Malmö's proximity to Copenhagen in Denmark. As is the case in the United States, performing and visual artists seem to be most over-represented in the most accessible locations. Designers and craftspeople are over-represented in Gothenburg in much the same way as American industrial designers are over-represented in Detroit. This probably reflects the close historical linkages between industrial design and the automotive industry (Volvo was founded in Gothenburg, while SAAB was founded in the nearby town of Trollhättan).

Case studies of individual cities confirm the strong preference for a central location among artists. For example, Markusen (2006) found that artists in the Minneapolis MSA disproportionately live in inner-

² The definition of artists by education vis-à-vis by occupation is clarified in Section 7.

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