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BOOK REVIEW
Creative Communities: Art Works in Economic Development
Michael Rushton, editor. Foreword by Rocco Landesman
Review by Mark A. Hager, Arizona State University

Every edited volume has a creation story. According to the foreword and editor Michael Rushton's introductory chapter, *Creative Communities* owes its origins to interests within the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to bolster research and theory on the economic value of arts and culture and its value to local communities. This led to a May 2012 Brookings Institution symposium, and ultimately to this compendium of chapters. So, to some extent, this edited volume aggregates people who were at the right place at the right time, raised their hands, and were able to put their foot forward.

Rushton does an admirable job of laying out a vision for the volume. The NEA's interests are clearly articulated by former chairman Landesman's foreword: engage economists to test and refine a pet perspective labeled as New Growth Theory. Rushton oversells this volume as the culmination of those interests. Certainly, it's a great vision: a cohesive volume with multiple teams plumbing the details of a single perspective would be a welcome and potentially landmark achievement. I think that the volume is best judged against that vision.

Although no one clearly points to the literature of this New Growth Theory, Rushton points vaguely back to the 1980s and outlines his view of its major tenets. First, it is an 'endogenous' theory, attributing economic change to controllable forces, such as investments and policy decisions. Second, innovations spill over to other firms operating in a particular field, which operates as an incentive for innovators to cluster and glean spill from competitors. Third, knowledge and innovation are durable and malleable, making them better investments than physical capital and labor in efforts to spur economic growth. Are these tenets generally true? Can they help us measure, understand, and maximize the potential of arts and culture to communities?

In his own overview, Rushton suggests relevant topics and applications. Individuals trade and consume artistic goods, potentially creating economic value. Spillovers and clusters may explain the creation or location of cultural producers. Arts and cultural production may attract creative talent, who may in turn attract the innovative talent necessary to develop a local knowledge economy. With the stage effectively set, Rushton turns to his contributors.

While I cannot speak for Rushton, my assessment is that the volume does not approach the vision that he sets for it. Whether it might meet readers' expectations will likely depend on what they want out of the volume. Regarding the state of the art in research on the relationship between arts and community, it is typical of an edited volume: uneven, uncoordinated, though occasionally brilliant. Regarding the vision of New Growth Theory as a guiding light for research on the value of arts in community, the various contributors seem barely aware of it.

Though self-contained and disconnected, I should say that each of the chapters in the volume are interesting in their own right. Contributions to New Growth Theory aside, there are good reasons why each team was invited to the Brookings symposium and why each was ultimately invited into the *Creative Communities* volume. Schuetz gets the first substantive chapter with her study of art galleries in Manhattan. One wonders why it occurs to her to examine whether commercial art galleries might influence neighborhood and physical development, except that the question generally fits in with the themes of *Creative Communities*. The theoretical underpinnings are uncertain, and she gives no lip service to New Growth Theory. She reports no particular effects of physical redevelopment that might be attributed to the presence of art galleries, which is the upshot of her fine study. Attention to the clustering of galleries might have established an anchoring to Rushton's themes, but the chapter instead serves as notice that contributors could go their own way without necessarily immersing in or extending those themes.

On the other hand, articulation of theory is central to at least the opening sections of the next chapter, by Markusen, Nicodemus, and Barbour. They advocate bringing 'consumption' into economic (or export) base theory. For me, some of these ideas already underlay the economic impact studies that Rushton is dismissive of in Chapter 1, although the authors do not suggest that kind of connection. More arts might foster arts consumption. The labor-intensive nature of arts and cultural work might result in more local spending. Arts activity might attract more non-arts creatives. Despite the interesting empirical work here, I came away with two critiques: one, the analysis seemed to call for the input-output analyses common in economic impact studies, but that connection is not made; two, the connections to New Growth Theory are not made, despite the softball opportunities to do so.

The next two chapters have less pretention to theory. Maloney and Wassall are interested in cultural economic development initiatives at the municipal level. Such policy action might have endogenous influence on community economic development, and therefore implications for New Growth Theory, but that chapter does not go there. Rather, the chapter stands alone as a descriptive case study of a Massachusetts initiative. A couple thousand miles away stands another policy initiative, Denver's Scientific and Cultural Facilities District, and the topic of Schmitz's study. Do the district's organizations have revenue advantages over organizations outside it? Apparently not. Does support of these organizations result in crowding in or crowding out of other kinds of support? Apparently not. Might the spillover of innovations clustered in a cultural district be a better topic for a volume on New Growth Theory? Apparently not.

Chapter 6, by Root-Bernstein and seven co-authors, is the best reason to pick up *Creative Communities*. Like other chapters, it generally eschews the New Growth Theory vision promoted by the NEA and Rushton. Nonetheless, its topic and discussions are most relevant to it, and perhaps ultimately most critical of it. They ask seemingly innocuous questions about who is entrepreneurial and who is innovative, and how such characteristics translate into scientific and cultural clusters of innovation. Their empirical work centers on the relationship between STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) impresarios and their attitude toward arts and culture. Their discussion (starting on page 112) of the complex relationship between STEM and the arts is the most theoretically relevant discussion of the entire volume, especially considering New Growth Theory's reported concern for how arts creatives might attract non-arts innovators. The criticism, however, comes from Root-Bernstein et al.'s observations that relationships are complex, slow to develop, and fraught with uncertainty: a stark reminder that the social world rarely boils neatly down to a page or two of theoretical principles.

Noonan and Breznitz's chapter feels much like the two preceding the richer Chapter 6. It is an empirical study of universities and arts districts grounded in the hypothesis that universities should foster innovation and arts districts support the culture associated with economic expansion. Economic growth is measured by employment share and patents. However, these scholars report little influence of universities and arts districts on these measures. The implications for New Growth Theory might be profound, but are left unexplored. Rather, and like Root-Berenstein et al., they point to the complexity of the relationships and the inability for crude analytical tools to discern them. If only somebody would lay down a specific theoretical perspective and organize scholarship around that perspective, maybe we could make progress on those fronts.

To Kushner's credit, his chapter 8 at least mentions New Growth Theory. The interesting empirical analysis, however, develops at the periphery of the vision outlined by Rushton. Rather than considering the central question of the value of the arts to community, this chapter asks how different community characteristics influence the development of arts organizations. Kushner hypothesizes that cultural expenditures, cultural participation, and overall community capacity will influence enterprise formation, and his county-level analysis bears this out. This chapter features what appears to be the best data in the volume.

However, the title of most sophisticated data analysis falls to Pedroni and Sheppard who ask a deceptively simple question: does arts and culture production result in *more permanent* increases in local economic growth? That is, is it more lasting than other kinds of economic production? Their answer: yes. However, this interesting finding seems more relevant to the economic impact arguments that Rushton rushes by rather than the New Growth Theory that supposedly frames the volume.

The final chapter falls to Bakhshi, Lee, and Mateos-Garcia's atheoretical exploration of the relationship between arts and cultural activity and local economic performance. They do make efforts to situate their work in the volume, characterizing local cultural activity as "clustering," and referring to the potential of innovation spillovers. However, rather than advancing these ideas, these references merely provide context for an empirical contribution. Like so many other findings in preceding chapters, results are mixed. We leave the chapter uncertain of the potential relationship between arts activity and prevailing wages. We turn the page, hopeful of a more fruitful ending, perhaps final thoughts from Rushton on the volume's contributions.

But the curtain falls instead, all index and silence. What's left is my critique of the volume: two familiar conclusions. One, this is a handsome collection of interesting studies. Two, they do not add up, do not turn on or advance New Growth Theory, do not give sum to the vision for why they are brought together in this volume to begin with. They are floats at a parade, winding by one after another, separate and independently adorned.