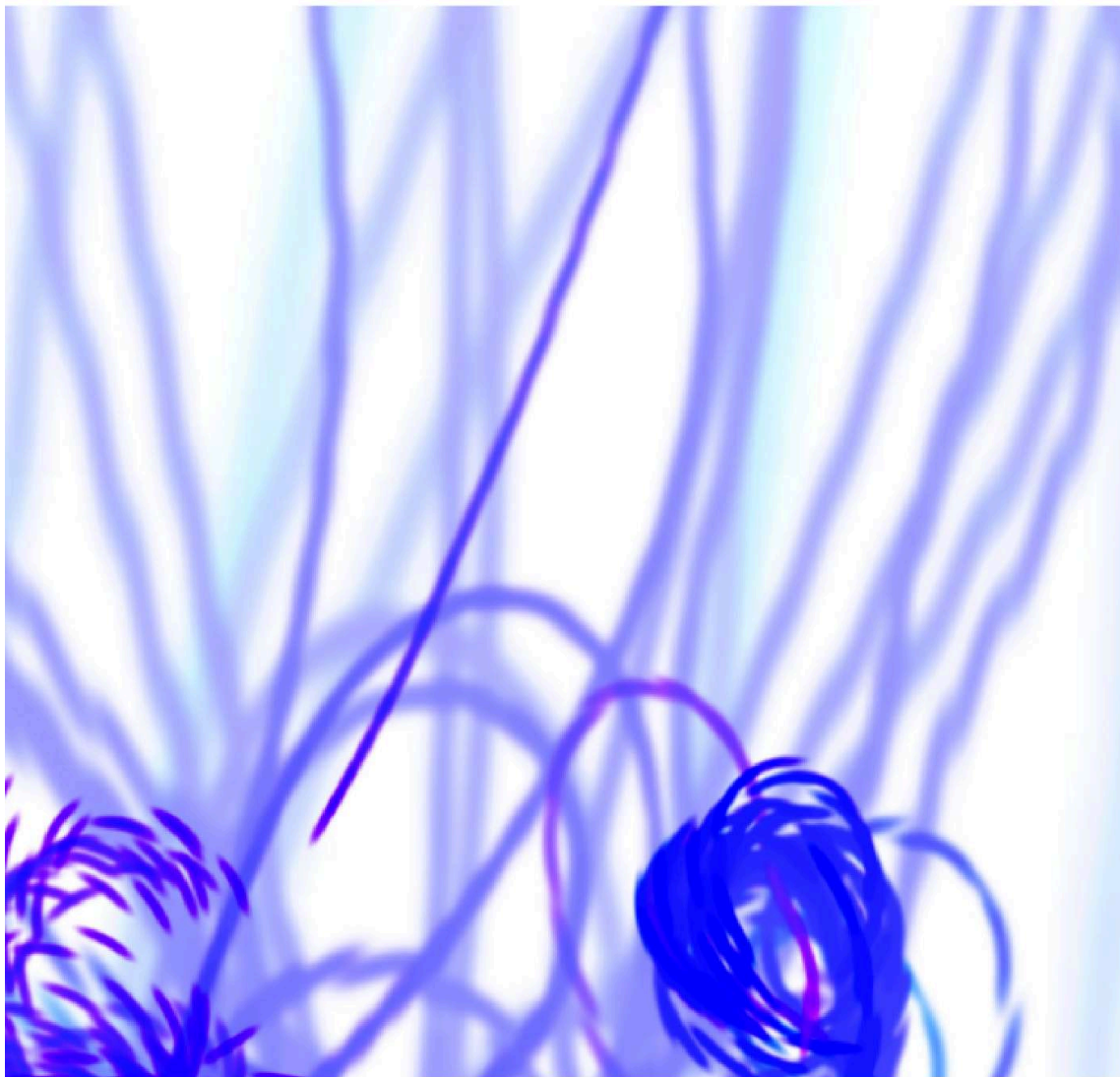


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La compétitivité urbaine et la qualité de vie

Sous la direction de Diane-Gabrielle Tremblay



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Urban Competitiveness and Quality of Life

Diane-Gabrielle Tremblay (dir.)



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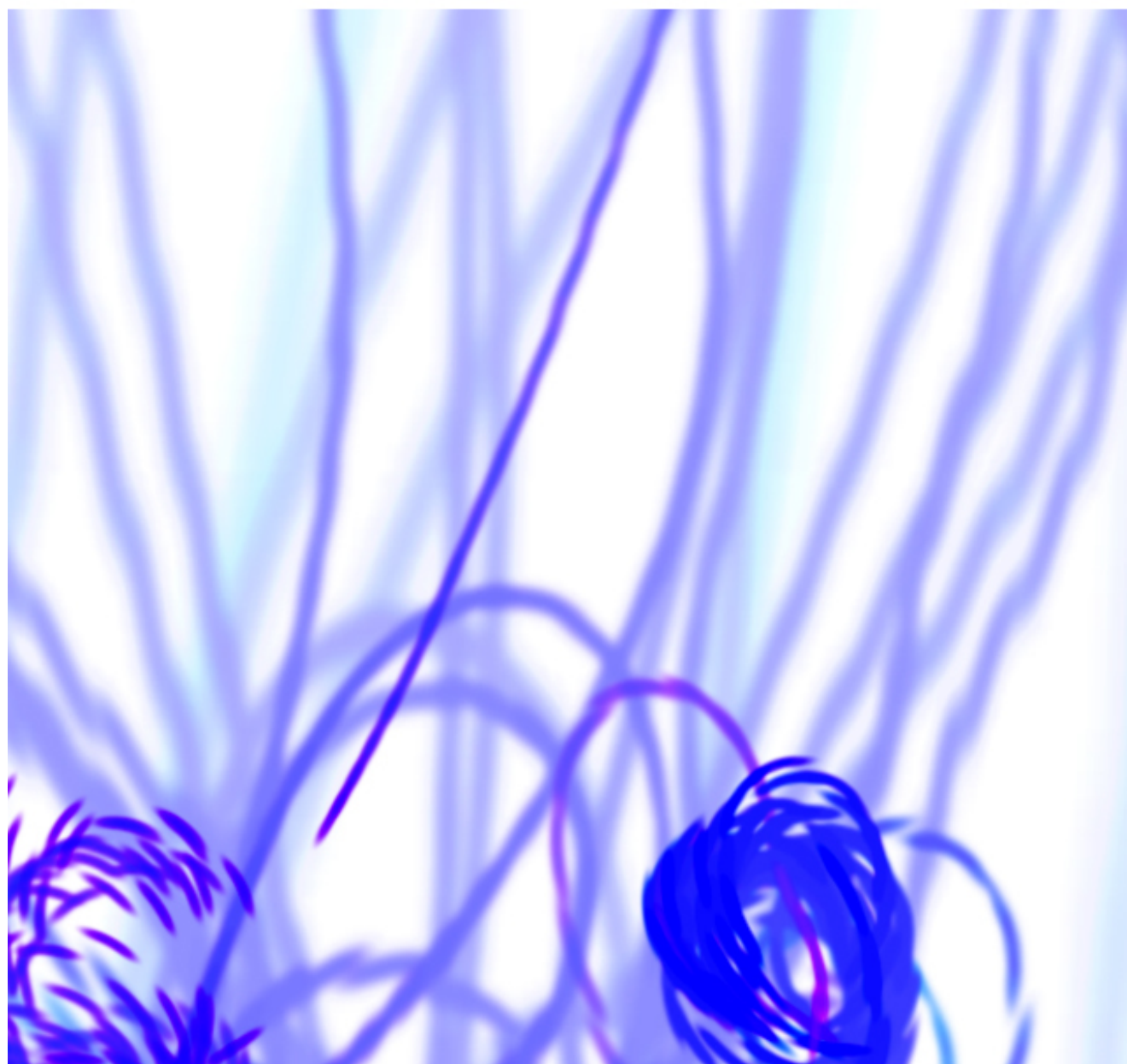
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La compétitivité urbaine et la qualité de vie. Introduction

Urban Competitiveness and Quality of Life. Introduction

Rémy Tremblay

- 1 Les travaux sur le rôle de la qualité de vie urbaine en rapport avec la compétitivité économique des villes sont relativement peu nombreux (Donald, 2001[5] ; Andrews, 2001 [6] ; Rogerson, 1999[7] ; Gottlieb, 1995[8] ; Wish, 1986[9] ; Malecki, 1985[10] ; R. Tremblay, 2006[11]). Ailleurs, le type et le nombre d'indicateurs choisis pour définir le concept de qualité de vie urbaine varient considérablement comme le montre Martha O'Mara (1998 [12]) dans son analyse des principaux ouvrages de références sur la qualité de vie des villes américaines ; en effet, les indicateurs varient en nombre de dix à plus de cent.
- 2 Pour notre part, nous définissons à ce stade-ci la *qualité de vie urbaine* comme une mesure de la vitalité économique, du mieux-être social, de l'intégrité environnementale et de la congruence socioculturelle (FCM, 2001[13]) parce que ces indicateurs recoupent des facteurs qui répondent aux préoccupations des personnes, des travailleurs, des citoyens et des familles.
- 3 L'ouvrage de Richard Florida (2002) *The Rise of the Creative Class*, portant sur l'importance primordiale qu'accorderaient les talents à la qualité de vie urbaine, a attiré l'attention de nombreux spécialistes des études urbaines en Amérique du Nord et en Europe. Selon l'auteur, les villes les plus susceptibles d'attirer ce qu'il appelle la *Creative Class* (30 % de la population active aux USA selon cette thèse) sont celles qui offrent le meilleur cadre de vie naturel, social et culturel (en particulier la tolérance envers les « gais »). Par contre, bon nombre de chercheurs, dont Markusen et King (2003[14]), Shearmur (2005[15]), Lang (2006[16]), Markusen (2006[17]), Peck (2005[18]) et R. Tremblay (2004b[19]), entre autres, doutent qu'il soit possible de faire un lien causal entre le succès économique d'une ville et la « tolérance » de ses résidents.
- 4 Joel Kotkin (2000[20] ; Kotkin et Siegel, 1999[21]) propose d'autres critères auxquels les talents porteraient attention. Contrairement à Richard Florida, Kotkin croit que les talents sont moins attirés par la vie animée d'un centre-ville, préférant vivre en communautés à proximité d'établissements de style campus regroupant plusieurs

entreprises de haute technologie et autour desquelles résident les employés et leur famille : La Jolla en périphérie de San Diego, Cary près de Raleigh et Kanata, ex-municipalité d'Ottawa, correspondent à ce concept. D'autre part, Manuel Castells et Peter Hall (1994[22]) sont plus catégoriques : les talents recherchent d'abord et avant tout un milieu de travail intellectuellement mobilisateur, alimenté par « les réseaux sociaux et les organisations professionnelles » (p.26). Enfin, l'on pourrait étendre l'analyse et y ajouter les concepts ou environnements que Brown et Duguid (2000[23]) désignent sous le terme de *communities of practice*.

- 5 Dans le cadre d'une étude à plus petite échelle portant sur les facteurs d'attraction des entreprises et des talents dans la banlieue du savoir montréalaise de Laval, Tremblay et al (2006[24]) et Naud et Tremblay (2006[25]) ont observé une tendance différente de celle évoquée dans la théorie de Florida. Par ailleurs, une étude comparative des 90 villes nord-américaines de plus de 500 000 habitants a permis de mettre en évidence différents indicateurs d'intensité de capital humain et de poids des secteurs *high tech* furent mis en valeur (Polèse et Tremblay, 2004[26] ; R. Tremblay, 2004a[27]). Cette exploration porte à croire que les critères usuels d'une « bonne » *qualité de vie urbaine* seraient moins déterminants que ne le laissent croire certains chercheurs.
- 6 La relation entre la qualité de vie et la compétitivité de villes du savoir doit donc être revue car la qualité de vie, souvent mesurée par le taux de criminalité à titre de facteur discriminant, procure une information répulsive et non constructive eu égard à la coopération et au leadership attendus (Stimson, Stough et Roberts, 2002[28]).
- 7 Ce numéro spécial ***d'Intervention économique*** présente des articles traitant, de façon plus ou moins directe, de la qualité de vie en rapport avec la compétitivité urbaine. D'abord, Sénécal, Hamel, Collin et Huot discutent des outils et des méthodologies servant à mesurer la qualité de vie urbaine en passant en revue les principaux jalons qui constituent l'expérience canadienne en ce domaine. Ils s'inspirent principalement du modèle de mesure de la qualité de vie développé par la Fédération canadienne des municipalités (FCM), un des modèles les plus respectés au pays. Ensuite, McCann se questionne sur la pertinence pour la technopole d'Austin au Texas de rédiger ses politiques de développement urbain et socioéconomique en s'inspirant des écrits de la classe créative de Richard Florida. Tremblay, Rogerson et Chicoine traitent pour leur part des imprécisions, voir des bavures que contiennent les palmarès urbains, outils pourtant si populaires auprès des « vendeurs » de villes. Les auteurs illustrent leur propos à partir du *Cities Ranked and Rated*, véritable catalogue contenant un classement comparatif de centaines de villes américaines et canadiennes.
- 8 Le texte suivant, de Sébastien Darchen et Diane-Gabrielle Tremblay, vise à identifier les concepts sur lesquels s'appuie la thèse de la *classe créative* développée par Richard Florida . Le texte se penche sur deux points en particulier, soit l'origine de la théorie et son apport en ce qui concerne les facteurs d'attraction des populations en milieu urbain et le thème de la compétitivité urbaine.
- 9 Par la suite, ce numéro présente trois entrevues réalisées auprès de spécialistes américains en études urbaines : Betsy Donald, géographe à la Queen's University à Kingston en Ontario, Peter Kresl, économiste à la Bucknell University en Pennsylvanie et de Robert Lang, sociologue à la Virginia Technology and State University (campus d'Alexandria près de Washington). Ces chercheurs ont été interviewés sur leurs recherches, traitant de sujets connexes aux concepts de qualité de vie urbaine, de classe créative, et de compétitivité urbaine en Amérique du Nord.

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Aspects et mesure de la qualité de vie : évolution et renouvellement des tableaux de bord métropolitains

Quality of Life Aspects and Measurement: Evolution and Renewal of Metropolitan Dashboards

Gilles Sénécal, Jean-Pierre Collin, Pierre J. Hamel et Sophie Huot

Introduction

- 1 Il est reconnu que les sociétés occidentales se préoccupent de plus en plus de la qualité de vie. Les administrations publiques élaborent sans relâche, avec une efficacité toute relative, des programmes et des politiques pour améliorer la qualité de vie de leurs citoyens, soit de manière générale, soit en faveur d'un segment particulier de la population. Parallèlement, on a assisté à la formation d'un domaine d'étude, notamment en études urbaines, dans lequel des chercheurs s'emploient à circonscrire la portée d'un tel concept et, plus encore, à proposer des champs d'application et des outils de mesure afin de pouvoir évaluer différents niveaux de qualité de vie (Schmandt et Bloomberg, 1969 ; *Urban Affairs Annual Review*, 1969 ; Liu, 1976, Smith, 1973 ; Bailly, 1981 ; Davies et Herbert, 1993 ; *Canadian Journal of Urban Research*, 2001 ; Urban Quality Indicators 1996-2003 ; Noll, 2003). Polysémique par définition, le concept de qualité de vie renvoie à différents aspects de la vie urbaine, comme les conditions matérielles d'existence, les disparités socio-économiques, l'accès à des services et à des équipements de toutes sortes, l'organisation des activités dans l'agglomération, la participation aux instances communautaires ou politiques, la coopération à l'intérieur de l'unité de voisinage voire à l'atteinte des aspirations de chacun. Depuis peu, la qualité de vie est associée au thème de la compétitivité des villes. La qualité de vie en milieu urbain serait ainsi conditionnée à la fois par des facteurs objectifs, comme les aspects physico-morphologiques et socio-économiques, mais aussi par des dimensions subjectives qui tiennent des valeurs, des perceptions et des aspirations de chacun.

- 2 Élaboré dans le sillage du concept de qualité de vie, « le développement social correspond à l'amélioration de toutes les facettes et dimensions des conditions de vie des individus et des milieux dans lesquels ils évoluent » (Lévesque *et al.*, 2002 : xii). À la différence du concept de qualité de vie, celui de développement social recouvre davantage les termes de la participation citoyenne et de la mobilisation des communautés lorsqu'il est question, de façon concrète, d'identifier les facteurs favorisant l'amélioration des conditions de vie et la réduction des inégalités. De manière un peu différente, Bernard *et al.* (2002) définissent le développement social comme « un processus d'amélioration des conditions de vie et des potentiels individuels et collectifs » (p. 20). Par processus, ils entendent la nécessité d'effectuer des comparaisons chronologiques. De plus, une telle définition sous-entend que le sort des individus et le développement des collectivités sont interdépendants. Enfin, la participation à la vie quotidienne, l'inclusion dans les différentes institutions déterminantes telles que la famille, l'école, le travail sont nécessaires pour l'individu.
- 3 En somme, ces deux concepts participent à situer les facteurs de bien-être et de santé des collectivités, et incidemment de leur attractivité voire de leur compétitivité, tout en étant construits dans la perspective du développement d'instruments de mesure sophistiqués et efficaces.

Les tableaux de bord métropolitains : les conditions de la mesure des états et des changements

- 4 La démarche de construire un instrument de mesure susceptible de situer la qualité de vie et le développement social des différents milieux ou quartier ne peut être que multidisciplinaire, de façon à intégrer différentes facettes de la dynamique urbaine, tout en permettant l'approche comparée. Ce type d'outil réfère dans le jargon habituel à l'image du « tableau de bord », qui illustre la démarche de compilation et de traitement des données disponibles. Le succès de la fabrication d'un bon tableau de bord repose, d'ailleurs, sur la qualité des données disponibles. Cet instrument de mesure doit être construit de telle façon qu'il est utile pour aborder des questions spécifiques, comme le développement social ou la qualité de l'environnement local, couplant des mesures qualitatives et quantitatives, mais dans une perspective de la modélisation des informations. Il doit aussi viser à la mise au point d'un instrument de veille de la dynamique des espaces métropolitains, pour saisir de manière intégrée les impacts politiques, sociaux, environnementaux ainsi que de santé publique qui affectent les métropoles en situation de métropolisation. Sur le plan méthodologique, de tels outils de mesure doivent être conçus pour résister à toutes tentatives de réduire la problématique de la qualité de vie et de développement social aux seules dimensions socio-économiques, certes centrales mais qui n'épuisent pas la problématique. Par ailleurs, ils doivent aussi mener à une analyse comparative dans le temps et dans l'espace, permettant de suivre l'évolution des milieux dans le temps, comparant le temps 0 aux temps 1, 2 ou 3. Un autre objectif est de situer une métropole comme Montréal vis-à-vis d'autres métropoles, canadiennes notamment.
- 5 Dans un autre ordre d'idées, le défi de l'intégration des problématiques et d'emboîtement des échelles pose d'emblée des problèmes d'ordre technique et méthodologique qu'il convient de ne pas négliger. Soit dit en passant, l'instrument de mesure qu'il conviendrait

de développer ne doit pas correspondre à un modèle quantitatif de type boîte noire. La constitution d'un tableau de bord doit plutôt recourir d'emblée à une approche raisonnée, voire réflexive, qui partant des données objectives, dont certaines qualitatives, vise à systématiser les informations, mais également les dimensions intangibles de la vie urbaine. L'objectif est de mesurer les tendances, les impacts et les réponses, mais aussi de réfléchir sur les processus et les pratiques qui sont engagés par les administrations publiques et les acteurs sociaux.

- 6 En fait, la mesure de la qualité de vie et du développement social doit être conçue de manière ouverte et flexible. Elle se distingue par l'échelle d'appréhension (l'aire métropolitaine ou le quartier), le niveau de comparabilité, le degré d'innovation, les types de données utilisées. Elle doit combiner des perspectives multiscalaires (différentes échelles), multiniveaux (selon les échelles de pertinence de l'organisation territoriale) et multisectorielles (urbanistique, socio-économique, santé, éducation). Elle décline des indicateurs d'état, d'impact ou d'atteinte d'objectifs.

La mesure de la qualité de vie : une approche ancienne en renouvellement

- 7 L'explication des différenciations spatiales, notamment celles observables entre les espaces résidentiels, était trouvée dans croisement des structures sociales, des styles de vie et des structures d'opportunités (Murdie, 1969, p. 21-24). L'organisation sociale des villes refléterait aussi, selon cette perspective de recherche, des structures de ségrégation et de défavorisation qui pourraient être compensées par un niveau de services publics adéquats. Plus précisément, les composantes de la qualité de vie en ville étaient circonscrites, selon des études pionnières des années 70, autour des dimensions socio-économiques, des caractéristiques du quartier incluant le logement, de l'accès aux services et aux équipements de proximité ainsi qu'aux lieux de consommation, de la vie démocratique et de la vie sociale (Smith, 1973 ; Palys, 1973). De telles études sur la qualité de vie supposaient qu'elle relevait du statut socio-économique, essentiellement le revenu pourrait-on mentionner, et d'indicateurs matériels qui renvoient à l'espace vécu par les gens, notamment la structure résidentielle et l'organisation spatiale des services de base dans l'optique de leur accessibilité (Bailly, 1984). Ainsi, l'accès aux services a souvent été mesuré en termes de distance (Davies et Herbert, 1993). Être à courte distance d'un hôpital ou d'un parc devait permettre son accessibilité et pouvait apparaître, par exemple, comme un facteur de la qualité de vie et, plus encore, comme un critère du choix résidentiel. Cela signifie aussi que le fait d'être au contact de lieu, comme un hôpital ou un parc, pouvant comporter un risque ou un stress potentiel, pouvait revêtir un côté positif malgré tout : le parc est une aménité urbaine recherchée bien qu'il puisse être le lieu de rassemblement d'un gang de jeunes comme l'hôpital peut être fréquenté par des clientèles à risque. Il paraît alors paradoxal que ce facteur de proximité tant valorisé dans les études sur la qualité de vie, et d'ailleurs le facteur sur lequel est fondée la notion de structure d'opportunités, soit précisément celui qui est remis en cause dans la situation de controverse de localisation et d'aménagement. La question posée tient alors, pour l'essentiel, à la recherche d'un équilibre entre les espaces résidentiels et la proximité physique à des lieux de services, d'équipements ou d'aménités. De la même façon, les grands principes du développement social peuvent être contredits par les comportements des ménages qui ne valorisent pas les espaces communautaires intenses et la

participation civique. Le comportement des ménages ayant choisi d'habiter dans des banlieues de faible densité et faiblement organisées sur le plan communautaire est éclairante à cet égard (Sénécal et Hamel, 2001).

- 8 Les études sur la qualité de vie devraient ainsi incorporer au cœur de l'analyse des éléments de l'environnement physique, notamment la densité résidentielle. Les caractéristiques des différentes communautés ou secteurs de la ville devaient permettre de considérer simultanément la morphologie urbaine, les interactions sociales et la structure des ménages (Davies et Herbert, 1993). Dans une étude réalisée au Canada pour le compte du Centre d'études prospectives sur l'habitation et le cadre de vie, par Murdie, Rhyne et Bates (1992), inspirée de l'approche *healthy city* et du plan de Toronto (*The Liveable Metropolis*) on retenait trois composantes générales de l'analyse de la qualité de vie en milieu urbain pour former le modèle d'orientation communautaire de l'environnement habité (MOCEH), soit la vitalité économique, le mieux-être social et l'intégrité environnementale; on y proposait une liste d'indicateurs et de mesures spécifiques pour chacune de ces composantes. Si les composantes économique et sociale sont plutôt standards, l'intégrité environnementale se résume aux mesures de densité, d'utilisation du transport en commun et aux économies d'énergie (tableau 2). Dans une proposition plus récente, le concept de qualité environnementale est réduit, par exemple, à la mesure des logements ayant au moins cinq heures par jour d'ensoleillement, aux différences normalisées selon les aires de l'indice de végétation normalisé, à la mesure du taux de nitroxyde (Takano et Nakamura, 2001).

Tableau 1 Le modèle d'orientation communautaire de l'environnement habité (MOCEH)

Composantes	Dimensions	Indicateurs
Vitalité économique	Emploi Richesse	Taux d'emploi Niveau de revenu
Mieux-être social	Accessibilité aux services Sécurité Abordabilité	Nombre et distance à parcourir Taux de criminalité Taux d'effort de 30 % du revenu du ménage affecté au logement
Intégrité environnementale	Densité Utilisation du transport en commun Conservation d'énergie	Nombre de personne au km ² Proportion d'utilisateurs des transports en commun Dépense d'énergie per capita

Source : Murdie, Rhyne et Bates, 1992.

- 9 Sous le même objectif de mesurer la qualité de vie, le rapport de la Fédération canadienne des municipalités (2001) proposait, dans une première ébauche de son modèle, des indices qui renvoyaient aux notions de capital humain (démographie et migration), de niveau de vie (revenu et coût de la vie), de qualité de l'emploi, du logement, de santé et de sécurité collective, de tension sociale et de sécurité communautaire. Par exemple, l'indice de tension sociale mettait l'accent sur les problèmes sociaux affectant les ménages ou les histoires de vie comme le pourcentage des familles monoparentales, le taux de suicide ou les faillites personnelles (tableau 3, Indice de la tension selon FCM). La qualité de vie était

aussi une affaire de satisfaction personnelle, vis-à-vis le logement d'abord, mais aussi vis-à-vis le cadre de vie et l'environnement social (Townshend, 2001).

- 10 En somme, les études sur la qualité de vie en milieu urbain sont incorporées depuis un certain nombre d'années, en plus des disparités sociales et l'inégale distribution des services et des équipements, des indices de tensions et la localisation des stress environnementaux. Des études spécifiques établissaient le lien entre la qualité de vie et la qualité de l'environnement, notamment Perloff et Blumenfeld qui abordaient les stress environnementaux et la vie quotidienne (Perloff, 1969 ; Blumenfeld, 1969). Ils identifiaient les problèmes de pollution, de congestion, de la circulation automobile et d'insécurité du cadre urbain comme des facteurs importants de la santé des collectivités. Dès lors, les critères de la qualité de vie pouvaient être mis en parallèle avec ceux de stress et d'insécurité du cadre de vie, ajoutant ainsi des critères supplémentaires à la conception jusque-là déterminée autour de notions de densité, de proximité et d'accessibilité. De telles études privilégient des espaces denses ou compacts, qui offriraient probablement, une meilleure accessibilité que des espaces de faible densité et non compacts. Dans cette perspective, on compte les approches communautaires, comme celle des *healthy city*, (Buchwald *et al.*, 2003 ; Evans, 2002 ; Aicher, 1998 ; Roseland, 1997 ; Burnman, 1997 ; Van der Ryn et Calthorpe, 1991 ; Hancock et Duhl, 1986) qui donnent une connotation positive aux facteurs environnementaux, d'équité sociale et de participation à la vie civique. Comme on est à même de le constater, la qualité de vie ou la durabilité environnementale sont comprises comme une proposition globale, voire intégrée, qui allie les comportements environnementalement corrects tels que l'usage des transports collectifs, l'intensité de la vie communautaire et l'équité sociale.
- 11 Dans cette foulée, les tentatives d'élaboration d'indicateurs de durabilité urbaine ont cherché à établir un système normatif pour évaluer notamment la progression de l'étalement urbain et la diminution des stress environnementaux (Maclaren, 1996a 1996b, Van Wijngaarden, 2001). Les modèles développés à travers l'expérience de développement durable urbain ciblent, comme *Sustainable Seattle*, en plus de la mesure de l'étalement urbain et les stress environnementaux, la participation des citoyens à la formulation de grands objectifs à atteindre pour parvenir au développement durable (Maclaren, 1996a, 1996b). Ils proposent ainsi de mesurer la participation communautaire ou la densité des réseaux sociaux, pour ainsi parvenir à évaluer le capital social et environnemental d'un territoire ou d'une ville (Ibid.). Par contre, la localisation de tels services communautaires peut, à l'occasion, susciter des réserves chez certains résidents.

L'intégration des perspectives sociales et environnementales

- 12 Si, depuis la Seconde Guerre mondiale aux États-Unis, il est proposé de développer des indicateurs en s'appuyant sur les données de recensement, afin de mener une analyse de l'espace social urbain, tout en construisant des indices de différenciation sociale qui croisaient le statut socio-économique, le statut familial et la structure résidentielle, il reste une grande insatisfaction vis-à-vis de telle approche et une difficulté encore indépassée à intégrer les problématiques environnementales et sociales (Sénécal, Hamel et Vachon, 2005).

- 13 La volonté d'intégrer plusieurs dimensions de la vie urbaine est cœur du modèle de la Fédération Canadienne des Municipalités (FCM), notamment la protection et l'amélioration de l'environnement naturel et bâti ; les possibilités de réaliser les objectifs, les espoirs et les aspirations personnelles ; la promotion d'un partage juste et équitable des ressources communes ; les possibilités pour les résidents de satisfaire leurs besoins fondamentaux ; la richesse des interactions sociales et l'inclusion de tous les résidents à la vie communautaire (FCM, 2004). Cette deuxième mouture du modèle de la FCM a été adoptée par plusieurs municipalités canadiennes, dont Ottawa, Toronto ou Calgary. Nous y reviendrons.
- 14 Par ailleurs, des métropoles canadiennes ont voulu aborder d'autres aspects dans leur stratégie de mesure, par exemple l'état de l'environnement ou du développement social. On pense ici à la stratégie de gestion de la croissance urbaine de la Ville d'Ottawa qui s'intéresse à la capacité de la communauté à améliorer le bien-être social et économique des résidents (Ville d'Ottawa, 2003). Dans la même veine, la Community Foundation tente justement d'arrimer le développement économique et le développement social, pour faire en sorte que la croissance se fasse de pair avec l'amélioration de la qualité de vie de l'ensemble des citoyens. Le projet de Toronto *Vital Signs* a pour fonction de reconnaître les tendances socio-démographiques en cours, tout en identifiant les inégalités sociales et ses effets (Toronto Community Foundation, 2004). En développement social, le plan de Toronto propose de soutenir la capacité d'agir dans une perspective partenariale et concertée (City of Toronto, 2001). L'ensemble de ces initiatives, tant de mesure de la qualité de vie que celles s'arrimant au développement social, s'inspire du schéma des indicateurs urbains qu'avait bien synthétisé le Modèle d'Orientation Communautaire de l'Environnement Habité (MOCEH) (Murdie, Dynes et Bates, 1992). Ce modèle retenait des indicateurs plutôt standards choisis en fonction de l'accessibilité des données. Les dimensions retenues étaient la vitalité économique, le mieux-être social, l'intégrité environnementale et la congruence culturelle. Le modèle était qualitatif et abordait, par exemple, la sécurité urbaine par le biais du taux de criminalité. Ses auteurs n'hésitaient pas, par ailleurs, à en reconnaître les limites.
- 15 Finalement, les avancées récentes, bien qu'utiles et nécessaires, ne renouvellent pas profondément l'expérience de mesure de qualité de vie. L'architecture des modèles de mesure de la qualité de vie a conservé une grande stabilité. Les rapports sur la qualité de vie dans les municipalités canadiennes de la FCM sont dans le droit fil des propositions du MOCEH. Il y est fait peu de place aux dimensions plus qualitatives, disons intangibles, que pourtant on ne manque pas de soulever, comme l'image du quartier, l'appartenance territoriale, la solidarité sociale, la capacité d'agir, les apprentissages collectifs, le sentiment d'insécurité, etc. Parmi ces dimensions, celles qui concernent le cadre de vie, l'esthétique et la perception participent également de la problématique de la qualité de vie. En définitive, le renouvellement des approches de mesure à l'aide de tableaux de bord appelle au recours à un certain nombre de dimensions de la qualité de vie, toujours évoquées mais rarement traitées, difficiles à aborder parce qu'elles concernent des aspects intangibles de la qualité de vie. Par ailleurs, le chevauchement des approches quantitatives et qualitatives demeure, encore aujourd'hui, et après plus de trente ans de débat, un défi.

Les rapports sur la mesure de la qualité de vie selon la FCM

- 16 Le système de rapport sur la qualité de vie (SRQDV) de la FCM a été instaurée dans le but de fournir aux municipalités un outil permettant mesurer les impacts produits par les changements dans les transferts de paiements fédéraux aux municipalités. Ce programme a comme objectif de mesurer, suivre et faire état de la qualité de vie dans les municipalités urbaines du Canada en utilisant des données provenant de diverses sources nationales et municipales. Regroupant initialement 16 municipalités en 1999, le SRQDV comprend maintenant 20 municipalités. Totalisant 40 pour cent de la population du Canada, ces municipalités comprennent certains des plus grands centres urbains du Canada, beaucoup de municipalités de banlieue, ainsi que des petites et moyennes municipalités dans sept provinces. À ce jour, deux rapports annuels et trois rapports thématiques ont été produits (voir tableau 2).

Tableau 2 : Évolution du système de mesure de la qualité de vie de la FCM : comparaison des modèles et rapports de 1999, 2001, 2004

Publication (année)	Dimensions / Indicateurs	Définition de la qualité de vie				
<table><tr><td>Quality of life in Canadian Community (1999) 16 municipalités participantes</td><td>8 dimensions 45 indicateurs</td></tr><tr><td>La qualité de vie dans les collectivités (2001) 18 municipalités participantes</td><td>10 dimensions (dont 2 en développement) 52 indicateurs (dont 11 en développement)</td></tr></table>		Quality of life in Canadian Community (1999) 16 municipalités participantes	8 dimensions 45 indicateurs	La qualité de vie dans les collectivités (2001) 18 municipalités participantes	10 dimensions (dont 2 en développement) 52 indicateurs (dont 11 en développement)	Aucune définition n'est présentée.
Quality of life in Canadian Community (1999) 16 municipalités participantes	8 dimensions 45 indicateurs					
La qualité de vie dans les collectivités (2001) 18 municipalités participantes	10 dimensions (dont 2 en développement) 52 indicateurs (dont 11 en développement)					
Rapport externe – Évaluation de la pertinence de la mesure. Évaluation de projet- Rapport Flett (2002). On y soulève le manque de conceptualisation de la qualité de vie.						

		La qualité de vie est définie selon 6 critères: 1. le développement et le maintien d'une économie locale prospère; 2. la protection et l'amélioration de l'environnement naturel et bâti; 3. des possibilités de réaliser les objectifs, espoirs et aspirations personnels; 4. la promotion d'un partage juste et équitable des ressources communes; 5. des possibilités pour les résidents de satisfaire à leurs besoins fondamentaux; 6. le soutien de riches interactions sociales et de l'inclusion de tous les résidents dans la vie communautaire.
2004 Rapport: Faits saillants 20 municipalités participantes	11 dimensions 72 indicateurs	
Rapport thématique 1: Revenus, logement et nécessités de la vie (2004) 20 municipalités participantes	Des 11 dimensions et 72 indicateurs, 26 indicateurs répartis en 5 dimensions sont étudiés	
Rapport thématique 2: Sociétés dynamiques et changement social (2004) 20 municipalités participantes	Des 11 dimensions et 72 indicateurs, 38 indicateurs répartis en 7 dimensions sont étudiés	
Rapport thématique 3: Croissance, économie et environnement urbain (2005) 20 municipalités participantes	Des 11 dimensions et 72 indicateurs, 17 indicateurs répartis en 5 dimensions sont étudiés	

Source : Fédération canadienne des municipalités, 1999, 2001, 2004

- 17 Il est à noter que la FCM ne tente pas d'établir un palmarès des meilleures villes canadiennes, mais plutôt de mettre en relief les changements qui s'opèrent dans les collectivités, que ce soit pour le mieux, ou non. Suite aux critiques du rapport Flett qui déplorait notamment l'absence de conceptualisation de la qualité de vie, les dimensions et des indicateurs ont été modifiés, ce que présente le tableau 3. Il est possible de déplorer ce changement alors que la majorité des indicateurs de la première version ont été renommés et modifiés pour devenir conformes aux travaux déjà existants.

Tableau 3 : Les dimensions étudiées par les rapports sur la qualité de vie des municipalités selon les années

Année	Dimensions	Exemple d'indicateurs
1999 2001	Capital humain (CH) : Croissance de la population ; niveaux d'instruction ; Littératie Niveau de vie (NV) : Tendance en matière de revenu ; Coût du transport public Qualité de l'emploi (QE) : Taux d'emploi et de chômage ; Salaire médian Qualité du logement (QL) : Revenu relatif au coût du logement ; recettes de taxes résidentielles Tension sociale (TS) : Proportion de famille monoparentale ; Taux de suicide Santé collective (SC) : Mortalité infantile ; Faible poids à la naissance Sécurité municipale (SM) : Délinquance juvénile ; Crimes violents Participation communautaire (PC) : Participation électorale ; Dons de charité Qualité de l'environnement : Nombre de jours d'alerte smog* Infrastructure sociale : Places en garderie par résident ; Rapports élèves-maître*	

Les villes de Vancouver, Burnaby, Calgary, Edmonton, Régina, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Windsor, London, Toronto, Hamilton, Peel, York, Ottawa, Waterloo et Halifax participent à ce premier rapport.

En 2001, la ville de Sudbury et la municipalité régionale de Halton se joignent au programme.

2004...	Données démographiques générales (DDG) : Revenu moyen ; Mobilité de la pop. Logement abordable et convenable (LAC) : Taux de disponibilité ; Loyer mensuel Engagement civique (EC) : Participation au scrutin ; Bénévolat ; Dons caritatifs Infrastructures communautaires et sociales (ICS) : Allocation d'aide sociale Éducation (ED) : Niveau d'études ; Niveau d'alphabétisation ; Dépenses d'éducation Emploi (EM) : Qualité des emplois ; Emplois de longue durée Économie locale (EL) : Faillites d'entreprise ; Taux de salaires horaires Environnement naturel (EN) : Qualité de l'air ; Densité de la population Santé personnelle et communautaire (SPC) : Nouveau-nés de faible poids ; Suicides Sécurité financière personnelle (SFC) : Abordabilité de la municipalité ; Écart de revenu Sécurité personnelle (SP) : Crimes violents ; Blessures et empoisonnements
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Aux municipalités participantes de 2001 s'ajoutent la ville de Kingston, la municipalité régionale de Niagara et la communauté métropolitaine de Québec alors que se retire la ville de Burnaby.

*** Ajout de 2001, ce sont des dimensions et des indicateurs encore en développement**

- 18 Dans l'ensemble, il s'agit d'une initiative répondant au but premier de fournir un outil aux collectivités participantes permettant de situer leur évolution par rapport à celle des autres, mais également de se situer dans le temps ainsi que de soulever leurs forces et leurs faiblesses.

L'intégration des aspects culturels et des ambiances urbaines

- 19 Le concept de qualité de vie a été associé, au Canada comme ailleurs, à l'élaboration des grandes politiques publiques et la mise en place de programmes sociaux qui ont fait de l'accessibilité aux services sociaux et de santé la pierre angulaire d'un projet métropolitain. De ce point de vue, la métropole viable était celle qui parvenait à établir une infrastructure efficace et accessible et, de la sorte, à répondre aux besoins des personnes. La qualité de vie est constituée de tout autant de points de services que des équipements assurant la mobilité entre ces points de services. La distance était le critère premier pour juger de l'accessibilité à tout ce qui assure la qualité de vie. On comprendra

que les premiers outils de mesure de la qualité de vie visaient, finalement, à évaluer l'avancée de l'État providence. Plus encore, les métropoles apparaissent comme les lieux par excellence de la qualité de vie puisqu'elles étaient le site privilégié des localisations d'infrastructures, d'équipes et de lieux de services de toutes sortes et ce, dans une perspective d'accessibilité spatiale optimale.

- 20 Le modèle d'orientation communautaire de l'environnement habité est venu clore ce cycle d'outils qui stipulaient qu'une métropole en santé, et incidemment prospère, se reconnaissait en croisant les statuts socio-économiques et les structures d'opportunités. Au demeurant, ce modèle introduit, dans le sillage du plan vert fédéral, les aspects environnementaux qu'ont développé par la suite Virginia McLaren (1996a et b) et la Table ronde nationale sur l'environnement et l'économie (2003). On y constate que ce sont les aspects physiques, comme le cadre bâti, les infrastructures urbaines et les équipements verts (parcs, aires de conservation, réseaux verts) qui étaient les marqueurs de la métropole durable. Par contre, les outils ne sont plus l'apanage des professionnels et des gestionnaires : ils se démocratisent. Les définitions du développement durable et du développement social ne sont pas tout à fait finies : la participation des citoyens, à l'intérieur des processus formels de délibération, serait de mise.
- 21 Avec l'approche du développement social, on s'attache plutôt aux difficultés rencontrées, notamment les tensions sociales et les populations marginales, pour situer la qualité de métropoles. Une métropole en santé et prospère est, dans l'esprit du modèle de la FCM, celle qui minimise les stress et tient compte des populations en difficultés. En d'autres termes, une métropole où règne la qualité de vie disposerait d'infrastructures performantes et de politiques publiques efficaces à même de gérer les tensions résiduelles.
- 22 De telles conceptions normatives ont traversé l'expérience canadienne de la mesure de la qualité de vie en milieu urbain, sans qu'elles soient acceptées de manière définitive. Une critique récurrente était à l'effet qu'on tenait compte des seuls aspects quantifiables. Dès les années 70, on a cherché à intégrer les aspects moins tangibles, comme la satisfaction et la perception. Ce type de mesures réalisées à l'aide de sondage a toutefois été reçu avec un certain scepticisme. Plus encore, ils ne faisaient que compléter, en interrogeant la satisfaction, les indicateurs plus classiques concernant la présence et l'accessibilité d'équipements, d'infrastructures et des services. Bref, on ne se contentait plus de les repérer dans les espaces urbains, on se demandait si les utilisateurs en étaient satisfaits. Plusieurs aspects sont demeurés inexplorés.
- 23 Parmi ceux-ci, les dimensions culturelles et identitaires étaient particulièrement négligées. Par dimensions culturelles et identitaires, on ne pense pas aux infrastructures culturelles, comme l'offre en théâtre et en cinéma, ni aux réseaux et équipements desservant les quartiers, mais au paysage urbain, aux ambiances et à l'esthétique. Des approches développées, notamment Richard Florida (2004), vont en ce sens. La qualité de vie n'y est plus considérée comme la sommation d'objets distribués dans l'espace métropolitain en fonction de statuts économiques. Les métropoles seraient devenues des emblèmes de la société globalisée et en compétition les une aux autres (Sassen, 2001). Et les personnes, en particulier la classe créative, participent de cette compétition à laquelle se livrent métropoles. Des facteurs comme la tolérance, la diversité culturelle et la place des artistes et autre bourgeois bohémiens viendraient en quelque sorte confirmer le caractère résolument viable et recherché des métropoles culturelles. Bien que critiqué pour sa méthodologie (Levine, 2004), notamment pour sa définition de la classe créative,

Florida a le mérite de situer la qualité de vie sous l'angle des dimensions ressenties par les personnes, certes ici par un groupe privilégié.

- 24 Ces personnes agissent comme des révélateurs de la qualité des paysages et des ambiances urbaines. Leur seule présence suffirait à révéler le caractère compétitif et innovateur de certaines métropoles. Cette posture tient essentiellement sur l'idée de l'accélération de la mobilité des personnes dites créatives : elles choisiraient des environnements de qualité, tolérants, plus exempts de risques urbains que d'autres.
- 25 Dans la même veine, Clark (2004) valorise le rôle de la culture dans la construction d'espaces urbains valorisés et appropriés, possédant le pouvoir de créer des ambiances recherchées. Une théorie des scènes urbaines est proposée afin de présenter la métropole comme une succession d'ambiances qui capturent l'essentiel de la qualité de vie (Silver, Clark et Rothfield, 2006). Le thème du « power of place » renouvelle les approches de la mesure de la qualité en mettant l'accent sur l'espace vécu et interprété par les individus, non pas à travers un filet de normes produites à la suite des politiques publiques, mais selon leurs préférences et leurs impressions. De telles scènes urbaines apportent leur lot de dividendes et assureraient vitalité et dynamisme à métropole. Quoi qu'il en soit, ces différents aspects, touchant la dimension culturelle et vécue des lieux, ne peut qu'être prise en compte à l'avenir dans la construction des modèles et tableaux de bord.

L'intégration du risque dans la mesure de la qualité de vie des métropoles

- 26 Une autre façon de situer ces questions de qualité de vie et de développement social des métropoles est d'en référer au concept de modernité réflexive (Giddens, 1994), dont la portée est avivée par l'idée que les sociétés industrielles seraient devenues des sociétés du risque (Beck 1986). Cette modernité réflexive, au sens où l'entend Giddens (1994), porte sur les discontinuités et des tensions que cela peut causer. En situant ces espaces déboîtés, selon l'expression de Giddens, se révèlent des tensions et des risques que la société doit affronter. Le risque renvoie à la confiance, au sentiment (ou perception de sécurité) et au danger calculé qu'une collectivité ou chacun de nous peut affronter. Il peut aussi être jugé à la lumière du manque de qualité des lieux traversés par les individus et à leur capacité de les fuir. Cela suppose d'engager un examen réflexif, c'est-à-dire procéder à l'examen constant des pratiques sociales (ibid., p. 46). Le savoir réflexif qui en résulte permet d'aborder les espaces de la vie quotidienne, autant en faisant appel à des autoconnaissances qu'à un large éventail de statistiques sociales (ibid., p. 49). De telle sorte que cet examen réflexif commande un état des connaissances sans cesse renouvelé, pour situer notamment les dimensions vécues de l'aménagement et de l'environnement (Rudolf, 2003).
- 27 Ainsi, la mesure de la qualité de vie revient à déterminer les niveaux de risque, d'incertitude ou de stress vécus, perçus localement à travers l'expérience urbaine par différents types d'acteurs sociaux et à différentes échelles de pertinence. Comme il convient de situer le niveau de plaisir, d'attractivité ou de convivialité qu'ils procurent. La réflexivité suppose une connaissance pratique de ces risques ainsi que des comportements individuels et collectifs qu'ils entraînent, afin non seulement de maîtriser le risque (Bourdin, 2003), mais aussi de penser la qualité de vie tout en apaisant le sentiment d'inconfort, ainsi que les peurs liées à l'expérience urbaine. Dès lors, la

réflexivité du risque s'incarne dans des processus de rationalisation dans lesquels les individus abordent des aspects de la vie urbaine comme les valeurs, l'éthique et l'équité sociale. C'est pourquoi, les tableaux de bord devraient être compris comme des instruments permettant de situer les grands enjeux sociaux et leur fabrication couplée aux débats sociaux qui traversent la société urbaine.

Conclusion : la qualité de vie est-elle soluble dans la compétitivité ?

- 28 La démarche de construction des tableaux de bord métropolitains a été liée, au Canada comme ailleurs, à la formulation des politiques publiques destinées aux villes. L'expérience canadienne de mesure de qualité de vie possède ainsi une temporalité qui n'est pas étrangère à l'évolution récente des sociétés occidentales. La période de croissance des années 60 et 70 était fortement marquée par la consolidation de l'État providence. Les premières initiatives tenaient donc pour essentielles la proximité et l'accessibilité à des services sociaux et à des infrastructures de santé et d'éducation. Une ville compétitive était forcément pourvue de tels services et équipements, et leur distribution à l'intérieur de la ville devait surtout servir à redresser les déséquilibres sociaux et les disparités territoriales. La période qui suivit était caractérisée par la montée de thématiques marquées du sceau de l'incertitude sociale et environnementale. De telles incertitudes étaient d'ailleurs accentuées par l'érosion des pratiques régulatrices des États. Les approches de développement social et de développement durable, qui ont démarré dans les années 80 et qui se prolongent encore aujourd'hui, postulent qu'une ville compétitive doit parvenir à résoudre, du moins en partie, de telles incertitudes, en atténuant les inégalités sociales et les stress environnementaux. Une autre tendance se dessine plus récemment, que reflètent bien les thèses de Richard Florida ou de Terry Clark, avec les notions d'innovation, d'ambiances urbaines et de métropole culturelle, convenues comme des facteurs de compétitivité urbaine.
- 29 Le contenu des tableaux de bord n'est donc pas socialement neutre. Il découle des intentionnalités des concepteurs comme des opérateurs publics chargés de leur mise en œuvre. La définition de la qualité a varié ainsi au gré des époques. Cela dit, il devient intéressant de rappeler que la logique des premiers outils de mesure de la qualité de vie se trouve dans l'énoncé des grandes politiques publiques de l'État providence, notamment du système nation d'assurance-santé canadien. De même, les indicateurs de développement durable et de développement social découlent sans nul doute de la prise de conscience de ce qu'Ulrich Beck (1986) a appelé la société du risque. Au Canada, il revient aux villes de gérer les problèmes sociaux vécus localement, ce qui explique le mandat de la FCM vis-à-vis la mise en place des tableaux de bords urbains et, parallèlement, l'énoncé de politiques et l'élaboration d'outils de mesure faits sous le chapeau du concept de développement social. Par ailleurs, les indicateurs de développement durable suivent l'énoncé de plan vert de 1990 (Canada, 1990). Mais, rédigés sous l'impulsion des groupes locaux, après l'abandon du plan vert, ils sont construits essentiellement pour favoriser des prises de conscience collectives et accroître les pressions sur les États et les grands décideurs sociaux. Il est moins certain que l'on sache vraiment les raisons qui motivent les propositions plus récentes et qui font de l'innovation et de la culture les facteurs premiers de la distinction entre les villes. On sait qu'elles se situent dans le débat plus large sur le devenir des métropoles qui oppose les

thèses décentralisatrices qui prophétisent le déclin des centres et de celles qui valorisent les centres villes intenses et animés. Les concepts de classe créative et de scènes urbaines soutiennent plutôt l'idée de la revitalisation des centres et des quartiers urbains à haut niveau d'intensité. Cela ne va pas, toutefois, sans favoriser certains groupes particuliers, comme les bourgeois bohèmes ou les membres de la classe créative. La compétitivité des villes se traduirait alors par la capacité d'attirer de tels individus mobiles et sans attaches réelles.

- 30 Finalement, le dévoilement des intentions affichées en amont de la construction des tableaux de bord constitue un exercice de réflexivité. Le retour sur un certain nombre de propositions qui se sont sédimentées au cours des dernières années exige, en effet, un effort critique de la part autant des chercheurs que des concepteurs de tableaux de bord, mais aussi des acteurs sociaux, voire de la population en général. Les défis sont nombreux. On en retiendra deux. D'abord celui d'intégrer des dimensions actuellement abordées séparément, comme l'offre de services publics et le cadre de vie, la santé des collectivités, la qualité de l'environnement, l'image de la ville, la culture et les scènes urbaines, ou encore la vie de quartier, le développement social, l'innovation, le niveau de tolérance. Cela revient à dire que la qualité de vie est une interface entre l'inéquité face aux stress et le plaisir que procure la vie urbaine. Un autre défi sera de saisir les dynamiques conflictuelles qui se trouvent à l'intérieur de chacune de ces dimensions. Selon cette optique, l'outil de mesure a pour première utilité de dévoiler les structures de tension présentes dans la société et projetées sur les territoires. Il importe donc de proposer un modèle théorique et méthodologique utile à la réflexivité. Penser la qualité de vie consiste dorénavant à penser le risque. Et une métropole qui se veut compétitive doit penser le risque.

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RÉSUMÉS

La mesure de la qualité de vie à l'intérieur des espaces urbains préoccupe les administrations publiques depuis nombre d'années. Cet article passe en revue les modèles de mesure de la qualité de vie développés par les métropoles canadiennes. Il s'interroge sur l'évolution de ces modèles de mesure et sur leur capacité à rendre compte des différentes problématiques désormais associées à la notion de qualité de vie comme le développement social, l'environnement, la société du risque, les ambiances urbaines ou la compétitivité urbaine.

For a number of years now, government bodies at all levels have been concerned with measuring quality of life within urban areas. This paper reviews the models used by Canada's metropolises to measure quality of life. It examines how the models have evolved and their capacity to consider various issues which have become associated with the notion of quality of life, such as social development, environment, risk society, urban surroundings, or urban competitiveness.

INDEX

Mots-clés : qualité de vie, tableau de bord, métropoles canadiennes, risque, compétitivité

Keywords : quality of life, evaluation report, canadian metropolitan areas, risk, competitiveness

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Livable City/Unequal City: The Politics of Policy-Making in a « Creative » Boomtown

Ville habitable/ville inégale : la politique de l'élaboration des politiques dans une ville « créative » en plein essor

Eugene J. McCann

Introduction

- 1 In a recent issue of the *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Leone Sandercock (2004) charts what she calls a “new planning imagination for the 21st Century.” Her paper identifies new ways in which we might conceive of the goals, methods, sites of engagement, and political potentialities of urban planning practice. She defines planning as an “always unfinished social project whose task is managing our coexistence in the shared spaces of cities and neighborhoods in such a way as to enrich human life and to work for social, cultural, and environmental justice” (Sandercock, 2004, p. 134 ; see also Sandercock, 1998 ; 2003). Her intent is to emphasize the need for planning to remain relevant to the contemporary economic and cultural characteristics of cities.
- 2 There are three elements of Sandercock’s work that are relevant here. First, she draws attention to the relationship between livability/quality of life/“enrich[ed] human life” and economic development in cities. Second, her paper presents a broad definition of urban policy-making that encompasses the actions of activists, the business community, and the media as well as city officials and politicians and, therefore, indicates that the formulation and adoption of urban policies is always a political process (Logan and Motlotch, 1987). Third, Sandercock draws attention to *imagination*, not as separate from reality but as productive of reality through its central role in “framing’ (Tarrow, 1992) social practice. More specifically, her work points to a particular type of social imagination – what David Harvey (1973, pp. 23-27), following Mills (1959), called the *geographical imagination* – whereby actors recognize how social relations are mediated by

space and through which they seek to use, shape, and manage space for specific purposes. This approach resonates with the wider understanding among geographers of the mutually constitutive relationship between urban social, political, and economic processes and urban space (Harvey, 1973 ; Soja, 1989 ; Lefebvre, 1991).

- 3 This paper will address the contemporary tendency in North American urban policy to uncritically seek to connect specific ideals of urban 'livability' with urban economic development policies that cater to the whims of Richard Florida's 'Creative Class' (Florida, 2004a). It will do so through an analysis of the politics of urban policy-making in Austin, Texas, a city Florida sees as a model for aspirant creative urban regions. Austin has 37.5 % of its workers employed in the Creative Class – third among large US urban regions, behind Washington, DC and Raleigh-Durham, NC (Florida 2004a, p. 368) – and it experienced a recent high-technology boom – a sector defined by Florida (2004a, p. 328) as part of the “Super-Creative Core” of the contemporary economy. The paper will outline two related spatial frames or parts of a geographical imagination, that underpin in Florida's argument – one which identifies an idealized vibrant urban neighborhood as the geographical nexus at which livability and economic competitiveness connect and another that positions individual cities within a wider context of competitors through the device of rankings and comparative tables. The paper will then address the case of Austin from 1997 to 2001, a period when a charismatic mayor and a Democrat-led, so-called “green council” enacted a set of policies aimed at growing the city's high tech economy while preserving its environment and enhancing quality of life. It will show how the council's attention to certain parts of the city and Austin planners' and local economic development specialists' attention to a mental map of cities to be learned from and competed against reflects Florida's perspective and, as his book indicates, has also influenced his account of how cities can become 'creative' (Florida, 2004a, pp. 190-191, 298-300).
- 4 The paper will subsequently turn to the question of inequality and its relationship to policies aimed at nurturing, attracting, and retaining the 'Creative Class.' It will examine debates in Austin over rising economic inequality and a related decrease in housing affordability which arose just as the city was gaining its reputation as an exemplar of 'new economy' urban success. This section will again focus on geographical framings to outline how activists, policy-makers, and politicians struggled over and sought to mitigate the negative consequence of Austin's high-technology boom and how this politics calls into question much of the rosy optimism of the Creative Class thesis.
- 5 In this context, the paper makes two related arguments : (1) an attention to space and spatiality – the interaction of space and social action (Soja, 1989) – offers analytical purchase on contemporary issues of urban development since urban policy, politics, and economic development reflect and shape geographical processes, including geographical imaginations and their spatial framings, and (2) the case of Austin suggests that even the most favored 'creative cities' are quickly forced to address the inequality which seems to result from Creative Class policies and, thus, advocates of the Creative Class thesis must address evidence of how creative cities are becoming increasingly *less* livable for many. Addressing this issue needs, the paper argues, the development of concrete policy strategies, not merely the sort of hand-wringing that has characterized much of the most prominent literature to this point.

The spatial politics of urban economic development and quality of life

- 6 The geographical aspect of contemporary efforts to fuse urban economic competitiveness with urban quality of life, or livability is captured by Logan and Molotch's (1987) phrase, "the political economy of place," which, along with Cochrane's (1999, p. 111) notion of the "the local politics of business" emphasizes the actions of "locally-dependent" (Cox and Mair, 1988) fractions of capital (rentiers, whose increased profit margins are dependent on the intensification of local land uses) and allied individuals and institutions (from the local media to developers and labor unions) in branding cities, shaping urban landscapes, and framing urban policy in reference to inter-urban competition (Hall and Hubbard, 1998; McCann, 2004; Ward, 2000a, 2000b). The importance of place and scale in these works emphasizes the centrality of spatiality at the heart of sociologists, political scientists, and geographers' understanding of contemporary urban development. A parallel focus of these literatures has been on the discursive and representational aspects of the politics of urban development that, according to Jessop (1998, p. 84-85 ; see also Boyle, 1999 ; Jonas and Wilson, 1999b ; McCann, 2002), increasingly involves, among other things, "modifying the spatial division of consumption through enhancing the quality of life for residents, commuters, and visitors."

- 7 Jessop's words echo Harvey's (1989, p. 12) argument that cities, once set on the treadmill of competition by larger structural forces, such as the reconfiguration of revenue streams from other levels of government, must "keep ahead of the game [by] engendering leap-frogging innovations in life-styles, cultural forms, products, and service mixes, even institutional and political forms, if they are to survive." There is a long social science and policy-making tradition of addressing factors involved in improving quality of life (such as decreased residential overcrowding and mitigating natural hazards) in order to create more socially just, equitable, and humane cities (Pacione, 1982 ; 1990). Yet, Harvey's emphasis on lifestyle in his discussion of urban entrepreneurialism indicates that quality of life is now routinely understood as a competitive advantage and defined in terms of consumption opportunities for wealthier and/or more economically valued class fractions who are able to choose the cities in which they live or invest on the basis of specific lifestyle characteristics.

- 8 This definition of urban economic competitiveness in relation to a narrow definition of quality of life (Ley, 1990), is especially evident in Richard Florida's (2004a) "Creative Class' discourse. It is a new policy vulgate or "commonplace' ("notions or theses *with* which one argues but *over* which there is no argument") (Bourdieu and Waquant, 2001, p. 2, their emphasis) that has become central to the entrepreneurial rhetoric of North American urban policy-makers (Peck, 2005). Florida's argument is that in order to be economically successful, cities must attract the "Creative Class' – young workers, primarily working in the sciences, engineering, the design professions – from architecture to product design – as well as the arts and education (Florida, 2004a). Cities' attractiveness, he suggests, is based on their ability to provide this class fraction with a high quality of life. "They like," says Florida,

indigenous street-level culture – a teeming blend of cafes, sidewalk musicians, and small galleries and bistros, where it is hard to draw the line between participant and observer, or between creativity and its creators (Florida, 2004a, p. 166).

- 9 According to this perspective, the city, if it is to be economically competitive, must be reshaped and repackaged as a consumption and lifestyle space that attracts the Creative Class.

Florida's geographical imagination

- 10 This has clearly been a persuasive argument for a wide range of cities (Peck, 2005). One aspect of its persuasive power that I would like to point to is Florida's skillful use of particular spatial frames – related elements of his geographical imagination. Each of these invokes certain images for policy actors, they are “causal stories” (Clarke and Gaile, 1997) or “regulating fictions” (Robinson, 2002) that help policy actors visualize their current practice, their creative future, and allow them to legitimize certain policy strategies over others.
- 11 Geographical imaginations are ways of seeing and understanding social space that influence how one acts in it and how one thinks it can be organized and managed (Soja, 1989 ; Harvey, 1990 ; Wolford, 2004). A geographical imagination, according to Harvey (1973, p. 24),
- enables the individual to recognize the role of space and place in his [sic] own biography, to relate to the spaces he sees around him, and to recognize how transactions between individuals and between organizations are affected by the space that separates them. It allows him to recognize the relationship which exists between him and his neighborhood, his territory, or . . . his "turf." It allows him to judge the relevance of events in other places ... It allows him to fashion and use space creatively and to appreciate the meaning of the spatial forms created by others.
- 12 More recently, Wolford (2004, p. 413), writing in a different context and elaborating on the cognate term, "spatial imaginaries," suggests that these ways of seeing are, “lens[es] for turning context into action.” This suggests that imagination, “no longer represents transcendence or escape, but is crucial – indeed the most crucial – form of social construction, of productive work” (Buell, 1994, p. 314 ; quoted in Olds, 2001, p. 48). Geographical imaginations allow urban policy actors to locate themselves in wider flows of knowledge (about good policies, for instance) and also motivate and legitimate their actions (e.g., efforts to attract the Creative Class). Each geographical imagination is a conception of society and space as they are, as they might, should, or will be. They are also social gathering points, around which actors converge to form interpretive communities, “who come together around a shared reading of a set of texts,” where “their shared reading serves as the basis for social action” (Duncan, 1990, pp. 155-156 ; see also Stock, 1986). Geographical imaginations like Florida's are, therefore, powerful. They permeate and constitute everyday urban policy-making.
- 13 Two spatial frames are particularly relevant here. The first is a mental map of successful or aspirant creative cities with which to compete or from which to learn. This is created through the “calculative practices” (Larner and Le Heron, 2002, p. 753) used to create Florida's indices of high-tech, innovation, gays, bohemians, talent, the melting pot, diversity, and creativity (Florida, 2004a, pp. 327-334). Subsequently these calculations lead to a ranked mapping of cities in terms of their levels of creativity (e.g., Florida, 2004a, p.xxii) which, I argue, are powerful and attractive spatial frames of reference for

policy-makers interested in competing with or learning from similar cities and interested in legitimizing their activities.

- 14 Florida's second spatial frame is an idealized vision of the vibrant, diverse, street-oriented, and creative urban neighborhood. Such neighborhoods – whether existing in the past, currently present, or promised for the future – are the rhetorical and spatial anchors of Florida's vision of creative city-regions (cf. McCann, 2007). His always-polished prose is at its liveliest when he describes these places and, as a result, I argue that the images he presents are powerfully persuasive to policy-makers and the general public, evoking as they do a sense of nostalgic familiarity coupled with anticipation of an urban future that is almost in reach.

- 15 This spatial framing is evident in his discussion of Jane Jacobs's Greenwich Village of the 1950s, and particularly Hudson Street, where she lived at the time : Her book, "celebrated the creativity and diversity of urban neighborhoods like her own Greenwich Village." "Jacobs's neighborhoods," Florida continues,

were veritable fountainheads of individuality, difference and social interaction. The miracle of these places, she argued, was found in the hurly-burly life of the street. The street, where many different kinds of people came together, was both a source of civility and a font for creativity (Florida, 2004a, pp. 41-42).

- 16 Florida argues that Jacobs's (1961) ideas are increasingly coming into their own :

Not only are urban neighborhoods similar to Hudson Street reviving across the country, but many of the principles that animated Hudson Street are diffusing through our economy and society. Workplaces, personal lives, entire industries and entire geographic regions are coming to operate on principles of constant, dynamic creative interaction (Florida, 2004a, p. 43).

- 17 This evocation of Jacobs's New York lays the foundation of many of the key arguments in Florida's book, particularly those that suggest the need for a fusion of economic development, "quality of life," and "quality of place." Here is Florida in the chapter entitled, "The Experiential Life," describing the appropriate milieu for the Creative Class – a type of space which cities must foster if they are to be economically competitive :

[T]he Creative Class is drawn to more organic and indigenous street-level culture . . . in multiuse urban neighborhoods. The neighborhood can be upscale like D.C.'s Georgetown or Boston's Back Bay, or reviving-downscale like D.C.'s Adams Morgan, New York's East Village, or Pittsburgh's South Side. Either way, it grows organically from its surroundings, and a sizable number of the creators and patrons of the culture live close by. This is what makes it "indigenous." (Florida, 2004a, p. 182).

- 18 "And then," he goes on, "if it is a proper street scene, there will be . . . a delicious sense of adventure in the air. One has an awareness of the possibilities of life [in such a place]" (Florida, 2004a, p. 186). Adventure and possibility can best grow in a certain type of space, he suggests, and in the vibrant urban neighborhood, they become the experiential building blocks of creativity :

I would further argue . . . that this kind of experience is essential to the creative process. We humans are not godlike ; we cannot create out of nothing. Creativity for us is an act of synthesis, and in order to create and synthesize, we need stimuli – bits and pieces to put together in new and unfamiliar ways¹, existing frameworks to deconstruct and transcend (Florida, 2004a, p. 186, my emphasis ; cf Jessop, 1997, p. 31).

- 19 These two spatial frames – the mental map of competitive creative cities and the vision of the livable, creative neighborhood – are geographically-grounded stories which link certain urban spaces and the geography of inter-city competition to current and future

visions of urban economies and societies. As 'causal stories' (Clarke and Gaile, 1997) around which groups of interpreters gather and in reference to which they develop policy (Stock, 1986), they are therefore powerful.

Keepin' Austin weird ? Geographies of policy and quality of life

- 20 Evidence of the power of Florida's geographical imagination and its two key frames, is widespread (Peck, 2005). How might a perspective that reads the contemporary influence of the Creative Class thesis in urban policy through the notion of the geographical imagination be useful in analyzing specific cases ? In the following paragraphs I will address this question by drawing on the politics of urban policy in Austin, Texas from 1997 to 2001. Austin is widely seen as the epitome of what might be termed a hometown/boomtown ideal in North America urban policy. By this I mean that the contemporary urban policy orthodoxy in North America suggests that successful cities must effectively blend a boomtown atmosphere – a vibrant economy, usually one structured around specific economic clusters such as semiconductors and electronics, computers and peripherals, and film and media – with a high quality of life which makes the place attractive as a hometown for business owners and their most valued employees (McCann, 2004). Austin is a city with a well-developed and still expanding technology sector, a growing population, a relatively low cost of living, an attractive environment, vibrant nightlife, and a strong arts sector, anchored by the music and movie industries.
- 21 While many North American cities have been adopted Florida's language and some of his policy ideas (Peck, 2005), the Austin case is more complex since the city was an exemplar for Florida – he drew some of his general principles from the study of the Austin case. Thus it might be seen as a proto-creative city, where some of the problems with the Creative Class model (such as the tendency towards increased economic inequality in creative cities) can be identified as clearly as any of its benefits (such as a tolerance for some forms of difference). The following two sub-sections discuss (1) the way Austin's policy-makers attempted to limit sprawl and to channel new development in ways that would enhance existing historical neighborhoods, thus promoting the sort of vibrant street-life that Florida celebrates and (2) how these internal policy interventions are shaped by an inter-city imagination of best policy practices and exemplary cities to be emulated or competed against – a mental map that is reflected in Florida's rankings of the top creative cities. These will lead to a discussion, in the next section of the paper, of the politics and geography of inequality in Austin.
- 22 The empirical material is based on fieldwork in Austin in Fall 2000, which employed semi-structured interviews with key informants (planners, members of the business community and neighborhood activists), direct observation of planning meetings, and archival research. Eighteen interviews, 45 minutes to two hours long, were conducted. Direct observation in various settings provided the opportunity to view how analyses of policy challenges were articulated in the political process. Archival research on government documents, newspapers, and materials distributed by activist organizations was also used during the period in Austin and afterwards.
- 23 Shaping vibrant, livable central city neighborhoods through planning policy

Redevelopment of downtown Austin is one of the priorities of the Smart Growth Initiative. The vision for downtown is a vibrant, diverse, neighborhood with a mix of cultural, employment, entertainment, residential, and retail uses.

City of Austin (1997, p. 3)

24 In Austin, after the election of the “green council” in 1997, the policy agenda soon focused on promoting economic development while managing the negative effects of growth on both the surrounding natural environment and also on central city neighborhoods. In this context, planning policy was reformulated around a Smart Growth agenda that had at its center a participatory neighborhood planning program, branded with the slogan “Neighborhoods First.” The two related intentions of the Smart Growth approach were first to discourage growth on environmentally sensitive land on the city’s edges and, instead, to channel that growth toward the downtown and a central city core defined by the city’s immediate post-war boundaries. Second, the neighborhood planning component of the strategy was intended manage new central city growth in order to maintain and promote the attractiveness of urban neighborhoods as they were impacted by new investment (McCann, 2003).

25 The city’s approach, then, was tied to a specific geographical imagination, frame, or causal story that guided and legitimated policy. In it, certain parts of the city were understood as particularly important objects of planning, either as problem areas to be managed (the growing suburbs) or as areas with the potential to attract the desirable populations (the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods). As a senior planner, resonating with Florida’s discussion of vibrant urban neighborhoods, put it,

One of the things, though that the Mayor sort of hooked on to, was . . . the fact that there’s a changing demographic going on here and everywhere else around the country. . . . [M]any young people who are tired and bored with the suburbs [are] interested in living downtown. So you’ve got this renaissance of downtown going on . . . and the Mayor and the Smart Growth Program have helped each other to help that process move forward (Interview with senior planner, November 6, 2000).

26 The control of sprawl, in this context, is part of a policy strategy aimed at promoting the “quality of life” and “quality of place” of central city neighborhoods and, in turn, to maintain and encourage the development of a high technology economy. While Florida (2004a, p. 290) makes a strong case for the importance of urban neighborhoods like Jacobs’s Greenwich Village, he also notes the links between sprawl-control and neighborhood-building strategies:

[I]n one of the most ironic twists in recent memory, both sprawling cities and traditional suburbs are seeking to emulate elements of urban life. Cities like Atlanta, Los Angeles, Phoenix and San Jose have all undertaken major efforts to increase density in and around their urban centers, develop downtown housing and redevelop their downtown cores. San Diego has embarked on an ambitious \$2.5 billion “City of Villages” initiative to generate more compact, community-oriented development by rebuilding its older neighborhoods as pedestrian-friendly centers, where homes are close to shops, parks and public transit.

27 Vibrant central city neighborhoods and their relationship to a certain definition of livability, are, then, central to Florida’s geographical imagination and to that of Austin’s politicians and policy professionals. As a City of Austin (1997, p. 1) document puts it, “[t]o address [problems of rapid growth] Smart Growth emphasizes the concept of developing “livable” cities and towns.”

Livability suggests, among other things, that the quality of our built environment and how well we preserve the natural environment directly affect our quality of

life. Smart Growth calls for the investment of time, attention, and resources in central cities and older suburbs to restore community and vitality to these areas (City of Austin, 1997, p. 1).

- 28 Following Clarke and Gaile (1997), this geographical imagination can be understood as a "causal story" which encourages, frames, and legitimates certain policy interventions. Austin's experience with this particular imagination in turn provided partial inspiration for Florida's arguments, as did a second spatial frame to which I will now turn.

Cities, good and bad: Politicians' and policy professionals' moral geography of urban policy

Austin or Houston ? You Decide.

Political campaign poster, Austin, Fall 2000

- 29 While the attention of Austin's politicians and planners was focused in part on the creation of a vibrant central city through the Smart Growth Initiative, those same actors along with the city's economic development professionals – in the city government and in the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce – were also developing a spatial frame which positioned their practice within a wider inter-urban geography of learning and competition. Through this frame, they positioned Austin, its quality of life, and economic competitiveness in relation to other cities and thus were able to advocate for and legitimate certain policy strategies. This inter-urban geographical imagination was frequently framed in terms of hierarchies or rankings that : (1) identified cities where positive or negative lessons about urban planning policy could be learned and (2) highlighted cities to be competed against for investment. These hierarchicalizations were simultaneously spatialized as part of a mental map or moral geography of good and bad places.

- 30 Local politicians and policy-makers actively sought out examples from elsewhere as they shaped and legitimated their Smart Growth approach. Specifically, the mayor took the lead in bringing the Smart Growth approach to Texas by "basically copying [Governor] Paris Glendenning's [highly regarded state-wide Smart Growth] effort in Maryland, but at a local level" (Interview with senior planner, November 6, 2000) and by subsequently hosting a national Smart Growth conference in 1998 (Interview with planner, October 17, 2000). More specifically, the planner in charge of the Neighborhood Planning element of the Smart growth process described how

we looked to Portland [Oregon] and we looked to [others places to] get these ideals from places, to design the initial program. [We did a] survey of neighborhood planning events in Texas to see what are those cities working with and to really learn about . . . their process and what they thought has worked out. And I think that our process of course is different from Houston because Houston doesn't zone. Our process is somewhat different from Portland, in that they have an excellent, excellent program. They really, they have a lot of funding for other things that we haven't been able to obtain (Interview with planner, October 12, 2000).

- 31 The focus on Portland was an obvious choice for a group of planners with a longstanding regard for the city as an exemplary place for growth management and the maintenance of vibrant neighborhoods. As Austin's chief Smart Growth Planner put it when asked to identify cities Austin modeled itself upon,

Portland has always held up as the prime example and its certainly been mentioned prominently here. I think you could probably talk about a number of west coast cities – Portland, Seattle ... Just the idea that you could have a very different type of city, from what we tend to have around here, you know. One that is not so auto-based ... (Interview with planner, October 17, 2000)

- 32 The other side of this moral geography highlights the cities that Austin's policy-makers view as cautionary examples. San Jose, California, at the heart of Silicon Valley, is a very different west coast city from Portland. It is a place with a high cost of living and problematic traffic congestion. It is frequently cited in Austin as a cautionary tale. "[We] don't want Austin to become the next Silicon Valley, in terms of quality of life," said a member of a local high tech trade association. She continued, "... there is a real sense that the economic engine that we are fueling is fantastic, but we don't want it to run over what is Austin" (Interview with trade association representative, October 12 2000). A local columnist echoed these sentiments: "[Silicon Valley] illustrate[s] the conundrum of prosperous, glittering new regions that attract brains and bravado. The regions spawn clusters of businesses, spin wealth for fortunate, highly skilled workers and, inadvertently, create a starkly divided cultural landscape in which poorer people are pushed farther out to the margins of society. . . . Is this Austin's future?" (*Austin American-Statesman*, 2000, p.A14).
- 33 Similarly, in the election of November 2000, Austin's ballot included an opportunity for the city's residents to vote on a proposal to fund a light rail system in the city. The proposal was strongly supported by incumbent politicians and policy-makers, who argued that it would mitigate the worst effects of traffic congestion in the rapidly growing city. Again, this local infrastructure proposal, which failed by the slimmest of margins, was framed in terms of an inter-urban geographical imagination. In the weeks before the election, signs appeared around the city with the following text: "Austin or L.A. ? You Decide. Vote Light Rail" (another version asked "Austin or Houston ? . . ."). While the campaign was unsuccessful, the imaginative geography it invoked both reflected and resonated with many in Austin who worried about a possible negative future for the city. A similar, if less explicit, sentiment was expressed in a bumper sticker that began appearing at approximately the same time. The sticker demanded, "Keep Austin Weird," and spoke to fears that the influx of technology workers – many who were attracted from California by Austin's relatively low cost of living – threatened to dilute the city's bohemian spirit in favor of corporatization and "Californication."
- 34 This spatial frame dovetails with that of city's economic development professionals and the greater Austin Chamber of Commerce. They identified a group of US cities that are Austin's main economic competition. The cities – Boulder and Denver, Colorado ; Phoenix, Arizona ; Portland, Oregon ; Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina ; Salt Lake City, Utah ; San Jose, California ; and Seattle, Washington – are, according to the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce,
- [metropolitan] regions chosen because, like Austin, they are high-tech centers, and because they are the competition. The Chamber has seen many businesses consider these benchmarked regions when locating or expanding in Austin (Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce, 2000, p. iii, my emphasis).
- 35 This geography, like that described previously, reflects an understanding of Austin's place within more widespread networks of interaction – circuits of policy knowledge and of capital. It resonates with the mental map produced by Florida's ranking of "creative cities" which places Austin at the top of the list, followed by San Francisco, Seattle, Boston, Raleigh-Durham, and Portland. Again, I want to argue that these imaginations should be seen as produced by and productive of the material practices of politicians, city planning and economic development staff, and business leaders. They are the causal

stories that framed and legitimated Austin's late-1990s push towards what Florida would later term the Creative Economy.

Livability for whom ? Inequality, politics, and the limits of the Creative Class thesis

- 36 In the preceding sections, I have suggested that contemporary urban policy-making aimed at nurturing, attracting, and retaining the group of workers and capitalists Richard Florida dubs the Creative Class has partly entailed the deployment of a particular geographical imagination. This imagination is underpinned by an ideal of vibrant, creative urban neighborhoods and by a mental map of cities to be learned from in terms of good urban policy and to be competed against for creative talent and high-tech investment. This geographical imagination and its intrinsic spatial frames are important, I suggest, because they are causal stories that encourage and legitimate specific policy interventions in the built environment and in the economic base of cities. I show that this imagination is evident both in Florida's writing and in the policy discourse of Austin in the period 1997-2001. Austin, I argue, can be seen as a proto-creative city ; one that inspired Florida's account and that has continued to develop policies in parallel with those he proposes.
- 37 I will now suggest, however, that while the Austin's experience and Florida's writings do seem to run in tandem, there is a point at which the reality of the rise of a high-tech, "creative" economy in Austin diverges from the rather rosy account of the Creative Class and its impact on cities that is featured in Florida's work. This divergence is caused by rising levels of economic inequality that are certainly correlated with, and are likely caused by the rise of the Creative Class. While, as I will show, Florida is aware of this problem but chooses to avoid dealing with it in any sustained and serious manner, Austin's politicians, planners, and economic development professionals have, since the mid-1990s, been forced to address its various dimensions. There has been a politics of inequality in Austin – inflected again by a strong spatial framing – which has brought politicians and policy professionals into engagement with a range of critics, journalists, and activists and, during the late 1990s and the beginning of the current decade, has entailed the development of a number of concrete, if unevenly successful, policies to mitigate the effects of the city's high-tech boom. The politics and policy interventions aimed at reducing inequality and of the politics surrounding questions of livability that were necessary in Austin are not reflected in the generally optimistic and apolitical writings produced by Florida. Arguments about the Creative Class must seriously address the relationship between policies aimed at this group and the economic inequality that is making cities *less* livable for many.
- 38 "The glittering signs of the new economy are becoming a familiar sight around these parts – the cranes and construction cones, the millionaires and megaplexes, the technology and traffic," noted an editorial in the *Austin American-Statesman* (2000b, p.A14). Yet, "[p]aralyzing poverty in a time of plenty is fast becoming the catch phrase for [Austin's] new economy". Austin's economic boom came with an attendant income bifurcation, which was a prominent discussion point in the city, not just in terms of its impacts on Austin's long-term economic competitiveness but also in terms of its quality of life. In 1990, the city's top decile of earners made 5.7 times the average wage of the

lowest-earning ten percent. At the end of the decade, during the height of the city's economic boom, those at the top earned 11.1 times as much as those at the bottom (Bishop, 2000, p.A1). At the same time, 13.1 % of the city's population lived in poverty, while the US average was 12.7 % (Sustainability Indicators Project, 2000).

- 39 Addressing these figures, a columnist for the *American-Statesman* argued that,
- [t]he rapidly increasing gap between rich and poor can contribute to ill health and crime, economists contend. And the gap could slow economic growth as companies find it difficult to do business in a region where most workers can't afford to live in most parts of the city. . . . Lower-wage workers can no longer find housing near their work. It becomes more expensive for them to connect to the labor market and harder for the labor market to connect to them (Bishop, 2000, p.A1).
- 40 Local politicians have expressed similar worries (Ibid.), as have planners and activists (Interviews with planners and activists, October and November, 2000). Another columnist crystallizes these concerns, again in terms of economic competitiveness and livability. Referring to the increasing tendency of Austin's new high tech elite to build hilltop mansions on the edges of the city with majestic views of the surrounding Texas Hill Country, while also being involved in local environmental initiatives, she argues that,
- People who have the means to enjoy living here often define success in economic or environmental terms. In the past year, environmentalists and business boosters forged a delicate alliance based on a report that said businesses consider quality of life when deciding where to move. . . . Economic development and the environment were linked. Yet we've overlooked one E in the three Es of quality of life : social equity. . . . There is much to be preserved in this region. Including people, not just vistas (Richardson, 1999).
- 41 It is worth noting that Florida is compelled, in the preface to the paperback edition of *The Rise of the Creative Class*, to acknowledge that there does indeed seem to be a correlation between the characteristics of cities that make them "creative" and the characteristics that make them socially and economically unequal. His analysis reveals that "inequality is highest in the creative epicenters of the US economy" (Florida, 2004a, p.xv) and that Austin – his top creative city (p.xxii) – also ranks fourth in the US in terms of levels of wage inequality (p.xvi). Yet, while Florida expresses disquiet over the probable causal relationship between creativity and inequality, he does not go beyond hand-wringing and offers no ideas for concrete policy solutions – merely opining that some city will eventually figure it out (p.xvii) and elsewhere suggesting that inequality is an "open question" for policy-makers (Florida, 2004b).
- 42 This seems less than helpful for cities that, like Austin, have found inequality on the rise in parallel with the "new economy." In Austin, inequality was particularly evident in relation to housing. Austin's boom in the 1990s drove up housing costs to the point where many who worked in the city were forced to look elsewhere for affordable accommodation while many long-term residents with below-average incomes were increasingly likely to experience, or fear the prospect of, displacement as a result of gentrification. In 1997, the median house price in the city (\$108,200) exceeded that of Texas' other major cities while Austin's median income (\$35,118) was lower than any of those cities. This created a considerable housing affordability gap (Breyer, 1997). By the end of the decade, 55-60 % of the city's housing was affordable, down from 62 % in 1991. This figure was 8 % lower than the national average (Sustainability Indicators Project, 2000). The city also dropped 40 places in a national survey of housing affordability in the

1990s (*Austin American-Statesman*, 2000) and was ranked as the second least affordable housing market in the US South in 1997 (Breyer, 1997).

- 43 The question of economic inequality and declining quality of life for many in the metropolitan population was the focus of policy and politics. In April, 2000 the mayor proposed a series of related policies aimed at increasing the amount of middle- and low-income housing. These proposals complemented a longer standing set of "SMART [Safe, Mixed-income, Accessible, Reasonably-priced, Transit-oriented] Housing Incentives' that were part of Austin's original Smart Growth approach (Interviews, 2000 ; Rivera, 2000). Reacting against visions of Silicon Valley and spurred by city staff's assertion that "[t]here's no question we have a housing crisis in Austin" (Hilgers, quoted in Breyer, 2000, p.G1), the mayor argued that "[o]ne of the ways that Austin is no longer Austin is if we are only a city of the rich and poor and we don't have the ability to have other people live in this town" (Watson, quoted in Rivera, 2000, p.A1 ; see also Greenberger, 1998).
- 44 These policy initiatives were spurred, to a great extent, by the prospect of the middle class – including public employees such as police officers, firefighters, teachers, nurses, and planners – being priced out of the city. It evoked a possible future geography of negative social and environmental consequences resulting from sprawl and unaffordability. In this geographical imagination, the Austin metropolitan region would become a sprawling place of commuter-clogged roads, traffic spewing noxious fumes as workers, pushed to the suburbs and surrounding towns in search of affordable housing, commuted back and forth to the central city each day. It further threatened a bland geography of monocultural enclaves linked by arterial highways yet ironically segregated by the individualized car dependency upon which this socio-spatial form is based.
- 45 The worries of, and about, the middle class in Austin were paralleled and often challenged by political activist groups based in the city's poorest neighborhoods, located east of downtown. These groups saw the city's economic boom, its housing affordability crisis, and the Neighborhood Planning policies intended to alleviate it as particular threats to Austin's Latino and African-American poor. They were vociferous, yet eventually unsuccessful, in opposing attempts to rezone poor central city neighborhoods to allow mixed uses and multi-family housing (McCann, 2003). These policy changes would, they argued, lead to the displacement of large number of existing residents who rented single-family housing in the neighborhoods as landlords converted this housing stock into new profitable developments with shops on the ground floor and lofts or condos above. As a leading activist put it, "whenever there is a big economic boom, all we can do is just pray. Because we know we are going to lose a lot of the land." Expressing her organization's worries over gentrification, she argued that,
- commercialization and mixed use [in East Austin neighborhoods] is going to be [high rent] condominiums and lofts. We don't fit into that equation at all . . . so to our people, it's just a major displacement. That's what we're saying. It's just a major displacement that is coming into our communities, and by changing all that zoning, all those people [gentrifiers] have been waiting to cross over [the boundaries of the neighborhoods]. . . . They are going to now move us all east of [Highway]183. . . . And that's what we're seeing right now – you know the gentrification, and the move out of our community to further east. And the zoning is one way of how they are going to do it (Interview with neighborhood activist, October 18, 2000).
- 46 This is a vision of Austin focused not on the benefits of the Creative Class but on the forward march of gentrification frontiers through the urban core (Smith, 1996) and the

subsequent scattering of Austin's long-established and tight knit low-income communities.

- 47 Tellingly, gentrification is not a term included in the extensive index of *The Rise of the Creative Class*. Florida occasionally touches on it in the text, however. Yet when he does, it is in passing and the topic is quickly dispatched in favor of a more familiar optimistic narrative. For example, Florida (2004a, p. 312) acknowledges that "deep social divides remain" in rejuvenating Pittsburgh.

The edgy street-level venues of Garfield and the new upscale development on the South Side do little to address the desperate plight of a large economic underclass. And while growing numbers of Creative Class types infiltrate and gentrify low-income urban areas, huge numbers of people in all classes continue to segregate themselves distinctly into different places – and different ways of life – along income and racial lines.

- 48 Here, not only is the topic dealt with quickly and without any concrete policy prescriptions but it is phrased in such a way – "... classes continue to *segregate themselves* ..." (Ibid. my emphasis) – that blame for gentrification and the inequality it fosters seems to be laid at the feet of its victims and their "choices." While some politicians and activists in places like Austin struggle to shape socially just economic futures, they find little in the largely apolitical and Pollyannaish Creative Class literature to aid them.

Conclusion

Every technical task involves a decision ... about what counts.
Sandercock (2004, p. 136)

- 49 This paper makes two related arguments. It suggests that an attention to the framing and legitimizing role of geographical imaginations provides useful analytical purchase on contemporary urban development policy-making. Secondly, using the case of Richard Florida's Creative Class thesis and that of Austin, Texas' experience as it became seen as an exemplary "creative city," the paper argues that the most prominent work on the Creative Class does a disservice to policy-makers looking to fully understand the range of positive *and negative* consequences of its proposed policy model. Thus, I suggest that Florida and others must take issues of inequality in "creative cities" more seriously, move beyond hand-wringing, and offer concrete policy prescriptions that promise to make those cities livable for more than just the Creative Class.
- 50 In reference to Sandercock's words on urban policy-making above, it seems, then, that only certain aspects of cities count for many proponents of the Creative Class thesis. For Florida, questions of inequality seem to count for less than optimistic and idealized visions of vibrant urban neighborhoods and an archipelago of "creative cities" strung out across the United States and, increasingly, the world (Florida, 2005). At first glance, what counted for Austin's party-political, business, and bureaucratic policy actors was the development of technology-oriented industries, attracting and retaining of "creative" workers, and the reassertion of the urban core as a live-work space for this class fraction. At most it seemed that these actors had accepted what Peck (2005, p. 766) describes as Florida's vision of "a form of creative trickle down" to aid the "two-thirds of the population languishing in the working and service classes." It is clear, however, that while it is possible for highly-mobile, trans-local consultants like Florida to remain detached from the questions of inequality that emerge in cities as they experience high-

technology booms, politicians, journalists, activists, and residents are forced to engage with the destructive elements of these changes (e.g., wage inequality, housing affordability gaps, displacement, and increased commute times) and ask for whom it is that their quality of life and quality of place is being shaped ?

- 51 Solutions will not be found in the popular Creative Class work. They are more likely to be found through the careful study of the politics of policy-making in cities like Austin. The city is a cautionary example of the limits of the creative Class thesis but its experience offers the concrete starting points for a discussion of the appropriate policies to mitigate urban inequalities. In Austin, the extreme conditions of the boom years have lessened since 2000. Evidence suggests, however, that this change is due more to a global downturn in the economy which severely impacted the city in the early years of this century, robbing it of its boomtown status, and that inequality in wages or housing affordability among other measures has by no means been eliminated (Central Texas Sustainability Indicators Project, 2004). Thus, the question of the effectiveness of some of Austin's anti-inequality policies remains one to be explored further. However, the widespread acknowledgement of the link between rapid economic growth and problems of inequality and declining quality of life in the city should provide pause for thought for policy-makers attracted to the increasingly hegemonic creative city' ideal.

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ABSTRACTS

There is a tendency in contemporary North American urban policy-making to uncritically connect specific ideals of urban 'livability' with efforts to cater to the whims of the so-called 'Creative Class.' The paper engages with this tendency through an analysis of the politics of urban policy-making in Austin, Texas – a place regarded as an exemplar of 'livability' and 'creativity.' With reference to the Austin case, the paper identifies and describes two related spatial frames that underpin the 'Creative Class' thesis and its relationship to a certain conception of urban livability – an idealization of the vibrant urban neighbourhood and a moral geography of competing 'livable' and 'creative' cities. The paper then addresses the question of inequality and its relationship to policies aimed at nurturing, attracting, and retaining the 'Creative Class.' This is done through a discussion of Austin's experience of rising economic inequality and declining housing affordability just as the city became 'creative' and 'livable.' The paper's core argument is that policy-makers must acknowledge and address the inequality that seems to result from the implementation of narrow 'livability' and 'creativity' policies and that advocates of the 'Creative Class' thesis must address, with more than hand-wringing and platitudes, evidence that 'creative cities' are becoming increasingly less livable for most people.

INDEX

Keywords: inequality, livability, 'creative class' thesis, urban politics, space

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Place Ratings, Shifting Neoliberalism and Quality of Life in Communities

Classement des lieux, le néolibéralisme en mutation et la qualité de vie dans les communautés

Rémy Tremblay, Robert Rogerson and Hugues Chicoine

Introduction

- 1 For a quarter of a century now, the *Places Rated Almanac* (PRA) has been helping Americans find their ‘best’ place to live. ‘Best’ in this context is clearly a subjective attribute that may be more accurately considered as shorthand for “most suited to individual interests”. Nonetheless its comparisons have clearly resonated with businesses and policy planners as well as individuals as a means to learn about other places as well as their own. Whether the target audience was the average American family looking for a change of scenery, or more specialised groups such as economic developers or retirees in search of their place in the sun, David Savageau and his co-authors have succeeded in publishing a series of best-selling guides to hundreds of communities across North America. In fact, since their first edition was published, they have been responsible for a veritable niche industry, providing not only a relative barometer on the evolution of American communities but also stimulating many competing and complementary ratings by other commercial and academic organisations in North America and around the world.
- 2 While each guide has been controversial, as rankings inevitably are, none of the criticisms of the various PRA guides slowed the juggernaut of their commercial success. The 1981 edition (Boyer and Savageau, 1981), published by Rand McNally, was arguably the first serious attempt in the USA to popularise a statistical ranking of communities and their quality of life, and it had within 12 months been reprinted four times. Similarly the 1985 edition was reprinted three times within a year. While the later editions – the *Places Rated Almanac, Millennium Edition* (Savageau and D’Agostino, 2000) and the special edition of the

Retirement Places Rated (Savageau, 2004) – have not sold as many copies as the original versions, they remain best sellers, with the latest editions of PRA being published in September 2007 (Savageau, 2007).

- 3 This critical essay explores why such popularity of place ratings continues within the US, and how such ratings have morphed over the past two decades. In particular, the paper explores ways in which PRA and its offspring have reflected and reacted to the changing nature of neoliberalism and the needs of capital. It argues that the continuing relevance of the PRA is related to its capacity to appeal not only to the place competitiveness of ‘roll back’ neoliberalism of the 1990s but also to the new forms of ‘roll out’ neoliberalism which foregrounds ‘social policy making’ (Peck and Tickell, 2002). It does so by considering three issues, with first an exploration of the continuing resonance of ratings within the shifting context of urban politics and the ‘new’ political economy of cities. Second, associated with a move beyond the singularity of economic competitiveness, it explores the extent to which the basis of the rankings reflects a form neo-imperialism. Finally, the essay considers how even without substantive evidence that almanacs such as the PRA have shaped patterns of migration, there is a utility of such ratings for communities in their engagement with social and economic agendas arising from roll out neoliberalism.

The almanacs’ neoliberal credentials

- 4 The PRA was a birthchild of the neoliberal era of the early 1980s. Its foundation was the growing restlessness of Americans with their current living and working locations – more than 5 million moved annually in the late 1970s – and the entrepreneurial opportunities created by the rapidly expanding data sets about local places. It capitalised on the switch from nationally and centrally driven Fordist-Keynesian policies towards more market oriented, neoliberal economic policies where movement of capital – human as well as financial – was central to economic well-being. And the almanac resonated with the notion of a ‘new urban politics’ (NUP) in which cities were increasingly pitied against each other in their search to tap into growth opportunities.
- 5 Such NUP was linked with new forms of urban leadership; ones which were more entrepreneurial, growth-oriented and adopting the characteristics of the private sector – risk taking, inventiveness, promotional and profit motivated (Cox and Mair, 1988, Harvey, 1989a). For those involved in these new public-private partnerships promoting urban growth, new emphasis was placed not only on exploiting the differential characteristics of cities in order to compete for private and public investment, but also on the need for clear evidence to support claims of local competitive advantage.
- 6 Alongside attempts to produce and cultivate the forms of agglomeration economies which have characterised Silicon Valley and Los Angeles (Davis, 1990) or ‘Little Italy’ in Europe (Bianchini and Parkinson, 1993), the formation of informational cities and networked tiers of ‘global cities’ (Taylor, 1995), and the capturing of hallmark events, property-led redevelopments (characterised by Baltimore’s transformation, Harvey (1989b)), place rating at a national and international level became important as places openly competing in this new neoliberal and globalised world.
- 7 At least part of the success of the PRA was the synchronicity of this new political economy context with Boyer and Savageau’s assessment that in the increasingly mobile United

States, there was a dearth of information about places to assist relocators – and city marketeers. The PRA capitalised on the provision by US National Census Bureau of much richer geographical data, opening up possibilities for more sophisticated analysis of living conditions below state level. Liu's (1976) pioneering study had already shown the possibilities of drawing on this locally-based data-rich environment to undertake a statistical analysis of the 'quality of living conditions in metropolitan areas' and reveal that there were strong differences across the (then) 243 standard metropolitan statistical areas (SMSAs). It was in this new research space that the PRA was located. Like Liu, they analysed not only the separate dimensions of a place's attractiveness but also derived a cumulative index of what they later termed 'quality of life'.

- 8 Although immediately subjected to criticism over its statistical base, the computational analysis and weightings, and the limited conceptual and theoretical underpinnings (Bell, 1984 ; Pierce, 1985 ; Cutter, 1985), the PRA nevertheless became itself a benchmark of place rating, and what became quality of life rankings of places. Such ratings became fashionable as part of the armoury of tools available to growth coalitions and city development authorities/agencies in their attempt to capture the diversity of economic capital available (Harvey, 1989a). In particular, rankings were utilised in the promotion of places ; 'selling the city' as a product (Ashworth and Voogd, 1990). Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, such place promotion on the basis of relative performance in league tables was a common component of those charged with economic development (Amin and Thrift, 2002). Places rated highly – even if only on a selective set of features – used these in justification of their attractiveness. Those at the other 'end' of the table deployed rankings as justification for investment from the state to raise them to a more level playing field in the game of capturing global capital.
- 9 Such global reach in turn led to a rash of international place ratings, emulating in part the methods and approaches of more national based studies in the US (including PRA), and in the UK (Rogerson et al, 1989 ; Moneywise Magazine, 1991). Some took on a regional perspective, with Healey & Baker (2000) for example producing annually a ranking of major European cities, whilst other such as the single Population Crisis Committee (1990) study or the more regular Mercer Human Resource Consulting survey rated a set of global cities. Each informed potential movers of the relative benefits (and pitfalls) of locations.

Moving beyond economic competitiveness

- 10 The relative futility of such overt and direct attempts to lever global capital as a 'zero sum game' has increasingly been recognised over the past decade. The sporadic successes of attracting capital and the apparent acceleration of mobility of capital, employment, and public investment have challenged this aspect of neoliberal entrepreneurialism (Cochrane *et al.*, 1996). Instead neoliberal processes of economic management have shifted to areas concerned with intervention in, and control over, more social issues (Brenner and Theodore, 2002).
- 11 This is not the place to explore such periodisation of neoliberalism fully (see Larner, 2000 ; Jessop, 2003 ; McNeill, 2005, and Craig and Porter, 2006) for example). Recent accounts, drawing especially on regulationist perspectives, have argued for greater appreciation of the important differences within the neoliberal project, and differences arising from local variation and mutation (Larner and Craig, 2005). Under this neoliberalisation thesis, there have been shifts in the emphasis in the nature and form of

regulation, institutionalisation, and central focus of neoliberal forms of governance. In particular, Peck and Tickell's (2002) proposed three-stage periodisation is of utility here, drawing as it does on the experience of Anglo-Saxon, and liberal welfare regimes, and leading international financial institutions (Harvey, 2005 ; Craig and Cotterell, 2007). Their chronological phasing marks progression from 'proto-neoliberalism' on the edges of Keynesian economic and welfare state thinking, to a 'roll back' phase where the force of neoliberalism is on the dismantling of the Keynesian state institutions and practices to a third, roll out phase addressing the social and economic outcomes of policies and practices of the roll back phase. Whilst acknowledging that such progression is manifested differently in local spaces, these phases have nevertheless been equated in North American and Anglo-European contexts as coinciding with shifts into and through Reaganism and Thatcherism, and then into 'Third Way' approaches of Clinton/Blair (Imrie and Raco, 2003 ; Boyle and Rogerson, 2006).

- 12 Accompanying the metamorphosis of neoliberalism into a more socially interventionist, 'third way' form of 'roll-out neoliberalism' has been a shift in the ways in which 'place rating' has been conducted. One expression of these has been the adoption of more cooperative, less competitive forms of comparison. In Europe and in Australasia, for example, the fashion of place rating comparisons has been replaced in part with 'benchmarking' comparisons. Networks of cities for collaborative functions have emerged, and through a recognition of common and shared experiences, joint projects, information sharing and co-operation between cities and between agencies has emerged (Luque-Martínez and Muñoz-Leiva, 2005 ; Floeting and Hollbach-Grömig, 2005). As part of this, greater harmonisation towards an agreed standard for measuring cities based on economic realities has emerged (Freeman, 2007). Although such collaboration has been criticised - "the reality, in our view, is that such benchmarking does little to promote "levelling up" between places and may actually serve to reinforce existing inequalities" (Greene *et al.*, 2007, 17) - examples such as the innovative Melbourne benchmarking study (Stokie, 1998) has shown the utility of this more collegial approach to placed ratings.
- 13 In the United States, such cooperative ratings have largely been absent within a form of place competitiveness where attracting and retaining capital remains dominant. Whilst promoting place rating guides, such emphasis on the relationship between local urban politics and economic activity within North America has tended to overshadow one of the original key intentions of the PRA. In each of the editions, the authors have signalled that for them the focus of place ratings was on people and communities - on the quality of life, amenities and qualities of place that influenced people's everyday life and made them attractive to live, not just to be economically competitive. Here too the PRA challenged underlying assumptions. Traditionally it was assumed that only companies competed, with communities considered part of a firm's *comparative advantage*, like access to resources or labour, but not of themselves competing. As late as 1991 when Michael Porter produced his national competitiveness strategy for the Canadian government (Porter, 1991) this assumption was still had considerable currency. Yet even then the transition from nationally-based industrial economies to knowledge-based economies with global reach was well underway. As knowledge became increasingly the primary competitive resource in world economic activity, the source of knowledge, people, has become the focus of economic development and the generation of firm *competitive advantage*. Accordingly, the recognition of the hard to duplicate *regional advantage* (Saxenian, 1994) has pushed communities to the forefront of the competitiveness debate.

- 14 Today it is generally recognized that communities compete with each other on taxation and regulation, on infrastructure and transportation, on quality of life, on the all important issues of the attraction, retention and development of human capital, as well as on the more familiar firm decisions investment and access to financial capital (Harvey, 1978 ; Tremblay and Tremblay, 2006). In turn those overseeing the governance of these communities have aggressively adopted and used ratings such as the PRA as indicators both of their particular *regional advantage* and of their success in offering local community-base advantages. As one of the more recent competitors to the PRA states :
- “quality of life involves being able to afford to tap into the American Dream of a middle class lifestyle. To them, access to good tickets to La Bohème is not nearly as important as access to good public schools, or being able to afford to own their own home, or to live in neighborhoods where they are [not] in constant fear of being a victim of crime.” (Expansion Management, 2007)
- 15 This aspect of the PRA has been enlivened by Richard Florida’s recent analysis of the future of cities. His focus is on one sub-group of these communities – the creative talents – which he perceives as central to economic and social success in the new global competition for key people with innovative and creative capacity (Florida, 2002, 2005a, 2005b). In making his case for a shift from social capital to creative capital, Floridian accounts put people and place at the heart of his assessment of economic success. His rankings of place – albeit on very different but equally controversial basis than PRA – has again spotlighted the importance of the quality of place and associated quality of life for individuals.
- 16 In echoing the blossoming industry of lifestyle guides, place development manuals, and marketing guides, Florida’s interventions in the area of urban economic development policy has re-invigorated debates over place rating. With the Floridian accounts challenging traditional notions of social class and the associated utilitarian categorisations of society (Florida, 2002), in an ironic twist, some critics of Florida’s rankings on creativity have turned to PRA and similar place ratings to emphasise the more inclusive, statistically rigorous and conservative accounts which they offer (Sawicki, 2003 ; Peck, 2005).

Extending reach : new imperialism or comparative realities ?

- 17 Place rating has not of course just been restricted to comparisons within national boundaries. Reflecting the global patterns of movement, especially of those perceived to be most likely to pay heed to rankings – the *‘globalites’*, the professional and managerial classes who both shape and populate the migration channels associated with global competition and business (Findlay *et al.*, 1996 ; Beaverstock, 2004) – such guides too have become significant to the marketing of global and international places. Mercer Human Resource Consulting’s annual ‘worldwide quality of living survey’, or the Economist’s ‘quality of life index’ (2005) for example both offer guidance of which of the main cities or countries in the world offer the ‘best’ living. Mercer’s survey rates 215 global cities against the benchmark of New York, whilst the Economist considers life satisfaction based on objective and subjective measures.
- 18 Such international comparisons create additional problems over the comparability and reliability of data, often restricting the number of components of ‘quality’ being assessed. Over the 25 years, the PRA has avoided such issues, remaining largely unchanged in its

principles and approach of assessing many characteristics of places. Minor modifications have been made to accommodate new sources of data, and the list of SMSAs has altered in line with the US federal government definitions. However, and very underplayed at the time, one of the main changes to the Almanac has been the introduction of non-US cities into the comparative analysis. The fourth edition in 1993 included a number of Canadian cities alongside the US metropolitan areas, but it was only in the fifth edition that the Canadian contribution was acknowledged and featured on the cover, enabling the authors to lay claim to the identification of “North America’s best all-around metro areas”.

- 19 The adoption of this more continental perspective arguably represents the growing challenge to the ‘taken for granted’ status of the nation scale, and the corresponding rise in regional hegemonies in the new post-Fordist political economy (Jessop, 2002). First, such comparisons align well with the concept of a ‘North American city’; arising from an ongoing convergence of Canadian and US economic interests under NAFTA (Lipset, 1990; Garber and Imbroscio, 1996). Such protagonists for a continental perspective argue that the forces of technology, economic and cultural globalisation have created a transnational urban system where the primacy of the differences between Canadian and US cities are being replaced with the primacy of their commonalities. For instance, in Canada or the US worker and firm mobility seem governed by many of the same constituent elements of regional advantage leading to a minimization of national differences. They suggest that counterarguments have tended to focus on historically engrained differences of culture and attitudes, and declining differences in municipal level powers (Ewing, 1992; Zolnik, 2004). Other researchers remain sceptical of such comparativeness, stressing that despite some similarities there remain distinct features which separated the US and Canada in terms of quality of life and urban liveability (Bourne, 1999; Mercer and England, 2000; Tremblay, 2004).
- 20 Second, the PRA’s inclusion of Canadian cities could be viewed as commercially astute given the increasing and different flows of people from Canada to the US. During the 1990s there was a marked flow of migrants travelling over the border – on average 20,000 per annum from Canada to the US, totalling 180,700 between 1993 and 2001 and over the ten year period 1996-2005 more than 273,000 on the reverse direction. But secondly, it also tapped into the changing nature of this migration stream, as migrants no longer sought (or required) to be permanent US citizens in order to gain advantages in the labour and housing markets or be permanent residents in Canada. Instead, the majority of migrants became more short term ‘opportunity seekers’. In contrast to the previous decade when 1 in 3 of Canadians moving to the US became a naturalized US citizen, fewer than 10% sought this in the 1990s (Table 1).
- 21 The PRA has not been alone in recognising these cross-border opportunities and flows, but other rating almanacs have employed alternative ways to accommodate differences between the US and Canada. One of the more recent guides – *Cities Ranked and Rated* (CRR) by Sperling and Sander first published in 2004 (and with the 2007 edition being published as this paper was finalised) – immediately adopted a similar ‘North American’ perspective. Like the PRA it has proved to be a commercial success and methodologically it too is based on an analysis of the characteristics of MSAs in the US and Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) in Canada. Covering *statistics* on population, economy and employment, cost of living, climate, education, crime, transportation) alongside *ratings* on leisure (restaurant, golf, ski, sports, inland water, parks, quality of life) and arts and

culture (libraries, classical music, ballet/dance, museums) the CRR is a direct competitor to the PRA.

- 22 In an effort to offer a unique take in this competitive market, the CRR provides not only rankings and prosaic statistical interpretation, but also a descriptive focus on each metropolitan place in the guide. Even with a restricted international component, and with the authors having a strong pedigree in place ratings – Sperling created the original Money Magazine ‘best places’ list – the inclusion of Canadian cities has stretched the US-based authors.
- 23 First, their local knowledge of places is more restricted. The claim under Edmonton for example that ‘The main ridge of the Rocky Mountains is visible to the west ...’ (Sperling and Sander, 2004, p.735) can be challenged. Checking with Tourism Alberta representatives, they indicated that ‘The Rocky Mountains are not visible from the City of Edmonton. However, the Rockies are visible from the City of Calgary.’ Indeed, Edmonton is 229 miles (366 km) away from Jasper in the middle of the Rockies whereas Banff, another ski resort, is only 80 miles (128 km) from Calgary. Or, under Sherbrooke (Quebec), “Sherbrooke is a bicultural industrial center ...’ (op.cit., p. 756). Sherbrooke is actually a university town with a growing biotechnology sector, and home to two (2) universities: *Université de Sherbrooke* (35,000 students and 5,600 employees), which has a medical school, and Bishop’s University (founded in 1843, 2,350 students from Canada and 45 other countries). At 42,950, the university population amounts to a substantial proportion of the 153,000 urban population of Sherbrooke (28 %) and influences the high proportion (1 in 5) with University degrees.
- 24 But secondly and more importantly, Sperling and Sander struggle to correlate Canadian and US cities given the different statistical bases. Consequently they admit that “the approach is more qualitative...” (p728) with comparisons made with a “US counterpart” on the basis of the author’s judgement on where the “Canadian city might fall it the places [in the US and Canada] ...were ranked together” (p728). The resultant amalgamation (Table 2) creates some intriguing outcomes of rankings and narrative. London, Ontario is compared with Lansing-East Lansing (Michigan) and given comparable rankings (165th and 162nd respectively) but Halifax, Nova Scotia is compared with both Portland, Maine (236th) and Boston, Massachusetts (71st) being given an equivalent rank of 150th. Other Canadian cities are ‘truly unique’ and the authors struggle to show comparisons. Montréal and New Orleans are described as having comparable traits, ‘culturally and geographically’ but are ranked poles apart – Montreal is ranked the equivalent of 30th in the US list, New Orleans ranks 139th.
- 25 The authors of the Places Rated Almanac avoid such pitfalls by searching out more comparable statistical evidence, enabling them to include their Canadian CMAs within the same list as US places and provide a truer sense of the North American ratings. In this respect they have remained a ‘market leader’.
- 26 In focussing on Canadian cities as comparators with US locations, both guides can be critiqued for promoting a specific ‘cultural nationalism’; one based on shared cultural heritages and values of the predominantly white and Anglo-based perspectives of the two nations. Why do these guides not include comparisons with Mexican cities which offer potentially similar relationships between southern US cities and their southern counterparts? This question is all the more pertinent when migration flows from Mexico to the US provide a potentially much larger market – between 15 and 20 times the size of that of Canadian migrants (Table 3). One clue for such absences might be the nature of

the migration streams from Canada to the US. According to the US 2000 Census, more than 52% of movers from Canada to the US over the decades hold 'management, professional and related occupations' with one in four found in educational, health and social services. In contrast, movers from Mexico occupy only 8% managerial posts, with production and transportation (29%) and sales and office (25%) dominating.

- 27 In an era of transnational capitalism, when the cross-national place descriptive comparisons and imagined geographies have the potential to shape flows, such absences and the lack of conceptual explanations of the basis of the comparative geographies of these guides leave them open to criticism as supporting forms of neo-imperialism.

Directing the 'mobilities'

- 28 The PRA and CRR almanacs – and indeed Florida's (2002) ratings of US cities in terms of a 'creativity index' – explicitly encourage mobility. They are a clarion call to 'greener pastures' for those who are considering, or those who may be tempted to consider, relocation – the '**mobilities**'. By this we refer to those who have the capacity to move but need to be stimulated and guided in their spatial movements. Whilst many people may have the potential and actual capacity to be mobile both geographically and socially – what Kaufmann et al. (2004) have termed 'motility' – this can remain latent, requiring to be awakened and then guided towards opportunities elsewhere. Such awakening can be of the individual mobility and those responsible for offering the place qualities which are attractive in enticing or retaining the individual.
- 29 The built-in assumption in the PRA and CRR almanacs is that place ratings will be used by mobilities to inform themselves of where to move. Evidence of such connections between published ratings and actual mobility remains under-researched and thus it is difficult to assess directly whether PRAs are effective or instrumental in attracting people – and importantly the 'right' people – into communities and places. Analysis of recent (1995-2000) patterns of gross and net migration between SMSAs within the US offer weak correlations with the rankings in the PRA in 2000 (see Rogerson *et al.*, 2007). Even if the focus is restricted to the top destinations for internal movers, there are only 2 in the top 10 rated places in the PRA (Rayleigh and Phoenix). Extending this to the top 30 rankings however does include 11 of the top 30 most common destinations for movers within the US (Table 4).
- 30 Getting an understanding of the stimuli and reasons for relocation of the more than 120 million US citizens who changed their place of residence in the 1995-2000 period is always going to be partial. Whether and to what extent guides to places actually matter in the process of stimulating and directing movers remains an area ripe for research, but one which will require to focus on specific relocators. The evidence to date that quality of life and quality of place factors shape mobility remains generalised (Rogerson, 1999). Within this knowledge vacuum, the authors of the PRA and similar guides continue to make assumptions that actual patterns of movement are being shaped by the availability and nature of information on places, and that they provide a 'service' to individuals and households who are searching for new destinations.

Enhancing communities

- 31 Even without such an evidential base to evaluate their impact in this respect, it is clear that the almanacs are rooted in the notions of mobility as beneficial to economic (and social) wellbeing. Increasingly, however, under different forms of 'roll out' neoliberalist regulation in the US (and elsewhere), alternative forms of local based engagement have been formulated, placing greater emphasis on constructing a stronger sense of attachment to place. This is in sharp contrast to the weakening of place ties evident in the 'roll back' neoliberalism (Peck and Tickell, 2002; Peck, 2004) when government encouraged people 'to get on their bikes' as a solution to problems in their lives and communities.
- 32 Further whether expressed through the Third Way of Clinton or the more neo-conservatist approach of Bush, the political slant of roll out neoliberalism has reinforced the importance of the social aspects of place over the economic ones. As Tickell and Peck (2003) express it, one element of this evolved form of neoliberalism has been its focus on the 'downstream' consequences of economic liberalisation – such as crime and social exclusion. In pursuing local urban and regional policies which give renewed importance to tackling such dystopian anxieties associated with 'community' (Sennett, 2003; Baeten, 2002), policy practitioners have placed increasing emphasis on recruiting current residents as 'active citizens' in the revitalisation of places. The resultant rush to support social networks, voluntary associations and more generally to engender social capital (Cole and Goodchild, 2000; Arthurson, 2002; Boyle and Rogerson, 2006) all reinforce the desire to retain those very groups that under roll back neoliberal programs were being encouraged to move. Whilst the PRA spoke to this earlier agenda, the Almanac also resonates the 'roll out' neoliberal policy arena.
- 33 Although here too empirical evidence is limited on the positive retentive benefits of quality of life and quality of place, conceptually it is clear that amongst potential mobilites, who have the capacity to move, there is scope for them to be anchored by improvements and new opportunities within the existing communities.
- 34 So how can PRA assist in this anchoring to place? One possibility is as a tool for social learning amongst communities. The PRA and other similar rankings can provide a catalyst for social learning and a tool for determining which type of collective learning is appropriate. It is the cognitive dissonance such rankings generate between the 'on the ground' reality and the reality suggested by the rankings that cause people to reflect on the question of what's right. This dissonance can often lead to collective learning by way of 'learning by doing', 'single-' or double-loop' learning (Argyris and Schön, 1974). The rankings act somewhat like a mirror, enabling reflective evaluation and diagnosis.
- 35 Where the ranking results are not as expected, then they can assist community representatives to :
- clean the mirror by suggesting changes to what is being measured or how it is being measured (*learning by doing* or *metacognitive process*). Since the measures are never assumed to be perfect, a trial and error process over time will likely ensue, gradually improving the quality of the rankings feedback. The criticisms and complaints associated with the early editions of the PRA are consistent with this type of learning but have also informed the Oregon Benchmarks studies (Schlossberg and Zimmermann, 2003) and the Austin, Texas quality of life priorities (Myers, 1989)

- change the community strategies (*single loop learning*) trying different approaches to affect different outcomes. This implies both the governing variables and the measurement tools are accepted as correct as is reflected in the fashion of undertaking new urban planning studies, cluster studies, community market studies in vogue with municipal governments since the mid 1990s. In the UK, the Nottingham Common Purpose exemplified this, germinating local discussion and feedback loops on how regeneration and improvement approaches were resonating and impacting on local communities.
 - change the community's basic governing variables such as assumptions, goals, governance mechanisms, values, etc. and then define an entirely new type of strategy (*double loop learning*) that is being reflected in smart growth planning, ecology based planning, one system planning efforts and usually involving a collaborative, community-wide process. One example is the adoption by City of Melbourne Council, Australia through their liveability study and the subsequent quality of life aspirational indicators (Stokie, 1999).
- 36 Together such case studies merely scratch the surface of this area. Both empirical studies of local projects which engage and anchor mobilities to place, and conceptual studies of links between cognitive psychology, social learning and place indicators are required to inform contemporary debates in political economy over sustaining vibrant and socially mixed communities.

New research opportunities

- 37 The tendency for successful projects such as the PRA to both be updated and mimicked is inevitable in a commercially sensitive world. The blossoming of business ratings of places is well noted (Amin and Thrift, 2002) as quality of life matters in people's lives and in their decisions of where to locate. However, as we have suggested here, commercial success is only one criterion in justification for their continuation. Whilst they can be critiqued in terms of the data, analysis and interpretation presented in each case, there are deeper issues which have perhaps been neglected in recent discussions of place ratings. As the zero sum game of competition for capturing of mobile economic capital has been recognised, questions about the utility of place ratings need to shift. First, there are issues about whether there are benefits to be derived from comparative rankings which cross international boundaries, especially when such league tables of economic opportunities appeal to a limited and highly mobile group of human capital. What is their relevance when many of those responsible for place marketing seek less competitive and more cooperative benchmarking comparisons? How do such comparisons relate to new forms of institutional and governance forms which have emerged under roll out neoliberalism? And, in the process of constructing comparisons between places, what embedded, if unintentional, cultural and neo-imperialism is being promoted?
- 38 Second, what evidence is there to indicate that place ratings have any particular impact on people's behaviour or patterns of mobility? The assumption of latent mobility implicit within PRA, CRR and similar ratings has largely been unchallenged. Whilst such an absence has not undermined the utility of ratings in the era of economic-led competition, it cannot remain so when there are more diverse agendas operating under roll out neoliberalism. As the focus switches to more community-base and social issues – witnessed for example by more cooperative frames for benchmarking and policy agendas emphasising the retention of mobilities in the context of sustainable communities – there

is an increased requirement for a stronger evidential base of the connections between place ratings and the processes of migration.

- 39 And thirdly, what locally do such place ratings offer to residents of place and communities? This question takes on greater import when the political economy contexts shifts towards building and supporting local places for themselves under a social-led agenda of roll out of 'third way' approaches. In particular, more research is required on the ways if any in which local communities have been able to utilise place rankings in the development of social capital and social learning.
- 40 As renewed interest is expressed in academic and policy communities in local quality of life, in building sustainable communities, and in new forms of place management, more critical engagement with PRA and comparable place ratings is needed. Although the popularity of such guides may remain evident to those involved in their production, 25 years on there continues to be a need for more research into their significance for and impact within communities.

Table 1 : Cross-border flows : Canada to US

Canada to US movement					
Entered	Total	Naturalised	%	Non-US citizen	%
1990-2000	243950	21340	8.7	222610	91.3
1980-1989	100670	32095	31.9	68585	68.1
Before 1980	476145	324625	68.2	151520	31.8

Source : US Census Bureau, Census 2000 Special Tabulations (STP-159)

Table 2 : North American migration to the United States, 1993-2001

Year	Canada (000s)	% total immigration	Mexico (000s)	% total immigration
1993	23.9	2.64	126.6	14.00
1994	22.2	2.76	6111.4	13.85
1995	18.1	2.51	90.0	12.49
1996	21.8	2.38	163.7	17.87
1997	15.8	1.98	146.7	18.37
1998	14.3	2.18	130.7	19.97
1999	12.9	2.00	146.4	22.64
2000	21.5	2.53	171.7	20.20
2001	30.2	2.84	204.8	19.24

Source : US Census Bureau, Statistical Abstracts, 2003

Table 3 : Comparing Canadian and US cities : CRR's 2004 rankings

Canadian Metropolitan Area	Canada rank	Comparable US rank	Canadian Metropolitan Area	Canada rank	Comparable US rank
Vancouver, BC	1	20	London	15	165
Montreal, Quebec	2	30	Kingston	16	180
Victoria,	3	35	Thunder Bay	17	190
Ottawa-Hull	4	35	Regina	18	195
Toronto	5	40	Trois-Rivieres	19	200
Calgary	6	65	Hamilton	20	230
Quebec City	7	65	Oshawa	21	235
Edmonton	8	70	Sherbrooke	22	245
Winnipeg	9	75	Windsor	23	265
Abbotsford, BC	10	90	Kitchener-Waterloo	24	270
St Catharines-Niagara	11	120	Saint John	25	290
Saskatoon	12	130	Chicoutimi-Jonquière	26	310
Halifax	13	150	Sudbury	27	320
St John's	14	160			

Source : Sperling and Sander (2004) Cities Ranked and Rated p728

Table 4 : Comparing Top 30 PRA Locations to Absolute In-Migration Rank

MSA	PRA Rank 2000	Total In-migrants	Absolute In-migration Rank
Salt Lake City--Ogden, UT	1	163782	47
Washington, DC--MD--VA--WV (PMSA)	2	609427	3
Seattle--Bellevue--Everett, WA (PMSA)	3	352801	18
Tampa--St. Petersburg--Clearwater, FL	4	394574	13
Denver, CO (PMSA)	5	356933	17
Raleigh--Durham--Chapel Hill, NC	6	260019	28
Houston, TX (PMSA)	8	433254	10
Minneapolis--St. Paul, MN--WI	9	130563	59

Phoenix--Mesa, AZ	10	582206	4
Cincinnati, OH--KY--IN (PMSA)	11	166121	46
Pittsburgh, PA	12	149474	52
Knoxville, TN	13	101225	77
Louisville, KY--IN	14	616948	2
San Francisco, CA (PMSA)	15	241013	32
Orange County, CA (PMSA)	16	363701	15
Miami, FL PMSA	17	31559	226
San Diego, CA	19	424318	11
Austin--San Marcos, TX	20	279963	25
New Orleans, LA	21	104314	70
Orlando, FL	22	336832	20
Indianapolis, IN	23	191705	42
Honolulu, HI	24	105760	69
Greensboro--Winston-Salem-- HighPoint, NC	25	170636	45
Portland--Vancouver, OR--WA (PMSA)	26	283841	24
San Jose, CA (PMSA)	27	201139	40
Cleveland--Lorain--Elyria, OH (PMSA)	28	154079	50
Philadelphia, PA--NJ (PMSA)	29	374787	14
Rochester, NY	30	89588	86
Nashville, TN	30	35836	209
Syracuse, NY	32	69412	110

Sources : Savageau (2000) p579-85 US Census Bureau, 2000 Table PHC-T-22

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ABSTRACTS

The publication of place ratings on the basis of their competitive attractiveness and quality of life has been one element of place marketing and promotion agenda associated with the onset of neoliberalism. The *Places Rated Almanac* in the US has epitomised and led the development of such guides, and after a quarter of a century appears on the basis of sales to continue to offer currency and utility. This paper explores the relevance of this particular almanach and its offsprings within the context of recent accounts of the periodisation of neoliberalism. In particular it considers the extent to which such guides have continued to have resonance through the shift from economic-focussed roll back neoliberalism to more socially-oriented roll out neoliberalism.

INDEX

Keywords: communities, ratings, places, neoliberalism, mobilities

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La thèse de la « classe créative » : son incidence sur l'analyse des facteurs d'attraction et de la compétitivité urbaine

The “Creative Class” Thesis: Its Impact on the Analysis of Attraction Factors and Urban Competitiveness

Sébastien Darchen et Diane-Gabrielle Tremblay

Introduction

Cet article a pour objectif d'identifier les concepts sur lesquels s'appuie la thèse de la *classe créative* développée par Richard Florida quant à l'analyse des dynamiques économiques contemporaines, notamment en ce qui a trait à sa définition du capital humain (ou des *talents*, pour reprendre ses termes) en tant que facteur déterminant du développement économique en milieu urbain. Pour ce faire, nous nous intéressons à deux points en particulier, soit l'origine de la théorie et son apport en ce qui concerne les facteurs d'attraction des populations en milieu urbain et le thème de la compétitivité urbaine. Nous rappelons comment cette approche du développement économique se rattache à un courant en économie urbaine qui a depuis longtemps fait le lien entre d'une part, le potentiel créatif d'un espace géographique ou d'une catégorie de la population en particulier et d'autre part, l'innovation nécessaire au développement économique. Nous revenons également sur la méthodologie utilisée par Richard Florida pour justifier son approche du développement économique en milieu urbain, l'objectif étant de clairement identifier les principes, les indices et les indicateurs à partir desquels cette thèse est construite. Nous énumérons les critiques faites à l'encontre de la thèse en question, mais soulignons également ses mérites, notamment en ce qui a trait au fait de repenser les initiatives en termes de développement économique en s'appuyant sur la valorisation du capital humain. Nous revenons également sur les applications de cette thèse qui ont déjà

eu lieu dans un certain nombre de villes en Amérique du Nord et exprimons certaines réserves quant à son application dans le cadre de politiques de développement urbain qui ne se baseraient que sur cette dernière afin de favoriser la compétitivité des villes.

Fondements d'une thèse d'inspiration sociologique sur le développement économique en milieu urbain

La thèse de Richard Florida s'est fait connaître suite à la publication de trois ouvrages successifs, publiés chez des éditeurs « grand public » : *The Rise of the Creative Class* and *How It's Transforming Work Leisure and Everyday Life* (2002), *The Flight of the Creative Class: the New Global Competition for Talent* (2005a) et *Cities and the Creative Class* (2005b). Ce dernier ouvrage insistant particulièrement sur le lien entre la définition du capital humain de Florida et les éléments qui font qu'une ville soit attrayante pour la catégorie de la « classe créative » en particulier, nous faisons ici principalement référence à cet ouvrage. Il convient également de préciser que la thèse a également été promue par le biais de l'entreprise de Florida, *Catalyx*, par un autre organisme qu'il dirige, appelé *Creative Class Group*, et par de nombreuses entrevues dans les médias et des conférences destinées à un public majoritairement composé de décideurs politiques et d'acteurs de la sphère économique.

Les fondements de la thèse de Florida se rapprochent de la notion d'idéal-type de Weber. Le lien entre l'économie urbaine et l'émergence d'une classe sociale en particulier a en effet été mis en évidence par d'autres travaux avant ceux de Florida. Veblen (1899) et Mills (1951) avaient déjà identifié l'émergence d'une certaine classe sociale en fonction de l'évolution économique en milieu urbain. L'analyse de Veblen (1899)¹ en particulier est très proche de la thèse de Florida. Veblen (1899) aurait en effet anticipé la théorie de la croissance endogène en démontrant que le changement technologique était essentiellement un processus de transformation culturelle et notamment que cette faculté à instituer le changement est détenue par une certaine classe de la société (*Interventions économiques*, 2007 ; Brette, 2002). La thèse de Florida s'inscrit également dans la tradition des théories sociales héritées de l'École de Chicago qui mettent en valeur l'influence du mode de vie urbain sur la personnalité des individus (Lang, 2006, p. 317). Florida s'appuie donc sur un courant de pensée déjà existant ; il réactualise l'idée que la ville est le lieu de la créativité et de l'innovation, de par sa diversité culturelle et sociale (Roy-Valex, 2006, p. 325). En ce sens, la thèse de Florida renvoie également aux approches de Jane Jacobs (1961, 1992), voire de Lewis Mumford (1970), qui considèrent que les centre-villes sont les berceaux de l'innovation du fait que ceux-ci abritent une diversité accrue en termes de population par rapport à des environnements qui ne sont pas de type urbain. La thèse de Florida s'inscrit également dans la continuité des travaux de chercheurs de l'université de Lund, en Suède, qui ont mis en valeur lors des décennies 1970 et 1980 le fait qu'un milieu urbain créatif – sur le plan artistique, de même qu'en ce qui concerne la science et la technologie – est le produit de plusieurs facteurs qui sont réunis dans un même espace géographique et dans un même espace temps (ex : Florence au XIII^e et XV^e siècle, Vienne entre les années 1880 et 1927 ; New York durant les années 1950 et 1960) (Andersson, 1985 ; Törnqvist, 1978). Andersson (1985) identifie un certain nombre de facteurs qui correspondent à ces milieux favorables à l'innovation. Entre autres, ceux-ci doivent réunir les facteurs suivants : une stabilité sur le plan financier, des infrastructures de transport efficaces afin de faciliter les communications, ainsi qu'une

certaine instabilité en ce qui concerne l'avenir technologique et scientifique, qui est une condition du développement d'un milieu créatif. En ceci le critère d'Andersson (1985) concernant une diversité du milieu – il ne précise cependant pas à quoi se réfère cette diversité – rejoint l'un des critères de Florida (2005b) qui a traité la notion de diversité qu'il mesure à l'aide du *Melting Pot Index* – les indices gai et bohémien sont également pris en compte – ; selon lui cet indicateur serait fortement en corrélation avec la concentration en entreprises de haute technologie pour une région, cette concentration étant considérée comme favorable à l'innovation. Enfin, ajoutons que Florida reprend certains éléments d'une autre enquête réalisée dans les années 80 par Ray et Anderson aux États-Unis auprès d'environ 100 000 personnes. Dans leur livre intitulé « L'émergence des créatifs culturels. Enquête sur les acteurs d'un changement de société », Ray et Anderson (2001) présentent les résultats de cette étude qui identifie une évolution radicale et un profond changement de société fondé sur la présence des créatifs du secteur culturel (Tremblay et Pilati, 2007a).

La thèse de Florida s'inscrit dans un certain courant de pensée en études urbaines qui fait le lien entre le potentiel d'innovation d'un certain milieu (en l'occurrence urbain) qui se caractérise par un certain capital humain et la croissance économique. Ceci dit, la thèse de Florida a suscité de nombreuses critiques tant sur le fond qu'en ce qui concerne la méthodologie qui sert d'assise à cette approche du développement économique. Pour certains, le fait qu'une concentration d'une population dite créative engendre l'innovation et la croissance économique a été considéré comme une extrapolation sans véritable assise empirique appuyée par une méthodologie solide (Lang, 2006 ; Shearmur, 2006 ; Malanga, 2005, 2004 ; Kotkin, 2004).

La thèse du développement économique de Richard Florida s'oppose aussi à des théories qui placent le territoire comme facteur générateur de l'innovation, par exemple la théorie des *milieux innovateurs* de Philippe Aydalot (Darchen et Tremblay, 2007). Florida soutient finalement le fait que le développement économique n'est pas tant induit par le progrès technologique que par le capital humain, c'est-à-dire par la présence de cette catégorie de professionnels, source à la fois de l'innovation technologique et de richesse (Peck, 2005, p. 743.). Cependant, c'est à partir de la conception que Florida a du capital humain que sa thèse tout entière est construite et ce, sans que son extrapolation de la notion de capital humain ne se vérifie empiriquement. Glaeser (2005, p. 596) montre en effet, en s'appuyant sur les indices proposés par Florida (*patents per capita*, l'indice gai et l'indice bohémien) et sur les exemples de 242 régions métropolitaines, que l'indice concernant le niveau d'éducation (personnes détenteurs d'un baccalauréat) demeure l'indicateur le plus significatif quant au lien avec les plus hauts taux d'emploi dans les secteurs dits super-créatifs, considérés dans la thèse de Florida comme le moteur de la croissance économique. Lorsqu'il s'agit de défendre sa version du capital humain qui fait intervenir les indices gai et bohémien, Florida ne peut donc apparemment pas le faire à l'aide de données empiriques solides ; Glaeser (2005) montre en fait que la population qualifiée demeure le facteur clé du développement économique en milieu urbain.

Florida procède donc rapidement au lien entre sa définition du capital humain et les attributs qu'une ville doit posséder pour attirer la catégorie de professionnels qu'il qualifie comme la « classe créative ». La ville devient, selon l'auteur, un lieu qui doit s'adapter aux besoins de cette catégorie de professionnels afin de l'attirer, car elle est nécessaire au développement économique. Cette part de la force de travail est estimée par Florida à 38 millions de personnes et représenterait 30 % de la main-d'œuvre totale

aux États-Unis (Peck, 2005, p. 743). Toujours selon Florida, cette classe de personnes s'identifierait davantage au lieu où elle habite qu'à l'emploi qu'elle occupe. L'auteur s'est donc efforcé d'identifier les critères qu'une ville doit réunir afin d'attirer cette classe de personnes en particulier.

L'organisation de la thèse de Florida : les principes

La thèse de Florida est organisée autour de l'idée que les entreprises – notamment celles des secteurs de la haute technologie – sont attirées par la présence d'une certaine « classe » d'individus précisément nommée « classe créative » par l'auteur. Le développement économique est donc dépendant de la présence de cette catégorie de la population active. Cette « classe » comprend autant des artistes (écrivains, musiciens, peintres) – que Florida qualifie de bohémiens – que des scientifiques (ingénieurs, informaticiens, professeurs) que l'auteur qualifie de « classe super-créative » (Suire, à paraître, p.10). Selon Florida, le secteur créatif comprend en fait quatre grandes catégories d'emplois qui forment l'acronyme « TAPE » ; elles correspondent au secteur Technologique, aux activités des Arts et de la culture, aux activités Professionnelles et managériales et aux activités d'Éducation. Le secteur créatif regroupe ainsi non seulement des individus du secteur artistique, que l'on identifie souvent au secteur créatif, mais aussi des individus travaillant dans les milieux de l'information et les sciences de la vie, dans le domaine informatique et mathématiques, mais aussi bien sûr dans d'autres domaines tels que l'architecture, le design, les arts et le divertissement.

L'objectif premier de la thèse de Florida (2005b) est donc d'identifier les facteurs qui contribuent à cette attraction du capital créatif². Dans son étude qui fait appel à des entretiens semi-dirigés et à des *focus group*, Florida (2005b, 2002) en arrive à la conclusion que la « classe créative » est attirée par des villes qui privilégient la tolérance et la diversité. Afin de mesurer cet indice de diversité et de tolérance, Florida (2005b) utilise trois indices finalement réunis en un seul indice nommé *Composite Diversity Index* (CDI), celui-ci comprend l'indice bohémien, l'indice gai et le pourcentage de personnes nées à l'étranger. Florida (2005b) trouve une corrélation très forte entre cet indice de diversité et de tolérance et la concentration en entreprises dans les secteurs de la haute technologie à l'échelle d'une région métropolitaine, ce que l'auteur considère comme un facteur déterminant de la croissance économique future. La thèse de Florida repose finalement sur une définition particulière de la notion de capital humain, dont certains diront qu'elle n'apporte rien de plus (Shearmur, 2006). Ainsi, Florida (2005b) se démarque de la notion de capital humain habituelle, qui repose plus souvent sur le niveau d'éducation de la population en question ; nous nous référons ici aux recherches qui font le lien entre la présence d'un capital humain dans une ville et sa croissance sur le plan économique (Glaeser et Saiz, 2004 ; Shapiro, 2003 ; Simon, 1998).

Florida (2005b) procède également à une hiérarchisation des régions métropolitaines les plus innovantes en utilisant un indice composite nommé *Creativity Index*, qui fait intervenir trois indices en particulier : le *High-Tech Index* qui mesure le potentiel d'une région en ce qui concerne une économie dans les secteurs de la haute technologie³ ; l'*Innovation Index* qui prend en compte le nombre de brevets émis pour une région en considérant une population de 10 000 habitants ; l'indice de créativité tient enfin compte du degré de « tolérance » d'une région, mesurée en considérant les indices gai et bohémien (Florida, 2005b, p. 156). En considérant quinze régions métropolitaines des

États-Unis, l'auteur établit qu'il existe une corrélation significative entre les régions métropolitaines qui affichent des taux élevés concernant l'indice de créativité, leur potentiel en termes d'innovation et leur performance en ce qui concerne la concentration d'entreprises dans les secteurs de la haute technologie. En prenant l'exemple de New York, Florida (2005b, p. 158-159) montre qu'il y a corrélation entre la bonne performance en ce qui concerne l'indice *High-Tech* et des résultats élevés concernant les indices bohémien et gai. En ce qui a trait à l'indice *High-Tech*, New York devance en effet des régions considérées comme étant des pôles émergents dans les secteurs de la haute technologie : *Raleigh-Durham Research Triangle* et des régions métropolitaines comme Denver ou Minneapolis (Florida, 2005b, p. 158).

Il faut reconnaître que la méthodologie qui sous-tend la thèse de la « classe créative » est relativement élaborée. Il faut sans doute aller chercher les lacunes de cette thèse du développement économique dans la faculté de Florida à faire des liens entre les notions qu'il utilise (ex : le degré de tolérance et de diversité est lié à performance économique dans le domaine de la haute technologie et au potentiel en termes d'innovation comme dans le cas de New York) et la réalité empirique qui, sur le plan statistique, ne confirme pas toujours clairement les corrélations conceptuelles dont l'auteur fait état. Il est indéniable que cette thèse est appuyée théoriquement et sous-tendue par une méthodologie solide, mais la démarche scientifique des ouvrages laisse à désirer en ce qui concerne le lien entre la construction conceptuelle de cette théorie et la réalité empirique évoquée. À la lecture des différents ouvrages de Florida, on est en droit de se demander si le lien entre le degré de tolérance et de diversité d'une région métropolitaine et son potentiel sur le plan économique va bien dans le sens qu'il la présente, ou si ce n'est pas plutôt l'inverse, à savoir que les villes qui croissent sur le plan économique attirent une diversité de populations, puisqu'on y trouve de nombreux emplois. Aussi, comme le souligne Glaeser (2005), la tentative d'extrapolation de Florida sur le plan de la définition de la notion de capital humain et de son influence sur la croissance économique, si elle ouvre des perspectives nouvelles dans la mesure où l'on admet que son concept de capital humain est plus large, elle n'est pas nécessairement convaincante sur le plan scientifique, ou encore en ce qui concerne les stratégies de développement urbain qu'il faudrait réorienter en ce sens.

Les principales critiques à l'endroit de la thèse de la « classe créative »

On peut énumérer trois critiques principales vis-à-vis de la thèse de Florida à partir des écrits sur le sujet :

- La thèse de Florida constitue une interprétation simplifiée de la croissance économique en milieu urbain dans le contexte contemporain ;
- Le fait que l'ensemble des catégories professionnelles constitutives de la « classe créative » souhaiterait résider dans les centres à caractère urbain (plutôt que la banlieue) est un *a priori* discutable ;
- Certains choix méthodologiques seraient aussi discutables.

Revenons sur le premier point. D'abord, la question du lien entre la croissance et le *talent* (c'est l'expression qu'il emploie) n'est pas aussi simple que l'affirme Florida. Sur le plan empirique, il n'existe en effet aucune preuve solide que le talent engendre la croissance plutôt que le contraire, c'est-à-dire que le talent soit attiré par la croissance. Certains

chercheurs considèrent que le lien de causalité entre les deux serait plutôt circulaire et cumulatif plutôt qu'unidirectionnel comme l'affirme Florida (Shearmur, 2006, p. 10). De plus, la croissance économique serait le résultat de plusieurs facteurs plutôt que le résultat d'un seul facteur en particulier (Shearmur, 2006, p. 3). En outre, des études indiquent plutôt que les personnes les plus éduquées auraient tendance également à être les plus mobiles ; ainsi le milieu ne bénéficierait pas forcément de ce capital humain fortement mobile et attiré par les lieux où les salaires sont les plus élevés (Dicken et Lloyd, 1990 ; Courchene, 1986). Cependant, cela n'empêche pas la thèse de Florida de servir de référence quant à l'orientation de certaines politiques de développement économique, notamment dans les métropoles canadiennes. Le lien que fait Florida entre sa définition du capital humain dans un contexte économique qui privilégie le savoir – *Knowledge Based Economy* – et l'aménagement, voire la gestion politique des villes qui se doivent d'être tolérantes et privilégiant la diversité afin de maximiser le potentiel créatif de leur population, est vu par certains comme un apport important concernant la question de la compétitivité entre les villes (Courchene, 2005, p. 4).

Le second point important de la thèse de Florida, à savoir que cette « classe créative » préfère les centres urbains plutôt que d'autres lieux, est également critiqué. David Brooks (2002) par exemple – un journaliste du New York Times – a mis en valeur l'émergence d'une nouvelle bourgeoisie éduquée ayant certaines habitudes de vie et qui constitue la classe dominante aux États-Unis, dans le sens que celle-ci accède aux postes les plus importants. Cependant, il constate que cette classe dominante, qui coïncide assez bien avec la « classe » définie par Florida (2002), demeure non pas dans les centres mais en lointaine banlieue, là où ils peuvent avoir l'espace nécessaire pour profiter de leur confort matériel. Cette ville que Brooks (2002) qualifie de « banlieue de la banlieue », il la nomme *Sprinkler City* (la ville des arrosoirs automatiques). Elle est la représentation d'une utopie à caractère conservateur, donc très éloignée de la diversité qui caractérise les centres, qui sont le lieu d'habitation de prédilection de la « classe créative », selon Florida. Si Brooks (2002) a raison quant au type d'environnement que préfère cette catégorie de professionnels, la thèse de Florida qui consiste à rendre les milieux urbains attractifs pour cette « classe » en particulier perdrait alors beaucoup de sa pertinence. Malanga (2005, 2004), un conservateur sur le plan politique, estime que la théorie de la « classe créative » est largement destinée à un groupe de décideurs orienté politiquement à gauche et aux aménageurs/urbanistes en quête de nouvelles directives quant au développement urbain. Cependant, Malanga (2005) précise que la croissance économique se produit non pas dans les centres mais plutôt en périphérie des régions métropolitaines : San Francisco, par exemple, en tant que ville « branchée », n'a pas connu de croissance économique significative alors que San José, une vaste banlieue sans centralité, a connu une croissance économique importante depuis 30 ans. La question mérite certes d'être posée ; il est fort possible qu'il y ait des différences d'un pays à l'autre et que la thèse ne tienne pas dans toutes les régions métropolitaines ou tous les pays.

Les critiques principales vis-à-vis de la thèse de Florida portent sur le manque d'assise théorique solide qui soutient cette approche du développement économique contemporain. La définition de la « classe créative » en tant que telle prête à confusion ; or, elle constitue la base de la thèse de Florida. Ainsi, Markusen (2006) fait remarquer que la définition de la « classe créative » intègre plusieurs groupes professionnels (analystes financiers, actuaire, ingénieurs mais également des artistes), alors que chacune de ces catégories a des comportements différents, notamment en ce qui concerne leur

préférence quant au lieu d'habitation à l'échelle métropolitaine. À cet égard, la notion de « talent » dans la thèse de Florida fait référence aux types d'activités professionnelles plutôt qu'au niveau d'éducation ; la notion de Florida correspond donc à une version élargie de la notion de capital humain, la prise en compte de ce capital créatif, serait d'après Florida (2005b, p. 6) un indicateur plus précis afin d'évaluer le potentiel en termes d'innovation et de croissance économique d'une région. Cependant, la définition de la classe créative en tant que telle pose en effet certains problèmes, elle est de fait relativement floue, elle incorpore différentes catégories de professionnels. De plus, la part de 30 % de créatifs estimée par Florida par rapport au total de la population américaine serait beaucoup trop élevée selon divers auteurs (Shearmur, 2006 ; Tremblay, 2004). Il faut enfin conclure que le calcul de la part de professionnels appartenant à la « classe créative » possède une lacune majeure, celle de considérer que toutes les catégories professionnelles constitutives de la « classe créative » aient les mêmes aspirations quant à leur mode de vie.

Comme nous l'avons déjà mentionné, il n'y a pas consensus sur le sens de la causalité entre la présence d'un capital humain et le développement économique. Certains travaux mettent en valeur qu'il existe un lien direct entre la présence d'un fort capital humain et le développement urbain, de sorte que le capital humain serait une condition de la croissance économique (Glaeser et Saiz, 2004, p. 85). Cependant, d'autres travaux affirment au contraire que ce sont les régions performantes sur le plan économique qui constituent un facteur d'attraction pour le capital humain (Hill, 2005). Dans ce cas, le sens de la causalité est inversé. D'autres travaux mettent enfin en valeur qu'il n'existe pas de lien de causalité simple entre la croissance économique et la notion de capital humain comme Florida le propose, mais qu'on ne peut qu'observer certaines corrélations (Shearmur, 2006). Shearmur (2006) précise également que la croissance économique d'une région est souvent dépendante de sa structure industrielle et de sa position géographique par rapport aux marchés et s'explique également par des facteurs d'agglomération. La croissance économique d'une région ne peut donc se résumer à un lien de causalité simple et attribuable à un facteur en particulier, comme l'affirme Florida. Or, l'auteur ne mentionne pas les diverses interprétations qui existent concernant le lien de causalité entre le capital humain et le développement économique (Sawicki, 2003, p. 90). Florida (2005b, 2002) s'en tient à une analyse que l'on pourrait qualifier de simplificatrice quant à l'influence du capital humain sur le développement économique.

Du point de vue de la méthodologie, l'approche de Florida a également été l'objet de controverse. Tout d'abord, dans son ouvrage initial⁴, l'auteur se montre peu rigoureux quant aux références. Les conclusions de l'auteur sont issues d'entretiens et de *focus group* mais celui-ci ne précise pas toujours les sources de ses résultats (Peck, 2005 ; Marcuse, 2003). La thèse de Florida s'appuie sur une approche bien établie dans le domaine de l'économie urbaine et qui fait le lien entre la notion de capital humain et le potentiel des villes en ce qui concerne l'innovation technologique et la croissance (Glaeser et Saiz, 2004 ; Shapiro, 2003 ; Glaeser, 2000 ; Mathur, 1999 ; Lucas, 1988). Cependant certaines lacunes sur le plan méthodologique et le manque de définitions précises des concepts utilisés ont exposé Florida à de nombreuses critiques. L'objectif de Florida (2005b, 2002) est de mettre en avant l'importance de cette « classe créative » pour la prospérité des villes ; toutefois les mécanismes qui pourraient expliquer le lien entre les facteurs identifiés par Florida (*Tolerance, Technology, Talent*) et la croissance économique ne sont

pas suffisamment approfondis (Peck, 2005). Ces lacunes concernant la méthodologie et la définition même des concepts constitue la faiblesse majeure de la thèse de Florida. Malanga (2005, 2004) suggère même que la méthodologie utilisée par Florida a été orientée afin de mettre en valeur une série de villes américaines de tendance politique libérale et dont la croissance est liée aux activités de haute technologie qui ont caractérisé les années 1990. De par son ton peu rigoureux⁵ et la relative fragilité de l'argumentation développée par Florida, l'ouvrage clé de la thèse de l'auteur – *the Rise of the Creative Class* – est considéré par certains comme étant une célébration des personnalités qui sont les moteurs de l'économie et également du mode de vie que ce groupe de personnes tend à privilégier.

Par ailleurs, l'ouvrage ne mentionne pas la question de l'équité urbaine et les problèmes de pauvreté qui touchent certains centres urbains (Peck, 2005). La question de la différenciation des espaces métropolitains n'est pas prise en considération dans l'approche de Florida. À cet égard, l'historien américain Joel Kotkin s'est longtemps opposé à la thèse de Florida en affirmant que la croissance économique des métropoles concernait avant tout les espaces de banlieues et qu'il était donc peu pertinent de penser avoir une influence sur la croissance économique en privilégiant l'aménagement des centres urbains. Toutefois, Kotkin utilise aujourd'hui certains des principes de la thèse de Florida puisque dans son ouvrage *The New Geography*, comme le souligne Florida (2005b, p. 57), Kotkin fait référence à une catégorie de professionnels sans attache particulière et qui serait la matière grise et créative nécessaire aux économies urbaines dans un contexte post-industriel.

Pour résumer, les critiques portent sur le manque de rigueur conceptuelle de la thèse proposée par Florida : les concepts de « classe créative » et de « talent » sont peu définis, ou alors en des termes trop vagues (Markusen, 2006 ; Shearmur, 2006 ; Tremblay et Pilati, 2007b). La méthodologie étant basée sur ces concepts, on peut émettre quelques doutes sur la validité des facteurs prépondérants concernant la croissance économique dans le contexte actuel que l'auteur a identifié et qui sont les suivants :

1. La concentration d'une population appartenant à la « classe créative » est le moteur de la croissance économique ;
2. Cette « classe créative » choisit de s'installer dans certaines villes en raison de la qualité de vie qui y règne plus que pour les emplois qui les caractérisent ;
3. Les villes les plus susceptibles d'attirer cette « classe créative » doivent proposer des environnements tolérants et accueillants à la diversité.

Dans un premier temps, comme le fait remarquer Levine (2004, p. 8), les classements proposés par Florida ont peu de signification sur le plan statistique. Par exemple, en ce qui a trait à la concentration de la population de la « classe créative » dans les régions métropolitaines, 34 des 49 régions métropolitaines les plus importantes des États-Unis se retrouvent à au plus 5 points de pourcentage de différence l'une de l'autre ; cet écart est trop mince pour avoir une signification sur le plan statistique. Deuxièmement, preuves à l'appui, Levine (2004, p. 12) montre que l'affirmation de Florida concernant le fait que la « classe créative » préfère vivre en ville plutôt qu'en banlieue n'est pas statistiquement vérifiée. En considérant les dix régions métropolitaines des États-Unis dont la concentration en travailleurs de la « classe créative » est la plus élevée, Levine (2004, p. 12) montre qu'il n'existe pas de différence significative sur le plan statistique entre la part de la « classe créative » qui choisit la ville et la part des travailleurs toutes catégories professionnelles confondues qui fait également ce choix. Dans deux des régions classées

par Florida dans les dix premières en termes de concentration de cette « classe créative », à savoir Washington (D.C) et Hartford (Connecticut), plus de 90 pour cent des catégories de professionnels constitutives de la classe en question a choisi d'habiter la banlieue. Le lien entre la présence de cette « classe créative » et la revitalisation économique des centres urbains se trouve donc fragilisé par le manque d'appui empirique et de preuves statistiques qui pourraient prouver que cette catégorie de la population préfère s'établir dans les centres plutôt qu'en banlieue. De plus, la thèse de Florida va à l'encontre de la tendance actuelle qui considère que le centre de gravité économique des régions tend à se déplacer hors des villes centrales et vers les banlieues.

Toujours sur le plan méthodologique et en ce qui a trait aux indices utilisées par Florida afin de définir un environnement qui soit « tolérant », à savoir l'indice gai et l'indice bohémien, là encore, Levine (2004) met en évidence plusieurs lacunes. Tout d'abord, en ce qui a trait à l'indice bohémien – qui est une sous-catégorie de la « classe créative »⁶ – Levine (2004, p. 23) montre que la corrélation entre cet indice et la croissance de l'emploi n'est pas vraiment vérifiée. Tout d'abord en prenant l'exemple de sept régions métropolitaines, Levine (2004, p. 23) montre que l'écart entre les villes concernant cet indice est trop faible pour avoir une signification statistique. Entre Dallas (15^{ème} rang pour l'indice bohémien) et Jacksonville (49^{ème} rang), la différence est de seulement 0.4 point quant à la concentration de travailleurs qui possèdent un emploi de type « bohémien ». Enfin, en comparant sept régions métropolitaines ayant des indices bohémiens différents, Levine (2004, p. 25) démontre que la corrélation entre cet indice et la croissance de l'emploi est loin d'être évidente. Par exemple Boston, qui affiche un indice bohémien de 2.8 %, a connu une croissance de l'emploi de 23 % entre 1992 et 2001, alors que Jacksonville qui affiche un indice de seulement 1.5 % a connu une augmentation de 37.5 % pour la même période. L'indice bohémien n'est donc pas un indicateur suffisant pour expliquer les différences en termes de croissance économique entre les régions métropolitaines. D'après Levine (2004), la même remarque vaut en ce qui concerne l'autre indicateur qu'est l'indice gai. Les différences statistiques entre les villes en ce qui concerne la proportion de population gaie par rapport au nombre total de ménages sont là encore très minces. En 2000, dans les plus grandes régions métropolitaines du pays, entre San Francisco qui possède le plus fort pourcentage de ménages gais (1.8 %) et Buffalo (0.4 %) qui affiche le taux le plus faible, la différence est peu significative. Il est donc peu convainquant d'affirmer que des écarts aussi minces entre les régions métropolitaines puissent avoir des conséquences importantes sur la performance économique de celles-ci.

Cependant, la thèse de Florida a été utilisée afin d'expliquer l'écart en ce qui concerne le développement économique des villes et ce, en se basant sur la notion de capital créatif. Marlet et Van Voerkens (2004), en se basant sur les 50 plus importantes villes de la Hollande, montrent qu'il existe un lien entre la présence de la catégorie de professionnels définie par Florida et la performance économique des villes en indiquant que la catégorie de la « classe créative » est un meilleur indicateur qu'une approche qui considère simplement un indicateur en termes de capital humain⁷. Les auteurs confirment également que comme le prétend Florida, il existe une corrélation entre la concentration de la population définie en tant que « classe créative » et la croissance économique des villes. Toutefois, les auteurs ne confirment pas l'intégralité de la thèse de Florida : l'effet bohémien, à savoir la concentration d'une population dont la profession a trait à une activité artistique a une influence restreinte (en tant qu'indicateur) sur les écarts de

croissance entre les villes considérées. Marlet et Van Voerkens (2004) suggèrent à ce sujet que la notion de créativité employée par Florida devrait être mieux définie afin d'être prise en compte comme indicateur dans la croissance économique des villes. Les auteurs confirment également que ce n'est vraisemblablement par le degré de tolérance des villes qui explique leur attractivité vis-à-vis de la « classe créative » mais plutôt la présence d'infrastructures urbaines (présence d'édifices historiques, activités culturelles, qualité de l'environnement), comme l'affirment Glaeser et al. (2004).

Applications de la thèse de Florida

La thèse de Florida, que l'on peut résumer par le fait que ce n'est plus l'innovation technologique et la présence de certaines ressources matérielles qui sont les moteurs du développement économique, mais bien le « talent » – ou la concentration d'une certaine catégorie de professionnels et de créatifs – permet une application dans le cadre de la politique urbaine. Florida (2005a, 2005b, 2002) propose en fait une formule simple et donc facilement applicable dans un contexte urbain. Bien qu'il ait une approche un peu particulière, l'auteur se situe malgré tout dans la lignée d'autres travaux qui mettent en valeur le lien entre le capital humain et la croissance économique en milieu urbain (Markusen, 2006 ; Glaeser, 2005, 2000 ; Glaeser et Saiz, 2004 ; Simon, 1998). Cependant Florida (2005a, p. 53) considère que sa théorie va plus loin que celle de ses collègues en ajoutant le facteur de *Tolérance*.⁸ Ce dernier précise qu'une ville doit en effet réunir les trois critères évoqués plus haut – *Tolerance, Technology, Talent* – mais que le facteur prépondérant est celui de la *tolérance*. Florida (2005a, p. 54) livre donc une stratégie de développement économique simple : une ville doit s'efforcer de considérer ces trois facteurs et améliorer celui où elle est plus faible, ceci afin d'accroître sa capacité d'attraction en ce qui a trait au capital humain défini en tant que « classe créative ». Si de nombreux auteurs⁹ reconnaissent le lien entre la concentration en capital humain et la croissance économique d'une région ou d'une métropole en particulier, aucun n'est aussi catégorique que Florida pour en faire l'unique solution capable de promouvoir le développement économique¹⁰. Comme le précise Donald (2006), la thèse de Florida va à l'encontre de travaux – Fainstein (2001) ; Harvey (2000, 1992, 1973) en particulier – qui mettent en avant la contradiction entre les notions de justice sociale et de politiques urbaines entrepreneuriales. Dans la même veine, Levine (2004) fait remarquer que compte tenu du caractère assez fragile de cette thèse sur le plan méthodologique, il serait risqué d'en faire un modèle quant au développement économique, ou encore une panacée afin de promouvoir la croissance de certaines villes en mal de solutions politiques.

Selon divers auteurs, la thèse de Florida risque de constituer une tendance en termes de développement économique, au risque de mettre dans l'ombre des priorités de base. En prenant le cas de Baltimore, Levine (2004) met en avant le fait que cette ville aurait avant tout besoin de solutions pour reconstruire les écoles publiques et créer des emplois pour les résidents locaux plutôt que de mesures afin de favoriser des installations urbaines comme des pistes cyclables, des clubs de nuit et de loisirs afin d'attirer la « classe créative ». Cependant, la thèse de Florida a gagné très rapidement la reconnaissance de nombreux professionnels du développement économique et de dirigeants municipaux. À défaut d'être rigoureuse sur le plan méthodologique, cette thèse est facilement adaptable et attrayante afin d'appuyer une stratégie de développement économique qui prône l'appui à la créativité. À Baltimore, Memphis, au Michigan, en Ontario (Toronto), la thèse

de Florida sert de base à la mise en place de stratégies de développement économique. Dans le cas de Montréal, une étude a été faite afin d'évaluer le potentiel de la ville selon la théorie du capital créatif de Florida (Stolarick, Florida, Musante, 2005), mais elle ne semble pas avoir eu d'effet concret à ce jour. Dans le cas d'Halifax, la stratégie de développement économique à l'échelle régionale mentionne une citation de Florida ainsi que sa thèse du capital créatif ; on affirme que le potentiel créatif de la population se doit d'être mis en valeur par des milieux de vie urbains tolérants et accueillants (Halifax Regional Municipality, 2005, p. 20). Dans le cas de Winnipeg, des suggestions sont faites quant à une stratégie de développement économique prenant en compte les thèses de Florida quant à l'attraction des catégories de professionnels constituant la classe créative (Canada Research Chair in Urban Change and Adaptation, 2006). Si la thèse de Florida est sans doute à considérer comme une stratégie de développement économique à l'échelle d'une région métropolitaine, il reste que de nombreux questionnements quant à l'application de cette théorie du capital créatif en tant que moteur du développement économique, doivent être précisés :

- À quelle échelle la théorie du capital créatif peut-elle être appliquée (celle de la région métropolitaine, de la ville, du quartier) ?
- Comment s'articule cette approche du développement économique avec des stratégies plus conventionnelles qui privilégient l'attraction de certaines entreprises plutôt que d'être centrées sur la main-d'œuvre ?
- Comment allier l'approche de Florida avec des politiques de développement urbain orientées par des valeurs telles que l'équité sociale, puisque ses propositions ne tiennent pas compte d'une grande partie de la population ne détenant pas des talents artistiques, créatifs ou autres.

Il convient également d'ajouter, et ceci est un aspect important du caractère biaisé que peut receler la thèse de Florida, que l'auteur utilise des données concernant les régions métropolitaines qui incorporent les espaces de la banlieue (Tremblay, 2006, p. 42). Les résultats concernant par exemple la performance d'une économie en matière de haute technologie pourraient être dus à des pôles suburbains performants dans ce domaine plutôt qu'au degré de tolérance et de diversité qui caractérisent les centres urbains. À cet égard, comment Florida peut-il expliquer la performance économique de pôles de banlieue notamment dans le domaine de la haute technologie (Laval, Kanata) qui font figures sur le plan de l'aménagement et de l'atmosphère de *nerdistans* – pour reprendre le terme de Kotkin (2000) – donc fortement éloignés des critères de Florida quant aux critères de diversité et la tolérance pour définir les quartiers urbains, mais pourtant très performants sur le plan économique ?

De fait, l'un des défauts de la thèse de Florida est sans doute d'être elle-même peu tolérante au fait que d'autres dynamiques et explications sont tout aussi valables pour expliquer le succès de certaines régions et notamment des banlieues. La thèse de Florida est bien construite et pertinente quant au développement économique de certains centres urbains mais il serait risqué d'en faire la seule thèse valable quant à la performance des villes dans un contexte de compétitivité basé sur une économie du savoir. Enfin, il convient de reconnaître que les dynamiques des entreprises vers certaines régions géographiques s'expliquent également par la structure industrielle, des effets d'agglomération, ainsi que la situation géographique ; bref la croissance économique d'une région ou d'une ville peut difficilement être attribuable à un seul facteur comme l'affirme Florida (Shearmur, 2006, p. 286).

Par contre, malgré le fait que la thèse de Florida écarte d'autres théories du développement économique en milieu urbain pour ne privilégier que cette approche du capital créatif, celle-ci a néanmoins le mérite de proposer de nouvelles manières de promouvoir le développement économique des villes, notamment la valorisation du capital créatif et des initiatives en matière culturelle ou artistique. Cependant, de là à embrasser totalement cette thèse et à faire abstraction de travaux qui mettent en valeur des principes reconnus dans le domaine de l'économie urbaine, il y a un pas que de nombreuses instances décisionnelles relatives au développement urbain, n'hésitent apparemment pas à franchir. On peut notamment énumérer certains faits qui s'opposent à la thèse de Florida, mais dont celui-ci ne tient pas compte dans l'élaboration de sa démarche :

- Le fait que la « classe créative », plus mobile que la classe moyenne, se déplacerait vers les régions métropolitaines offrant les emplois les plus rémunérateurs (sur ce point de nombreux auteurs reconnaissent que la relation de causalité entre les deux est sans doute circulaire et cumulative, entre autres Shearmur (2006) et Tremblay et Pilati (2007b) ;
- Le fait que l'attraction du capital humain est un facteur à considérer dans le processus de croissance économique d'une région économique mais qu'il n'est pas le seul. La croissance économique se rapporte en effet à l'analyse d'une combinaison de facteurs plutôt qu'à un facteur explicatif unique (Lewis, 1955) ;
- Enfin le principe du *trickle down effect* qui veut que la majorité profitera à long terme du succès de l'élite créatrice s'apparente plus à une opinion politique qu'à une théorie économique (Shearmur, 2006).

Bref, l'application de la thèse de Florida, compte tenu de certaines des lacunes identifiées dans le cadre de cet article, risque de mener à des politiques de développement urbain qui focalisent sur une apparence de prospérité sans que des problèmes économiques flagrants et hérités de longue date ne soient véritablement résolus, notamment ceux qui touchent une population non concernée directement par l'approche de la prospérité urbaine préconisée par Florida.

Conclusion

Au terme de cette recension des écrits et surtout en considérant la structure de la thèse de Florida, l'organisation conceptuelle de cette thèse et la méthodologie utilisée par Florida, il convient de reconnaître que celle-ci repose sur une idée forte. Celle-ci concerne le lien entre la définition du « talent » ou du capital créatif (qui inclut les composantes gaie et bohémienne) chez Florida et les décisions en ce qui concerne l'aménagement des centres urbains, afin non seulement d'attirer ce « talent » mais également lui permettre de s'épanouir et de contribuer à la croissance économique en milieu urbain. À la lecture des écrits de Florida et des critiques faites à l'encontre de sa thèse, on pourrait être porté à croire que celui-ci a construit une méthodologie afin de confirmer son approche du développement économique plutôt que de s'inscrire modestement dans un courant de pensée contribuant à une meilleure compréhension des facteurs de croissance économique en milieu urbain.

L'approche de Florida a en effet tendance à évacuer d'autres approches qui pourraient également être valables dans l'explication des succès économiques de certaines régions géographiques plutôt que d'autres, par ex : les pôles suburbains performants dans le domaine de la haute technologie : Kanata (Ottawa), Saint-Laurent (Montréal) qui

s'expliquent par une tendance sur le plan économique, notamment une flexibilité accrue de l'appareil de production et non par des initiatives en termes d'aménagement particulières afin d'attirer une certaine classe de la population. Nous sommes bien dans ces cas précis dans une configuration où une certaine catégorie de la population suit le mouvement des entreprises. Il convient donc de mentionner que la thèse de Florida est loin de pouvoir expliquer tous les cas de succès économique. Afin d'être plus convaincante, la thèse devrait en outre tenir compte des échelles territoriales auxquelles l'auteur fait référence dans son analyse de la croissance économique en distinguant clairement les espaces centraux, des espaces suburbains et périurbains.

Concernant les points positifs, il convient de reconnaître que la thèse de Florida a le mérite d'attirer l'attention de nombre de décideurs publics sur de nouvelles sources potentielles de développement économique, ainsi que de mettre en évidence le rôle potentiellement positif du secteur des arts et de la création et également de souligner l'importance de facteurs d'attraction concernant le capital humain qui n'avaient pas jusqu'ici été vraiment considérés (le niveau de tolérance et de diversité d'une ville) qui, certes, ajoutent à la réflexion sur les moteurs de la croissance économique des villes et sur leur niveau de compétitivité dans le contexte contemporain. Cependant, les concepts proposés par l'auteur concernant sa définition élargie de la notion de capital humain se doivent d'être vérifiés empiriquement.

Sans diminuer les mérites de cette thèse, l'article identifie une série de faiblesses assez importantes, ce qui n'empêche pas cette théorie de faire partie dorénavant des thèses concernant les stratégies de développement économique et d'être intégrée à un grand nombre de plans de développement économique au Canada (Halifax, Winnipeg, Toronto, Vancouver) comme aux États-Unis. Pour résumer ses faiblesses, nous rappellerons simplement que la question de la dichotomie ville/banlieue (tant sur les plans économiques, du mode de vie que des déplacements) n'est pas convenablement prise en compte dans la thèse de Florida et notamment au niveau méthodologique.

Le deuxième point qu'il convient de souligner et qui, d'après nous, constitue une faiblesse majeure de la thèse proposée par Florida, c'est de supposer que l'ensemble des catégories constitutives de la « classe créative » aient les mêmes aspirations en termes de milieu de vie, loisirs, possibilité de sorties, etc. Entre un employé d'une entreprise œuvrant dans les secteurs de la haute technologie et une personne appartenant à la catégorie des bohémiens, nous sommes sans aucun doute en présence de deux mondes différents, mais dans la thèse englobante de Florida ces deux catégories professionnelles auraient des aspirations similaires en ce qui concerne le mode de vie et le milieu de vie qui caractérisent leur lieu de résidence.

Enfin, un dernier point important qui tient plus à l'application de cette thèse en ce qui concerne la mise en place de politiques urbaines concernant l'aménagement des espaces urbains : les aspirations de la « classe créative » vont sans doute évoluer avec le temps, ce dont ne tient pas compte cette thèse. En effet, les membres de la classe créative ne vont sans doute pas toute leur existence aspirer à vivre dans des milieux de vie urbains, tolérants, etc. On peut donc soulever la question du caractère éphémère des dispositions en termes de développement économique ou d'aménagement urbain, qui résulteraient de l'application de la thèse de Florida.

Bref, au terme de cet article, il convient de reconnaître que cette thèse est séduisante et assez bien articulée, ce qui explique certes son succès auprès des instances municipales qui élaborent des stratégies de développement économique dans un contexte économique

qui privilégie les activités du savoir (*Knowledge-Based Economy*). Toutefois, la recherche dans le domaine économique et également des études urbaines invite à une certaine prudence quant à l'application de cette thèse somme toute pertinente, mais quelque peu particulière. Il convient donc de remettre cette thèse du développement économique à sa place en tant que contribution importante pour expliquer les dynamiques qui caractérisent l'évolution des économies en milieu urbain. Il faut reconnaître que Florida ne nous apporte qu'une réponse partielle à une réalité économique complexe, qui ne peut s'expliquer totalement par le seul recours à une définition de la notion de capital humain adaptée au contexte actuel, parce que centrée davantage sur les « talents » ou les créatifs.

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NOTES

1. Voir le numéro 36 de la revue *Interventions économiques* consacré à Veblen : http://www.telug.quebec.ca/pls/inteco/rie.entree?vno_revue=1.
2. Florida (2002) utilise le terme de *low barriers to entry for human capital*.
3. Cet indice est basé sur la proportion (établie par rapport aux revenus en dollars) représentée par une économie dans les secteurs de la haute technologie pour la région en question par rapport à l'activité totale de cette région et également par rapport à l'activité en haute technologie à l'échelle nationale (Florida, 2005b, p. 156).
4. *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002).
5. Peter Marcuse (2003) affirme le fait que l'ouvrage de Florida (2002) est bien écrit mais que le style rappelle celui employé dans les discours de dîners des Chambres de Commerce (Peck, 2005, p. 741).
6. Les catégories professionnelles incluent dans la catégorie de la population « bohémienne » sont les suivantes : écrivain, artiste, musicien, concepteur, acteur, photographe (Levine, 2004, p. 23).
7. La notion de capital humain fait en général référence au niveau de scolarité d'une population et non au type d'occupation professionnelle, comme cela est le cas dans le cadre de la définition de Florida, qui inclut la population des bohémiens ; on évoquera donc plus le terme de « capital créatif » que de capital humain en ce qui concerne la thèse de la « classe créative ».
8. À ce titre, nous confirmons la pertinence du degré de tolérance d'une ville en ce qui a trait à sa capacité d'attirer et de retenir les étudiants étrangers dans le domaine des sciences et de la technologie dans le cas de Montréal. Ceci a été confirmé dans le cadre d'une recherche en cours (Chaire de recherche du Canada sur les enjeux socio-organisationnels de l'économie du savoir ; www.telug.uqam.ca/chaireecosavoir) sur les facteurs d'attraction et de rétention de la population étudiante dans le domaine des sciences et de la technologie.
9. En particulier : Glaeser, 2005, 2000 ; Glaeser et Saiz, 2004 ; Markusen, 2006 ; Simon, 1998, mais aussi nombre d'économistes.
10. Charles Landry (2000). *The Creative City. A Toolkit for Urban Innovators*. London : Earthscan correspond également à l'approche préconisée par Florida.

RÉSUMÉS

Richard Florida propose dans sa thèse du développement économique en milieu urbain dite de la « classe créative » une conception innovante de la notion de capital humain en se fondant sur ce qu'il nomme le capital créatif. Dans le cadre de cette article, nous nous attachons à mieux cerner la définition de la notion de capital créatif proposée par l'auteur ainsi que les attributs qu'une ville doit posséder afin d'attirer ce capital et de le mettre en valeur. Notre objectif est d'explicitier la méthodologie utilisée afin de valoriser la pertinence de la notion de capital créatif et de présenter les applications possibles de cette thèse en milieu urbain. Nous revenons également sur

certaines des critiques qui ont caractérisé l'analyse de la thèse du développement économique proposée par Florida.

Richard Florida developed an approach of economic development based on a new conception of the theory of human capital and labelled creative capital. In this paper, we define the notion of creative capital linked to the positive aspects of cities attracting this capital and promoting it. We focus on the analysis of the methodology on which is based the concept of creative capital and on the application of this approach to economic development in an urban context. This paper also presents some of the critics developed by researchers in urban economics regarding Richard Florida's theory of economic development.

INDEX

Keywords : creative class, creative capital, economic development, economic innovation, urban development

Mots-clés : classe créative, capital créatif, développement économique, innovation économique, développement urbain

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Sébastien Darchen est au post-doctorat dans le cadre de la Chaire de recherche du Canada sur les enjeux socio-organisationnels de l'économie du savoir et il est en voie d'obtenir son doctorat en études urbaines effectué à l'Institut National de la Recherche Scientifique-Urbanisation, Culture et Société. Il a été chargé de cours à l'Institut d'urbanisme de l'Université de Montréal ainsi qu'au département Geography, Planning and Environment de l'Université Concordia.

DIANE-GABRIELLE TREMBLAY

Diane-Gabrielle Tremblay est titulaire de la Chaire de recherche du Canada sur les enjeux socio-organisationnels de l'économie du savoir (www.teluq.uqam.ca/chaireecosavoir) et cotitulaire de la Chaire Bell en technologies et organisation du travail ; elle est professeure en économie et gestion à la Télé-université de l'UQAM et a été professeure invitée dans les universités de Paris I, Lille I, Lyon III, Louvain-la-Neuve, en Belgique, Université des sciences sociales de Hanoi, au Vietnam, ainsi qu'à la European School of Management.

Interviews

Interview with Betsy Donald

Entrevue avec Betsy Donald

- 1 Betsy Donald is an Associate Professor in the Department of Geography at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. She has degrees in history, environmental studies, planning and geography from McGill, York and Toronto respectively. She teaches and does research on the urban creative economy, with recent publications in **Economic Geography**, **Environment and Planning A**, and **Space and Polity**. She is also a **Registered Professional Planner** and has consulted on a wide-range of public policy issues for all levels of government. Her report, *Competing for Talent: implications for social and cultural policy in Canadian city-regions* was commissioned by Heritage Canada. Dr. Donald currently has two SSHRC-funded research projects: one on creative class politics in Toronto and Boston, and the other on the urban creative food economy. As a Visiting Scholar at **Harvard University's Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston in the Kennedy School of Government**, Dr. Donald has been examining the politics of the new economy in Boston.

Remy Tremblay (RT): Betsy Donald, what is your opinion on Richard Florida's creative class? Is it realistic? Has it been empirically demonstrated?

Betsy Donald (BD): Well I think that obviously Richard Florida's work, particularly his 2002 book *Rise of the Creative Class*, and all the work he has been doing on the 3 Ts and the role that place plays in local economic development is probably the most significant work to come out of the regional economic development field in about 20 or 30 years. And I think that you first have to give him credit for starting a debate again about the role of place and the importance of measures, subjective measures like quality of life to the economic health and stability of cities, especially knowledge-intensive cities. So I think that you know absolutely he is important, whether you agree with his work or not. He absolutely has had such an important impact. All you have to do is look at all the cities across North America, and now Europe and even Asia that are starting to fashion policies after his work. So you know cities that are now interested in looking at quality of life measures for their people. And one of the difficulties obviously is that quality of place as Richard Florida has articulated in his books is really his own views of what he thinks it is. Yes it is based on empirical research he did in the late 90s with IT workers, information technology workers aged 20 to about 28. So, the problem is that

here we are in 2005, almost 2006, our economy has changed a lot, he hasn't looked at a lot of other people in the economy, so his version, he has really kind of individualized quality of place, depoliticized the concept. He has got one vision but there are clearly so many different visions of what quality of life is for different people, for women, for people who are in different lifecycles, for retired people, for people who are in their 30s who have got children, I mean there are so many different aspects that have yet to be explored.

RT: I think Richard Florida mentioned in a footnote in his latest book, *The Flight of the Creative Class*, that while you can have a strong high-tech economy it brings social inequality.

BD: I think that what his research found, and this is one of the most disturbing aspects of the knowledge-intensive economy, is that where you seem to have very high growth in cities, for example, I know North America better than other places, but in San Francisco, Boston, New York City, Toronto, Vancouver, even Montréal to some extent although it is not growing as intensely as those other places, is that what comes with that is increasing social and spatial polarization. So you are starting to see that as the rich get richer, the poorer get poorer, and I think that seems to be a function of our knowledge-intensive society. And when you think about it, nowadays you need a credit card for everything, everything is on the Internet, you can Internet bank, you know, you need to have good credit to get groceries (laughter); so there are all these technological changes that are great for people who have the skills and the know-how and the resources to use them but there are a lot of people left behind. So, I think that is the biggest challenge facing a lot of these knowledge-based cities now in North America --is this the kind of society we want, where we have this increasing haves and have-nots, and I think that Richard Florida has demonstrated in his latest book that we are seeing those places that happen to be growing the fastest are also polarizing. So I think that is definitely a key characteristic of globalization in the global city.

RT: Do you think that he forgot to look at the suburbs?

BD: I think that again, his empirical work was really based on focus groups that he did with information technology, young people in their 20s who were living in these cities in the heyday of the late 90s and the year 2000 when everyone was going to bars, had tons of money, and there was this real, what is the word I am looking for, frenzy of economic activity and since then we have started to see a bit of a clearout in these cities because of the dot.com bust. But also, again I think that Robert Lang's work on the sociology of the creative class is very good because he talks about how Florida hasn't really developed a sociology of this class, I mean is it really a class? Class is often defined as a socio-economic group but he sort of adds this kind of sociological anecdotal kind of stuff. So assuming that everyone wants to live downtown, everyone wants to live in the cities, but again, if you look at the empirical work, the suburbs in North America are continuing to grow. That is where people tend to live. Certainly a lot of people that move into the family lifecycle stage are looking for larger homes with backyards and parking, close to schools. You know there is evidence in Toronto that certain immigrant groups tend to prefer the newer suburbs over the older suburbs, so I think that it is definitely misleading to assume that everybody wants to live in the urban cores. And I think that the reason why he has popularized that notion is that, his main audience has been local economic development planners who are trying to revitalize the old American city. And again, there is a huge difference between the

Canadian tradition versus the American tradition of urban life and that Canada had always put in much more strategic investments, and Québec, the Québec government too, in terms of investing in urban areas in terms of transit and transportation and schools. We have a whole different tax structure around our school system which has enabled a much more even educational system across space. Whereas in the US of course, one of the key difference is that they have whole world status, towns and cities have much more local power to make their own decisions. There is not a lot of regional thinking down in the US so you've got a lot of fragmentation and metropolitan fragmentation, and they also have a history of racial conflict, obviously much deeper than ours in Canada, and class, so you really saw the white middle-classes fleeing the cities in the 50s, 60s, and 70s. So they have a contemporary history of a lot of white flight and suburbanization, so when Richard Florida came up with his thesis that there is new interest in the cities and that people are starting to be attracted.

I think the important context you have to remember about why Richard Florida's work has been taken up by so many policy makers in the US in the American city is because the American city has a history of white flight to the suburbs so the very idea is that he is trying to give hope I think back to a lot of cities that have been on the decline, that have seen their inner cities pretty much fall apart. But the question is, are the policy "fixes" actually the right ones? And I think this is where, you know the paper I wrote on competing for talent, the implications for the social and cultural planning of city regions is important because it really says it is important to think about. What I am trying to say there is that in many ways, Richard Florida's definition of the creative class is really a very narrow kind of talent elite that is interested in a very narrow band of cultural consumption activities, and really, if you want to really be interested in a long-term health and sustainability of a city or city region, you have to have more strategic investments in things like health care and immigration settlement and education. Concerning the public education system, it is absolutely imperative that we invest in that, and that we invest evenly in it. I think it is very interesting to think about how we in Canada have funded education services. Basically we take people's property taxes and the business portion of property taxes and we collect from all on a regional scale, or even on a provincial scale, and we redistribute it, and the idea is that every student has about the same amount of money and that schools should be relatively even in terms of their educational contribution. There are variations but the idea is that there are not huge discrepancies. In the US, the education funding is much different, it is very localized, so it is all on the local property tax. So what people do there, and this is why we are seeing such a huge increase in housing prices in the US, is that you go to a neighbourhood if you want to send your kid to a certain school. So you pay for your schooling essentially through your housing cost. It is also why you get such unevenness in space there, where you've got very bad schools in one area and really really good schools in another area. I was just in Boston and it's really interesting to see how in one small city in the Boston region (Brookline), the entry level house is a million dollars. I was talking to people there and they were saying well you know that's because we want to get our kids in these public schools that are thought to be the best in the US. So of course if you're poor, if you're black, if you're someone who hasn't got the resources to do that, you're sending you kid to the local school. So you actually see incredible amount of racial tension in the school system there too. I think that we could be going down that kind of slippery slope here if we don't think about innovative ways

to fund our system in order to make sure that we've got the sort of regional or national provincial thinking around funding public schools. That's just one example. I think that's where we need to be putting your strategic investments. Immigration settlement is another area that the federal government is become much more interested in making sure that our cities in Canada are able to manage the influx of immigrants, and some of the special needs people have around English or French as a second language. I think that those are kinds of things we have to be thinking about. In terms of culture, one of the things Richard Florida is so known about is talking about, in his findings, he found that capital C culture, which is very formal culture, i.e., museums and opera, those are in his view almost old economy types of cultural activities and that while they are important and they're a good indicator of cultural kind of make up of a city, ... The other that we have to think about is small "C" culture, more informal culture, like art in the parks, just walking around the neighbourhoods, the streetscapes and the ability to go into a shop or go into a bar or we've called just in time amenities, you know this idea of your working late and you just want to go run up the mountain or you know, have a break of just go sit in a bar or just go for a little shop. So this kind of more informal cultural experience, which obviously Montréal is probably one of the best example in the world of this kind of informal cultural milieu that is very attractive and I think that is why Richard Florida was so attracted to writing about Montréal because it's such a fun city to be in. But that's what a lot of cities are trying to copy and they're doing it through things like marketing gay pride, gay festivals or "hey we're cool we've got lofts now in our city". But the question is, how far is that really going to go, you have to really make sure that you don't do those things at the expense of those long term strategic investments in place. And again if I can just reiterate, for people who would be listening to this: housing, transit, really sustainable land-use, all those things are really important when you're thinking about governing the city.

RT: Of course Richard Florida's theory has been discussed a lot over the last 5 years at least. Are there any other theories we should think about, or consider?

BD: Sure, I think again he's the most popular. In the fields of urban geography, economic geography, regional economic development, in all these fields there's a lot of really interesting research going on. I'm thinking of the work of Ann Markusen who has written about the quality of occupational theory, or occupational class. So her point similar to Florida is that firms are still very much important in the economic development of a city, you have to remember that people are increasingly identifying themselves not so much with « I work for Coca-Cola and I will for the next 30 years », but rather « I am a professor and that's my occupation ». Maybe professor is not a very good example, because you're not that movable. But a better example is "I'm a medical technician, and I can travel anywhere, my skills are desired anywhere and I will choose to live in the place that offers the things that I want." So again Richard Florida has popularized it. But this idea is that I will choose to go to a place that has a lot of economic opportunity, so that if I lose my job or I want to switch jobs, I can do that in a relatively deep labour market. I love that term, a thick or deep labour market. It's very important for a city to concentrate on. And then of course I'd like a place that has a quality of life, and that of course being the most contentious, because who defines quality of life? It's very much a subjective and individualized process. Having said that, there are some general things and one would be again affordable housing, safe neighbourhoods, good education system, nice parks, all those kinds of things. So there

are in some indicators that researches have shown that actually do make a difference in the quality of people's life. And then of course, Richard Florida who popularized it, but other people have been doing work on the diversity, the importance of tolerance and diversity. So this idea that you can feel accepted. Again Canadians are known for public policies that really try to promote tolerance and acceptance in a place. And I think that that's not a quick fix urban solution, but that is something that's imbedded in our charter of rights and freedom around issues of civil rights and human rights. It's a very important dimension, or characteristic that is very important for understanding why our cities are desirable for many people from all over the world. Ann Markusen works on the occupational class, she's an excellent person I recommend reading anything of hers. And then Charles Landry from the UK has been doing work on the creative city and it's much more about he's more of a kind of architect, urban design thinker, so I think that his work is good. And actually, locally Anne-Marie Séguin who just wrote a book on the design city where she's actually referring to cities from all over the world but she's using Montréal's example. She's the design commissioner for the city of Montréal and she's using Montréal as an example of where the city is trying to encourage design in place. So that's something to look at. And then the other really great writer in this field is Jamie Peck. He comes from the regulation school of political economy and he's a very critical thinker and a very funny writer as well. He wrote a paper called *Banal Urbanism* critiquing all the Richard Florida work. And then another excellent researcher is Ed Glaeser who's at Harvard University, he's an economist. Glaeser basically took all of Richard Florida's empirical work and his argument is that he has looked at north American cities and growth patterns over the last 100 years and he prefers - he doesn't like the term creative class, because he said it's too fuzzy and kind of nebulous, so then actually after talking to him I tended to concur with him but I find it's too, people are able to hide in it, and it's not analytically clean - so he prefers the term skilled-city, because his research shows that really the only predictor of growth in the knowledge intensive city is education, formal education. So I think that really the creative stuff comes sort of as an afterthought in the growth city. But he thinks the consumption of creativity is really a by-product of often a lot of money by the elite classes. Having said that, other people will argue in fact that you have to be poor to be an artist because you have to, you know, you've got the angst that forces creativity and I think there's a wonderful literature there of course sociology area and the sociology of creativity.

RT: You said that Richard Florida interviewed young people in their 20s. Do you agree with him that they too want to live in cool downtowns?

BD: One of the debates of course in economics, urban economic development is: who is driving the economy of the cities? Is it firms? Is it people? What is the best way of thinking about it? And traditionally we've always thought about firms. If you can attract the Gillettes, or the GMs, or the Fords, bring those manufacturing plants to your city, excuse me, that's a good thing because they're bringing so many jobs and they're bringing in so much tax dollars for the local economy. One of the key things I always stress to my students when we're thinking about urban economic development is you have to think about where is the money coming from for these other services. So I highly recommend a basic course in public finance, like municipal public finance. It's really important for students to understand, especially in the Canadian context, but most everywhere in the world, with few exceptions, local governments get their money

through property taxes. That means that they're interested -- and that pays for all the services, like garbage collection and schools, the roads and the parks and all those things. So they're really interested in maximising that opportunity and the way the tax system works is, there's different classes and there's residential, and within residential there's apartment buildings plus single family and then there's commercial and industrial and retail taxes. Depending on jurisdiction, there are different classes. But one of the biggest drawers is industrial-commercial, so they're able to charge more per square foot for an industrial actor than they are for a single family home. And the other dynamic going on, of course, is that cities tend not to like, there're certain groups, certain more expensive than others so if they can build housing not for that group, they will, it's illegal to do it, but they do it another way, so they don't like a lot of social housing, no they don't like a lot of people that can draw upon services. They tend not to like young families because they use the school system, especially in the US, for they have to pay for the school system out of those revenues. Those are really how a lot of local economic development or politicians are thinking. So if they can get a big company to come in, and stay there, they're just ecstatic, because they bring in a lot of revenues and jobs as well. So there's still a real interest in attracting this kind of players to these cities. So the question then becomes why would they want to attract young people, or why would they want to run into this Richard Florida type of thing. Well I think because the idea is that these young people are working at these really dynamic firms or they're creating their own, they've got a lot of energy, they've got the entrepreneurial spirit, these are the high knowledge workers who if they had a choice would live anywhere. So they're the ones that are creating the new technologies and creating the business activity. So that's the thinking. If they can get them. Sure they're not going to be like in the older economy a big sort of solid GM plant or Ford plant, but they've got a lot of other things they bring in the city in terms of vitality. And to some extent that's an indicator of economic activity. So again it's this idea there relatively, you know, a lot of these Richard Floridian kind of solutions are relatively cheap things for the cities to do. But this is only one way of thinking about economic development or social development of a city. Clearly lifestyle cycle has to come into play. It begs questions, but what kind of city do you want to live in, what kind of life do you want to live, do you want it to be all the same, or do you live in places with a lot of different types of people and lifestyles and life cycles. Personally, I would like to be in a place with both old people and young people and everyone in between and different races and classes and mixes. So is this idea of making sure that we don't ignore the very vulnerable in our society which really make our society. I can't remember who's the famous Supreme Court judge in the US always said that our policies are sort of tax policies define us as a civilization. But you know, our policies around even urban development define us as what kind of people we want to be or what kind of civilization we want or what society we want. And I think that's why I'm urging people to think about those longer term strategic investments in place that really make a place sustainable and value added for people who live in.

RT: Thank you very much for this interview.

Interview with Peter Kresl

Entrevue avec Peter Kresl

- 1 Peter Kresl is Professor of Economics and International Relations in the Department of Economics at Bucknell University. His fields of research and teaching interests are economics of integration, the European Union, U.S./Canada relations, urban economies and globalization, and culture policy and trade conflict. His recent publications focus on the effects of globalization on urban economies and on the impact of NAFTA on Canadian and Quebec culture. He has done work for the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the United Nations' Habitat II project. He is a past-President of the Association for Canadian Studies in the U.S. and member of the editorial boards of both journals, *The American Review of Canadian Studies*, and *Quebec Studies*.

Diane-Gabrielle Tremblay (DGT): Peter Kresl, how do you see the knowledge economy, or the evolution of North America large cities or medium cities?

Peter Kresl (PK): Well, everybody, of course, is on the bandwagon of knowledge, high-skilled labour and so forth. What I think is interesting is these days, in the old economy, if you had steel or automobiles, there were only 2 or 3 cities that could do that. You have Detroit, you have Chicago, or a few other cities. Steel was Pittsburgh, Buffalo and Chicago and so forth. But when you're looking at biopharmaceutical, there's so many little niches in it that 30 or 50 cities can all have strategic focus on biopharmaceutical or information technologies. There's so many different aspects of those industries that it's reasonable, although it doesn't seem that way immediately, for every city would be saying we want to have a high-tech economy with biopharmaceutical, information, communication technology. So it's possible and it does make a certain amount of sense, we all understand the transition from agricultural to manufacturer service and from muscle to brain and so on and what we do here.

But I think we should not get too carried away, I think there will always be manufacturing in Montreal or Chicago, there will always be services and mixed economies. One thing that stroke me a couple of weeks ago was a report by the OECD, which said between 70 and 90 % of the educated elite of many third world developing countries are outside the country. They're working in Canada, US, Western Europe. And that's in large part due to this functionally economies and political systems that are unstable, coups every couple of years, and brutal regimes and educated people said

“heck with that, I’m just going to walk away.” Now, if those economies get stabilized politically and they start to get an economy that makes sense, I suspect that a lot of those people, we all have attachment to place where we grew up ; I suspect a lot of those people will go back. So we shouldn’t think the third world countries don’t have educated people and high-skilled labour, they’re all in the developed world, right now. But they can all go back. So this could change around with some structural changes there.

I think another thing that makes it a little less clear is we know that financial companies are hiring MBAs in India to do a lot of financial analysis. We know that people in hospitals are sending diagnostic reports to India or Brazil for analysis and they get sent back : telecommunications. And we know that people are going to places like Cuba, or India, for medical procedures, for surgical vacations. So there’s a lot of activities of a high-tech nature that already get done in third world countries and I think there’s potential for that to grow. So I don’t think we should think that we’re all going to be in Canada, USA, Western Europe, like what Robert Reich, the past labour secretary under Clinton, said symbolic analysts, that is we deal with numbers with plans, with ideas, with concepts and other people deal with metal, wood and plastic. It’s not that clear. I think what’s going to happen is that we’ll find the differences between our economies and other countries will be diminishing, so that we will have to find certain things in the high-tech, high-skilled, knowledge area that we can do best and clearly, there’ll be other things that they can do elsewhere.

America tends to think that all that all the pharmaceutical advances are in the USA. But they forget that the things been in Korea, Japan, stem research in Korea, for example, and Brazil and other parts of the world. So we have this notion that we have all the high-skilled, high-tech stuff and the others don’t and that’s just not true. I think we’ll have a comparative advantage in many areas of high-skilled, high-tech, but we shouldn’t think that we have the monopoly on it or the high-skilled, high-tech at large are comparative advantages in third world countries have something else.

DGT: You mention high-skill and high-tech. In your view, do they generally go together or do we have high-skill and sometimes with high-tech and sometimes just high-skill or high-tech ?

PK: A good example is the steel industry in the USA. We used to have these huge mills and the Ford factory making cars. You start up with some iron ore at River Rouge and they make the steel, they roll the sheets, they make the fenders, they put the car together. It’s a mass manufacturing kind of industry : automobiles and steel. Steel isn’t like that anymore. Steel is one of the comparative advantages of the USA now. But it’s done in smaller mills and it’s done with a lot of patents in a lot of, for example, there’s one in Chicago I’ve visited, Comco Steel, it got 150 employees. But they specialize in huge castings, very difficult to cool without having them fractured or distorted and they surrounded their processes with patents, with technological advances, and so on. Do the workers have to be super-skilled to do that ? Perhaps not.

The technology is where the skill is and designing these new ways of doing things. But the workers may still be pouring steel the way they did decades ago. Only its processing is done with the more mechanized supervision. So we have high-technology which is designed, the idea you come up with to do something and then you realize that using all the industrial designers and chemist and physicists and all these people. But then when

you get this in place, it may be that you don't need terribly high-skilled labour to carry it out. There is very high-skilled labor in doing things like making a piece of fine furniture, that's very high-skilled, try it sometime. And a lot of high-skilled work in things we'd call manual activity. Making things like semi-conductors is a terribly sophisticated thing, but once you've got the individual all suited up and pushing buttons on the machine, through a robot you can do it. There's a certain skill, but it's not something that people can't figure out fairly quickly. One example is a GM plant built in Pueblo, Mexico, small sophisticated technology, the same thing they're doing in California. Within 18 months, the Mexican workers are as productive and as skilled as all the workers in California. A lot of this stuff is very highly skilled, design and putting the machine together in the process, but third world countries workers can get up to speed in 18 months or something like that.

DGT: What about the concept of new economy? For a couple of years it was very faddish I guess. How do you see this? Do you consider that there's anything new or there's really nothing new about it?

PK: I think there should always be something new. I've been doing work on urban competitiveness and strategic plan and it's clear that cities can rest on their laurels and not be innovative and then they have futures that are characterized by marginalization and stagnation. We see a lot of examples of that. Cities like Buffalo or New York, it's just been wallowing, stagnation since the oil price heights since 1970s and many other examples of that. Cities have to continually come up with something new. Another complete *bouleversement* just the same industry advanced a little more, a higher technology product, higher technology process. They have to be continually thinking about the economy, the future, which is the new economy.

Now it can be a modification of what they're already doing, what I would call quantitative enhancement, doing the same thing, only better. Or there could be a qualitative change, which would mean the quality the economy would be different, they develop new things. In both instances they do something new. Some are using steel, for example, and using new technologies to make it a highly competitive sector in the USA, where the old Pittsburgh, the Monongahela Valley, was an enormously competitive steel sector until the 1970s. I had a tour there and this one worker was saying this Homestead of steel mill here, in Pittsburgh, we turned out, during second world war, more steel than all the steel mills in Japan plus all the steel mills in Germany, in that one plant. It's dead now, it's a historical mark and has a plaque that say this was the Homestead. So they have to continue looking for something new.

The new economy isn't something that is right after the service sector. For the individual city, it has to be a change; it has to be an improvement, new technologies, new products, something like that. But it doesn't mean that everybody has to get into information technology and biopharmaceutical, that's the new economy. There's some cities that going to be quite successful, people will have good jobs, high incomes, economic growth, centers of tourism, recreation and culture. Others, they can be logistics centers. They don't all have to have this cookie-cutter sort of economy stamped on them. The latest thing that comes out of the consulting bag is the new economy, you're always looking for new economy.

DGT: What about the knowledge economy concept? Is that in any way more precise or exact, again ?

PK: Well, I think we all have a responsibility to use our brains and a lot of economic processes are using Robert Reich concept of the symbolic analyst. That's a knowledge kind of economy. But we're not the only ones that can do the knowledge. As I said, some of these activities are being done in India or Brazil or Cuba. They're knowledge economies as well. Maybe small sectors, not the whole economy. And I think certain cities are going to want to focus on that sort of things. I was in Europe doing a project on 10 large, internationally, gated cities, and places like Munich have been pushing knowledge since the mid-1970s, when the industry minister said we're going to focus on Munich's strength. The university's science technology, Deutsche Museum, all the things that they've done so well in Munich for so long and that's been the central focus of that economy ever since. And that's highly successful. I think of Montréal, if you go back to « le virage technologique et bâtir le Québec », those reports in the 1980s, they set a tone for a technology focused to the economy and you see what's happened to Montreal in the 25 years after that. You've made some considerable success in many sectors, but you wouldn't say that you have a knowledge economy, because you still do manufacturing and retail, you do a lot of things, but part of it is highly sophisticated information technology and communications and biopharmaceutical and stuff like that. It's a part of your economy, clearly.

DGT: If almost everybody can do it or can do some parts of the knowledge economy, or these new activities, how do we explain the movement that there seems to be towards southwest of North America, for example? How do you see the movement, maybe the difficulty of the north-eastern part of North America ?

PK: Things go up and things go down! When the defence economy was in the recession, back in the early 1990s, California was going down, Connecticut was going down and after the 1970s oil price heights, the American industrial heart became the Rust Belt. Then, 5 years ago, unemployment in (medicine) was constantly 1.5 %. Unemployment in city after city upper Midwest is 2 or 2.5 %. It's a hot area, the Midwest was in a tank, and then boom, here they come. I have a friend living in Phoenix and maybe it's a hot economy, but it's a 105 all summer, starting in April, ending up in October. That's not attractive to me ! Sooner or later they're going to run out of water, they're going to run out of a lot of things. I think it's attractive to certain activities, there's a defence base to it, that's the proper of the southern California economy and a lot of the Texas economy. And that's based on little rain, good skies, aircraft testing, military bases and defence production, there.

I wouldn't ride off the Northeast, I think Chicago has come back nicely. I think Montreal, I did a study with Pierre-Paul Proulx, who's the dean of the University of Montreal, we did a study of competitiveness in North American cities, in 40 American, 7 Canadian cities. Montreal is number 15. That's the most highly ranked Canadian city in terms of competitiveness. Calgary is second. It goes back to that strategic focus made 25 years ago, the « virage technologique » and consistent, you see what happens in city like Chicago. Mayor Daley comes in, we're going to be internationally, we'll put ourselves on the map, we're going to do this, we're going to... and then, he dies of a heart attack, his successor says no, we're going to look at the neighbourhoods. The whole internationalization of Chicago collapsed. Now, with Richard Daley back, the son, all of sudden, Chicago is elevating itself internationally, it's a global city, you know, that

stuff. So these things come and go. Quebec has had this consistent thrust with the provincial government and the city government, going back to the 1980, and that tells. It's like Lyon, in France, and Munich and Barcelona, those are cities in Europe that relatively have a consistent focus on their economies and it have been very successful. And I think Montreal was a very successful city in many ways.

DGT: We're talking more and more about cities precisely, what happens to the hinterland? Do you think there's any future, are people going to be moving to the more urban environments or we're just talking a little bit more about cities ?

PK: Well, you've got two sides of the city, one is a place where you have social pathology, you have congestion, you have pollution, you've got crimes, you've got drugs, and all that stuff. On the other hand, other people will look at the city and say it's a privileged to space, because you have to have face to face contact, for people in technology areas and if you have an educated labour force being in Gatineau, some place outside Ottawa, it's very lovely, but you wouldn't live there all the time or Kapuskasing, or something like that.

Educated people want symphonies, they want cultural institutions, museums, they want their kids at the dance companies and things like that. Naturally, they are going to flock to cities. But the other thing we see in the USA were the most competitive kind of cities, is the university town. Boulder, Colorado or Madison, Wisconsin or Austin, Texas or even my little town of Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, it's a betterment community for the valley, the physicians, the attorneys, the business executives, all come in, they built McMansions, you know, these big monster houses. There's the university, lecture series, the cultural series, the performance, the orchestra and things like that. Housing stock and historical district downtown. That's a very attractive thing. Now, it's a small town. So you find that a lot of university towns are very successful in getting people to live there and from universities, if there's any kind of size of the university, you're getting these spin-offs as people start companies and companies go there and hire students in the faculty and things like that, so there's a very positive dynamic in some university towns. So I wouldn't say it's all going to the big cities.

Some cities, as I have suggested, Buffalo or Pittsburgh, are having difficulty too. Those are two cities, sizable places, in difficulty. And you can look around and see a lot of small towns that are very attractive and a lot of industries don't need that kind of labour that you have, that wants symphony and wants museums and so on. I hate to say, they're engineers or something and they're not interested in the culture so much. Not that I want to paint all engineers with that brush, but that's part of the reality, the metal bending industry can go to smaller town and there is numerous examples of successful small towns with that kind of industry. But some things, like financial services and a lot of professional services are going to be in cities for obvious reasons.

DGT: You mention that you did a comparison of North American cities on the competitiveness basis. How do you define this competitiveness, what do you look for in cities ?

PK: It's a very tricky thing, there's a Competitiveness Institute that says it's clusters. Some clusters are mostly national firms subsidiaries and all the communication goes like this. Other clusters are intensely inward looking and they have no connection with the rest of the world. So both of those are not what we really think of what's clusters, but they really are clusters. And a specific cluster is one that is open to the rest of the world and has a lot of interaction and so on. Some places just share a common labour

market, but there's no communications among the firms and that's a pretty weak cluster. I don't think clusters can do it, and both Michael Porter and Paul Krugman said that competitiveness is productivity.

But when you mention productivity, you can have constant output, but reduced employment, so more output per worker. But what you got in the process is unemployment. Those who are employed are more productive, but a lot are unemployed. Is that a positive way to look at it? So what I did was a more general thing, it's a combination of three factors.

One is manufactory value-added, because if you have that growing, measured over a period of several years, it means that moving at a higher value-added stuff, for example, manufacturing output in the USA during the 1990s went up by 60 %. Employment went down by 2 %. I mean, that's productivity. The places that are doing that have manufacturing output growing and that because they're in high-tech kinds of activities, higher value-added kinds of things. The second one was retail sales. You walk around Montreal, you see people from all over come on to shop, to go to concerts, to go to restaurants, it's an attractive place to spend a week-end. It's an attractive place to stay if you live there and spend time. So retail sales suggest it's an attractive place and it's also likely that the population is stable or growing, and that the income level is rising and people are spending money in retail. And the third one was some measure, combination of professional services, so that the economy could go in whatever direction it wants to, it has all the professional consultants and so on to help companies move in this direction or that direction. So I used a composite of those three, but it's kind of tricky, because if you do it over time... One of the factors is the cultural institutions, the cultural assets, the high-culture, the symphonies, museums, theatres and so on...

If you do it over time, you see they're growing, which says it's getting hotter and hotter and hotter, but maybe New York isn't growing. And yet, it's still the cultural number one place in North America because it got more than anything else. Do you say it got an awful lot of the good stuff, therefore it's competitive, or it's growing in that area, that's an indication that it's competitive, because developing on, some ways. I took the more general one I had of manufacturing value-added and retail sale and professional services, because it's a general thing, it doesn't privilege information technology or biopharmaceutical, it doesn't privilege anything. I'm with the urban competitiveness project and our definition of competitiveness we can play around is that city's competitive if it's giving the residents of the town the jobs, the incomes, the environmental, quality, the traffic congestion and the social inclusion or exclusion, the cultural assets, that the residents desire to have. If it's meeting all that, those indicate they're successful cities, I think. We're still toying around with what competitiveness is and it's difficult to get a definition that everybody would agree upon. But we do get a sense when cities are moving in a positive avenue.

Paul Cheshire, in Europe, uses the model of urban problems. It sees when cities are dysfunctional or things are going bad, that means they're not competitive. So there are many different ways of doing it. Partly, definitions of competitiveness and things like that are set upon because the data is available or not available. In the USA, Mexico and China, 3 countries in which you have hundreds of series of statistics, economics, for 200 cities, you can do this statistical analyses. In Europe, you can't even do it for Germany,

because each of the Lander has different standards, what data is. Eurostat had nearly nothing for Europe. So people don't do this statistical analyses in Europe, they tend to do sort of benchmarking analyses. The cities competitiveness is indicated by indices and ranks in these benchmarking activities. And they look around what's available. Airport, passengers, scientific citations, you look around for a handful of other things, you say "ah ! Well let's see where we are with these." Now, you don't know if those are actually statistically verifiable, important determinants of competitiveness. You don't. Now, when we did our studies, you can get the ranking of all the cities and then you could try to explain that ranking by using regression analysis, so you end up with 8 different variables that were crucial determinants for competitiveness. That's statistically based. Every city could see where's it is weak and strong. Competitive stuff is all over the place, as you gather.

DGT: Can you make a link as well with the employment issue? Could you see, for example, that the cities that were most competitive were doing well on the employment issue or were they as well excluding a certain amount of people ?

PK: It's a bit tricky talking about the rate of unemployment, for example, because if the city is really hot. I mean, it's making transition and it's laying off a lot of workers who don't fit the new economy and it's drawing people to it who have those skills. So on one hand, you have the employment in this new economy high-tech sector going very dramatically nicely and on the other hand, you got more and more people that are cast off and are unemployable in that new economy. So you can say that successful cities generally have employment that's stable or growing. Some places have a rate of population growing up because they're warm. Or because they've got a lot of retired people going. Like a lot of the southern cities. Population's growing, they're competitors ? Well, they are because there a lot of retired people going there. Retired people have generally more money than 22 year olds, so they're buying houses, diners out and restaurants, buying clothing and so on. It's a good group to have, but it doesn't say that the economy itself is terribly good. They have a group that's coming in bringing money with them and spending. So retail is strong, but manufacturing may not be. The information economy may not be there. So it's sort of tricky, it takes more than just looking at the employment or something like that.

DGT: You mentioned the clusters and mentioned the fact that it's a limited view. There's a lot written as well on regional systems of innovation and there seems to be this idea of contact, proximity. How do you see this ? Is it important to have business people close to other people or is it faddish ?

PK: It depends on the industry. Some people interaction intensely. London, England, is an example, if you're in information technology and you want to find something out or find somebody who knows something about that, it was estimated that it would take 7 links to get to the person who had that information. In Silicon Valley, it was 3, because everybody knows everybody, they know what's going on, if you say I need this, he says I'll ask somebody and the guy comes and says here it is ! In that kind of industries, interaction is very important. But in a lot of other industries, for example, the auto industry, in Detroit, they were illegally enjoying the guest coming in contact, because they share trade secrets and end up conspiring against the general public, as John Smith put it. So in some places the interaction is legally forbidden. Other places, it doesn't happen. And other places, is very active. I don't think we can generalize on that.

DGT: What about the thesis that Richard Florida put forward, how do you see that? Do some people support it and there has been a certain number of criticisms. How do you view that ?

PK: I think the idea of creative classes is obviously a very important one and it's not new. I did a course with my wife, who's actually a professor of music, and we looked at the cities in the culture of creativity and we looked at *fin de siècle* Vienna, we looked at Paris before the first war, we looked at Harlem in the 1920s, looked at Weimar Berlin in the 20s, New York in the 40s and 50s. And you could see that there's an awful lot of creativity going on there, the kind of thing that Richard Florida would be talking about. And we found that were certain features that were important. Use this gay index, for example, an instance of tolerance, that's what it is. Atlanta is a very intolerant place and there's nothing going on there. They don't create culture, they display culture that's been done in New York, Chicago or L.A. Places like New York and San Francisco and Chicago, they're tolerant, all kinds of things are going on. So the tolerance is important.

People were moving in from everywhere and all of those 5 places that we looked at had people coming in from everywhere else and bringing new ideas, new ways of thinking with them. If you close off the borders, you keep them out. For example, you take all the North Africans and Arabs, and put them in ten stories skyscrapers in the *banlieue* around Paris, and they don't enter the economy. They may have new ways of thinking about, things very productive. If you go back to Paris before the first war, there were people from Russia, from Ukraine, people from Spain, people from all over coming to Paris and that stew of international competition of ideas and new things and so on. There should also be a patron class, somebody to throw money at the group and people went to Montmartre and Paris and people, whites going at Harlem in the 40s. There's always a patron group. And it also helps to have the group that is closed, that is an official established group that won't let new people in. And then they set up the *Salon des refusés*, it's a secession movement, all these alternative groups that take off and become terribly important. So there are features that we know about from a long time, but I think the idea of the creative class is a very important one, in that cities have to make themselves attractive to that group of people. And I focused on, in my research, the cultural assets that said is one of the determinative of the city competitiveness. And if you do regression analysis on the educated component of a labour force, again cultural institutions is one of the 5 very variables important there.

So culture is very important to bring those people together and he was motivated to do that study, because he noticed that so many young people were leaving Pittsburgh. And they were the ones making the contribution and they're abandoning Pittsburgh. It's one of the few cities that are losing population. So people said maybe it's the only city in North America that will actually lose people between now and 2020. That's the group, they're educated, they have portable skills, they can move, they can go anywhere they want to. That's why a city has to try to keep that group or attract them, do what it can, because they're the movers and shakers towards whatever the new economy is for that city. Just like Michael Porter's competitive advantage of nations and he's talking about this for a long time and general case to general theory. Everybody's talking about that for years before, but this person distils it, packages it, makes a contribution to it clearly, but then it sort of becomes something that is marketable, something that everybody talks about.

DGT: Our cities may be giving it to much importance, because I know there was a study done for Montreal, for example, in a couple of pages. Do all cities have to go that road ?

I think any city that wants to change and wants to avoid stagnation, it's difficult to find something you can do *ad infinitum* like ski resort, you know, and there's people going down the hill all the time. Somebody in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, doing something and selling (?) and all of sudden, a train comes in and they're taking off stuff made in Boston. All of sudden he's got a competitor from Boston. That's happening here too, all these cities are getting competitors for what they're doing, every city is active in this way. And I think it's a feature of this period of time, more ever since the Dutch commercial revolution in the 17 century. Cities are on the center stage and people talk about globalization doing things to the nation state, that's not true. The nation states generated all the stuff that created globalization. The nation states hammered the ways since 1948 to get tariffs to the GATT or the WTO. From 45 % to 3 %. I mean that's a tremendous thing.

The nation states struggle to get financial markets open and nation states put these structures on subsidies and so on. They put constraints on their own capacities to intervene in their own economies, to help distressed factors of production or regions or industries. They tied their own hands. And since they don't have the capacity to intervene and formulate policy, which regard to competitiveness the way they might have decades ago. It's all falling down on the shoulders of the city. And you see, when the Eurocity was formed in 1988, they had the Eurocities Manifesto and in it, one of the phrases was « Now is the time for the cities ! » And all they say is we're going to assure ourselves. And I think that it's clear that cities, urban economies, urban regions, not just the city but the metropolitan statistical area, that sort of thing, Greater New York, Greater Montreal and so on. They're asserting themselves and they have to. Because if they don't, they just stagnate and get marginalized.

DGT: And at the same time, you consider that they still need nation states. How would you compare, for example, North America, the US more particularly, and Europe, on those points. We tend to think that Europe intervenes much more than the US. What are they doing and what they should do ?

PK: It's not to say that government intervenes in Europe. I spent the last spring in Turin, winter and spring, in Italy, and the Italian economies are going nowhere. Unemployment is high and rising. Economic growth is zero. Competitiveness is going down. It's a sick economy. And the industrial group got together for a conference and the first thing they did was passing a resolution saying the government had to have a new strategy. Can you imagine, a bunch of people in the USA "our industry's hurting, let's get government do something for us." Go up and do it ! It's not so much the governments are overbearing in Europe, it's the people seeming to be inviting them to make decisions for them. Now, government has many, many positive things to do. In my country, I think the debate is never overlapped ; it's always on getting the tax rates down. We get lower and lower taxes. Alabama was very successful on that. Very low taxes. Then Toyota said we're not going to expand our plant in Alabama, we're going to move to Ontario. 1) Ontario has a national health care and we don't have to pay for the health care. 2) In Alabama, the workers are so illiterate, we have to give them pictographs to show them how to work on the production line. In Ontario, they're literate. We give them a text and they can read it. So you got low taxes and your workers

are competing with Haiti. So it's never really sensible to talk about tax rates, it's always sensible to talk about the balance between public goods and private goods.

Do we want more VCRs or more education ? Do we want more SUVs or do we want public health ? These are the trade-offs, we never talked about that. Government has a role to play. Richard Musgrave in his classic theory of public finance said : stabilization, allocation of resources and redistribution. That's what the government does. And it's brilliant to put it that way, because it's exactly what government should be doing. And we have to have that kind of a debate. So government has a clear responsibility. They do a lot of the transportation infrastructure. They put, depending on the country and what level of government, money into education. In Colorado, they have this program TABER, for reducing government and the day there were a recession, revenues would fall, but you could never increase it again, so it continues at a lower level. Next recession like this, finally the governor Owens said we got to do something, because in 10 years we won't have enough money to support our higher education system. We're going to be the only state in the country to cut back on K12 education. Our highway system is already deteriorated. Now, Colorado is lovely place, but if they got an education system to rival Alabama and a highway system like Haiti, who's going to go there, except to ski ? So government has an important role to play. But they can't do everything for competitiveness policy, a lot has to go down, to the city level, the urban economy level, they're the ones who have to shake their own economy and see what has to be done and set a strategy and mobilize the local resources, individual and so forth.

DGT: And when you say they urban economy, do you mean something rather wide, for example Montreal with the suburbs around?

PK: Oh yeah, la Communauté urbaine de Montréal, or Metro Toronto, of the MSA of New York, Northern New Jersey, Western Connecticut, West Chester, Dutchess County, and so on. It's a larger area than just the city. Because there's a relationship between the center of the city and the other areas. And they all have special advantages for certain activities. You don't want to do your back office stuff in Manhattan, where the land price is extraordinary, so you do it over in New Jersey. The way you have an industry where people have to get together at a very high level, you cluster that in Manhattan. And following the 9-11, the disaster in New York, how should you restructure, what should you do with that site, what should you do with Manhattan ? And some people are suggesting that you don't have just the same square footage of office space in that same spot, just a fancy different building with tiltedness and spirals and all that stuff and then 15 floors of concrete, to protect against attacks. Some of that stuff can go over to Brooklyn, or Queens. So the metro area can be a division of labour, sort of speak, within its own area and these areas can support themselves, support each other, rather, in a positive way.

DGT: And what about competition between cities? Because of course, if they want to be competitive, they're competing with one another, are a lot of them going to be losers in this game ?

PK: Well, if things go wrong, you have to adjust. Toronto and Atlanta were both trying for the Olympics. Atlanta got it and Toronto didn't disappear. Chicago, Dallas and Denver were all competing to get the HQ for Boeing and Chicago got it. It's interesting, in that competition there many profoundly important things that were being discussed. One perhaps superficial, but I think emblematic kind of thing, were there when the

team that was going to look at the placement of 500 top executives in Boeing, the upper management is going to be concentrated in one of the central location and a good airport on that. They wanted Denver and they had John Elway, the football player, and they talked about what a great town Denver was for athletics and the skiing and all that. And Dallas local culture, they had Mariachi band and a BBQ and this is Dallas, we're so open and friendly and all that stuff. And they went to Chicago and they had a grande soirée with the artist students in Chicago, surrounded by Chagal, Monet and all the stuff that Chicago has in its art institute and music was provided by musicians of the Chicago Symphony. Now, high culture versus sports culture versus local culture, and in that case, high culture won out. At least symbolically, that's the way I look at it. So cities are in those competitions and they're always going to be in competitions and you lose one contract and you go for another. And with these areas like biotech and information technology, there are so many little niches that you can get one and then build on it and gain some strength on it's not going to last forever. Steel didn't last forever for a lot of cities. Chicago evolved out of being steel, heavy manufacturing, you know, in the southeast corner of the city, towards regional finance and transportation logistics, professional services, advertising, a lot of things and technologies too that are having nothing to do with steel. So you have to keep evolving.

DGT: Thank you very much!

Interview with Robert Lang

Entrevue avec Robert Lang

- 1 Robert E. Lang is Director of the Metropolitan Institute at Virginia Tech in Alexandria, Virginia, and an Associate Professor in Urban Affairs and Planning in Virginia Tech's School of Planning and International Affairs. Dr. Lang is also the new Editor of the scholarly journal *Housing Policy Debate*, which until recently was published by the Fannie Mae Foundation. Dr. Lang received a Ph.D. in Sociology from Rutgers University, where he also taught sociology and urban studies. He was a Research Associate at the Center for Urban Policy Research at Rutgers University. Dr. Lang's research specialties include suburban studies, demographic and spatial analysis, housing and the built environment, and metropolitan governance. He has authored over 100 academic and professional publications on a wide range of topics, and has developed many new urban planning concepts such as "Boomburbs," "Edgeless Cities," and "Megapolitan Areas."

Diane-Gabrielle Tremblay (DGT): I'd like you to give me your views on Richard Florida's thesis of the creative class. How do you see this ?

Robert Lang (RL): You mean the big idea of the creative class? I see it as an extension of the sociological work of previous people that tried to identify new classes, like in the mid-20th century, someone identifies white-collar workers for the first time and this is a kind of follow up on that work. Florida is not quite explicit about it.

DGT: Do you think it's something which is realistic? Is it useful or could we have done without it ?

RL: It varies in its usefulness. It's based on kind of sociological propos. Sociology is when you try to identify new phenomena. You come up with an exemplar case, like the software engineers that surfs at lunch, that kind of things. And it typically is not the most common representation of that phenomenon. For example, when they were considering the white-collar workers, C. Wright Mills was the sociologist, he was interviewing people out of Wall Street and Madison Avenue, and there was all that popular culture about people in great flannel suits. It was a small share of who's white-collar, but it was the one that the public could easily understand and that the media could understand. But it was kind of a caricature and just a contemporary understanding of the creative class, it's a caricature. Because he's saying it's a third of the work force, anytime you term a third of the workforce, a lot of people whose work

with not look immediately creative. So it's kind of overbalanced, but not useless, it's just of limited use.

DGT: Do you see it linked to the knowledge economy or new economy? How do you see the links between the two ?

RL: Well, it's supposed to be part of the knowledge economy and the new economy, it's supposed to be part of urban revitalization. What was useful about it is that in the economic development world, they were doing things like stimulating growth by putting an aquarium in. And that world was pretty stale, it wasn't focusing on what's the quality of life in the city, what kind of workforce are we trying to attract ? This was very useful that way, because it changed the conversation and shifted it away from projects, like an aquarium or convention center and bricks and mortar. And it shifted back to what are cities like, where do you go as a worker ? Where would you have a good quality of life ? Where would you have fun ? And cities do well by focusing on that. They don't have to buy the whole creative class concept, to change their policy, but it was a way to promote a change in their policy.

DGT: Have many US cities have gone that way?

RL : It's funny. The US cities that have mostly adopted Florida are not the ones that already have the creative class. It's in New York, it's in San Francisco, in Boston, in Washington, pretty much the northeast. But the places that buy into it are small cities, like Roanoke, Virginia, Memphis, Tennessee, places that aren't immediately associated with creative class, but are slower growing. And it's very hard for them to really build momentum in this regard, because they're stuck with doing things like extreme skateboard parks or something crazy like that, it's not that immediately connected. The other thing is Florida's preaching the idea of tolerance and some of these places do not have a history of being very receptive to, say, gay population.

DGT: Has there been any evolution in any of the cities or are they really trying to change the image or it's impossible to do that?

RL: I don't know which would be touted as a success story. The other thing is, Florida will turn around saying like Austin, Texas. Let's look at Austin, Texas. Austin, Texas, isn't really Texas. First of, it wasn't settled by people who were from the south, who were Scotch-Irish, who are out of Kentucky, deeply religious and all the rest of that. It was settled by Germans. Palatine Germans. And it had breweries. It had a whole different politic, it was always progressive, like northern Germany's progressive politics. So the fact that a place like Austin, Texas, emerged as the center of the creative class, to me, speaks less about public policies that promoted the idea and more to the fact that it was never part of Texas. It doesn't even have Texas music. It's got a fusion. Instead of music that you'd get, country and western in Nashville, the mainstream country and western, people listen to in pickups, all over America, instead, you've got this kind of odd kind of fusion of blues and western sounds, it's a different world. So I don't think that what it is, is that policies promoting creative class that made Austin. It's that Austin was a different place that became apparent in terms of creativity, cause it was on a different part of the economy with a huge university system and all these idiosyncrasies about it.

DGT: Are universities maybe more determinant? I know that there were some references to the fact that a lot of pretty small US cities have a college or university. Is this maybe a more determinant dimension ?

RL: If you're saying its knowledge workers and then you're talking about that part of the economy, even Madison, Wisconsin, and places that are pretty small suddenly have a disproportionally high share of creative class workers, as he would call them. And that's been noted before that, it didn't take the creative class to understand the dynamic, in fact. One of the things people have been noticing for years is that state university towns are doing better. When you combine with a state capital, Columbus, Ohio, it's even better ; you have a large share of white-collar workers. Columbus is the only city in major metropolitan area in Ohio that isn't losing population, that's actually thriving.

DGT: How do you see a lot of these writings and some of them say: place makes innovation. Do you agree with this vision ?

RL: The relation between place and innovation is more complicated than that and one of the things I make issue with Florida is this: that he has no mechanism. And it's a shame to show that relationship, because it's a well developed mechanism in sociology. There is a theorist, Claude Fisher, who developed, in the 1970s, at the University of California, Berkeley, the relationship between size and density. And creativity, and what would it be alternative lifestyles, and big places have a kind of completeness to them. Let's say, for example, two Korean brothers and they immigrate to the USA and one goes to Duluth, Minnesota and the other goes to Los Angeles. The one that goes to Los Angeles goes to a fully made Korea town and can maintain distinctness, because there are institutions, restaurants, Korean language newspapers. The one that goes to Duluth, assimilates into general American culture. So large cities, dense cities, with a lot of communications create these enduring neighbourhoods. And this is true of dissident communities with gay populations, on a large scale, are nurtured there as well. And there's also a self-selection, people will go to these places. The leading cities in the creative class, by Florida's definition, happen to be, basically, the largest metropolitan areas in the USA, big metropolitan areas, or big complicated entities that produce all sorts of little subcultures within them and sustain them at the metropolitan level. And that is how place would make a community. If you're the offbeat kid in Iowa, where no one gets you, you want to go to these places. And you add to that kind of differentiations in the rest of the society.

DGT: Is there also a negative impact in this idea that cities should be thriving to attract the best talent, the most educated and the like? Is there a risk of more income polarization or is there no preoccupation for the excluded ?

RL: That's one of the criticisms, always focusing in on high end and I suppose it would be accurate if it was effective. I don't think they had much movement that way. There's not many places that I can think that have said we're going to go after this as a policy and have scored, compared to places where it was part of the process, where it was occurring already, where they are lucky from history or the location of the large university.

DGT: Is there any preoccupation in including the excluded, especially I think of large metropolitan areas that have had difficulties? Is this a preoccupation that is rising or is the Florida perspective the only discourse you're hearing ?

RL: I think it's part of the discourse, because it's part of the contested nature of urban politics. And some of the people that poll Florida as a consultant have to answer to constituents about why we should put so much emphasis about attracting this class of people. Their rationale is : these are high tax payers, these are people who would stimulate economic development of the region. It's a very similar debate that touches on gentrification, but you know the thing about gentrification is that the most recent studies in the USA show that, surprise, surprise very few people are displaced due to the gentrification. There are cities where it's an issue, as San Francisco or Boston. Gentrification in Detroit ? They should be so lucky ! It's not like this huge middle class clamouring to get in to some of these distressed cities. The places that would not even bother with the creative class, because they're creative, don't even have this. This is part of the mix, it's not part of the policy issue. The places that would invite Florida in need of this kind of stimulation, have so little going for them that any stimulus in that direction would not upset anybody's neighbourhood, essentially.

DGT: What about the suburbs? North American cities are known developing suburbs, what's their place ?

RL: Here is the big problem. The creative class is region-wide. It is not located within the central city. The Silicon Valley of San Francisco, last I checked, was suburban. The high-tech belts around Washington are suburban. That's been one of the weaknesses in Florida's analysis and he talks about this kind of urban dwellers, very talented persons. And the reality is, if you look around Washington, D.C., and you visit the National Institute of Health, where people sit and invent new life forms, they look very conventionalized, they live in the suburbs, they shop at big box retails, they eat at formula restaurants, they might have moderate politics and yet, they fit all the definition of the creative class. They might be terribly creative at work ; they might have very pedestrian tastes outside of work.

DGT: What about the ethnic issue? The blacks and the Hispanics in the US, how does that fit into his vision of attracting talent ? Are they anywhere in there ?

RL: I think to the extent they're in there, there's a high regard for diversity. And that metropolitan areas that are exclusively white, or predominantly white, are not particularly interesting sort of blandish, or are not going to appeal to people seeking that difference and seeking out liveliness. In his view, a creative class type is an exemplar case of the creative class, that would be outwardly looking, would seek out people of different backgrounds, would not be affronted by diversity, would seek diversity.

DGT: You mentioned the methodology issue and the fact that it's not necessarily scientifically based. Do you think it is possible to prove or is it interesting to prove such a theory ?

RL: No social science is necessarily scientifically based, let's just start with that. It's a different kind of science approach. I'm a social scientist, so I'm saying that openly. What Florida does is that he creates a series of rankings and he correlates it with place. And what's missing is analytic reason, analytic frame to describe why. Why would X place produce Y outcome ? What would be the specific reason for it. It's been weak on that, weak enough to raise criticisms and I think I can easily be squared. That's the

paper I'm giving which is : you could just put this in sociology. The funny thing is that we did a review of his book. I'm an editor for the Journal of the American Planning Association and we did a round table on his book. We invited his response and we had people contribute to it. We described some of these deficiencies relating to atheoretical approach, just the lack of analytic frame. And his response was interesting ; he said more or less "no, it's in there." And I've read this guy and it was like a series of name dropping, but literally he's missing a formal axiom, like a proposition : this would lead to that. It's nowhere in the writing. This all ends up : these are the places that have this quality. So he's created a vulnerability that, in my way of thinking, he doesn't have to have. And it wouldn't be necessarily that he would prove or disprove it. It would more like he would have an indication, predictability, or at least a specificity about where it would happen and not happen.

DGT: What would be the policy impacts over the coming years or decades, do you think this will have an important policy impact or will it not?

RL: Well, the impact is probably now. And the impact is that it shifted the discourse, shifted the discussion in economic development, which was stale. From, as I said, bricks and mortar, to this idea of people, that's the lasting impact, because probably that would be asserted now. In other words, people who raise just bricks and mortar solutions will be asked to address this alternative concern of putting another aquarium, and it doesn't change the mix of people in the city, it's kind of an easy thing to understand, because you sell bonds for, and you get the State to help with it, but what do we get for it ? Not much.

DGT: What about cluster theories, which seem to be sometimes in the similar perspectives? How do you see those ? Are they also a proposal for cities ?

- 2 **RL :** Industrial clusters ? Well, they're based on some older notion of agglomeration economies ; if one firm's located there and several firms are there, there's producers' services firms that help them, and they create efficiencies. I think it's true to some extent, but it's different than it was years ago, in that you needed much greater proximity in the cluster than you do now. You can do this across much greater distances, because of the nature of improved telecommunications, Internet, you name it. And the scale at which that exists might be even larger than an individual metropolitan area. It could extend for thousands of square miles, in which that concentration would exist. There's a belt of pharmaceutical firms in the eastern US that runs from suburban Philadelphia to New Jersey to Connecticut, off to Boston, it's kind of a speciality of the Northeast US. And again true enormous amount of space.

DGT: So it would not be limited to such small zones as many seem to pretend?

RL: There was a time when you needed a financial district and people had the face to face contact and they really needed to be proximate. And there's still, in terms of certain kind of exchanges, some of that. It's interesting since post 9-11, Lower Manhattan has not recovered economically from 9-11. It had no impact on the New York metropolitan area. The firms left for New Jersey and scattered pretty widely. 9-11, had it not happened, half of these firms by inertia would have remained there, but because you lost the World Trade Centers, you've had this instead pushed out to the metropolitan scale. It has had no impact on its productivity. If it had left the region, it would probably had an impact on productivity, cause you have to change the labour force, you know, who would be able to get to these jobs would have to cross, and this is the largest US metropolitan area, cross the New York metropolitan area. You can do

this same function, so it can benefit several states, not just a few blocks or more in Manhattan.

DGT: So are the city regions going to be the concept which might be more useful?

RL: Yes, the scale at which all of this is functioning has to be at the metropolitan level. That's where, by the way, Florida reports his data from. He does something with ecological fallacy, which is to take from one unit of analysis, like a city, and then generalize to other spaces. You know, to talk about these bohemian enclaves and identify a third of the population, they cannot possibly be living in enclaves. By logic, a third of the US population, a third of US work force cannot be living in enclaves. They must be metropolitan wide. And all the high-tech stuff. What high-tech stuff is in downtown? Other than some of the content or the Internet, which could be downtown? And other than what they call Silicon Alleys, south of midtown Manhattan, the rest of it is in a series of low slung nondescript office parks that are interspersed with big box retail and formula restaurants!

DGT: And do you consider that there is a movement from the northeast or the southwest in the US, in terms of activity or is that not the case?

RL: That's been going on since the 19th century that was the US project, it was to take people and resources from denser parts of the settled land and distribute them more evenly across the whole expanse of the continent. And in fact, the Interstate system was never designed as a hub and spoke system to provide access to the northeast and the west of the country. It was built as a grid, with a series of east-west roads and north-south roads, so that you had uniform access, so I went through deserts, like Phoenix, but in the end, Phoenix would have as much access to the system as any big city in the northeast, Midwest, etc. That's been a public policy in the USA since the beginning of the republic. And you ride a state now where there's a virtual equalization, you know, east and west, north and south, it's starting to, actually, really fill out proportionally parts of the country and the pattern will keep going that way until it does. There are some counter movements, small bands of people leaving California and moving to Midwest, but that's because of the high costs.

DGT: So it was an objective to spread out the population?

RL: It's a national policy. Some of this was obtained through treaties, some of this was conquered land from Mexico, but the idea was that you would use the USA fully and its dated, even to the Interstate pattern, is really by President Roosevelt, who by hand sketches said, planners came by and showed him that the traffic in the US was concentrated between Chicago and New York. And that the US should take its resources to improve all the transportation infrastructures between those locals and all that satellites off of them. And Roosevelt said this isn't the US of the northeast, it's the US of America, drew a map and said the system, like the railroads, goes everywhere.

DGT: So would that tend to say that actually transport infrastructures are more determinant over almost anything else?

RL: In the post-war years, what it did was, you look at a place like the south, which after the Civil War until the mid 20th century had fallen almost out of the national picture because, not just the fact that it was economically underdeveloped rather than northeast, Midwest, but it was a racial problem, several kinds of things. And concurrently with the Civil Rights movement was the construction of the Interstate, suddenly, Greenville, South Carolina, was competitive with the northeast, Midwest, it

had the same quality of infrastructure and had the same newness of that infrastructure, but it had less unions, lower labour cost, so before things left the USA, they paid a visit to the south, like textiles, before it was China, and to this day now, the heart of auto parts manufacturing in the USA is shifted out of the heavily unionized Midwest and into the south, Charlotte, Atlanta, you know, in-between those spaces, eastern Tennessee, they manufacture BMW in Spartanburg, in South Carolina, there's a Mercedes plant in Alabama. It has happened.

DGT : Thank you very much.