

## The 2012 Experience the Creative Economy Conference

*“Tolerance-or, broadly speaking, openness to diversity-provides an additional source of economic advantage that works alongside technology and talent. The places that are most open to new ideas and that attract talented and creative people from across the globe broaden both their technology and talent capabilities.”*

*– Richard Florida: The Rise of the Creative Class Revisited*

It is now well known that diversity of people and ideas and the acceptance of diversity is crucial to innovation. Through openness to different ideas, practices, beliefs and creativity, people and cities can grow and innovate. Central to the newly released tenth anniversary edition of *The Rise of the Creative Class Revisited*, is the idea that openness influences the ability to acquire new skills quickly and the companies, cities and people that are open to diversity will subsequently thrive in the creative economy.

This openness to experience new types of people and new ideas that is fundamental to creative individuals is an essential element of the Martin Prosperity Institute’s annual *Experiencing the Creative Economy Conference*. Located in the Martin Prosperity Institute’s MaRS offices in the heart of downtown Toronto, and now in its fifth year, this annual conference brings together early career academics whose research focus is on the creative economy for four days in June to share their work. Through presentations, discussions and workshops, the participants are provided with ample time to engage with each other in an open and diverse environment; creating a collaborative learning experience. As always, there were participants from leading universities from across the world. Some of the cities and universities represented include University of Tennessee, University of Toronto, Cleveland State, University of Southern California, Umea University (Sweden), University of Salford (UK), Uppsala University (Sweden), CUNY (New York), University of Iowa, Kansas State University and The Milano School of International Affairs.

The conference always begins with ‘Academic Speed Dating’, which is a rapid fire introduction activity in which each participant discusses their academic background and research interest’s one on one to the other participant. This year, the participants also took part in an opening session lead by Richard Florida, which discussed among many other things, the tenth anniversary edition of *The Rise of the Creative Class*.

The conference also consisted of sessions in which the visiting participants each presented their research, giving all participants a wide range of ideas and knowledge that could only come from a diverse range of scholars. With plenty of time for discussion, the sessions allow for the opportunity to be exposed to new ideas and the latest research. Presentations such as “Urban amenity preferences among creative immigrant workers: The case of Bengali-Indian immigrants in Kansas

*France is not one-third of Europe.  
Who's going to tell them?*

Separation of Creative Class  
Occupations  
New definitions  
Race/Ethnicity  
Artists/Engineers  
Urban/Suburban  
Region size  
Training/Skills-Obtaining  
Tolerance/Diversity  
Entrepreneur Types

Places  
Media City  
Artist Studio  
Arctic Circle  
Campus vs. City  
Co-creation  
Peripheral

Qualities of Place  
Broadband  
Bourdieuan Cultures  
Restaurants  
Conspicuous Production  
- Products/Services  
Role of Region Size  
Charismatic Leaders  
Urban/Rural/Peripherality

Transitions  
Migration  
Immigrants  
Job/Class Changes  
Michelin Stars

Temporality  
Events/Festivals  
Buzz  
Michelin Stars  
Exclusivity

## Summarizing the 2012 **Experience the Creative Economy**

Apparent Challenges  
Media Cities  
Interns  
Service Work/Precarious

Disguised Challenges  
Private Art -1%  
Economic Development Policy  
Constant Innovation  
"Slowdown"  
Oxymoron of "Corporatized Creativity"  
Regional Vibrancy  
"Hits" and Precariousness  
Research: Dimensions of Differentiation

City metropolitan area” by Anirban Mukherjee is just one of the diverse topics presented. Andrey Petrov and his presentation “Creative frontiers: Creative capital and economic future of the Arctic” was another one of the presentations. There were also a wide range of topics presented during the conference from creative strategies, to presentations on effects of musicians and artists within society. UBC’s Elliot Siemiatycki’s presentation: “Flexible or precarious? A comparative case-study of employment relations in the creative city” calls into question the premise that creative jobs are in fact, good jobs. And the vital theme of diversity was explored by Haifeng Qian in his presentation “Diversity or tolerance? The social driver of innovation and entrepreneurship in U.S. cities”. The full list of the presenters and presentations can be found on the [ECE website](#).

The diversity of ideas and discussion is displayed in Figure 1 (below), providing a snapshot of the main themes of the presentations and discussions during the conference. Of course, with so many geographers in the room, the power of place is bound to be discussed. Places from the media city to the Arctic Circle were discussed, as was the effects of Bourdieuan culture and conspicuous production of products and services on quality of place. Both the disguised and emerging challenges of the creative economy were presented, such as the growth of interns fuelling an increasingly number of industries. Lastly, the temporality of events, and exclusivity and transition through migration and class changes were all themes of the conference. As is extremely evident, the ECE conference provides participants with the exposure to a diverse range of topics and intellectual participation.

The conference formally ended with a presentation and summary by the Martin Prosperity Institute’s Research Director Kevin Stolarick before MPI researchers took participants for a whirlwind scavenger hunt across the City of Toronto. Of course, it is important to note that none of this would be possible without the tireless efforts of the conference organizers: Brian Hracs, Karen King, Melanie Fasche, Elizabeth Mack and Kevin Stolarick.

With a growing international network of ECE participants, the conference hopes to foster long-term academic partnerships across universities and research areas. Long term collaborations continue even after the conference has ended, with previous participants such as Brian Hracs, Atle Hauge and Doreen Jakob going on to publish academic papers based on sessions from the conference. And, with each ECE conference, the worldwide network of participants continues to grow, as it is crucial that diverse creative people are open to experience new ideas.

*The [Martin Prosperity Institute](#) at the [University of Toronto’s Rotman School of Management](#) is the world’s leading think-tank on the role of sub-national factors—location, place and city-regions—in global economic prosperity. We take an integrated view of prosperity, looking beyond economic measures to include the importance of quality of place and the development of people’s creative potential.*