

Entrepreneurial Activities and Residential Networks of Creative Areas in Japan and Korea

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Abstract

This study surveyed and compared the creative and entrepreneur activities of small-size local areas in Japan and Korea adopting creative city policies with qualitative analysis. The result showed that the tolerance of these areas had influence on the entrepreneur activities, and the strength of social network among citizens had related with the effect of creative city policies. Along with the findings from the previous studies, this study proposes a new finding that residential network, which has not been discussed in the original creative city theory, and its strength could be essential factors affecting success of creative city policy and entrepreneur activities.

Keywords

Creative city, Entrepreneurship, Residential Networks

(1) Introduction

The theoretical background of creative city policy can roughly be divided into two streams. One is based on Landry (1995) and the other is on Florida (2004). This study is based on the latter as it is more widely adopted.

As a bearer of modern economy, Florida pointed out the existence of “creative class,” a group of people engaged in economic activities with their creativity as initial capital, and “creative economy” sustained by them. He criticized conventional policy which tried to increase population by inviting large-size factories, and insisted that local area could

attract creative class, give birth to creative firms, and finally succeed in regional vitalization through making its environment attractive for creative workers. Specifically, he classified professions such as scientists, artists, designers, entertainers as “Super Creative Core” and defined adjacent professions, such as managers, as “Creative Professions.” People belonging to these classes exceeded 30 percent of total population in the United States according to Florida (Florida, 2004).

Creative industry excels others in production effectiveness. For example, although workers of creative industry accounted only four

to six percent of the total workforce in the United Kingdom, its output of about 21 trillion yen far exceeded that of financial sector (NESTA, 2004). According to Yoshimoto (2009, p.42), Japanese creative industry had 250 thousand offices and 2.19 million employees in 2006, which accounted for 4.4% and 4.0% of the whole offices and employees respectively. According to the trial calculation of Nomura (2012, p.23), the output of Japanese creative industry was 64.4 trillion yen, comparable to those of agriculture (8 trillion yen), financial industry (98 trillion yen), steel industry (16 trillion yen), automobile industry (including parts industry) (42 trillion yen), medical welfare industry (42 trillion yen). This indicates that creative industry is one of highly efficient industries which can produce large output with small workforce.

Florida (2004) pointed that three Ts - Technology, Talent and Tolerance - were required in order to enhance creative economic activities of these classes. The area with these three elements were said to be able to bear creativity, attract creative workers, give birth to creative firms created by entrepreneurs, and keep growing regionally.

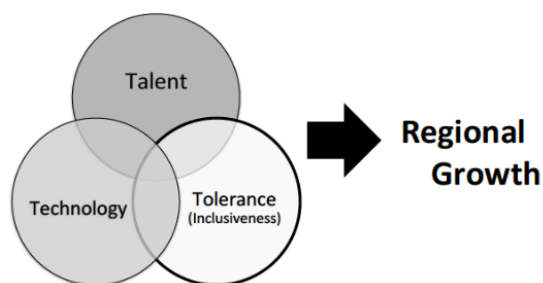


Figure 1. Florida's 3Ts for Creative City

Source: Florida, 2004

(2) Background in Japan and Korea

Florida's theory was introduced into Japan

in the beginning of the 21th century, and some of local governments had adopted it as the theoretical basis for their policies.

First of all, Kanazawa Association of Corporate Executives started an international conference "Kanazawa Creative City Conference" in 2001. Then Yokohama came to the first city to adopt creative city policy by establishing "Creative City Promotion Section" and starting "Creative City Yokohama" project in 2004. Sendai, Kobe and some other cities followed Yokohama, but this movement was mainly observed in large cities such as ordinance-designated cities in Japan (Sasaki, 2012).

Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs launched "Creative Cities Network Japan" in 2013, which held small-size autonomies such as Higashikawa town in Hokkaido prefecture (population 7,800), Nakanajo town in Gunma prefecture (population 17,000). The Agency announced that it would promote the creative city policy even for areas populated below 100,000.

However, most of researches have focused on large cities, and few of them have discussed whether this creative city policy model worked even for a small-size autonomy. Kang and Kawaji (2015) conducted fieldwork on a marginal settlement implementing the policy, and found that although it was effective for entrepreneur activities and business performance in the area, unexpected reverse economic effect was caused by the fact that regional intolerance drove out immigrated entrepreneurs and artists from the area.

Creative city policy has been aggressively pursued in not only Japan but also Korea, mainly among large to middle cities. For instance, Incheon city joined UNESCO Creative

Cities Network in the field of Craft and Folk Art, Seoul city did in the field of Design and Jeonju did in the field of Gastronomy.

In addition to this, Korean government started to implement creative city policy¹.

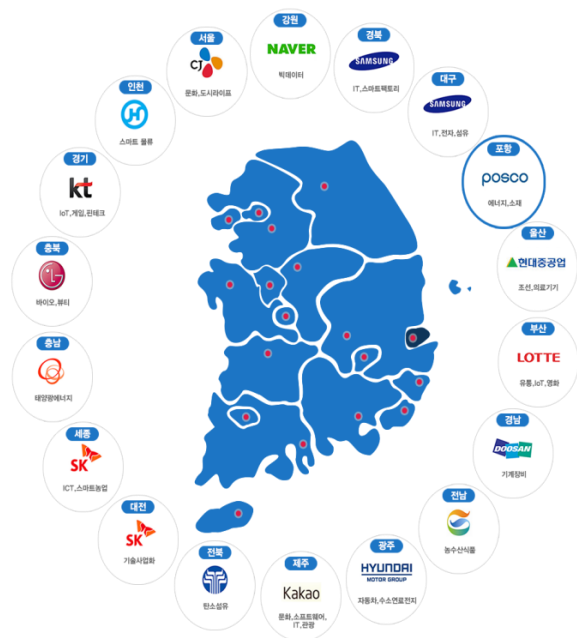


Figure 2. Creative & innovative cities and supporting companies in Korea.

Source: Korean Creative Economy & Innovation Center, 2016.

The government designated eighteen cities throughout Korea, where leading companies were designated as implementing entities, and started “Creative Economy Innovation Center” project aiming at creation of creative economy by a policy-driven approach. This is a mechanism in which each company is responsible for promotion of creative economy in the area.

On the contrary to the governmental approach, there is an area famous for its

residential approach. That is Seongmisan Village in Mapo district of Seoul city, where community development has been led by residents. They started business such as theaters, schools and cafes consecutively, and became popular even among Japanese citizens engaging in regional vitalization. Related books were published (Empublic & Nihon Kibou Seisakujo, 2011) and visiting tours were conducted in Japan².

(3) Research

1. Research Question

Creative city policy has come to be implemented in not only large cities, but also small-size areas as stated above. Kang and Kawaji (2015) conducted a survey on a marginal settlement implementing the policy, and found the unexpected economic effect caused by the fact that regional intolerance ousted creative workers to entrepreneur activities outside the area. In order to explore the difference between characteristics specific to the creative city activities of small-size areas and those of large cities, we decided to conduct surveys in wider areas.

Specifically, our objectives are to explore (1) whether creative city policy is effective even for small areas, (2) if it is so, how it contributes to development of the area, (3) what kind of influence entrepreneur activities receive, by surveying typical cases of small-size areas vitalizing communities with creativity (two in Japan, one in Korea).

2 Research Method

at that time, some of which included “Seongmisan Cooperative Visiting Project” by NPO Corporation Akatsuki, “Let’s go to see, as ‘town development’ in Seoul is awesome” by Bukasu Do! Regional Revitalization Section.

¹ In President Park Geun-hye’s first press conference in Jan 6th 2014 after her inauguration.

² We encountered some of tours from various places, such as Tottori prefecture in Japan. Many other tours were held

We adopted qualitative approach for small areas vitalizing communities using creativity. Specifically, we visited related facilities and interviewed policy makers. The interviews were recorded, converted into text, and analyzed with SCAT 4-step coding method (Otani, 2007).

The surveyed areas were Yanedan district in Kanoya city, Kagoshima prefecture (conducted in 2014), central area of Kurume city, Fukuoka prefecture (2015), and Seongmisan Village in Mapo district of Seoul city, Korea (2016).

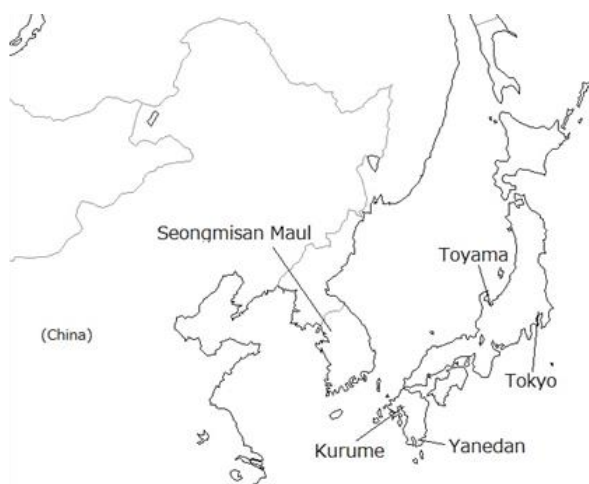


Figure 3. Creative cities in Japan and Korea

Source: Prepared by authors.

Let us explain the reason why these areas were chosen. There are four research fields regarding creative cities (Table 1), large city with population decreasing, large city with population increasing, small area with population decreasing, and small area with population increasing.

For large creative cities (with population around more than 0.5 million), there are various reports already. For example, City of Yokohama and Suzuki (2010, p.130-231) summarized characteristics of twelve creative cities, and

Kang (2013) studied Sendai and Kobe cities.

For small creative areas, there are few studies conducted at this point, but the study of small area with population decreasing could mislead us to the problem of depopulation. Thus we excluded this field and concentrated on “creative small area with population increasing,” and selected three typical areas, Yanedan, Kurume city and Seongmisan Village. They are not only small size population increasing areas, but also famous for creative activities. Yanedan has its own source of income based on its creative regional management philosophy (Toyoshige, 2004). Creative regional economic activities of Kurume city are supported by entrepreneurs (Kawaji et al., 2016, p.1-4). Seongmisan Village has built its local infrastructure from the point of building resident associations (Empublic & Nihon Kibou Seisakujo, 2011, pp.40-45).

Table 1. Creative city research matrix

Population	Large City	Small Area
Decreasing	Kobe	Depopulation
Increasing	Yokohama Sendai	<u>Not studied</u>

(4) Results

1. Yanedan district

Yanedan district is a small settlement in Kanoya city, Kagoshima prefecture. It had about three hundred residents and aging rate of over 30 percent in 2015. It had carried out aggressive reforms (starting town businesses producing and selling Shochu (Japanese traditional white liquor), selling deodorants, etc.) since Mr. T (age 75) was installed as a president of a residents' association.

Table 2. Concepts extracted from interviews (Yanedan district)

Interviewee	T	A	B	C	D	E
	70s	40s	30s	30s	60s	60s
	Male	Male	Female	Male	Male	Male
	President of a residents' association	Photo Design	Grass Sculpture	Painting	Bronze Sculpture	Ceramics
Concepts						
Enhancing creativity of the area	++	-	-	—	—	+
Enhancing creativity of his/her own	-	—	-	+++	-	-
Enhancing skills of his/her own	N/A	+++	++	+++	++	+
Tolerance of the area	++	—	—	—	—	—
Entrepreneur activities in the area	++	+	-	-	-	+
Entrepreneur activities outside the area	N/A	+++	-	+++	+++	+
Willing to live continuously	+++	—	—	—	—	+
Total Valuation	+++	++	++	+++	++	++

Source: Prepared by authors.

The reform was successful and its residential internal revenue sources totaled to be over five million yen, which made it possible to distribute bonus of ten thousand yen to each of one hundred twenty two households.

An artists invitation project had been started since 2006, aiming at enhancing cultural level of the area by letting artists live vacant houses with low rent fee. Houses of immigrated artists were named as Geihinkan (VIP guest house), galleries reformed from vacant houses were scattered around the district, and an art festival was held once a year. We interviewed Mr. T and all artists living in the district at the time of survey. The interviewed contents were converted into text, coded, and reconstructed by concepts (Table 2).

The table indicates the creative city policy in the area caused discontent, dissonance and disagreement on future direction in both sides of residents and artists.

Residents had little interest in creativity of artists or enhancement of regional creativity.

On the other hand, artists suffered from such indifference, had difficulty in adapting themselves to old conventions in the area, and were apt to disconnect from association with local residents. Tolerance of the area was at the worst level, which made the artists discontent.

As a result, the artists got out of the district to outside area and achieved good performance by actively engaging in entrepreneur activities with firms and organizations there. This made the district lose some of the outcome of creative economy, but they still could establish its brand as “village of artists.” Thus both of residents and artists accomplished part of their objectives.

In contrast to this, one of the essential objectives of creative city policy, “development of regional creativity,” was not observed in the area, whereas it was active outside the area. Judging from this finding, we confirmed that a creative economy model was effective even for small-size autonomies, but the largest inhibitor was tolerance.

2. Central area of Kurume City

Kurume city is a core city holding thirty million people, and one of few cities with increasing population in Japan. Nishinippon Shinbun (2014) listed three reasons for the increase as follows; (1) low house acquiring cost, (2) reliable medical system, (3) increased employment by local firms, which reduced draining out of young workforce.

For promoting creative activities in city, Kurume city invited Ms. Yuko Yamashita to Highmart Kurume, a third sector company. She was a regional vitalization producer and succeeded in promoting creative activities in urban areas such as Toyama city (Yamashita, 2013). Under her planning and guidance, we conducted non-structured interviews to residents involving creative activities in Kurume city. Note that we moved from place to place on foot, indicating that creative activities were carried out within walkable distance.

Subjects were Ms. Yuko Yamashita (indicated as Mr. Y), Mr. F, a designer/producer of Kurume Kasuri (a traditional splashed textile), Mr. G, a Kurume Kasuri wholesaler and a cheap sweet shop owner, Mr. H, a video creator, Mr. I, a business conductor, and Mr. J, a real estate renovator. All of them were managers, as young as their thirties, had territorial relationship, and engaged in entrepreneur activities.

Most of interviewees started their businesses after working or studying outside Kurume city. All of them strongly respected Ms. Yamashita, and stated that she brought weak ties into strong territorial and blood ties of Kurume, which had influenced on their creative activities at that time.

Yamashita said “my job is to connect person

with person.” According to Mr. I, each subject engaged in a job which he/she believed to realize his/her “belief” and worked separately before she came to Kurume. They tried to vitalize the area using various methods, but such trials were not successful. One of the reasons could be lack of connection among them. “We knew each other’s face, but that is all.”

After meeting at an event held by city government and noticing this problem, they started “Wisdom Connection Project,” (Yamashita, 2015, p.18) in which participants connected their pieces of wisdom. “It did not come out in a good shape actually” (Yamashita, 2015, p.17) at first, but “Wisdom such as vision, idea, network in each area began to connect each other” (Yamashita, 2015, p.21) after finding that “there are many active people!” (Yamashita, 2015, p.19) in each area of Kurume city according to Yamashita.

In general, the eager activity gets, the stronger human relation gets. Such tendency is strong in local cities, where territorial, blood and educational relationships temper the tendency.

Under such situation, Yamashita succeeded in not only connecting people, but also bringing many points connecting Kurume residents and outside people. For example, she invited Ms. Tomsuma Alternative, who is a contemporary art performer, from Toyama prefecture in “2016 Wisdom Connection Lecture” held in Feb 2016. By asking her to explain cases and information nothing to do with Kurume, she tried to break firm relationships in the area. She continues this kind of activities, which are thought to bring weak ties into the area.

3. Seongmisan Village in Mapo District of Seoul, Korea

Table 3. Concepts extracted from interviews (Kurume city)

Interviewee	Y	F	G	H	I	J
	40s	30s	30s	30s	30s	30s
	Female	Female	Male	Male	Male	Male
	Regional activation	Textile Design	Textile Shop	Video Artist	Share Office	Rental House
Concepts	Coordinator				Business	Business
Entrepreneurial Environment	++	++	+	+++	+++	+++
Experience outside Kurume	+++	++	-	+++	++	+
Business Performance	—	+	++	+	+	+
Willingness to make regional contribution	++	+++	+++	+++	+++	+++
References to Strong Network	+++	++	++	++	+++	++
References to Weak Network	+++	++	++	++	+++	++
Respect to Yamashita	N/A	+++	+++	+++	+++	+++

Source: prepared by authors

A part of residential area adjacent to downtown Seoul is known as Seongmisan Village. Twenty-five households began to connect each other and engaged in regional activities, taking the opportunity of building a nursery by themselves. They have continuously engaged in entrepreneur activities, making the area known as a creative activity area. Today, residents there run cooperatives, restaurants, groceries, cafes, theaters and so on by themselves.

The area holds around 0.1 million residents. Two thousand citizens participate in regional activities, of which ten percent live outside the area (Empublic & Nihon Kibou Seisakujo, 2011).

We interviewed Mr. S, a leader of residential activities of Seongmisan Village, visited facilities in the area, and conducted a literature survey in March 2016. The result is shown in Table 4.

The residents in Seongmisan Village do not receive any public fund, and engage in creative activities with their own funds. Mr. S told that

“we came to know that housewives usually have secret savings of ten million won (US\$ 10,000) or so.” Actually, most investors participating in entrepreneur projects invested around ten million won to cooperatives, restaurants, groceries, cafes or theaters.

The environment of these residential businesses is, however, harsh. One of the difficulties is specific to Korean lease contract, in which rent increases each time of renewal. “Rent rises more than twice, making us hard to continue business,” said Mr. S. Despite of it, more than twenty businesses have started by residents for more than twenty years, indicating their competency in entrepreneurship.

As stated earlier, not all of residents participate in these creative or entrepreneur activities. 1.8 thousand of 0.1 million residents participate, meaning that a participation ration is only 1.8 percent. Moreover, people living outside can also participate them. Thus, although these activities are strongly related to the area, they can be regarded as being

supported by weak ties, which hold residents together with shared wishes such as “I want to protect regional environment,” “I want to stick to my own lifestyle.”

However, there were not only weak ties but

also strong ties, connecting entrepreneurs who have strong and clear will of “want to start my business,” “want to be successful in business” in specific fields.

Table 4. Concepts extracted from an interview and literature (Seongmisan Village)

Concepts	S	Articles & Fieldworks
	40s Female	Books, Thesis Visiting, Observation etc.
Entrepreneurial environment	++	++
Spontaneous creative activities	++	+++
Business performance	-	+
Willingness to make regional contribution	++	++
References to strong network	+++	++
References to weak network	+++	++

Source: Prepared by authors.

(5) Discussion

Viewing from the aspect of theory of “strength of weak ties” (Granovetter, 1973), both of weak and strong ties had influence on creative and entrepreneur activities in three cases described in this research.

“The strength of weak ties” is a theory addressing that information of high novelty and value can be obtained more from weakly connected network (weak ties), such as “friend’s friend,” than from strongly connected network (strong ties), such as blood or territory relation. This theory implies that weak ties enhance exchange of information of high novelty and value, thus stimulate creative and entrepreneur activities.

In Yanedan district, artists invited from outside felt intolerance to strong regional ties, and sought weak ties outside the district. Consequently, the entrepreneur activities were vitalized and content level of immigrated artists increased.

In Kurume city, although activities and

relationships restricted inside the area had a limitation (they tend to become strong ties), thanks to the construction of connections among people spatially separated by Mr. Y, human relations with weak ties among them were successfully formed. This type of network exerts powerful influence of exchanging useful and novel information, which is not visible from inside of network with strong ties.

In Seongmisan Village, strong ties aiming at starting business together were naturally spawned among people tied weakly. This mixture of weak and strong ties was observed to vitalize the area.

Weak ties bridge gap between strong ties, and play an important role in conveying valuable information. This study thinks that a mixture of weak and strong ties facilitates communication and vitalizes creative and entrepreneur activities.

The previous studies of creative cities have not put much emphasis on the connection among residents so far. For example, Florida

(2004, 2005) insisted that creative workers gathered to the area naturally as the level of regional creativity increased, regardless of blood or territorial relationship.

Our results, however, cast a doubt on it, as connection among residents is found to be an important factor affecting creative activities.

Some studies also reported the similar results. An international research team of EU committee (ACRE project) conducted a questionnaire survey on thirteen creative cities in EU (Martin-Brelot et al., 2010). Their result showed that creative workers' willingness to live in creative cities was much more strongly affected by personal connections (such as family members or friends live in the same cities, or close places) than working environment. This fact was inconsistent with the widely accepted theory that good working environment with sufficient tolerance attracted creative workers.

Their and our findings jointly indicate that residential network might be essential for creative activities, and research on it should be promoted.

Kang (2013) surveyed three advanced cities implementing creative city policy Sendai, Yokohama and Kobe in Japan, and pointed out that although these cities helped creative workers by offering abandoned facilities, such help might hinder spontaneous development of creativity.

Creative economy theory originally states that creative environment develops and attracts creative works naturally without public support. This statement and our findings suggest that not only public support of facility or fund, but also policy aiming at bringing strong and weak ties to residents might enhance spontaneous creative activities when adopting creative city

theory.

Although we made some contribution to creative studies, our findings should not be generalized as they are based on the surveys in limited areas and time interval. To be specifically, we focused on small population growing areas in Japan and Korea, where creative activities were observed (Table 1). Let us summarize the space and time boundary conditions of our study as follows:

- a. Part of Eastern Asia centered in Japan and Korea.
- b. Area where creative economic activities can be observed.
- c. Not large region, but small area.
- d. Not population decreasing, but increasing area.
- e. At the time from Dec. 2013 to Mar. 2016, when our surveys were conducted.

(6) Conclusion

This research found out three important facts.

- a. In Yanedan district, immigrants engaging creative activities escaped from strong ties of old residents, and sought for weak ties outside the district.
- b. In central area of Kurume city, a producer invited from outside brought weak ties and creativity from outside.
- c. In Seongmisan Village, regional active-ties were supported by weak ties among residents as they were started as volunteers' weak connections. Note that some activities, such as starting a business with joint investment, could be supported by strong ties.

Judging from these three findings, we

concluded that when implementing creative city policy in small-scale area, two points should be considered.

- a. Social tie is one of the required components (both of strong and weak ties are important).
- b. Weak tie is necessary for creative city policy.

The previous study of creative cities had seldom focused on residential network, and Florida's creative city/economy theory insisted that creative workers migrate among cities looking for talent, skills, and tolerance without minding such network. Our findings and Martin-Brelot et al. (2010), however, cast doubt on such a simple view.

Our findings imply that strong and weak ties of residential network interact each other, and exert influence on will of living and creative activities of creative workers. The underlain mechanism is, however, unknown. Further research is needed for clarifying processes and variables in it. Moreover, the way of building these ties should be studied.

One way of approach to this problem could be management resource needed for starting creative or business activities. That is, by scrutinizing benefits of strong/ weak ties which vary from resource to resource, we may clarify the processes where these ties exert influence on the activities. For example, the benefit of strong ties on human resource when starting the activities may be "obtaining core management staff" since they are glued with strong ties. On the other hand, that of weak ties could be "obtaining various talents" as they come from weakly tied human network. Thus, we may infer that both of strong/weak ties play important roles in the process of obtaining

human resource, but with different approaches.

Another approach is society type theory, *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. *Gemeinschaft* means a community where its members are strongly connected with territorial and blood ties, while *Gesellschaft* is an association where its members are weakly connected with benefits or contracts. The former often refers to a pre-modern society where people gather on community events, while the latter to a modern global society where people communicate with SNS. By linking weak/strong tie theory with *Gesellschaft*- *Gemeinschaft* theory, we may approach to the problem of building ties. For example, we may say that community activities are effective for building strong ties in *Gemeinschaft* while SNS are beneficial for weak ties in *Gesellschaft*.

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