

Creativity in the recreational industry.  
Re-conceptualization of the Creative Class theory in a  
tourism-dominated rural area  
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**Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to analyse the dynamics of development in a small rural region. Sälen in Sweden is a typical ski resort, with vast seasonal fluctuation of people and amenities. Our main analytical tool is Richard Florida's theory on the Creative Class. This is a somewhat original approach for this type of context. Despite the great impact and controversy the theory of the Creative Class has had in both academia and among policy makers, it has primarily been applied on larger urban areas. The last few decades have seen a clear tendency towards urbanisation; cities and larger urban regions have undergone the most positive development, both in terms of job creation and the number of inhabitants. However, some rural areas have experienced positive development not normally seen in this type of vicinities. A dominating tourism industry is often seen as serving as an engine for overall development. This paper attempts to re-conceptualise the theory of the Creative Class to determine how it can be used to understand development in rural tourism-dominated areas.

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**Introduction**

Richard Florida has made a great impact with his theories on Creative Class, both in academia and among policy makers and planners. He argued that places and regions with a high fraction of talented and creative people – the Creative Class – have a much greater chance of succeeding in competition with other regions. Despite his growth in popularity, Florida has been criticised for being part of the neo-liberal discourse (Peck, 2005), for having a “fuzzy” conceptual framework (Markussen, 2006), being too pliable (Hoyman & Faricy, 2009), for a weak empirical foundation (Glaeser, 2004), and for not focusing on the dynamics behind urban growth (Storper & Scott, 2009) involving migration of human capital (Hansen & Neidomysl, 2009). A recent comparative European project found little empirical evidence of one of Florida's central ideas, the migration of creative workers to places that are tolerant, open and diverse. They found that key actors are much less mobile than the Creative Class theory suggests (Musterd & Gritsay 2010). One of the main criticisms is that the theory of the Creative Class is biased towards large urban areas (Andersen et al. 2010; Hansen, 2008), and that Florida's approach is less fruitful for smaller communities. A claim is that his theories and empirical findings favour big cities, making it difficult to study smaller cities and rural areas within the same framework. However, this paper attempts to unpack Florida's theories and use them as an analytical

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framework to investigate regional development in the mountainous area of Sälen, Sweden where winter and ski tourism are the most significant businesses. The paper also explores whether the main ideas of the Creative Class hold true even for places with a narrower economy such as tourist resorts.

Several commentators have called for a broadening of the Creative Class perspective to maintain its relevance and for customization to enable it to be a tool for regional policy makers outside the setting where it was originally developed (Asheim & Hansen 2009). The geographical focus needs to be expanded to include dynamic rural areas (Petrov 2007, 2008), and the understanding of the Creative Class as a homogeneous group in terms of professional and leisure preferences needs to be further developed (Asheim & Hansen, 2009).

Despite this scepticism, we employ this theory to understand the dynamics of regional development in a rural region dominated by tourism. However, in order to use this approach, we have to unpack and re-conceptualise the theory so it can be tailored to the context of the case-study; a rural region, dominated by tourism. Even though we amend the original theoretical framework, we still believe we keep the basis of the original approach. In today's economy, individual's talent and competence is somewhat most firms will need to compete for. This talent seem to cluster to certain places, and flourish in each others company. We also agree with Florida that these individual characteristics is best nourished and harnessed in milieus open and tolerant to creativity and innovation. We think using a case with the seasonal variations characterising a ski resort is very interesting. It almost resembles a laboratory for regional development in that the course of action is happening over and over again and thus make them easier observable and more straightforward to compare. How can the managers keep the positive element from previous seasons, and avoid the more undesirable?

All in all, we think there are four reasons why this might be a fruitful approach. First, it is an endeavour to meet what might be the most frequent and vocal critique of Florida's theory of the Creative Class, namely that it is hard to apply outside larger (North American) metropolitan areas. By harnessing this theory in a very different context, we start to examine what is transferable and what needs local adjustment and tailoring. This brings us over to the second point; the theory of the creative class has been popular among policymakers lately. However, we think that much of the Creative Class policy measures lack sensitivity to the local context. Too many policy makers praise the Creative Class without really digging into its substance. In the following, we try to unpack the theoretical framework to explore how (and if) this can be a fruitful approach even outside metropolitan areas. The third reason is that we find the Creative Class framework to offer a holistic framework to understand the dynamics of regional development. By this we mean that it includes and investigates the relationship and dynamic between the business structure and level of human capital. This is analysed with a concern of place specific characteristics, both physical and socio-cultural. We would like to argue that this gives a more unmitigated picture. And finally, we think that even though an abundance of theoretical development both in the field of tourism research and regional devel-

opment has been seen, there are few attempts to merge these two fields. These two related field would mutually benefit from closer co-operation, both when it comes to theoretical development, empirical studies and development of policy measures.

The data behind this paper was collected during a study focusing mainly on temporary and permanent migration and the driving forces behind moving to Sälen. This is a useful case study region because it is dynamic and there has been a positive development the last few years. In addition it is located rather isolated, so the impact of the ski resort as the main driver behind development is very evident. In addition in-migrants, politicians, destination developers, entrepreneurs, in-habitants and seasonal tourism workers were interviewed.

The outline of the paper is as follows. First, Florida's theories on the Creative Class are presented, and then the manner in which this theory is applied in a rural context is examined. Second, the case study area is introduced, and the empirical data are presented. The theoretical framework informs the analysis of the data, and is critically examined to determine whether they can help us understand the competitive strategies and regional development of tourist destinations. The paper concludes with policy advice for this rather distinct context. Even though Florida's principal argument on that people's knowledge is the most important resource, and creativity is the most important process in regional development, is applicable even here caution is needed when transferring strategies and theories developed in different environments.

### **The theory of the Creative Class**

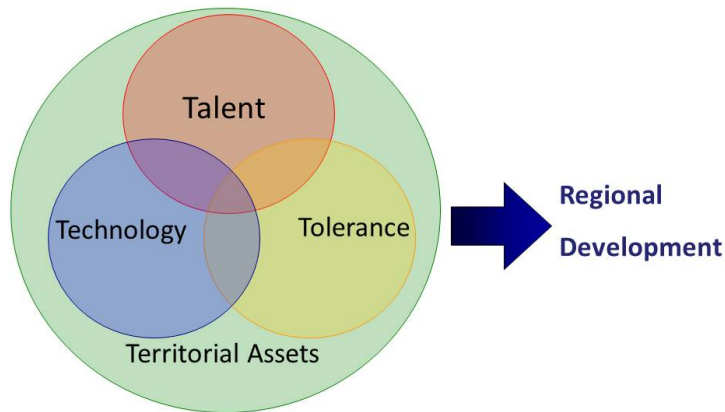
The essence of the Creative Class theory is that human capital propels regional development and prosperity. The knowledge and creativity of people enable some places and regions to do better than others. In particular, Florida (2002, 2005a and b, 2008) singled out a group labelled the Creative Class. The commonality within this group is that members' contribution consists mainly of cognitive labour and problem solving. In other words, they get paid to think. He argues that creativity is found in different industries, and what one actually does is more important than the industry in which one works. Thus, the Creative Class is a diverse group, and Florida includes in it traditional human capital-intensive positions, such as managers, scientists, architects and consultants, as well as more artistic professions. For Florida, the local musician is just as important for regional development as the bank manager.

One of the main implications of the Creative Class theory is that regional development should shift the focus from business' climate to people's climate. Florida argues that people, and in particular the Creative Class, increasingly are looking for interesting places and not jobs when they move. Jobs on the other hand, are increasingly pursuing these people. To put it bluntly, jobs follow people, not the other way around.

To attract and retain these people a place needs "the four 'T's": Talent (the human capital), Tolerance (a diverse and including community), Technology (an

economy with a high level of knowledge intensive businesses) and Territorial assets (physical and intangible amenities). In his initial work, Florida (2002) included only the first three of these T's, but in his later work (Florida, 2005b, 2008) Territorial assets have been incorporated as an important factor. As can be seen in figure 1 these talent, technology and tolerance are surrounded by the amenities that the place provides, the territorial assets. Together all these four elements creates regional development.

Figure 1. The 4T framework (After Stolarick, presentation held in Hamar, Norway 4.11.2008)



### The Creative Class theory in a rural context

The Creative Class theory has had a focus on larger urban areas and has had less to say about development in more sparsely populated regions. Research on rural and urban development and economic growth has often had few meeting points in the last few decades. Research on rural growth has been focused on, amongst other things, the importance of amenities (Deller et al. 2001; Green et al. 2005) in relation to tourism (Marcouiller et al. 2004). Up until today not much attention has been put on applying Florida's work in a rural context, even though there are some exceptions. Heikkilä & Pikkarainen (2010) study on Finnish counties and talent attraction; Ström & Nelson (2010) call for a more fine grained analysis; McGranahan et al. (2010) study on economic growth in rural US based on creative capital; Nuur & Laestadius (2009) on talent attraction; McGranahan & Wojan (2007) amenities as source for talent attraction can all be seen as examples. Stolarick et al. (2010) argues that some typical tourist destinations share similar attributes and amenities with urban areas, such as restaurants, bars and cultural services, in addition to favourable outdoor amenities. Stolarick et al. (2010) concluded their article by suggesting that tourism should be viewed not only as the last way of creating an economic base for the region. Instead, it is important to use tourism and the amenities that the tourism industry is based on

to attract new residents; in other words, attract new residents in the way that tourists are attracted (see also Morgan et al. 2009). Attracting the Creative Class through the quality of a place can be leverage to attract even more individuals and families willing to move to the area.

Rural areas are often characterised by restructurings in nature-based industries (i.e mining and forestry), population decline, an ageing population and losing young people to more urban areas. However, some rural areas have reversed this trend and are experiencing in-migration, development and economic growth. Strategies for the tourism industry are favoured when it comes to regional development in several rural areas. Not only do they attract visitors, but in-migrants, entrepreneurs and investors also follow a dynamic tourism industry. A dominating tourism industry can give the area a supply of services (restaurants, stores, bars, health care, to name a few) far beyond what can be offered in rural areas that do not have such an industry. Growth in the supply of such services, entrepreneurial creativity and people living and working in the area, together with the tourists, create urban qualities normally not seen in other rural areas.

Florida (2002; 2008) showed that the Creative Class is typically over-represented in larger urban areas. However, it is worth asking whether these factors for success are only present in large metropolitan areas, or whether they are valid for explaining development in other types of places as well. For example, what kind of talent base is required in places with a one-sided business structure compared with places with a more diverse economy? How does tolerance work in a place where up to half of the population only stays for the season; what technology is needed where tourism is the main business? The findings section of this paper addresses these questions.

### **The case - Sälen, Sweden**

Rural tourism areas have been viewed as core for regional development (Kaupila, 2011); therefore, Sälen was chosen as a case for this study, as we think that the growth in a place with a dominating tourism industry could to some extent be understood by applying Florida's basic ideas of the Creative Class, such as the key role played by talented and creative individuals in regional development and how place-specific amenities work as a powerful pull factor for migration.

Within the Swedish mountain range, many villages were restructured from nature-based industries into a more dominant tourism industry. Sälen is one of those villages (Lundmark, 2005). In the 1970s, a governmental policy change forced municipalities to play a larger role in the development of tourism in Sweden. In Sälen, the municipality owned 40percent of the mountain tourism development company, Sälenfjällen AB established in 1982, the remaining 60 percent owned by smaller local enterprises organised under an economic organization (Bodén & Rosenberg, 2004). Sälen experienced significant growth, and the destination was transformed from a small-scale mountain destination into a large winter tourism destination owned and operated mainly by private companies

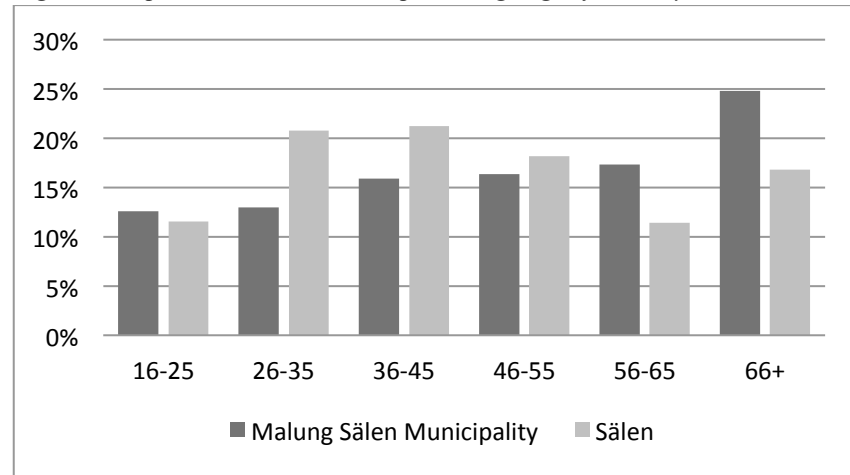
(Fredman, et al., 2001; Bodén & Rosenberg, 2004). Today, the village hosts one of Sweden's largest winter tourism destinations with six ski facilities. The dominating company is Skistar AB, Scandinavia's largest winter tourism company that operates four of the six ski facilities and that owns the largest ski facilities in Sweden and Norway. Many small companies are also part of the tourism industry, and Skistar AB may be viewed as the engine.

Sälen is located in the northern part of the Malung-Sälen municipality with a total population of about 10,400 inhabitants in the municipality year 2010. A little less than a tenth of these inhabitants lived in the village of Sälen (Statistic Sweden). Figure 2 shows the distribution of the population aged from 16 (see limitations of the database further down in this chapter).

The migration and population pattern of Sälen paints a different picture than most other rural regions. An age distribution where the largest portion of the population is under 45 years of age is uncommon in rural settlements given the population decline in such areas. However, in the case of Sälen, the village can be seen as a winner as its population is growing and the distribution is positive, with its core within the age group 26–55. For many rural areas with an aging population, the only salvation is in-migration. During the last 15 years, Sälen has faced domestic in-migrants coming to the area to a relatively large extent. Of those aged over 16 years and living in Sälen during 2005, 39.4 percent moved to the village from outside the municipality over the last 15 years. Sälen faced a population increase with about 24,2 percent during the years 1995-2010 compared to an decrease with 8,8 percent in the municipality (Statistic Sweden). Idre, a mountain tourism destination in the neighbouring municipality Älvdalen, on the other hand faced a decrease during the same years with 13,7 percent (-12,4 percent in the municipality). Hjort and Malmberg (2004) study on rural migration in Sweden evinced a clear tendency of retirement migration to rural areas and youth migration to more urban areas due to their supply of educational institutions. For Sälen there seems to be the other way around. The area has a positive gross migration even though the numbers are low. However, in the ages less than 45 years there is a positive gross migration compared to the ages 46-65 where the numbers are negative. In the ages over retirement age (65 years) the gross migration is positive but not in the same extent as in the younger ages.

For our study of Sälen we have both used qualitative and quantitative methods focusing on interviews and statistical data. The interviews were carried out during 2010 and 2011, and a total of 19 persons were interviewed. Some of the people interviewed were both an in-migrant and entrepreneur or destination developer. During the peak tourist season, seasonal workers who temporarily move to the area for a couple of months dominate the workforce. Seasonal workers were interviewed in groups (six persons in each group) and the same group was interviewed three times in one season: once when they just arrived for the season, once in the middle of the season and once at the end of the season. During these interviews, themes concerning work life, social life, life in Sälen and life before and after Sälen were discussed.

Figure 2. Population distribution in percentage aged from 16 years, 2005



Municipality: n=8755. Sälen: n=928  
 Source: Statistic Sweden/Database BeDa

In addition, public longitudinal micro-level statistics compiled and stored by 'Statistic Sweden' (under the name 'Database BeDa') was used to calculate population development, human capital and self-employment. This dataset includes individuals aged from 16 years who are registered for the census within the four counties of Bergslagen, of which Dalarna is one. The data were divided into six years with a three-year interval ranging from 1990–2005.

## Findings

The analysis and discussion in this paper take Florida's four Ts as a point of departure, but reconstruct the content of each T to be more sensitive to the contextual setting in which the study took place. Rural growth in tourism-dominated areas can be explained by using the Ts to illustrate different aspects of the attraction of the locality.

### Talent

Florida put significant emphasis on creative and capable individuals – the talents. This emphasis is measured and operationalised as level of education; in other words, human capital (Florida, 2002). This does not mean that talent cannot be found outside the highly educated, and this does not per se include all of the Creative Class, as many of those working within the creative core are self-taught individuals, such as poets, artists and musicians. Even though educational level has shortcomings and has been criticised, it is a good way to quantify the amount of knowledge in a region. Overall, the tourism industry is characterised by low formal education, and educational level may not be the best indicator for predicting and analysing prosperity in a tourist region. Instead, practical compe-

tence, service attitude and hospitality skills are more important than formal education. Nevertheless, creativity is one of the most important aptitudes in tourism, as unplanned events take place and situations differ from guest to guest. As Florida (2002:69) argued, employees within the creative core are *'people engaged in creative problem solving, drawing on complex bodies of knowledge to solve specific problems'*. This description fits many, if not most, people working with guests and visitors.

Our data show that employers in Sälen put a lot of effort into recruiting the right people. These people have not only the required skills and knowledge but also the necessary, and equally important, social skills. One company told their recruitment procedure:

We have a web-based recruitment system where you are applying through [...the company's homepage] and we work with a ranking system using stars [...] a self-assessment test that is built on the basis of our values ... that is, here in Sälen, it is SÄLEN. Selling/service (Säljande/service), Honest (Ärlig), Responsive (Lyhörd), Dedicated (Engagerad) and Curious (Nyfiken). These are five traits that we are looking for. (Author's translation)

When having many applicants for a season they only interviewed those that got a gold star, ie. those that had a lot of SÄLEN in them when answering the questions.

Some companies, including the company using the above mentioned recruitment system, also tested their staff during a start-up weekend where they welcomed all potential new staff for the season to come to Sälen and learn more about the place and the company. During these days, managers observed how potential staff socialised with each other in team-building activities, at dinners and during free time. The company was eager to find staff with social skills and who could develop a social group with members that live and work together during the season and could handle the pressure during peak season.

For many companies, retaining staff with previous experience at the company was also important. To start a new season takes a lot of effort by the company and it is crucial that some staff members already know the company's rules and regulations and can assist new seasonal staff. Moreover, these 'senior' seasonal workers play an important role in contributing to the social life of an area, as they have knowledge about the place:

Interviewer: Was there a sense of security when you came here your first season and lived with those who had already been here a season or two?

Women 1: Yes, I think it was. You can ask them if there is anything that you wonder and all that. They have all the answers to you when you are here for your first season.

Women 2: And then they know how things work. You know the benefits and things like that and you can hit the closest road to work.(Author's translation)



This dialog is taken from one of our group interviews with seasonal workers with previous experience of working in Sälen. The points they put forward about them knowing how things works was also highlighted as important among the first year workers.

Another type of talent is related to preparing guest amenities. For example, such skills in mountain tourism destinations include designing facilities like fun parks for skiing and snowboarding and providing and maintaining artificial snow and new slopes in areas dominated by skiing. These jobs do not necessary require formal or higher education; rather, the employee needs to show talent for such tasks and, to some extent, creativity in creating these facilities. Former experience is obviously an advantage.

However, one respondent mentioned a problem associated with attracting highly skilled workers for special positions requiring higher education, such as an account manager or a property manager. Compared with recruiting seasonal staff, where over 10 applications are received for each position, the struggle is in finding new managers. Many potential managers are attracted by the job but realise that bringing their family is problematic, as the partner might struggle to find a suitable job in an area with a limited labour market, in contrast to that of more urban areas. The thin labour market can explain some of the relatively high entrepreneurial activity found in Sälen. Full time, year round occupation can be difficult to find, so many have to create their own jobs. This might show the importance of another type of talent – entrepreneurial skill. Many managers running a small business, which is a dominant feature in the tourism industry, are characterised by having little or no formal education (Shaw & Williams, 1998). In this context, those with such entrepreneurial skills and experiences can create businesses out of the amenities that a place offers. This takes us to the next T – technology.

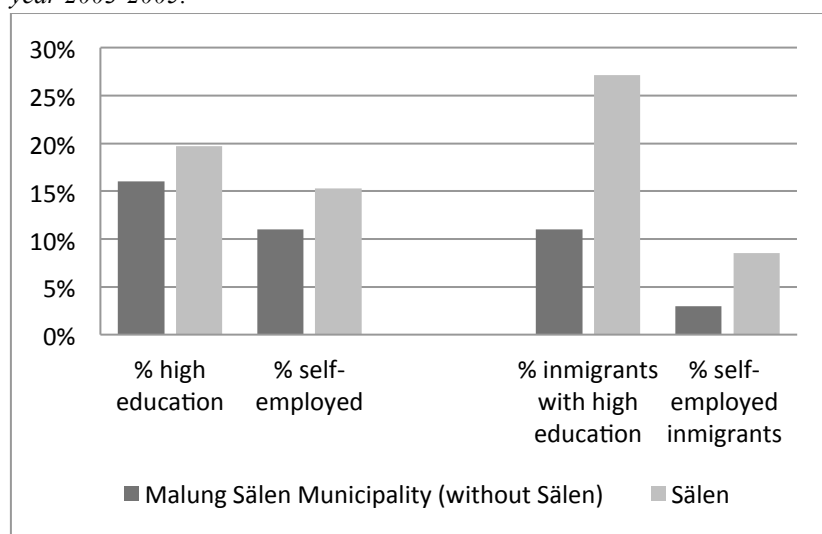
### **Technology**

This T is strongly connected to the first, Talent, as high-tech industries often employ talented persons with high education. Florida (2002) strongly connects innovation and technology to places with a high percentage of the Creative Class. In tourism-dominated places, the traditional high-tech industries are more or less absent, yet growth in both employment and population can be found. The technology profile of the local economy is clearly very different from that of a metropolitan area. Instead, the entrepreneurial spirit found in a place such as Sälen is very important in explaining the local dynamic. A lot of creativity exists among start-ups and people setting up their own businesses. Entrepreneurs in Sälen are not necessarily educated at universities nor do they work in the high-tech sector, but they have been crucial for the positive development that the place has enjoyed lately. Kokkranikal and Morrison (2011) highlighted the importance of entrepreneurial innovation for a tourism destination as an engine for both industry and job growth. Noteworthy is that a distinction should be made

between entrepreneurs that are profit and growth oriented and those running their business primarily for lifestyle reasons (Getz & Petersen, 2005).

Jobs, education and income distribution are some of the most important elements for realising growth in rural areas, but rural prosperity seldom occurs in mountain areas (Isserman et al. 2009). However, Sälen is a small village located in the southern mountain range of Sweden and the village is experiencing both economic and population growth. Figure 3 shows that a relatively large number of the people moving into the municipality are moving to Sälen. Out of the 444 in-migrants, 267 moved to other parts of the municipality. In-migrants to Sälen constitute a large number of self-employed and highly educated individuals compared with the municipality at large.

Figure 3. Share of population and in-migrants aged 16–65 with higher education (< three years at the university level) and that are self-employed. Migration year 2003-2005.



Source: Statistic Sweden/Database BeDa

Figure 3 shows a tendency for Sälen to be a popular place for in-migration in the municipality, and a tendency that parts of these migrants create their own jobs. No correlation exists between higher education and self-employment, and this point fits well with the overall picture of the tourism industry in which few new jobs are created in the high-tech sector. Noteworthy is the high share of highly educated individuals moving to Sälen compared to other parts of the municipality.

However, one of the central arguments Florida makes is that places need to be inclusive and newcomers need to feel welcomed. How is this case in a place where the population is fleeting and temporal, as in a typical winter destination such as Sälen?

### **Tolerance**

According to Florida (2002), open, diverse and including communities attract members of the Creative Class. The importance of lifestyle choices is emphasised in Florida (2002, 2008); people from the Creative Class prefer places where they can experience a vibrant street life and small-scale cultural events. Large sport centres and tourist attractions such as museums and concert halls do not attract the Creative Class. Participants in Florida's focus groups found smaller, not so organised events and less fancy places more interesting than big events organised to attract the broad masses. Cultural events organised bottom-up are more appreciated than the top-down induced. To statistically evaluate and measure the Tolerance factor against the other Ts, Florida developed a Bohemian index. For example, Florida found that the existing statistical data on the number of museums and cultural places was outdated. Instead, smaller events, such as street music events and places available for informal gatherings, were of interest and Florida (2002) attempted to capture this phenomenon within the indexes of Bohemians (such as number of musicians, artists, actors, directors and authors).

In Sälen, at least three groups of people need to feel welcome: the guests, the in-migrants and the seasonal workers. As the tourism industry is based on interactions between producer and consumer, and as the tourism product cannot be stored, it is of crucial importance for tourism companies to generate as many visitors as possible during the high season. In Sälen and many other places with one dominating season, recruiting staff that companies can keep year-round is difficult, as many companies close during the off season. Every year, companies start a new recruiting process to find the best-suited staff for the upcoming season. As was mentioned earlier, one criterion is the social skills of a potential staff member.

However, social skills are a difficult talent to define and measure. It is highly contextual and individual. What one consumer appreciates might be a very different experience for another. Hence, the ability to read the situation and the individual customer might be the most important element of the bundle of social skills needed in tourism. Obviously, like any other skill this improves with training, but there are big individual differences in the talent for this. That could be the reason why many of the informants seemed to follow the old recruitment mantra of 'hire for attitude, train for skill' (e.g. Carbonara, 1996).

In tourism-dominated areas, the importance of social capital (see Putnam, 2000) and being/becoming a part of the community can be an indicator of the level of tolerance of the community. Studies have shown that being part of the community is important for in-migrants in giving them the sense that they belong and can give back to the community in which they live (for example, Thulemark, 2011). For Putnam (2000), social capital has two major varieties: bonding and bridging capital. Bonding describes the internal links of reciprocity in a group, whereas bridging refers to connections between more heterogeneous groups. Both types are highly relevant at tourist destinations, which need to

quickly build internal bonds between seasonal employers and more permanent residents and links to external groups to maintain competitive advantages.

Tourism destinations attract many different types of visitors and potential residents. A small place may view sharing their amenities and social services with non-residents as bothersome or disturbing. However, if the tourism industry dominates and almost everyone working within the community is involved or related to the tourism work, they all depend on these visitors.

I say that everyone that works here works in the tourism industry. The district health care centre works with tourism, the local merchant [ICA-handlaren] works with tourism. You wouldn't have the business if it wasn't for the tourism destination [...] All of the jobs are directly or indirectly linked, in my own world, to the tourism industry. (Author's translation)

This quote is taken from one interview with a permanent resident and he was, together with others, telling us the importance of the tourism industry for everyone working within the community. Not only those meeting the tourists but also persons working within the social service:

Are you a teacher at the school in Sälen, there are 140 children on the school and that is due to the tourism industry, otherwise it would have probably been 14 children. (Author's translation)

A place that can handle 70 times the number of inhabitants in the form of tourists who come and go every week during the high season and double the amount of inhabitants in the form of seasonal workers living and working in the area over a season may be interpreted as having high tolerance. This measure may also be a better way of studying the tolerance and openness of a place rather than the share of gay people or Bohemians, as in the studies of Florida (2002, 2005a, 2005b, 2008).

The seasonal workers interviewed also stressed the importance of a social life and social relations. Many highlighted the fact that they had chosen Sälen for the social attributes that the place provides instead of the French Alps and its better skiing conditions:

The skiing in the Alps was a little better, you could say, but life here is better. It's much more fun to work a season here (in Sälen). (Author's translation)

or the Norwegian mountains, known to the Swedes to pay better salaries:

I've heard that it's so damn boring to be a seasonal worker there. It is not as great (as here).

People come here from Trysil [closest ski resort on the Norwegian side of the mountain range; authors own addition] to party. (Author's translation)

However, without a doubt, many come to Sälen for the major attraction – the skiing facilities.

### Territorial assets

Several recent studies showed that place-specific amenities matter for regional growth (for example, see Florida, 2002, 2005b, 2008; Van Den Berg et al. 2005; Trip, 2007). In Florida's (2002) focus group interviews with employees and students soon to be working within the Creative Class outdoor activities and closeness to outdoor recreation areas were often highly ranked. In Florida's early work on the Creative Class, neither territorial assets nor amenities was singled out as a unique factor, but was more or less incorporated in the initial three Ts or treated under the heading 'amenities'. Even after *territorial assets* was introduced in the Creative Class framework, Florida (2005b) and others (for example, Florida et al. 2008; Asheim & Hansen, 2009; Boschma & Fritsch, 2009) did not pay that much attention to the 'fourth' T; rather, they held on to the first three necessities that Florida mentioned in his research from 2002. In their later work, Florida and associates (for example, see Tignali, 2009) developed the Cultural Opportunity Index and Public Provision Index to measure the level of cultural and public services. However, finding suitable data and measurements to determine access to outdoor recreation areas in urban surroundings remains a work in progress (McGranahan et al., 2010).

On the other hand, amenity-rich rural areas seem more likely to attract entrepreneurs from the Creative Class. This occurrence contrasts with places with less abundant and diverse facilities, where the Creative Class works within the industry and jobs are the main attraction (McGranahan et al., 2010). However, amenities in a narrow sense are not the only important aspects of these types of areas, as broader lifestyle choices are also important. The possibility of living life in a better and more satisfying way is mentioned to be a driving force for lifestyle migration (Benson and O'Reilly, 2009). Mainly, recent studies have put this type of migration in the context of migration to warm and sunny climates (for example, Gustafsson, 2009; Korpela, 2009; Trundle, 2009; Williams & Hall, 2000).

However, as Thulemark (2011) argued, living a more fulfilling way of life can be strongly connected to the amenities and should in some cases be seen as dependent on each other. Much of the research done on amenity migration has taken a more nature-orientated direction, and for mountainous areas the amenities were viewed as the driving force for migration (Moss, 2006). Withal, both Thulemark (2011) and Jobes (2000) highlighted the importance of lifestyle choices within these types of areas and 'the destination chosen by lifestyle migrants tells us a lot about the lives they wish to lead' (Benson & O'Reilly, 2011;611). Florida (2002) mentioned the importance of lifestyles and the opportunities to fulfil a desired lifestyle, but this did not receive a lot of attention. For many, lifestyle has become more important and 'people's climate' highly reflects lifestyles, together with amenities that support the desired lifestyle.

One respondent tells his story of how he ended up living with his wife and two kids in Sälen:

...I moved here, studied during the autumns and worked at a ski school during the winters. I studied economy but I wanted to be a certified ski instructor so I did that and continued to study some economy. Later I got a position as a manager over the ski school and I thought that was fun so I put my studies aside. I then met my wife here, she was also a seasonal worker and we started to have Sälen as our base. (Author's translation)

His wife went away to study but both of them continued to call Sälen 'home'. On the other hand, he gave up his studies and started to get new manager positions, and ended up being a destination manager for a major skiing area.

His office still makes it apparent that he went there for skiing, as all of his gear is ready for the day when the conditions are perfect and he gets some time off. The amenities give him the opportunity to live his preferred lifestyle and have a job that he finds stimulating. A similar relation to the mountains is seen amongst many of the seasonal workers interviewed. One of them described how he tries to catch some time on the slopes with his snowboard every morning before going to work as a chef. He sees the winter as the best period during the year as snow activities such as snowboarding become available. This young man, who grew up in an urban area close to Stockholm, claimed that he could see himself living in a small mountain village, such as Sälen, because of the amenities that can provide him with his desired lifestyle.

## **Final discussion**

This paper has explored Sälen's regional development. In short, this is relatively prosperous compared to other rural regions – population is increasing, the population is rather young and the economy looks positive. We argue that the people working in Sälen is the main reason for this. This is in line with Florida's (2002) argument that employees knowledge is the most important resource, and creativity is the most important process. Even though Sälen's main business is tourism and not high tech industry, knowledge and skill is still the main competitive advantage. Further, we have argued that the "peoples climate" of Sälen works as a major attraction when recruiting seasonal workers. Although Florida's work has an urban focus, some tourism destinations share many characteristics with Florida's Creative Class fuelled successful metropolitan areas (see Table 2 for an overview). A talented workforce tolerant of new ideas and people typify such places, where lifestyle and amenities are more important for newcomers than careers and wealth. These talented and creative people create jobs, both for themselves and others, despite not possessing the level of education required to be included in the Creative Class and not working in a high-tech sector.

This type of rural area is knowledge intensive but not necessarily technology intensive, and the jobs there involve mainly service and special experience productions where more social skills and entrepreneurialism are promoted. Such a rural area points to the fact that Florida's concepts need to be unpacked and

situated within the context in which they are used. Talent might not mean the same thing for an employer in a tourist business as for one running a biotech company near a major city.

*Table 2. Overview over the differences among the four Ts in Florida's study and in rural tourism areas*

|                           | <b>Florida's study</b>  | <b>Rural tourism area</b>   |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Talent</b>             | Education (human capital)<br>Artistic and creative capacities | 'Skills and experience', not necessarily education<br>Service attitude<br>Entrepreneurs, not necessary educated   |
| <b>Technology</b>         | Jobs within the high tech sector                              | Entrepreneurs<br>Specialised know-how   |
| <b>Tolerance</b>          | Gay index and Bohemian index<br>Diversity                     | Social capital – inclusion and participation in the local community<br>Intentions to be a part of community<br>Tourists, seasonal workers, in-migrants and 'original' inhabitants |
| <b>Territorial assets</b> | Culture Opportunity Index<br>Public Provision Index           | Lifestyle amenities<br>Seasonal opportunities   |

This paper argues that territorial assets play a significant role in attracting creative people to all kinds of areas, and this fourth T should not be placed second when studying the numbers and importance of the Creative Class in rural as well as in metropolitan areas. McGranahan et al. (2010) provided evidence that the Creative Class and entrepreneurs are more common in high amenity rural areas than other rural areas. Therefore, for tourism destinations, territorial assets might form the base for a lifestyle-orientated migration such as the one seen in both the concept of lifestyle migration and migration among the Creative Class.

### Further research/Policy implications

In line with a suggestion by Petrov (2007), further studies on the role of the Creative Class in rural areas are required before policy makers and planners adapt the original theory. The theory needs to be further modified to better suit rural areas, and knowledge of how the theory should be adapted needs to be highlighted. One criticism towards the type of reinterpretation to which this paper contributes is that Florida's concept is too watered out. However, as the theory has gained considerable attention amongst policy makers and planners, showing that the concept needs to be explored critically and not just adopted in any region is important. When applied, the Creative Class theory needs to consider seriously the contextual specificities.

For Sälen and places with similar characteristics, policy makers and planners may need to consider the factors that attract in-migrants, such as a labour market developed to suit the tourism industry as well as partners moving along, open-

ness to entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs, attractive living environments that give potential in-migrants the incentive to settle permanently and a countryside flourishing with a social service that functions year-round and that does not depend fully on the tourism industry's peak season. Finally, the social milieu is important and should not be disregarded.

A final question arises: how is this applicable to other rural areas and how can the results from this paper be useful? As others before us have done, this paper highlights the importance of critically exploring Florida's theory and using the theory as a base to develop explanations for growth. In this paper we have employed Richard Florida's theory of the Creative Class to analyse regional development and dynamics in an unusual context – a small place with tourism as the main trade. In this process, we have adjusted and modified the content of the core concept and the operational definitions. One could then argue that we have watered out and tempered with the theory to the degree that little is left. However, even if the operational definitions have changed, we believe that the core of the theoretical definition is intact. To be exact, clusters of talented individuals are in today's knowledge driven economy vital for regional development. This is true even outside large metropolitan areas. We have shown that the quality of place and the concentration of talented individuals in a given area have a positive effect on regional growth. It is important to remember that creative as well as non-creative individuals can be found in all occupations. In addition, we are in agreement with Florida that the quality of place is more than physical amenities; it also rests on socio-cultural features, maybe best characterised as atmosphere. However, one should be careful to aggregate individual readings of atmosphere. What some individuals find amiable might be very different from others.

This conceptual framework might not be suitable in other areas, but the important contribution of this paper is how it critically explores and reuses the theory to explain for academics as well as for policy planners how to think about the Creative Class theory when adopting it outside the urban US, especially rural areas. Used with care, the Creative Class remains a constructive tool for policy makers and analysts, even in these types of regions. The yardstick for most policy makers is the concept's main message that the creativity of individuals is a major tool for prosperity, and that different places offer different atmospheres for nourishing new ideas. The biggest challenge remains; how to attract the right people and cultivate an atmosphere that nurtures creativity and new ideas?

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