The Contribution of the Creative Economy to the Resilience of Rural Communities: Exploring Cultural and Digital Capital

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Abstract

This article develops understanding of cultural and digital capital in order to evaluate the contribution of creative practitioners to rural community resilience. Online practices today impact on creative work in rural locales in a number of ways. However, exactly how they extend 'reach' and contribute to rural creativity deserves greater attention. We examine how broadband Internet access and online practices impact on rural creative work and, in turn, how this enables creatives to participate at different levels in their rural communities, thus contributing to research into both rural community resilience and rural creative economies by providing in-depth qualitative analysis. Through interviews undertaken in rural Scotland, the article outlines the implications of poor rural Internet connectivity for creative economies and explores the impact of this on the role of creatives in their rural communities and their 'community-focused' creative activities. Our findings suggest creative practitioners are using digital technologies and adaptive approaches to overcome barriers to connectivity and to remain in rural locations. Creatives are invested in their communities and their rurality on a number of levels, contributing to community resilience through building cultural capital in diverse ways, and to 'ripple effects' from online activities.

Introduction

This article explores the contribution of creative practitioners (or 'creatives') in rural communities in developing cultural and community capitals to build resilience, with a focus on the mediating role of digital infrastructure and technologies. The article makes contributions by developing understanding of cultural capital in community resilience frameworks and by adding a digital technology focus to rural creative economy work. We present collaborative work carried out at the University of Aberdeen by the Digital Engagement and Resilience (DEAR) and the Satellite Infrastructure for Rural Access (SIRA) projects. DEAR worked to develop a conceptual

framework for understanding digitally enhanced community resilience. It worked with
SIRA as a case study. SIRA investigates satellite Internet infrastructure as an alternative
technology for rural areas, focusing on individuals working in creative industries to
explore the potential of the technology. We focus on the use and requirements of
Internet access for rural creative practitioners, asking: how do broadband Internet
infrastructure and associated digital resources enable creative practitioners to contrib-
ute to the rural creative economy; and how, in turn, does this impact on rural
community resilience more generally?

The article begins with a literature review briefly outlining the rural creative
economy and examining the growing importance of Internet access and digital tech-
nology use for rural creatives. We then define 'resilience' in the context of community
development and outline the four resilience themes through which we undertake our
analysis: adaptive capacity; cultural capital; leadership and resourcefulness; and resili-
ence 'ripple effects'. In the methodology section, we outline how we worked
collaboratively to evaluate qualitative interview data using resilience themes and
introduce the interview respondents, providing some context to the rural creative
economy in Scotland. In the conclusion we draw our analysis together to respond to
our research questions and make recommendations for future work and policy relat-
ing to digital-creative practice.

Rural creative economies

The rural creative economy is receiving increasing attention (Bell and Jayne 2010;
Gibson 2010; Herslund 2012). It is claimed that creative processes occur through
networks and flows of people and information between city and the country, at
regional, inter-regional and inter-community levels, and consist of scattered networks
and nodes, hubs and incubators (Burns and Kirkpatrick 2008; Gibson *et al*. 2012;
Thomas *et al*. 2013). Creative sectors include advertising, architecture, arts and
antique markets, crafts, design, designer fashion, film, video and photography, soft-
ware, computer games and electronic publishing, music and the visual and perform-
ing arts, publishing, television and radio (Department of Culture Media and Sport
2001).[1] Following Richard Florida's key texts (Florida 2002, 2012), the creative
economy has more commonly been understood in the urban context, with buzzy
creative cities, cultural quarters and hubs as desirable places attracting business,
consumers and residents. Although the 'creative' in creative economy is taken in
much of the work inspired by Florida to refer to the knowledge economy, innovation,
information technology and intellectual property across all economic sectors, we seek
to explore the specific qualities of creative work in terms of rural community resili-
ence. As Thomas *et al*. (2013) find, the rural creative economy consists of a mix of
craft-based and traditional local culture (both material and symbolic) and new creative
industries.

Research into rural creative industries describes various reasons why creative
individuals and businesses are attracted to rural areas, revolving around lifestyle
preferences such as quality of life (Duxbury and Campbell 2011), finding creative
inspiration away from high rents and homogeneity of urban areas (Duxbury and
Campbell 2011; Gibson *et al*. 2012; Collis *et al*. 2013), and particular 'place' strengths

such as strong regional cultural networks and economies (Chapain *et al.* 2013). It comprises a mix of established individuals and networks and in-migrants (Herslund 2012; Borén and Young 2013) who contribute different skills and resources to their communities.

Herslund's (2012) study of creative rural in-migrants finds that younger creatives want a family-friendly vibrant community with resources and are likely to relocate if the community cannot provide amenities, whereas older creative in-migrants tend to create 'regional lifestyle businesses' that involve diversifying their practice and reducing time and energy travelling to urban centres. Diversification is increasingly necessary for rural economic sustainability, with many rural practitioners carrying out more than one form of creative work (Ellis 1998; Niehof 2004; Duxbury and Campbell 2011). Rural areas also have problems retaining and sustaining creative talent in the absence of effective policies and adequate infrastructure, and rural economies can be more vulnerable because they are remote from economic centres, making an already vulnerable profession more so (Bain and McLean 2012; Donald *et al.* 2013). For example, rural practitioners may feel they are overlooked by city-centric funding approaches and gatekeepers (Duxbury and Campbell 2011). While the creative economy has had equal impact on urban and rural areas, according to Currid-Halkett and Stolarick (2013, p. 68), it should not be considered a 'silver bullet': its relationship to prosperity 'remains in the details of where and who'.

Creative-cities theories, while often critiqued, remain an attractive aspect of place policies. Continued research supports the observation that high numbers of creative workers increase economic growth (McGranahan and Wojan 2007), although it is also argued that economic impact is spatially variable and rural in-migrants are often self-employed, which has limited impact on rural economic regeneration (Bosworth and Willett 2011; Herslund 2012). Predominantly, the policy imperative to encourage growth of the creative sector in rural regions is an economic one (Anwar McHenry 2011); however, there is a growing recognition that cultural capital has a vital role in rural community development. Herslund's (2012) conclusion that rural creative practitioners, as individuals or small to medium-sized enterprises, may be contributing little economically, but offer a number of other advantages, is key to exploring the role of the creative economy more broadly for rural community resilience.

Research examining the role of cultural activities for rural community development tends to focus either on heritage or community arts projects. Arts development is widely supported for encouraging participation, well-being, growing 'sense of place' and creating a context for interaction among diverse actors, giving each a voice in solutions to local challenges, thereby empowering communities (Anwar McHenry 2011). This literature typically does not consider the perspective of creative economies that are driven more clearly by profit. Some studies do, however, consider the extent to which those working in creative sectors might contribute to their rural communities (Duxbury and Campbell 2011; Hatcher *et al.* 2011). Much of this work looks at how creatives contribute more generally to community capitals. For example, De la Barre (2012) suggests creativity should be considered in terms of its non-market features, especially in the sense of community building and development. For Duxbury and Campbell:

Arts, culture, and heritage are ... a foundation upon which the future of these rural/small communities rests ... The growing recognition of artists, creators, and entrepreneurial creative businesses as potential residents and businesses in rural areas seeking to diversify their economic base offers a widening opportunity to re-think the contributions of arts and creative activities to these communities. (Duxbury and Campbell 2011, p. 111, 113)

Furthermore, Thomas *et al.* (2013) stress the need to think about creativity in terms of formal (professional) and informal (social, community) networks, and the messy relationship between them. In Herslund's (2012) study, the formal and informal work together, with creatives also becoming social entrepreneurs 'operating over a larger regional area, extending networks and providing "organisational energy" ': 'They coordinate, mobilise, fund-raise and set up networks' and use their 'skills for the betterment of the area' (Herslund 2012, p. 253, 251). Research into the rural creative economy reflects a shift from thinking in terms of sectors or 'creative milieus' as in urban settings (Currid and Williams 2010; Florida 2012) to thinking about creatives' role in rural communities (Wilson 2010).

One way in which they are able to do this is by utilising information and communication technologies to extend their 'reach' and work across broader geographies (Herslund 2012). Increasingly, new digital technologies are understood as an essential, interconnected part of creative practice, with creative economy work being defined as 'the conceptual and practical convergence of the creative arts (individual talent) with cultural industries (mass scale) in the context of new media technologies (ICTs)' (Hartley 2005, p. 5). European down to UK policy seeks to join up creative and digital sectors, developing supportive digital infrastructures for creative work as well as viewing creative sectors as driving digital inclusion (Department for Culture, Media and Sport [DCMS] 2008; European Commission 2010; Scottish Government 2011). Implicit in the literature on rural creatives is their capacity to access regional and global networks through Internet-enabled communication technologies. Though literature exists on the benefits of the Internet and digital tools for rural businesses, few have gone into detail about the role of digital technologies specifically for rural creative economies (Bowles 2008; Burns and Kirkpatrick 2008; Bell and Jayne 2010; Duxbury and Campbell 2011). This may be because many rural areas continue to face poor broadband connectivity, and even when access is adequate adoption has often been lower than in urban areas (Farrington *et al.* 2013; Townsend *et al.* 2013).

Galloway *et al.* (2011) suggest that rural information and communication technology (ICT) use is mostly related to survival; online presence is required because business systems have become ICT-standardised, yet this may not be the case for rural creatives. Rural creative practice is increasingly dependent on broadband Internet of acceptable speed and quality (Bowles 2008; Burns and Kirkpatrick 2008). Bell and Jayne note that much rural creative work relies on home working, which requires adequate Internet connectivity, and that the use of new technologies 'raises an important symbolic issue that highlights disparities between policy makers' conceptions and practitioners' needs' (2010, p. 216). The Internet enables creatives to connect with peers, markets, audiences, sources of inspiration, trends and tools for self-promotion (Duxbury and Campbell 2011). It has opened up alternative and global markets for creatives. Our analysis below examines rural creatives' use of Internet-enabled digital

technologies and how it impacts on their capacity to develop cultural capital and contribute to community resilience more generally.

Resilience frameworks

'Resilience' is increasingly referenced in policy in relation to UK-wide rural and community development (Scottish Government 2009; Cabinet Office 2011). In this usage, it moves beyond its predominant disaster-planning context to refer to building strengths in communities to facilitate the process of resilience when needed (Sherrieb *et al.* 2010). Community resilience can be understood as

> the existence, development and engagement of community resources by community members [who] intentionally develop personal and collective capacity to respond to and influence change, to sustain and renew the community, and to develop new trajectories for the communities' future. (Magis 2010, p. 402)

In this framework, communities proactively develop capacities to adapt to changes in rural landscapes, such as loss of services and infrastructure (Oliva 2010; Noack 2011; Farmer *et al.* 2012), economic deprivation (Bosworth and Willett 2011; Shucksmith 2012) and youth out-migration (Commins 2004). This 'adaptive capacity' is theorised in a number of ways. Rural communities are thought to require the following:

- repeated mechanisms and multiple pathways for capacity building (Skerratt 2013);
- diversification in terms of economic sectors and the socio-demographic make-up of the community (Sherrieb *et al.* 2010; Franklin *et al.* 2011);
- social capital in the form of networks of trust, reciprocity, collective outlooks, values and action (Sherrieb *et al.* 2010; Poortinga 2012; Wilson 2012);
- community leaders who are able to identify funding sources, mobilise and network (for) the community (Berkes and Ross 2012);
- efficacy and agency, the belief that change can be achieved by the community (Magis 2010; Berkes and Ross 2012); and
- a 'sense of place' and collective pride in their community, which encourages the local multiplier effect (Graugaard 2012).

Though frequently discussed at community level, resilience is recognised as multi-scalar, developed across and dependent on different actors, networks and institutions, from the individual to the community, and regional, national and global (Wilson 2012; MacKinnon and Driscoll-Derickson 2013).

Processes for resilience are often evaluated in the literature through a balance of community capitals. Social capital has become a focus of resilience and community development literature because it is created through community-level interactions and relationships, and is argued to facilitate coordinated actions (Knox 2011; Chen 2013). Along with economic and natural capitals, it figures largely in resilience research mapping on to sustainability indicators (Graugaard 2012; Wilson 2012; Skerratt and Steiner 2013). Callaghan and Colton (2007) claim, meanwhile, that the value of cultural capital in community resilience frameworks has often been ignored or underestimated. Wilson (2012), however, refers to the high degree of

interdependence and complexity between community capitals and argues that a disruption to one capital can cause a ripple effect across other capitals, thereby increasing or reducing resilience. The Internet and ICTs are sometimes incorporated into economic or social indicators of resilience, but have not been discussed in terms of digital capital. Digital capital refers to the resources and benefits that can be utilised by communities, from Internet infrastructure to online information, modes of communication and tools, to digital literacy and skills. We therefore seek to contribute to resilience frameworks by evidencing the importance of cultural capital and showing how it can contribute to community resilience through the example of rural creative economies, particularly how it might be enabled or hindered by multi-scalar digital capital.

Methodology

Resilience research has been criticised for lack of methodological and empirical focus (Cote and Nightingale 2011; Berkes and Ross 2012). However, recent approaches encompass quantitative and secondary data (Sherrieb *et al.* 2010), interviews and ethnography (Matarrita-Cascante and Trejos 2013; Wilson 2013) and longitudinal and participatory action research (Franklin *et al.* 2011; Skerratt 2013) for understanding how communities cope and thrive in the context of ongoing change. All utilise a literature-derived 'resilience' framework, deriving indicators or interview themes.

Our article describes research carried out across rural Scotland. In-depth semi-structured interviews were undertaken with 15 creatives over three months in 2012. The interviews were designed to find out about working and living in remote rural places experiencing poor Internet connectivity. Interview questions explored the following: decisions to move to or remain somewhere with low Internet connectivity; quality of life and sense of 'community' or connectedness in such areas; respondents' use of digital technologies and the Internet; how Internet technologies impact work practices and life generally; and how the technologies affect their creative practice and the wider community. Because DEAR and SIRA had overlapping aims to understand the relationship between digital engagement and development of community capitals, it was relatively straightforward to map resilience themes (those outlined above – diversification, adaptive capacity and participation) on to the interview data. Using this framework approach, interviews were 'guided' (Matarrita-Cascante and Trejos 2013) by overarching themes. 'Barriers and enablers' was an additional theme in relation to digital technologies. Emergent themes were also coded. This process was triangulated by reporting and discussing findings between the authors during analysis and interpretation of data.

Our research drew together experiences of individuals living in dispersed and discrete remote rural areas on islands and the mainland of Scotland that are often sparsely populated, lacking infrastructure and with mountainous or forested terrain. Some of the areas have industries such as tourism, food and drink and agriculture. Others would be considered to be in economic decline. As individuals or households in rural Scotland they represent the reality of digital connectivity for up to 18 per cent of the population. They were all receiving less than 2 megabits per second and struggled with tasks such as loading data-heavy websites and live streaming of content.[2]

The creatives interviewed reflected a mix of sectors and work approaches. While many were in-migrants, having moved from London and larger Scottish cities, others had lived in rural locations for 20 or more years. The Internet was for most of our respondents an important factor in choosing where to live. Some had believed, mistakenly that they would have an Internet connection; others had been left behind by recent advances in speeds in more populated areas. Most had had a career change and many worked in more than one area of creative practice, such as a music teacher who also made films and a painter who played the bagpipes. Their decisions to live in rural areas incorporated factors such as inspiration for their creative practice, family reasons, because it was where they had been brought up, or to pursue a more laid-back lifestyle. For some it was not a choice but necessitated by personal factors.

Some of the respondents could be categorised as 'digital creatives' (Andrew and Spoer 2011); they used digital technologies as part of their creative practice, such as video, editing suites and production software, and worked in sectors such as design or production. While none of the respondents was working in rural crafts (a common topic of literature about rural creative economy), a group of respondents were artists who also worked in arts education and curatorship. Another category in our sample was rural arts hubs. Other respondents also represented writing, photography, film production, radio production, marketing and advertising.

Resilience factors in rural creative economy

Current research finds rural creatives are networked regionally, either working in a city-centric manner or re-orientating their creative practice toward local rural markets (Gibson 2012; Herslund 2012). It suggests rural creatives work in formal and informal capacities in their communities (Thomas *et al.* 2013; Waitt and Gibson 2013). Our research focuses on implications of broadband and digital technologies in these processes. It is through this that we aim to make an original contribution to the rural creative economy literature, which as yet does not adequately consider digital technology aspects. We ask in what ways rural creative practitioners are using Internet-enabled digital technologies, and how this impacts on their capacity to develop cultural capital and contribute to rural community resilience. We consider this in terms of four pertinent themes derived from resilience frameworks: adaptive capacity; cultural capital; leadership and resourcefulness; and ripple effects.

Adaptive capacity

Adaptive capacity is defined in resilience literature as 'the ability or capability of a system to modify or change its characteristics or behaviour to cope better with actual or anticipated stresses' (Brooks 2003, p. 8 in Maguire and Cartwright 2008). It is developed variously through flexible approaches, diversification, social networks and learning communities (Berkes and Ross 2012). More recent literature posits adaptive capacity in terms of agency (or the capacity of an individual or group to act independently) (Berkes and Ross 2012) and it is dependent on tangible assets (for instance, financial resources) and less tangible aspects, including skills and opportunities (Brown and Westaway 2011). Adaptive capacity and vulnerabilities (such as

dependencies and lack of resources and flexibility) are both thought to impact on processes for resilience. These are discussed next in terms of taking advantage of the opportunities of Internet connectivity and the barriers created by low speeds and quality of connection in rural locales.

Adaptive behaviour. Our interviews represented a range of digital practices, with practitioners illustrating different levels of adaptive capacity to 'get by' or make the best of their limited Internet connectivity, dependent on their current practices and business aspirations. Although respondents reported that Internet performance was crucial to business success and talked about how stressful a slow and unreliable service is, many had developed adaptive capacities to compensate. The creatives illustrated how they could be creative with their use of technology and work around problems using buffering strategies (Bain and McLean 2012):

> I can't do without the iPhone ... But then if I need to send an application in, I need to find someone with a laptop. Or the pub ... Quite a lot of people just sit in the car park and do it. (R9, lighting designer)[3]

Rural creative practitioners are adopting unconventional technology practices such as visiting the pub car park or juggling mobile phones:

> So we juggle satellite technology, mobile phone Internet access, local Internet access, and we often steal other people's using BT and things like that ... We usually carry about three mobile phones. (R8, regional radio producer)

Sending e-mails with large attachments or downloading and uploading content required doing these tasks at certain times of day and often overnight: 'It took three days to upload them all to the client' (R6, creative agency). It also meant making choices about prioritising bandwidth for work rather than social usage. This is not to say greater levels of connectivity were not strongly desired by all, but the effect differed between individuals and sectors, newcomers and established practitioners.

Reach. Internet-enabled ICTs in rural economy work are discussed in terms of individuals' and businesses' reach, which differs for incomers and endogenous rural enterprises (Persson *et al.* 1997 in Herslund 2012). Creatives are able to maintain larger networks while living rurally through communication technologies like e-mail and Skype. Even access to limited broadband technologies enabled our respondents to extend their reach. However, the extent to which they sought to do this varied, and adaptive strategies were often utilised to overcome poor Internet connectivity. A creative agency had changed from working with private clients, such as advertising companies, to working with the public and arts sector because they were more tolerant of the limitations caused by poor connectivity. Another factor that affected reach was the extent to which respondents were already well networked and already had a favourable reputation. This was not only to do with being local or an incomer, but also with the length of time they had worked in a sector. Several respondents observed that the extent to which individuals relied on attracting business through online activities was dependent on these factors. Those who had strong offline professional networks generally felt that because they were well connected anyway, they

were not disadvantaged by limited access to online networks such as social media sites and e-mail. Those with existing offline networks felt that online networking was not as important for themselves as for others who were establishing themselves: 'It increasingly comes down to [the fact that clients] want to work with me as opposed to somebody who happens to have the equipment' (R9, music producer).

Likewise, the music producer felt that he had leverage from his existing reputation to attract his clients to a rural location, making it a selling point in terms of creative inspiration. However, for creatives trying to expand their markets it was felt to be much more difficult to succeed in a rural area without online technologies: 'I think if you were trying to attract new business, that would be really challenging' (R6, creative agency).

A musician who was a relative rural newcomer found that maintaining her reach by establishing relationships with urban venues was increasingly difficult, but that online technologies did help. She used social media to 'like' new venues and other musicians in order to build new relationships online, feeling that such initial contacts could then be moved to e-mail or offline, although she did acknowledge the benefits of easy travel and visits to venues to establish good connections. Like Bowles (2008) and Duxbury and Campbell (2011), we found creatives were using digital tools to tap into wider work networks and to access information and markets. To do this, they worked around the lack of connectivity, often using low-tech approaches.

Opportunities and vulnerabilities. Access to limited Internet connectivity provided opportunities for rural creatives. Digital tools are an increasingly important component of all creative practices, and our respondents used these in various ways, from simple research to sophisticated online 'real-time' collaboration or broadcasting. Respondents referred to the Internet as an essential business cost (R3, musician) and as fundamental to their business (R8, radio producer). Opportunities were enabled for the respondents through access to broadband connectivity as a key component of creative practitioners' capacity to promote themselves and stay up-to-date and competitive. Marketing, communication and research were the main digital activities of rural creatives:

> I'm just all about the communication ... we have to move forward. (R3, musician)

> I'm totally dependent on e-mail. That's my only point of contact with most people. (R2, arts hub owner)

> I believe very much in exhibiting my work online and being in charge of marketing it. (R1, artist and musician)

Creatives were excited by different aspects of being online, for instance for finding creative inspiration and opportunities for collaboration. Their desire to be online was influenced by the creative potential of digital tools, but predominantly by the business potential of digital communications. Most of the respondents were aware of the significance of Skype and other online telecommunications for maintaining professional relationships now and in the future, and were seeking to enhance their business transactions online:

> I'm quite limited in terms of my lack of Internet with regard to receiving payments ... It's really to have an immediate reaction to people who are interested in my work where it's a streamlined system. (R1, artist and musician)

> We've got a website so people can find us ... It's not a secure site, so people can't order online even if we wanted them to because we haven't got broadband. (R4, furniture maker and distributor)

Conversely, limited access to online resources could create vulnerabilities for rural creative businesses and organisations. Creatives identified many limitations to working practices caused by poor or unavailable broadband Internet service. For some, such limitations were simply the capacity to use e-mail reliably or with ease (that is, not requiring a trip to the library or driving down the road):

> I am missing out on the communication side of things quite badly. (R9, lighting designer)

> It would be nice to have better connectivity with people and know what they are doing because we all inspire each other, don't we? (R2, arts hub owner)

> You will rarely get dialogue with a gallery unless you e-mail, send images over the Internet. (R1, artist and musician)

A key disadvantage noted was the inability to upload and download data-intensive files such as images and video clips, often a crucial professional activity, although creatives were finding ways round this; for example, the online journalist and photographer who, when living in an urban area, would be able to 'send large files to people, whereas at the moment I copy them on to CD, stick it in a jiffy bag and take it on one of the three buses to Ellon' (R15). Unreliable and slow connectivity was felt to impact on their professional identities in two ways: firstly in their ability to remain competitive through research, to be up-to-date in their field and to buy and use cutting-edge technology; and secondly, in their capacity for effective marketing, which often requires social media and data-intensive websites:

> It's essential for the growth of my business to be able to access tools that are available to everyone else ... I need to see what my competitors are doing, what new things are going on. I can't go on YouTube and see what other people are doing because ... it cuts off. (R11, children's music video producer)

To overcome poor Internet connectivity, rural creative practitioners link to larger websites such as YouTube and Flickr that can accommodate memory-intensive files such as images. There was recognition that a 'good visual presence' online (R9, lighting designer) was crucial to promotion, but that working in an area with limited Internet connectivity meant that they were often unable to maintain personal websites with high-resolution visual material in a way that they desired, and they thus relied on third-party websites such as social media or industry listings. Another way to do this was to get better online coverage by being tied into arts networks that linked into larger organisations and cities. For the lighting designer, this was particularly important because of the lack of network he experienced:

> Well, certainly if I want to carry on working in Scotland, which I do, I have to make some concessions ... but also I have to promote myself better ... when I was in London or Nottingham I was part of a network ... There is a network up here, but it's so diverse ... it's so spread out.

Likewise, a musician referred to her regional network as 'just little pockets' (R3) These examples illustrate interdependencies between online and offline networks and the extent to which rural creatives want to or need to retain links with broader (urban) networks.

A further problem caused by poor connectivity is the stress it can create and the barriers it presents in terms of progressing with digital strategies or online marketing. For example, one respondent noted how poor connectivity made it hard to complete tasks online:

> If I've been at the computer all day with the build-up and frustration, you can imagine the stress that builds up. I'll do what I have to do and there's just no energy left for the extras like updating my website or doing something with Facebook. It's just such a negative thing. (R14, artist and curator)

Another respondent described a resident artist as having an interview via Skype with a prestigious magazine – an important opportunity to advance the artist's career – but said that 'trying to conduct it over Skype was pretty horrific' (R12, arts support agency). 'Digital creatives' (those using high-tech facilities as part of their creative practice) especially noted concern that their technology had to be compatible with what collaborators used:

> [At] the moment we're sort of getting away with it ... We have got high technology and we're delivering HD projects and music at high res ... but particularly on the film side of it, for the future, if we don't get improved broadband you'd have to make a decision of you go rustic or stay ... (R6, creative agency)

> People like you to be in the city where they can physically see you. If they can't trust the technology is going to work, then you don't get the gig. (R8, regional radio producer)

Clients, suppliers and peers can simply choose to work with someone else rather than adapting their work practices. The arts practitioner stressed the inconvenience of having to say to clients, 'You've got to make it like this in order that I can get it quickly enough' (R5). This continues to create vulnerability for the rural creative economy: as Warren (2007) notes, as digital technologies continue to develop, rural areas are caught in a game of perpetual 'catch-up'. Continued advances in technology were a concern for even those of our respondents who could 'get by' at present.

Cultural capital

Cultural capital can be defined as the benefits derived from cultural goods, activities and participation, which can boost the prestige and competence of a particular community, having both material and symbolic value for those who can access them (Bourdieu 1986; Sutherland and Burton 2011). Cultural capital exists in tangible and intangible forms. It is tangible as part of the public, infrastructural and economic capital (for instance, when it contributes to tourism) and of a community in the form of its built heritage: 'old buildings or gardens, works of art, and other artefacts ... man-made things' (Callaghan & Colton 2007 citing Throsby 1999, p. 936). Intangible culture exists in the stories, practices, traditions and values shared in a community.

Callaghan and Colton (2007) argue that 'cherishing cultural capital' – culture, heritage and the arts – is an essential part of understanding a community's past in order to envisage its future (Callaghan and Colton 2007, p. 936). This risks romanticising a community's cultural capital and making it something produced only from its heritage. We choose to interpret cultural capital as something that is *also* being created and produced *now* and that includes the following: tourist trails, community arts, creative hubs and clusters, annual festivals, regional networks, music studios and conceptual spaces, as well as traditional endogenous crafts and archives.

Rural or urban facing. The extent to which rural creatives are developing cultural capital in their communities depends on how much their practices are community-facing or city-facing. Herslund (2012) reports findings that suggest rural creatives offer little economically to their rural regions because they continue to work across urban areas, whereas other reports evidence their economic contribution (Craft Council 2012). Our interviews drew on a spectrum of professional creative practice, from the community-focused to the urban-focused, which suggests cultural capital is being developed at different scales. For example, a radio producer working for a regional radio station valued being able to live in a rural area, adding that the Internet 'lets us work in areas we could only have dreamed of before' (R8), but was orientated to an urban centre in terms of delivering content and services that were broadcast regionally. In contrast, a musician facing difficulties with her band – 'not getting enough gigs in the Highlands' – was having to travel regularly to Glasgow or Edinburgh, but felt that 'you have to be in an area to get little links going' (R3). The band was simultaneously city-orientated and trying to break into local (rural) markets. The musician noted that the existing social and cultural capital in some rural areas could actually make it difficult to establish oneself as a new artist:

> If ... you are not an established artist, it's very difficult to get in ... You tend to need to have someone speak on your behalf.

This extract illustrates how creative practitioners might face barriers in developing cultural capital in their communities.

Formal or informal. We found that city-orientated creative practice in rural communities was sometimes accompanied by simultaneous community-orientated (formal and informal) creative activities. Rural creatives were often involved in contributing their time and skills through informal networks. As well as developing cultural capital through formal community and intercommunity activities, such as music lessons, gigs or working with the local arts sector, rural creatives were working in informal ways in their communities to deliver 'arts development' activities and were even actively working to promote their communities as places to visit or live using creative and digital tools:

> We're doing an oral history project here at the moment and trying to record as much as we can in broadcast quality with a view to making it, using it as publicity for the island. (R7, musician and film maker)

Our respondents operated businesses and often worked informally across several creative sectors in and beyond the community or region. Different levels of formal

and informal activities reflected an individual's circumstances. For example, an arts hub owner suggested her motivation was as much social as professional, seeking only to stay afloat in order to be able to continue doing the work she enjoyed: 'It's nice, it's just a social thing, because there isn't an awful lot in this area' (R2). A children's music video producer meanwhile stressed that 'it's not a faffing business – I'm actually trying to make this work' (R11). Our interview data evidenced the diversity of rural cultural practice, supporting current findings (De la Barre 2012; Thomas *et al.* 2013) that it represents a jumble of paid and unpaid work (McRobbie 2011): 'there's more a sort of barter remuneration for that stuff' (R7, musician and film maker). Access to the Internet, which allowed for city-facing activities professionally, also allowed for community-facing informal activities as a result.

Existing cultural capital. Respondents had a strong awareness of the resources available in the community and the extent to which they perceived a 'sense of community'. One respondent commented that community activities had 'petered out': 'It's one of those ... sort of lost and forgotten villages ... There's not really much of a community feeling ... It's kind of a TV village' (R3, musician). However, others spoke about networks of support, active parent networks and relatively well-developed cultural activities, particularly around community groups and festivals, such as film and quiz nights, gigs and music clubs, representing forms of cultural capital through the place value created by cultural events and the social networks created through cultural activities. Community capacity in informal networks can play a role in the professional activity of rural creatives. One respondent benefited professionally from her investment in informal, local networks:

> There is a lot of support from musicians round and about. We go to a regular open-mike session – it's not a job, it's a social situation ... It's run by a music promoter and he has managed to get us gigs. (R3, musician)

This, again, illustrates the interplay of formal and informal cultural activities in rural communities. While creatives are evidently contributing informally to cultural activities and to paid and unpaid work locally, surprisingly they are not leveraging their digital skills regularly in this capacity. This could be due to a lack of recognition of digital skills and because of the limited Internet connectivity they regularly experience locally. Unsurprisingly, the creatives using technology are more actively involved in, or have an interest in using digital skills for the benefit of the community.

Leadership and resourcefulness

Leadership in resilience literature most commonly refers to local government (Cowell 2012) and other formal institutions; however, there is growing recognition that some local businesses and individuals also exhibit leadership qualities that contribute to building community resilience (Callaghan and Colton 2007; McManus *et al.* 2012; Besser 2013). Magis observes that although 'external forces impact the community, the community can influence its well-being and take a leadership role in doing so'

(2010, p. 405). For Magis, community members can themselves be viewed as a resource in their communities. Farmer *et al.*, for example, describe how local health professionals

> made their skills and knowledge available to the community for other purposes, including formal or informal civic and social participation ... many health professionals were board members, held community leadership roles or gave medical support for events. (2012, p. 5)

As a form of human and cultural capital, creatives are resources, being in a position to offer abilities, skills and knowledge to local leadership and innovation. Agency and self-efficacy are important characteristics of such individuals, who have a strong vision and desire to make changes (Magis 2010; Berkes and Ross 2012).

Organisational capacity. Rural creatives exhibited leadership through their organisational capacity. For example, one artist operating on a not-for-profit basis had created a community hub, mentoring local people and providing cultural activities and materials for their benefit. She was well networked and sought to attract artists from around the region and leading international artists to her community network. She took trouble to do this – 'you'll be ferrying him about a bit just to make sure he gets here' (R2) – and represented something of the 'organisational capacity' described by Herslund (2012).

Our interview data also provided examples of rural creatives linking their communities to regional and, in some cases, international cultural networks. A creative's social networks are critical for accruing resources, which build cultural capital at community and regional levels. Cultural events were networked into regional organisations such as North East Open Studios, which several of our respondents referenced, and tourism activities. Such activities were valuable for community-level participation, thereby building cultural capital, as well as promoting rural creatives among a broader professional community and to markets. Our respondents accessed a variety of online and offline networks. The extent to which these practices develop cultural capital in communities depends largely upon their relevance to their local place-based and professional communities. Contrary to some research findings (Gibson *et al.* 2012; Herslund 2012; Thomas *et al.* 2013), respondents did not always feel well networked, and some found rural regional networks patchy or frustrating. Online activities – or a lack of them – played dynamically into this experience of connectivity and offline networking.

As community resources. Rural creatives also felt a sense of responsibility about their remote communities. From a lighting designer who helped with the local pantomime lighting to a musician who was setting up a junior bagpipe band, our respondents acted as cultural resources in their communities. Many of the respondents were working informally in the community, both through cultural activities and community-level activities more generally, and felt that they were able to access resources on behalf of their community:

> I think it is very important if you live somewhere ... you don't have to force it on anybody, but you should make your skills available to your society. (R9, lighting designer)

> I like to give space here to people who haven't got it ... And there's people out there, like Gemma,[4] who is working at Marks & Spencer's, but she's got a lot more to give than that. And it will fade away if she's not encouraged. (R2, artist and hub owner)

> I do a bit of work on the island, and it involves people from the island, but that is more me working for free, within the community ... I often just do stuff because I feel like it needs to be done. (R5, arts practitioner)

Each of these individuals was aware of the need to create and provide different opportunities:

> We introduced another festival into the year ... and the extent to which it does or doesn't enrich the community is really interesting ... Some of it is to do with making life interesting ... and giving them the opportunity to make sure there are opportunities for people to show what they do. (R5, arts practitioner)

The interviews reflected community-mindedness among creatives in terms of cultural activities and beyond. In our rural context, then, the 'economy' in creative economy needs to be reconsidered in terms of the 'mix of cultural, economic and social assumptions buried in the term "creativity" in order to understand the role of creative activities for society more generally' (Oakley 2006, p. 271 in Wilson 2010, p. 3).

However, there was some tension noted in the way that one respondent represented a Scottish island. The respondent noted that 'one of the things I was criticised for at Easter was that I was turning the island into a venue' (R5, arts practitioner). Power operates, often unevenly, through different actors and groups in and beyond communities, particularly through how a community represents itself. It should be asked: resilience of what and for whom? (Cote and Nightingale 2011). This article reflects on research into cultural capital from the perspective of creatives, but it would be worthwhile to map this on to the perspectives of community residents, whose relationships with creative 'incomers' may be problematic (Burnett 1998; Bosworth and Willett 2011.[5]

Entrepreneurship. While our respondents are embedded to different extents in their communities, most appear to some degree to offer themselves as a resource for their communities and can play a role in creating opportunities and acting on behalf of their communities, utilising cultural activities or capital in a purposeful way. Herslund reflects on creatives as 'mobile professionals' bringing know-how, expertise and client networks to rural areas, which, it is argued, explains their 'enterprising behaviour' (Herslund 2012, p. 238). Like Herslund (2012), Hatcher *et al.* (2011) observe that creatives in rural locations tend to be entrepreneurs and have a strong interest in developing the community. Many of our respondents had been involved in a community project or event, offering either their creative skills or other resources such as a venue. This may also be motivated by a need to diversify their practice for professional survival in rural areas. Creatives have resources of value to their communities, and many of our respondents were actively seeking to make them available in supporting others. This suggests creativity beyond the current narrative of its contribution to economic growth and looks to 'the other geographies' of creative production (Cole 2008 in Harvey *et al.* 2012).

We found in our sample that creative economy workers had considerable capacity and self-efficacy. In her efforts to improve her local Internet situation, one respondent went to the extent of phoning Alex Salmond, the First Minister of Scotland, and the local council representative. To strengthen her case for increased broadband capacity, she took matters into her own hands:

> I once did a small survey myself about how many businesses ... there's one-man bands all over the place here doing quite a lot of things that nobody would actually know was actually happening, so there are a lot of businesses ... even farmers. (R10, marketing)

Another respondent participated in a community-level organisation to get better Internet through the UK government funding scheme for rural communities to build their own broadband networks:

> So we went for all the meetings for that and we had to put a group of us all together and we were having all these meetings and putting together why we need broadband. (R4, furniture maker and distributor)

A small proportion of our respondents undertook activities to increase digital capital on behalf of their rural communities and acted in an entrepreneurial capacity:

> I'm on the community council ... the council do understand that we need the economy to grow, we need innovation, we need entrepreneurial spirit. (R6, creative agency)

Some creative practitioners are clearly involving themselves in community councils and local events, being knowledgeable about grants and sources of support, utilising cultural capital and working to build digital capital.

Resilience ripple effects

Wilson (2012) refers to the high degree of interdependence and complexity between community capitals and argues that a disruption to one capital can cause a ripple effect that affects other capitals, thereby reducing resilience. Equally, resilience and vulnerabilities are both evident in individual capitals. Referring to social, environmental and economic capital, Wilson argues that 'the relationship among individual components of the three capitals matters more than the components themselves' (2012, p. 1223). In creative policy literature, the ripple effect of cultural capital is referred to as 'spillover' in terms of economic boosts, increased tourism, knowledge transfer and the desirability of an area (DCMS 2008; Richards 2011; Borén and Young 2013). Here we focus on the spillover of the presence of creatives and micro-enterprises for rural communities.

Cultural activity is viewed as having a number of positive spillover effects for the community (Anwar McHenry 2011; Duxbury and Campbell 2011). Referring to a local arts festival, the respondent involved in setting it up said:

> [The festival] puts a lot of money through various businesses ... And so the festival is involved in stimulating the economy and providing opportunities for that economy on a voluntary basis as well as trying to provide some glue to the community. (R5, arts practitioner)

The reference to 'community glue' is illuminating in terms of the practitioner's sense of his own role and the role of cultural activities in the community to bring people together. This implies that the community, in his view, was not cohesive. He suggested that the island did not offer anything to youth, who tended to move away, and that local people did not find opportunities beyond farming. Again, it is worth noting that this is not necessarily a view shared by everyone. Another respondent espoused the potential role creatives could have in remote rural communities:

> We could offer employment or training or work apprenticeships, so you have people on trainee schemes and they could go off into Glasgow and do sort of sandwich course type things and come back here and work ... you start to offer people what they might see as irrelevant, as an exciting career! (R6, creative agency)

In this sense, there is potential for rural creatives to play an active role in community development, with positive spillover for community capitals more generally.

In contrast to this positive spiral of community capitals, our respondents were keenly aware of a negative spiral too. One creative stated:

> Within the next few years, if we don't see any change [in Internet speed and quality], we will have to move somewhere more accessible ... Which also has a knock-on effect on the local schools because if people are leaving the area when they are people who are putting money into the area. (R11, children's video producer)

The movement of such individuals and their families illustrates how different aspects of rural life can impact one another. Supporting this sentiment, practitioners referred to being looked upon favourably 'if you can bring small people into the village because it keeps the school going' (R1, artist and musician). The children's video producer referred to the importance of people like her bringing different skills to the area:

> If you start losing people who are working within the community and stuff, it becomes a dying area – or an area just full of one type of people; it would just be farmers in the area ... and it also stops diversity, and I always think diversity is the best thing for any area. Bringing in different people with different skills and then everyone feeds in what they've got. (R11)

We have sought to 'understand the lives of rural creative workers, and their particular motivations and aspirations' (Bell and Jayne 2010, p. 211) in order to contribute to understandings of rural creative practice. The Internet is a deciding factor in whether creatives can work in rural areas, impacting substantially on rural creative practice and its ripple effects.

Conclusion

Broadband Internet connectivity and its applications have been explored here in terms of enabling creatives to live in or relocate to rural regions. New digital technologies provide access to resources that creatives use in cultural activities in and sometimes for their communities. They act as inhibitors when they increase the vulnerability of creative businesses to secure work and remain professional in appearance, and may even contribute to out-migration of rural creatives. Rural creatives are,

to an extent, accommodating their rural locations using adaptive measures, and Internet-related technologies factor in their 'buffering strategies' (Bain and McLean 2012). Although individuals were creatively adapting to overcome poor rural Internet access, we do not suggest that this was unique to creative economy workers. While we are wary, following Wilson (2010, p. 7), of making claims that creatives are 'in some way different to the rest of us', a notable finding of our research was the creative efforts that were necessary to enable digital creative work in particular locations. Actors such as health professionals and local businesses are also viewed as contributing to community resilience (Farmer *et al.* 2012; Besser 2013) though not specifically through cultural capital. We argue that Internet-enabled technologies are an important aspect of the rural creative economy and the role played by its actors in the resilience of rural regions.

The article also contributes to work on rural creative economy that appreciates the 'distinctive arts ecology' of rural areas (Bell and Jayne 2010) by theorising digital capital as a contributory factor. Many factors can influence digital capacity, and a lack of digital capital caused by geographical and infrastructural barriers can have a ripple effect on a community's resilience. We have identified spillover effects or resilience ripple effect (Wilson 2012) in terms of positive or negative spirals. This interrelationship is pronounced in remote rural communities. Although the research focused on individuals with inadequate Internet connectivity, the article recognises the mix of creative and digital practices happening in rural areas as well as the different motivations and approaches of practitioners.

The article has drawn out many of the 'adaptive capacities' identified in resilience frameworks at the beginning of the article. Through their informal and formal community-facing and networked practices, rural creatives represent multiple pathways for capacity building (Skerratt 2013), contributing to rural diversification in terms of economic sectors and of the socio-demographic make-up of the community (Sherrieb *et al.* 2010; Franklin *et al.* 2011). We identified how some creatives function in the role of community leaders who are able to identify funding sources, mobilise and network (for) the community (Berkes and Ross 2012). Rural creatives have a strong sense of place (Graugaard 2012) and value the communities they live in, having a keen sense of roles in small, remote locations. Cultural events and activities foster a cultural milieu that is said to contribute to a community's identity and can enhance inhabitants' place value, improving quality of life and community cohesion (Anwar McHenry 2011; Duxbury and Campbell 2011; Brouder 2012). However, as was illustrated in the reaction to the festival held on a Scottish island, such activities can also be divisive. Further work might look more closely at this relationship in rural communities.

Our research found that although they represented a range of digital skills and awareness, many respondents were digitally literate anyway due to the nature of their work. One recommendation from our findings is that creatives can be employed as resources in a community for delivering digital inclusion strategies. Creatives with high digital capital would make good digital intermediaries (Gov.UK 2013) and may be willing to do so, either formally or informally. The skills they are offering to their rural communities informally tend to be creative or general rather than Internet-or ICT-related. A final policy implication is that if creative economies are key to rural

growth, there is a strong economic incentive to improve rural Internet infrastructure in order to attract and retain creative workers, thereby contributing to a diverse economy for rural development.

Notes

*   Corresponding author.
1   For the rest of the article we refer to our interview respondents as creatives, meaning that they all work in sectors of the creative economy identified by the Department of Culture Media and Sport.
2   To provide some context, Ofcom report that the UK rural average in 2013 rose to 11.3 mbps. Superfast headline speeds are 30 mbps (Ofcom 1914).
3   R stands for respondent. Our interview respondents have been numerically coded.
4   This name has been changed to protect anonymity
5   This point was raised by only one respondent and the scope of the research did not allow us to explore this further.

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