

Expanding the Economy in Southern Illinois through Creative Placemaking

By

Kent Dolezal

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Since the 2002 release of Richard Florida's *The Rise of the Creative Class*, a considerable amount of the discussion on regional and local development has centered on his concept of attracting and retaining the creative class as a vehicle of economic growth. A major criticism of Florida's work has been its focus on major metropolitan areas (Peck, 2005). Since more than 59 million or 19.3 percent of the American people live in rural areas, including nearly 12 percent of Illinoisans (Census, 2010), ignoring the impact of rural artists and creative activities comes to the detriment of local, state and national economic progress.

Primary data sources

In recognition of the presence of creative people in all areas of our nation and to help the prospect of local economic development, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA; as part of its Mayors' Institute on City Design in partnership with the United States Conference of Mayors and the American Architectural Foundation) sponsored a white paper entitled *Creative Placemaking*¹, authored by notable regional development scholars Ann Markusen and Anne Gawda (Markusen and Gawda, 2010). The authors present a detailed explanation and argument for how the arts can be used in economic development. Markusen and Gawda describe necessary resources for accomplishing policy change, the challenges of such endeavors, and case studies illustrating how creative placemaking has impacted communities, large and small.

Americans for the Arts, another organization promoting arts-based development, sponsors the ArtsIndex², a one-stop website for information on the consumption of the arts, the economic impact of creative industries, the distribution of arts-based activities, and nonprofits' impact on cultural consumption. The site provides centralized arts consumption data at the county level gathered from the U.S. Census Department and Bureau of Labor Statistics surveys, and data

¹ The document can be found at <http://arts.gov/publications/creative-placemaking>

² The Arts Index can be found at ArtsIndexUSA.org

generated by private research organizations, like Dunn and Bradstreet. The Paul Simon Public Policy Institute was fortunate to be granted permission by Americans for the Arts to use data from its Arts Index to investigate the impact of the arts in Southern Illinois.

The purpose of this document is to help provide a contextual framework and potential for increasing the development of the arts-based economy in Southern Illinois. To begin this process, Markusen and Gawda's (2010) framework will be used to describe the resources and potential of Southern Illinois for creative placemaking. Utilizing data obtained from Americans for the Arts, we will then discuss the economic impact of the arts from both consumer and business-activity bases. Data comparing arts consumption across the 18 counties in Southern Illinois, Illinois as a whole, and the greater tri-state region (southern Illinois, southeast Missouri, and western Kentucky) will be presented. Finally, the arts economy and business activity of southern Illinois will be described, with comparisons to the relevant regions described above.

Creative Placemaking

As a concept, creative placemaking is centered on the connections between place and people. The interactions between people and the space they are living or visiting can be more positive with the inclusion of the arts. With *Creative Placemaking* (2010) Markusen and Gadwa provide a grounded historical and descriptive definition of the arts impact in the United States. The authors provide a concise description of the challenges and keys to successful initiatives. A brief discussion of these components and their application to southern Illinois follows.

One of the key components of successful creative placemaking projects (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010) is the identification of, and focus on, the project area's unique characteristics. Successful creative placemaking projects are designed to highlight what makes the project area distinct. The focus is on re-energizing existing characteristics, not on inventing a new

community culture. Some successful projects have utilized heritage and local culture, while others have exploited geographical, historical, or architectural legacies to center their redevelopment efforts. In essence, creative placemaking reminds residents and shows outsiders what makes the area unique and valuable. Markusen and Gawda highlight Paducah, KY and Cleveland OH for their revitalization of waterfronts and historic architecture from their days as centers of river trade. Araundville, LA emphasized its Cajun heritage, while the Fond du Lac Reservation's promotion of its Ojibwe artists was not only a driver of economic growth but a vehicle for community healing and reconnection to its historical identity.

Southern Illinois is as rich in its own attributes as the areas mentioned above. From its history as the agricultural heart of early Illinois, to its being a center of America's coal industry, and its lakes, hills and canyons, one can see southern Illinois has the basis to expand its pride and identity among its residents and its attractiveness as a destination to visitors and those looking for a new place to live. The location of southern Illinois is also a vital asset. Many may think the southern 18 counties of Illinois are out of the way or "in the boondocks," but with three major metropolitan areas, St. Louis, Memphis and Nashville, within three hours driving distance, one can argue southern Illinois is actually in the center of it all. Looking at a driving radius of six hours, it is easy to see that visitors from Chicago, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Little Rock, Louisville and Cincinnati are potential audiences for southern Illinois' unique offerings.

Economic impact of creative placemaking

Besides a desire to reconnect and emphasize art and culture, *Creative Placemaking* recognizes these projects are also meant to foster economic growth and diversification. The impact of a creative economy to the local economy comes through three channels, import substitution, increasing the export base, and tapping into latent demand (Phillips, 2004;

Markusen & Gadwa, 2010). The term import substitution simply refers to local people being able to consume cultural activities in their area rather than having to travel outside of the area to partake of those activities. Expansion of the export base is the economic term for tourist activity, visitors coming to an area for recreational, leisure, or arts consumption purposes. Latent demand is the economics term for untapped consumption possibilities present in the local populations, in this case, for cultural and arts activities.

There are two reasons for latent demand; individuals may want to be consumers, but lack the resources to do so, or individuals, who may otherwise be consumers, are not because they lack information. An example of the first type of latent demand might be a southern Illinois resident who loves opera but cannot afford either the time or money to travel to St. Louis to see a performance. For the second type, consider a southern Illinois resident who knows nothing about opera and has never seen one, but would really enjoy it if she did. To meet latent demand in the first example, a successful creative placemaking initiative regularly produces and promotes a wide variety of arts activities throughout the Southern Illinois region. And by expanding the portfolio of arts activities available and promoting these to a broad cross-section of the Southern Illinois population, via non-traditional venues and outlets, local residents may now be exposed to new cultural activities they had not known they would enjoy. Simply put, when given access, local residents go to events they never thought they'd attend because they now have access to those activities (Phillips, 2004; Markusen & Gadwa, 2010).

The role of Southern Illinois University

The contributions of Southern Illinois University are not to be overlooked. A university by its very nature is a draw for creatives, the artists, scientists, researchers, engineers and designers who teach and create their own works, along with a campus community's contribution to a

young, diverse and vibrant cultural scene, lend confirmation to Florida's (2006) claim the presence of a university is a key asset to a creative place, but not the sole determinant of a thriving creative economy. A university needs to be nestled in a community that supports and contributes to its creative energy; successful "town-gown" relations are a symbiotic partnership, not apathetic or parasitic (Florida, 2006). Regardless of the actual relations between SIU and the City of Carbondale, Route 51's hindrance to an easy flow between campus and community is not only an actual physical barrier but a strong signal the division may go deeper, not the first impression one would want to give to new students, visitors and new residents coming to Carbondale and southern Illinois.

Markusen and Gadwa (2010) state federally-funded research shows creative placemaking activities foster greater civic engagement. Arts projects are often paired with other initiatives which better the community, such as beautification projects, transportation modernization, or other infrastructure development. The authors state the purpose of creative placemaking can be thought of creating a portfolio of assets, including fostering a sentiment of people being connected to a place rather than a job or single employer, such an attitude leads to higher retention of residents as employment conditions change.

The challenges and necessity of partnerships

Creative placemaking is not an easy process. In fact, according to Markusen and Gadwa (2010), one of the biggest obstacles to successful projects are also one of its keys to success: the creation and maintenance of partnerships. The authors acknowledge the difficulty in approaching and facilitating the involvement of all relevant stakeholders. Relationships may need to be mended, as misunderstanding about mission and scope are typical in this process. Although a core of 'creative initiators,' individuals tasked with and committed to the project, is central to

success, a wide base of community support is vital. Stakeholder involvement is necessary for any initiative to be viewed as a true community development project, not a scheme that benefits some citizens or businesses over others.

A closer look at the creative economy in southern Illinois

As part of its mission for promoting the arts in the United States, Americans for the Arts³ sponsors the ArtsIndex.⁴ This unique website allows users to investigate the economic impact of the arts from both a national and local perspective. A wide variety of topics are covered, including consumer spending on the arts, the prevalence and economic impact of nonprofits, solo artist and creative businesses. Utilizing data from the website and a data set provided to the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute by Americans for the Arts through the work of one of its lead researchers, Dr. Roland Kushner, what follows is a comparison of current arts activity in Jackson and Williamson counties to the rest of southern Illinois and the state, 11 counties of southeast Missouri and the eight westernmost counties of Kentucky.

Consumer expenditures

The first component of economic impact to be investigated is consumer arts spending at the county level. The consumer spending figures utilized in figures 1 and 2 are an aggregate of expenditures on admission fees, recorded media, musical instruments, photography, and readings materials. The original data was prepared by Claritas and is an estimate of the per capita expenditures on the individual categories. Although these categories do not cover the complete spectrum of arts and cultural spending, these figures do give an insight into consumer activity. The numbers for each county are not the consumer expenditure in solely in his or her home

³ Americans for the Arts is a non-profit organization with offices in Washington, DC and New York, NY. More can be learned about the organization at its website: <http://www.americansforthearts.org>.

⁴ Found at ArtsIndexUSA.org

county, but also account for consumption happening outside of the home county, including the Internet.

Figure 1⁵ show the 18 counties of southern Illinois against one another. Jackson and Williamson county residents are spending between \$320-340 on the categories listed and are among the top four counties in the region. There is clear evidence of comparatively strong consumer spending on cultural activities in most of the counties. The data do not permit us to investigate why Pulaski and Alexander counties fall below \$300.

Figure 1

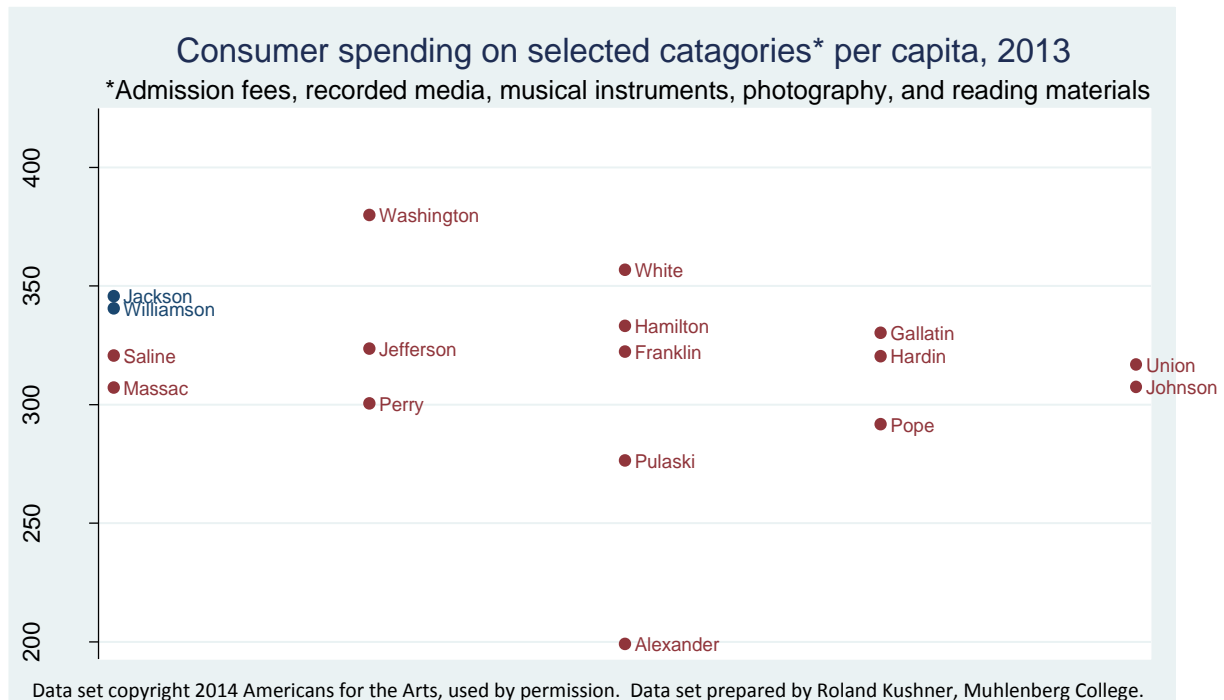
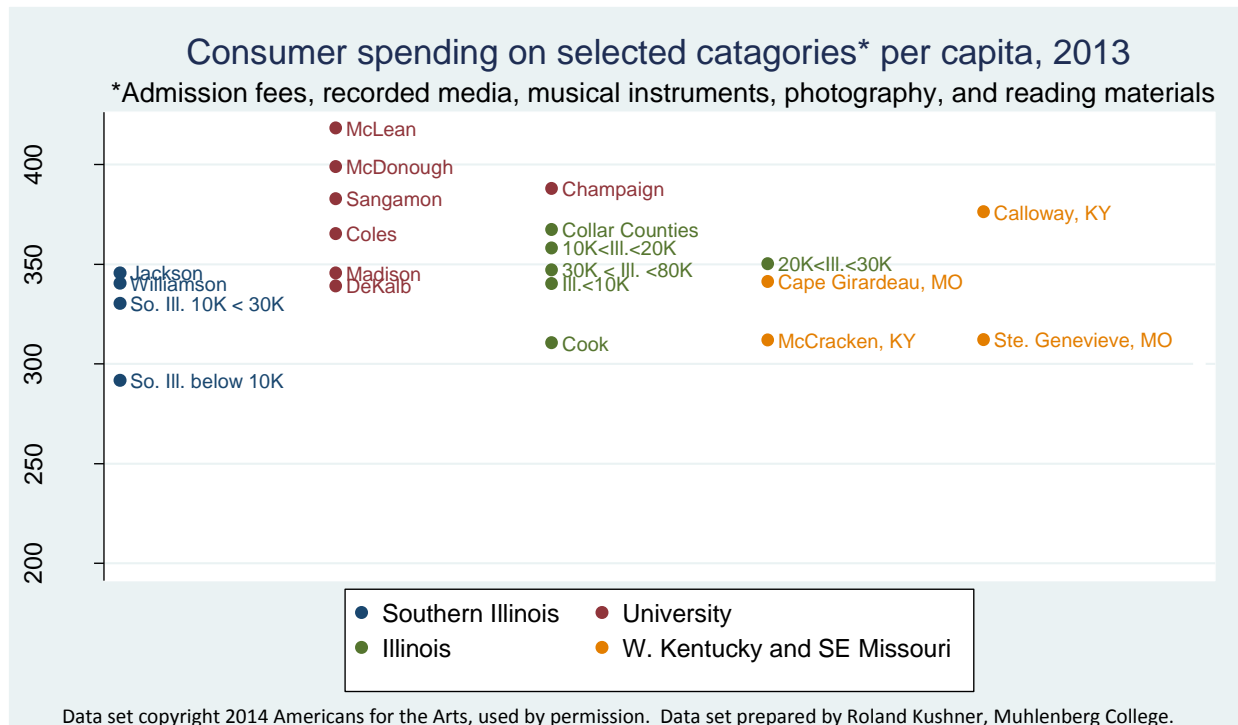


Figure 2 expands the comparison group to include the rest of Illinois and select areas of western Kentucky and southeast Missouri. Averages for southern Illinois counties grouped by population size are in the first column; the third column contains similar averages for the Illinois

⁵ Unless otherwise noted, the horizontal placement of a county's marker is not of significance, only its placement on the vertical scale.

counties not specifically presented in the figure. When seen in this larger context, Jackson and Williamson County resident spending is below many places in Illinois, but on par with its regional peers: McCracken, KY, Cape Girardeau and Ste. Genevieve, MO. Those counties in the second column each contain a major state university (McLean, Illinois State University; McDonough, Western Illinois University; Sangamon, UIS-Springfield; Coles, Eastern Illinois University; Madison, SIU-E; DeKalb, Northern Illinois University). Jackson County trails almost all of those counties. One may discount those differences due to population and location, but when compared to Calloway County, KY, the location of Murray State University, we can see Jackson County trails a similar area by a considerable amount.

Figure 2

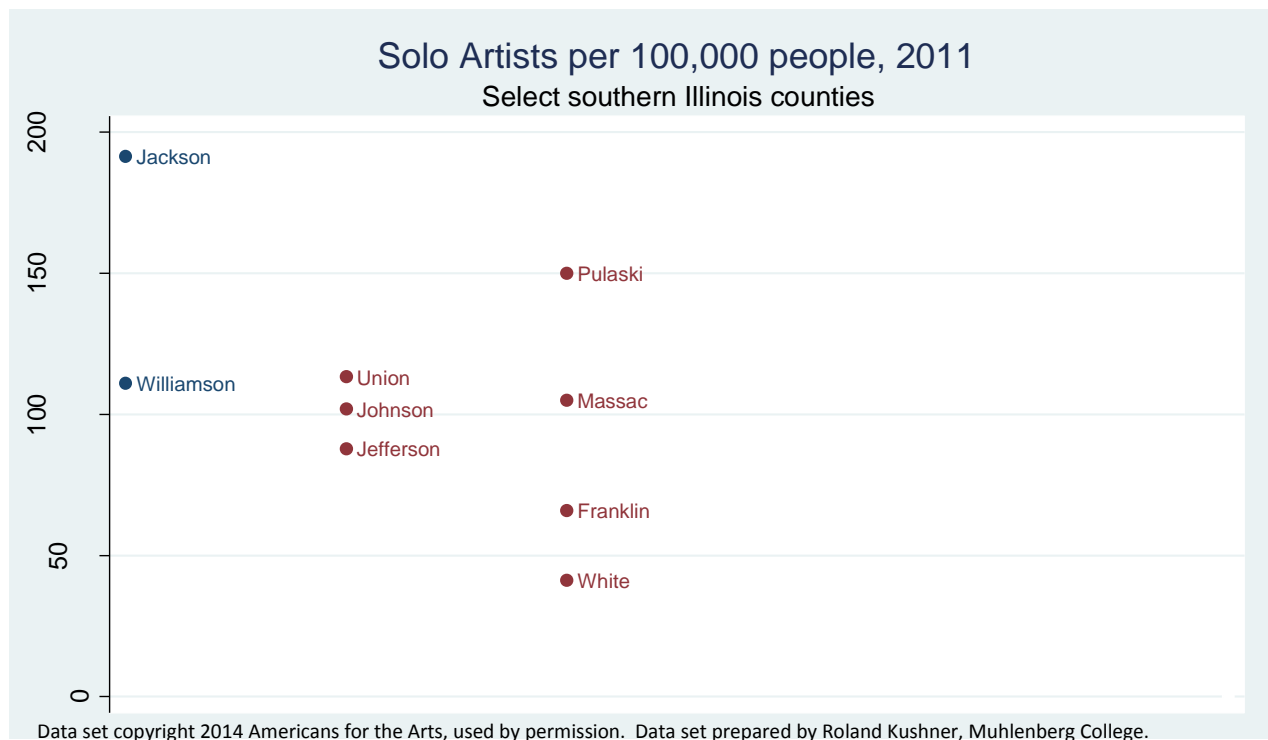


Presence of solo artists

An estimation of the number of solo artists present in a county was created utilizing Census data and North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS). The Arts Index’s creators

have identified 44 of the 1800 NAICS codes that best represent solo artistic professions. The county-level Census numbers are then normalized to out of 100,000 people to facilitate the comparison across areas of differing population. One may argue the normalization process may overstate the presence of solo artists in small-population counties. This may be the case, but in no way are the numbers presented supposed to be the actual number of solo artists in a respective county.

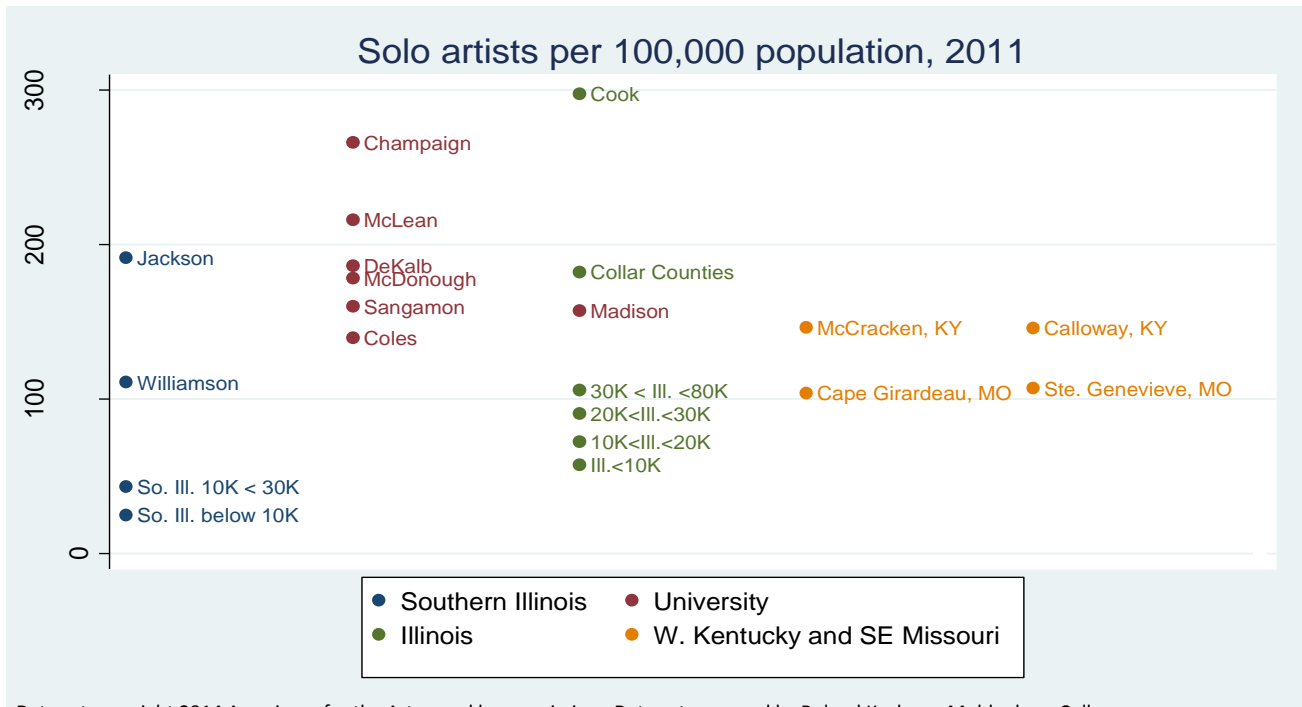
Figure 3



Jackson County is the solo artist center of southern Illinois (figure 3). However, when seen in a larger context (figure 4), Jackson County finds itself in the middle of its Illinois University Town peers. Perhaps the most surprising revelation is that Jackson County has more solo artists per 100,000 people compared to McCracken County. McCracken County, home of Paducah and its Artist Relocation Program, has had a dramatic transformation on a formally rundown

neighborhood and is used as a case study of successful creative placemaking by Markusen and Gadwa . Yet, by this ranking system, McCracken County has fewer artists. If Jackson County has more solo artist residents than McCracken County, why does it not have an arts community as vibrant and as well-known?

Figure 4



Data set copyright 2014 Americans for the Arts, used by permission. Data set prepared by Roland Kushner, Muhlenberg College.

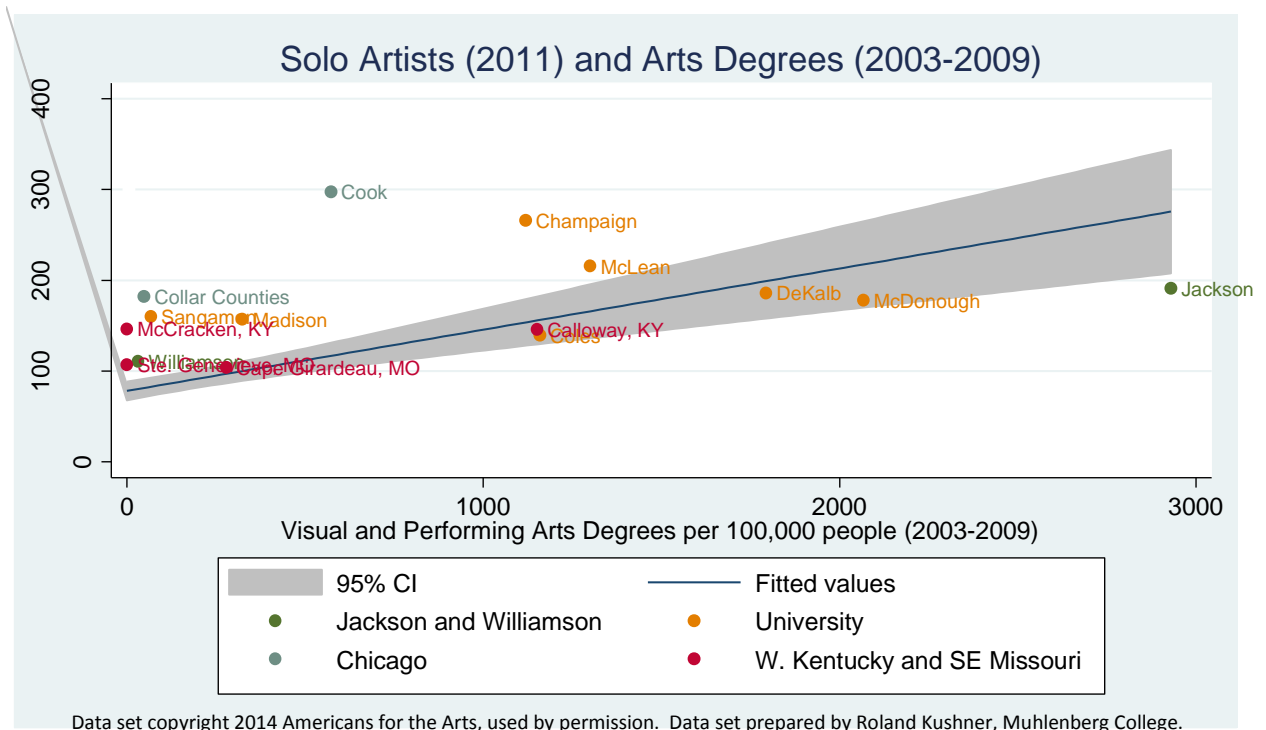
Higher education and number of solo artists

Figure 5 extends the discussion on solo artists by investigating how the number of visual and performing arts degrees that have been granted in a county from 2003-2009 relate to the how many solo artists are in that county in 2011⁶. Degree data is sourced through the National Center for Educational Statistics, part of the U.S. Department of Education. Again, the data is presented on the scale of per 100,000 people to facilitate comparisons and is not the actual number of degrees granted over the six-year period. The figure shows the counties illustrated in figure 4,

⁶ Visual and performing arts degrees per 100,000 people (2003-2009) appears on the horizontal axis, while the number of solo artists per 100,000 people (2011) appears on the vertical axis.

but does not include the averages for other Illinois areas. The ‘fitted values’ line and 95% confidence interval are calculated from the entire data set and represent a statistically significant relationship⁷ between the two variables.

Figure 5



Jackson County graduates the largest number of visual and performing arts degrees per 100,000 in the sample, yet has a solo artist population well below the trend line. Champaign and McLean counties look as if they are able to retain a larger share of their graduates, comparatively. Many counties, including Williamson and McCracken, KY, are above the trend line, yet lack significant graduates in their areas. One may be troubled to find that many graduates from SIU leave the area to ply their trade. An honest assessment will recognize not all SIU arts graduates are able to have a career in southern Illinois. An actor, for instance, would be

⁷ In a linear regression, estimated by ordinary least squares, arts degrees were shown to be a significant (at the 1% level) factor in the number of solo artists. The coefficient is positive (0.0673) with a t-score of 5.54, $R^2=0.186$.

better served by relocating to Chicago than remaining in Carbondale. However, there are many arts graduates, such as ceramicists, glass artists, painters and writers, who could stay and be successful in southern Illinois.

The presence of creative industries

Determining the number and impact of creative industries is addressed in the next three figures. These industries are defined through 644 codes in the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC). Although this classification has been discontinued by government agencies in favor of NAICS, Dun & Bradstreet has continued to utilize SIC in its county-level data collection. Figure 6 presents the number of creative businesses per 100,000 people. This categorization of industries broadens the discussion beyond arts and cultural establishments, showing Jackson and Williamson counties well situated in comparison to University counties and those of southeast Missouri and Callaway, KY.

Figure 6



When viewed as a share of all business (Figure 7), the creative industries comprise a greater share in Jackson County than Williamson. In contrast to Figure 6, it looks as if Williamson County has more establishments than Jackson County; this cannot be verified by the data percent. In the broader comparison, five of seven university counties have higher shares than Jackson County. Against regional peers, Jackson County is second to McCracken County, while Williamson is at par with Calloway, KY and Ste. Genevieve, MO. Data for Cook County is not available.

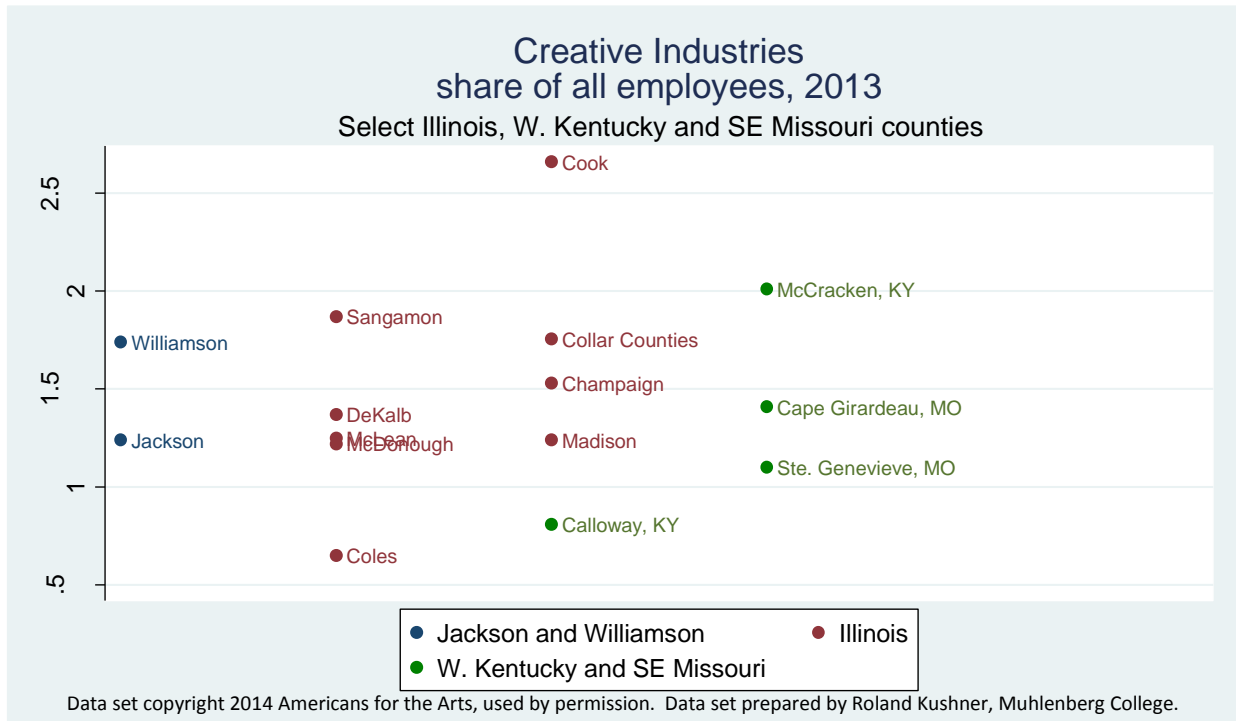
Figure 7



Finally, Figure 8 presents the share of all employees comprised by workers in the creative industries. Williamson County shows a higher percentage than Jackson County, but some of this difference may come from the fact that practicing solo artists do not count as employees. Again,

Cook County and McCracken County lead the rankings, being the only two counties represented with over 2% of each respective county's employees working in creative industries.

Figure 8



Concluding remarks

Creative Placemaking provides a good jumping off point when framing the challenges, keys to success and benefits of expanding the arts and culture in a town, city, area, or region. Markusen and Gadwa state there is no clear template for success; creative placemaking by its very nature is experimental. The authors provide a set of powerful case studies, demonstrating how creative placemaking not only aided in economic recovery and development but increased a community's sense, knowledge, pride and appreciation of itself.

A recent poll⁸ conducted by University of Illinois Springfield Survey Research Office supports the premise of latent demand for cultural activities exists in southern Illinois. With 75% of Jackson and Williamson county residents surveyed stating they do not think there are enough museums and over 60% also commenting on the need for more art exhibits and galleries, a ready audience exists for these cultural activities in the two-county region. When assessed by age of respondent, museum expansion sees over 90% support from 25-34 year olds, exactly the demographic the area needs to attract and retain. The argument is furthered by noting nearly half of all respondents would like see more music events and public lectures and discussions, respectively. Over four in ten support expansion of outdoor festivals.

The data presented from Americans for the Arts illustrates the basis for the expansion of arts and culture in the local economy exists. With an emphasis on increasing the exposure and access to local artists and increased retention of young artistic talent being trained at SIU, southern Illinois can capitalize on its uniqueness by attracting visitors, increasing the cultural experiences of its residents, and attracting new people to migrate to the region. The opportunities present are best encapsulated in a quote from Markusen and Gawda (2010, p. 6).

Arts and culture at this historic juncture are proving their power as economic and social catalysts. Through smart collaborations with other sectors—government, private business, foundations—they are creating opportunities for rejuvenation and economic development, anchored in and tailored to diverse communities. The arts can be a fulcrum for the creative transformation of American cities.

⁸ The complete report may be accessed at <http://paulsimoninstitute.org/images/PDF/spring2014/psppi-jackson-williamson-county-report.pdf>.

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