# Achieving "Cluster Consciousness:" The Challenges of Defining and Nurturing a Cultural Cluster in a Rural Region

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## Introduction & Outline of the paper

The focus of this paper is on the challenges of developing and nurturing an arts and creative cluster in a rural, remote and non-urban-adjacent region.  The Stephenville-Corner Brook-Rocky Harbour region of western Newfoundland is home to several well-established theatre companies, literary festivals, post-secondary programs in film, visual and theatre arts at both the College and University level and one of the Atlantic region's most recognized National Parks (Gros Morne National Park).  In this context, surrounded by a vibrant culture and astounding natural beauty, a number of arts and cultural workers are making this region their base of operations.  However, until recently there has been little official acknowledgement of the value of the cultural sector to the overall economy and life of the region.  This paper focuses on the strategies being used to help build not only the awareness of this cluster, but to build the cluster itself.

The paper begins by going through selected background literature on clusters and the creative economy which may be of value in looking at this specific geographic region at this moment in its development.  The focus here is on how past research might inform future work in western Newfoundland.  From there, the paper discusses briefly the nature of how actors within a potential cluster might come to identify themselves as members of a cluster (and then come to act as a cluster).  This is followed by a discussion of how these processes are unfolding in western Newfoundland, ending with some thoughts on how we assist a cluster in coming to a consciousness of itself.

## The Cluster Literature (what is a cluster, what is the creative economy, can there be a creative rural economy, what are some ways that the creative economy or an arts cluster be nurtured along?)

In this section, we summarize several threads of literature on clusters but also on creative economies and how they may relate to rural development. The attempt is not to be a thorough review of the area, but a consideration of how the literature helps us to think through our own situation in western Newfoundland.

Cluster theory came out of Michael Porter's theorizing and re-working of regional competitive advantage (Porter, 1998, 2000). It has been used in a variety of countries and contexts and has been has been distilled into assorted creative parks, bases, incubators, industrial districts, creative cities, and creative regions (for example, Keane, 2009). Porter argued that there were a variety of preconditions to cluster development, including some competition among rivals within a region, which implied some level of scale (this has implications for rural and remote regions). With the level of efficiency and productivity of cluster development, it was argued, cluster theory went beyond simply a regional competitive advantage theory.

If we add to this some of the ideas from Richard Florida and others on the "creative economy," we see the outlines of what might be called a "creative cluster development" approach. In a too-brief summarization, Florida's "creative capital" theory of economic development is that the presence of three elements in a region (technology, talent, and tolerance) fosters the creative process, which then generates economic vitality. In its application, researchers may seek out whether these "three-T's" exist in certain regions, and if that can explain their vitality. It is not as clear on how to build these, or if they just appear in areas and they are identified after the fact. Indeed, if they are needed for a creative cluster, can the theory give us any ideas on how to build creative capital?

Given the widespread currency of Florida's work, it is expected that his theories have some detractors. In some ways, one could say that the extent of the opposition to an idea may be a testament to the potential of the idea, or at least the extent to which it touches some new nerves. The following are some of the valuable qualifications to the work around clusters and creative economies:

Lew (2010) questions the theory that cluster development and creative classes and workers were responsible for the growth of urban areas in the past decade or so, thus looking for substantive evidence for both Porter's and Florida's work.

Long (2009) points out the problems with actually trying to operationalize Florida's ideas, in this case in Austin, Texas (a city that Florida celebrated, but which does not, on reflection, make a good case for the uncritical application of Florida's ideas).

Hoyman and Faricy (2006) evaluated the empirical evidence for the creative class theory, compared to some other theories of development (such as social capital and human capital). They found that "the creative class is not related to growth, whereas human capital is a good

predictor of all economic growth and development measures. We found mixed results for social capital although it outperformed all models in predicting average wage" (Hoyman and Faricy, 2006).

Daly (2004) comments on the actual lack of understanding of how the arts and culture sector operate in Florida's work.

Gibson and Kong (2005) refer to the ways that innovation is collapsed into narrow views of arts and culture that relate directly to the market within this theory, thus missing some of the nuances of how culture operates *in situ*. They write: "Cultural activities are somewhat collapsed into an overarching single urban culture of playfulness and ceaseless invention, understating the extent to which 'culture' is a mishmash of contradictory forces and shifting battle lines between dominant and marginalized voices" (Gibson and Kong, 2005).

Mommaas (2004) refers to cultural clusters as an urban development strategy more than a theoretical construct that can be used indiscriminately. He referred to their adoption in the Netherlands as "urban cultural development hype."

Despite the specific challenges to the work of Porter and Florida (and others writing in those traditions), there are many who have taken some parts of these theories to look more closely at their own situations. The whole notion of how culture interacts within a region to potentially promote economic development (or at least make the place more attractive as a place to live) is of wide interest. For example, Johnson (2007) questions whether these arguments about creative clusters are a new form of place-based development theory. Each of the cultural sectors which may be discussed are clearly situated in a particular place, and sometimes it is in the characteristics of the place (rather than the people) that one might find an explanation for vitality. In their work, Wojan et al. (2007) discuss creative economies and artist havens. They note that for both established and emerging artist havens, they tend to be located in more mountainous regions. They also contain factors such as a larger college-going population, and a larger and more diverse lodging and restaurant sector. They also refer to a correlation of "wine country" designation with emerging artistic havens. Thus, the factors influencing these locations as artist havens may be beyond the mix of individuals who end up there (and beyond the "three-T's").

In another publication, Wojan and McGranahan (2007) refer to the ways that the artist havens can have effects on economies beyond the cultural industries (with spinoffs in other sectors). For example, in innovative and amenity-rich areas, there may be spinoff effects in the development of smaller scale manufacturing. The entrepreneurs in these sectors may rely on the widespread atmosphere of creativity and amenity-rich lifestyle more than the specialized skills of individual members of the creative class. This builds on the theories of entrepreneurship which argue that entrepreneurs are generalists whereby creative workers tend to be specialists (see Lazear, 2004, 2005). Wojan and McGranahan write: "The data are not clear on whether the association between creative capital and entrepreneurship is simply associational, in that manufacturing entrepreneurs are attracted to areas high in creative capital, or causal, in that location in a county high in creative capital generates new plant formation and leads to adoption of advanced technologies" (2007).

To bring this discussion back to western Newfoundland, while this region is not home to the specific amenity of a booming wine area (except in terms of an active home-brew industry…), the iconic Gros Morne National Park would attract many similar type tourists as wine regions - namely affluent, highly educated visitors with an interest in fine dining and 4-star accommodations.  With this type of audience, there is generally opportunity for the development of high-quality cultural experiences and events.  In addition, while the cultural sector in the Western Region is clearly situated in a *place*, it also reaches well beyond place, which is seen in the way that festivals like the March Hare and Writers at Woody Point have been able to attract national artists and media attention.  Many of the people involved in these festivals have adopted the region which perhaps helps the cultural sector overall resist becoming possessive or inward-looking in their sense of place.  Finally, in speaking with artists in Western Newfoundland, it is clear that there is interest in developing their entrepreneurship, but many feel that they are currently limited in their business skills and expertise.

## Is there a place for Rural in the Discussion of the Creative Economy or an Arts Cluster?

One of the characteristics of much of the discussion of the creative economy is the focus on cities as being the location for cultural clusters,. This is not a new equation, and some (such as Friedmann, 2007) have referred to the intrinsic nature of cities to include a number of discrete clusters of activity (he identifies seven of them). As a city evolves, these clusters may change in their relative importance and size. However, there can also be strategic investment in some of them. He refers to these clusters as "tangible regional assets in which investments should preferentially be made." They include clusters such as "the heritage of the built environment and popular culture" as well as "intellectual and creative assets." The assumption here is that all cities, by their nature, include some element of these clusters (and they might be a defining feature of cities). But Friedmann emphasizes that these cities *cannot* be seen in isolation from the countryside surrounding them. He advocates a more regional approach, which has implications for the urban-focussed views of the creative economy, and it is something that resonates well in western Newfoundland.

Florida tends to privilege cities (and city cores especially) as being the engines for the creative economy. The key geographical division which runs through the bulk of creative place analysis and planning is the splitting of cities into "creative" inner cities and "uncreative" suburbs, particularly outer suburbs (Gibson and Brennan-Horley 2006). However, Collis et al. (2010) argue that creative centres don't have to be inner cities, but can be suburbs as well. Using data from Australia, they illustrate that the suburbs are also sites of creative production. Those areas which Florida refer to derisively as "sprawl," and as uncreative and economically "choking" (Florida, 2004, 2005), may actually be the site of clusters and linkages for workers in the "creative economy."

While western Newfoundland is not urban-adjacent (and certainly not urban), it is important to acknowledge the relationship that exists with St. John's primarily due to Gros Morne National Park. Many non-resident tourists who land at St. John's airport visit Gros Morne during their stay (it is one of three major locations with high recognition-value among tourists, along with St. John's and Twillingate). According to data collected in 2009, 17% of the approximately 174,000 visitors to Gros Morne in that year came to the province via St. John's. In addition, many resident tourists from the St. John's CMA spend time in the western region due to the presence of Gros Morne, the primary motivation of their trip. This creates an important flow that connects the region to the urban centre of the province despite over 700 kilometres of separation.

Gabe (2007) notes that even in the discussion of rural development, many people are now turning toward a consideration of the cultural sector. Likewise, Bell and Jayne (2010) refer to the rise of interest in the rural creative sector in the UK. They note that, until recently, cultural policy has ignored rural, and rural policy has ignored culture.

Part of the reason for this interest is the data that shows the value of "creative occupations" in rural communities. In the US, for example, it has been shown that "The top quarter of all counties, ranked by the percent of workers in creative occupations as of 1990, experienced

faster employment growth in 1990–2004 than counties in the bottom three-quarters of this scale. While this holds true for both metro and non-metro counties, the difference in growth rates is considerably larger in non-metro areas" (Economic Research Service, 2007). Of course, this raises questions around whether we can successfully translate the urban-focussed theories around creative economies and creative workers to the rural context. Would there need to be some changes in how we evaluate the rural creative economy? Are the needs of cultural workers in the two locations similar?

Some of the reasons for the value of the creative and cultural economy to rural regions may relate to not only the influx of "footloose" creative workers, but also the ways that these new cultural economies replace import consumption with local consumption. Markusen (2007) looks at consumption-drivers of development in rural regions and the role of artists as catalysts in the process, arguing that adding local "consumption-serving economic activity" increases the jobs and the tax base of the rural region. "For rural communities, where economic survival is particularly tough and spending on industrial recruitment has often had disappointing results, incentives for consumption activities such as health care clinics, retirement communities, casinos, and cultural centers offer an alternative path for growth and stability" (Markusen, 2007). Locally-based artists can bring new ideas at the same time as they help "validate" local products and expression, attract tourists, revitalize downtowns, and so on. Examples of this are drawn from rural Minnesota, where such strategies have been more successful than the old industrial-attraction models. Examples of this can also be seen in the work of Grant (2006) who outlines the reasons for local tax incentives for artists, or Wojan et al. (2007) who discuss efforts to re-brand Paducah, Kentucky, as the "SoHo of the South" through its Artist Relocation Program. For all of these case studies, the role of the artists themselves is crucially important (as their skill-sets are valuable in community development), as are the development of places such as artist-run centres (which is an issue in western Newfoundland).

Thus, we are arguing that some of the insights of the theories around clusters and creative economies can be applied to rural and regional contexts. We are not saying the cultural sector is the only engine of growth in a remote rural region; but that it is a new engine that needs to be more finely tuned and put to work in the mix of engines that will drive sustainability. In western Newfoundland, the cultural sector is a complementary "engine" for some of the other engines in the economic mix, namely tourism, academia, etc. It adds value to these other economic sectors, contributing significantly as well to a sense of place that is probably crucial to their success in attracting tourists and professionals/students, respectively.

## Becoming a Cluster: Developing a consciousness

One of the underlying questions which prompted us to work on this paper, and to advance our ideas in this topic, was the question of how a cluster comes to recognize itself *as a cluster*. In order to derive the benefits of being a cluster, the group of individuals and organizations that constitute a cluster must be able to see themselves as being a cluster. They need to understand that there are some interests in common and that they are not simply individual actors doing some similar activities, but they are a community.

This process of coming to a realization of a common identity is not an unusual process, and it is well-described in the sociological literature. From social classes to social movements, the process of gaining and exercising power includes an understanding of a commonality. In order to exert influence, it is first necessary for a social group to recognize themselves as having some connection that transcends any other fractures or fissures. This is referred to in different ways in the literature – sometimes as "the personal is the political" (as with the women's movement, which meant that personal experience was not simply individual misfortune, but part of a collective experience that could be altered via political means). A part of this process can be done internally, with people coming to identify themselves as having similar interests and situations as others around them. But sometimes this is done with the assistance of "outside" influences. This could be individuals or organizations who educate or "politicize" a group to see their own commonality. They could be individuals from outside who nevertheless have gone through a similar process in their own region or social location. But it may involve some outside assistance in achieving a "cluster consciousness" (which we define as the acceptance of a sense of identity as being a member of a particular grouping, along with the acceptance that all members of this group have some common interests and experiences and can more effectively transform the future if they work together rather than separately).

Of course, related to this underlying question is the issue of how a cluster can come to recognize its interests as common interests with a goal to expanding the sector, rather than as competing individual interests with a goal to getting their own share of what is seen as a pie of a constant size. This can only be achieved if there is a convincing argument put forward that illustrates a collective enterprise will yield better results than dispersed, individual activities.

In terms of putting forth these arguments, or even identifying the clusters to begin with, this could potentially occur either from inside the cluster, or possibly from outside. Part of the assumption of the cluster literature is that outside agents *can* assist in cluster development (thus making this approach a practical one rather than simply a theoretical exercise). In some senses, cluster development is easier if it works from the external inwards, as sometimes it is easier to see the profile of an area from a distance, rather than from within. It is not entirely clear if one mode is better than the other (defining from the inside-out or from the outside-in). The dynamics of the two situations may well be different. But social science, just like market identification within development studies, often accepts the validity of the outside-in approach.

The argument we then advance is that, in order to move forward to build this cultural sector in Western Newfoundland, there is a need for organizations in the sector to see themselves as a

"cluster."  This kind of identity formation borrows from sociological concepts regarding identity and collective behaviour.  For example, there can be a group of people who have common interests, who have common challenges and disadvantages, but they may not define themselves as a "group" or a "class" set apart.  It is only when they are able to achieve a self-definition of being a "class" in themselves that they can take useful collective action.

Likewise, a cluster may exist in objective reality, and may be visible by others outside the cluster.  But if the groups within the cluster do not define their interests in common or see the connections, then they will not act as a "cluster in itself."  Thus, we are borrowing from the concept of "class consciousness" to a concept of "cluster consciousness" – a self-awareness of organizations within a region to act in their own interests and to advance their collective conditions.

Related to the concept of a cluster consciousness is the underlying issue of identity as well.  One's "identity" can be seen as a person's expression of their collective affiliations, and their self-definition as a member of that affiliation.  It includes a notion of role behaviours, whereby one acts out according to their identity.  Developing a cluster consciousness is not only an individual but also a collective activity, but that is predicated on the ability to adopt an identity as a member of this collective activity.  Thus, identity is both a "connection" with others, as well as a way to distinguish a difference from certain "others" who are not "like us."  As theory from social anthropology and sociology has generally argued, identity is not a natural "given," and not "fixed," but one that has been actively constructed.  It is a subjective field, not a subset of biology or environment.  See, for example, Mead (1934), Cohen (1998), Sökefeld (1999), Jenkins (2008) and Hanisch (2003).  Identity can be expressed through "markers," such as dress, language, customs, food choices, attitudes, behaviours, roles, etc.  We could ask about the markers of identity as a member of a cultural cluster – are they both internal (attitudes, self-identification) as well as external (behaviours)?

In sum, we are talking about a sense of identity that certain individuals can adopt which relates to a membership in a particular social group (or cluster), a connection to a common narrative about that cluster, and a willingness to act in support of that cluster.  Without a consciousness as a cluster, and the willingness of potential members to define their identity as being within that cluster, then it is unlikely that the economic benefits of cluster development will be realized.  We move now to the substantive issue of how we can mark the boundaries of one such cluster within the cultural sector of Western Newfoundland.

## Cultural Cluster Development in Western Newfoundland

The paper explores these questions and themes in the context of western Newfoundland, where there are some efforts to expand the cultural sector. It will be argued that one of the first steps has been to make the sector visible. One way to do this was to begin to generate statistics on the value of the sector to the region, which raised the general awareness of how many jobs and opportunities exist in this sector – an important validation and "tool" for both those inside and outside the sector.

A second step was to create ways to bring individuals in the sector together around common needs and interests. This has taken place on a number of fronts, initiated by different parties. Government undertook consultations with artists and cultural organizations to identify their collective needs and opportunities for collaboration on regional development. An artist-led group is looking at a potential community arts centre (which has been a response to the need for space for artists and cultural producers) and another group of young artists has come together with government to look at business and entrepreneurial opportunities using their skills (in response to the stated need for advice and support on business development).

A third step has been to encourage broader linkages between the sector and other groups or organizations that can provide support or create opportunities for cluster development. Developing a one-stop information service for the sector through Canada Business Newfoundland and Labrador has, for instance, increased access for regional artists to a broad range of business services targeted to meet their needs. This business development support has added an important dimension to the cluster development. Broader linkages are also helping the sector look outward to arts centre models, for instance, that can support the longer term sustainability of their investments.

## The Context

To begin to ground this in the specifics of place, western Newfoundland consists of a relatively large physical geography with a small population base. The main service centre in the region is the City of Corner Brook with a population of approximately 22,000.  The smaller service centers are all much smaller, Stephenville (population 7,700), Deer Lake (population 5,200), Port aux Basques (population 5,200) and St. Anthony (population 3,000).

The economic base in the region is derived mainly from the primary resource industries with many communities heavily dependent on the fishery and forestry industries.  There is also a growing tourism sector in the region with Gros Morne National Park/UNESCO World Heritage site being the primary driver for people to travel to the destination.

In 2008, ACOA undertook an internal analysis of the economic impact of the cultural sector in western Newfoundland on the provincial economy, taking into account Statistics Canada data and data from several arts organizations to derive several key pieces of economic data.  The report showed that in 2008, the direct GDP impact of the cultural sector in western Newfoundland was an estimated $31.2 million, with $15.6 million in direct wages and salaries.  The indirect impact was $12.7 million, with $6.8 million in indirect wages and salaries; and the total GDP impact, including the induced impact, was $57.0 million.  Total employment in the western region's cultural industries was 665 FTEs.

The region's cultural assets range from heritage, academic and hosting infrastructure to arts, tourism and media organizations to festivals and events in a range of cultural sectors.  (See Appendix A for an asset inventory).  While some of the individuals and organizations working in the sector come together to advance areas of mutual interest, most often collaboration is focused on one discipline (i.e. performing arts, literary arts, etc.) or a specific event (i.e. the March Hare writer's festival or Trails, Tales and Tunes).

## A Role for Government

Recognizing the significant economic contribution, critical mass, and cultural assets of the western region, ACOA launched an internal strategic team in 2009 to try to better understand the nature of the opportunity for this sector's development.  This was in line with a new way of working within ACOA's Newfoundland and Labrador office known as *Opportunity-based Teams* which bring together a wide range of internal expertise and resources to proactively develop opportunities in specific sectors and places.  These teams encourage focused collaboration with key stakeholders like community organizations, municipalities, the provincial government and the private sector.  They are mechanisms for developing opportunities, rather than waiting for projects to be submitted by individual proponents.

Working with a broad base of community partners, who may or may not be in touch with one another, government is sometimes in a position to see synergies for larger-scale regional collaboration than individual organizations working in a given sector. To be effective as a broker for sector development, government also needs to have mechanisms for working proactively and collaborating with stakeholders of emerging clusters early in the process.

## Actions to date

Having identified potential for further development of the cultural industries cluster in western Newfoundland, ACOA undertook several activities to try and answer two simple questions: what are the needs of the sector and what are the opportunities for overall sector development.

One of the first activities for ACOA's Opportunity-based Team was to organize a consultation in April 2010 with sector stakeholders to determine what opportunities might exist for them to collaborate with government on specific projects that would contribute to the overall development of the sector. Represented at the consultation were 3 federal departments, 2 provincial departments and 10 different regional organizations that included representatives from all arts disciplines, academia and the Aboriginal community. ACOA presented the results of its economic analysis and then asked participants to suspend their individual interests to share their ideas for advancing the regional arts sector in general. Later in the day, they were asked to identify concrete opportunities to work together as a region, in collaboration with government, in areas of mutual interest. Four priority initiatives were identified:

- A regional arts and culture marketing strategy;
- A one-stop shop of business information for artists;
- An arts business networking group;
- Development of the Gros Morne region as a cultural event destination and as a centre for professional development in the arts.

This consultation was followed up with a shared report and numerous informal consultations (many of which were one-on-one) with artists, arts groups, cultural industries associations, Memorial University, various federal and provincial government officials, and community groups. The format of some of the consultations would not necessarily be considered the most typical forms of consultation undertaken by government agencies. While there were some formal meetings, most of the consultations took place in places where the artists felt most comfortable, such as local coffee shops, studios, and even around kitchen tables. The informal consultations definitely led to more frank and open discussions and also to increased interactions between the various artists being consulted. In total there were over 50 artists consulted and a listing of regional artists and groups was complied.

This intensive series of discussions, which brought together artists and organizations who had not previously discussed collective needs and opportunities, resulted in a series of sector development initiatives that are currently being implemented, as follows:

### The Gros Morne Cultural Blueprint

After some investigation, it was determined that a more detailed plan was needed to fully utilize the strengths of Gros Morne National Park as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It was quickly realized that the numerous cultural events, groups and artists in combination with the traditional cultural offerings and unique landscape make Gros Morne a special place, and that a more integrated and holistic approach to development was required. This project has started a more

detailed level of discussion with artists and arts groups and is being led by a partnership between ACOA, Parks Canada, and the Gros Morne Cooperating Association (A Friends of the Park organization). The partners are now in the process of developing a terms of reference to hire a consultant or group of consultants to help form a regional development plan for the cultural sector. Other government and NGO groups have been brought into this project, and there is growing momentum within the various levels of government and the arts community to move this project forward. Although this is a new initiative, the networking that took place at the consultations contributed to some interesting new discussions that are influencing the development of this opportunity and other new cultural products such as an artist retreat and a collaborative partnership on new venue space.

## Arts Collective

The Arts Collective is an informal networking group based in Corner Brook which is being set up to provide artists an opportunity to network and learn new business skills. The networking sessions are very informal and attract 10-12 artists each night, with about 25 artists actively involved in the group. Memorial University has been a key supporter of this group, and several of its Faculty of Fine Arts have attended the meetings. It is hoped that this group will attract upper year fine arts students and help them establish themselves in the artistic community. Based on the feedback from the artists this group will primarily meet at local bars and coffee shops, and guest advisors will be brought into the group to discuss specific business related topics. Some of the topics identified include marketing, networking, and copyright. This group is still in its infancy, and it is too early to tell what the results may be. One lesson learned to date is that the artists prefer the informal settings and structure for the sessions.

## Artists One-Stop Shop

Through ACOA, in partnership with the Canada Business Service Centre, several new information services are now available to the cultural industries. At the Centre's main office located in St. John's, a staff person has been identified to specialize in information on the cultural industries and to promote the centre to this target group. If an artist calls the toll-free number to the Business Service Centre, they will be able to get enhanced services from this individual. Also a program called the Guest Advisory Service will now be offered in Corner Brook. This program allows individuals and organizations to get a free consultation with a business professional. Each month there will be a different professional or group of professionals depending on the needs of the community. In addition the Centre's Books-by-Mail Program has acquired some additional resources related to starting a business in the cultural industry. There has been increased promotion, awareness and uptake of these services by artists and arts organizations in the region.

## Rotary Arts Centre

During the consultations, it became clear that the Corner Brook region had some specific challenges in developing cultural industries. Artists identified a need for a public art gallery and a small performance space. The lack of a public professionally-curated gallery has been seen

a roadblock for new graduates from Memorial University's Fine Arts Program.  Without the exposure and credibility that come from the display of art in a public gallery, it is difficult for these new artists to establish a resume and attract arts funding.   Also several community groups and theatre troupes have identified the need for a smaller performance space.  Currently, a provincially-owned Arts and Culture Centre does provide space for large-scale productions but it cost prohibitive for smaller events.  There are also two stadium-style venues that can host events for over 1000 people, but again they are too large for most groups to utilize.  This lack of performance space has limited the growth of some small theatre groups.  The Rotary Club of Corner Brook had been looking to establish an arts centre for some time but have not previously had much success.  In partnership with various community stakeholders and ACOA, a feasibility study is nearly complete.  To date, this study has identified several key partnerships that need to be formed for the centre to be financially viable.

Combined with several smaller projects that have been identified by community groups, these initiatives are helping to create networks of artists, arts organizations, NGOs and government departments that are working to support sector development.  All are recognizing the cultural industries in the western region of Newfoundland as an important emerging cluster which, working together, can identify, develop and sustain initiatives that will contribute to the overall development of the region.

## Conclusions: Do we help to *create* a cluster by *studying* it?

Over the course of this paper, we have outlined some of the theories related to cluster development and the creative economy, discussed the implications of how a cluster comes to a sense of consciousness about itself (both individually and collectively) and applied these ideas to the situation in western Newfoundland.  As we draw the paper to a close, we'd like to revisit a few of the over-arching questions we continue to engage.

### What are the challenges of the "outside-in" version of cluster development that we are currently doing in western NL?

Clearly, there is a concern that we are not creating something that does not exist in reality.  However, the data (and the sessions we've been holding with groups and individuals in the region) currently support the proposition that a cultural cluster does exist.  Beyond that, it is crucial that people within that sector come to see themselves as a cluster and act as a cluster – that they develop cluster consciousness.  This process appears to be one of guided self-realization, and actions to enhance this must be sensitive to issues around power and voice and local self-determination.

### What is the role of outside agencies in spurring this development; e.g., regional University campuses or economic development agents?

As members of these groups, the authors all consider this question in their daily work.  However, the organizations in this case are both committed (in their mission statements and role) to the promotion of rural and regional development.  Thus, it is within the normal role of such organizations to help stimulate cluster consciousness (keeping in mind the sensitivities mentioned above).  Indeed, Flew and Cunningham (2010), in a discussion of the concept of creative industries and their link to economic development, argue that public institutions are often the ones called upon to take the lead in setting up infrastructure for creative clusters.  Public funding becomes an accepted springboard for future development, especially if the promotion of a creative economy is seen as a reaction to the post-industrial economy and a source of hope for economies in transition.  In terms of university involvement in such activities, McCulloch-Lovell (2006) refers to the rise of cultural clusters in New England, providing examples of universities building cultural clusters alongside their communities.  This is even referred to as a "creative campus" movement, and it clearly validates the role of universities in helping communities to build creative clusters.

### How can institutions provide support to clusters in development without being prescriptive?

This can involve delicate negotiations, but the primary purpose of university and development agent assistance might be in drawing the contours of the cultural cluster and planting the seeds of how it can thrive, rather than in determining each step of the cluster once it has emerged.  One observation about the cultural cluster development in western Newfoundland is the inherent vulnerability of some of the players, due to their lack of core funding and dependence on project support.  When an organization is struggling to fulfil its basic needs, it may be difficult

to look outward and see itself as a cluster partner that can work with other organizations to fulfil larger needs or opportunities. However, serving to point out common interests definitely affects the development of the field, helping to mobilize action.

**What are some of the lessons we have learned thus far?**

1. While government departments may sometimes seem to be "risk-averse," there is a need to take some risk in order to promote these developments.

2. One cannot overestimate the value of informal or "kitchen" conversations in cluster development.

3. In rural and remote regions, there is a need to build confidence in the value of local cultural expressions (to validate local culture).

4. Setting up networks and linking individuals is an important task in cluster development.

5. There is a great value in doing statistical and economic analyses of a potential cluster in a region – this can lead to a validation of cluster development, and can raise awareness of the importance of a sector to a region. For example, the finding that in western Newfoundland there were over 650 people employed full-time in the cultural sector, at a time when the prime resource-based economic driver of the area has about 600 direct employees, was a powerful indicator of the value of the development of the creative economy.

Finally, in doing this study and the consultations around it, we are breaking one of the rules of research which social scientists hold dear. They argue that when we go out into the "field," we should study it but not affect it in any way. But by identifying a cluster and pointing out its common interests, we may actually affect the field, and leave behind a changed perception and new structures of interaction. We may change what it is we are looking at just by our actions of looking and identifying. Indeed, that is our hope.

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# Appendix A: Cultural Assets in the Region

## Physical Assets

- Sir Wilfred Grenfell College (with Arts and Culture programs)
- College of the North Atlantic
- Gros Morne National Park
- Arts and Culture Centres
- Margret Bowater Park
- Captain Cook Lookout
- Majestic Lawn
- Hotel Ball Rooms
- Legion
- Private Art Galleries
- Schools
- Churches
- Villa Fairwinds
- Marble Mountain
- Humber Valley Resort
- Corner Brook Port
- Pepsi Centre
- Museum
- Warehouse Theatre
- Bonne Bay Marine Station
- Woody Point Heritage Theatre
- Old Bonne Bay Cottage Hospital
- Gateway West

## Cultural Organizations/Assets

- League of Artists of Western Newfoundland
- Voice of Bonne Bay (Radio committee)
- Theatre Newfoundland and Labrador
- Stephenville Theatre Festival organization
- Off Broadway Players
- Stockpile
- Downtown Business Association
- Corner Brook Museum and Archives
- Marina
- Bennet Hall
- Private Clubs
- Association of Cultural Industries
- Gros Morne Cooperating Association
- Go Western NL (Western DMO)

- SIFE
- Corner Brook Youth Theatre (offshoot of TNL)
- Dance Studio West
- Gros Morne Summer Music
- Grenfell Arts Programs
- Community Band
- Community Choir
- Rotary
- Chamber Music Group
- Theatre by the Bay
- Page 1 Writers Group
- Gros Morne Institute for Sustainable Tourism
- Radio stations (CBC, CFCB)
- Television outlets (CBC, NTV)
- Print media (Western Star)
- Internet-based media (Cornerbrooker.com)

## Cultural Events
- Farmers Markets (Stephenville and Corner Brook)
- Regional Craft Fairs
- Trails Tails and Tunes Festival
- Writers of Woody Point Festival
- Spring in Your Step Festival
- East Meets West Meets North Festival
- Winter Carnivals
- Grenfell Art Sales (for student work)
- Festival 500
- The Rotary Music Festival
- The March Hare
- April Rabbit
- Gros Morne Theatre Festival
- Stephenville Theatre Festival
- Sounds of Summer Concert Series
- Culture Days
- Open House Canada
- Drama Festival
- LAWN Summer Exhibition
- LAWN Christmas Exhibition
- Summer Community Festivals (e.g. Cow Head Lobster festival)