

Report 6: Daniel de Oliveira Vasconcelos, Session I. Regions, Culture & Creativity



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The 2024 Regional Studies Association Annual Conference dedicated considerable space for discussions on culture and creativity. Between the 11th and 14th of June, scholars worldwide gathered, presented, and debated various topics related to creativity, culture, and their spatial implications in diverse geographical regions. Professor Rafael Boix Domenech kick-started the discussions on creativity right at the Conference's Opening Plenary, showcasing his research on "Creative Lights and Cultural Shadows in Regional Policies". With outstanding visuals, Domenech illustrated how creative enterprises are distributed worldwide in inequality and how "creativity" is concentrated in traditional centres of cultural production, such as New York. From his insightful presentation, I couldn't help but reflect on how we categorise creativity. By looking at the number of formal companies registered as "creative industries", we overlook the bursts of creativity from "peripheric" regions where informality and individualised forms of creative production prevail. Aren't these people also "creative"?

Over the next few days, I joined countless presentations and discussions that touched on the geography of creativity. Innovative methods and conceptual frameworks from various academics helped me reflect on the abovementioned question. Topics ranged from the effect of zoning and policy on creative outcomes to "culinary trails" and the effects of digital technologies on their geographical distribution. Most notably, A/Prof Martin Arias-Loyola, for instance, presented her research about the "coproduction" of creativity in the informal city of Los Arenales, Chile, and Milene Tessarin reflected on the "creativity-led innovation" in rural areas. I also introduced my research on the "invisible clustering dynamics" of home-located artists and designers. These presentations signalled the complex and overlooked aspects of culture and creativity. At the same time, despite the excellent research done by many colleagues, I felt we still relied too much on measurements and conceptualisations of creativity that invariably give more prominence to global centres of cultural (and knowledge) production.

The good news is that the RSA Annual Conference provided a healthy and conducive environment to raise these provocative reflections. While there was a special session to discuss "Regional Culture and Creativity", several presentations from other sessions touched upon this topic, revealing its intrinsic

interdisciplinarity. The Conference was, therefore, a context where we could get more familiar with research on creativity from around the world, question our theoretical underpinnings, and propose avenues for further investigation and action. Amid Florence's beautiful and inspiring landscapes, delicious food and pleasant weather, we dedicated ourselves to four intensive discussions to advance our knowledge of the geography of culture and creativity.