



# Creative Class: The Outward Flow of Creative Energy

Yuwei Wu(✉)

Design History and Theory of the School of Design and Creativity, Tongji University,  
Shanghai, China  
2131935@tongji.edu.cn

**Abstract.** Creative class is the product of creative economy era, and it is also the power source of creative city. They are gradually influencing and changing the pattern of cities. By studying the opportunities and crises brought by the birth of the creative class, this paper finds out the problem of class isolation faced by the working class and the service class at present, and analyzes the essential reasons for this problem by introducing Krebs's creativity cycle model, and finds out that the essence of the problem is fair opportunity. I hope to explore a balanced way to make the "flow" of ideas flock to other classes, bring them real economic benefits, alleviate class segregation, and make the city more dynamic and cohesive.

**Keywords:** Creative city · creative class · urban design competitiveness

## 1 The Birth and Crisis of Creative Class

With the development of free economy, the creative class came into being. Their appearance has been given the mission of making the city better, solving the "stubborn diseases" of the city and bringing more vitality to the city. Richard Florida believes that those cities that want to stand out should try their best to attract people from this class to settle down, and the investment, planning and construction of cities should also try their best to adapt to the life and aesthetic style of this class [1]. After the concept was put forward, it caused a lot of discussions. In addition to questioning the definition of "creative class", the "creative class" also showed a high degree of spatial aggregation and political tendency, which were bound together and considered to be purely based on education level and had almost no obvious relationship with creativity [2, 3].

At the same time, "the proportion of homosexual population" was introduced into the evaluation index system of creative cities, which was even considered as a political position [4]. Twenty years later, in *The New Urban Crisis*, Florida reflected on some ideas that the "creative class" makes the city "automatic" and sustainable [5]. Is it because the "creative class" has failed to have a positive impact on cities? It's not. In fact, the "creative class" has not failed to revitalize the city. Even after many years, [6] the creative class, as a human resource in urban areas, continues to have a positive impact on local social and economic development. And where does the problem mainly occur? Friedmann divides the U.S. workforce into three categories: the creative class, the service class and the

working class [7]. Taking 2012 as a node, he compared the big cities with a population of over 1 million in the United States, and found that in 2012, among the five cities with the highest and lowest residual wages after deducting housing expenditure, only the residual income of the creative class was positively correlated with housing expenditure, while the service class and the working class were negatively correlated [5]. Therefore, at present, under the premise of limited resources, the relationship between the creative class, the service class and the working class is just like the parasitic relationship between *Cuscuta chinensis* and the host plant, absorbing nutrients and water from the plant. The damaged plants grow poorly, and finally the whole plant dies due to malnutrition and dodder entanglement.<sup>1</sup>

## 2 Creative Class vs Service Class/Working Class

How to change from this unfavorable parasitic relationship to a favorable symbiotic relationship, we must first clarify the main contradictions between them. As early as 2000, New York Times columnist David Brooks wrote: “The educated class does not become an independent group. Anyone with the right degree, job and cultural ability can join.” But 21 years later, Brooks believes that what he describes as the “creative class” has become an isolated and privileged group, which is not good for the working class in America. [8] And what happened in these short twenty years? Content creative companies represented by Facebook have blossomed all over the world, and people are willing to pay for valuable creative content. On the one hand, these creative companies have made the creative class gain a lot; On the other hand, creative content has become the added value of products, which has rapidly pushed up the local cost of living and diluted the income of the service class and the working class. This phenomenon is mainly concentrated in big cities. Hansen et al. pay attention to the migration of creative class in Sweden, [9] analyze the basic needs and preferences of creative class, and [10] find that inclusive and uncertain big cities can attract them more [11]. And this attraction aggravates the separation between classes. “Gentry” inevitably intensifies when these creative classes move into the inner city areas of these cities in order to enjoy an inclusive life. But Florida pays tribute to the economic and social benefits produced by the creative class—he more or less refers to the same scientists, engineers, designers, financiers, lawyers, professors, doctors, executives and other professionals [12]. These highly educated people are creating huge wealth, and they can turn new ideas into software, entertainment, retail concepts and so on. In fact, these creative classes, who profit from good educational background, have been trying to get their children into good universities, but they have also pushed the cost of universities and urban housing prices so high that their children are struggling under heavy financial burden. On the contrary, those poor and urgently

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<sup>1</sup> Gay index refers to the proportion of homosexuality in a region divided by the proportion of homosexuality in the United States. The number greater than 1 indicates that the region has a high acceptance of homosexuality.

areas in the city are concentrated in the service class and the working class, [13] whose income continues to decline, which aggravates their poverty level.<sup>2</sup>

The “creative class” has transformed cultural achievements into economic privileges [14]. Judging from the class segregation that has clearly appeared, the long-term impact of gentry is far more than Friedman imagined. A study by the Empire Foundation on the migration of New York City in the mid-1990s found that the average annual income of people leaving Manhattan is about 60,000 US dollars, while the study of IRS data shows that foreign immigrants who move to New York usually only have 25,000 US dollars, which is the lowest income in the city [15]. As a matter of fact, the creative class keeps rising prices through its own economic privileges, which makes the service class and working class living around unable to make ends meet, so it can only be gradually eliminated by this area. The eliminated vacancy is occupied by the same class with the same income and payment level as the gentry, and finally the residential isolation caused by the income gap is the most powerful embodiment of the gap between the rich and the poor in space. However, this paper argues that as long as there is a gap between the rich and the poor in cities, any mode of public service provision is at the expense of others. This is the law of modern cities. So there is no point in seeking a better balance to mitigate the effects of class segregation rather than arguing about the merits of the existing system.

### 3 Barriers of Creative Class and Fair Opportunity

If the creative class is a group with innovative ability, then this ability should be divided into expression ability, exploration ability, creation ability and communication ability. These four abilities are produced in four different fields: science, engineering, design and art. Before the advent of this creative era, we were still acting in disconnected islands of thought, and were instilled with this inherent thought, which made these four fields distinct [16]. Now, a penetrating “flow” has been created in the four fields of science, engineering, design and art. Science transforms information into knowledge, engineering transforms knowledge into utility, design transforms utility into cultural behavior and context, and then art takes this cultural behavior to question our view of the world [17]. In this process, this information flow transforms into creativity flow, can wander freely in four fields, which makes new knowledge no longer belong to or produce within the boundaries of disciplines, but more closely linked. It is conceivable that these highly educated creative classes become closer in this “flow” connection. They are connected actively or passively because of their own adaptability. Then, a map of the interrelationships between these fields is established, and one field can lead to revolution in the other. The closer they are, the more centralized they are. Centralization brings isolation and deepens the division between classes. In fact, due to the centripetal force brought by the flow, the creative class has created barriers with the service class and the working class. Barriers include education level, political power and so on, which are considered

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<sup>2</sup> Gentrification, also translated as middle class, aristocracy or gentry, is one of the possible phenomena in social development, which means that an old district originally gathered low-income people, and after reconstruction, land prices and rents rose, attracting higher-income people to move in and replace the original low-income people.

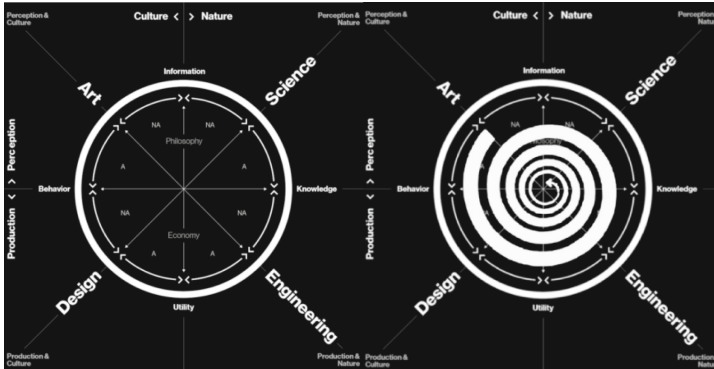
to separate the inclusiveness between classes and even cause inequality between consumption and education [18]. Florida believes that to eliminate this division, it should gather, gather and re-gather, so as to “promote integration and interaction” [5]. For now, however, at the same time, sadly, if people want to escape from the poor communities where they were born and raised, their best chance is still to go to big cities. Even though the economic gap there is difficult to bridge, the probability of upward mobility, that is, crossing the gap, is still much greater than that of poor communities: Would you like to live in a place where it is more unequal in all aspects but has some upward opportunities for individuals, or a place where it is more equal but has little opportunities? As far as the current data are concerned, most young people choose the former [19]. This further leads to the agglomeration, agglomeration and re-agglomeration of urban centers, but the degree of integration is very low.<sup>3</sup>

But fair opportunity is an ideal state in itself. Individual subjects often feel powerless in the process of discovering, creating and grasping opportunities. Even talented young people, faced with the reality of huge economic gap, will have unprecedented pressure: more wealth can make people choose their place of residence better—more rich people occupy better neighborhoods together—low-income people are gradually pushed out and deepen economic isolation—and the exclusive effect is deepened. Even if your talents can make you have a matching job, the high housing price will still make it difficult for you to settle here, which will eventually lead to you having to leave [19]. Over time, young people lose the motivation to compete, and the class solidification caused by “lying flat” and “anti-involution” has become a certain situation. Florida quoted Patrick Sharkey’s words in *Stuck in Place* to describe this terrible scene: “Community injustice is related to generations, and it passes from one generation to the next like the intergenerational transmission of genetic background and wealth” [5]. Even the creative class has been regarded as “an isolated, intermarried Brahmin elite that dominates culture, media, education and technology. Worse still, it is difficult for us in the same class to recognize our power, let alone use it responsibly” [8]. So how to break through the barriers between the creative class and the service class and the working class, let the creative energy generated within the creative class flow outward, and” hydrolyze “the energy released to promote the positive flow of the economy of the service class and the working class, instead of just” involution “in the creative class (As shown in Fig. 1).

## 4 The Outward Flow of Creative Energy

Because this paper belongs to the initial stage of research, so how to make creative energy flow outward is still relatively rough. However, this paper argues that in order to make creative energy flow outward, it is mainly necessary to find the interface between different levels.

<sup>3</sup> By Neri Oxman in the Dawn of the Entanglement. Is the Internet Changing the Way You Think? The Krebs Creativity Cycle (KCC) proposed by The Net’s Impact on Our Minds and Future (Edge Question Series) is a map describing the permanence of creative energy (creative ATP or “CreATP”), which is similar to the Krebs Cycle itself. In this analogy, four models of human creativity—science, engineering, design and art—have replaced the carbon compounds of the Krebs cycle. Each pattern (or “compound”) produces “money” by converting to another pattern.



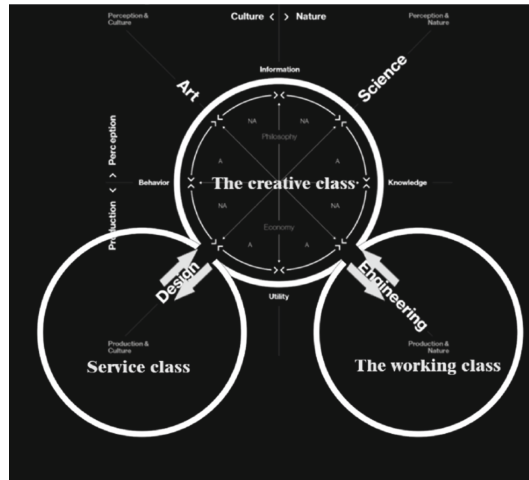
**Fig. 1.** Image source: (first from left) Neri Oxman. (2015). *The Dawn of the Entanglement. Is the Internet Changing the Way You Think?: The Net’s Impact on Our Minds and Future* (Edge Question Series). *Journal of Design and Science*, (second from left), not originally created by the author, modified from Neri Oxman. (2015). *The Dawn of the Entanglement. Is the Internet Changing the Way You Think?: The Net’s Impact on Our Minds and Future* (Edge Question Series). *Journal of Design and Science*

#### 4.1 Active Transportation

In fact, the service class and the creative class are not completely distinct, at least this paper thinks that it can be linked with the design business and open a breakthrough. This flow mode is through active transportation, which refers to the transportation mode of substances along the reverse chemical concentration gradient difference (that is, substances move from low concentration areas to high concentration areas) [19]. Active transportation not only depends on a specific medium embedded in class isolation as a carrier (that is, each substance is transported by a special carrier), which needs to be helped by improving education level and corresponding political policies, but also must consume the energy generated by a certain creative class. This is bound to cause certain losses to the interests of the creative class, but from a long-term perspective, realizing the steady development between classes will help maintain the vitality of creative energy and ensure the sustainability of their own development.

#### 4.2 Passive Transportation

Passive transportation is a mode of transportation in which substances follow the concentration gradient without consuming the generated energy [20]. The transportation power comes from the creative concentration gradient potential energy or concentration difference within different classes. Passive transportation can be understood as a simple diffusion of creative energy. However, this still requires the creative class to maintain a respectful and inclusive attitude, appreciate different lifestyles and reduce self-superiority. Therefore, it is no longer a simple gathering, gathering and re-gathering, but a kind of guidance and communication is needed to make it integrate naturally. This process will obviously be very long, but it is the lowest “energy consumption” mode of transportation (As shown in Fig. 2).



**Fig. 2.** Image source: Not originally created by the author, modified from Neri Oxman. (2015). *The Dawn of the Entanglement. Is the Internet Changing the Way You Think?: The Net's Impact on Our Minds and Future* (Edge Question Series). *Journal of Design and Science*

## 5 Summarize

Although the arrival of the creative class, for the current urban life has brought some problems, but there is no denying the creative class in recent decades of achievements. Through certain policy changes and positive adjustment, we can certainly form a city with social vitality and vitality, a city with low degree of exploitation, strong social cohesion, good communication and mobility among different social strata, citizens' superiority and community spirit, tolerance for different life styles, harmonious ethnic relations and a vibrant society. I hope that the creative era will continue to glow with vitality.

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