Metropolis on the margins: Talent attraction and retention to the St. John's city-region, Newfoundland.

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The objective of this research is to examine what factors influence the attraction and retention of creative and highly educated workers to a small-sized Canadian city. The study is premised on two hypotheses: that the social dynamics of city-regions constitute the foundations of economic success in the global economy; and, that talented, highly educated individuals will be attracted to those city-regions that offer a richness of employment opportunity, a high quality of life, a critical mass of cultural activity, and social diversity. The hypotheses are explored through in-depth interviews with creative and highly educated workers, employers, and intermediary organizations. The evidence from the interviews suggests mixed support for the hypotheses. In view of these findings we contend that the specificities of place must be more carefully theorized in the creative class literature and be more carefully considered by policy-makers designing policies directed toward attracting and retaining talented and highly educated workers.

Introduction

      This paper explores a two part hypothesis. First, that the social dynamics of city-regions constitute the foundations of economic success in the global economy (Wolfe 2006). Second, that talented, highly educated individuals will be attracted to those city-regions that offer a richness of employment opportunity, a high quality of life, a critical mass of cultural activity, and social diversity (Wolfe 2006). The paper is theoretically informed by the burgeoning literature examining the geographies of human capital and the 'creative class' (e.g., Florida 2002b, 2002a; Florida 2003) as well as recent critical interventions in this body of work (e.g., Peck 2005; Markusen 2006; Scott 2006; Hansen and Niedomysl 2009; Storper and Scott 2009). In light of the evidence we discuss in this paper, we find only mixed support for the two hypotheses. As a consequence, we see a need to more deeply contextualize the sociospatial dynamics of city-regions in order to understand the dynamics of their growth or decline. At the very least, we see a need to reemphasize theories of place that insist on its relational character – places understood as 'articulated moments' in networks of relations with places elsewhere (Massey 1994, 154) – where the spacing and timing of social life (Jones *et al.* 2004) emerge in knots that are at once economic, political, and cultural. In such knots, the interplay of independent and dependent geographic patterns are critical, but rarely predictable, factors that shape places and their possibilities for economic success.

      The article examines results from a study of the social foundations of talent attraction and retention to the city-region of St. John's, Newfoundland. The results suggest that a key factor playing a determining role in the attraction and retention of creative and highly educated workers to this city-region is its relative size and location

with respect to provincial, national, and international networks of places. There are critical characteristics of the St. John's city-region that strongly influence the attraction and retention of talent that result from both *in situ* factors (e.g., salary and tax rates) and factors that emerge from the city-region's relative location, shaped as it is by its connectedness and disconnectedness to places elsewhere. The St. John's city-region exhibits what might be called 'metropolitan' or 'large' city characteristics because of its size and functional role relative to the provincial rural-urban system. On the other hand, the city-region's small size and isolation relative to national and international locations dampen its 'stickiness' (Markusen 1999) as a city-region for attracting and retaining talent. Our results from interviews suggest there is a dual character to the St. John's city-region – as both metropole and margin – that plays a critical role in its ability to attract and retain talent. What this means is that the St. John's city-region appears to be a staging ground for the province's home grown creative and highly educated workers who envision future migration out of the province to further their careers. In interviews with creative and highly educated workers, their employers, and key intermediary organizations (e.g., labour associations, trade associations, and immigration organizations) these relations of relative city size (framed by interviewees as 'smallness') and location (framed by interviewees as 'isolation' or 'disconnectedness') were noted, both explicitly and implicitly, as conditioning employment options and future career aspirations as well as the city-region's ability to attract and retain talent. In broad terms what this means is that St. John's displays some features of 'urbanity' – for example, a thriving arts and cultural scene – disproportionate to its size and location. At the same time, due to St. John's smaller size and its disconnectedness relative to larger urban

centres nationally and internationally, it also means that attracting and retaining talent is a significant challenge. We suggest that it is important for economic development plans premised on creative class concepts to carefully consider the role of relative size and location. Creative class concepts may not be applicable without significant modifications that account for the specificity of place (Johnstone and Lionais 2004).

Methods

This study is part of an on-going cross-national investigation of the social determinants of innovation in small, medium, and large Canadian cities (Innovation Systems Research Network 2008, hereafter ISRN). A total of 15 cities are being examined. Among the working assumptions of the study is that city-size is an important conditioning factor in the attraction and retention of highly educated and creative workers. The cities under investigation are divided into the following population size classes: small (100,000-249,000), medium (250,000-999,999), and large (1,000,000+).

The overall ISRN project examines hypotheses about the social dynamics of economic performance in Canada's city-regions divided into three themes: the social dynamics of innovation, the social foundations of talent attraction and retention, and inclusive communities and civic engagement. Our paper is focused on the theme of talent attraction and retention and investigates two hypotheses. First, that the social dynamics of city-regions constitute the foundations of economic success in the global economy. Second, that talented, highly educated individuals will be attracted to those city-regions that offer a richness of employment opportunity, a high quality of life, a critical mass of cultural activity, and social diversity (e.g., Smith *et al.* 2005).

To investigate these hypotheses we draw on 25 in-depth interviews with respondents classified into three categories defined for the larger ISRN study: 1) creative/highly educated workers/employees, 2) employers, and 3) intermediary organizations (e.g., labour associations, trade associations, and immigration organizations), where different sets of questions for each interview type are used (see below for interviewee demographics).[1] Interviewees were selected from four broadly defined economic clusters identified by Spencer and Vinodrai (2006) as present in the St. John's city-region. These clusters are 1) education, 2) oceans/offshore industries, 3) health, and 4) arts, media and culture.[2] Interviewees were recruited through a random sampling of industry member directories and through personal networks.[3] Those recruited were contacted through email, and after initial interviews were conducted, a snowball method of recruitment took place. New interviews were conducted until theoretical saturation – the point at which the range of discourses discussed by interviewees begins to recur – was reached (Crang and Cook 2007).

Literature review

According to creative class theory, creative and talented people – defined occupationally as the 'creative class' – are responsible for the innovation that leads to economic growth in the contemporary economy (e.g., Florida 2002a, 2002b, 2005; Stolarick and Florida 2006; Florida 2008; Florida *et al.* 2008; Martin and Florida 2009). Members of the creative class are assumed to be highly mobile – a corollary of advanced education and in-demand job skills. It is assumed in the literature that members of the

creative class are prone to 'voting with their feet' and that their economic positioning allows them to demand more in terms of amenities from a city. In addition to employment opportunities, they are believed to appreciate cultural diversity, amenities (*inter alia* restaurants, cafés, hiking trails), openness, and tolerance. Florida warns that if governments do not accommodate the needs of the creative class, regions will lose skilled workers and suffer economically.

The creative class hypothesis and variations on it have garnered much recent attention because of the potential to inform economic development policy. By measuring creative indicators (e.g., Deller *et al.* 2001; Gertler 2003; Beugelsdijk 2007), studying regions that demonstrate creative capital's capacity for economic growth (e.g., Lloyd 2002, 2004; Currid 2006) and exploring the lifestyle propensities of the creative class (e.g., Bridge 2007; Danyluk and Ley 2007; McGranahan and Wojan 2007), officials hope to learn how to harness creativity and innovation for regional economic growth and competitiveness. Although most of these studies are American-based, academic and government researchers are beginning to expand the scope of the creative class concept to include Canadian cities (Donald and Morrow 2003; Wolfe and Gertler 2004; Rantisi and Leslie 2006; Rantisi *et al.* 2006; Stolarick and Florida 2006; Schimpf and Sereda 2007; Sands and Reese 2008; Schimpf 2008).

While the reputation of creative class theory grows in popular and policy discourses (e.g., Ashbrook 2009; Florida 2009), it has been subject to pointed academic critique. Markusen (2006), for example, argues that key concepts of creative class theory are fuzzy, lacking both theoretical consistency and empirical rigour. For example, she notes a tendency to conflate creativity with high levels of education and that the

occupational categories of the creative class exclude at least as many occupations where 'creativity' is at work, while including categories that many would not intuitively understand as a creative occupations (e.g., insurance adjusters, actuaries, tax collectors). Others are sceptical of what they argue are overly hasty leaps from correlation to causality between the supposed entrepreneurial acumen of the creative class and a vibrant urban economy (Scott 2006; Storper and Manville 2006; Thomas and Darnton 2006; Wojan *et al.* 2007; Hansen and Niedomysl 2009). Still others question creative class theory in terms of its assumptions about class formation and class politics. Markusen (2006), is sceptical of the idea that the varieties of occupations lumped together in statistical studies of the creative class (e.g., insurance adjusters, actuaries, tax collectors, lawyers, engineers, musicians, writers, and dancers) can be logically assumed to share a class identity. More pointedly, Peck (2005) contends that the reason creative class theory has gained such popularity in policy circles is that it helps depoliticize the reproduction and expansion of status-quo capital accumulation strategies while side-stepping issues of social inequality that such accumulation creates (see also Barnes *et al.* 2006; McCann 2007; Donegan and Lowe 2008). Despite these criticisms, cities worldwide are adapting creative city strategies (Scott 2006; Wong and Bunnell 2006; Clifton 2008).

To date, much of the creative class literature – both supportive and critical – has focused on US urban contexts. In addition to the critiques outlined above, there are important differences between the urban history and dynamics of Canadian versus US cities that suggest there are reasons to be cautious about importing creative class strategies to Canadian urban development policy as if these different geographies do not matter. For instance, the size and density differences that exist between Canadian and US

cities are of particular concern (see Bunting 2004). US based creative class research has

focussed on cities with populations of 700,000 or more, of which there are over ninety.

Yet, Canada's urban system is very different. Only seven metropolitan areas in Canada

have populations of 700,000 or more. These kinds of differences make comparative

research that seeks to statistically test the validity of the creative class hypothesis very

difficult (Ferguson *et al.* 2007; Hansen and Niedomysl 2009).

Relatedly, it is relevant to note that studies that pay attention to city size as an

important variable in conditioning the interactive relationships between cities and the

creative class do not use consistent statistical definitions of city size. This inconsistency

may have important consequences in terms of drawing conclusions about correlative and

causative relationships between city size and creative class location preferences. The

research reported in this article is part of a cross-national study that categorizes cities of

100,000 – 249,000 as 'small'. Yet, other recent Canadian studies on this topic classify

cities quite differently. Sands et al., (2008) call cities of 75,000 – 350,000 'midsized'

whereas Schimpf and Sereda (2007) and Schimpf (2008) classify cities using Census

Metropolitan (CMA) and Census Agglomeration (CA) data where CMAs over 100,000

are 'large' cities and CAs of 10,000 – 100,000 are 'small' cities. Given these various

definitions of city size, the St. John's city-region fits all three size classes ('small',

'medium', and 'large', see Figure 1). These definitional inconsistencies may make

interviewees' qualitative perceptions about relative city size and location more accurate

measures of the interactions between city-regions and their ability to attract and retain

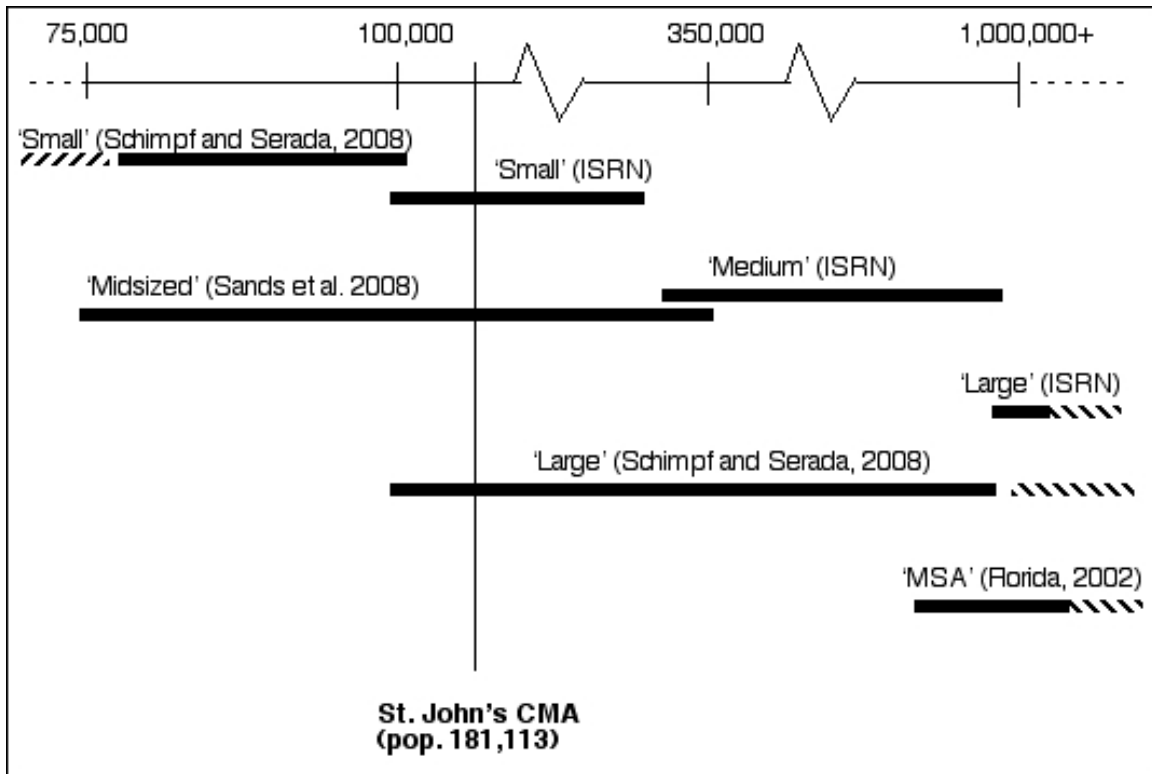talent than are quantitative measures of these factors.

Figure 1. Urban size classes in creative class research

Understanding economic and population growth in municipalities across Canada is further complicated by the urban strategy of annexation. In a study of changing municipal boundaries in regions across British Columbia, for example, Meligrana (2007) posits that the trend of municipalities to extend their boundaries, whether increasing urban sprawl, or to reserve room from growth, makes studying the causes of economic and population growth much more convoluted and difficult to speculate upon. Even if creative class theory has some validity, it is at least possible that it is a 'local' validity applying to the US cities of 700,000+ that have formed the basis of Florida's studies, rather than having universal validity in all urban systems. The distinct differences between the geohistories of Canadian versus US urban geographies are, we think, reasons

to be cautious about applying creative class inspired economic development strategies in specific Canadian cities.

St. John's within the provincial and national context

Conventional wisdom suggests that most urban centres were restructuring to accommodate the 'knowledge economy' beginning in the 1970s, shifting from manufacturing and industry to a service-based economy. But the geographies of this shift have been highly uneven within national urban systems such as Canada's, where inter- and intra-urban variation is the norm. Despite the broad shift to a 'service economy', economic and political change in Newfoundland continues to be shaped by resource capitalists and a staples economy (Innis 1940; Summers 2001; Roy *et al.* 2006; Locke 2007). As the provincial capital and largest city, St. John's urban fabric is shaped by the political-economy of extractive resource industries, tempered by the city's function as administrative metropole for the province. Except for a few select urban centres linked to St. John's along the TransCanada highway, the province's urban-rural network is experiencing dramatic population loss, a factor especially prevalent in the province's outport peripheries (see Figure 2 and Figure 3).
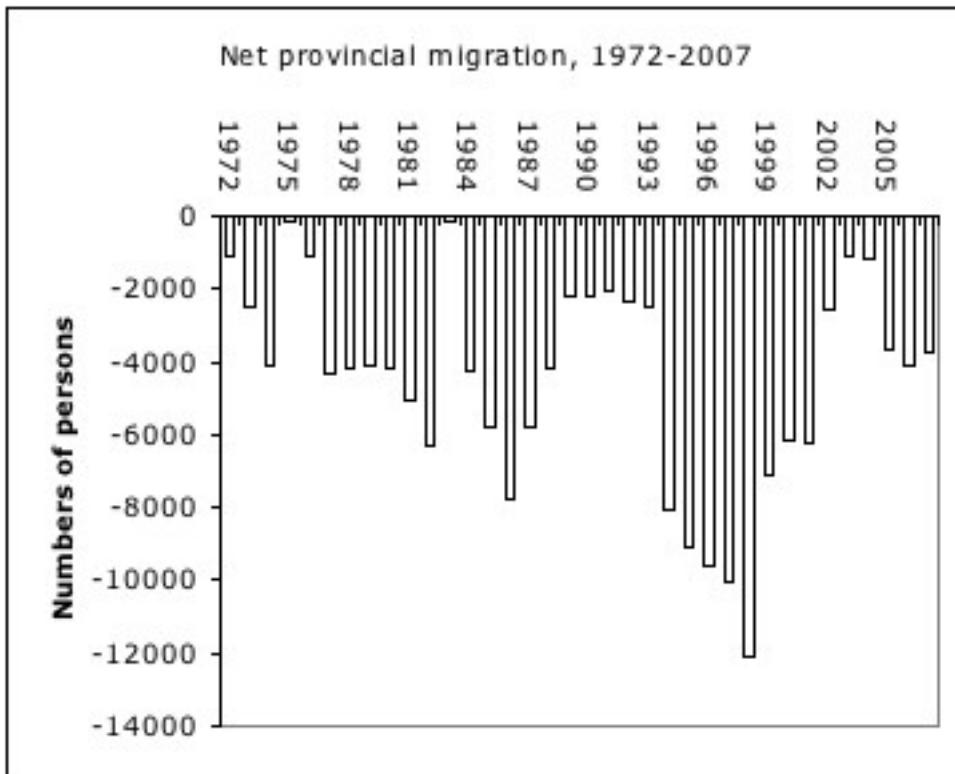
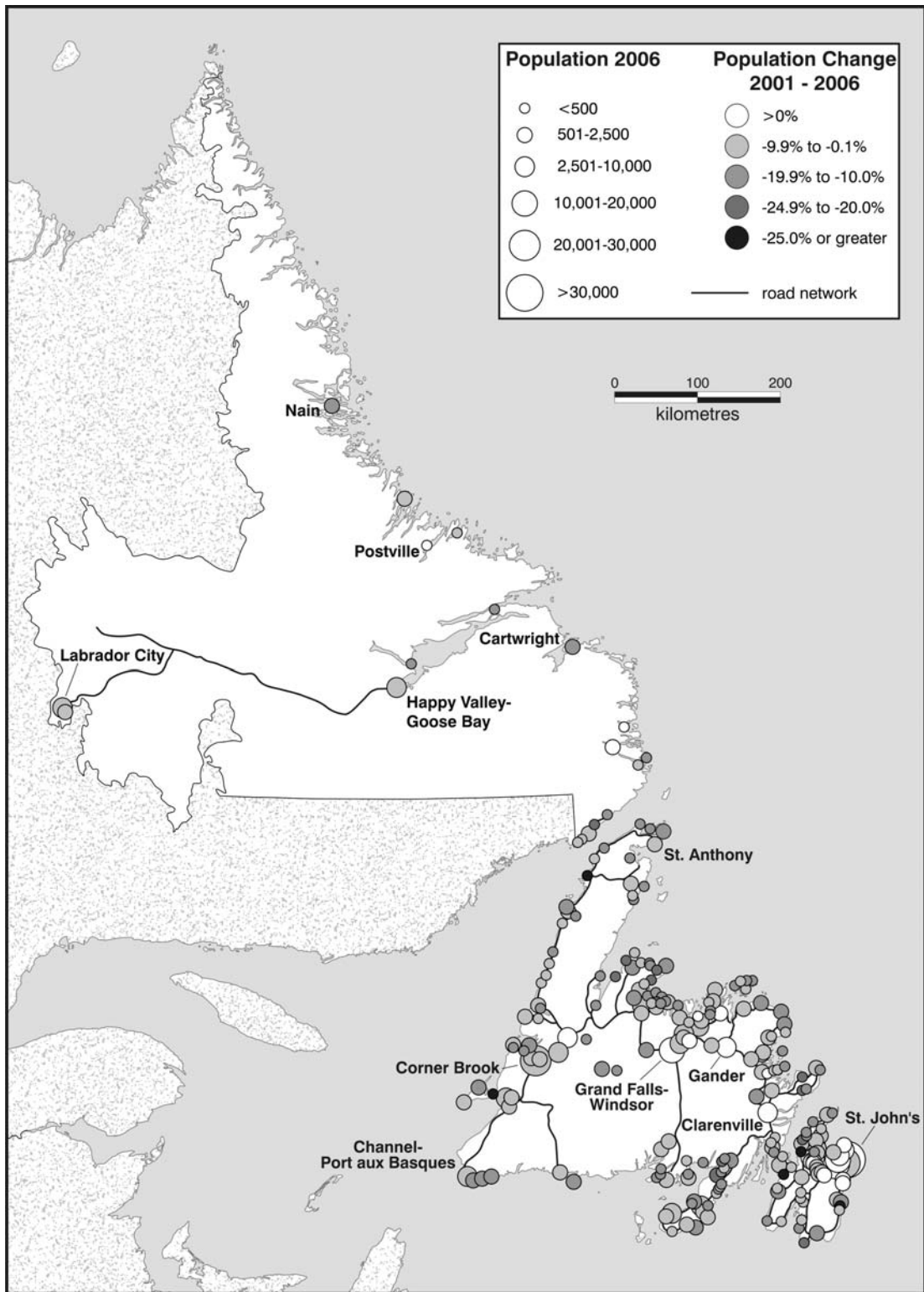Figure 2. Net provincial migration, 1972-2007. Source: (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 2007, 3)

Figure 3. Population distribution and change in Newfoundland, 2001-2006. Source:
(Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 2007, 3)

As the provincial peripheries depopulate, the St. John's city-region is experiencing new

rounds of growth and housing speculation as offshore oil and gas production take-off and

the city begins to sprawl to adjacent urban jurisdictions (see Figure 4 and Table 1). The

city's Downtown Strategy Report certainly acknowledges the continuing relevance of the

staples economy, particularly the potential growth to be realized by geographic proximity

to offshore oil and gas production that may make St. John's the oil capital of Atlantic

Canada (City of St. John's 2001). The labour that is needed to maintain the economic

growth in this cluster has illuminated the challenge of attracting and retaining creative

and highly educated workers across sectors to the St. John's city-region.
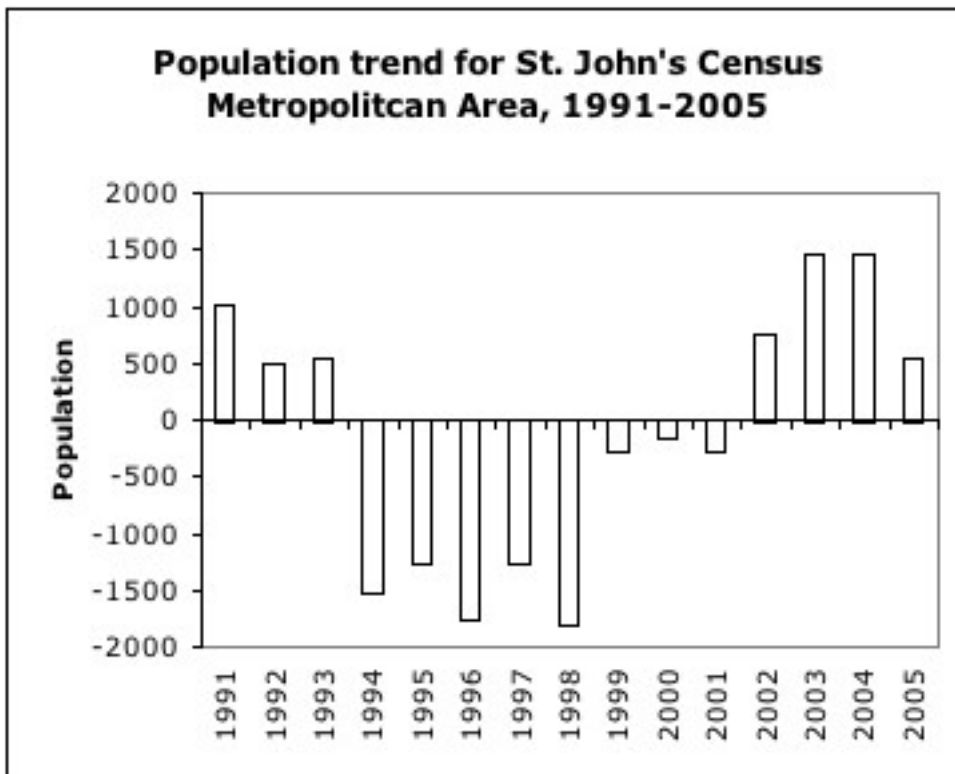

Figure 4. Population trend for St. John's CMA, 1991-2005. Source: (Government of
Newfoundland and Labrador 2007, 42)

Table 1. St. John's CMA Community Census Counts. Data source: (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 2007, 42)

	1991	2006	% change 1991-2006
St. John's	104,659	100,646	-3.8
Mount Pearl	23,676	24,671	4.2
CBS	17,590	21,966	24.9
Paradise	7,358	12,584	71
Portugal Cove	5,459	6,575	20.4
Torbay	4,707	6,281	33.4

Between 1996 and 2001, Newfoundland and the St. John's CMA experienced significant net out migration of -7 percent and -0.7 percent respectively (Statistics Canada 2008). However, since 2001 the situation for St. John's has changed. While the province continues to experience net out migration (-1.5 percent between 2001 and 2006), the St. John's region saw its population grow 4.7 percent to 181,113 (Statistics Canada 2008) (see Figure 5A and 5B).

Figure 5A. Intra-provincial migration flows for the St. John's city-region. Data source: (Statistics Canada 2006)
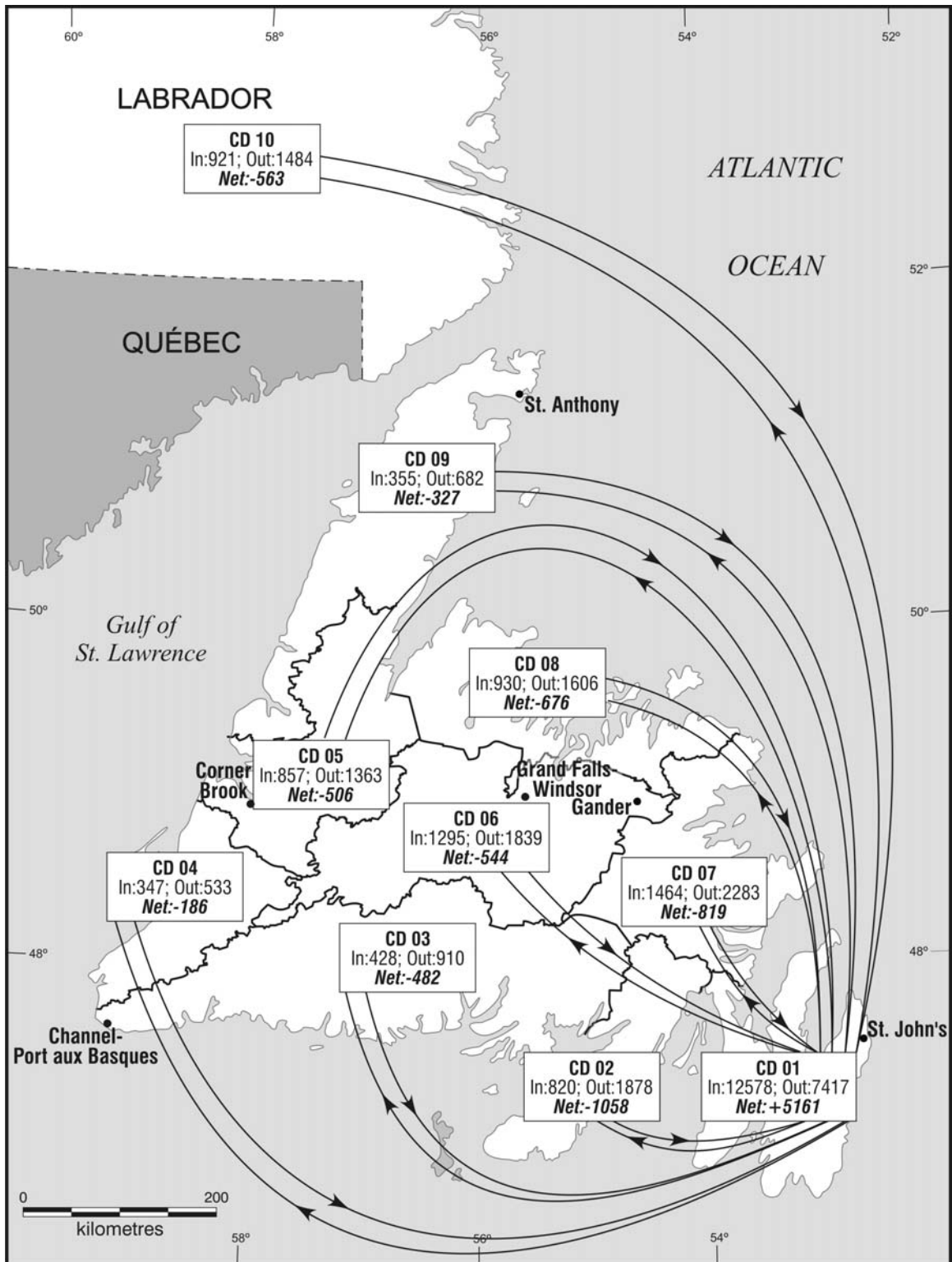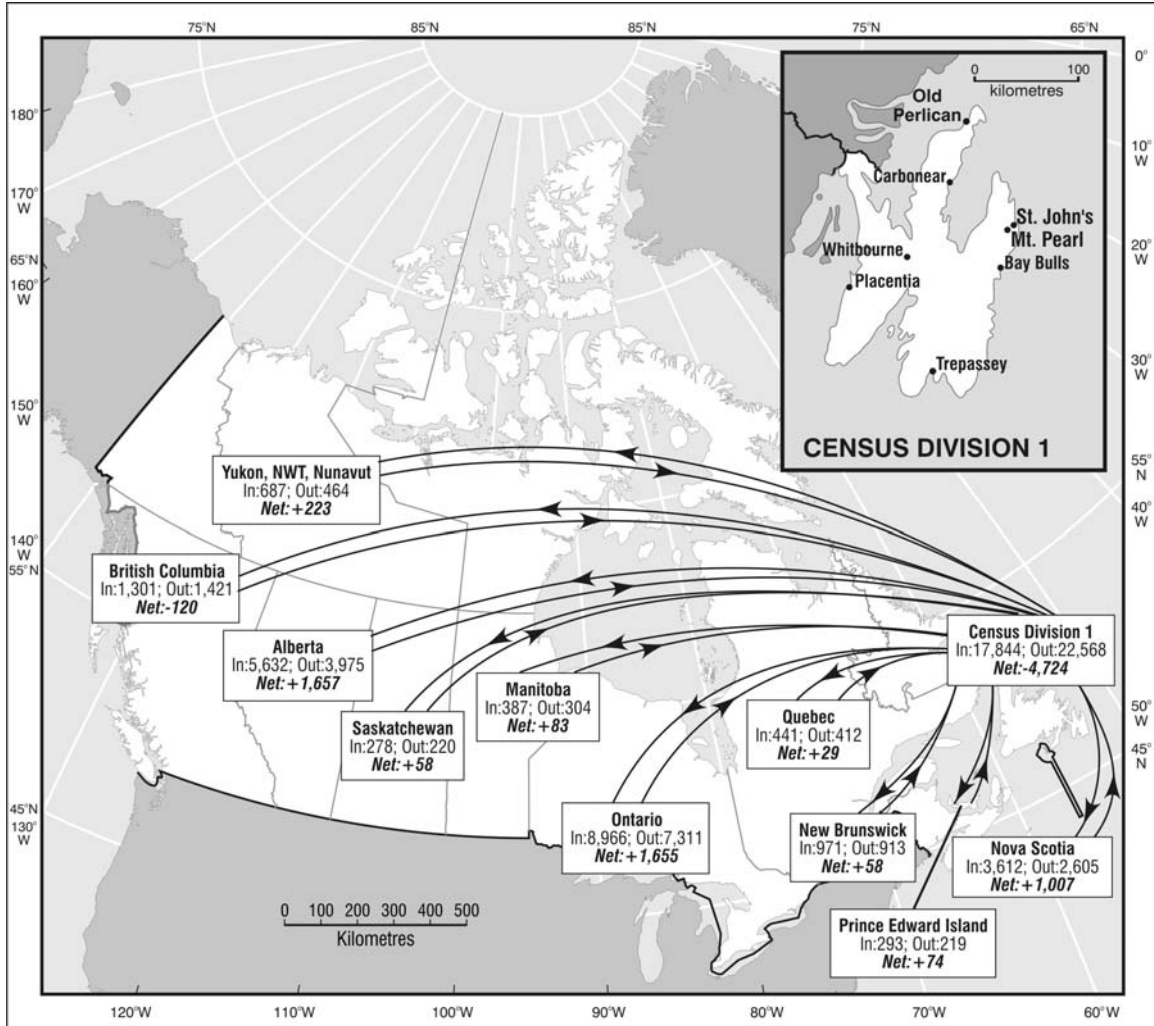
Figure 5B. Inter-provincial migration flows for the St. John's city-region. Data source: (Statistics Canada 2006)

The city region's population is generally less diverse in relation to Canada as a whole in terms of ethnicity and place of birth (see Figure 6). However, its population exceeds national averages in educational attainment (see Table 2 and Figure 7) and

occupational structure in the tertiary and quaternary sectors of the economy (see Table 3

and Figure 8).

Diversity of St. John's relative to Canada

Oceania and other
Southern Asia
South-East Asia
Eastern Asia
West Central Asia and the Middle East
Africa
Southern Europe
Eastern Europe
Other Northern and Western Europe
United Kingdom
Caribbean and Bermuda
Central and South America
United States
Born outside province of residence
Born in province of residence

0.000   0.200   0.400   0.600   0.800   1.000   1.200   1.400
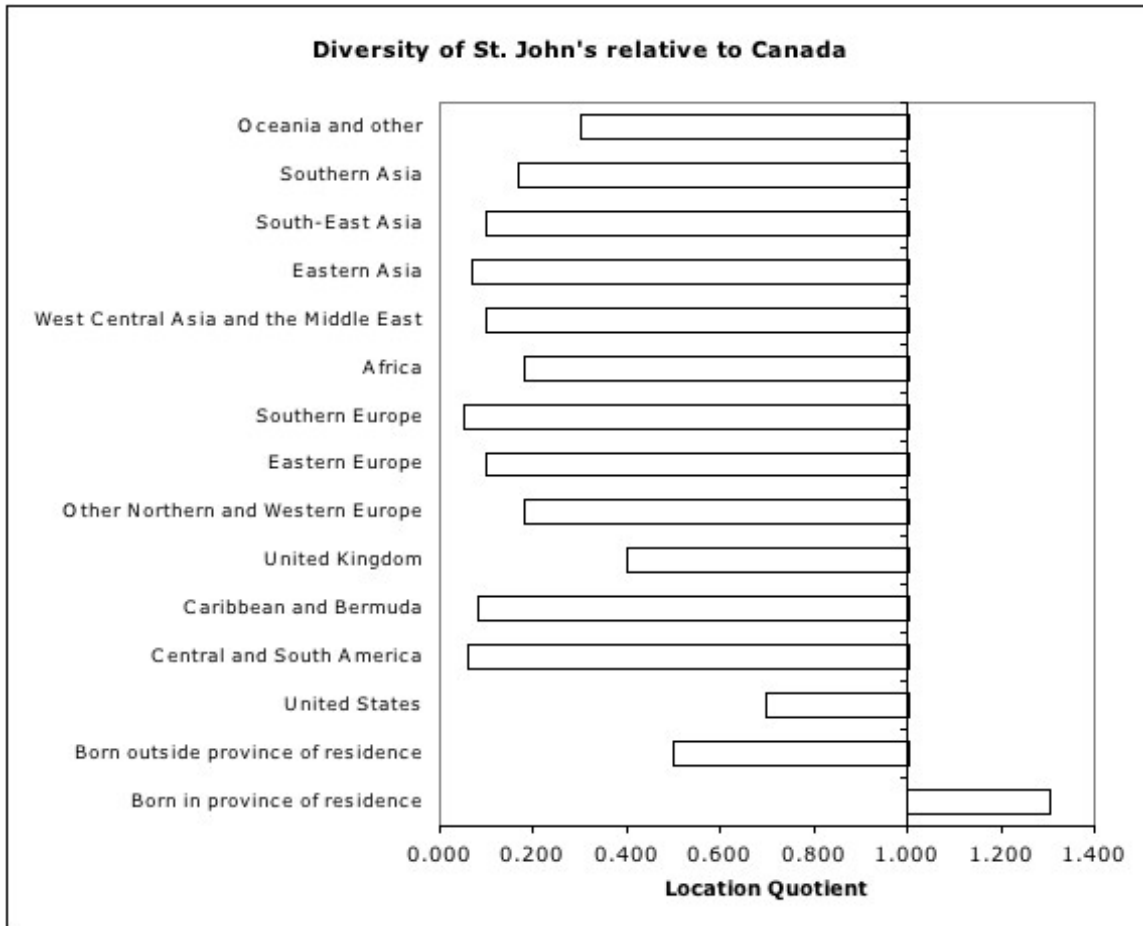**Location Quotient**

Figure 6. Measures of demographic diversity, 2001. Source: (Spencer and Vinodrai 2006, 3)

Table 2. Educational attainment, 2001. Source: (Spencer and Vinodrai 2006, 4)

	% College degree or higher	% BA degree or higher	% MA degree or higher	PhDs per 1,000
St. John's	33.1	16.7	4.1	7.9
Canada	32.9	15.4	3.2	5.4
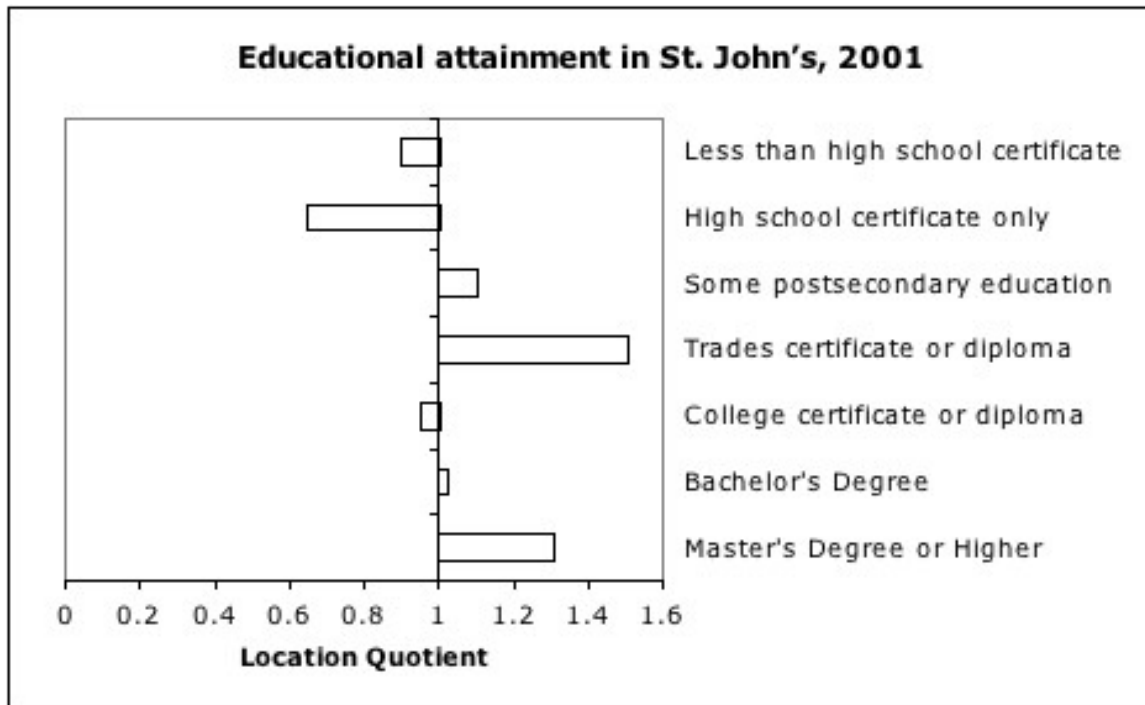
Figure 7. Educational attainment in St. John's, 2001. Source: (Spencer and Vinodrai 2006, 4)

Table 3. Occupational structure. Source: (Spencer and Vinodrai 2006, 6)

	Management, Business & Finance			Natural/social science, health, education & artistic occupations			Sales/service, trades & manual labour occupations		
	1991	1996	2001	1991	1996	2001	1991	1996	2001
St. John's	30.8	30.6	30.3	24.4	25.3	26.8	44.9	44.1	42.9
Canada	28.6	27.8	28.2	18.8	19.8	21.3	52.5	52.4	50.5
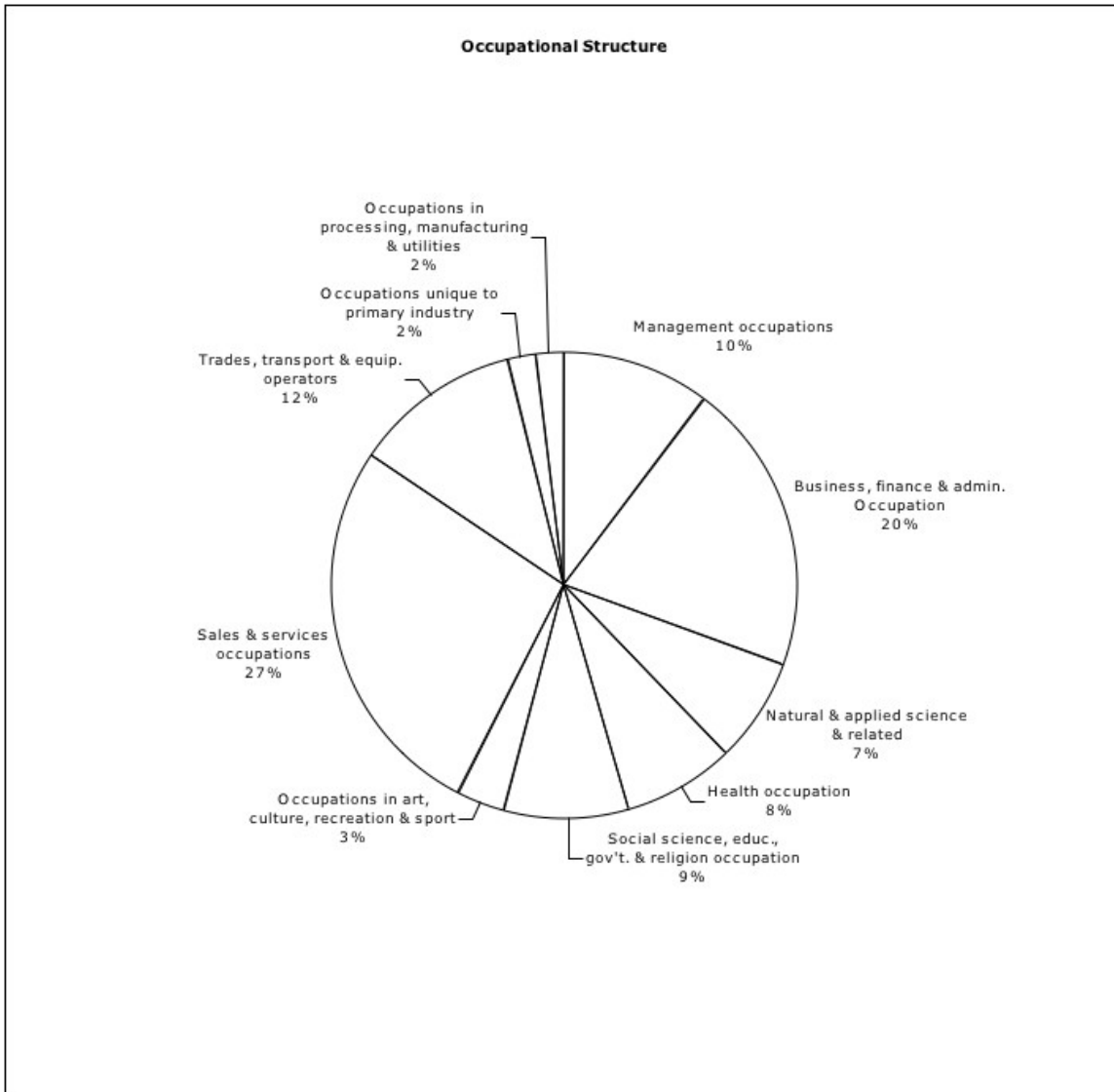
Figure 8. Occupational structure. Source: (Spencer and Vinodrai 2006, 6)

Of particular importance to this study is the fact that the occupational structure of the St. John's economy appears to be weighted toward 'creative' and service sector jobs (see Table 4). Also, the city exceeds national averages in terms of percent employed in the 'creative' sectors of the economy and in measures of 'bohemia'. For example, St. John's exceeds by nearly 10 percent the number of employees in the creative sector and slightly exceeds the national average in terms of science and technology workers and

'bohemians' per 1000 population. Furthermore, in a recent study the 'A1C' postal code

of downtown St. John's was found to have an artistic concentration four times higher

than the national average and the second densest concentration of artists in Atlantic

Canada after Halifax harbour south (Hill Strategies 2005).

Table 4. Occupational groups. Source: (Spencer and Vinodrai 2006, 7)

	Creative	Service	Trades & manual	Agricultural
St. John's	38.20%	45.80%	14.60%	1.40%
Canada	29.20%	42.70%	23.90%	4.30%

Results

In what follows, we discuss the key themes that arose in the interviews (see Table

5). These key themes are 1) relative city-size, (dis)connectedness, and mobility; 2) the

importance of social networks for enhancing economic security and creativity; 3) loyalty

to place, but a perception of greater economic attractiveness and creative 'buzz' being

available elsewhere; and 4) the lack of perceived links between St. John's as a city and

the creativity of highly educated and creative professionals. In each of these themes, the

interviewees perceived relative city size and location of St. John's to be conditioning

factors – both positive and negative – in their decisions to be based here and their future

career aspirations in ways that will likely mean they will leave the province.

Table 5. Interviewee type and demographics

Interview number & pseudonym	Interview type	Description
#1 - Jacinta	Employer	Female, 30s, Caucasian; Higher education human resources manager
#2 – Ron	Intermediary	Male, 60s, Caucasian; President of trade association
#3 - Lawrence	Intermediary	Male, 60s, Caucasian; Director of health research organization
#4 – Bonny	Intermediary	Female, 60s, Caucasian; Director of civil society immigration group
#5 – Wilson	Employer	Male, 50s, Caucasian; President of offshore industries engineering firm
#6 - Michael	Creative worker	Male, 20s, Caucasian; Musician
#7 - Jason	Creative worker	Male, 20s, Caucasian; Film maker
#8 - Sarah	Creative worker	Female, 20s, Caucasian; Film maker
#9 - Betty	Intermediary	Female, 40s, Caucasian; President of labour union
#10 – Frank	Employee	Male, 50s, Caucasian; Business development manager of offshore oil & gas engineering firm
#11 – Richard	Employer	Male, 50s, Caucasian; General manager of offshore oil & gas engineering firm
#12 – Hamish	Creative worker	Male, 30s, Caucasian; Aquaculture PhD student
#13 – Sally	Employer	Female, 40s, Caucasian; Public relations consultant
#14 – Tom	Creative worker	Male, 40s, Caucasian; Provincial government Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation.
#15 – Gwynn	Creative worker	Female, 40s, Caucasian; Musician
#16 – Brenda	Intermediary	Female, 40s, Caucasian; Provincial government Department of Business
#17 – Mark	Employer	Male, 50s, Caucasian; Bank vice president
#18 – Ron	Employer	Male, 50s, Caucasian; Bank director
#19 – Karim	Creative worker	Male, 30s, Asian; Naval architect
#20 – Laura	Employer	Female, 40s, Caucasian; Environmental consultant
#21 – Paul	Creative worker	Male, 20s, Caucasian; Musician
#22 – Nick	Intermediary	Male, 40s, Caucasian; Federal government accounts manager
#23 – Bob	Creative worker	Male, 50s, Caucasian; Business consultant
#24 – Jane	Intermediary	Female, 40s, Caucasian; Board member of trade association
#25 – Leonard	Intermediary	Male, 50s, Caucasian; Board member of trade association

Creative workers

We begin with a discussion of themes arising in interviews with creative workers. In each case, when asked about movement between sectors or occupations and future career aspirations interviewees spoke to the issue of relative city-size, location, and (dis)connectedness as significant factors conditioning their past employment experiences and future career aspirations.

When asked about mitigating the risks of unemployment interviewees emphasized how characteristics of place condition the strength and density of both family and social networks. For example, Michael told us

> Well, I think, obviously, I just have a lot of family here. I mean, my mom and dad are here and they helped me out big time; and, obviously, I just know a lot of people. There's just like a big social network, so getting a job really wouldn't be that hard. Just, you know, call my uncles and aunts and, I mean, you know, they have businesses or have brothers who own businesses. I mean, it's just such an incredible network of people. I mean, I could probably get a job in an hour…

Michael suspects, though he is not certain, that city size and what he refers to as the 'culture' and the 'isolation' of St. John's are key factors in conditioning the important social networks that reduce the risk of losing one's job. For Michael, these social networks were less something to do with the city's economy, than with its relative size and location:

> I'm not sure what sort of … economic aspects … it's just a small sort of city that you know everybody, and there's just these social ties to so many different sectors and so many different businesses. I guess, it's… I don't know if it's specific to this place because of the culture or because of the isolation, but everyone seems to be just incredibly interconnected, and, you know dozens of people who own things or hire people and put in a word for you, you know. And I don't know if it's just the size of the place… probably the isolation and probably the culture – probably everything.

Within Michael's response, then, we do get a sense that some of the factors hypothesized in the creative class literature to play an important role in attracting and

retaining 'creatives' and highly educated workers to particular city-regions are at play in the St. John's case. For example, Michael draws attention to qualities of place and their influence on the strength and density of social relationships. But there are also important nuances hinted at in Michael's response. For example, Michael identifies city size as at least one probable factor explaining the strength and density of social networks that mitigate against the risks of job loss. Yet, it is his perception of St. John's being a small city that is key to the character of these networks. In the literature, the tendency is to associate increases in the density of social networks with larger city populations – in simplistic terms: more people, more networks. Michael's response at least hints at a potentially important point: that the character or quality of social networks – not just the number of them – are important and that the relative smallness of a city like St. John's can play a positive role in facilitating strong, dense social networks that mitigate against the risks of job loss. This theme of 'smallness' and dense social networks recurred in our interviews. It suggests the importance of thinking critically about the assets of relatively small cities and to understand that 'smallness' should not simply be seen as a liability in terms of attracting and retaining creative and highly educated individuals (cf. Doloreux and Dionne 2008).

Michael also draws attention to what he calls the 'culture' of St. John's and its 'isolation' as two other factors that condition the social networks that mitigate against job loss. Our interviews with Michael and others (see below) suggest that by 'culture' is meant a strong, tangible sense of mutual support in the artistic community broadly – and in the music and film industries, specifically – that helps individual workers overcome the precarious nature of artistic employment and especially the boom-bust character of

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the film industry in the province. Michael perceives these practices of mutual support to be strengthened by the isolation of St. John's, where, because of the relative disconnectedness of the city-region provincially, nationally, and internationally, a culture of mutual support is a survival tactic for workers in the cultural industries.

Jason also pointed to what he sees as St. John's small size as being an asset for mitigating the risk of job loss. Jason, like Michael, initially drew attention to the importance of family social networks as important for mitigating the risks of job loss, stating 'Well, St. John's is where I was born and raised, so I had … my parents here and I have siblings here'. But he continued by saying that he has

> a lot of friends. So… I mean, in my field of work I do (film making) … I spend just as much time working on my own not getting paid as I do when I am getting paid. So I was going to be working regardless, and I was building towards creating and, hopefully, marketing my own work. So, whether or not I was employed, I was going to try and do that; but St. John's, I mean, it has a strong artistic community whereby… I think a lot of people are used to working in kind of spurts in certain ways because it's almost like a lot of places – they say when it rains, it pours. You know, sometimes it's really busy and everyone works, and then there's a lot of periods in between when people don't; and they're still, one way or another through places like NIFCO (Newfoundland Independent Film Co-op), or just independent groups that are formed, people find a way to get work made regardless.

For Jason, as with Michael, the strength of mutual support networks in the artistic community are crucial. Jason and other film makers manage to get work done through mutual support networks that help further their careers as film makers. There are significant periods when paid work in the industry is scarce, but Jason is still able to make important progress in terms of his career by building his body of work thanks in part to a culture of volunteerism in the film community.

Sarah, too, drew attention to the importance of the strength and density of social networks that are important in terms of mitigating the risks of job loss:

> What's so great about this place (St. John's) is, you know, you become part of this really small community and it's really wonderful and everybody knows each other and, you know, everybody supports each other…
>
> … the community that I work in (film making) is relatively small and close-knit, so there's a kind of… there's a core group of people who always work on set ... But in terms of like social networks, I mean everybody is extremely supportive of one another because it is… everybody knows each other, right, and so everybody is always willing to help out on smaller projects. I would say that for sure. When I was making my first short (film) on my own, you know, I was working with like the same people who work on the big features because there wasn't work at that time and everyone is really generous and volunteers their time and works for cheap or for free. So there's a real support network for making your own work here in film.

As in the cases of Michael and Jason what appears to be important from Sarah's point of view is the small size of the St. John's city-region. Its relatively small size plays an important and positive role in creating a close-knit, supportive social network that helps overcome the precarious, boom-bust character of the film industry. Jason perceives St. John's small size to have similar positive effects on the character and density of mutual support networks that help to mitigate the risks of job loss. He described the film making community in St. John's as

> a network of people that often volunteer and keep one another busy; and then the bigger the group gets of individuals that help, then side projects branch off of that because, I mean, a lot of… I don't know if I would say the majority, but a large percentage of films that are made in the independent world are done… are not funded anyway, and a lot of it is volunteer work. Until … people become professionals, a lot of the films are made for free anyway.

Not only do Michael, Jason, and Sarah suggest that small city size can be an asset in terms of fostering dense social networks that can mitigate the risks of unemployment, it can also have positive potential in terms of fostering openness to experimentation. Michael related how he thinks

> there is a real openness in St. John's, now that I think about it … and I that I think people are less likely to cut you down a little bit maybe, and a little less sure… I don't know if it's the size of the city again or what, but less sure of what they want. You know what I mean, you're in a big city and there's so much there. You kind of define yourself a lot more quickly or something, and you can engage in things that are specifically you or whatever, but I think maybe coming from a place where there's not as much on the go, you're more willing to be taken for a ride or whatever by it. …

[Interviewer]: So if I just try to understand what you're getting at – the idea is maybe in a larger city, there might… there may be so many more things available to you. If you really like something, you can go and slot yourself into it.

Michael: Yes.

[Interviewer]: Whereas here (St. John's), it may or may not be present, so you might experiment by going to see something that you wouldn't necessarily…

Michael: Yeah, and you get dragged along with a friend, whatever; and I think it's like… you're less able to sort of really focus in on a certain thing and define yourself in that way, and to sort snub everything else, right? Like, you know, in big cities there's like… 'oh, I only go see like, you know, vegan, straight-edge bands' or something. I mean, you can't do that here (in St. John's), right? You either go see bands or you don't, basically. So I think, because of the amount of things happening and the amount of styles happening, you kind of… yeah, people just are maybe more open to new things.

This link between small city size and openness to experimentation that Michael highlights is important to think with because it suggests a different way to conceptualize assumed relationships between city size and creativity. From Michael's perspective, larger cities present increased opportunities for specialization and the hyper refinement of musical tastes – as his half-joking description of 'vegan straight-edge bands' suggests. Implicit here is the idea that the numerous opportunities for specialization and refinement that larger metropolitan centres offer can be barriers to experimentation because they allow people to remain within the envelope of their own proclivities. Smaller centres, because they offer fewer choices (e.g., in terms of styles of musical performances) might mean a greater willingness to try experiences outside of one's comfort zone, that is, a greater willingness to experiment.

However, being in a small city is not *simply* positive. As Sarah points out, the relatively small size of St. John's and its disconnectedness from other major urban areas plays a direct role in the lack of paid employment security in the film industry:

there's not a lot of security in terms of, like, constant work, and there's not a lot of guarantees … that making your own work is going to make you any money at all. In fact, there's very little guarantees that it will. So, yeah, and there's not enough (work)… it's

not like, you know, Vancouver or Toronto or Montreal where there's production after production.

On one hand, St. John's small size is perceived to foster a close-knit creative community and a culture of volunteerism that help overcome the risks of sporadic employment in creative industries. Creative workers in the industry are willing to help one another out in ways they might not be in larger centres like Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal where steadier employment in an industry such as film is more likely. On the other hand, it is the lack of steady work in film that makes film making a challenge for people in the industry like Sarah and Jason – and one of the important factors impinging on their future career aspirations, a topic to which we now turn.

Michael, Sarah, and Jason each grapple with aspects of their future career aspirations that would push and/or pull them away from St. John's. Michael, lead singer of an award winning band, experiences external pressure to leave St. John's for Toronto and must balance this with the wishes of his fellow band members who want to remain in St. John's:

> … we had a bit of pressure to move away, from our booking agent, who lives in Toronto, because he finds it kind of hard to… you know, he could get us a lot of bookings if we were in Toronto because we could just go anywhere in the GTA (Greater Toronto Area) for the weekend for whatever and…Ontario – just so many people there, it's incredible; but, instead, we have to go up there and sort of slog it away for a month straight and then come home.

From an economic standpoint, a large city like Toronto has obvious appeal for a group of musicians who must contend with building an audience who will support their work and the less glamorous aspects of the business such as the costs of travelling from gig-to-gig. A large city offers a larger actual and potential audience and more venues in a compact area.

Yet, Michael and his fellow band members are starting to see the kind of success that means they both can, and must, contemplate tour schedules that will exceed any single city. This possibility of major success – something new for Michael and the band – is opening new opportunities and constraints for where he wants to, and can, locate:

> But we found that it doesn't really matter where you are … because none of us will move to Toronto, so it's not really an option. Thinking about moving to Montreal or Halifax or Quebec City or something, but it's still the same thing. You still have to drive and go away; and the way tours work is that… I mean, eventually, it's not just going to be GTA that you're touring, so you're going to have to be away all the time anyway, so it doesn't really matter where you're based if you're never there, right? You know what I mean?

Michael's response here suggests that industry type and stage of career are important to consider in creative class theory's assumptions about creatives' locational decisions (cf. Hansen and Niedomysl 2009). The industry and stage of career that Michael and his band find themselves in bears strongly on the kinds of locational choices that they see open to them. On the one hand are the realities of major tours which will mean lengthy national and, possibly, international travel that takes them away from wherever their home base is. In this sense, where they are based does not matter. The corollary of this situation is a certain kind of support for the Florida hypothesis: Michael and his band have a certain freedom to choose to live wherever they wish. For Michael and his fellow creatives in the band this means that

> we've all sort of, I think, agree(d) that we're going to live here (St. John's). (chuckles) Our bass player refuses to even discuss the option of not living here. He's like pretty tied to the place. And, you know, I don't know, it seems like the older I get the more I feel the same way.

For Jason and Sarah, the situation is somewhat different in terms of their future career aspirations. They both see themselves moving away from St. John's – at least temporarily – in order to pursue their craft as film makers. Sarah feels a certain loyalty to St. John's and its film community, but also has a personal preference for large cities:

> … ideally, I would love to kind of live in St. John's half of the time. I really like St. John's and I think I like St. John's more now than I ever have. I feel like connected to the community here, and I don't overly want to… you know, I don't want to abandon St. John's, by any means…
>
> And, also, I really like big cities. I like Montreal and I like Toronto and so just, personally, I see myself, you know, needing to leave this place for awhile, even just to kind of get more creative inspiration. You know, I want to meet more people and hear more stories.

But, beyond these personal preferences for large cities, Sarah pointed to city size (specifically the perceived smallness of St. John's) as a factor that bears on film making as a craft. She cannot foresee making all her work in St. John's because there is 'a really small pool of actors here'. She also notes what she sees as important limitations related to Newfoundland landscapes in that 'there's a really small pool of places here where you can shoot that don't look like Newfoundland… every film I've ever written, nothing has been set in Newfoundland …'. More important for Sarah, however, is that

> … there's that thing of like, you know, you see the same people walking down the street. I see the same people at every party I go to or every, you know, film event or every film festival or every day of work. You know, you need to work with different people to get better. You know, you need to work with different actors and different crew and different directors and editors and cinematographers, and you need to see different places; and so just for the sheer fact that this place isn't that big, this place doesn't have a lot of people. It doesn't have a lot of different people here. I can't imagine myself staying here permanently from here until the end of my life. (chuckles) I'm going to go for awhile, which doesn't mean I won't come back, which doesn't mean I don't want to come back. You know, you get stuck here and nobody wants to get stuck.

In this part of Sarah's interview the same characteristics of city size that she perceived as positive – a small city with strong, dense networks of support – are stifling her creative learning and growth. There is even a hint at the issue of a lack of diversity apparent in her description of a lack of 'different people here'. These various aspects of St. John's relatively small size are factors influencing Sarah's intention to move away from the city and the province, at least temporarily. In this sense, we can see some support for the creative class hypothesis that talent is attracted to open and diverse urban regions.

However, this support for the creative class hypothesis is tempered by the positive

aspects of St. John's small size described by Sarah and other interviewees.

Like Sarah, Michael and Jason think seriously of leaving St. John's for career

related reasons. For Michael, this possibility is in constant fluctuation as he negotiates

his own desires and career aspirations with those of his band members:

> I don't think it's (moving away) very likely right now. Like a year ago I would have
> said it would be very likely; but I think the only reason that it would have been likely - or
> the main reason it would have likely – was that… just that it's… they're (Toronto,
> Montreal, and Halifax) less isolated and so, for touring purposes, it's a lot easier if you're
> in Montreal to tour Ontario and to tour Quebec and to go in the States and tour, and just
> like… I mean, just adding another… living here (St. John's) just adds another 24 hours of
> travel time before you get to do anything, you know, which is a pain in the ass and kind
> of expensive.[4] So… and also like if there wasn't a couple of guys in the band who are
> like, you know, vehemently opposed to moving, I think it would be quite likely. I,
> unfortunately… you know, I mean I love it here but I'm willing to go and I like to
> explore places and live other places very much, you know, so I'm not terribly tied to St.
> John's, as much as I love living here….

But if he were to move, Michael sees several alternative places that would better suit both

his creative proclivities and offer more career related opportunities than St. John's:

> I'd like to live in Halifax because I have a lot of friends there, and I really, really love the
> music scene there, and it's also really close to home. I'd really love to live in Quebec
> City just because it's like three times the size of St. John's and everywhere looks like
> downtown - (chuckles) and everyone speaks French; that's just the way… and they're
> just… yeah, just everyone I meet there is just incredibly nice. I lived in Montreal for
> three years, and obviously miss that. There's so much going on there. I mean, I guess
> that's, you know, the ultimate like in openness in the cutting edge and in the… you know,
> in… and then, obviously, there's idiots there too; but I guess they're just overwhelmed by
> like liberal artists or something, but, I mean, probably those three (places). I'd have a
> hard time picking one. It might be Halifax. Our label is in Halifax. Our manager lives in
> Halifax. I have a lot of friends in Halifax.

When asked about what made his three alternative choices – Halifax, Quebec City, and

Montreal – more attractive than St. John's, Michael stated:

> Well, I think just the nature of the sizes of all of those, the career opportunities would be
> much more, although it could actually be a hard time if you don't speak French. Yeah,
> although Halifax is not very different (from St. John's) in terms of its… the way it's
> structured, I don't think, in terms of careers. But like Montreal, for example, yeah,
> there's a lot of different people. You could probably (play) every night of the week all
> the time, and there'd be different people out to see you. And, certainly, Toronto is like
> that, but I won't go to Toronto. … there's the quality of life. I don't know, there's
> something about Quebec City and Montreal in terms of quality of life and the people, I

don't know why. They're like more cramped and more dirty than anywhere else but, really, it's so much sweeter. I guess, there's just… the French sort of permeates the city and you really aren't… you don't feel like guilty for like drinking wine in the afternoon and hanging out. So I guess the slower… it's slower, for some reason, even though there's like so much… there's so many more people.

In Michael's perception of his preferred alternatives, Halifax drops out, Toronto is dismissed, while Quebec City and Montreal are described favourably. What appears important to Michael are certain tangible and intangible aspects of these cities – their larger size and greater connectedness to other centres in terms of relative location coupled to their perceived openness to creative endeavours and practices associated with ideas of 'Frenchness' (e.g., afternoon wine drinking).

Jason, unlike Michael but echoing Sarah, is very certain he will leave St. John's in the next three years. He will most likely move to

Toronto because there is a larger market for selling my work and sustaining a long career where you actually… I mean, I don't need to be rich but I'd like to be comfortable. I enjoy certain things in life, and I think it's more difficult to do consistently here, whereas I think there's much broader markets and outputs in Toronto that would make that city attractive for us who have family there as well. And, again, I'm just thinking Canada now. I don't know. That's the place I think I'll go next probably.

For Jason, Toronto, when compared to St. John's offers

much, much more opportunity in kind of every facet, I would think. Just the sheer amount of people, the productions that are going on, the money that is put into these productions; the kind of history that the company (is giving you) and security. They have more of an open-mindedness to experimentation and just… like in each genre or each thing like from kids' television to adult television to films to short films to animation, each kind of area or genre has its own well-defined, well-supported community in a place like Toronto.

Jason, like Michael, recognizes certain trade-offs in terms of quality of life between Toronto and St. John's, but for Jason these trade offs

would depend on what stage in your life you are in. I mean, you know, if you are younger and you are feeling more mobile and you just wanted to work, I think it could be good. You know, and when it comes to the air quality, the amount of space you have for your property, the safety, security of your kids – these things – I mean, I don't think… I mean … those are things that are great about St. John's in a lot of ways. Canada, in

general, health care - obviously. there's a lot of good things – but, for me right now, I mean, all those bad things (in big cities) are exciting so… (laughter)

Sarah's talk about where she would ideally like to live raised issues of economic opportunity in large cities, but also a sense that such cities enhance her creative energy. When asked where she would move if she were to go to another city, Sarah replied:

> Yeah. I'll just go by country. (chuckles) In Canada, it would have to be between Montreal, Vancouver and Toronto – Montreal being my first choice. I'd have to refresh my French, but I wanted to work there. You know, I'd love to live in New York. If there was any way I could work there or live there or afford to live there, I'd love that. Basically, a big city - like I know this is the complete other side of it. Like this (St. John's) is a small town, but maybe that's why I would like to live on the extreme for awhile. There's definitely more opportunity work-wise in bigger cities, but I just think… personally, I know that I would be a lot more… I think I would find a lot more inspiration creatively from big cities, simply because there's more stuff to look at and learn and talk to and watch, you know.

But Sarah also pointed out an association for her between big cities and creativity:

> I stopped taking pictures when I moved here (St. John's) a couple of years (ago), for some reason. I was really into photography when I was in Montreal, and I came back here and just like… I don't know if it's because I grew up here and so I wasn't seeing, you know, weird things; but I just… there's something about… something about big cities, I guess, that I find really nourishing or something less cheesy than that.

Jason's and Michael's talk about their perceptions of links between St. John's as a city-region and creativity resonated with Sarah's. For example, when asked about whether there are particular aspects of St. John's that enhance his creativity Jason told us, 'I don't know. I don't think so. Personally, I think it's kind of… it's the individual and the will, I mean, you know, yeah, for me personally.' When asked the same question Michael felt similarly:

> That's a hard question. I have to say that I do not feel that, no. I don't feel that there's anything (about St. John's as a city) that enhances creativity. I'm a very reclusive sort of creator or whatever. I usually just like never leave my house, which was why I kind of wanted to come down here for this interview. So I don't know. Mostly, it's all in my head when I'm creative so…

As if to emphasize the point about his lack of a perceived connection between place and creativity, Michael joked by saying

> as much as I'd like, you know, your findings to be that like places really make creativity; and then like the government would be like – 'oh, let's make this place sweet (so people) can be creative in (it)' – I think it's like… I don't know – you're kind of creative wherever you are, I think…

Thinking through Sarah's, Jason's, and Michael's interview talk with creative class theory we find some support for it, but there is a great deal more complexity than its tenets help us understand. Yes, to some extent for these creatives the world is, indeed, 'spiky' (Florida 2008, 19; Martin and Florida 2009). Yet each of them finds aspects of St. John's relatively small size and location that help facilitate strong and dense social networks that help them achieve their goals as creative professionals. Moreover, loyalty to place – expressed overtly in Sarah's talk about not wanting to 'abandon' the city or in Michael's negotiations with his band mates – is playing at least some role in holding these creatives in place. The struggle of personal loyalties evident here suggests that the decisions of creative and highly educated workers to move, even at an age when mobility tends to be highest, involve more than looking elsewhere and answering 'What's there?' and 'Who's there?' (Florida 2002c) before making the decision to move. Our findings on this point strongly resonate with the results of Hansen and Niedomysl (2009) who find no evidence to support the supposition in creative class theory that members of this class are especially prone to mobility.

Other issues of identity that can differently shape mobility options of members of the creative class are also important to consider. Markusen (2006) has pointed to a problematic political silence in creative class theory given that it throws together occupational categories premised on educational attainment, but which have no inherent

logical similarity in terms of shared socio-political affinities that might be understood as a shared 'class politics'. Why, she asks, should we assume that the occupational categories that comprise the creative class – e.g., scientists, engineers, lawyers, accountants, writers, dancers, painters, and photographers – share a class identity in terms of socio-political affinity with one another? Markusen's critique is aimed at what she sees as a lack of coherence underpinning who logically comprises the idealized classed subject in creative class theory.

One of the participants in our study forced us to take the general thrust of Markusen's critique and further sharpen it. Karim is a naval architect in his early twenties. He was born in Kenya, but identifies as Indian. When asked how likely it would be for him to move to another city-region he related the following story:

> … that depends, I can't just move around like you. My friend said, 'hey, let's go to New York for a trip'. Ok, that's great for them but if I want to go anywhere I have to get permission. You don't know how lucky you are to have a Canadian passport. If you go to Australia, that's great. If you go to the States, that's fine, you're one of them, if you go to the Middle East, they kiss your feet. I have to apply for a visa to go anywhere and then sometimes I get denied.

> Yeah, that's not so bad (moving within Canada), but it's going back and forth outside of the country that is most difficult. I was going to an interview in Houston, everything was already set up, but my visa got denied so I couldn't go.

Karim raises important issues of citizenship and, perhaps implicitly, issues of race that mark him differently from other members of the creative class and impinge on his abilities to reap the supposed benefits of membership in that class. A strict occupational definition of the creative class misses these important factors of identity that clearly constrain the mobility Karim is supposed to have at his disposal as a member of the creative class. Creative class theory's emphasis on occupationally driven location choice and assumptions about the freedom to move misses the complex geometries of power that

stratify labour flows (Massey 1994) thus enabling and constraining the mobility of differently situated members of this class through much finer grained sorting practices than occupational categories can account for in explaining the location patterns of members of the creative class. Karim's experience speaks to a missing component of creative class theory: a nuanced understanding of various forms of power and how they enable and constrain the geographies of flows that sort members of this class into their variegated agglomerations.

Employers and Intermediary Organizations

From the perspective of employers and intermediary organizations, three key themes emerged in interviews: 1) St. John's small size and remoteness; 2) structural aspects of the labour market related to taxes and salaries; and 3) social divides between Newfoundlanders as 'insiders' and those 'from away' as 'outsiders'.

In broad terms, St. John's size and relative location were seen as significant challenges for getting and keeping creative and highly educated workers in St. John's and Newfoundland more generally. For example when asked about particular strengths and weaknesses of St. John's for attracting and retaining talent, Jacinta replied:

> I think one of our strengths is also one our weaknesses, which is our location, being located fairly remotely from everything else within Canada. I think that that's probably a benefit for people that want to be remotely located, but also a challenge for those that are used to being more centrally located.

These sentiments about location were echoed in other interviews as well. Lawrence, for example, told us:

> This is a small place on the edge of the continent. There aren't a lot of jobs kicking around; but, when there are, it's often hard to find good talent. So you run an ad and get one or two applicants. It really is a problem, and the more specialized you get, the harder it is.

Jacinta reiterated this point about distance and disconnectedness:

> Because of the distance that people need to travel, the distance that people need to move. There's a big psychological barrier whenever you cross a body of water, so it's not as if you're moving from Ontario to Quebec. You know, you're moving from Ontario to a place that's very far away. So the distance is certainly a factor.

Echoing, the perceptions of creative workers like Michael, Jason, and Sarah, both Jacinta and Lawrence speak to the issue of the relative size and location of St. John's from the perspective of an employer and intermediary organization, respectively. Jacinta describes the 'remoteness' of St. John's in relation to inter-provincial/national urban places. Lawrence, on the other hand, places the city-region on the edge of a continental geographic imaginary, suggesting a set of international relations between St. John's and places elsewhere. In their different descriptions of 'remoteness' we see the fluid, yet stubbornly material, emplacement of St. John's on the margins.

Concomitant with St. John's small size and disconnectedness, Lawrence pointed out structural aspects of the labour market as challenges to attracting and retaining creative and highly educated workers. Above he points out that, 'there are not many jobs' and this can make it difficult to attract and retain talent who have partners and/or families. Related aspects of the labour market were raised by both he and Jacinta. For example, Jacinta told us:

> One of our challenges, in recruiting any type of an employee new to the market, is our tax system because we do have the highest provincial tax rate, anywhere in Canada. So even if we are bringing someone from the west into… and we're able to match their salary, their take-home pay is not going to be the same because of our tax rate. So that's a challenge. That's really the only thing that I'm aware of in terms of when we bring new people, what are they most concerned about. I think we have the same difficulties in terms of health care, child care services, education system challenges. I think that those are not unique to Newfoundland. So I don't see those as being any better or any worse, but they're certainly not an advantage for us when it comes to recruiting people.

The issue of tax rates raises important issues of perceived versus actual rates. Jacinta's characterization of Newfoundland having the highest tax rates in Canada is correct up to and including 2006. However, after 2006 Newfoundland's provincial tax rates were reduced and put the province's highest tax bracket in fourth place in 2007 and fifth place in 2008 and 2009 (see Table 6A and 6B).

Table 6A. Provincial Tax Brackets (in percent) for Selected Canadian Provinces, 2001-2009. Source: (Canada Revenue Agency 2009)

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Alberta	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
British Columbia	16.7	14.7	14.7	14.7	14.7	14.7	14.7	14.7	14.7
	15.7	13.7	13.7	13.7	13.7	13.7	13	12.29	12.29
	13.7	11.7	11.7	11.7	11.7	11.7	11.1	10.5	10.5
	10.5	9.15	9.15	9.15	9.15	9.15	8.65	7.7	7.7
	7.3	6.05	6.05	6.05	6.05	6.05	5.7	5.06	5.06
Manitoba	17.4	17.4	17.4	17.4	17.4	17.4	17.4	17.4	17.4
	16.2	15.4	14.9	14.9	14.9	14.9	13	12.75	12.75
	10.9	10.9	10.9	10.9	10.9	10.9	10.9	10.9	10.8
New Brunswick	17.84	17.84	17.84	17.84	17.84	17.84	17.95	17.95	17.95
	16.52	16.52	16.52	16.52	16.52	16.52	16.8	16.8	16.8
	14.82	14.82	14.82	14.82	14.82	14.82	15.48	15.48	15.48
	9.68	9.68	9.68	9.68	9.68	9.68	10.12	10.12	10.12
Newfoundland and Labrador	18.02	18.02	18.02	18.02	18.02	18.02	17.26	16	15.5
	16.16	16.16	16.16	16.16	16.16	16.16	14.98	13.3	12.8
	10.57	10.57	10.57	10.57	10.57	10.57	9.64	8.2	7.7
Northwest Territories	13.05	13.05	13.05	13.55	14.05	14.05	14.05	14.05	14.05
	11.7	11.7	11.7	11.95	12.2	12.2	12.2	12.2	12.2
	9.9	9.9	9.9	9.9	8.6	8.6	8.6	8.6	8.6
	7.2	7.2	7.2	7.2	5.9	5.9	5.9	5.9	5.9

Table 6B. Provincial Tax Brackets (in percent) for Selected Canadian Provinces, 2001-

2009. Source: (Canada Revenue Agency 2009)

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Nova Scotia	NA	NA	NA	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5
	16.67	16.67	16.67	16.67	16.67	16.67	16.67	16.67	16.67
	14.95	14.95	14.95	14.95	14.95	14.95	14.95	14.95	14.95
	9.77	9.77	9.77	8.79	8.79	8.79	8.79	8.79	8.79
Nunavut	13.05	11.5	11.5	11.5	11.5	11.5	11.5	11.5	11.5
	11.7	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
	9.9	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
	7.2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Ontario	11.16	11.16	11.16	11.16	11.16	11.16	11.16	11.16	11.16
	9.22	9.15	9.15	9.15	9.15	9.15	9.15	9.15	9.15
	6.16	6.05	6.05	6.05	6.05	6.05	6.05	6.05	6.05
Prince Edward Island	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7
	13.8	13.8	13.8	13.8	13.8	13.8	13.8	13.8	13.8
	9.8	9.8	9.8	9.8	9.8	9.8	9.8	9.8	9.8
Saskatchewan	16	15.5	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
	13.5	13.25	13	13	13	13	13	13	13
	11.5	11.25	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
Yukon	13.34	12.76	12.76	12.76	12.76	12.76	12.76	12.76	12.76
	11.96	11.4	11.44	11.44	11.44	11.44	11.44	11.44	11.44
	10.12	9.68	9.68	9.68	9.68	9.68	9.68	9.68	9.68
	7.36	7.04	7.04	7.04	7.04	7.04	7.04	7.04	7.04

Lawrence pointed to problems with salary structure when asked about facilitating

attraction, retention, and integration:

> …it's certainly not that we're paying decent salaries because, frankly, to go back to... one
> of the challenges and obstacles is how pathetic the non-academic salaries are. Academic
> salaries here are not good, but they're not awful. The non-academic salaries really are
> not adequate. You can barely pay people. Even though the cost of living here is
> significantly lower than a lot of places, we really aren't paying people enough in jobs like
> program coordinator, research program manager, database manager, to bring people in
> and keep them here. They will come here (but) they never come here for the salaries.

Jacinta also drew attention to salaries when asked about the major challenges her

organization faces in terms of retaining creative and highly educated workers saying:

Well, it's strictly monetary. The opportunities elsewhere are so good. So the top folks, if they're at all motivated monetarily, then – and, I mean, it's hard not to be. We're not talking about small increments. We're talking about huge, huge increments in terms of take-home pay with… particularly, when you figure in taxes and the cost of benefits and those things. So I'd say that that's the biggest challenge that we face.

The issue of salaries and wages being a particular challenge for attracting and retaining highly educated and creative workers to the St. John's city-region was raised repeatedly by participants. Brenda put it this way:

the lure of the west (of Canada) and the money that's out there that we… I think our biggest challenge is attracting and keeping good, solid… the young people, because it's a brain drain. It's good to lose them for awhile provided we're able to get them back, and that we can have sufficient labour supply, skilled labour supply to move our businesses forward and position ourselves to be competitive with the rest of… well, not just the nation, but I think, as a… a lot of countries, a lot of… in the western hemisphere anyway, a lot of people that are struggling with having the right labour supply … We've got to be in a position to offer wages that are competitive and… because people are no longer satisfied to work for minimum wage, so it comes down to a matter of dollars and cents for a lot of young people … well, anybody.

Responding to questions about challenges for attracting and retaining talent in the St. John's city-region and Newfoundland more broadly Richard said, 'I think competitive salary is the biggest (challenge)' and Mark pointed out, 'We are always challenged by the issue of compensation. People always like to earn more money'. Ron stated,

somebody who is trained perhaps in a skilled area … can look elsewhere, not just Alberta but look at Ontario or British Columbia or somewhere else if they're prepared to move, and find salaries and promotional opportunities that go far beyond what our employers can offer here.

Similarly, Laura, comparing the attractiveness of other cities said,

(i)t would be Calgary and, to a lesser extent, Fort McMurray. It's just sort of the mystique that's grown up around it and people, you know, are drawn by the energy – just the excitement of being part of a really big project. That's very seductive, and also the thought of these high salaries.

While Jane pointed out that,

Other things, I suppose, would attract workers from around the world would be wages and, you know, if we can't meet some of the wages that are being paid in the rest of Canada, i.e. Alberta, then I don't think we're going to attract Newfoundlanders who are in Alberta back home simply because I don't think… people, once they are used to a salary, are not going to take a major cut.

The emphasis on salaries and wages that emerged in our interviews we think raises an important point: many interviewees pointed to this issue as a key challenge for attracting and retaining talented workers. Yet theories of what factors shape the distribution of highly educated and creative workers tend to focus on three place-based factors that may work individually or in concert: the presence of institutions of higher education, the quality of amenities, and/or tolerance or openness (Florida *et al.* 2008). We do not think it trivial that many respondents highlight money, rather than amenities, as a key challenge for the attraction and retention of talent. In view of our results and those of others (e.g., Hansen and Niedomysl 2009) we remain sceptical of a creative class theory that implicitly or explicitly emphasizes factors such as amenities, tolerance, and openness as substitutable for monetary compensation in the location decision calculus of members of the creative class.   Our interviews reverberate with monetary motivations affecting the attraction and retention of highly educated/creative workers, something which creative class theory does not seem to sufficiently appreciate.

Other common themes conditioning the attractiveness of the St. John's city-region were mentioned by interviewees (e.g., weather) but another strong common, though complex, theme to arise concerns an insider/outsider dynamic between 'Newfoundlanders', 'mainlanders', and others from 'outside' Newfoundland. Both Jacinta and Lawrence spoke about this unprompted, though in slightly different ways. For Jacinta, who was born and raised in Newfoundland (though she has worked outside the province), it is a dual problem of stereotypes or assumptions held by 'outsiders' on the one hand and 'insiders' on the other that help create an us/them dynamic. This issue

began to emerge in Jacinta's interview when she was asked about the city-region's strengths and weaknesses. She told us:

> I think our general reputation within the rest of Canada is probably a weakness. Until people actually experience us, I don't believe that mainland Canada fully appreciates how well educated, how diverse, how culturally oriented this province is becoming. So maybe that's probably one of our challenges.

Here the issue of 'outsider' stereotypes is rather subtle, but it was an issue that became more pronounced as Jacinta's interview continued. For example, when talking about what in the St. John's city-region undermines its attractiveness in terms of recruitment efforts, Jacinta answered in part:

> We're still very much an insular community, still very much looking in and remember a lot of our history and… although we're very friendly, we're also very… I don't want to say suspicious, but you still… whenever you sit down… well, whenever I sit down with anyone, I still get the – 'Who's your father?' 'Where were you born?' – Right? So we try to trace back our roots to find out… it's very important to find out how you're connected to Newfoundland, and I think that that can be a real barrier.

Jacinta uses the pronoun 'we' in reference to Newfoundlanders being 'insular', suggesting she understands herself as part of that inside group. She is from Newfoundland, but has worked in Ontario for several years before returning. Her tentativeness or hesitancy at explaining the inside/outside dichotomy is, perhaps, revealing. It suggests a feeling with real consequences, but also one that is difficult to explain without reinforcing stereotypes that 'outsiders' may already have.

> Lawrence, who self-identified as an 'outsider', was much more emphatic:

> Well, frankly, there's a problem. There's a CFA (Come From Away) problem. I'm one of them. Many academics who come here from elsewhere in Canada or elsewhere, find that the only people they end up hanging around with are other CFA's, whether Canadian or not. So, unless you have some structural grounds for breaking through that barrier, you often don't. So I find myself going to three kinds of dinner parties. This sounds familiar, huh?

> <Interviewer: Yeah.>

> There are the dinner parties for the Newfoundlanders where my wife and I are the only non- Newfoundlanders, and the reason I'm there is because of my wife who has been

here for twenty years and has been adopted partly because she was initially married to a Newfoundlander, and partly because she works on Newfoundland issues and is just that kind of person. So we will go to a dinner party of filmmakers or artists or musicians or theatre people in which we're the only non-locals. The next night you'll go to a dinner party in which everybody is from away, and that tends to be an academic event. Occasionally, you get events that are mixed; but, mainly, it's one or the other and that's always a bit of a problem here. It's a problem. The more distant somebody is from here... but not even necessarily - sometimes international people have an easier time plugging in than other Canadians. In a way, there's a kind of resentment about people from Toronto and Montreal and Halifax that poses a kind of barrier to integration that there isn't for newcomers from, I don't know, say, Italy or China, who are found to be interesting and not threatening or offensive. So there is that integration barrier.

That there is a well known acronym for this phenomenon, 'CFA' or 'Come From Away', – an acronym that Lawrence saw no need to spell out for the interviewer, whom he had just met – is suggestive of the extent to which this kind of division is felt as a genuine emotional facet of daily life and that plays an important role in its spacing and timing (Jones *et al.* 2004). In Lawrence's response, important geographies of being 'from away' are hinted at. This is not a homogenous category. The distinction between Canadian 'outsiders' and international 'outsiders' suggests important spacings being achieved within and through the category 'outside'. Time is also relevant: one can, like Lawrence's partner, 'become Newfoundlander' with enough time – though not an insignificant amount.

The CFA/Newfoundlander division does, perhaps, highlight issues of tolerance and openness theorized in the creative class literature to play an important role in attracting and retaining its members. When asked about possible solutions, Lawrence half jokingly stated: 'Well, in my case it was marriage, so you have to fix people up with local men and women. That really does help… Not really.' He continued, but could only gesture to some general strategies that his organization has tried with mixed results:

You know, welcoming structures, welcoming events, events for new faculty and new post-docs and graduate students, some sort of... well, we've cooked one up, actually. We have something called a mentorship program, which is both for local people and non-

local people, but new faculty members where we pair them with a more senior faculty member. A number of faculties do that now. That works a bit, but it depends on the quality of the match and, often, it's just luck. Off the top of my head, I can't think of anything else really clever that would do the trick.

The Newfoundlander/CFA division points to a complex set of historical-geographical lineaments that crystallize the contemporary St. John's city-region as a place shot through with uneven social geographies of power and identity. In certain ways, the divide speaks directly to the characteristics of tolerance and openness that creative class theory argues are so important for the economic success of particular places. But it is difficult to imagine policy prescriptions that might be used to overcome such a divide.

Conclusions

We have offered an examination of two linked hypotheses: that the social dynamics of city-regions constitute the foundations of economic success in the global economy; and, that talented, highly educated individuals will be attracted to those city-regions that offer a richness of employment opportunity, a high quality of life, a critical mass of cultural activity, and social diversity. We have found a certain degree of support for these propositions, though with some caveats.

Social dynamics, in the form of strong and dense networks of employment and creative support, are emphasized as critically important by creative professionals to cope with the precarious nature of employment in their fields as well as to enhance the creativity of their work. In the St. John's case, the character and quality of these networks appear to be positively enhanced by the relatively small size and disconnectedness of the city-region. However, these same characteristics appear to be problematic for creative workers as well as for employers and intermediaries. For home

grown talent, St. John's seems to be a staging ground before migration out of the province to pursue career aspirations, at least temporarily. We also have a sense that the attraction of home grown talent to St. John's is, at least partially, a self-fulfilling process. Newfoundland's urban-rural network places St. John's as the province's metropole, making it almost inevitable that it exhibits metropolitan, or 'large' city, characteristics in a relatively small place. If indeed talented individuals are attracted to places with the right mix of employment opportunities, quality of life, a critical mass of cultural activities, and social diversity, then there are few likely options in the province other than St. John's. This is not to say that other communities in Newfoundland are lacking in all such characteristics, but it is in the St. John's city-region where such characteristics are most intensely articulated with one another in an urban place.

From the perspective of employers and intermediaries, St. John's relative size and location make attraction and retention of talent a distinct challenge. Perceptions of relatively low salaries and higher taxes are also seen as deterrents. But what also appears to be important is the persistence of an insider/outsider dynamic to the social relations of the city-region. The persistence of such a dynamic is seen to be a real barrier to integration that plays a distinctive role in retaining, if not attracting, creative and highly educated workers.

Our findings suggest the importance of how historical and geographical antecedents play a critical, but contingent – and we would argue, largely 'uncontrollable' – role in making places what they are in relation to other places. In Newfoundland, a staples economy remains of central importance. The diminished role of fisheries extraction is being followed by the growing importance of other extractive industries,

especially oil and mining. The shift in staples production is part of the *re*-placement of the province's population and labour force. Within the province, we see a depopulation of the outport periphery coupled to political-economic centralizing tendencies in a few centres along a ribbon of national highway, while the province as a whole experiences significant net out migration. These processes remind us that historical-geographic contingency and specificity matter and are conditioned by political, economic, and cultural relations with places elsewhere.

The characteristics of city-regions need to be understood from a perspective that they are made through their connections to, and disconnections from, places elsewhere. The manner in which connection and disconnection are articulated in place make geographic specificity and contingency crucial analytics to think with. The character of similarly sized city-regions will be conditioned by their emplacement and (dis)connectedness. Bluntly: Kingston Ontario's relative location with respect to three of Canada's largest cities will make it a very different place from St. John's Newfoundland in terms of attracting and retaining talent despite the fact that Kingston and St. John's are of the same size class. This is not some naïve geographical determinism. It is simply to say that location, in both absolute and relative terms, matters. The presence of such qualities as 'diversity', 'cultural activities', and 'creative networks' are themselves 'relative' phenomena in St. John's – they are present here more than in Corner Brook, far more than in Burgeo, but less so than in Halifax or Montreal. Whether one sees St. John's as the 'bright lights, big city' or a 'provincial backwater', depends very much on the extent to which one is on, or of, the margins. These points speak to the attraction and retention of talent, but also to the question of insider/outsider dynamics, since diversity in

its various incarnations may be measured and experienced differently in St. John's than in other urban, rural, or outport communities provincially – or in relation to other urban-regions nationally and internationally. The 'spikes' of the world are not heads of pins, but knots in threads of relational size and (dis)connection.

In terms of what lessons our findings may have for policy makers, we contend that urban economic growth strategies premised on creative class theory seem to be of limited relevance for a city like St. John's. There are three main reasons for this. First, participants in our study did not emphasize the presence or absence of amenities as significant factors influencing the attraction and retention of highly educated and creative workers to the St. John's city-region. Rather than amenities being seen as a key driver of attraction and retention, it would seem that salaries and tax rates are perceived to be of much more importance. Second, qualities of place that do seem to matter, but in equally positive and negative ways, are the relative size and (dis)connection of the St. John's city-region within provincial, national, and international networks of places. As Hansen and Niedomysl (2009) point out in their critique of creative class theory, it may be that the theory is relevant in countries like the US with many large urban centres from which members of the creative class can selectively choose. In countries like Canada where only a few large cities exist, the co-presence of high levels of economic growth in those city-regions and the creative class is a near certainty. In the Canadian context, as with the Swedish context studied by Hansen and Niedomysl (2009), it seems more likely that such co-presence represents a specious correlation as opposed to a causative relationship between the presence of the creative class and high economic growth.

Third, the St. John's city-region is *the* metropole in the province in large part due to antecedent geographical and historical processes of urban economic growth that have been lately intensified by the transition to an economy heavily reliant on off-shore oil and gas development. The extant co-location in the St. John's city-region of the main infrastructure of provincial government institutions (and regional federal government institutions), the industrial infrastructure of the offshore oil and gas sector, and Atlantic Canada's largest university strongly skew the urban hierarchy of the province toward the St. John's city-region. The geographical situation of the St. John's city-region coupled with the emphasis on salaries, wages, and taxes in our interview material suggests that the specific geographies of production activities and work relevant for the St. John's city-region are more important drivers of the location decisions of highly educated and creative individuals than are the presence or absence of amenities (see Storper and Scott 2009).

Notes

[1] Creative occupations, as defined for the ISRN study, include: Senior management occupations; Specialist managers; Managers in retail trade, food and accommodation services; Other managers; Professional occupations in business and finance; Finance and insurance administrative occupations; Professional occupations in natural and applied sciences; Technical occupations related to natural and applied sciences; Professional occupations in health; Nurse supervisors and registered nurses; Technical and related occupations in health; Judges, lawyers, psychologists, social workers, ministers of religion, and policy and program officers; Teachers and professors; Professional occupations in art and culture; and Technical occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport. Bohemians are defined as artistic occupations and include the following occupational categories: Authors and writers; Producers, directors, choreographers and related occupations; Conductors, composers and arrangers; Musicians and singers; Dancers; Actors and comedians; Painters, sculptors and other visual artists; Photographers; Graphic designers and illustrators; Interior designers; Theatre, fashion, exhibit and other creative designers; Artisans and craftspersons; and Patternmakers, textile, leather and fur products (see Spencer and Vinodrai 2006, 12).

[2] An additional 'other' category includes interviewees/organizations relevant to the broader ISRN study of social foundations of talent attraction and retention but who are outside the four cluster categories relevant for St. John's. This 'other' category includes, for example, professional consultants, government institution employees, and commercial bankers, but those who are not employed in any of the four St. John's clusters.

[3] The East Coast Canada Oil and Gas membership directory; the Newfoundland and Labrador Environmental Industry Association directory; and Newfoundland and Labrador Export directory.

[4] It is an eight hour drive from St. John's to Corner Brook, the province's next largest city. Few direct flights exist between St. John's and Canada's large cities, except for Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa. Flying time to Halifax is ~1.5 hours, ~2.5 hours to Montreal, and ~3 hours to Toronto. Flying to Vancouver from St. John's usually means connecting flights making cross-country travel a 12-18 hour trip. In 2006, St. John's lost direct air connection to Europe when Air Canada ceased its thrice weekly connection to London, Heathrow (CBC News 2008). Before the cancellation of the St. John's-Heathrow connection, it was a 4.5 hour flight to London. Air fares between St. John's and Canada's major cities often equal or exceed fares between those cities and major European or Asian destinations.

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