



# Industry and Innovation

*Special Issue Call for Papers*

## Edge: Creation and Valuation of Novelty at the Margins

*Guest editors*

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### Background and Objective

Humanity, as we are incessantly reminded, has entered the urban age. To underscore the significance of this prophetic revelation, cities are routinely eulogized as harbingers of progress and emancipation, as the locus of innovation and creativity. And, in fact, the historical record of cities in engendering artistic, scientific or societal creativity from the ancient Greece polis over Renaissance Florence, Modern Art Paris to New York's "Warhol Economy" (Currid-Halkett 2008) is impressive. Even a cursory glance at the genealogy of creativity seems to attest nothing less than the irrefutable "triumph of the city" (Glaeser 2011). More recently, though, discords began to mingle with the harmonious choir praising the allegedly greatest invention of humanity. The fixation with the unique affordances of urban places, as the critique maintains, has systematically impoverished our understanding of creativity in the periphery. To rectify this "urban bias" (Shearmur 2017), a veritable stream of research initiatives has been launched more recently to push the focus of scholarly debate on creativity from center to periphery, from the urban to the rural. While this challenge of the ontological privilege of the center appears overdue, this special issue is not intended to simply shift the view-finder of academic inquiry from one static territorial category to another territorial category. With the proposed special issue we rather pursue three more ambitious aims.

First, we seek to push beyond the prevailing perception of periphery as the non- and the beyond-center. The term periphery routinely amounts to hardly more than a residual category for all those pitiable places that, despite their historical and geographical specificities, share a syndrome, not to say a destiny: They are deficient places suffering from a fundamental lack of those quintessential urban qualities that fuel innovation: Jacobs-externalities, Florida-amenities, and Glaeser-density. The first aim of the proposed special issue is to critically interrogate this perception and to advance an understanding of peripherality as an asset (Cattani, Ferriani and Lanza 2017). The lack of "speed" might be re-read as an opportunity for reflection afforded by "slowness", and the absence of "modernity" might entice a critical

interrogation of “tradition”. Moreover, although Simmel ([1908]1992) was not concerned with peripherality in geographical terms, his conceptualization of “the stranger” elucidates the benefits of peripherality in a relational sense. Ever since Simmel’s portrayal of the emblematic stranger, outsiders, mavericks and misfits have occupied a prominent position in the exploration of creativity (Jones, Svejnova and Strandgaard 2011). Located at the fringes of the field, judgements and perceptions of these actors are less framed by in-group loyalties and preconceptions, and their “attitude of objectivity” (Simmel ([1908] 1992: 766) opens up fresh perspectives (Schütz 1944).

The second aim of the special issue is to push beyond the prevailing understanding of centrality and peripherality as adamant fate sealed by geography and history. On the one hand, actors might deliberately choose a peripheral position as outsider to shield their creativity from the isomorphic pressures of the field (Patriotta and Hirsch 2016: 882). In this perspective, peripherality does not equal the “focused naïveté” (Merton 1973: 518) resulting from ignorance of the mainstream, but a deliberate dissociation of the mainstream (Grabher 2018). On the other hand, creative agency might induce a reversal of the attribution of centrality and peripherality. Creative outsiders who transit between center and periphery might catalyze shifts in evaluative frames (Powell and Sandholtz 2012) in the course of which the former periphery morphs into a center of a new creative movement. Center and periphery, then, cannot be reduced to a static dualism, but rather are relationally constituted and functionally interconnected (Hautala and Ibert 2018).

The third aim of the special issue is to provide a trading zone between two strands of inquiry driven by different disciplinary concerns, conceptual traditions and methodological proclivities. On the one hand, geographical and organizational scholarship primarily has dwelled on the contexts for the generation of novelty (like the research on “related variety” or “structural holes”, for example) while neglecting that creativity also has to be recognized and accepted as such. On the other hand, a sociological line of inquiry has proceeded on the presumption that creativity “is not the product of single individuals but of social systems making judgements about individuals’ products” (Csikszentmihalyi 1999: 314), and consequently has focused on the practices of valuating novelty (through “judgment devices”, for instance). By probing into the interrelations between generation and valuation of novelty, the special issue seeks to elucidate the dynamic interdependencies between center and periphery: Although peripherality might benefit the inception of novelty, centrality is essential for the “nexus work” (Lingo and O’Mahony 2010) between creator and audience to authenticate the value of the novelty (Sgourev 2015). These negotiations of value habitually are framed by “cicerones” who dispose of the symbolic resources of the center to validate novelty (Karpik 2010).

## Research Topics

We invite conceptual and empirical contributions that:

- advance novel approaches for the analysis of creativity and innovation based on the specific affordances of peripheries;
- theorize the suppression of creativity and innovation by metropolitan orthodoxies and mainstream field-configuring events;
- employ a center-periphery understanding that is sensitive to the interdependent dynamics between generation of ideas (in the periphery) and consecration of concepts (in the center);
- do not limit themselves to a physical understanding of peripheries, but explore relational peripheries that might be located right in the heart of metropolises (like spaces for experimentation);
- that extend the empirical study of creativity from generative to evaluative dynamics.

## Important deadlines

- Submissions to the Special Issue due by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020
- Publication of the Special Issue in 2021

## Related events

“Edge: Creation and valuation of novelty at the margins”  
International Conference, 21- 22 November 2019, Berlin  
<http://edge-conference.de>

“The (silent) triumph of the periphery”  
Two sessions at the 5<sup>th</sup> Global Conference of Economic Geography, 24-28 July 2018, Cologne

## Submission Process

Paper submissions will undergo rigorous editorial screening and double-blind peer review by a minimum of two recognized scholars. The standard requirements of Industry and Innovation for submissions apply. Please consult the journal submission guidelines available at <http://www.industryandinnovation.net>.

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