CREATIVE WORKERS' SENSE OF PLACE ASSOCIATED WITH CULTURAL CREATIVE CLUSTERS : A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

SENSO DE LUGAR DOS TRABALHADORES CRIATIVOS ASSOCIADO A NÚCLEOS CRIATIVOS CULTURAIS: UMA REVISÃO SISTEMÁTICA

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Abstract

This study presents a systematic literature review exploring the relationship between creative workers' sense of place (SoP) and the development of Cultural and Creative Clusters (CCCs). While CCCs are widely recognized for their role in driving innovation and urban economic growth, limited research has examined how SoP, comprising place attachment, place identity, and place dependence, influences both the career trajectories of creative professionals and the sustainability of CCCs. SoP shapes creative workers' professional identity, sense of belonging, and collaborative engagement, while simultaneously enhancing the cultural distinctiveness, attractiveness, and resilience of CCCs. To investigate this relationship, the study reviewed 62 peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2015 and 2024. The synthesis reveals that high-quality built environments, inclusive social settings, and culturally rich urban experiences significantly enhance creative

Resumo

Este estudo apresenta uma revisão sistemática da literatura que explora a relação entre o senso de lugar (SdP) de trabalhadores criativos e o desenvolvimento de Clusters Culturais e Criativos (CCCs). Embora os CCCs sejam amplamente reconhecidos por seu papel em impulsionar a inovação e o crescimento econômico urbano, poucas pesquisas examinaram como o SdP, que engloba apego ao lugar, identidade com o lugar e dependência do lugar, influencia tanto as trajetórias de carreira de profissionais criativos quanto a sustentabilidade dos CCCs. O SdP molda a identidade profissional, o senso de pertencimento e o engajamento colaborativo de trabalhadores criativos, ao mesmo tempo que aprimora a singularidade cultural, a atratividade e a resiliência dos CCCs. Para investigar essa relação, o estudo revisou 62 artigos de periódicos com revisão por pares, publicados entre 2015 e 2024. A síntese revela

workers' engagement, satisfaction, and long-term commitment to place. Additionally, local heritage and urban identity are shown to play a pivotal role in shaping the global competitiveness of CCCs. The study proposes a three-dimensional conceptual framework linking SoP with creative industry agglomeration, offering new insights into how emotional, cultural, and functional place-based factors influence the spatial behavior of creative workers. The findings underscore the importance of integrating SoP into urban planning and cultural policy to attract and retain creative talent, strengthen place-based cultural ecosystems, and support the sustainable evolution of CCCs. This research contributes to the growing discourse on creative urbanism by bridging human-place relationships with cultural cluster development.

Keywords: Cultural Creative Clusters. Creative Workers. Sense of Place.

que ambientes construídos de alta qualidade, ambientes sociais inclusivos e experiências urbanas culturalmente ricas aumentam significativamente o engajamento, a satisfação e o compromisso de longo prazo dos trabalhadores criativos com o lugar. Além disso, o patrimônio local e a identidade urbana demonstram desempenhar um papel fundamental na formação da competitividade global dos CCCs. O estudo propõe uma estrutura conceitual tridimensional que vincula o Senso de Lugar (SoP) à aglomeração da indústria criativa, oferecendo novas perspectivas sobre como fatores emocionais, culturais e funcionais baseados no local influenciam o comportamento espacial dos trabalhadores criativos. Os resultados destacam a importância de integrar o SoP ao planejamento urbano e às políticas culturais para atrair e reter talentos criativos, fortalecer os ecossistemas culturais locais e apoiar a evolução sustentável dos Aglomerados Culturais Criativos (ACCs). Esta pesquisa contribui para o crescente debate sobre urbanismo criativo, conectando as relações entre humanos e lugares ao desenvolvimento de aglomerados culturais.

Palavras-chave: *Aglomerados Culturais Criativos. Trabalhadores Criativos. Senso de Lugar.*

1 INTRODUCTION

In the era of innovation, the creative and cultural industries are increasingly becoming key components of high-quality urban spaces and regional economic development (O'Callaghan, 2010; Kashkouli, 2018). Cultural Creative Clusters (CCCs) have emerged as a popular strategy for local development (Chapain, 2020), supported by the built environment, networks, and technology that permeate every stage of creativity from generation and production to dissemination. Place identity supports creative activities during the ideation phase (Granpayehvaghei, 2022), while Sense of Place (SoP) shapes individual and collective identities during the dissemination and collaboration phases (Bhansing, 2020; Fan, 2023). SoP has thus become a crucial pathway for promoting regional development within CCCs (Gainza, 2018).

SoP encompasses meanings, beliefs, values, emotions, and symbols that individuals or groups associate with specific locations (Ridgway & Kirk, 2021; Ayudhya, 2024). It includes cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of human-place relationships manifesting as place attachment, place identity, and place dependence (Isa, 2022; Meetiyagoda, 2024). These dimensions reflect the distinctiveness of locations and extend the concept's applicability across varied urban themes and disciplines. The SoP significantly influences both the career development of creative workers and the evolution of CCCs. It contributes to identity recognition, emotional belonging, and professional engagement (Ridgway & Kirk, 2021; Tan, 2023). In dense creative economies, shared spaces, cultural interaction, and local engagement promote a sense of belonging and self-efficacy (Bhansing, 2020). Embedded local identity and collaborative networks enhance CCC's branding and global competitiveness (Rodrigues, 2021). Moreover, creative professionals are more likely to invest long-term in environments where they experience strong SoP, especially in regions characterized by high place quality and interdisciplinary potential (Bhansing, 2020). Therefore, a framework that integrates place attachment, identity, and dependence can inform how SoP drives creative agglomeration and development strategies (Esmaeilpoorarabi, 2016).

Despite growing interest, the relationship between creative workers' SoP and CCCs remains underexplored. Prior studies have separately addressed CCCs or SoP but rarely investigated their intersection. A preliminary review found only 7 relevant literature reviews (Table 1), revealing significant research gaps in how emotional, cognitive, and functional relationships with place influence CCC sustainability and innovation.

This study aims to systematically explore the dynamic relationship between creative workers' SoP and the development of CCCs. While CCCs have been widely recognized as engines of innovation and urban regeneration, there remains a significant gap in understanding how creative individuals' emotional, cognitive, and functional relationships with place influence both their personal trajectories and the vitality of the clusters they inhabit. Accordingly, this research sets out to examine how the components of SoP, namely, place attachment, place identity, and place dependence, shape the career development, professional identity, and social integration of creative workers within CCCs. It further seeks to investigate how these place-based experiences contribute to the emergence, branding, and sustainability of CCCs as innovation ecosystems. To address these aims, the study develops a comprehensive theoretical framework that explains how SoP acts as both a driver and outcome of creative

clustering processes. In doing so, the research aspires to illuminate the mutual reinforcement between creative individuals and the urban contexts they shape and are shaped by.

This research makes several notable contributions to the existing body of literature in urban studies, cultural geography, and creative economy research. First, it bridges two previously under-connected fields, SoP and CCCs, by systematically reviewing and synthesizing their intersection. Through this synthesis, the study provides an integrated theoretical framework that captures how emotional bonds, cultural identity, and functional dependencies collectively shape the spatial preferences and collaborative behaviors of creative professionals. Second, the research introduces a multidimensional understanding of SoP within CCCs, clarifying its role in fostering place-based innovation, community cohesion, and urban distinctiveness. Third, the study offers practical value for policymakers and urban planners by highlighting how spatial design, inclusive cultural environments, and heritage narratives can be strategically employed to attract and retain creative talent. Lastly, the article stands out methodologically by applying the PRISMA 2021 framework to screen and analyze 63 peer-reviewed journal articles spanning one decade, thereby offering a rigorous and reliable foundation for future empirical research. Together, these contributions position the study as a foundational reference for scholars and practitioners interested in the cultural and spatial dynamics of the creative city.

Table 1

A Comparative Analysis of Related Reviews

Keyword	Descriptive components	Key Findings	Reference
Sense of Place (SoP)	Interaction with a physical environment and the meanings assigned to it by individuals or society.	SoP toolkit, a practical resource to identify and communicate the unique features of a destination, including cultural, natural, and social attributes.	Jarratt et al. (2019)
	(i) Community attachment, sense of community, place identity, place dependence, and SoP are commonly employed to conceptualize and describe place attachment. (ii) Place attachment refers to the relationship between individuals and their environment. Most definitions emphasize the emotional aspects associated with a specific place.	Empirical evidence shows a significant relationship between place attachment and behaviors	Dang & Weiss (2021)
	A multidimensional construct that describes the relationships and meanings individuals or communities attribute to a specific place, involving emotional, cognitive, and conative dimensions.	A three-theme framework that integrates attachment, identity, and satisfaction to provide a comprehensive view of sense of place.	Erfani (2022)

Cultural Creative Clusters (CCCs)	Creative spaces are physical environments of varying scales designed to foster creativity and innovation, encompassing carefully planned architectural layouts and meticulously arranged furniture. These spaces are widely utilized in educational institutions and corporate environments.	A well-designed workspace can stimulate users' creativity and promote innovation.	Thoring et al. (2019)
	Transforming localized clusters into hubs for cultural and creative activities can enhance collaboration and innovation while fostering a sense of cultural identity among local residents.	The essential features of creative spaces include comfort, safety, stimulation, social dimensions, flexibility, and cultural attributes.	Thoring et al. (2020)
	Localized areas that serve as catalysts for cultural and creative activities.	(i) Conceptual Ambiguity in CCC Research (ii) Evolution of CCC-Related Concepts (iii) Key Themes and Dimensions Identified (iv) Methodological Fragmentation (v) Need for a Renewed Research Agenda	Chapain & Sagot-Duvauroux (2020)
	An area that integrates physical spaces, design elements, and environments.	(i) Shift in Innovation Cluster Models (ii) Variation Across Contexts (iii) Holistic Typology Framework (iv) 28 Key Indicators Identified	Yigitcanlar et al. (2020)

## 2 THE EMERGENCE OF SENSE OF PLACE AND ITS ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CREATIVE CITIES

SoP has emerged as a pivotal concept across disciplines such as urban studies, environmental psychology, and cultural geography. SoP refers to the meanings, beliefs, emotions, values, and symbolic associations that individuals and communities ascribe to particular locations (Ridgway & Kirk, 2021; Ayudhya, 2024). In the context of creative city development, SoP functions as a crucial driver of emotional attachment, identity formation, and civic engagement factors that underpin the success and sustainability of CCCs.

As illustrated by the keyword co-occurrence network generated in CiteSpace (Figure 1), core research themes related to SoP include place attachment, place identity, place dependence, community, and satisfaction. These interconnected concepts reflect the multidimensional nature of SoP and its integral role in shaping the social, emotional, and cultural architecture of creative urban environments.

Figure 1

Keyword Co-Occurrence Network of SoP Research (2015–2024)

The evolution of SoP-related scholarship is further visualized in the timeline diagram (Figure 2), showing increasing academic attention to themes such as city identity, place attachment, and pro-environmental behavior from 2015 to 2024. This growth reflects an expanding recognition of SoP's relevance to urban regeneration, placemaking, and the strategic development of CCCs.

SoP plays a multifaceted role in the development of creative cities. It contributes to the construction of local narratives and symbolic meanings of place that shape urban identity and cultural heritage. These symbolic frameworks support efforts in place branding, civic pride, and global competitiveness. Furthermore, SoP fosters co-creation and participatory governance by engaging local communities, creative workers, and stakeholders in shaping and managing urban creative spaces. This participatory dimension is vital for embedding social inclusion and innovation in local development processes.

In addition, the rising prominence of ecological and sustainability-related keywords in SoP literature signals a deepening alignment between SoP and sustainable urban development. By promoting environmental stewardship and long-term community

commitment, SoP offers a valuable framework for cultivating ecological responsibility within creative cities.

Figure 2

Timeline View of SoP Research Themes (2015–2024)
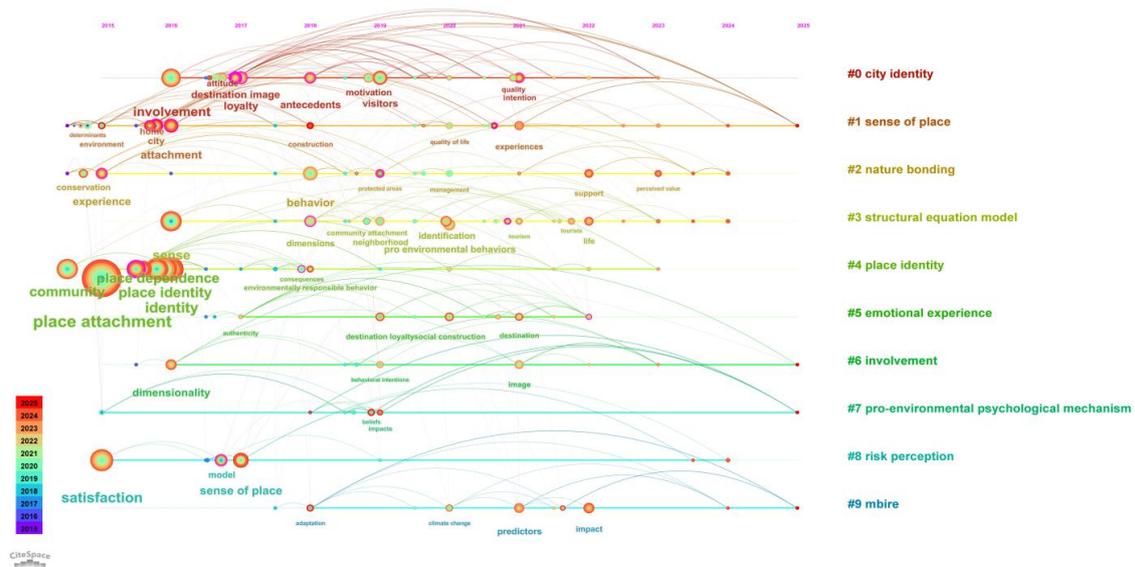
In conclusion, SoP encompassing emotional, cognitive, and functional connections to place has become foundational in shaping the cultural, social, and spatial dimensions of creative cities. It contributes to cultural sustainability, reinforces the rootedness and agency of creative professionals, and facilitates collaborative urban transformation. These insights align directly with the research objectives outlined in the Introduction, particularly regarding the investigation of how place-based experiences influence both career development trajectories and the evolution of CCCs as socio-cultural ecosystems. However, further research is warranted to understand how SoP can be actively cultivated and strategically integrated into policy frameworks to enhance long-term inclusivity, resilience, and innovation in creative urban contexts.

3 THE CONCEPT OF CULTURAL CREATIVE CLUSTERS (CCCS)

Creative and cultural industries have become integral components of high-quality urban environments and drivers of regional economic development (O'Callaghan, 2010; Kashkouli, 2018). The relationship between creativity and place is inherently

multidimensional, shaped by the interplay of the built environment, social networks, and technology. Across the phases of creativity generation, production, and dissemination, place identity plays a critical role in supporting innovation through localized networks of trust and collaboration (Granpayehvaghei, 2022).

The development of CCCs requires careful balancing between material infrastructure and cultural identity, often benefiting from diverse cultural expressions and heritage (Thoring, 2020). Key urban strategies for enhancing CCCs include cultivating place branding through high-end cultural amenities (Ridgway, 2021) and leveraging the Experience Economy to attract tourism, talent, and investment (Pasalar, 2019). Technology, as a conduit for knowledge, facilitates knowledge-driven urbanism and fosters the sustainable development of innovative spaces (Morisson, 2019; Maddah, 2023). Moreover, external cultural linkages such as international collaborations and cultural exchanges further contribute to the resilience and continuity of CCCs (Adu-McVie, 2021).

A longstanding debate in creative city policy is whether development should be place-centered or people-centered (Fang, 2022). From a place-centered perspective, CCCs can be understood through a three-tiered spatial typology:

i.   First Space: Residential zones that accommodate diverse housing preferences and provide a stable living environment for creative professionals (Lawton et al., 2013; Granpayehvaghei, 2022).

ii.   Second Space: Work-oriented environments such as co-working hubs, innovation labs, and creative studios, where professional interaction and knowledge production occur (Thoring, 2019; Labib, 2023)

iii. Third Space: Informal social venues such as cafés, bookstores, and art galleries that exist beyond home and work. These act as Centers of Community Vitality, enabling informal learning, creative networking, and social cohesion (Esmaeilpoorarabi, 2018; Shen, 2023).

The Third spaces, in particular, are instrumental in the transfer of tacit and explicit knowledge, identity formation, and the cultivation of lifestyle-oriented urban experiences (He & Gebhardt, 2014).

On the other hand, the people-centered approach, best exemplified by Florida's Creative Class Theory, emphasizes the centrality of creative individuals in driving urban transformation. It argues that creative professionals seek authentic, vibrant urban

lifestyles that align with their values and aspirations (Ferreira et al., 2019; Florida, 2008). This class tends to cluster in environments that offer distinctive cultural identities and strong SoP factors that reflect deeper pursuits of self-expression, identity development, and creative freedom.

Together, these perspectives illustrate the importance of place-based experiences and spatial quality in the formation and sustainability of CCCs. Whether approached from the lens of place or people, SoP emerges as a foundational element in both conceptualizations, underscoring its critical role in attracting, retaining, and empowering creative workers within dynamic urban ecosystems.

3 METHODOLOGY

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to synthesize research on the relationship between creative workers' SoP and the development of CCCs. The SLR approach is appropriate for conceptually fragmented topics spanning urban studies, cultural geography, and creative economy research, to consolidate existing knowledge, identify research gaps, and propose an integrated framework. The review follows the PRISMA 2020 (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines to ensure transparency and reproducibility in the selection and synthesis process. The complete workflow is illustrated in Figure 3.

3.1 Database selection and search procedure

Three comprehensive academic databases, Web of Science, Scopus, and ProQuest, were selected to ensure multidisciplinary coverage of relevant peer-reviewed research. The search was conducted in January 2025, targeting studies published between 2015 and 2024, thus covering two decades of literature relevant to the evolution of CCCs and place-based creative policy.

The search query was constructed using Boolean operators and refined through iterative testing. The final query syntax applied across all databases was: ("Cultural Creative Clusters" OR "Innovation District" OR "Innovation Cluster" OR "Creative Space") AND ("Creative Workers" OR "Knowledge Workers" OR "Creative

Entrepreneurs") AND ("Sense of Place" OR "Place Attachment" OR "Place Identity" OR "Place Dependence"). Filters applied:

- Language: English
- Document type: Peer-reviewed journal articles
- Disciplinary categories: Urban studies, planning, architecture, cultural geography, creative industries

The initial search returned 162 records: 86 from Web of Science, 43 from Scopus, and 33 from ProQuest. After removing 33 duplicates, 129 unique articles were retained for screening.

4 INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

Articles were evaluated in three stages: title, abstract, and full text using a structured framework adapted from Wen (2012). Inclusion and exclusion criteria are presented in Table 2.

After the title and abstract screening, 68 articles were excluded for failing to meet core conceptual criteria. The full texts of 61 articles were retrieved for detailed assessment. Of these, 3 could not be accessed, and 37 were excluded after full-text review for insufficient coverage of SoP or CCCs. Ultimately, 21 core articles were included in the review.

Table 2

Structured Criteria for Literature Inclusion

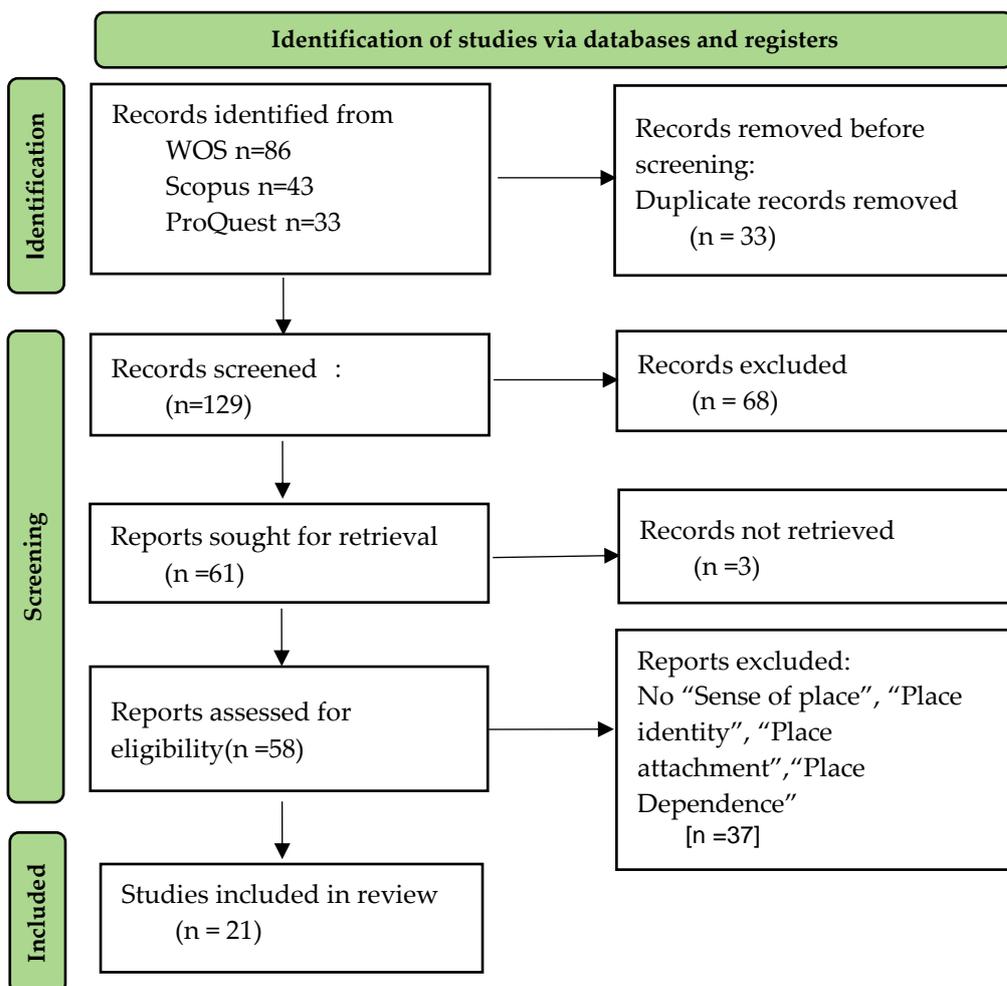| Review Stage	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Title-level	Mentions CCC-related keywords such as "creative cluster," "innovation district"	Focuses solely on tourism, heritage, or general development without creative focus
Abstract-level	Refers to creative professionals [e.g., workers, entrepreneurs, knowledge labor]	Studies unrelated to creative labor or socio-cultural urban transformation
Content-level	Discusses SoP concepts: place attachment, identity, or dependence	Lacks substantial engagement with any SoP dimension or CCC concept

To supplement this corpus and ensure theoretical saturation, an additional 41 articles were identified through citation chaining [backward and forward referencing] and expert relevance screening. These additions were selected based on citation frequency, thematic relevance, and methodological robustness. This brought the final sample to 63 peer-reviewed journal articles.

4.1 Screening process and flow diagram

The multi-stage screening process is visualized using a PRISMA 2021 flow diagram (Figure.3). This diagram clearly delineates the number of records identified, screened, assessed for eligibility, and ultimately included in the review.

Figure 3

PRISMA 2021 Flow Diagram

Identification of studies via databases and registers

Identification

Records identified from
WOS n=86
Scopus n=43
ProQuest n=33

Records removed before screening:
Duplicate records removed
(n = 33)

Screening

Records screened :
(n=129)

Records excluded
(n = 68)

Reports sought for retrieval
(n =61)

Records not retrieved
(n =3)

Reports assessed for eligibility(n =58)

Reports excluded:
No "Sense of place", "Place identity", "Place attachment","Place Dependence"
[n =37]

Included

Studies included in review
(n = 21)

4.2 Data extraction and thematic coding

For each included article, data were extracted using a structured template capturing:

1. Bibliographic data (authors, year, country/region)
2. Type of creative worker (e.g., core creatives, freelancers, entrepreneurs)
3. Primary SoP dimension addressed (attachment, identity, dependence)
4. Contextual setting (e.g., Global North vs. Global South)
5. Methodology (empirical, conceptual, mixed methods)
6. Key findings and policy relevance

Thematic analysis combined deductive coding (guided by pre-defined SoP constructs) and inductive coding (capturing emergent patterns). Themes were iteratively refined and grouped under three core categories:

1. SoP's influence on creative workers' career trajectories,
2. SoP's role in shaping CCC development,
3. Integrative frameworks bridging micro and macro urban processes.

This systematic approach allows for both conceptual synthesis and empirical grounding, culminating in a comprehensive framework that links emotional, symbolic, and functional place-based dimensions to creative urban clustering.

5 RESULTS

Fried's (1963) foundational work laid the theoretical groundwork for examining the relationship between creative workers' SoP and the development of CCCs. This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to synthesize research on the relationship between creative workers' SoP and the development of CCCs. The SLR approach is appropriate for conceptually fragmented topics spanning urban studies, cultural geography, and creative economy research, to consolidate existing knowledge, identify research gaps, and propose an integrated framework. The review follows the PRISMA 2021 (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines to ensure transparency and reproducibility in the selection and synthesis process. The complete workflow is illustrated in Figure 3.

Building on this theoretical lineage, the present study presents the findings of a systematic literature review that unpacks the complex interplay between SoP and creative

workers within the context of CCCs. The review reveals how SoP not only influences the individual career paths of creative professionals but also contributes to the socio-cultural dynamics and spatial evolution of CCCs. The results are organized into three core dimensions: (1) the influence of SoP on the career development of creative workers, (2) the role of SoP in shaping and sustaining CCCs, and (3) a theoretical framework that synthesizes these interactions to conceptualize the relationship between creative workers' SoP and CCC development. These dimensions are visually represented in Figure.4, which outlines the integrative conceptual framework emerging from the literature.

Figure 4

Conceptual Framework based on Literature Review
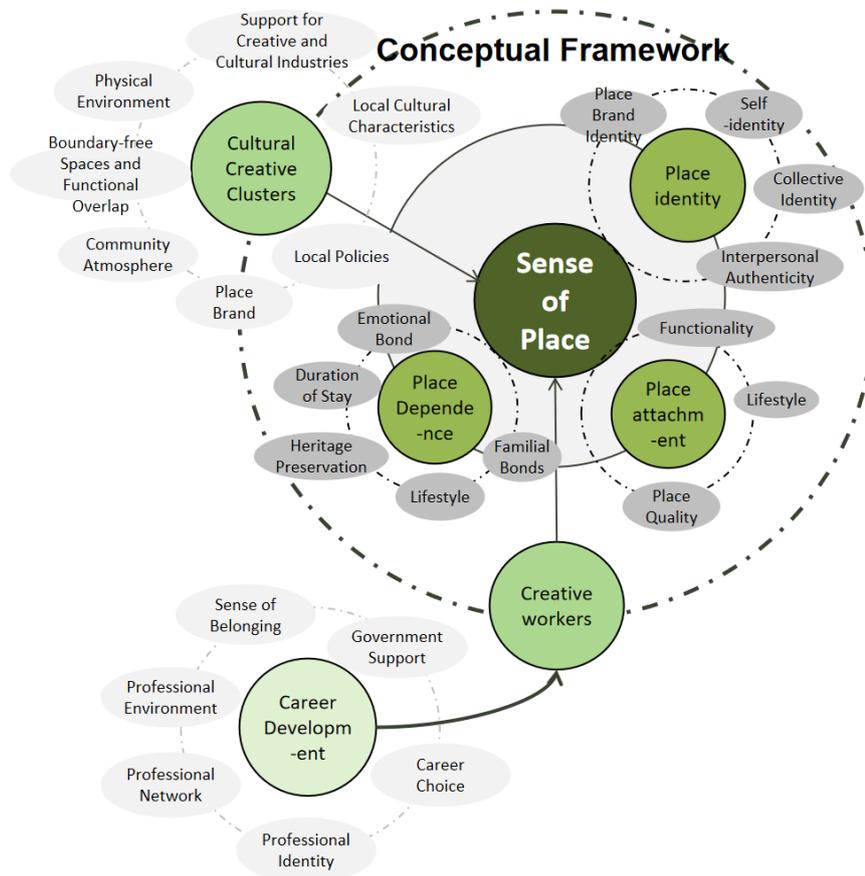
5.1 The Impact of sense of place on the career development of creative workers

SoP plays a pivotal role in shaping the professional trajectories of creative workers by influencing their identity formation, career decision-making, and long-term engagement within creative environments. Within the broader context of the creative

economy, individuals such as freelancers, independent contractors, and cultural professionals are regarded as key agents of innovation and social value, with their creative outputs transcending traditional industry boundaries (Hennekam, 2016; Baek, 2021). These creative workers can be broadly categorized into two occupational types: pragmatic creatives, who primarily pursue commercially driven activities, and core creatives, who engage in fields such as the arts, design, science, and entertainment commonly referred to as the Core Creative Class (Lawton, 2013; Fang, 2022).

The development of SoP among creative workers is characterized by a reciprocal interaction between individuals and their surrounding environment. Empirical research demonstrates that high-quality physical environments in cultural and creative districts characterized by well-maintained architecture, public art, accessible green spaces, and inviting social infrastructure significantly to enhance creative workers' sense of belonging and professional identity (Fan, 2023). Additionally, the presence of socially diverse and inclusive communities supports more meaningful interactions, which in turn strengthen emotional ties to place and promote a conducive atmosphere for creativity and personal growth (Esmaeilpoorarabi, 2018).

Participation in local cultural activities and immersion in a place's socio-cultural fabric further reinforce SoP. The distinctive cultural characteristics of a locale not only serve as a source of artistic inspiration but also enable creative workers to actively contribute to that place's identity and reputation through their creative practices (Tan, 2023). As creative professionals become embedded within these networks, they facilitate knowledge exchange and interdisciplinary collaboration, thereby supporting the growth of creative ecosystems and value chains (Ridgway & Kirk, 2021; Granpayehvaghei, 2022). Such interactions also enhance the competitiveness and visibility of creative city clusters in regional and global contexts (Lawton, 2013; Fang, 2022).

Moreover, innovation clusters and creative districts embody the material and symbolic impact of SoP by offering integrated cultural environments, convenient transportation networks, and multifunctional public spaces. These spaces contribute to shaping a region's cultural identity, improving its image, and optimizing resources to better accommodate the professional needs of creative workers (Esmaeilpoorarabi, 2020; Fan, 2023). The spatial concentration of the creative class also strengthens place branding efforts, amplifies the influence of local culture, and raises the international profile of the cluster (Li, 2019; Ridgway & Kirk, 2021).

In sum, a strong sense of place cultivates a profound connection between creative workers and their communities. It nurtures interpersonal and professional networks, facilitates identity formation, and enhances the value of creative workers within the cultural economy. More than a psychological or emotional concept, SoP serves as a structural force that binds individuals to place, enabling mutual prosperity between creative talent and the locality in which it is embedded. This dynamic and reciprocal relationship underscores the central role of SoP in CCCs.

5.2 The impact of sense of place on the development of CCCs

An individual's SoP acts as a significant motivational force in shaping their relationship with the locality and, in turn, influences the formation and evolution of CCCs. Numerous studies have emphasized the importance of SoP in knowledge-based CCCs, highlighting it as a critical factor in aligning creative workers with the cluster's brand identity (Granpayehvaghei, 2022). SoP contributes not only to the development of individual identity but also to the construction of collective identity, particularly in multicultural and creative environments. It facilitates the integration of diverse groups and fosters a shared sense of belonging, thereby enhancing cultural affiliation and strengthening the symbolic value of place (Bhansing, 2020).

Furthermore, SoP acts as a catalyst for creative collaboration and civic participation. When creative professionals feel a strong emotional and cultural connection to a place, they are more likely to engage in collaborative projects, contribute to local events, and participate in community-building activities (Esmaeilpoorarabi, 2023). These forms of engagement enrich social capital and reinforce localized networks of trust and cooperation, ultimately deepening the ties between creative workers and their host environment (Kaplan, 2021).

From an urban development perspective, SoP offers a valuable lens for evaluating the quality of innovation clusters. It encompasses both environmental and experiential dimensions, such as aesthetics, safety, accessibility, and inclusivity, which influence the attractiveness of a region to creative professionals and enterprises alike (Pancholi, 2017; Liang, 2020). A high-quality environment not only enhances workers' satisfaction and comfort but also contributes to talent retention and cluster competitiveness (Esmaeilpoorarabi, 2020).

In both theoretical and policy domains, SoP supports frameworks such as Creative Class Theory, which underscore the importance of cultural and spatial factors in fostering innovation-driven economies (Tan, 2023). Policymakers and urban planners can leverage insights from SoP research to design targeted interventions that meet the unique needs of creative workers, thereby enhancing their motivation, engagement, and loyalty to place (Pancholi et al., 2017). Additionally, SoP reinforces the interconnectedness between creativity and urban experiences, promoting place-based sustainable development that integrates cultural heritage, community values, and spatial innovation (Bertoni, 2021; Betlej, 2021).

Collectively, these findings highlight the growing recognition of SoP as a core driver of regional development in CCCs. By fostering emotional investment, cultural resonance, and social engagement among creative workers, SoP not only strengthens the internal cohesion of creative clusters but also enhances their external visibility and resilience in an increasingly competitive global landscape (Gainza, 2018).

5.3 Theoretical framework for the relationship between creative workers' sense of place and CCCs

5.3.1 Place attachment

Place Attachment Place attachment refers to the emotional and psychological bond that individuals or groups form with specific geographic locations (Ridgway & Kirk, 2021; Iversen, 2024). This connection is cultivated and deepened through continuous interaction with a place, which in turn fosters a sense of rootedness and long-term association, particularly relevant in the context of CCCs (Meetiyagoda, 2024). As a multidimensional construct, place attachment incorporates both affective and cognitive dimensions, capturing how individuals internalize their environment emotionally and functionally. Its assessment often involves analyzing how emotional variables influence place-related behaviors and intentions (Ferreira, 2019).

This attachment is further reinforced through mechanisms such as open communication, shared knowledge exchange, cultural preservation, and participation in collaborative projects (Pancholi, 2018). These practices not only foster trust and cooperation but also help build strong social networks, particularly by bridging diverse groups such as the general public and knowledge workers (Esmaeilpoorarabi, 2020). For

transnational creative professionals, place attachment is a significant factor in selecting a location for settlement, often described in terms of familial rather than merely professional ties (Lawton, 2013). These interpersonal relationships enhance the social infrastructure of CCCs and make them more attractive to incoming creative talent (Gainza, 2018).

In many creative urban environments, spatial boundaries are fluid, and functional areas often overlap, blurring distinctions between spaces for living, working, and social engagement (Adu-McVie, 2021). This flexibility allows individuals to interact with CCCs in diverse and meaningful ways, contributing to a strong sense of belonging, which is itself a key outcome of place attachment (Ridgway & Kirk, 2021).

A central factor in the development of place attachment is place quality, which encompasses the convergence of environmental, social, and experiential elements encountered by individuals (Esmaeilpoorarabi, 2018). At the street level, this includes day-to-day experiences shaped by music, cuisine, public amenities, inclusivity, and openness elements that attract creative professionals seeking authentic and vibrant settings (Esmaeilpoorarabi, 2016). Place quality not only reflects physical infrastructure but also captures intangible dimensions such as emotional satisfaction, psychological well-being, and cultural engagement (Esmaeilpoorarabi, 2016).

Creative individuals often choose their residences based on how well a place's characteristics align with their professional needs and personal values. Factors such as the authenticity of the environment, availability of cultural venues, and quality of housing and leisure facilities all influence their decision-making (Shen, 2023). As a result, CCCs that prioritize both material and symbolic aspects of place quality tend to foster stronger emotional bonds and attract more creative talent.

Ultimately, a high level of place attachment contributes to the creation of cohesive, engaged communities. By enhancing the quality of place and fostering deep emotional connections, CCCs not only improve residents' well-being but also strengthen their appeal as dynamic environments for creativity and innovation.

5.3.2 Place identity

Place identity is intimately linked to place attachment, yet it extends beyond emotional bonds to encompass the symbolic meanings, cultural values, and social

representations associated with a specific location. While place attachment primarily refers to the emotional connection individuals develop with a place, place identity reflects the integration of that connection into one's self-concept, especially through ongoing community involvement and social interaction (Aun & Bustami, 2025; Billig, 2014). When individuals begin to view a location as their permanent home, that place becomes an essential part of their personal and collective identity.

This identity is closely tied to an individual's commitment to community well-being, and it is shaped by personal, social, and material aspirations (Billig, 2014; Pancholi, 2018). Scholars have further distinguished between self-identity, which is internally constructed, and social identity, which emerges through external discourse and public representation (Hennekam, 2016). Place identity is thus situated at the intersection of continuity and change, anchored in tradition yet dynamically shaped by everyday interactions and experiences, imbuing places with a distinct sense of uniqueness and meaning (Rodrigues, 2021).

In urban contexts, narratives tied to architectural heritage play a pivotal role in reinforcing cultural and national identity. These narratives elevate certain places within the collective cultural consciousness, particularly during times of identity crisis. In such cases, urban societies often revisit their historical roots to preserve continuity while simultaneously facing pressure to innovate and adapt, as Rodrigues (2021) notes, urban creativity and spatial innovation provide pathways not only for reimagining place identity but also for responding to the homogenizing effects of globalization.

For creative workers, the connection to place significantly reinforces both their professional and personal identity. This occurs through active participation in community life, collaborative engagements, and cultural exchange (Bhansing, 2020). The identity of a place is continually reshaped by the lived experiences and perceptions of its community members, who together define the evolving values, symbols, and narratives associated with that space (Pancholi, 2018). Accordingly, the aesthetic preferences and lifestyle needs of creative professionals must be acknowledged as integral to shaping and strengthening place identity within CCCs (Fan, 2023).

Furthermore, the construction of place identity is influenced not only by a space's physical attributes but also by cultural resonance and emotional identification. The perceived distinctiveness of a location shaped by the views of both residents and stakeholders contributes meaningfully to the formation of urban identity (Hennekam,

2016; Esmaeilpoorarabi, 2020). Efforts to preserve cultural heritage and integrate it with contemporary entertainment and creative functions can enhance urban resilience, enrich local culture, and promote prosperity. Thoughtful planning and design of urban cultural landscapes play a crucial role in stimulating creative activity and fostering a vibrant culture of innovation (Kashkouli, 2018).

Ultimately, this collective, grassroots process fosters cultural exchange and mutual recognition among diverse actors with strong place-based identities. These interactions contribute to the development of interpersonal authenticity, further anchoring place identity in shared community experiences (Muñiz-Martínez, 2023).

5.3.3 Place dependence

Place dependence is less frequently emphasized in the context of CCCs, yet it constitutes a critical dimension of the broader SoP framework. In the literature, place dependence refers to "the ability of the physical environment of a particular location to facilitate goal attainment" (Meetiyagoda, 2024). This concept highlights the functional relationship between individuals and place, specifically, how effectively a place supports the activities and objectives of its users relative to alternative locations (Iversen, 2024). In CCC-related studies, place dependence is often discussed as a form of functional attachment. For example, Luo (2016) emphasizes the significance of the built environment in providing spatial features, amenities, and infrastructural conditions conducive to achieving specific personal or professional goals. These functional attributes are commonly experienced through regular use and reinforced over time, particularly in areas that support frequent interaction, creativity, and collaboration.

Importantly, place dependence emerges as a key determinant in the residential choices of knowledge and creative workers. Research has shown that these individuals tend to select locations based on practical place-based factors such as accessibility, diversity of lifestyle options, availability of workspaces, and cultural vibrancy that align with their occupational demands and personal aspirations (Pancholi et al., 2017). As creative professionals often operate in interdisciplinary, project-based, and mobile work environments, the ability of a location to meet diverse and evolving needs becomes central to their decision-making processes. Moreover, studies by Esmaeilpoorarabi (2023) reveal that place dependence is strongly influenced by place qualities, including

infrastructure, openness, and adaptability, which play a crucial role in supporting creative identities and enabling professional expression. Locations that offer high levels of functional suitability tend to foster sustained engagement, attract talent, and support the long-term development of CCCs.

In summary, although often understated, place dependence is a vital component of SoP that underpins the pragmatic, goal-oriented interactions between individuals and their environment. When integrated with place attachment and place identity, it completes a holistic framework that captures the full spectrum of emotional, symbolic, and functional relationships creative workers establish with their urban contexts.

4 DISCUSSION

While the literature comprehensively documents the interplay between SoP and CCCs, several critical observations emerge that reveal nuanced dynamics and theoretical gaps. Much of the reviewed research, particularly from Global North contexts such as Europe, North America, and developed Asian economies, emphasizes the role of aesthetic infrastructure, high-quality urban environments, and symbolic identity in fostering SoP among creative professionals (Rodrigues, 2021; Fan, 2023). These studies often highlight the strategic use of third spaces, cultural branding, and heritage-led regeneration as mechanisms for attracting and retaining talent in urban creative ecosystems. In contrast, scholarship emerging from Global South regions such as Southeast Asia, Latin America, and parts of Africa tends to focus more on informal creative economies, community-driven cultural production, and spatial inequalities that hinder the formation of a robust SoP (Kashkouli, 2018; Ayudhya, 2024). For example, while place attachment and identity in Global North cities may arise from curated urban aesthetics or lifestyle-based consumption, in Global South cities, they are often linked to grassroots creativity, adaptive reuse of public space, and informal social networks. These divergent realities reveal the limitations of applying a one-size-fits-all approach to SoP and CCC policy. Moreover, there is an observable imbalance in how the three components of SoP are treated across studies. Place attachment and place identity receive significant attention, especially in relation to emotional and symbolic dimensions of urban experience. However, place dependence centered on the functional utility of place remains underexplored, particularly in policy-focused literature. This gap is especially relevant

for creative workers operating in precarious or mobile work environments, who may prioritize accessibility, affordability, and functionality over symbolic meaning.

These regional and conceptual disparities highlight the need for a more context-sensitive and critically reflexive approach to SoP in CCC research. Future studies should move beyond descriptive generalizations to examine the socio-political and economic structures that shape creative place-making in different urban settings. This includes interrogating who benefits from SoP-driven development strategies and whose cultural narratives and spatial needs are marginalized in the process. Integrating these critical dimensions will lead to a more equitable and grounded understanding of the relationship between SoP and CCCs across diverse global contexts.

5 CONCLUSION

This study has undertaken a systematic literature review of 63 peer-reviewed journal articles to examine the relationship between SoP and CCCs, with a particular focus on creative workers. The findings reveal that SoP plays a pivotal role in shaping the career trajectories, identity construction, and professional engagement of creative professionals. High-quality environments, characterized by aesthetic architecture, green spaces, open public spaces, and inclusive cultural settings, enhance creative workers' emotional ties to place, fostering a deep sense of belonging and professional identity.

Participation in local cultural activities and community life further reinforces these bonds, inspiring creativity, facilitating interdisciplinary collaboration, and promoting knowledge exchange. These dynamics not only empower creative workers but also strengthen the cultural and economic vitality of CCCs.

At a broader level, SoP significantly contributes to the formation, sustainability, and competitiveness of CCCs. It facilitates both individual and collective identity formation, particularly within multicultural and transnational urban contexts, strengthening cultural cohesion and social recognition. Creative workers with a strong SoP are more likely to engage in collaborative projects and grassroots initiatives that reinforce social capital and foster localized innovation. Well-designed CCCs enhance urban branding, meet diverse lifestyle and professional needs, and attract talent and investment, thereby reinforcing their long-term resilience.

This interconnection can be conceptualized through a three-dimensional framework comprising place attachment, place identity, and place dependence. These dimensions reflect emotional, symbolic, and functional facets of the human-place relationship. Place attachment refers to emotional bonds and familiarity; place identity to symbolic meaning and cultural resonance; and place dependence to a location's functional support for creative and professional goals. These factors jointly influence locational choices and engagement behaviors, shaped not only by material conditions but also by deep-seated emotional and cultural ties.

Nevertheless, SoP is not uniformly present in all urban clusters. Its development is influenced by factors such as urban culture, historical memory, class dynamics, and perceived distinctiveness. Architectural heritage, authentic experiences, and cultural vibrancy play essential roles in cultivating SoP. Thoughtful spatial design and inclusive urban planning can enhance this process, contributing to the emergence of resilient and innovative creative ecosystems.

This review underscores the mutually reinforcing relationship between creative workers' sense of place and the evolution of CCCs. As both research fields and policy priorities, SoP and CCCs are gaining traction in the context of creative urbanism. Future research should investigate how the three dimensions of SoP can be leveraged to enhance innovation and resilience in CCCs. What spatial or governance strategies can cultivate SoP in different cultural settings? And how do creative individuals perceive and co-construct place meanings over time? Addressing these questions will enrich theoretical understanding and support evidence-based policy for sustainable creative cities.

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Authors' Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

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