Preface

Once upon a time 'creativity' was seen as something divine, a gift from heaven. For a long time, skills associated with creativity were consigned to the realms of philosophy and art; nowadays they are regarded as a key source of productivity that pervades the expanding knowledge-based economy. Access to creative people is just as important for many modern firms as coal and iron once were for the steel industry. The aura and prestige surrounding scientists are brighter than ever before. Today, creativity is a topic seizing everyone's attention.

Research on creativity and innovative processes has grown immensely since World War Two.

Different approaches have been pursued, depending on the specialties and fields of research involved. Today, these are found in a lot of disciplines including humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and medicine. As a geographer, my interest was from the beginning focused on the environment – areas and places known for remarkable renewal in philosophy, mathematics, art, music, literature, technology and sciences. Soon I experienced that my own opening approach was not fruitful enough – I had to widen the scope.

Up to now, my research findings have mostly been presented in Swedish. Only shorter articles have been available in English and French. This book represents an attempt to break down a linguistic barrier, and bring work formerly hidden on a domestic shelf into a larger, international arena.

Instead of producing a long list of names, I express my sincere thanks to colleagues and graduate students in Sweden who have contributed to my research during seminars and discussions. Two individuals in particular have been helpful in bringing the project to fruition. Ken Shubert has played a crucial role in the process translating my manuscript. Sir Peter Hall, University College London, has given me generous support and inspiration. I owe a debt of gratitude to them both. Finally, *Stiftelsen Riksbankens Jubileumsfond* (The Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation) triggered the whole process with generous grants, for which I am very grateful.

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