

KEY ELEMENTS OF CREATIVE CITY DEVELOPMENT: AN ASSESSMENT OF LOCAL POLICIES IN AMSTERDAM AND ROTTERDAM

Arie Romein
Jan Jacob Trip

Delft University of Technology, OTB Research Institute for Housing,
Urban and Mobility Studies, Jaffalaan 9, Delft, the Netherlands.
E-mail: a.romein@tudelft.nl and j.j.trip@tudelft.nl.

Abstract

The creative city thesis states that creativity — a creative milieu — is an important precondition for innovation to flourish. Yet, the creative city is often considered a hype, something momentary. This raises the question of whether this thesis has any long-term value. This paper reflects on this question from a local policy perspective. It first presents key elements (success factors) of the creative city as emphasised in academic literature, including an assessment of the extent to which these can be applied in local policies. Next, it analyses their practical application in the two main Dutch cities, Amsterdam and Rotterdam. By assessing these cases against the background of the listed success factors, the paper concludes with some implications for local policy.

Keywords

Creative city, creative industries, quality of life, local policy, the Netherlands

1. Introduction

The creative city has become a popular concept among urban policy-makers worldwide. Particularly the work of Richard Florida (2002) has given a boost to this idea. Whereas Florida was not the only, or even the first, to embark on the creative city discourse, his version “[...] has proved to be a hugely seductive one for civic leaders [in cities] around the world”, who “have [...] paid handsomely to hear about the new credo of creativity, to learn how to attract and nurture creative workers” (Peck, 2005:740). In the end, Peck is quite critical of Florida’s ideas, particularly of their relative disregard of social consequences. Chatterton (2007:392) even states that the creative economy is often “little more than a rhetorical device which can placate the hearts and minds of local councillors and politicians that they are actually doing something whilst doing hardly anything at all”. But controversial as it is, the prospect of innovation and economic development based on creativity, represented by either the creative class or creative industries, appears attractive.

The creative city thesis has its icon cities, such as San Francisco, Glasgow and Barcelona. And, as often with concepts that become very popular in a short period of time, other cities tend to adopt it rather uncritically (cf. Amin and Thrift, 2007:151-2). But that something is a success in one city not necessarily makes it a success elsewhere. This implies that however seductive the creative city thesis may be, creative city policies run a significant risk of failure because no elaborated methodology exists to effectively transfer concepts like this thesis from first mover cities to other cities. To make a start, this paper examines what actually are essential characteristics of a creative city, and to what extent are these have the potential to be viable for urban economic development, also in the longer term.

In view of the above, this article reflects on the long-term value of the creative city thesis for the economic competitiveness of cities from a local policy perspective. Its recent, quick spread across cities worldwide resembles a hype (cf. Peck, 2005; Harris, 2006) by which policy makers are swayed by the message of today. We focus on the longer term by exploring the sustainability of these ideas. This is guided by four research questions:

- 1) what are key elements that determine whether a city is successful or not as a creative city?
- 2) to what extent, and how, can these key elements be effectively influenced and applied in local policies?
- 3) to which extent, and how, are they already being applied in local policies at present?
- 4) what could be the more permanent, long-term potentials of the creative city for local policy-makers, from the perspective of urban economic development?

The next section addresses the first two of these questions on the basis of a systematic, comparative review of academic literature on the creative city thesis. Because the answer to the third question is city-dependent, it is reached by means of case studies of the two largest cities in the Netherlands — Amsterdam and Rotterdam — in section 3. Section 4 discusses the long-term value, and implications, of the thesis for urban policy making. Some tentative conclusions, as well as some starting points for further research, conclude the paper.

2. The creative city thesis: a brief overview and key-elements

The popularity of the creative city thesis as an urban development strategy is partly explained by overarching processes of societal change that are beyond its emergence, and that are structural rather than momentary. These processes are

economic (globalisation, service economy) as well as geo-political (vanishing national borders and rise of regions as engines of growth), technological (ICT and transport), and socio-cultural (consumption) in nature. As a result, a consumer market has emerged in advanced economies that is driven by an increasingly diverse and volatile demand for goods and services. Particularly the consumption of symbolic values and experiences, and the diversity and authenticity of goods and services have become important. In a broad perspective, urban atmospheres and spaces are also considered such 'goods'.

Competitive high-cost urban economies can no longer compete on mass products, but have to focus on symbolic values. This requires a shift of their production structures towards creative design activities. Moreover, it requires a capacity for permanent and rapid innovations. Hence, creative innovation now constitutes the main activity of a broad range of industries. In view of this, the observation that (creative) people is the most crucial resource for economic performance of cities today, is fundamental to the creative city thesis.

It is not only types of activities (jobs) that are being labeled 'creative', but also entire branches of industries (firms). Furthermore, these industries are called rather randomly either creative or cultural. At best, we can observe a certain tendency to refer to the design of new products in close connection with advanced technology as creative industry, and to arts, performances and heritage-based products as cultural industries. Small wonder then, that the creative city thesis includes a variety of ideas and perspectives. A fundamental distinction can be made between a focus on innovative production milieus and a focus on consumption milieus. The first focus is innovative ideas and processes and how these are born, transferred and implemented throughout clusters of firms — not necessarily all part of the creative industry — due to their mutual proximity. The boost that was given by Florida (2002) to the creative city debate concerns the urban consumption milieu. This approach focuses on the qualities of place and life in a city that make creative talent decide to move there. It assumes that 'capital (investments, jobs) follows labour (creative people)' instead of the classical reverse order.

Table 1 presents main success factors, or key elements, of the creative city. It is mostly a summary of our systematic analysis of literature in this field. Noteworthy, most are elements that refer to both the production and the consumption milieu and are indeed difficult to separate. This reflects the close intertwining of working, living and leisure by workers in the creative economy in both place and time. Hence, local creative city policy should not focus exclusively on either the people-oriented or the business-oriented policy perspective, but should combine both perspectives. It is not the exclusive domain of 'traditional' economic policy, but requires a more integrated local

policy with ramifications into other fields, especially art and culture, leisure, housing, spatial development and urban (re)generation. The ranking of the key elements from top down (except the bottom element) reflects the ascending degree to which we suppose — to the best of our knowledge — that these can be influenced by local policies. The bottom element presents ideas on governance, i.e. how, by which institutional arrangements, cities work on these success factors.

Table 1: Key elements of the creative city and their main characteristics.

Key element	Characteristics	Production or consumption milieu
social climate	prevailing values and attitudes; social tolerance; openness towards diversity (e.g. gay and foreign-born population, subcultures)	both
representation	image; symbolic value of cultural heritage; ‘story’, humorous soil or DNA of the city as a whole or specific intra-city areas	both
labour market and employment	diverse pool of talented workers; vocational training; ‘thick’ labour market	both
buzz; atmosphere	face-to-face networks; tacit knowledge; street life; possibilities for unplanned encounters in ‘third spaces’	both
built environment; living and residential environment	diversity and size of buildings; vibrant street life; diverse, pedestrian-friendly public spaces; authentic neighbourhoods	both
amenities	cultural festivals; outdoor sporting facilities; parks; education facilities; specialist libraries; specialist shops; diversity of cafes and restaurants	consumption
clusters; incubators	affordable spaces; old industrial buildings; authenticity	production
policy; government and governance	creating conditions rather than detail planning; cooperation between local authorities, firms and interest groups	

Source: based on Romein and Trip (2008).

The geographical scale of the production and consumption milieu usually entails entire cities or city-regions, in spite of the crucial role of proximity in the former. Cities however, consist of highly different types of areas or zones, with quite distinctive characteristics and potentials for creative sector developments.

The integration of policy fields should be, moreover, more area specific than theory reflects. Actually, many cities hold such a broad view on economic performance, but have put this into practice in almost every conceivable way.

3. Creative city development in Amsterdam and Rotterdam

Amsterdam and Rotterdam, the two largest cities of the Netherlands, are both located in the country's western part at a mutual distance of only 75 kilometres by motorway. With 743 thousand and 596 thousand inhabitants in 2007 respectively, they are comparable in size. Furthermore, both faced a dramatic de-industrialisation in the 1960s-80s and both now have a highly multi-ethnic population. Otherwise, however, they differ considerably on many of the key-elements of the creative city. All over, these provide Amsterdam with better prospects for creative city development.

These better prospects of Amsterdam are being reflected by a larger proportion of total employment — 7.0 percent against 3.3 percent in Rotterdam in 2004 — in arts, media and entertainment and creative business services (Manshanden *et al.*, 2005). Despite its disadvantages, however, Rotterdam also considers creative industry crucial for a competitive post-industrial urban economy (Gemeente Rotterdam 2004a, 2005, 2006a/b, 2007a), and has elaborated creative city ambitions in recent policy initiatives. The next two subsections focus on recent trends in both cities regarding key-elements of creative city development and on their policies to face these trends. These latter are summarised in Table 2 (p.7).

3.1 Amsterdam

Creative industries in Amsterdam have grown considerably over the last decade and the city is now often acknowledged as the 'creative capital' of the Netherlands. It considers its inner city the self-evident number one location for the creative economy in the Netherlands. Its densities and diversity of authentic cityscapes, cultural facilities, 'third places', and resident creative workers are so abundant that it is even considered one large, uninterrupted creative zone. Besides, Amsterdam is still renown for its tradition of tolerance, openness and social diversity — illustrated by its large gay and bohemian scenes. Amsterdam nourishes this reputation, and although it has been tarnished recently by several assaults on gays, it is still conceived as relatively tolerant and open. The main resource of the city for the development of a creative however, is its historic inner city. It has grown organically throughout several ages, and is now blessed with a fine-grained physical structure and a high density and diversity of cultural heritage. In fact, it is one of the largest areas of this kind in Europe. Due to the

types of residents, and the many tourists this attracts, it has also a high-level infrastructure of nightlife ‘pub and club amenities’. The high potential of this area for innovative and creative entrepreneurship and tourism is marketed by the motto ‘I AMsterdam’. This motto should demonstrate personal endorsement for the city, based on the self-evidence of qualities. Notwithstanding these good prospects, recent policy documents also signal adverse trends that are about to threaten both the production and consumption climates. Against this background, the 2007-2010 Economic Programme pays significantly more attention to the creative economy than the previous one (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2003a; 2007a/b).

Primarily business-oriented policies

The current economic programme acknowledges creative industries as a separate sector, added to the cluster of ICT and new media. The programme on creative industries is rather generic; only design and game industries are mentioned more explicitly. The objective to strengthen creative industries can also be observed in other fields of municipal policy document, for instance the new Arts Plan *Amsterdam Creatieve Stad* (Creative City) (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2004a). This Plan proposes to improve training and coaching facilities and to provide affordable business accommodation. Overall, however, it only applies general elements of the city’s economic policy to the creative industries.

Since 1999, the municipality has invested in an incubator space policy, making ‘old buildings’ like former factories, warehouses, schools etc. available as business spaces for small-scale start-ups in creative and cultural industries. At the moment there are 40 such incubators, mostly situated in and around the inner city. This policy was a response to the observation of growing scarcity of adequate spaces for creative businesses. At present, however, a conflict between subsidizing incubators and benefiting from the general trend of rising land prices by the city is becoming evident (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2003b:48; www.vrijeruimte.nl, February 2006). Actually, a lack of affordable small-scale business spaces still hampers the growth of creative industry (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2007b:6).

Table 2: Local trends and policy issues in Amsterdam and Rotterdam by key element of the creative city.

	Amsterdam	Rotterdam
Social climate (resident population)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • retain open, mellow atmosphere • guard position as a tolerant city; position as a ‘gay capital’ endangered by recent anti-gay violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strong focus on public safety and zero-tolerance (part. in 2002-2006) put openness and tolerance under strain • encourage young people as initiators of creative activities (e.g. graduate students and pop musicians)
Image and representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tolerant, I Amsterdam campaign, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘rough’ and ‘unfinished’ city with many possibilities for experiments; conflictuous with City as a Lounge.
Buzz, atmosphere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • retain attractive inner city with many ‘third spaces’ • risk of becoming too much of an ‘in-crowd’ atmosphere • free inner city from ‘criminogeneous’ activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need to upgrade inner city; lacks liveliness and ‘third spaces’ • ‘roughness’ and opportunities to experiment attract certain creative talents; less attractive for general public
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strong position in producer services (e.g. finance) needs to be reinforced, being threatened by several factors • improve level of education of working force 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need to compensate the decline in (still relatively strong) manufacturing industries, transportation, and construction branches • need to reinforce producer services
Built environment, living and residential environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘key projects’ in historic inner city to face endangerment of quality of place by overcrowding (tourism) and ‘criminal infrastructure’ • address shortage of, particularly, middle-income housing; excessive price level due to dysfunctional housing market • improve transportation system • redevelopment of former port areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • filling in ‘empty’ spaces between high-rise buildings • despite large-scale construction still need to address shortage of high-quality housing • relatively low price level reflects poor image as a residential city • redevelopment of former port areas
Amenities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • policy focuses on constructed amenities in arts, sports, tourism, leisure etc. • need to spread amenities and tourism, as inner city suffers from a too large concentration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • upgrading of inner city for leisure, shopping, living • subsidies focus on ‘old names’ • promoting of Rotterdam as a festival city • somewhat ambiguous stimulation of pop music (e.g. podiums)
Clusters, incubator spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strong position in creative industries, but needs to be reinforced in view of but recent stagnating development • strong policy focus on creative industries, but rather generic • provide affordable working space in old buildings; nevertheless still a shortage of cheap working spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focus on strengthening creative production, particularly since 2005 • focus on architecture and urban design, design and product innovation, audiovisual production and music • provide affordable working space in old buildings, but on a limited scale
Policy, government and governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shift from government to governance • shift to more active approach rather than waiting for others to taken the initiative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shift from government to governance • increasing co-operation, co-ordination and co-financing

Additionally, other business-oriented programmes focus on the coaching of new entrepreneurs and on the delineation of ‘special zones’ where business regulations, for instance concerning labour, are adjusted in favour of starting creative entrepreneurs. Business space — not necessarily in old buildings — is also provided to small-scale entrepreneurs with the objective to revitalise disadvantaged neighbourhoods just outside the inner city. Partly, this is a response to a spontaneous process of outmigration of creative business from the inner city due to growing scarcity and rising rents of spaces.

Primarily people-oriented policies

Recent local policy documents in Amsterdam place explicit emphasis on quality of life (e.g. Gemeente Amsterdam, 2003b; 2004b/c). Accordingly, the 2007-2010 Economic Programme comments that “quality of life – a good climate for working and living — is becoming ever more important for the business climate of metropolitan regions. Increasingly, firms are guided by the availability of well-educated personnel — firms follow people rather than vice versa – and these people like to choose for a city with an attractive living climate, safety and good cultural amenities [*our translation*]” (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2007a:3).

Policies to improve the quality of life in Amsterdam focus strongly on ‘constructed amenities’ for arts, culture, tourism, leisure, sports and education (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2007b/c). These policies primarily aim to give a new impetus to Amsterdam as a metropolis of international standing that attracts highly skilled professional workers and tourists (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2004a), rather than to encourage the street-life and informality that are supposed to be highly appreciated by workers in the creative economy by, for instance, Florida (2002, 2005).

A main bottleneck for the quality of place of Amsterdam for creative workers is a severe mismatch on its housing market. The one-sided policy focus on providing cheap social housing during most of the industrial era, has resulted in a housing stock that fits in badly with the changing structure of demand in the current post-industrial city. Scarcity and excessively rising price levels in several segments of the market obstruct the entry of lower-income and lower middle-income groups (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2007d) and are serious constraints to the attraction of young creative talent at the beginning of their careers. The problem is the largest in the historic inner city, the type of residential environment that is also most popular among artists, designers, media folk and the like in further stages of their career. Municipal policy for the coming decade aims to achieve a radical change in the composition of the housing stock, decreasing the cheap housing stock and increasing the amount of middle-income and expensive housing; the latter seems somewhat at odds with

the object to ease the entry of creative talent to the city's housing market, however (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2007d:60).

A serious drawback for the rather unique people climate in the historic inner city of Amsterdam is a trend towards a congested monofunctional tourism area. One of its most beautiful parts — postal code 1012 — has fallen victim to the city's reputation as a tolerant city. The 'red light and cannabis tourism' has been at the root of ever more 'low-quality activities' that frequently lead to nuisance and crime. Local government is now working on a comprehensive programme of spatial economic transformation of the entire 1012 area into a new, dignified heart of the city (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2008a). Furthermore, it also aims to redistribute some tourism to other parts of the city, for instance along the river IJ (new Music Building and Film Museum), and in neighbourhoods adjacent to the inner city in accordance with the objective to revitalise these both economically and socially. The city's new hotel policy is quite explicit in this (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2007c; 2008b). Nevertheless, the small scale and diversity of the inner city is still emphasised as a precious asset for urban quality (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2006), although not necessarily in connection to the creative economy.

Policy approach

On the whole, Amsterdam's current economic and allied policies explicitly include several key elements of the creative city thesis, but do not articulate these very well. And if they do, they mainly focus on creative businesses. The implementation of people-oriented ideas is less clear, although many key elements that play a role in the creative city in this broader sense are there. Apparently, both the large proportion of highly educated residents and the unique quality of place for the creative economy in the inner city are considered so self-evident that the people climate should not need explicit policy support.

Regarding the implementation of creative city policy, Amsterdam is shifting from a re-active towards a more pro-active approach, meaning that the municipality looks actively for initiatives that support policy objectives, rather than waiting for initiatives to come. Furthermore, the cooperation with a range of actors will be reinforced (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2007a). This is likely to be more of a gradual change than it appears from the policy documents, but it is a change in the direction indicated by several of the reviewed authors.

3.2 Rotterdam

The transformation towards a post-industrial economy is more painful in Rotterdam than it is in Amsterdam. Be it a cause or an effect of that, it leaves no

doubt that social tolerance and openness have become under more strain in recent years than in Amsterdam. The local government in office in 2002-6 in Rotterdam made zero tolerance against unsafety and nuisance its main policy issue. That provoked fierce public debates and an atmosphere of decreasing rather than increasing tolerance among population groups (cf. Van Ulzen, 2007a:214). In addition, Rotterdam has no high quality inner city space. The post-war reconstruction of the inner city that was necessary after the destructive bombardment in 1940, combined a top-down planning system with a strict modernist separation of functions. Up to 1980 this resulted in separate projects of office buildings, shopping zones and high-capacity infrastructure for rapid traffic circulation. This has recently been supplemented with high-rise residential and office buildings and big-ticket leisure venues. Nevertheless, quality of place remains relatively poor (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2008): Rotterdam lacks Amsterdam's diversity, density and continuity, and is not very enticing now people increasingly attach importance to the social and symbolic values of space. The official representation of Rotterdam as a world city, referring primarily to the un-Dutch concentration of high-rise buildings in its inner city and its relatively young population, does not alter this low quality. Finally, the level of education of the resident labour force in Rotterdam lags seriously behind other cities.

In 2004, local government created the advisory Economic Development Board Rotterdam (EDBR) with the assignment to generate ideas to renew and diversify the economy. Its advise to local government (EDBR, 2004; 2008) includes creative industry as one of the three economic clusters — besides port and industry, and health care — that should be further developed by acquiring more innovative firms and stimulating local start-ups and spin-offs. This explicit emphasis on the economic importance of creative industry has been worked out further in several other, more recent policy documents. Parallel to this advise, several other policy documents have also recommended to improve the quality of place in the inner city. The most elaborated one — Inner City as a Lounge — was published quite recently (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2008).

Primarily business-oriented policies

Since the policy document Vision on the Creative Economy (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2007b), Rotterdam concentrates its efforts on four innovative creative branches: architecture and urban design, design and product innovation, audiovisual production (inling film and new media) and music (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2006b, 2007b). The objectives to stimulate architecture and audiovisual production are not new; local policy already focused explicitly on their development quite some time before publication of the Economic Vision

2005-2020. Architecture received a boost in Rotterdam when the city won the fierce competition with Amsterdam for the location of the Netherlands Architecture Institute in the late 1980s. It is now represented by some world-famous bureaus, such as OMA of ‘starchitect’ Rem Koolhaas.

The recent cultural policy in Rotterdam (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2004b) is motivated by Rotterdam as the only Dutch city with a rejuvenating (and increasingly multi-national) population. Rotterdam sees young people as a resource: the local government self-declared the city the European Youth Capital (EYC) of 2009. Music production by young people is considered promising as a creative industry. Rotterdam is often labelled ‘hip-hop capital’ of the Netherlands. Others, however, comment that the local music scene has lost much of its previous élan: the once celebrated variety of small podiums has disappeared without being replaced by a podium of metropolitan standard, and several clubs wrestle with financial and housing problems. One of the projects of EYC was the development of an urban culture podium, but the project has not yet been a great success and is fiercely criticised.

Overall, Rotterdam’s creative city policy entails a mixture of supportive measures and instruments to stimulate entrepreneurship, to establish commercial and social networks of entrepreneurs, and to fill in lacunas in the value chain of education — design — production — marketing — distribution in the four priority branches. Notable emphasis is placed on improving the potentiality of interactions between the four creative key branches and the knowledge base in the city and its region, including two universities — one a University of Technology with large architecture and industrial design faculties — and tertiary vocational training in fields like technology, arts and graphic media and design. Besides, policy places emphasis on a better visibility of creative production in order to stimulate start-ups by other creative talent (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2006b; 2007b; EDBR, 2008). In practice, Rotterdam has offered affordable working space in large, and indeed very visible ‘old buildings’ to starting creative entrepreneurs with some technological background. The scope of this policy is relatively small, however. It is limited to a very few buildings — much less than in Amsterdam — that were easily to acquire or already in ownership of the municipality.

Primarily people-oriented policies

Public investments in upgrading the quality of place of the inner city have already been made since the 1980s. Nevertheless, this quality remains poor and the area still lacks ‘buzz’ (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2008). Recent documents therefore considers its improvement an important pillar for a successful transformation of the Rotterdam economy. This is not only beneficial for the

creative cluster as such; the two other key-clusters for economic transformation of the city are also highly dependent on workers' knowledge and creativity (EBDR, 2008).

Quality of place policy in Rotterdam also explicitly includes housing. Its housing market suffers from a similar mismatch as in Amsterdam (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2007c). In the beginning of the 2000s, a large-scale construction programme high-rise buildings of high-quality apartment started in the inner city. Because apartments in Rotterdam are still among the cheapest in the Netherlands, it appears a shortage of high-quality residential environments is a more important strain than a shortage of demanded dwellings per sé. What is more, this construction programme aims at medium-high and high income households *cum* highly educated professionals rather than explicitly at the creative class. Moreover, the main objective of the new housing policy is to offer the opportunity for a housing career to all 'Rotterdammers' (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2007c).

An explanation of the still poor quality of place of its inner city is Rotterdam's long-standing emphasis on being 'a city of projects' of built hardware (urban highways, high-rise buildings, big-ticket entertainment venues) and an annual calendar of national and international festivals of film, music, sports, and ethnic carnival. It has been acknowledged only recently that the urban software of high-quality spaces to stay and to meet other people, either for fun or for doing business, between the projects makes the difference in the competition with other cities nowadays. Inner City as a Lounge (Gemeente Rotterdam 2008) presents six mutually coherent strategies to improve the urban software up to an internationally competitive level: residential milieus; culture and leisure; streetfronts and the waterfront; green and parks; 'power to the pedestrian'; and use of architecture, cultural heritage and 'Rotterdam themes' in public spaces.

Overall, the recent people-oriented policies do not complement the explicit focus on the creative industry by the business-oriented policy with an equally explicit focus on the creative class. As the interviewees at OBR commented, "Rotterdam has no explicit creative *city* policy that merges both perspectives. What it has is a business-oriented creative *economy* policy that is supplemented with people-oriented objectives with a more general scope than only creative talent."

Policy approach

Policy-making in Rotterdam has also shifted towards a governance model. Local government is neither able nor willing to renew the city's economy and quality of place all by itself. It explicitly invites and attempts to inspire non-government

beneficiaries in culture, leisure and creative production to co-operate, to co-finance and even to co-manage programmes and projects (EDBR, 2004, 2008; Gemeente Rotterdam, 2008). It sees its own role reduced to investing in physical and institutional infrastructure, assisting other beneficiaries with the design of initiatives, and examining these initiatives' compatibility with overall policy objectives. Furthermore, Rotterdam set up semi-public foundations for formulation and implementation of policy in some specific fields (e.g. Rotterdam Festivals).

A remarkable feature of current urban planning in Rotterdam is its focus on area development. This is a response to the highly different potentials of the production and consumption milieus in different areas in the city. An early example is the former port area of Lloydkwartier that has been developed into a cluster of audio-visual industry for some fifteen years now. Nevertheless, the creative city is far from dominant in current area development schemes. The Inner City as a Lounge divides the inner city into nine 'focus areas' to implement the six strategies it proposes in different combinations, but creative workers and creative production play an explicit role in only one of these.

5. Implications for local policy

Although the creative city thesis is often depicted as a hype, it is plausible that many elements of its thesis have a more permanent value because the underlying processes that have contributed to the growing significance of innovation and creativity for urban economic development are structural rather than temporary. In this section, we derive some tentative — based on two cases only — valuable implications of the thesis for urban development policy in the longer term.

Both cities have an incubator policy that promotes the reuse of old buildings that are 'unfinished' and cheap. These buildings, however, are also in demand for more profitable uses in the short term, and quite a few were simply demolished — particularly in Amsterdam — to make place for new luxurious apartment buildings, constructed amenities, or offices. Policy-makers have to be aware of the risk that even young creative talent that is embedded in the local urban society may, in the end, move to other cities where affordable working space is less scarce.

Scott (2000) and Storper and Venables (2002) emphasize the importance of 'buzz', generated through face-to-face contacts in socially based networks of key persons of cultural and creative industries for their performance. Although there is no guarantee that the limited scope for policymaking to create buzz — such as programming live performances in the street and more pubs and tearooms — effectively stimulate these networks, Amsterdam and Rotterdam do

not go far beyond such measures. What is more, Amsterdam highly relies on its historically grown inner city that should require no further action at all.

Even in case of strong social networks in the creative industry, it still seems unlikely that these may lead to a substantial role of this industry the urban economy in relatively small cities like Amsterdam and Rotterdam. Such networks can have considerably stronger impacts if they also include branches that do not belong to the creative or cultural industries as such, but face the need to pay increasing attention to design and exposure of their products, e.g. high-tech industries, business services or care. These more extended networks should facilitate small-scale creative firms with knowledge exchange, training if necessary, and ultimately partnerships in value chains.

Creative workers attach great importance to the symbolic meaning of spaces both in their role as consumer and as entrepreneur. Creative city policy should take the symbolic meaning — the ‘identity’ or ‘story’ — of the city as such, and of the district where the development of creative activities is being planned, explicitly into account. With a suddenly popular concept as the creative city the danger of becoming a copycat is imminent. This is most obvious regarding flagships like Guggenheim, but also imminent with respect to the ‘history’ of a robust industrial or port area. For a sustainable competitive advantage that prevents imitations, cities should make the most out of their uniqueness of interconnected amenities, atmosphere, cityscape, and clusters of specific cultural industries. Most cities have no unique historic inner city like Amsterdam and have to work hard for that. Rotterdam, for instance, sees its current identity of high-rise building capital of the Netherlands being made visible in several TV series and commercials made by its audiovisual industry, but has not exploit the presence of world-famous architecture bureaus (Van Ulzen, 2007b:31). Rem Koolhaas is a born Rotterdammer, but his creations are relatively scarce and not commonly known in the city.

Cities must realize that the vision on quality of place of Florida (2002, 2005), and Jane Jacobs (1961) as his main source of inspiration, could not be put into practice easily. Florida’s creative class attaches much importance to a vibrant and diverse street life, to compact, distinctive and authentic neighbourhoods with a finely meshed street pattern, to ‘third places’, and to pedestrian-friendly public space, all with the aim to encourage spontaneous meetings. If these things are indeed indispensable, there is little hope for a city like Rotterdam. However, creative talent can also be attracted by other environments: “[...] many architects and designers settled in Rotterdam because of its port city image, the ‘rhythm of the river’, and the anonymity in its open spaces” (Van Ulzen, 2007b:10-1). In the interview with us, she added that “[...] not all these people feel the need to lengthy discuss every new idea in a local café or in the street”.

What seems to matter most is the unfinished nature of buildings and areas, and the opportunities these offer to creative people for experiments.

To be effective, creative city policy must also be specific as to which group(s) of creative talent it aims at, and how this values different urban qualities and amenities. For, even the 'creative class' is not homogeneous (Marlet and Van Woerkens, 2004; Clark, 2004; Florida, 2008). Depending on variables like their creative branch and stages in life- and family-cycle, creative professionals merge lifestyle factors with 'traditional factors' (the presence of good schools, clean and save streets, or parks), into highly different combinations. In policy practice, however, creative city policy in both Amsterdam and Rotterdam not even make a clear distinction between creative talent and other groups, particularly spending tourists and highly-educated professional workers.

6. Conclusions

Current policies in both Amsterdam and Rotterdam include key elements of the creative city in more explicit forms and in more sectoral policy documents than before. Actually, their creative city policies do not differ fundamentally from each other in emphases, target groups and institutional organisation of implementation, regardless of their highly different contexts. But despite the rising importance of the people-oriented approach in the creative city debate, the business-oriented component of their policies is most explicit. We cannot yet conclude that the creative economy has already reached some sort of 'natural ceiling'. Actually, its potentials to strengthen innovative capacity still seem not optimally utilized. For a better use of its potentials, local policy should invest in the elaboration of a strategy to optimize the concordance of economic policy with other relevant policy fields, like culture, leisure, housing and spatial development.

Current research on creative city development pays little attention to the role of intangibles and amenities, and more particularly how these are appreciated by different groups of creative talent. Surely these issues are hard to grasp, but they for a large part define the qualities (plural) of place of cities, including the growing importance of symbolic values. We therefore suggest a socially structured analysis of context-specific networks of amenities that focuses on the questions how amenities are combined into networks by their users, and what specific values 'user groups' attach to these networks. The outcomes of such analyses would provide useful new insights to be implemented in creative city policies. That research should explicitly address the issues of scale and location.

We are convinced that the creative city thesis is not a hype in the sense that all of its message will be soon forgotten. The competitiveness of western urban economies in the current global playing field simply requires (more) creativity

to uphold the innovative capacity that is essential for their competitiveness. But to be viable in the longer term, local policy must find a balance between supporting new creative entrepreneurship; general preconditions such as an open social climate, safety, amenities, and accommodation; and a clear focus on specific strengths as attributed by different user groups. A creative city is far from an easy city.

Acknowledgement

The authors wish to thank Terry Nichols Clark, Dan Silver and their colleagues from the University of Chicago, and Annet Jantien Smit from the University of Amsterdam, for their valuable comments on an earlier version of this paper.

References

Policy documents and interviews Amsterdam

Gemeente Amsterdam (2003a): *Hermez; Het economisch resultaat moet er zijn; basisprogramma economische zaken 2002-2006*. Gemeente Amsterdam, Economische Zaken.

Gemeente Amsterdam (2003b): *Structuurplan Amsterdam; kiezen voor stedelijkheid*.

Gemeente Amsterdam (2004a): *Amsterdam creatieve stad; kunstenplan 2005-2008*.

Gemeente Amsterdam (2004b): *Vrije tijd in Amsterdam: ruimte en mogelijkheden in beeld* [first draft]. Gemeente Amsterdam, DRO.

Gemeente Amsterdam (2004c): *Vrije tijd in Amsterdam: Ruimte en mogelijkheden in beeld* [first draft]. Gemeente Amsterdam, DRO.

Gemeente Amsterdam (2006): *Amsterdam Topstad: Metropool*.

Gemeente Amsterdam (2007a): *Basisprogramma economie Amsterdam 2007-2010*. Gemeente Amsterdam, Economische Zaken.

Gemeente Amsterdam (2007b): *Basisprogramma economie; uitvoeringsprogramma 2008*. Gemeente Amsterdam, Economische Zaken.

Gemeente Amsterdam (2007c): *Nota Hotelbeleid 2007-2010*. Gemeente Amsterdam, Economische Zaken.

Gemeente Amsterdam (2007d): *Wonen in de metropool; woonvisie Amsterdam tot 2020* [concept , inspraakversie december 2007].

Gemeente Amsterdam (2008a): *Hart van Amsterdam. Strategienota Coalitieproject 1012*. Versie Consultatieronde 18 November.

Gemeente Amsterdam (2008b): *Ontdek Amsterdam! Spreiding van het toerisme over de stad*. Gemeente Amsterdam, Economische Zaken.

Interviews with Jos Gadet, Koos van Zanen and Mariëtte van Baaren (DRO), and Jeroen Saris (De Stad B.V.)

Policy documents and interviews Rotterdam

EDBR (Economic Development Board Rotterdam) (2004): *Economische Visie 2005-2020*. Rotterdam.

EDBR (Economic Development Board Rotterdam) (2008): *Koers houden, doorpakken en uitvoeren. Update Economische Visie Rotterdam 2020*. Rotterdam.

Gemeente Rotterdam (2004a): *Sense of Place: Atlas van de Culturele Ecologie van Rotterdam*. Gemeente Rotterdam, dS+V.

Gemeente Rotterdam (2004b): *Cultuurplan 2005-2008*, Gemeente Rotterdam, Dienst Kunst en Cultuur.

Gemeente Rotterdam (2005): *AV-Beleid 2005-2010*. Gemeente Rotterdam, Overlegdocument t.b.v. Raad & Commissie.

Gemeente Rotterdam (2006a): *Gateway to Europe. De koers naar 2030*. Gemeente Rotterdam, dS+V/OBR.

Gemeente Rotterdam (2006b): *Rotterdam maakt werk van creativiteit*. Gemeente Rotterdam, Economic Development Board Rotterdam and Rotterdamse Raad voor Kunst en Cultuur & Economie.

Gemeente Rotterdam, (2007a): *Economische Verkenningen Rotterdam 2007*. Gemeente Rotterdam, OBR.

Gemeente Rotterdam (2007b): *Visie Creatieve Economie 2007-2010*. Gemeente Rotterdam, OBR.

Gemeente Rotterdam (2007c): *Wonen in Rotterdam. Geactualiseerde woonvisie 2007-2010*.

Gemeente Rotterdam (2008): *Binnenstad als City-Lounge. Concept Binnenstadsplan 2008-2020*

Interviews with Jan van Teeffelen (dS+V); Jeannette Leete & Pauline de Vries (OBR); and Patricia van Ulzen (author of Van Ulzen 2007a/b)

Other references

Amin, A. and N. Thrift (2007): Cultural-economy and cities. *Progress in Human Geography*, 31(2), 143-161.

Chatterton, P. (2007): Will the real Creative City please stand up? *City*, 4(3) 390-397.

Clark, T.N. (ed., 2004): *The City as an Entertainment Machine*. Elsevier, Amsterdam, 103-140.

Florida, R. (2002): *The rise of the creative class; and how it's transforming work, leisure, community and everyday life*. Basic Books, New York.

Florida, R. (2005): *The flight of the creative class; the new global competition for talent*. Harper Business, New York.

Florida, R. (2008): *Who's your city? How the creative economy is making where you live the most important decision of your life*. Basic Books, New York.

Florida, R. and G. Gates (2004): Technology and tolerance: the importance of diversity to high-technology growth. In: T.N. Clark (ed.): *The City as an Entertainment Machine*. Elsevier, Amsterdam, 199-217.

Glaeser, E., J. Kolko and A. Saiz (2001): Consumer City. *Journal of Economic Geography*, 1, 27-50.

Harris, H. (2006): *Supercity me; on contextualising the creative city discourse within contemporary urban studies*. Paper presented at the International Conference 'Urban Conditions and Life Chances', 6-8 July 2006, Amsterdam.

Jacobs, J. (1961): *The death and life of great American cities*. Random House, New York.

Manshanden, W., P. Rutten, P. de Bruyn and O. Koops, O. (2005): *Creatieve industrie in Rotterdam*. Delft, TNO Innovatie en Ruimte.

Marlet, G. and C. van Woerkens (2004): *Atlas voor gemeenten 2004*. Stichting Atlas voor Gemeenten, Utrecht.

Peck, J. (2005): Struggling with the creative class. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 29(4), 740-770.

Romein, A. and J.J. Trip (2008): *Theory and practice of the creative city thesis: the cases of Amsterdam and Rotterdam*. Paper presented at the ACSP-Aesop 4th Joint Congress 'Bridging the divide: celebrating the city', 6-11 July 2008, Chicago.

Scott, A.J. (2000): *The cultural economy of cities; essays on the geography of image-producing industries*. Sage, London/Thousand Oaks.

Storper, M. and A.J. Venables (2002): *Buzz: the economic force of the city*. Paper presented at the DRUID Summer Conference on 'Industrial dynamics of the new and old Economy – who is embracing whom?', 6-8 June 2002, Copenhagen/Elsinore.

Van Ulzen, P. (2007a): *Dromen van een Metropool. De Creatieve Klasse van Rotterdam 1970-2000*. 010 Publishers, Rotterdam.

Van Ulzen, P. (2007b): Waar blijft dat Rotterdamse designhotel? *KAAT kunst & economie in Rotterdam*, 1, 30-31