

march The PhD Seminar on

19-20

2009

# PUBLIC SPACE

Delft, The Netherlands



Workshop 1 – Public Space and Neighbourhood Quality

**The Transformation of the Dutch Urban Block in Relation to the Public Realm; Model, Rule and Ideal**

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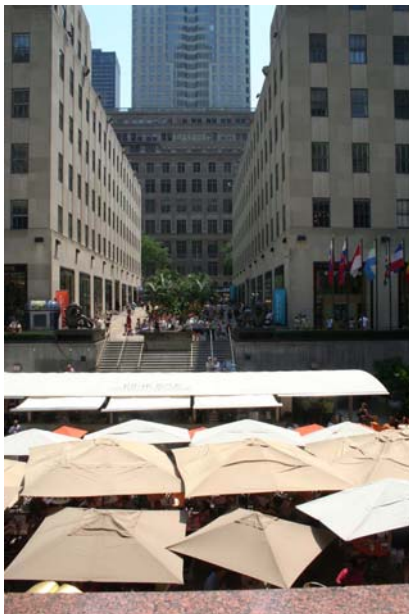
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25 February 2009  
number of words including notes: 6.500

### **Public domain, Dutch urban block and city economy**

Why should we discuss the relationship between public domain, urban block and city economy?



*Ny Rockefeller, Public Domain and urban economy:-  
Rockefeller Plaza New York, density, stacking,  
Mixture and overlap of functions (S. Komossa)*



*Mil Park, Public Domain and leisure: Millennium Park Chicago  
(S. Komossa)*



*Lunch break, Public Domain and knowledge  
Exchange: lunch break in Bryant Park New  
York (S. Komossa)*

The analysis of the Dutch urban block in its relation to the public domain shows that during the last hundred years social cultural ideals dominated the transformation of the block's

architectural model. Except stores for daily needs economic activity and urban economy<sup>1</sup> in general were excluded from the new neighbourhoods and areas of urban renewal. The one-sided focus on social-cultural aims of dwelling resulted in the collapse of the public realm in and around urban blocks. It was abandoned in favour of collective green spaces, often accompanied by decreasing densities of buildings<sup>2</sup> and users. Nowadays it becomes evident that the emphasis upon social and cultural aspects and collective space during the past leads today to big problems. Neighbourhoods dating from the nineteen-fifties, -sixties and -seventies suffer from severe social and economical problems and are often characterised by a relative poor and segregated group of inhabitants. Therefore these neighbourhoods, like Rotterdam Pendrecht caught political attention. Euphemistically called 'magnificent neighbourhoods' almost all of them are up to restructuring or even demolition.

This paper focuses on urban economy in relation to urban blocks in the two great Dutch cities, Rotterdam and Amsterdam. In these great Dutch cities the public domain gains its physical shape not only through social and cultural activities but also, or even especially by economic activity as part of the everyday life of inhabitants and visitors.

In order to research the relationship between economic activities, daily life and urban block - that in fact constitutes almost 80% of the cities built volume - one can follow two approaches. Economical-geographic research maps where are which company's and why<sup>3</sup>? Morphological and typo-morphological research approaches the relationship by investigating the architectural and urban models of blocks, buildings and city extensions. Morphological research as such concentrates upon the physical form by using maps and drawings: how does economic activity take shape on different city and building scale levels. One glance at the city map of Rotterdam is enough to understand where the big factories, industry and harbours are situated. The morphological map of the building structures shows from which period a city extensions dates and how big or small the distance to the centre is. The structural map of rails and roads clarifies the hierarchy and accessibility of the different areas. A more careful analysis of the structure of water and green renders together with the position and form of squares and public buildings a good impression how the position and character of the public realm is thought. Typo-morphological drawings of buildings and urban blocks indicate the architectural elements used to design the transition from private to public and to what extend the built structure can house different kinds of functions. The morphological urban analysis based on typological-morphological research can further be directed to more specific questions. For example: how are vicinity and distance between public domain of the city and the urban block designed in a specific urban model, which kind of architectural and urban elements are used to establish this relationship? How are public buildings distributed within the city and how are they linked to the public domain and to what extend does the structure of the urban block allow economic activity? Does the physical structure allow that different functions overlap each other within a certain area?

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<sup>1</sup> In order to understand the importance of economical activity, especially small-scale enterprises for the public domain of cotemporary living quarters, the Hypermarché in Bagnole near Paris is a good example. Bagnole is one of those neighbourhoods in the banlieue that were hit by violence during the last years. The former mayor of the satellite city who had become the managing director of a highway supermarket discovered that there was almost no relationship between 'his' supermarket and the inhabitants of the area next to it. In order to change the sometimes even hostile relationship he offered the inhabitants the opportunity to organise a mini market on the parking area next to supermarket. Nowadays the inhabitants of Bagnole sell there all kinds of products. Also the stock of the supermarket has changed. It contains recently more products of the liking of the locals. The economic activity of the mini market has changed the character of the whole area. Bagnole received a centre<sup>1</sup> where people engage in economic activity and which visit in order to participate in public life. The presence of the mini market influences directly everyday life in Bagnole. 'The big scale of Bagnole is shed by another light by the new active character of playgrounds and commercial spaces... The neighbourhood has discovered a new public realm to which it can relate. A new urban coherence has emerged.' (Boxel, Elma van, Kristian Koreman, ZUS (Zones Urbaines Sensibles); Re-public, naar een nieuwe ruimte politiek; NAI uitgevers, Rotterdam 2007, p. 19)

<sup>2</sup> number of dwellings/hectare in relations to the average dwelling size, see also: (19 paradigmatical ) projects, Komossa, S., Meyer, H. e.a.; Atlas of the Dutch urban block, Bussum Thoth 2005

<sup>3</sup> Dienst Ruimtelijke Ordening Amsterdam, Koos van Zaanen e.a.; Productiemilieus van de creatieve industrie in Amsterdam; DRO Amsterdam Januari 2006

It is not possible to deduce directly from urban or architectural form the actual use of a built structure, but they reflect each other. The research is therefore more focused upon the architectural and urban mediation<sup>4</sup>, for example how are architectural and urban model related to each other? Researching the transformation of the Dutch urban block shows that if the form of the block changes also the urban model changes, and vice versa<sup>5</sup>. Both are complementary to each other. Every urban model has its own way in which public buildings, squares, the water- and green structure are designed and positioned within the city. Their form and position reflect how society thought during a certain period about public domain and the importance of urban economy. And vice versa also ideals developed on the scale of the urban models are expressed in the urban block.

Jane Jacobs<sup>6</sup> was one of the first authors<sup>7</sup> who discussed the relationship between urban economy, physical structure<sup>8</sup> of the city or quarter and the public domain. She wrote in 1969 the book 'The economy of cities'<sup>9</sup> in which she describes the city as origin, place and motor of any economical innovation. 'Cities (opposite to villages, towns and farms) are the primary necessity for economic development and expansion, including rural development.'<sup>10</sup> About the way in which the city should be organised she says: 'I do not mean that cities are economically valuable in spite of their inefficiencies and impracticalities, but rather because they are inefficient and impractical.'<sup>11</sup>

On one hand she criticizes with this statement the general urban planning ideas that were still current during the nineteen sixties and which advocated the efficient functional division of dwelling, working, traffic and recreation in order to realize clear goaled and easily executable policies. On the other hand she points to the meaning of the city as place and motor of economical innovation. Doing so the fundamental notions are discussed that form still today the core, probable more than ever, of any debate about the city, her economy and her public domain. The question how to connect tradition with innovation, the local with the global, 'top down' urban planning with 'bottom up' initiatives of the inhabitants, planned order with daily chaos, the formal with the informal, old and new buildings, diversity in background and life styles of the city inhabitants with the identity of the 'Dutch city', officially recognized culture with popular, migrant and youth culture, poor and rich, one with 'the other' and conflict with democracy<sup>12</sup>? The possible answers to these questions contain always also a physical dimension that influences or is expressed by the structural arrangements of the city.

<sup>4</sup> See also chapter 'Transformatie van stadsmodel en bouwblok: De mercantiele stad', 'De verfraaide civieltechnische stad in de negentiende eeuw', 'De stad van de sociale hervormers', 'De sociaal culturele stad' in: Susanne Komossa. De transformatie van het Hollandse bouwblok in relatie tot het publieke domein; Model, regel en ideaal, PhD-thesis, Delft 2008.

<http://www.library.tudelft.nl/ws/search/publications/index.htm>

<sup>5</sup> mediation: '...that the development of form is not directly related to the translation of a social aim, that form uses during its becoming mediations that are specific for architecture'. Dutch: '....dat de uitwerking van de vorm niet terug is te brengen tot de directe vertaling van de sociale opdracht, dat zij tijdens het totstandkomen van het ontwerp gebruik maakt van voor de architectuur specifieke bemiddelingen..'. Castex, J., C.-Ch. Depaule, Ph. Panerai, De rationele stad, Van bouwblok tot wooneenheid, SUN, Nijmegen 1984, p.222

<sup>6</sup> 'Jane Jacobs, OC, O.Ont (May 4, 1916 – April 25, 2006) was an American-born Canadian urbanist, writer and activist. She is best known for 'The Death and Life of Great American Cities' (1961), a powerful critique of the urban renewal policies of the 1950s in the United States. The book has been credited with reaching beyond planning issues to influence the spirit of the times. Jacobs came down firmly on the side of spontaneous inventiveness of individuals, as against abstract plans imposed by governments and corporations. She was an unlikely intellectual warrior, a theorist who opposed most theories, a teacher with no teaching job and no university degree, a writer who wrote well but infrequently.' [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jane\\_Jacobs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jane_Jacobs)

<sup>7</sup> in the perception of architect, urbanists and planners.

<sup>8</sup> English 'physical', is here used a synonym for Dutch 'spatial' (ruimtelijk).

<sup>9</sup> Jacobs, Jane; The economy of cities; Penguin, Harmondsworth 1972 (1969)

<sup>10</sup> ibidem p. 85

<sup>11</sup> ibidem p. 50

<sup>12</sup> 'The city as place to negotiate conflict without going to war' very differently than countries and nation.. Saskia Sassen places here in 'I have a dream...de rol van de stad'; Lezingen en debat, Felix Meritis Amsterdam 21 Januari 2008, the importance of cities above nations. Jacobs did this earlier with her book 'Cities and the wealth of nations'; Random House, New York 1984

The understanding that the city is the place where an important part of economical innovation happens, how it takes shape and becomes legible, grows in the minds of politicians, municipal policy makers and urban planners. Facing this fact, the cities of Amsterdam and Rotterdam, and probably all the other great cities in Europe, operate on three levels. They try to attract big, internationally operating companies in order to realize big scale labour employment for their inhabitants. In the Netherlands this means mainly service companies in the field of insurance and financing and main offices of multi-nationals. At the same cities realize that they need to facilitate the development of new often-small scaled innovative companies in the field of the knowledge- and creative industry<sup>13</sup>.

In Rotterdam that means the development of the medical cluster around the Erasmus Medical Centre and design companies operating on a broad field and within a great number of disciplines, like film, ICT et cetera. Amsterdam distinguishes different sectors of the creative industry like performing arts, services for art, museums and galleries, publishers, journalism, photography, film industry, radio and television, advertisement, interior and fashion design, architecture and urbanism<sup>14</sup>.

The notion that the small scale urban economy, let it be shops, workplaces or knowledge intensive businesses offer also a chance for newcomers and migrants with very different backgrounds and education to emancipate themselves not only social-culturally, but also economically is not yet very strongly developed in the mind of the municipalities. The small-scale urban industry of migrants can be also supportive to the creative industries by delivering services. The municipal policy is at this moment one-sidedly orientated by focusing mainly upon innovative 'incubators' for the highly educated. The idea that the small-scale industry should have a place all over the city and that high- and low educated maintain a relationship in this, is not so strongly developed yet among policy makers<sup>15</sup>.

In order to enable all the activities connected with the urban economy, space is needed. Especially the small-scale urban economy asks for specific physical conditions. Old and new, big and small, cheap and more expensive buildings and spaces have to be available. And also the physical interrelationship and connection between the different activities, between dwelling and working and the public domain as area of exchange are important. In the public domain economical activity and every day life take place at the same time and side by side by living and working, the exchange of ideas and knowledge, going out, shopping, visiting schools and cultural institutions, watching and being watched. Pre-condition for connection and overlap of economical activities and everyday life, of production and consumption is a well functioning public domain also inside and around urban blocks that is characterised by short distances and physical vicinity, high density of buildings and uses, mixture of functions, diversity of users and kinds of activities, tolerance, dynamics and changeability.

### **Urban division of functions on the scale of the city and the urban block**

During the last hundred years the municipal policies of the cities Amsterdam and Rotterdam were pointed at the social, cultural and hygienic aspects of dwelling. Economical activity was mainly considered on a big scale concentrated in the centre or in harbour- and industrial areas and as something that is relatively independent from dwelling. The physical policies of the cities were from halfway the thirties dominated by thinking on a big scale, which was at the same time reinforced by CIAM ideas and ideals. Slowly but surely CIAM ideas entered architecture and urban planning and formalised the urban division of functions by supplying the architectural and urban models. In the practise of urban extension during the last years before the Second World War and the fifties up to the seventies this meant that the city was divided in dwelling, working, recreation and infrastructure. Every category had it's own

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<sup>13</sup> See as an example 'Stadsvisie Rotterdam, Gemeente Rotterdam, December 2007. On p.58 and 59. next to the development of the harbour and industrial complex the knowledge and service economy are listed as well the stimulation of the creative and leisure industries as main focus points, also of the physical planning.

<sup>14</sup> Dienst Ruimtelijke Ordening Amsterdam, Koos van Zaanen e.a., Productiemilieus van de creatieve industrie in Amsterdam, DRO Amsterdam Januari 2006

<sup>15</sup> See also the recent urban policies described in the city visions (Stadsvisies) of Rotterdam and Amsterdam.



policies. This led to a situation that also in a physical sense the city was divided into areas, in which in each of its parts one function was dominant. The division of neighbourhoods and functions takes literally shape by the introduction of an extensive structure of green that doesn't connect but divide. At the same time the division of functions meant thinning down and the reduction of density, especially in the dwelling areas. The mutual distance between dwellings and the individual dwelling and public domain of the city was increased exponentially.

On the scale of the urban block one can distinguish a comparable increase of the separation of functions. Economic activity that formed a self-evident element of any urban block in seventeenth till nineteenth century city extensions vanishes gradually. The one-sided emphasis upon social, cultural and hygienic aspects of dwelling led (as we saw in the earlier chapters) to a considerable transformation of the urban block, in relation to its spatial as well its programmatically and functional aspects. The new neighbourhoods built by the housing corporations after the housing act in 1901 were mainly meant to live in.



*Pendrecht green, Collective green in Rotterdam Pendrecht, a neighbourhood dating from the nineteen fifties (Fotografische Dienst Bouwkunde)*



*Pendrecht Aerial, Green as a dividing device between the public realm of the city and the private realm of dwelling (Atlas of the Dutch urban Block, Peter van Bolhuis)*



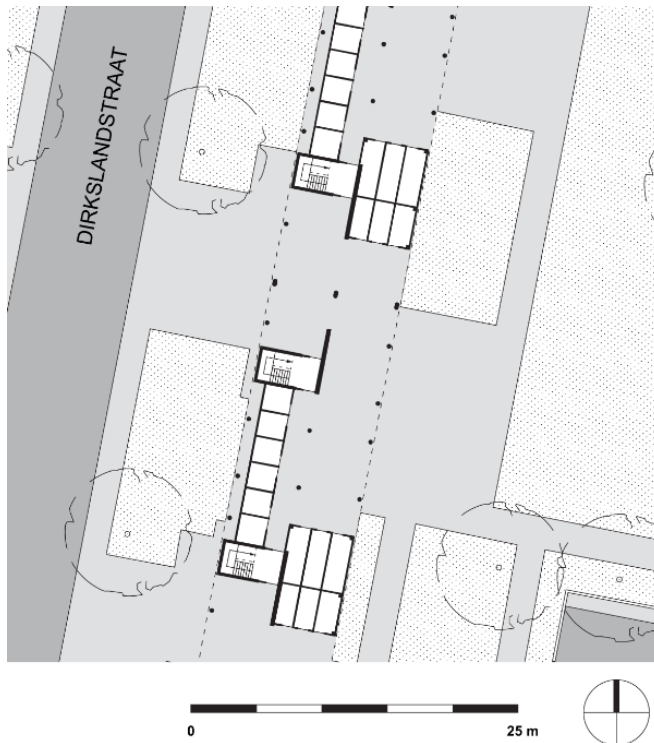
*Uitsn Rotterdam 2007, Fragment morphological map Rotterdam 2007 showing how the Zuidpark pushes Rotterdam Pendrecht into the city's periphery near the big scale employment of the Waalhaven (Kadaster Emmen)*



*Uitsn Rotterdam 2007, Fragment morphological map Zuiderpark. Its borders are shielded with sport fields and allotment gardens directed towards so-called 'active recreation' (Kadaster Emmen)*



*Frag Pendrecht 5000, Fragment map Pendrecht showing the extensive green structure within and between neighbourhoods. focused on the ideal of large-scale labour and the collective realm, all economical activity is banned from the living quarters except shops for daily needs (Atlas of the Dutch urban block)*



*Pendrecht frag 1-500, Fragment footprint slab Pendrecht showing the disconnection between private dwelling and the collective realm (Atlas op the Dutch urban block)*

### **The importance of physical connections for the small-scale urban economy**

Today the attention paid to employment, dwelling, recreation and traffic and transportation as big separate spatial entities shifts to the mutual connection of these urban functions. There is a growing interest for those parts of urban economy that are characterised by the integration of dwelling and working, or put into other terms, of production and consumption. The integrated industries, in which dwelling, working and everyday life are closely interconnected is per definition a small-scale economy. Because at the moment companies, especially manufacturing companies grow bigger, they have to search for other locations. Generally policy makers expect a great deal from the small-scale, integrated economy, especially when they consider the innovative industries.

The small-scale urban economy is expected to be the incubator for the development of new ideas, products and services, the so-called 'knowledge and creative industries'. One assumes that they will generate in the short run impulses for the over-all western knowledge industry so that it will be able to meet the challenges and compete by specialisation, knowledge and creativity with the upcoming Asiatic low-wages economies that are focused on mass production and 'distant-service'. Western cities and regions, like Amsterdam and Rotterdam, state that by the development and specialisation of the knowledge- and creative industries with their spin-off of new companies today's level of welfare of city inhabitants can be maintained also in the future.

And as described earlier the small-scale urban economy can also be understood as a means for integration and emancipation of Dutch citizens that have a non-western background. Own businesses, and as a consequence, economical independence offer the possibility to achieve an equal position in Dutch society<sup>16</sup>. Already today the majority of starting entrepreneurs in Rotterdam and Amsterdam has a non-western background.

<sup>16</sup> Saskia Sassen and Richard Sennett talk about 'The city as space of the not-haves to bring forward change'. On one hand they refer here to parades and events where the 'not-haves of power' can manifest themselves socio-culturally and politically. On the other hand they point out 'the places of potential, like edges, periphery, pockets, forgotten spaces' as 'cheap spaces for growth'. On the occasion of 'I have a dream...de rol van de stad'; Lectures and debate, Felix Meritis Amsterdam 21 January 2008



## Order and chaos

In her book 'The economy of cities'<sup>17</sup> Jane Jacobs reflects upon the direct link between the physical conditions of the public domain of the city and the urban economy. Important notion in her discourse are 'chaos' opposite to 'planning' and mixture of functions opposed to division of functions. Eight years before she wrote the 'Economy of cities' Jane Jacobs published 'Death and life of great American cities'<sup>18</sup> the book that made her famous all over the world. In this first book she drew attention to the social impact of the mixture of functions and the role of the public domain of the city and their relation to urban elements and spatial organisation<sup>19</sup>. In the second book she incorporates urban economy into her discourse.

Plans to demolish Greenwich Village, New York, in 1960 caused Jacobs to analyse this neighbourhood where she lived more closely. According to her Greenwich Village was not the problem that had to be sanitised by demolition but the modernistic neighbourhoods elsewhere in Manhattan: they had become ghetto's that were one-sidedly directed to dwelling and there criminality and un-safety formed a daily routine. Compared to these areas 'The Village' was a safe area because of the intensive, sometime chaotic mixture of functions with shops and businesses on the ground floor and dwellings above. Architectural and urban elements like stoops, corners and short building blocks are for safety as well mixture of eminent importance. Stoops are the locus of potential contact between very different people. It's a form of contact that doesn't interfere with the anonymity and privacy of people, but notwithstanding it causes trust and increases the liveability, diversity and variety. In terms of Sennett who poses 'The city is where strangers meet' one could say this kind of contacts takes away the fear of strangers and 'the other'. Above that stoops form the place where children can play safely and are educated en passant. Everyone keeps an eye upon them, at least in 1961, and corrects if necessary bad conduct. Every participant of everyday daily life on the stoops plays an important role. Also the idler, the good-for-nothing has an important part. Because he doesn't do a thing all day through he's especially able to watch continuously what's happening in the street and by doing so he contributes to the prevention of small criminality. Besides the presence of stoops and mixture of functions there are according to Jacobs other physical important conditions for a well functioning public realm: short, closed perimeter blocks that furnish a great number of corners<sup>20</sup> and a diversity of routes the passer-by can choose from, density and mixture of old and new, cheap and expensive spaces, so also marginal activities have a chance to flourish. 'He the passenger would have alternative routes to choose from, the neighbourhood would literally opened up for him'. And in the relation to urban economy: 'The supply of feasible spots for commercial activity would increase considerably'<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Jacobs, Jane, *The economy of cities*, Penguin, Harmondsworth 1972 (1969)

<sup>18</sup> Jacobs, Jane; *The death and life of great American cities*; Random House, New York 1961

<sup>19</sup> In 'The economy of cities' dating from 1972 her statements got further economical foundations.

<sup>20</sup> 'Street corners express the nature of the city as meeting place, a place of superposition and conflict.' Sola-Morales, Manuel de; 'Cities and urban corners', *The monographs #4*, b.mm, april 2003, p.133 cited from: Nanine Carre, *Street corners, place of interaction an identification*, B-nieuws 11, 14 april 2008, Faculty of Architecture, Delft University of Technology, Delft 2008, p.14

<sup>21</sup> Jacobs, Jane; *The death and life of great American cities*; Random House, New York 1961, Vintage Books Edition, 1992 p.180



*Vingbooms, Corner of an Amsterdam ring canal Block dating from the seventeenth century (Fotografische Dienst Bouwkunde)*



*NW hoek, Corner café of a nineteenth century mixed urban block in Rotterdam connecting the different worlds of the adjacent streets (Fotografische Dienst Bouwkunde)*



*De Klerk, 'Dumb' corner in the city of the social reformers in the beginning of the twentieth century in Spaarndammerbuurt Amsterdam (Fotografische Dienst Bouwkunde)*



*Photo Pen Hoek, 'No' corner expressing the absence of public life and socio-economic diversity in uniform Pendrecht (Fotografische Dienst Bouwkunde)*



*Müller Pier, Corner of the recent re-structuring of the Müller Pier in Rotterdam: once again an enclave? (S. Komossa)*

## Sustainability

Small-scale economical activities and the dynamics of old and new, cheap and expensive can also contribute to what one would call today a sustainable group of inhabitants and users that wants and can dwell and work over a longer period in the neighbourhood. 'The key link in a perpetual slum is that too many people move out it too fast – and in the meantime dream of getting out'<sup>22</sup>. For the Dutch problem-neighbourhoods mainly second item, the absence of (possibilities for) active involvement applies. It explains probably the 'devastation' of public space. A lot of people do not live voluntarily in these so-called 'magnificent neighbourhoods' but are forced because of poverty and the lack of other perspectives. In that case they ask themselves why they should pay a lot of attention to the area they live? Above that the chances to start a business in a neighbourhood like Pendrecht in Rotterdam are minimal, for example to find a fit spot with enough people to pass in order to start a shop or workshop.

<sup>22</sup> ibidem p.271

Sustainability of quarters means also that one faces the fact that areas and neighbourhoods know periods of decline. The Amsterdam ring canals and Amsterdam South have known these periods of relative decline, impoverishment and low house- and apartment prices. The same happened before in De Pijp in Amsterdam. So it is not enough to cheque on a neighbourhood's wellbeing or bad being at a certain moment but one has to analyse also the transformative potential.



*Amsterdam Zuid, Corner/square in Amsterdam Zuid. The neighbourhood knew periods of relative decline but is now much favoured. Business on the streets leading to the centre flourish wel (Fotografisch Diens Bouwkunde)*

### **Big and small, old and new**

Next to the analysis of the dynamical potential of neighbourhoods one can distinguish 'stagnating' and 'growing' economies of cities<sup>23</sup> that also have a relationship to the physical structure of the city. Here the ability of economical innovation is the determining factor. Stagnating cities, often 'corporate' cities are cities that host foremost one or a relative small number of big employers. In cities with a growing urban economy a great number of small enterprises is active. In the first city huge complexes and buildings dominate<sup>24</sup>, in the other mixture and chaos of big and small. In the Netherlands one can define The Hague as a 'corporate' city. The city shows because of the presence of the big ministries relatively small physical and economical dynamics. In The Hague not very much changes. Rotterdam holds a position between both limits. The after war big scale shopping and office complexes are dominantly present in the reconstruction of the inner city. The small-scale economy supposedly develops in the areas that surround the centre. In Amsterdam dwelling and small-scale enterprises can be found in the ring canals, they are the place to be. The car traffic and transport of goods are everything but efficient in this area, but all urban functions reside in each other's vicinity. According to Jacobs cities with an extended small-scale urban economy always have a physically complex character. They seem to be per definition inefficient and impractical and also should be like that. For people who work day and night, the vicinity of dwelling, working space and a lot of other social-cultural amenities serves very well because 'Development work is a messy, time- and energy consuming business of trial, error and failure.'<sup>25</sup> This characterisation is very much to the point. Today one could describe the work of the creative industry in this way.

<sup>23</sup> See also: Jacobs, Jane; Cities and the wealth of nations; Random House, New York 1984

<sup>24</sup> The notion of big corporate sites as used here shows similarities to the notions of 'heterotopy' (H. Lefebvre) i.e. 'enclaves' in the city. Too many big enclaves paralyze the city, not only culturally, but also its economical and innovative potential.

<sup>25</sup> Jacobs, Jane, The economy of cities, Penguin, Harmondsworth 1972 (1969), p.89

### **Creative industry and public domain as space of knowledge exchange**

Jos Gadet<sup>26</sup> who works as a social geographer at the Physical planning department of the municipality of Amsterdam (Dienst Ruimtelijke Ordening) points to a quality of the knowledge and creative that is usually not recognised so specifically: the need for knowledge exchange and vicinity. He distinguishes knowledge that is generally available in libraries, the Internet et cetera and specific knowledge bound to individuals. In his eyes only people talking to each other, i.e. in a situation of physical proximity, transfer specific knowledge. This explains why certain enterprises search for each other's physical proximity and public spaces like cafes in order to exchange thoughts and ideas. Physical vicinity also seems to be important in a psychological sense. By seeing and talking to each other it is easier to trust one another. Vicinity, concentration of different creative disciplines also facilitates dropping in to each other's office spaces in order to gather fast (and cheap) 'expertise' and services from other disciplines<sup>27</sup>.

Already in 1969 Jane Jacobs discusses the nature of the physical structure of the city where economical innovation and new businesses emerge. 'Consider too the physical arrangements that promote the greatest profusion of duplicate and divers enterprises serving the population of the city, and lead therefore to the greatest opportunities for plentiful division of labour on which new work can potentially arise...'<sup>28</sup> Summarised in short the 'physical arrangements' are vicinity and connectivity, a mixture of small functions, where some functions like cafés and shops are used by everybody, high density of users and visitors, 'short' routes and a mixture of living- and working spaces, different types of buildings, like old and new, cheap and expensive, big and small.

### **Physical conditions for innovation and renewal**

'Urban chaos', the spreading of risks<sup>29</sup> among a larger number of smaller businesses and the off-split of into smaller groups that develop new initiatives with their work is a *conditio qua non* for the economical growth of a city. Accepting chaos opposes in a way the work of architects and urban planners that search per definition for order. The attempts of architects and urban planners representing the Modern Movement, who wanted to create a perfect, harmonic world, end directly in the garbage can if we look at it in this way. The ordered world of the drawing table and the chaos needed for economical renewal and everyday life, merge badly<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> In a conversation 29 May 2006, see also: Dienst Ruimtelijke Ordening Amsterdam, Jos Gadet e.a., *Aantrekkende stadsmilieus, een planologisch-stedenbouwkundig ontwikkelingsperspectief*, DRO Amsterdam 2006

<sup>27</sup> DRO Amsterdam distinguishes as parts of the creative industry: performing arts, service for arts, museums & galleries, publishing houses, journalism, photography, film industry, radio & television, advertisement companies, interior & fashion design, architectural & urban design. Each sector has its own pattern of settling. They all share the preference of the historical intercity of Amsterdam. Source: Dienst Ruimtelijke Ordening Amsterdam, Koos van Zaanen e.a., *Productiemilieus van de creatieve industrie in Amsterdam*, DRO Amsterdam Januari 2006.

<sup>28</sup> Jacobs, Jane, *The economy of cities*, Harmondsworth, Penguin 1972 (1969), p.100

<sup>29</sup> The unpredictability of innovative processes asks above all for the spreading of risks. For companies that develop new ideas it is very attractive to spread the risk among a bigger number of smaller groups of participants and enterprises. Because every experiment includes the possibility of failure, one wants to keep damage as small as possible. The merchant float during The Golden age in seventeenth century Amsterdam is a good example how already in that period people dealt with knowledge, innovation and risk spreading in very insecure enterprises like sailing the East. On one hand there is the knowledge industry that consisted of the collection of information and determination sailing routes in maps. Innovative was shipbuilding of advanced ships with great loading capacity. The relatively high financial that a ship would sink during the trip to the East was spread and covered by stocks of the VOC, the Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie. Everybody who could spare a little money was able to participate in the adventure. Doing so, a lot of small shoulders were able to carry a big risk and of course they hoped for good luck and financial gain.

<sup>30</sup> Jacobs, E of C, p.250 'The bureaucratized, simplified cities, so dear to present-day city planners, and familiar also to readers of science fiction and utopian (sic) proposals, run counter to the processes of city growth and economic development. Conformity and monotony, even when they are embellished with a froth of novelty, are not attributes of developing and economically vigorous cities.'



In 2002 Richard Florida who refers explicitly to the work of Jane Jacobs tries to relate the future of the contemporary economies to the development of Western cities and regions<sup>31</sup>. According to him Western economies can only develop if they are based on knowledge and innovation, i. e. no longer depending only on large-scale industrial production and service. The latter moves to low-wage countries and upcoming economies. In his book 'Cities and the creative class'<sup>32</sup> he tries to find out which factors in certain cities and regions contribute to the coming into existence and development of innovative enterprises in the field of technology. He states that next to the presence of a technical infrastructure, like knowledge centres and universities the choice for 'talent's' settling is decisive. 'Technology and talent are highly mobile factors flowing into and out of places.'<sup>33</sup> In fact he turns around the classical statement 'people are where the work is.' Florida's says 'the work is where the talent is' and poses the question: what do talented people want, where and why do they settle in certain places? Florida looks more than Jacobs at the 'consumptive' side of 'innovative' industries. The notion of chaos – a precondition in Jacob's ideas about economical growth and development is in Florida's theory translated into the notion of 'tolerance'. Florida understands a tolerant environment as the criterion for the settling of the 'creative class'<sup>34</sup>. He includes into the notion of tolerance notions as creativity, diversity, open-mindedness, accessibility, inclusiveness (as opposed to exclusiveness), bohemian life style, interest in high as well low culture and time conscientiousness (time as a good that cannot be replaced by money). According to him creativity asks for diversity in attitude, life style and background: 'Creativity defies gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and outward appearance.'<sup>35</sup>

According to Richard Florida 'today's' talent because its lack of time prefers a life style in which work and leisure, production and consumption are tightly interlinked. This calls for special arrangements in regard to the nature and place where one wants to establish businesses and especially for the interconnection between work, dwelling and social-cultural facilities. 'Members of the creative class prefer active, participatory forms of recreation and have come to expect them in urban centres. Along with street level culture – the teeming blend of cafes, galleries, small music venues, and the like – where one can be a participant observer, these workers enjoy active outdoor sports'<sup>36</sup>. Dwelling mustn't be too expensive, mixed facilities have to be available within vicinity and a fast network of public transport that helps to avoid the daily car traffic jam. (Everyday life and raising kids are not categories within Florida's thinking). '...the new city is becoming defined more and as a city of consumptions, experiences, lifestyle and entertainment.'<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Florida, Richard, *The rise of the creative class and how it's transforming work, leisure, community and everyday life*, Basis Books, New York 2002

<sup>32</sup> Florida, Richard, *Cities and the creative class*, Routledge, New York/London 2005

<sup>33</sup> *ibidem* p.7

<sup>34</sup> Florida includes as member of the 'creative class' anyone who has a college degree. 'The creative sector (is) engaged in science and engineering, research and development, and the technology based industries, in arts, music, culture, and aesthetic and design work, or the knowledge based professions of healthcare, finance and law.' *ibidem* p.3

<sup>35</sup> *ibidem* p.5

<sup>36</sup> *ibidem* p.167

<sup>37</sup> *ibidem* p.167



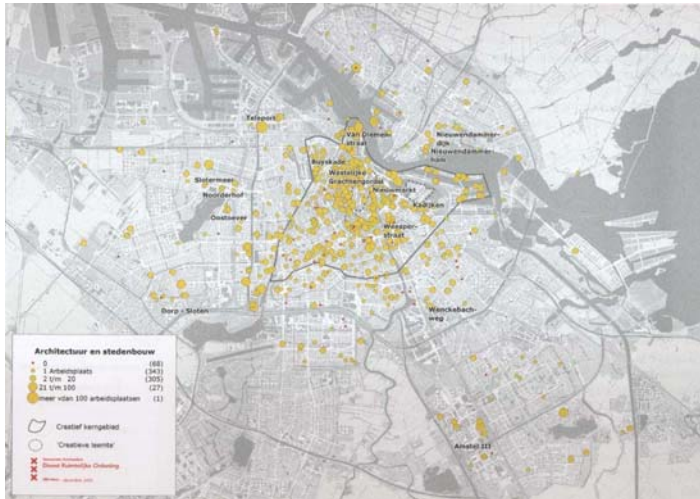
*Atti, Integration of work and leisure. Knowledge worker keeps contact with her work on a day off sitting in the front door portico of her nineteenth century house in Rotterdam (S. Komossa)*

### **The Dutch city in the perspective of the small-scale urban economy**

In a certain sense Florida describes the European (great) city. In Europe cities like the ones described above do not have to emerge they already exist. But the question remains if cities like Rotterdam and Amsterdam – that meet in a lot of ways the stated requirements - are really able to attract talent? Without detailed research it is obvious that the knowledge infrastructure that exists in Rotterdam as well Amsterdam is not very visible in the street scene. In Rotterdam the Erasmus University, the brain parks, an institute like TNO in Delft surely exist but do not present themselves in a comprehensible way to the tourist or newcomer. In Rotterdam there are areas where new creative industries like to settle, like the Witte de Withstraat, the Van Nellefabriek and the Lloydpier. Here areas start to emerge with a character of their own, as spot one could visit. Areas like the Delftsestraat<sup>38</sup> near the Central Station of Rotterdam combine in fact a great diversity of functions, but they do not relate to each other. In this area one finds big office- and chic apartment buildings, ‘wild’ places of nightlife entertainment and small enterprises of the creative industries in abandoned buildings. Contrasts are huge. Only a little corner café let by a former architecture student from Delft is visited by a diversity of users of the surrounding area. As a whole the area forms an enclave within the city and by itself it also contains a number of enclaves. The overlap between the different functions is minimal and only few inhabitants of Rotterdam know what is happening there. Coherence in and between the ‘creative’ areas is absent for the time being and because of that they are not able to manifest themselves as a public realm on the level of the city.

Amsterdam has almost an opposite problem. Ring canals and the nineteenth century neighbourhoods are so much wanted as work- and dwelling area of the creative industries that getting a spot there is almost impossible. One has to search for new potential areas serving the creative industries. The possibility of finding an appropriate apartment in Amsterdam is very limited because prizes are very high.

<sup>38</sup> The area of the Delftsestraat forms during 2007/2008 the site of the Masters studio Public Realm Rotterdam of the chair of Public Building, Faculty of Architecture, TU-Delft. Students analyse the site in order to develop new strategies for reinforcement of the public domain in the area.



*Amsterdam productiemilieus, Map locating architecture and urban planning offices in the Amsterdam ring canals, from: Dienst Ruimtelijke Ordening Amsterdam, Koos van Zaanen e.a., Productiemilieus van de creatieve industrie in Amsterdam (DRO Amsterdam, Januari 2006)*

And even in Rotterdam it is not so easy for newcomers and creative people: it is hard to find a nice dwelling in a nice area that is also affordable. At this moment this group lives completely scattered all over town and tries to make the best of it in the various spots. This finding matches with the lack of coherence that Arnold Reijndorp cum suis analyze in 'Sense of place'<sup>39</sup>, with their invitational maps for 'cultural productions' and 'knowledge exchange'.

In the Netherlands we can ask ourselves whether and how the change in architectural and urban thinking has echoed in projects like the restructuring of the Oude Westen in Rotterdam during the seventies, the GWL terrain in Amsterdam during the nineties and more recently the development of the Wilhelmina Pier in Rotterdam? Do the new plans incorporate changing insights and thoughts related to the mixture of functions and healthy chaos, as Jacobs states, in their architectural model? And if yes, how do they do it? What are the form, organisation and meaning of the Dutch urban block in the new plans?



*Mag Müller Pier, Model of the Müller Pier in Rotterdam (DS+V Rotterdam)*



*Maq IJburg, Model of IJburg in Amsterdam (DRO Amsterdam)*

### **The relation between small-scale urban economy and the physical structure of the urban block**

Now at the beginning of the twenty first century the Dutch urban block needs once again a transformation if one considers global economical changes and worldwide migration. The contemporary Dutch urban block should - as in the seventeenth and at the end of the

<sup>39</sup> Gemeente Rotterdam, DS+V, Arnold Reijndorp e.a., Sense of place, Atlas van de culturele Ecologie van Rotterdam, Rotterdam 2004, p.28 t.m.31

nineteenth century - be able to offer a public domain to city inhabitants, visitors and migrants that are characterized by very different backgrounds. For the future of the western European city, the development of the service, knowledge and creative industries is of fundamental importance. These industries depend for their development, knowledge exchange and risk spreading on a well functioning public domain and not too expensive small business spaces. These are also important for migrants that start their own businesses. In fact urban block, city and public domain form for both groups their 'natural environment.'

In order to understand the relation between economical dynamics and the transformation of urban models, the careful analysis of the architectural models of the Dutch urban block is essential. Documentation, analysis and interpretation of the changes of the Dutch urban block show that not only the urban block transforms under the influence of changes in the socio-cultural and economic context, but also the relation between the private space of the dwelling and public domain of the city is highly relevant. The urban block is the intermediary in this relation: it links the everyday life of the city inhabitants to the public domain of the city.

As architects and urban planners we have to understand the relationship between socio-cultural and economic changes, and the transformation of architectural and urban models. In order to develop adequate new architectural models for the Dutch urban block we have to consider urban economy and the public domain as categories that constitute the city.