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The limited potential of the creative city concept: policy practices in four Dutch cities

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Summary. The creative economy is considered to be crucial for urban growth in the twenty-first century. Many professionals and academics emphasise the dynamic role played by creative production in the urban economy, and in particular the production of commercialised cultural goods and services. Others attribute importance to the roles played by amenities, leisure, entertainment and a thriving cultural life. They consider consumption to be either a direct source of urban economic performance, or something that adds 'quality of place' and attracts businesses and professionals. Richard Florida is an exponent of the latter thesis. His ideas (Florida, 2002, 2005) have provoked a lively debate in the Netherlands, and some cities have suddenly developed ambitions to become 'creative cities'. This paper explores how Florida's thesis has impacted on recent urban policy in the Netherlands. It does so by means of case studies of the four largest Dutch cities: Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht. These case studies suggest that the impact of Florida's thesis has been very limited, and this is linked to the more general lack of potential in Florida's thesis for implementation in practice.

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1. Introduction

Knowledge-based economic activities are of crucial importance for growth in modern urban economies. Some regional economists claim that local clusters of linked industries and institutions in specific knowledge-based sectors are essential elements of the 'new economics of competition' (e.g. Porter, 1998). Over the last decade, another approach to urban economic development, the people-based perspective, has become increasingly popular. Whereas adherents of human capital theory emphasise the importance of highly skilled and well-educated workers as the key to cities' economic successes, Richard Florida (Florida, 2002, 2005) stresses the importance of creative talent. There are few books on urban economic development that have received so much attention outside the academic world as Florida's *The Rise of the Creative Class* of 2002. As Peck (2005, p. 740) comments, "The book's thesis ... has proved to be a hugely seductive one for civic leaders around the world ... , cities (*around the world*, our addition) have paid handsomely to hear about the new credo of creativity, to learn how to attract and nurture creative workers ...". Nathan (2005, p. 1) typifies Florida's work as a "creative class model of city performance". The structure of his aggregate of concepts and ideas is slightly too loose to be called a model however; Peck's term 'thesis' would appear to be more appropriate. This paper is concerned with the implementation of Florida's thesis in local (municipal) Dutch urban policy. In this introductory section, we first present some key elements of Florida's thesis, followed by a discussion of the paper's objective and central research question.

A fundamental notion in Florida's creative class thesis is that human creativity is the most important resource for urban economic growth. Although many members of the creative class are highly-educated – in this sense, the difference between Florida's ideas and human capital theory is only a matter of degree – it is primarily their capacity to generate new ideas, new knowledge and technologies, new forms and content, and to solve complex problems, that determines whether technologically-advanced companies decide to locate

and invest in a city. Florida's assumption is that 'jobs follow people', rather than 'people follow jobs' (as was previously the case). Local economic policy should be primarily aimed at attracting creative people rather than businesses. Such creative people prefer urban places with an attractive living environment, a good 'quality of place'. If a city can provide a good quality of place, creative people will settle in the city, and investment in creative, productive activities will follow. In fact, "places have replaced companies as the key organizing units in our economy" (Florida, 2002, p. 30). A main element of good quality of place is a social climate of tolerance and openness, by which Florida means not just the absence of discrimination, but 'proactive inclusion' (Florida, 2005, p. 39). Florida sums up his message in the metaphor of the '3 Ts' – technology, talent and tolerance – that are crucial to the economic performance of a city. Technological capacity is a prerequisite for economic success; flows of talented people are essential, since these are the carriers of creativity; and tolerance is the crucial magnet, the supply-side foundation upon which creative clusters are built (Peck, 2005, p. 746). Successful cities 'need to do all three Ts well' (Florida, 2002, pp. 249-250; Florida, 2005, pp. 37-38, 54).

Besides tolerance, the key concept of a city's quality of place involves a broad array of other factors that the creative class takes into account when making location decisions. Trip (2007, p. 31) presents a list of ten qualities of place from Florida's work and that of others who have operationalised his work. His list includes diversity, specific amenities, liveliness and culture, and – notably – all three Ts. Good quality of place enables "a creative life packed full of intense, high-quality, multidimensional experiences" (Florida, 2002, pp. 166, 173, 217, 223). This notion places Florida's thesis within a modern sociological concept of urban living that dates back to Jacobs (1961), and even to Wirth (1938), in which variety is seen as the key to a rich social, cultural and economic life.

According to Florida, creative talent attaches great importance to the presence of 'third places which are neither home nor work', and forms of outdoor leisure and entertainment where information and ideas can be interchanged. These venues offer opportunities both to reflect upon and to reinforce creative identity. This is not seen as an activity that is strictly separate from work and only to be engaged in at certain times of day, but rather as something that interacts with work in a process of personal and social creative growth. In general, Florida's thesis also builds on the notion that former "established dichotomies such as culture versus the economy, work versus leisure, production versus consumption" (Mommaas, 1999, p. 177) are becoming less relevant to our understanding of how an increasing number of people live and work in cities, and how cities prosper.

Florida is neither the first nor the only scholar to emphasise the importance of creativity for urban development (see also, for instance, Verwijnen, 1999; Hall, 2000; Landry, 2000a, 2000b). To be sure, Florida does not have exclusive rights to the idea of the relationship between creativity and urban development. His work, however, has provoked a very lively debate on the 'creative city' in the Netherlands, as in other countries. This debate has not only taken place among academics, but also among a much broader range of actors, including policy-makers, politicians, private business associations, educational institutes, local artists, and protest groups. Among other things, this has yielded a series of workshops and conferences, a large number of local websites [footnote 1], and a burgeoning research output (cf. Marlet and Van Woerkens, 2004; Kloosterman, 2004; Rutten et al., 2004; Ernste and Boekema, 2005; Franke and Verhagen, 2005; Van Aalst et al., 2005; Manshanden et al., 2005a; Trip, 2007; Atzema, 2007). A considerable part of this latter output concerns definitions and demarcations of creative aspects of the urban economy, jobs, and industries, and the potential of Florida's thesis for improving urban economic performance.

Given the attention that has been paid to Florida's thesis, it would be plausible to expect that local politicians and policy-makers would have applied Florida's ideas to urban policy. Some sources do indeed suggest such a development. Trip (2007, p. 30) remarks that attracting and keeping the right, talented people – especially creative people – rather than attracting firms, "more or less expresses the current strategy of many Dutch cities". Van Engelsdorp Gastelaars and Hamers (2006, p. 218) are more explicit in their comment that "the 'creative city' has a prominent position on current urban policy agendas" in the Netherlands, and Florida's work has given a significant impetus to this development. There are, however, few empirical research results available that can prove such statements. It has not yet been convincingly explained how prominent 'the creative city' actually is in the context of local policy agendas as a whole, nor how it came to be on these agendas. Trip (2007) examines the role of Florida's thesis in urban development programmes in the Netherlands, but his research is limited to the concept of quality of place in a very particular type of programme (the design of high-speed train station areas) in just two cities (Amsterdam and Rotterdam). More generally, the question of how and to what extent Florida's thesis has been implemented in current Dutch urban policy still has to be answered. This paper aims to redress this situation, by using empirical data on contemporary urban policy to shed light on the impact of Florida's ideas.

2. Structure and methodology of the paper

Dutch urban policy over the past few decades has consisted of a composite of policies designed on different levels of scale, mainly the national and the local. A shift from the national to the local can be identified during this period. Urban policies in the Netherlands both share a national policy context and are characterised by many various local differences. This makes it virtually impossible to provide a universal answer to the research question

regarding the implementation of Florida's thesis in Dutch cities. Instead, we present case studies of the four largest Dutch cities: Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht (see Figure 1).

Section three presents a short historical overview of key areas of urban policy in the Netherlands, including the role played by national policies in local practices. In the following sections, we analyse current urban policy and policy intentions in the four cities (section four), and, in response to the research question, provide a comparative analysis of these four cities (sections five and six). The necessary empirical data for these sections is obtained by means of a content analysis of recent policy documents from these four cities in three policy areas that fit best with Florida's ideas; that is, economy, culture and arts, and leisure (see Appendix at the end of the paper). In addition to this desk research, we interviewed representatives of local policy departments [footnote 2]. The methodology used for the content analysis can be considered a 'family member' of discourse analysis and qualitative research (cf. Weber, 1990; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Fairclough, 1995; Gee, 2001; Phillips and Hardy, 2002; Van den Brink and Metze, 2006).

Major shifts in urban policy entail adopting new core principles, new programmes, and new means of implementation. In order to take these various components into account in our analysis, we used the so-called 'policy philosophy model' developed by Vermeijden (2001) in an historical analysis of national-level urban policy in the Netherlands, circa 1960-2000. Vermeijden himself based the concept of policy philosophy on a model by Sabatier (Sabatier, 1987). The model identifies the three major components in a policy philosophy shift:

Figure 1: The Randstad, showing the four large cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht



1. The normative core: the basic principles and guidelines of urban policy. This core both motivates and legitimates plans and proposals. It consists of values and axioms regarding the relationship between urban economic development, social trends and environmental aspects, as well as on the government's role in urban policy.
2. The policy core, consisting of concepts, strategies, themes, programmes and policy objectives. By means of these, the normative core is elaborated into policies.

3. Secondary aspects: the practical core of policy implementation. This includes not only legal, administrative and financial frameworks, but also the organisational framework for putting policies into practice.

Vermeijden (2001) notes that a policy philosophy shift may take place when “different policy philosophies compete for hegemony”. Further, the process of replacing the old ruling philosophy with a new one is set in motion in the normative core. The process is complete when the new philosophy lies at the ‘centre’ of both the reflective and practical aspects of policy-making, and the old philosophy has moved to the ‘periphery’. Complete policy shifts entailing replacement of the normative core rarely occur. In the daily practice of urban policy, new strategies, programmes or practical arrangements are often introduced to achieve adjusted policy objectives within the context of an unchanging ruling normative core. We derived our answer to the question concerning implementation of Florida’s concepts and ideas in the four cities from changes in the three cores of the existing urban policy philosophy, but we did not anticipate radical changes in each core beforehand.

From the outset, we considered it to be highly unlikely that Florida’s concepts and ideas would have already provoked a radical shift in urban policy philosophy in Dutch cities, despite the attention that his work has received in recent years. It seemed much more likely that his ideas were merging with existing modes of thinking and evolving policies. In advance of the analysis that follows, we would note that the implementation of Florida’s ideas and concepts remains quite limited in the four cities. In the concluding section of the paper (section six), we relate this observation to a brief assessment of the value and utility of Florida’s thesis for urban policy.

3. Urban policy in the Netherlands

Since circa 1960, urban policy in the Netherlands has been characterised by three different policy philosophies, which have been labelled 'urban reconstruction', 'classic urban renewal', and 'urban revitalization' (Ter Borg and Dijkink, 1992; Vermeijden, 2001). The urban reconstruction phase began in the 1950s, and was the major philosophy in the 1960s and early 1970s; classic urban renewal dominated for much of the 1970s and early 1980s; and urban revitalisation became the leading policy philosophy in the mid-1980s (see also Table 1). With regard to the question of the implementation of Florida's thesis in Dutch urban policy, this section pays most attention to the current mode of urban policy, urban revitalization philosophy.

Normative core

Classic urban renewal philosophy, which dominated Dutch urban policy between 1973 and 1984, was strongly motivated by social and environmental concerns. Emphasis was laid upon redistributive welfare policies, giving greater priority to cities' residential function than to economic growth. Extended social housing programmes were concentrated in pre-war neighbourhoods around city centres, where quality of life was lowest. 'Building for the neighbourhood' was a common slogan. Over time, this philosophy ran into severe difficulties due to various factors.

Table 1: Urban policy in the Netherlands since the 1960s

	Policy philosophy	Normative core	Policy core	Organisational framework (secondary aspects)
Early 1960s	Urban reconstruction	Economic growth	Inner-city as economic and service hub	Hierarchical / top-down from national level (government)
Early 1970s	Urban renewal	Redistributive welfare policies	Selective economic growth of (inner-) city; strengthening of inner-city as residential area	More 'interventionist' government than in the previous period
Early 1980s	Urban revitalisation	Entrepreneurial policies	Large-scale consumption projects; area (re-)development programmes; knowledge-based urban development; cultural / creative industries	Multi-level and multi-actor networks; vertical and horizontal structures (of governance)

First, continuous selective suburbanisation and the concomitant erosion of urban services were steadily leading to deterioration in economic and social performance in urban cores, particularly in large cities. An increasingly negative discourse on the city was one of the side-effects of this trend. Furthermore, the state's ability to maintain general welfare levels in cities was in decline. Local policy in the period of classic urban renewal was "pursued mostly in a top-down manner, concerned to exercise national redistributive welfare policy" (Heeg et al., 2003, p. 140). However, a decade of this 'welfare state' approach had caused a growing fiscal crisis and eroded the financial redistributive capacity of the state. These difficulties provoked a shift in the normative core of urban policy towards more economy-focussed, market-driven entrepreneurial policies. At the same time, some responsibility for urban economic performance was delegated to cities. To be sure, these changes were not unique to the Netherlands, and could be observed in many western countries at this time. The Dutch state seems to have continued to play a larger role in urban policy than elsewhere, however.

As part of this shift, the city, and its performance and image, became a central issue for governments and urban research and planning professionals in the 1980s. Several working groups and committees, composed of both national and local representatives, discussed the future of cities (cf. *Gemengde Werkgroep Grote Stedenbeleid*, 1982; VNG, 1984, 1989; RAWB, 1988). For the first time in years, discussions addressed not only the city's 'problems', but also, increasingly, the city's potential. As Mommaas (1999, p. 178) commented at the end of the 1990s, "the Dutch government considers the urban environment as a major spearhead in national economic revitalization, vital to the competitive strength of the Dutch economy in a globalizing market". Besides, the partial withdrawal of the redistributive welfare state has made cities more aware of the importance attributed to strengthening (inter)national competitiveness by investors in economic growth sectors, professional workers, high-income households, and spending visitors (Ter Borg and Dijkink, 1992; Vermeijden, 2001; Van der Cammen and De Klerk, 2003). Given the erosion of national borders in Europe and increasing job mobility among the professional workforce, cities have made a strategic decision to emphasise their potential rather than their problems in the interests of increasing competitiveness. At the end of the 1980s, the *Externe Commissie Grote Stedenbeleid* (1989) had already concluded that cities themselves had taken the lead in transforming the discourse on the city and the formulation of new policies.

Policy core

The current urban revitalisation philosophy has engendered a plethora of policy fields. Many of these interlink aspects such as culture, consumption, economic production, and the spatial development of cities. We selected three fields for a general overview of urban policies in this revitalisation phase: large-scale consumption projects and area (re)development programmes; knowledge-based urban development; and cultural and

creative industries (Table 1). We do not claim to offer a complete overview of existing policy fields; we only comment briefly on issues such as social development, housing, accessibility, and infrastructure, for instance. Our selection does, however, include the key themes from Florida's thesis – urban consumption, the environment, and technological and creative production – that are most relevant as background to the four case studies.

Urban revitalisation policy initially focussed on the realisation of large-scale consumption projects, the creation of "big statements and flagship projects for spectacular consumption" (Mommaas, 2004) such as theatres and museums. Rotterdam had already added new cultural, leisure and entertainment venues to its urban landscape in the late 1970s (Klompe and Romein, 2006). Strongly connected to the "leisure-trend of the late eighties" (Spierings, 2006; cf. Van der Cammen and De Klerk, 2003, p. 321), cities turned to creating a cultural renaissance and an atmosphere of leisure in their centres. More recent examples of such projects and programmes include clusters of particular venue types (e.g. museums); complexes consisting of complementary forms of culture and leisure; and facilities combining culture and leisure, including shops, offices, and middle- and upper-segment dwellings intended to attract the new urban middle-class. As a whole, these "generations" (Gemeente Utrecht, 2003b, p.6; see Appendix) of projects serve a variety of objectives, including job- and revenue creation, upgrading cities' images and marketability with a view to international competitiveness, and redevelopment of derelict urban districts such as abandoned manufacturing or port areas. These projects are mainly planned, designed and developed by local governments. The role of national government can be significant, however, for instance in investment financing. This latter role is most obvious with the strategic 'new key projects' in six cities in the Netherlands – including the four largest cities – for the redevelopment of the main railway station areas. These projects aim to take advantage of these areas' connections, directly or via shuttle trains, to international

high-speed rail links that are under construction. Although these new key projects are not primarily consumption projects, creating a good 'quality of place' for visitors and residents is a principal objective (cf. Trip, 2007).

Knowledge-based urban development policy aims to achieve economic gain from 'knowledge valorisation' at city level, by developing close ties between academic and vocational training institutes, research laboratories, and firms applying advanced formal scientific knowledge in new goods and services (Van den Berg et al., 2005; Den Heijer et al., 2006; *Ministerie van Economische Zaken*, 2004; Raspe et al., 2004). Local policy-makers consider this type of urban economic development, if embedded in local networks of 'knowledge relations', to be both profitable and relatively sustainable in the current context of increasing economic mobility. In several university cities in the Netherlands, the policy has yielded productive clusters known as 'science parks', 'tech parks' or 'science clusters' (Van der Hoeven, 2006). The Dutch Government nevertheless observed that the Netherlands had fallen behind other European economies in technology production and economic activity, despite such strengths as infrastructure, digital connectivity, a trained labour force and high-ranking research capacity. In order to tackle this adverse trend, in 2003 the government implemented a series of new science, technology and innovation policies under the umbrella of a new national Innovation Platform, chaired by the Prime Minister. This initiative's strong bias towards hard science, technology innovation and industrial R&D was extended, following frequent criticism, to 'societal sectors' such as education and healthcare. Universities and research institutes play a leading role by working with private companies to develop applications for innovations. The city-region of Eindhoven, where a large percentage of R&D activities in the Netherlands are concentrated, has been given the status of national 'brainport' in the current National Spatial Strategy (*Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieu*, 2004).

The 'cultural and creative industries' policy theme covers the stimulation of a broad spectrum of activities, including the arts, media, entertainment, and creative business services (Rutten et al., 2004; Manshanden et al., 2005a). It is generally believed that these types of industries and services constitute important growth sectors in urban economies. This is mainly a local policy theme; cities, and certainly not only the four largest ones, have taken the initiative in this field. Local practices intended to stimulate these types of industries demonstrate great variety, including business-oriented (production) and people-oriented (consumption) approaches (Van Engelsdorp Gastelaars and Hamers, 2006, pp. 217-221). Central government's contribution to this policy theme has been relatively small and is almost exclusively contained in one document, the common 'policy letter' entitled 'Our Creative Capital'. This was produced by two ministries (*Ministerie van Economische Zaken* and *Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur & Wetenschappen*, 2005), and assigns the relatively small sum of 15 million Euros to policies that stimulate cultural industries, while noting that cities should take the initiative in this regard. The document's keyword is culture, rather than creativity, although it considers culture and creativity to be sub-domains of the knowledge-based sector. Furthermore, the document is concerned with the contribution of economic sectors rather than that of the creative class – to urban economic performance. Economic effectiveness is the major issue at stake, and the document focuses directly on how specific cultural and creative sectors can increase productivity and revenues.

Organisational framework

The third core of the policy philosophy model includes the practical ordering of the large variety of frameworks and arrangements in the implementation of urban policy. Here, we limit the discussion to the organisational framework and focus in particular on the regional perspective of urban policy. Florida largely ignores this latter perspective (or at least, fails to

make it explicit), but it has played an important role in recent discussions of Dutch urban policy.

The organisational framework that had dominated the urban reconstruction and classic urban renewal policy was characterised by a state-centric system with high levels of regulatory power. Since the late 1970s, this state-centric framework has been eroded by three mutually interwoven trends. The first one is labelled 'de-nationalisation of the state' by Heeg et al. (2003). This denotes the decreasing belief in the effectiveness of national, interventionist, top-down policy-making. States have relinquished a certain degree of sovereignty and government capacity to both the European and the local level. The second trend involves the scaling up of the spatial scope of main urban policy themes, such as housing, employment, and leisure and entertainment, from city- to regional level. The effect of both trends has been neither a simple erosion of the nation state nor its replacement by another type of state, but instead a multiscale reorganisation of policy-making by new forms of government interactions across various levels of scale; that is, local, regional and national. The third trend, 'de-statisation of policy and planning' (Heeg et al., 2003) means that policy-making on complex issues is no longer exclusively carried out by governments, but also by semi-autonomous state agencies, non-governmental organisations and private agencies – a trend that has become known as 'the transition from government to governance'. In sum, the earlier primacy of national, government-led decision-making has shifted towards the co-production of policy by a variety of partnerships among public and non-public actors at diverse levels of scale, with local-level actors playing an increasingly important role. In the course of increasingly complex planning, "process has gained importance over documents" (Van der Cammen and De Klerk, 2003).

Since the late 1980s, a number of reports, planning memoranda and even laws have proposed new interscale governance arrangements for Dutch urban policy. One important

objective of these proposals has been strengthening the international competitiveness of Dutch cities, in particular the four largest cities (Van der Wouden et al., 2001). Some proposals reflect a growing awareness that this objective should be viewed from a regional, rather than local, perspective. Initially, this regional perspective was defined as the city-region, composed of one large city surrounded by satellite towns and smaller settlements. The current National Spatial Strategy – literally named *Nota Ruime* [Space Memorandum] – has a broader regional perspective, taking the concept of the urban network as the most appropriate territorial scale upon which to organise urban competitiveness (*Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieu*, 2004). The strategy argues that the competitiveness of urban networks should be strengthened by means of coordinated and co-operative policy-making by cities and towns within the network, supplemented by the government(s) of the province(s) in which the network is located. Since all four large cities of the Netherlands are part of one of the urban networks (the Randstad) that are defined in the current National Spatial Strategy, they should strengthen their co-operation. This co-operation is voluntary, but offers an opportunity to harmonise municipal and provincial policy with the central government's investment strategy. The Memorandum also 'invites' non-governmental actors to contribute 'inspiring visions and ideas' to co-operative arrangements with municipal and provincial governments. The organisation of such contributions, however, is left to 'stakeholders' in urban networks.

4. Current policy initiatives in the four largest Dutch cities

This section explores the four largest cities' current policy initiatives. All three cores that are distinguished in the policy philosophy model are taken into account. In practice however, greatest attention is paid to the policy core, as this reveals both more dynamics and more differentiation between the cities than the other two cores. In accordance with the overview

of Dutch urban policies presented above, our discussion of the four cities' policies explicitly distinguishes between consumption- and production-oriented strategies. The full titles of the policy documents that this section refers to are listed in the Appendix at the end of the paper.

AMSTERDAM: improving the environment for consumers

Economic policy in Amsterdam views consumption as a key lever for economic performance. The city is working on area-development programmes on both banks of the River IJ [*IJ-oever*] and in the *Oostelijk Havengebied* [Eastern Port Area] with large-scale consumption venues, including a new film museum. At present, Amsterdam is also attempting to strengthen its economy by increasing the attractiveness of its public domain. Improving the quality of public spaces (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2004a), urban living (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2003a, 2005), and even the city as a consumer environment, are key policy issues. This has certainly been the case since the city's ranking slipped in various 'hit lists', such as the European Cities Monitor (ECM) contained in Cushman & Wakefield's Annual Report, which rates European cities as business locations (Gadet and Van Zanen, 2005, p. 23; Gemeente Amsterdam, 2004b, 2006c). The policy focus on consumer environments has not been exclusively directed at the creative class, nor at highly skilled workers. This was considered unnecessary in light of the fact that over 50 per cent of the workers in the city are already highly skilled. Instead, the city aims both to encourage creative talent to settle and tourists to visit, without making a clear distinction between different target groups. As one of our interviewees commented: "If Amsterdam is attractive to its inhabitants, then it is also attractive to creative talent and tourists". Nevertheless, since the 2006 local elections, the new urban government has paid more explicit attention to attracting talent, referring

more overtly to what the city often calls its 'traditional characteristic tolerance and open atmosphere'.

Recently, the city's Spatial Planning Department replaced its 'traditional' top-down, supply-side, design-focussed planning approach, and its preference for spatially-defined assignments, with a new kind of urban planning. Interactive experiments in which the demand-side plays a more significant role are now being carried out, with local government playing the part of mediator. For new project proposals, target groups, customers and market players, wanting to take the initiative are actively being sought and sorted into product-market combinations. With regard to inter-municipal collaboration, Amsterdam sees city and region as belonging together. "The territorial dynamics of the creative sector - of direct importance to Amsterdam - extends beyond the boundaries of the municipality" (Rutten et al., 2004, p. 11; Gemeente Amsterdam, 2007). Amsterdam and Almere have thus recently developed the concept of a 'twin city', a means of extending the spatial vicinity via true collaboration.

Amsterdam has also focussed on strengthening production. Science Park Amsterdam, a cluster of high-tech industries based on the valorisation of knowledge relations, is an early example of Dutch knowledge-based urban development policy. While its planning dates back to 1989, the Park is still in development. With regard to creative and cultural industries, since 1999 the city has invested in a *broedplaatsenbeleid* [seedbed policy]. This new policy was the outcome of developments in the 1990s. After two decades in which "living in the centre of Amsterdam was not popular for people with money" (Shaw, 2006, p. 34), the 1990s were characterised by large-scale clearing of 'old buildings' and a boom in the private construction of commercial mainstream developments. Affordable locations for displaced or new creative initiatives became increasingly scarce, and a growing number of such initiatives subsequently moved to other cities, including Rotterdam.

Following protest meetings by 'subcultural collectives' (Shaw, 2006), the local government realised that a valuable kind of economic capital was being destroyed, and the seedbed policy was introduced. This policy aimed to take abandoned factories, warehouses, and similar buildings 'out of the property market' and place them at the disposal of small-scale, start-up enterprises in the creative and cultural industries, as a means of providing affordable living and working spaces (Van Ulzen, 2007, p. 181). Aside from its seedbed policy, however, the only other initiative to strengthen creative production taken by the city has been the creation of an inventory of creative businesses, including characteristics of their production environments, to provide an empirical basis for possible future policies (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2003b, 2006a, 2006b).

UTRECHT: supporting consumption and the economy

A focus on consumer environments is also clearly evident in Utrecht. Two memoranda (Gemeente Utrecht, 2003b, 2003c) explicitly aim at strengthening the (inner) city as a hospitable meeting place. Key roles have been assigned to the hospitality sector and to new leisure facilities. These two memoranda have different emphases, however: the Leisure Memorandum (2003b) seeks to attract more visitors to Utrecht in order to create jobs and revenues, whereas the Economic Memorandum (2003c) positions Utrecht as a 'meeting place for talent' that must be enticed to live and work in the city. This coveted 'talent' would be better described as highly trained than creative, however. The two policy documents reflect an entrepreneurial approach that is also discernible in the Memorandum on Culture (Gemeente Utrecht, 2005); the economic potential of consumer environments is evidently the foremost priority for policy-makers in Utrecht.

The consumption-oriented policy in Utrecht strives to achieve culture and leisure services in specific areas of the city. Particular emphasis is placed on the historic city centre;

the intention is to create a consumption environment featuring new shops, catering establishments, cultural services and nightlife activities that can compete successfully with Amsterdam. In addition, less closely-interlinked area development programmes have been planned around the central railway station, adjacent to the city centre, and in Leidsche Rijn Centre, the future 'second heart' of the city that is being developed on the western edge of Utrecht as part of a large extension of the city's built-up area which will lead to some 80,000 new residents and 40,000 new jobs. All of these programmes include large-scale consumption projects, such as a new music hall, multiplex cinema, and multi-purpose theatre. Lastly, large-scale, mono-functional retail, sports and recreation projects are planned at the edges of the city. All these projects reflect Utrecht's ambition to become a leisure centre of national importance (Gemeente Utrecht, 2003a).

Policy in Utrecht focuses more explicitly on reinforcing cultural and creative production than that in Amsterdam (Hogeschool voor de Kunsten, 2005). Like Amsterdam, Utrecht has mapped out its creative sector, but unlike Amsterdam, the intention is to use the 'Creative Map of Utrecht' actively as a tool for reinforcing creative production. Furthermore, the municipal departments of Economy and Culture are attempting to support fledgling creative companies by equipping (temporary) seedbeds and multi-tenant buildings. With regard to this type of production, Utrecht's policy is more explicitly geared towards economic goals than Amsterdam's, as illustrated by Utrecht's explicit intention to improve the quality of cultural and creative entrepreneurship.

Of all four cities, Utrecht is the only one that is involved in a 'formal' regional platform of municipalities, joined by the Province of Utrecht, collaborating on production. One of the objectives of this so-called Innovation Taskforce is strengthening networks of creative and artistic businesses with other companies and institutions, including educational institutes and banks. In addition, the city has a 'close alliance' with the Province via the

long-term cultural programme, *Vrede van Utrecht* [Treaty of Utrecht, 1713]. In the years leading up to the third centenary of the Treaty, many cultural events will be organised, and investments in cultural production will be made that explicitly aim to position Utrecht on the international map of cultural destinations.

The policy focus on production is not limited to cultural and creative industries. The Economic Memorandum (Gemeente Utrecht, 2003c) focuses on two additional sectors, business and medical services. The latter case is a clear example of knowledge-based urban development; the aim is to strengthen links between educational and research institutes, healthcare services, and industry. Utrecht's approach is more explicitly entrepreneurial than that of Amsterdam, and there is a finer balance between consumption- and production-based policies.

ROTTERDAM: focus on creative production

The recent consumption and production-oriented policies in Rotterdam should be seen against the background of the grown awareness that the city's economic performance lags behind the other three large cities due to a relatively strong orientation on capital-intensive manufacturing and logistics, lowly skilled labour force, and low knowledge intensity (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2004b). The principal aim of its consumption-oriented policy is to improve the city's attractiveness for residents (including graduated students), visitors and tourists. This policy has clear economic roots, although the relative strength of the economic perspective differs between local government departments and agencies. The municipal Department of Art and Culture's Cultural Plan 2005-2008 (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2003) puts forward major social and educational goals, for instance, whereas the mission statements of the *Ontwikkelingsbedrijf Rotterdam* [OBR, Rotterdam Development Agency] and the

Economic Development Board of Rotterdam (EBDR) are spatial-economic in nature. Their consumption-oriented policy clearly reflects an entrepreneurial approach.

The OBR chaired the interdepartmental Working Group that was responsible for developing the vision of the city's leisure and entertainment provision in 2001 (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2001). This vision – *De stad als belevenis* [Experiencing the city] – connected twenty-four different locations (for the most part concentrated in the city centre and the adjacent waterfront) with ten different leisure themes (including shopping, modern architecture, cultural heritage, sports, and port, maritime and water-related activities). A specific combination of themes was developed for each location. The vision acted as a framework for inviting entrepreneurs from the leisure industry to invest in the city (Gemeente Rotterdam, OBR, 2004c). Like Utrecht, Rotterdam, explicitly aspires to strengthen its leisure economy, and acknowledges the importance of large consumption projects in area development programmes. Indeed, the building, extension, and renovation of sports facilities, multiplex cinemas, theatres and museums have been features of urban policy since the 1970s. Furthermore, Rotterdam places significant emphasis on large-scale, outdoor summer festivals. In 2005, Rotterdam won the 'National Festival City of the Year' award for the second time.

More explicitly than Amsterdam, and in a more elaborate manner than Utrecht, Rotterdam has developed a policy that focuses directly on encouraging creative production. This focus is emphasised in the *Economic Vision 2020* memorandum (Gemeente Rotterdam, EDBR, 2004a) and developed further in two recent policy documents, the *2005-2010* Audio-visual policy consultation document (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2005b) and Rotterdam makes work of creativity (Gemeente Rotterdam, EDBR, 2006). The former reflects the priority assigned to the development of audio-visual expertise in competition (rather than co-operation) with other cities: "Digitisation of the AV sector provides opportunities for

Rotterdam as new media and markets are emerging that have not yet been assigned to the traditional AV-bulwarks of Amsterdam and Hilversum” (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2005b).

Rotterdam makes work of creativity is a more general policy document that denominates four promising creative sectors for further development: audio-visual and new media, design, architecture, and music. The document distinguishes between four types of ‘creative zones’, demarcated city areas where designated policies stimulate concentrations of creative businesses. Visibility, and therefore clustering, is considered a precondition for successful creative-sector development.

The intention is that the creative cluster, and the medical cluster and port and port-bound industries, should create the “international profile of Rotterdam in the near future” (Gemeente Rotterdam, EDBR, 2004a). For the creative cluster in particular, local government aims to focus on improving the city’s ‘quality of place’, in order to attract and retain students and other creative people. However, most policy initiatives concerning the creative city aim more directly at production, including the upgrading of entrepreneurship and improvement of adjustment of the knowledge infrastructure to creative production (Gemeente Rotterdam, OBR, 2005a; Gemeente Rotterdam, EDBR, 2006). The role of the local government in the expansion of these three key-sectors of local economy is to facilitate the process of cooperation between businesses, knowledge institutes (vocational training and research) and municipal departments.

In some locations, policies aiming to improve urban consumption and strengthen creative production are being combined with truly large-scale area redevelopment programmes. In the *Lloydkwartier* [Lloyd Quarter] and *Kop van Zuid* [Head of South], leisure, residential developments for the new middle-class are being developed alongside cultural and creative sectors. The Kop van Zuid had already been designated as a strategic urban development programme in the early 1980s (Ter Borg and Dijkink, 1992). Amsterdam

(IJ-oever) and Utrecht (Central Station area) are also focusing on area redevelopment, but not so explicitly in support of creative production.

THE HAGUE: showcasing cultural production

The Hague is a city that attaches a great deal of importance to culture. It seeks to strengthen small-scale forms of cultural production by encouraging these to interlink with consumption. The keyword here is integration; the intention is that small-scale producers of culture should be more open to the public. Moreover, the intention is that established actors should themselves open up to (subsidised) local small-scale producers, so as to create a public for the latter. However, local memoranda (Gemeente Den Haag, 2005a, 2005b) state that no changes are needed with respect to sectoral retail policy. Leisure policy is less relevant to the creative city; it is consumption-oriented, and aimed at large-scale facilities in general and the business tourist in particular. Two areas in The Hague – the city centre and the Scheveningen beach resort – conspicuously represent this approach. A notable aspect of local policy is the potential linkage between culture and the economy. Local memoranda contain the suggestion that previously separate policy areas and social domains could be linked to great effect. Interlinkage is needed in order to allow different economic sectors to profit from one another. The city is actively using its real estate to implement local policy.

The city-region of The Hague offers evidence of what is perhaps the highest level of inter-municipal co-operation in the four largest Dutch cities. Comparable with Amsterdam's proactive approach, The Hague is initiating meetings to harmonise the interests of cultural producers. A large number of networks are being organised in order to bring the relevant parties together, such as producers, theatres, and real estate owners (Gemeente Den Haag, 2005c, 2005d). In the case of The Hague, however, discussions do not end with the borders of the city. Retail and leisure are major issues of discussion with secondary cities in the

vicinity (see, for example, Stadsgewest Haaglanden, 2002, 2006), including the location of a new multiplex cinema. In addition, The Hague is holding talks with Delft about developing the ICT sector. One clear advantage for The Hague is the fact that Delft, a medium-sized city with circa 95,000 inhabitants, is the location of a large University of Technology. Moreover, The Hague is in discussions with the secondary city of Leiden on the possible relocation of part of that city's university to The Hague. Knowledge-based urban development is an increasingly important field of urban policy-making. The Hague is at a disadvantage in this respect, because it is the only of the four largest Dutch cities without a university of its own.

The Hague's policy discourse is at least as explicitly entrepreneurial as that of the other three cities. Although the two policy directions – the stimulation of large-scale consumption projects, and the stimulation of cultural industries – are present in all of the four case studies, The Hague's policy is the most openly entrepreneurial due to the formulation of specific product-market combinations. For example, the municipality is looking for 'big spenders' such as tourists, or high-income workers not yet living in the city. Furthermore, the city aspires to be 'business-like' and 'a reliable partner' (Gemeente Den Haag, 2005e).

5. Florida as a source of inspiration for the four cities

In order to answer the question of how, and to what extent, Florida's work has been implemented in the current urban policy of the four largest Dutch cities, we now relate observations from the case studies to the comparative framework introduced in section two, the three-component policy philosophy model.

Normative core

Recent economic, cultural and leisure policies in the four largest Dutch cities correspond with the entrepreneurial mindset that has been developing for over two decades. The four cities have adopted strengthening competitiveness for post-industrial economic growth as a main objective, although some have formulated more outspoken entrepreneurial policies than others. Urban projects that are designed to attract and retain specific target groups, such as tourists and professional workers, indicate the degree of importance that has been attached to economic efficiency. These projects are part of the challenge of manufacturing images and branding cities as attractive places for “economically robust companies and households” (Vermeijden, 2001, p. 220). Economic efficiency has taken precedence over social equity. While the social problems suffered by disadvantaged groups in these cities have far from disappeared, they are no longer being tackled primarily via generic redistributive welfare policies, as had been the case during the classic urban renewal era. Moreover, such problems are underplayed in cities’ branding and marketing strategies. Tailor-made programmes for specific disadvantaged groups have been developed in order to tackle social problems, but without any change to the entrepreneurial normative core.

Florida does not present an elaborate normative core in his vision of urban policy. This is not to say, however, that his work lacks normativity. He places explicit emphasis on the strengthening of cities’ economic competitiveness, not least in order to attract the “highly mobile flow of creative talent” (Florida, 2005, pp. 158, 258). In his paper on how Florida’s ideas have been implemented in North American (and some European) cities, Peck (2005, p. 764) is extremely outspoken: “both the script and the nascent practices (...) are peculiarly well suited to entrepreneurialized and neoliberalized urban landscapes. They provide a means to intensify and publicly subsidize urban consumption systems for a circulating class of gentrifiers”. With regard to urban policy in the Netherlands, Florida’s

ideas are hardly included in discussions on the policy's normative core, insofar these take place: his ideas are neither in contradiction with the current normative core nor impact upon it.

Florida is less consistent on social issues in the creative city. On the one hand, he labels creativity a 'great equalizer' because it does not depend on race, ethnicity, sex or age: 'every person can be creative'. On the other hand, however, his thesis implies a conceptual model that links a flourishing creative economy with increasing social inequality and exclusion. He assumes that non-creative people are needed for a flourishing creative urban economy because they do the service work that the creatively talented have little time to do for themselves. Furthermore, "there is little regard for those who are on the thin end of Florida's 'thick labour markets', beyond the forlorn hope that, one day, they too might be lifted into the new overclass" (Peck, 2005, p. 746). Many of the jobs held by these non-creatives – Florida estimates that they consist of circa 70 percent of the urban labour force – are badly paid and insecure. Florida shows himself to be quite concerned about rising social inequality as a direct negative consequence of the creative economy, and comments that 'we' need to respond to this issue (Florida, 2005, p. 64). He pleads for "new kinds of social institutions and policies to complete the system and make it work well" (Florida, 2005, p. 241). Notwithstanding this concern, however, his main lever consists of moral exhortations. "There is certainly no need for unions or large-scale government programmes, creativity-stifling institutions that these are held to be, since Florida's vision of a creative meritocracy is essentially a libertarian one" (Maliszewski 2004, quoted by Peck, 2005, p. 756). In fact, the only salvation for the less creative underclass is to become more creative. But however one interprets Florida's position on the social aspects of the creative economy, this has played no overt role in the debate about his thesis in the Netherlands.

Lastly, Florida's plea for an open and tolerant social climate in cities does neither appear to have had a significant impact on Dutch urban policy. On the contrary, there are indications that the social climate in Dutch cities has become less open and tolerant in recent few years. Amsterdam, with a mayor who stresses integration and tolerance between the city's different ethnic and religious groups, is still thought to come relatively close to this ideal. Prior to the local elections in 2006, however, municipal policy in Rotterdam was characterised by "a negative attitude against cultural differences in the urban society" (Van Ulzen, 2007, p. 214). In general, the shift towards a less tolerant social climate corresponds with a nationwide normative shift from the ideal of a harmonious multicultural society embracing cultural diversity, towards the adjustment of diversity to fit Dutch cultural values and norms. As with social inequality, tolerance is an issue of debate in Dutch cities, but this is largely separate from the debate on the value and utility of Florida's thesis.

Policy core

In the four cities, a large variety of policy cores aim to achieve a strong, competitive position and good economic performance. These are mostly sectoral policies, outlined in a plethora of policy memoranda in the fields of the economy, arts and culture, leisure and retail. In general, 'hardware-oriented' large-scale consumption and area-regeneration programmes appeared earlier on the policy agenda than 'software-oriented' knowledge- and creativity-based policy themes. Florida's conceptual framework fits best with this latter type. Accordingly, he criticises policies such as large-scale area-revitalisation programmes and the erection of large-scale consumption projects, on the grounds that these negate how consumption and production interrelate in a successful creative city. Florida maintains that these large, standardised and tightly-scheduled forms of consumption can hardly stimulate the kinds of informal networks that reproduce creativity. He even calls for a "moratorium on

these public boondoggles” (Florida 2005, p. 49). Policy-makers in the four cities however, have planned and developed new commercial consumption-oriented programmes of retail, culture and entertainment, regardless of Florida’s criticisms.

Trip (2007, p. 31) comments that qualities of place “are easy to perceive in places where they are ‘in the air’ but that some are hard to define. For planners, they are difficult to reproduce, let alone to create out of the blue”. He adds that this latter challenge is particularly true for cities that lack an historic centre with a certain density of cultural heritage. Urban policy in Utrecht builds explicitly on its historic heart, whereas Rotterdam lacks such a centre. On the whole, the four cities as a group focus less on improving quality of place in order to attract talented people, than on the direct and explicit support of economic production. These policies do involve small-scale production of cultural activities and creative goods, such as the direct support of creative businesses in Rotterdam and the cultural sector in The Hague. The cities pay at least as much attention, however, to the development of clusters based on advanced scientific knowledge, such as the medical clusters in Utrecht and Rotterdam. One of the strategies adopted by local governments to support creative production has been to put old buildings temporarily at the disposal of creative producers. Occasionally, conflicts of interest arise between these seedbeds of small-scale creative production and the commercial developers of large-scale mainstream programmes, such as the construction of new office buildings, expensive apartment complexes, or leisure shopping facilities. Small-scale creative producers are usually the losers in such conflicts, due to different levels of commodification (cf. Scott, 2000; Kloosterman, 2002; Mommaas, 2004). In this respect, one of the criticisms of Amsterdam’s seedbed policy has been that the duration of lease contracts for the old buildings has not been long enough to enable a substantial investment by the occupiers (De Haan, 2001; Shaw, 2006).

It is apparent that the four cities do not have blind faith in the notion that jobs in the creative economy automatically follow when a high-quality consumption environment for the creative class is established. Moreover, Florida's most important concept – that of the creative class – is not particularly prominent in current urban policy. Rather, the cities aim at attracting graduates and well-trained professionals in order to boost scientific knowledge-based economic sectors on the one hand, and at attracting spending visitors and tourists on the other. The latter may be one of the reasons why Florida's criticism has hardly affected the importance that was already attached to large-scale consumption projects.

Organisational framework

One obvious aspect of the organisational framework of local governments in the four Dutch cities for the stimulation of creative production is the creation of co-operative networks that link established client-firms and institutions with young, talented creative producers. Utrecht is an interesting case in this regard, because a department within one of the city's leading educational institutes, rather than the local government, took the initiative in developing one such network. Furthermore, Utrecht takes part in a provincial inter-municipal platform to bring together initiatives and interest in creative industries. The three other cities have taken similar initiatives, but on a smaller scale.

Most consumption-oriented programmes have a supra-local perspective. All cities have planned and developed large-scale retail, leisure and entertainment projects in order to attract national and foreign visitors. With regard to planning the supply-side of such projects, the perspective is much more local, and co-operation with neighbouring municipalities is very limited. If it does occur, it is restricted to a few surrounding suburbs and secondary towns only and even in these cases competition is at least as widespread. Rotterdam, in particular, makes no secret of this fact. At the larger scale of the urban

network, co-operation between the four cities is limited to some platforms for exchange of information, discussion, or lobbying towards the national government to obtain more means to strengthen their competitiveness, like the *Vereniging Deltametropool* [Deltametropolis Association] and the Great Four Consultation (G4, 2002). Co-operation to create, for instance, regional top-class cultural services or entertainment venues rather than the current competitive services - as proposed in *Vereniging Deltametropool* (2004) - is practically nonexistent, despite the plea for such co-operation in the current National Planning Strategy (Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieu, 2004). It is only very recently that Amsterdam and Rotterdam concluded that co-operation in the cultural sector should be to the benefit of both, and to the benefit of the competitiveness of the entire urban network in the Randstad (NRC Handelsblad, 22/03/2007). This is, however, an initiative taken by major institutes for art and culture in both cities, in which local governments have so far played no part. Because policies to develop creative production have an even stronger local scope than the consumption-oriented policies, collaboration in that field between both the four cities and each city with surrounding secondary towns is practically non-existent.

Florida's impact on local and regional governance arrangements that reinforce the creative economies of the four cities is very limited. This is not due to the fact that cities do not listen to his advice, but because Florida does not give such directions. Of course, Florida (2005) advocates an interactive/collaborative planning approach, but so do most planning professionals. He advances the thesis that strong urban policy is important and that it should "provide the physical and social space needed for creative and economic opportunities to take root". He does not elaborate on how this can be done, however, other than to refer to Jane Jacobs' statement that "new ideas require old buildings" (Florida,

2005, p. 259). Moreover, this is an element of the policy core, rather than of the organisational framework.

6. Florida: a new policy philosophy for Dutch cities?

Richard Florida has provoked a lively debate on the importance of creativity for urban economic development and policy in the Netherlands. Many local government officials and policy-makers are aware of his thesis and some suggest that it has potential for local economic development, even though the exact extent to which they are informed about Florida's ideas is not always clear. It is also unquestionable that the debate in the Netherlands about Florida's work has had some influence on Dutch urban policy. Core concepts such as 'creativity' and 'creative class' continue to be frequently used words (even though different meanings are ascribed to them), there is a growing research output on Florida's ideas, and new perspectives have been generated on the economic performance of the city. There is an increasing belief that certain groups of people should be enticed to move to cities, and more attention is being paid to small-scale creative and cultural production, both as growth sectors in the post-industrial economy and as tourist attractions.

Despite this, however, the implementation of Florida's ideas has remained limited in the urban policy of the four largest Dutch cities. With regard to the normative core, Florida's vision of urban economic development fits relatively well with the entrepreneurial philosophy of these cities. It hardly adds something new, however, as this philosophy developed gradually over time and pre-dated Florida's major publications by twenty years. Neither has Florida's thesis regarding social development and tolerance had a significant impact on urban policy in the four cities, as these issues lie largely outside the primarily economic scope of the debate on his work. When it comes to the policy core, the diversity of policy themes addressed in the four Dutch cities has a much broader focus than Florida's

thesis. Policy measures designed to attract certain groups to live and work in these cities have not been exclusively aimed at the creative class. Instead, the policy core lays most emphasis on giving explicit, direct support to businesses and creating a 'business climate', as opposed to a 'people-climate'. Where Florida refers primarily to people as creative, these cities tend to use the label 'creative' for productive activities. Policies designed to improve the business climate are partly aimed at activities within the 'creative economy', but these cities, particularly Rotterdam and Utrecht, still expect more from the (much larger) 'non-creative economy', and prioritise policy themes that stimulate more traditional industries. These themes include accessibility (via new infrastructure), main port development (such as the Port of Rotterdam), well-trained labour, and available commercial property. Florida's thesis thus appears to be little more than a source of inspiration that has been interpreted widely, in order to stimulate creative industries in the context of broader economic growth. Lastly, there has been no development from Florida's work of governance arrangements that can contribute to a more competitive creative city. Indeed, there is little to be learned from Florida's work in this respect, as he hardly addresses this issue.

These observations lead us to question the value and utility of Florida's work for the practice of urban policy. For now, there are no clear signs that a shift in the normative core of urban policy is about to occur in Dutch cities. There is no evidence that processes underlying such a shift like those in the early 1970s (growing local protests against the deteriorating quality of life in cities, and the emergency of a progressive, left-wing government with a strong social and environmental agenda) or in the mid-1980s (a fiscal crisis, erosion of the industrial basis of urban economies, and a negative discourse on the city) are currently underway. Some commentators have even stated that "the four largest city-regions are the forerunners of the post-industrial economy in the Netherlands" (Van der

Wouden et al., 2001, p. 163) and that Dutch cities in general “are doing fine again” (Hemel, 2002, p. 6).

The four cities, like other cities, “have two faces”, however (Van der Wouden et al., 2001, p. 3). Social problems such as unemployment, low levels of formal education, high drop-out rates, decreasing social cohesion, and poverty tend to concentrate persistently in certain neighbourhoods. Urban policy has always addressed these ‘big city problems’ to some extent, and they have received more attention since a new national government took office in 2007. Such problems are nevertheless seen as secondary to good economic performance, as suggested by current images of the marketable ‘vital city’ and ‘strong city’. Tailor-made programmes for disadvantaged groups and neighbourhoods have been extended since the 1990s, but a return to the redistributive welfare economy is not perceived to be necessary. If such a need were to be felt in the near future, however, Florida would have few lessons to impart in this regard – aside from the notion that non-creative people should ‘get more creative’. It is likely that there is a more fundamental issue at stake here, however; namely, that Florida’s thesis has become popular among mayors, city councils and urban development officials “not because it is revolutionary, but because it is so modest” (Peck, 2005, p. 760). Florida does not meddle with the entrepreneurial economic policy philosophy, and his ideas imply that it is possible to avoid engaging with real social reforms.

With regard to their potential impact on cities’ policy cores, we believe that Florida’s ideas offer little more than a source of inspiration. A number of criticisms have been made regarding the potential of Florida’s thesis to generate sustainable urban economic growth, and we only address a few of them here. First, it is a long way from improvement of certain qualities of place to economic growth, and one might justifiably doubt whether a substantial positive causal relationship exists between the two. Second, as Atzema (2007, p. 21) has

put it, "the devil is in the definition". It is extremely difficult to define who belongs to the 'creative class' and who does not, and the extent to which this is a multiform class. A dichotomy such as that established by Marlet and van Woerkens (2004) between 'bohemians' and 'nerds' underestimates the diversity of creative workers. Detailed research on the creative class's multiform nature, and the existence of a diversity of its preferences for qualities of place, is, however, still too scarce to serve as the foundation for dedicated policies. A more important question, however, is whether such a research agenda would make sense in the first place, since there is, again, a more fundamental issue at stake. Atzema concludes that "the creative class in the Netherlands is more of an ideal type than of an empirical fact. It exists for its largest part of ordinary working people who all possess *some* (our emphasis) characteristics of the creative class" (Atzema 2007, p. 26). This would imply that the distinctive creative class, on which urban policy should supposedly be focussed, does not actually exist as such.

Another criticism is that Florida's conviction that creative city policy should focus on the complex interrelations between living, working and leisure is very difficult to put into practice. Van Dalm (2007, p. 1) criticises such practices in the Netherlands by commenting that they consist of little more than combined investments by the separate departments of Economic Affairs and Culture in the development of creative production. One may also wonder, however, whether Florida's thesis does not demand too much creativity from local policy-makers, who work in institutional settings composed of separate departments.

A final critical remark on the appropriateness of Florida's work for Dutch urban policy concerns his spatial perspective. Florida's implicit model is a 'typical' North American metropolitan area, consisting of one single, large central city that has extended via rings of suburbs. Contemporary urban development in the Netherlands, however, is characterised by the emergence of urban networks that contain various large cities of similar size,

interspersed with smaller towns. This latter form of development demands that we place urban policy issues, including issues related to quality of place, in a different spatial perspective. This would require a more regionally-based and cooperative inter-city framework than could ever be distilled from Florida's work.

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Appendix: local and regional policy reports and plans

Amsterdam

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2. GEMEENTE AMSTERDAM, DIENST RUIMTELIJKE ORDENING [MUNICIPALITY OF AMSTERDAM, DEPARTMENT OF SPATIAL PLANNING] (2003b) *Vrijetijdsatlas Amsterdam*.
3. GEMEENTE AMSTERDAM, DIENST RUIMTELIJKE ORDENING [MUNICIPALITY OF AMSTERDAM, DEPARTMENT OF SPATIAL PLANNING] (2004a) *Vrije tijd in Amsterdam: Ruimte en mogelijkheden in beeld (eerste opzet, maart)*.
4. GEMEENTE AMSTERDAM, DIENST RUIMTELIJKE ORDENING [MUNICIPALITY OF AMSTERDAM, DEPARTMENT OF SPATIAL PLANNING] (2004b) *Plan van aanpak creatieve*

kennisstad, werken aan condities van stad en regio Amsterdam voor Europese toppositie in kenniseconomie en culturele industrie.

5. GEMEENTE AMSTERDAM, DIENST RUIMTELIJKE ORDENING [MUNICIPALITY OF AMSTERDAM, DEPARTMENT OF SPATIAL PLANNING] (2005) *Fact and figures consumptiemilieus: Ruimte voor bestedingen.*
6. GEMEENTE AMSTERDAM, DIENST RUIMTELIJKE ORDENING [MUNICIPALITY OF AMSTERDAM, DEPARTMENT OF SPATIAL PLANNING] (2006a) *Productiemilieus van de creatieve industrie in Amsterdam (concept).*
7. GEMEENTE AMSTERDAM, DIENST RUIMTELIJKE ORDENING [MUNICIPALITY OF AMSTERDAM, DEPARTMENT OF SPATIAL PLANNING] (2006b) *Aantrekkende stadsmilieus. Een planologisch-stedenbouwkundig ontwikkelingsperspectief (concept).*
8. GEMEENTE AMSTERDAM [MUNICIPALITY OF AMSTERDAM] (2006c) *Amsterdam topstad: Metropool.*
9. GEMEENTE AMSTERDAM, DIENST ECONOMISCHE ZAKEN [MUNICIPALITY OF AMSTERDAM, DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS] (2007) *Jaarverslag 2006.*

Utrecht

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2. GEMEENTE UTRECHT, MARKTPLAN ADVIESGROEP [MUNICIPALITY OF UTRECHT, MARKET PLAN ADVISORY GROUP] (2003b) *IJzer smeden als het heet is. Beleidsadvies leisurevoorzieningen.*

3. GEMEENTE UTRECHT, DIENST STADSONTWIKKELING [MUNICIPALITY OF UTRECHT, DEPARTMENT OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT] (2003c) *Utrecht, ontmoetingsplaats voor talent. Economisch profiel Utrecht 2010.*
4. GEMEENTE UTRECHT, DIENST MAATSCHAPPELIJKE ONTWIKKELING [MUNICIPALITY OF UTRECHT, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT] (2005) *Cultuur is kapitaal. Cultuurvisie 2005-2008.*
5. HOGESCHOOL VOOR DE KUNSTEN UTRECHT [MUNICIPALITY OF UTRECHT, ACADEMY OF ARTS UTRECHT], WITH MKB UTRECHT (2005) *Cultureel ondernemerschap. CMKBU; een veelbelovende onderneming.* Utrecht: Academy of Arts, MKB Utrecht

Rotterdam

1. GEMEENTE ROTTERDAM [MUNICIPALITY OF ROTTERDAM], Werkgroep Stad als Belevens (2001) *De Stad als Belevens. Visie & advies.*
2. GEMEENTE ROTTERDAM, DIENST KUNST EN CULTUUR [MUNICIPALITY OF ROTTERDAM, DEPARTMENT OF ART AND CULTURE] (2003) *Cultuurplan 2005-2008, incl. Uitgangspunten. Overlegdocument t.b.v. Raad en Commissie 2004.*
3. GEMEENTE ROTTERDAM [MUNICIPALITY OF ROTTERDAM], ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD ROTTERDAM (2004a) *Economische Visie 2020. Deel A: Rotterdam: Stad van de toekomst. Sterke stad in een welvarende region. Deel B: De kracht van Rotterdam. Positie, trends en ontwikkelingen.*
4. GEMEENTE ROTTERDAM [MUNICIPALITY OF ROTTERDAM] (2004b) *Concept MOP: Veelbelovend maar uit balans. Overlegdocument t.b.v. Raad & Commissie, hoofdstuk 4, Economie.*

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6. GEMEENTE ROTTERDAM, ONTWIKKELINGSBEDRIJF ROTTERDAM [MUNICIPALITY OF ROTTERDAM, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD] (2005a) *Uitvoeringsprogramma economie Rotterdam 2006-2009*.
7. GEMEENTE ROTTERDAM [MUNICIPALITY OF ROTTERDAM] (2005b) *AV-Beleid 2005-2010*. Overlegdocument t.b.v. Raad & Commissie.
8. GEMEENTE ROTTERDAM, ROTTERDAMSE RAAD VOOR KUNST EN CULTUUR [MUNICIPALITY OF ROTTERDAM, ROTTERDAM COUNCIL FOR ART AND CULTURE], ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD ROTTERDAM (2006) *Rotterdam maakt werk van creativiteit*.

Den Haag (The Hague)

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2. GEMEENTE DEN HAAG [MUNICIPALITY OF THE HAGUE] (2005b) *Leisurenota Den Haag 2005-2010*.
3. GEMEENTE DEN HAAG [MUNICIPALITY OF THE HAGUE] (2005c) *Notitie creatieve stad..*
4. GEMEENTE DEN HAAG [MUNICIPALITY OF THE HAGUE] (2005d) *Notitie broedplaatsen*.
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Networks (G4, Deltametropool, city-regions)

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2. STADSGEWEST HAAGLANDEN [CITY-REGION HAAGLANDEN] (2002) *Leisurebeleid*. Den Haag.
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Footnotes

(1)

A search operation using Google on the combination of the key terms *creativiteit* (creativity) and *stad* (city) at the end of June 2006 yielded about half a million websites. Google marked 670 of these as showing a sufficient degree of dissimilarity as to be unique.

(2)

The interviews with a number of representatives from the four Dutch cities took place during January and February 2006. Our requests for interviews always met with positive responses. We spoke to representatives from various municipal departments in Amsterdam (the Spatial Planning Department of the Municipality of Amsterdam); Utrecht (the Social Development Department, the Department for Cultural Affairs, the Town Planning Department, and the Department of Economic Affairs of the Municipality of Utrecht); Rotterdam (the Rotterdam Development Agency and the Department of Culture and Arts); and The Hague (the Urban Development Department).