

Urban planning for creative agency The theoretical case of Antwerp

1. Introduction

The decline of heavy industries in Western economies from the 1970's onwards similarly ushered in a downturn in the affluence of many North American and European cities. Although the trend of relocating industrial activities continues – as a part of the process of globalization of trade and industry – several Western cities have recently known a reversal of their misfortunes. In some cases, it would seem that a mix of the inner city dereliction (and the ensuing low housing rents), the physical urban historicity and the alternative cultural scenes has attracted young knowledge workers, intellectuals and artistic individuals. They tend to be upwardly mobile, have no immediate plans to settle down and exhibit a strong self-focus (i.e. their standard of values reflects a marked need for self-satisfaction and self-fulfilment).

R. Florida (2002, 2004, 2005) has bunched these people into the Creative Class claiming that they are the economic growth force of the post-industrial economies. Much of his findings on talent, technology and tolerance are based on a controversial methodology: e.g. by operationalizing creativity through educational levels, by measuring diversity through the number of same-sex couples instead of the habitual categories of ethnicity-race, religion, social or economic classes; or by picking a scale – the metropolitan area – which serves the purpose of the hypothesis (Markusen, 2006). There are, moreover, ontological questions. By studying the historical contingent and structural conditions, an explanation can be formulated on the reasons why and how a specific society has come to adopt democratic rule. Similarly, we need to ask ourselves why and how Western society should have evolved in such a manner that, inevitably, a 'creative class' – which in sociological terms has not even generated a form of self-consciousness, let alone a drive for political power and societal dominance – should now be its driving force. The lack of an all-embracing theory of societal evolution discredits Florida's discourse on the importance of creativity.

It is, however, undeniable that there is an increased public attention for the liberty of individuals to express themselves creatively and an ever more important call for innovation in economics. In line with these observations, Florida's popularization of his earlier findings on the learning region (Rutten e.a. 2007) has almost amounted to scare-mongering among city officials on the future of their city. Peck (2005a) notes somewhat sarcastically:

“ So, growth derives from creativity and therefore it is creativity that makes growth; growth can only occur if the creatives come, and the creatives will only come if they get what they want; what the creatives want is tolerance and openness, and if they find it, they will come; and if they come, growth will follow. “ (p. 16)

Many a city official in the USA and increasingly all over Europe is turning to Florida's formula to steer urban planning policy and decisions on spatial transformations. With respect to this political voluntarism, it is worrying that “policymakers and journalists [...] wax enthusiastic about the creative class, with wildly different visions of its constituents” (Markusen, 2006, p. 1923). In fact, Peck (2005b) argues that “extant urban-policy orthodoxies – based on interlocal competition, place marketing, property- and market-led development, gentrification and normalized socio-spatial inequality – are barely disrupted” by strategies of creativity. On the contrary, in Peck's view, these creativity strategies are but a repackaging of the neo-liberal urban strategies.

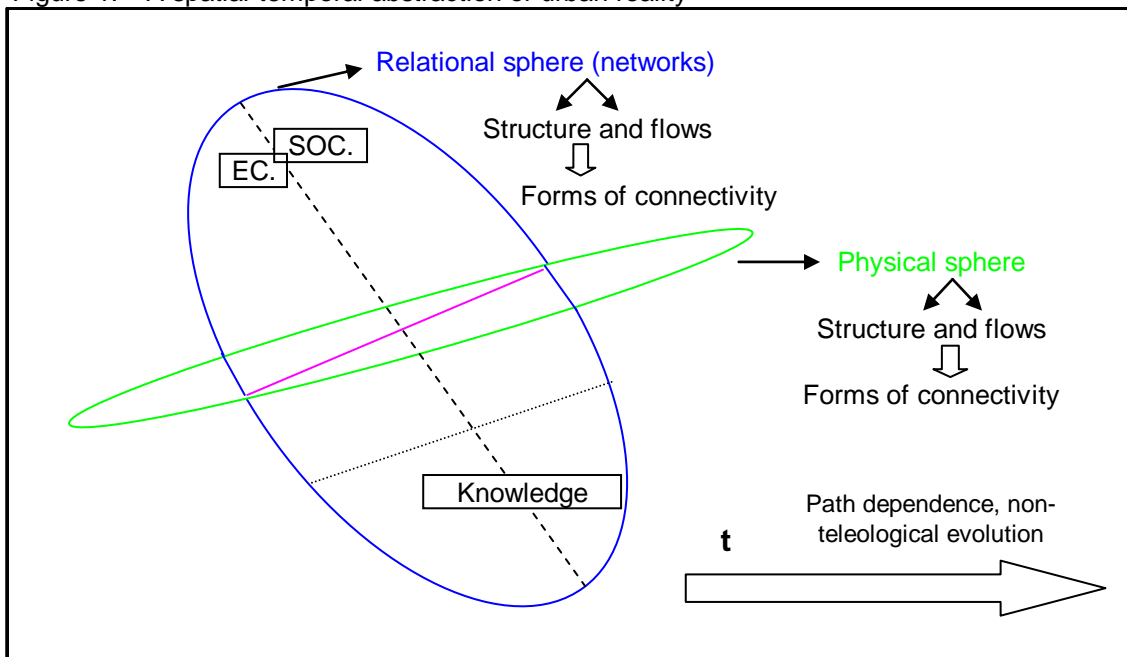
There is little doubt that the urban reality is again – as in the 1950's up to the early 1970's – one of the focal points of policymaking. But is it 'all new wine' or 'old wine in new bags'? The introduction of the concept of urban governance in the late 1990's – inspired by corporate governance which involves not only management, employees and shareholders but also all kinds of other stakeholders – may suggest that the process of steering the urban reality has changed in one or more qualitative manners. Consequently, can strategies of urban planning be any longer the sole concern of politicians or urban administrators? Moreover, the

qualitative nature of that concern has also changed. We will follow up these ideas in the next section, while the implications for our case – Antwerp – will be dealt with in the last section.

2. A theoretical framework

Figure 1 is but a starting point to explore the urban reality which is constituted by both its physicality and its relational nature.

Figure 1: A spatial-temporal abstraction of urban reality



The identity of a city and its hinterland is in the first place a physical authenticity. This actuality consists primarily of buildings – of a private or public nature; for production, trade and consumption of goods and services; for living, work and leisure; many of which are laden with symbolism; marked by concentration or clustering based on their functionality (such as in suburbs and industrial terrains) – secondly, of transport lanes (i.e. road types such as high-, rail-, water- and airways); and finally of greenfields. Irrefutably associated with this description are questions about connectivity and accessibility. The reality of each urban settlement is that it facilitates and/or impedes mobility between sites within the city, and between itself and other cities. History is abundant with examples of urban planning and the thereof resulting spatial transformations aiming to resolve problems of mobility of people, ideas and products. Closely related is the problem of accessibility. There is little point in connecting sites to one another if the destination is not accessible. Thus, we are also concerned with the architectural aspect of the urban reality. The physical structure of the urban settlement inevitable co-dictates the flows of people, products and ideas. Undoubtedly, the increasing digital connectivity has alleviated the difficulties pertaining to the mobility of ideas and even people (e.g. video-conferencing). However, it has been noted by several authors that the transferral of ideas (and especially new ones) is deeply grounded in local social structures, especially those concerning trust (see e.g. Boschma 2005).

This brings us to the relational nature of cities – i.e. its second identity. At the intersection of the scientific fields of geography, social sciences and economics, it is now commonly acknowledged that cities are the bedrocks of economic processes. In Figure 1 the relational sphere is divided between social and economic processes by a dotted line. Each of these types of processes permeates the other; they are completely interdependent. Moreover, both

are dependent upon the continuous production or acquisition, and diffusion of knowledge on all kind of matters. For the sake of simplicity, the relational nature of urban reality will be analysed from both social and economic theorising. The aim is to formulate a theoretical framework which can handle economic, social and geographical questions.

Firstly, let us look at the social dimension of the relational sphere. A comprehensive understanding requires a solid starting point. For this we turn to the theory on agency and structure, in particular, to the Critical Realist approach to society. Agency is defined as referring both to individual behaviour as to collective action. Structure is consequently treated as referring to both large-scale social structures as to micro structures involved in agential interactions.

Agency is concerned with the means, ends and capabilities of agents. Conversely, structure is all about how social arrangements enable or constrain agential behaviour. However, the agency-structure conceptualisation needs some refining. We introduce a four-level abstraction of the city: the basis is constituted of agent-inhabitants (a set of selves); who engage in social activities (of which creative practices are of particular concern to us); where the city is the setting for these specific situated activities; and, finally, whereby the national and global environments offer a dynamic context. Next, we define emergence as the phenomenon whereby a system (e.g. a society or a city) apparently transcends anything that can be offered by its components. It has been observed that the emergence of social mechanisms – practices and consequently structures – ‘can be heavily dependent on the setting [*in casu* the urban settlement], but once established, the very interactive, situated and continuity-preserving nature of social life is such that there are likely to be tendencies in place for the selected social mechanisms to lock-in’ (Lawson, 1997, p. 251). Social practices and structures are in many cases indicative of vested interests. What is more, these interests and social structures are already in place before each person reaches adulthood, which is closely bound up with the exercise of an agent’s citizenship.

We introduce extelligence as the sum (or stock) of all the forms of human capital bases – present and past – and as the capability (or practice) to presently or in the future add to or change those bases (Stewart e.a. 1997; Keignaert, 2007a & b). One form of capital is the ensemble of buildings that surround agents. Another form is the set of social structures that offer a framework for individuals to evolve in. The former type of capital is transformative – it helps the transformation of one capital variety (e.g. natural resources) into another variety (e.g. even more buildings) – while the latter is a meta-capital base – it is the bedrock in which transformative processes are embedded. Through socialization people are made aware of and made to accept the extant capital bases and are taught which practices are acceptable. Moreover, many social structures – just as plenty of buildings – are laden with symbolism. All agential practices are steeped in these transformative and meta-capital bases. Socially creative practices are, accordingly, impinged upon by these capital bases and the underlying vested interests. In fact, these constraints can be observed when ‘imaginative agential projects outstrip the social possibilities of their times’ (Archer, 1995, p. 200). Given these observations it is not surprising that agents devise all kinds of strategies to pursue their self-interest. Therefore, the phenomenon that professional agents are invited to formulate plans on behalf of social structures – e.g. urban planners in the service of urban government – cannot be called unexpected either. In the field of urban planning, for example, Healey (2006, p. 185) identifies “urban strategies as emergent social products of complex governance settings whereby these products possess transformative potential”.

Within the Critical Realist approach, Archer (1995), has introduced the concept of morphogenesis. It is a process through which complex patterns of agential interactions – framed by social structures – eventually lead to changes to the system and to further socio-structural elaboration. Morphogenesis – in contrast to morphostasis – implies the (unintended) emergence of new agential behavioural patterns and social structures from anterior extant behavioural patterns and structures. When social and economic scientists or commentators argue that the present Western society has, at hart, become creative this immediately begs the question what the preconditions were that could have led to the

development of such a societal order? Undoubtedly the number of people with professionally creative occupations is on the rise but it is very much doubtful that their presence has already resulted in a complete overhaul of societal order – it cannot even be said that the economic order has been fundamentally changed even if innovation is today's buzzword¹. This author reasons so, because most of our social (economic) structures and behavioural patterns are still in place or only very slowly evolving. Notable societal changes such as the increasing secularisation and the declining appeal of marriage can hardly be ascribed to the marked ascent of the category of creative professionals. The reverse relationship between these phenomena could be a better contender for scientific research. Still, increased importance is being ascribed to groupings of creative agents and their practices. In many cities planners and politicians are formulating strategies for the recruitment of creative occupational groups to the urban economy in order to compensate some perceived deficit in socio-cultural and intellectual capital. At the same time, more and more scientific literature explores the relationship between economic innovative practices and their socio-cultural urban bedrock (see for an overview and comment e.g. Greene e.a., 2007).

By adopting a number of concepts from Pierre Bourdieu, Hans Joas and Benjamin Dalton (2004) on individual creative behaviour it can be safely posited, *primo*, that agents have reasons to be creative other than as a response to social upheaval or societal breakdown and, *secundo*, that they would expect from their creative practices socially desirable results other than the simple restoration of societal order. Creativity as a habit – instead of being a crisis resolving tool – offers in a dynamic society a chance at social rewards and at an increase feeling of self-fulfilment. The misleadingly, simple looking, relationship between expectations about novel practices and the underlying societal conditions is what – again within the framework of a dynamic system – can lead to morphogenesis. Moreover, by introducing the concept of creativity as a form of habitual behaviour Bourdieu's *habitus* – a set of internalised schemes that allow an agent to understand the social events in society and that help an agent to define and act out his sociality – becomes a far more dynamic component of the overall societal system. Consequently, it could be argued that any future Western societal order may look – rather sooner than later – very different from the present-day social order if indeed the dominant agential behavioural patterns have changed profoundly towards seeing creativity as a habit. But this contention is too speculative to be retained as a part of the ongoing research.

Secondly, on the macro economic level we need to find a theoretical framework for studying the processes that go on in the economic dimension of the relational sphere. The starting point is neo-classical (orthodox) economics which serves as a means to focus, eventually, on heterodox approaches to the research question. Neo-classical economics at the macro-level is in fact nothing else but micro-economics adapted to a larger scale. A component of the starting point is, certainly, the seminal contribution of Krugman (1991) to geographical economics. It is an attempt at explaining the persistent measurement of differences in agglomeration economics, in terms of rational economic agents and by relaxing the assumptions of perfect competition and constant returns to scale. But, there are already at least two problems with micro-economics itself:

- the use of rationality, and even bounded rationality, is not without its conceptual and factual problems,
- the focus on equilibrium and steady state outcomes from linear or simple non-linear models doesn't help the analysis of the problem either because *ex post* data analysis has shown that actual economic events bare little resemblance to predicted outcomes from econometric models (Lawson, 1997, 2003).

Therefore, the search for an economic framework needs to focus on heterodox applications of economics. To compound the difficulties, it should be pointed out that economic geography and geographical economics are not the same scientific field. Economic geography covers the group of scientists interested in economic questions within the field of geography, while geographical economics is about economists who focus on the geographical dimensions of the economy. At times – if not all of the time – the debate

between these two distinct groups has been sterile (Duranton e.a. 2006, Plummer e.a. 2006). One of the bones of contention has been the use of (overly) quantitative or qualitative modes of analysis whereby the former mode leads to a complete neglect of the local and contingent conditions and the latter mode fails to objectify its findings in terms of the possibility to generalise the findings. It has been established for some 25 years now that local amenities can influence urban economic performances – although this begs the question what comes first: the amenity as a cause or as an outcome of a more fundamental societal process? A contested approach to urban economics has been R. Florida's quantitative work. Its merit lies in the fact that a seemingly irrelevant factor for economics such as the degree of tolerance in the local population has been reconnected to economic performance. Alas, the methodology, the ontology and any answer to the question concerning causality have been left wanting. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches have established particularly strong correlations between dependent and independent variables, but have had little to say about causality. It would seem that economics is very good at detecting empirical events but is still searching for a truly good theory on why and how these events occur.

The literature on the micro-economic importance of innovation at the firm level requires at least a cursory introduction. Firms are on the continuous look-out for creative individuals who can define radically new products for the world or who can revamp the extant core competences and products of a firm. Consumers too are more than ever before interested in products that flaunt their novel nature. Both the consumption and the production sides of the economy are therefore continuously exploring and learning about novelty and how to produce it. Economic literature on the importance of local networks or concentrations of firms; production and diffusion of knowledge; and finally the social framework (or social capital or set of conventions – the terminology depends upon the article or author) has been on the ascent ever since the mid-1990's. This author hypothesises that these insights can be tied up with the concept of local extelligence.

Thirdly, at the intersection of the relational and physical sphere we find topics such as urban competitiveness, social equity, governance and sustainability (see Fig. 1). We will only touch in a cursory manner on the subjects of sustainability, social equity and competitiveness. There is, however, little doubt that these topics are strongly related to urban governance. This author posits that developing the concept of local extelligence and by trying to reveal how the mechanisms that are embedded in urban extelligence influence the outcomes of societal and economic processes, offers a framework to bind competitiveness, social equity, governance and sustainability together.

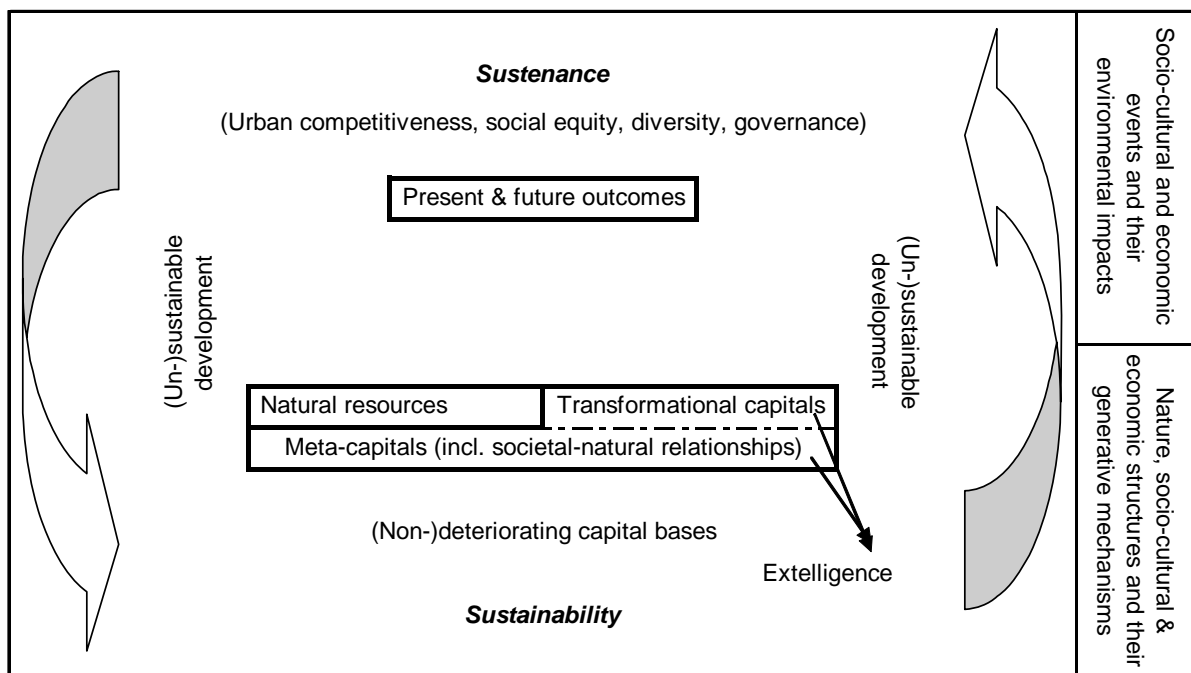
Let us focus on the question of urban competitiveness. In the current literature on urban questions there is a very serious debate on whether urban economies are competitive at all. Undeniably, the term competitiveness comes from micro-economic theories of the firm. It is indeed doubtful that competitiveness can be straightforwardly applied to cities. We hypothesise that urban economies are embedded in local extelligence and that the latter social structure influences the fitness of the urban economy. Contrary to competitiveness – which in itself suggests that by tweaking and tuning a few parameters it can be increased – fitness cannot be so easily manipulated. One could compare this to an adult person who hasn't physically exercised for over 20 years and who is told to get competitive without even passing through the stage of getting fit. The structure of local extelligence – i.e. its capital bases and the capabilities that these hold – can constrain or enable urban fitness and attempts to improve fitness. This is quite similar to how the mental attitude of an adult and the consequent lack/surplus of will power can constrain/enable actual fitness and certainly any attempt at improving fitness. Moreover, fitness is strongly intertwined with sustainability, social equity and governance. Good governance increases the likelihood of fitness and continued fitness encourages good governance. Improved fitness can lead to better social equity while an equitable urban settlement can be instrumental to its fitness. From these characteristics – fitness, equity and governance- it is only a small step to pursuing, attaining and preserving sustainability.

The concept of fitness allows us to join up with the literature on evolutionary economics. Reference has been made to the literature on innovation. Inevitably, this brings up the name of Joseph Schumpeter. In his analysis of economic phenomena, Schumpeter also adopted the idea of Nicolai Kondratieff on long-term economic cycles. Much of the literature on evolutionary processes is concerned with path dependence; lock-in and non-teleology (see Fig. 1). Here too, it is hypothesised that local extelligence is part and parcel of the explanation of those phenomena.

3. The theoretical case of Antwerp

Admittedly, there is something strange to the concept of planning for creative agency. Sure, firms can plan for innovation. But, how should an urban settlement plan for creative agency? Especially, since creativity can have so many unintended consequences whereas innovation aims specifically at intended consequences. The economy distinguishes itself from society because its participants aim to introduce certainty and to reduce uncertainty into controllable risk. Social life on the other hand is complex and diverse: typified as much by deviating behavioural patterns, instable relationships and non-linear evolution as by conformism, stable relationships and linear processes of goal-attainment. To top it all: the outcome of urban planning is desirable in as far as its outcome – a spatial transformation – is structurally sustainable (see Fig. 2)

Figure 2: Inputs, throughput processes and outputs within interdependent ecosystems



Source: Adaptation from numerous sources by the author

In his seminal book *Cities in Civilization* Peter Hall (1998) writes on cities that had experienced historically successful periods and had achieved great economic growth based on innovative *milieux*:

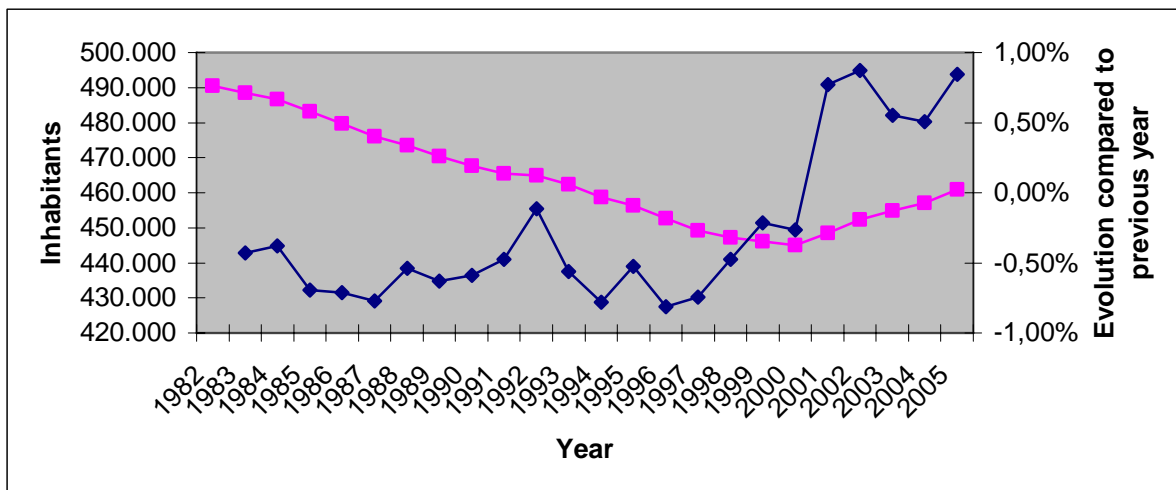
“ And they had a quality difficult to define: they were free of older traditions, prejudices and restraints. *Stadtluft macht frei*, city air makes free, as the old medieval phrase goes; but in these small cities the air was particularly heady. There was a nervous energy, a belief that there were no limits to the possible. At least initially, there was no Upas Tree,

that legendary tree of the Pacific that kills all vegetation in its shade; new initiatives could thrive and take root.” (p. 494)

Traditions, prejudices and other behavioural restraints are manifestations of locally extant capital structures which duly constrain creative agency. In contrast, the belief that there are no limits to the possible is indicative of a local extelligence that is not extremely formative towards the individual agential minds; so that these minds are still interested in entrepreneurship and innovation. In this case, extelligence enables agents to strive for excellence and success. A city’s extelligence or (transformative and meta-) capital structure and its derived set of capabilities should not hang over the city as a forbidding shadow and inhibit its agents to formulate creative ideas, to innovate and to establish new enterprises.

In recent years the exodus of inhabitants from Antwerp seems to have been halted and may even have been turned around, although it is too soon to label the latter as a structural phenomenon. Over a period of two decades the population fell from just over 490.000 in 1982 to under 445.000 in 2000 – a loss of 9,28%. By 2005 the number of inhabitants had climbed to 461.000 – still 6,02% less than in the reference year 1982.

Figure 3: Population of Antwerp and its yearly fluctuation



Source: City of Antwerpen, Registrar’s office, 2005 Annual report on civil registration and population

Similar reversals of migration have been noted in cities all over the North American and European continents, although at the same time several cities have kept fading away. At the broadest geographical scale, Europe’s mega-urban regions (e.g. the UK’s Greater South East) and the largest political and commercial cities (e.g. Madrid and Milan) outside of the Central Capital Region (CCR) have known a sustained growth throughout the 1990’s (Hall, 2001). But at a finer scale, the central capitals (e.g. Brussels, London and Paris) have witnessed a diluting efflux towards smaller metropolises within the CCR. Cities endowed with industries and ports have struggled demographically throughout the last three decades of the previous century, but in the case of Antwerp this may finally have been off-set by gains from the population decrease hitting the larger cities in its neighbourhood.

With only 7,4% of the registered company offices Antwerp handled approximately 22.5% of the Flemish GDP in 2005. Of the registered company offices in Antwerp some 20% are involved in knowledge intensive and high to medium-high technologically driven activities. In comparison, 6.6% of the total number of registered company offices is occupied in creative activities. Of the latter type of companies 90% have less than 20 employees; in fact 67% have only 1 up to 4 employees. There is a remarkable concentration of creative companies in the southern part of the area within the circular ring around Antwerp. Knowledge intensive and technology driven companies have also formed a cluster just outside of the circular road

and adjacent to the cluster of creative companies. The number of creative companies has risen with 10% over the last decade. Similarly, employment in the creative and knowledge/technology industries has been increasing steadily over the last decade. It is known that such a rise in employment is more than equally responsible for a rise in available income since many of these employees are highly-skilled and equally highly remunerated. At the same time – and probably not surprisingly – the turnover in the *horeca* has gone up with an astounding 20%. Much of the restaurants and cafés are concentrated – in the very hart of the city – just north of the knowledge/technology and creative industries. The relationships between these numbers have as yet not been scientifically verified but comparable evolutions have been observed in other cities, e.g. Glasgow and Amsterdam². Given these evolutions it certainly makes sense for the city of Antwerp to plan for its urban development and spatial transformations in function of these prior developments.

Amsterdam offers an interesting point for comparison because Antwerp and Amsterdam are closely related cities. Between 1480 and 1585 Antwerp was the premier merchant city of Europe. The economy of Antwerp went into decline due to the war between the Dutch Republic and the Kingdom of Spain. Amsterdam picked up this role of premier commercial town of Northern Europe – and along the way a large part of the merchant class of Antwerp – until London became predominant in the 1660's. In fact, some families in Amsterdam can show genealogical lines that go back to 16th century in Antwerp. The religious divide between the Southern and Northern Netherlands was only overcome shortly when The Low Countries were politically reunified between 1815 and 1830. There is little controversy in the observation that Antwerp and Amsterdam grew religiously and culturally apart after the Spanish war efforts of the late 16th century.

In the wake of WWII the American Marshall plan shaped the economies of Belgium and the Netherlands. Both countries had at their disposal a number of colonies and large cities such as Antwerp and Amsterdam saw the colonial natural resources pass through their harbours. In addition, both had and still have strong social and cultural scenes (for instance, their art academies). Undoubtedly, in cities such as Antwerp and Amsterdam, (dis-)similarities have developed that make sense only under local extant conditions. Differential rates of growth and innovation, different approaches to and appreciation of innovation are all expressions of differences in practices and structures that exist only by the grace of different underlying mechanisms and patterns. Creative agency also tends to produce further refinement in agential practices and further elaboration of the socio-cultural structures. Many of these novel practices and structures are unintended and unforeseen. In their turn, they influence human beings. Thus, secondary and tertiary phenomena arise. Such phenomena are e.g. the development of different cultural industries (for example fashion in Antwerp, advertising and media in Amsterdam), the presence of groups lobbying in favour of specific vested interests (for instance bank and trading companies in Amsterdam, chemistry and diamonds in Antwerp), the way politicians use democratic institutions to reach certain goals or the formation of informal networks of relationships. One element in which Amsterdam distinguishes itself from Antwerp – or any European city for that matter – is its history of urban planning which goes back to the 1930's (Healey, 2007; Kresl, 2007).

Hall (1998) ventures a guess on how to establish innovative *milieux* within a city. In first order he suggests modesty in the definition of objectives: for instance through investment in high-quality science parks for existing *milieux*. Antwerp e.g. has a university, but in Hall's opinion only a prestigious research university will do. He also suggests that it will require a long-term financial effort by national authorities to get it done. But clearly, this vision favours the exploitation of extant meso-economic and institutional advantages – i.e. the identified clusters of industries – and requires the mobilisation of national means. Although we cannot know for certain, these advantages may already be waning while at the same time it is known that mobilising national means is time-consuming. Moreover, Kresl (2007, p. 114) notes that “national governments are retreating [from the field of ‘city management’] in the face of the growing financial and policy responsibility of the EU”. In contrast with Hall's

precept, we feel that the sources of the vibrancy of Antwerp - embedded in its micro-social and micro-economic scenes – should be targeted for development. The micro-scenes – which are the manifestations of the mechanisms of creativity – should be the starting point for urban planning. Kresl's comments chime in with this point of view:

“ One of the most important supports of the creative industries is a strong system of higher education, and Amsterdam is rich in knowledge-generating institutions. The city has made itself attractive to a young and cosmopolitan work force and once these workers are concentrated in residential areas with good restaurants, clubs and bars and impressive cultural assets [...], serendipity takes over and, not surprisingly, creative people end up doing creative things. This seems indicative of the general approach that is taken by current city leaders, in that *there is less emphasis on taking specific actions to achieve a specific objective and more reliance on simply creating conditions or an environment which will be supportive of economic activity in general*, albeit primarily that of a knowledge- and skill-based nature, and letting individual actors and market forces give specific shape to economic development. “ (p. 115, *italics added*)

Even more so because Hall himself writes that authorities should focus on currently underdeveloped technological niches: “[T]hese may be local opportunities, based on local capabilities and local needs or, better, both of these, which can then be advanced to the point that the products can be exported to wider national and global markets” (p. 498). It is on these local opportunities, capabilities and needs – whereof we contend that they are embedded in or strongly influenced by local extelligence – that urban planners should focus by looking to remove constraints based on local traditions and other forms of restraints (e.g. political). This may well entail e.g. shedding the strongly established views on the all-absorbing importance and primordial role of chemistry, diamonds and the harbour activities in Antwerp. The local power structure, the relationships with these industries and the ensuing patterns of lobbying simultaneously produce enablements for those industries but can also impose constraints on the development of small and innovative firms in new sectors. Both chemistry and harbour activities are known to detract from a city's attractiveness when agents consider their options with regard to living and housing. And for all the importance of any effort aimed at innovative practices – in creative and knowledge/technology driven industries - still no answer is given on the question how city officials should plan for agential creativity.

Hall's precept is based on the following assumption: innovative processes –whether of private or public nature or both– drive the need for spatial transformation and spatial transformations enable or constrain potentially innovative processes. Spatial transformations resulting from innovation usually come at a cost: e.g. gentrification, loss of historical identity, increased competition over (or abandonment of) spaces with desired (or consequently undesirable) attributes. Any public debate will inevitably revolve around the question whether spatial transformation or morphogenesis – thus standing in contrast to morphostasis – is at all times the sole answer to innovative processes. Assuming that the implementation of socio-cultural and economic behavioural patterns is generally supported by spatial configurations, every spatial transformation requires a thorough understanding of the evolution of behavioural patterns – in particular of creative agency – and of historically inherited social structures which have resulted from prior creative agency. In the case of Amsterdam, Musterd e.a. (2006) accurately observe that the benefits of structures and institutions established centuries ago have returned it to pole position. During the Dutch Golden Age, Amsterdam – exemplifying commercial capitalism – made history in the fields of global trade, financial and knowledge-driven services. Present-day spatial transformations – *in casu* the expansion of international airport, highway and railway links – serve primarily to enhance those inherited benefits. Knowledge-driven (e.g. finance) and culturally (e.g. media) creative professionals make up the heart of its post-industrial economy. Most importantly, their activities are to a high degree based on face-to-face contact, trust and tacit knowledge. Cities are physical forums where knowledge can be exchanged and contacts can be made/sustained.

It is hard to predict where the next great innovative product will come from – let alone what that product will be. It is even harder to do the same for creative agency: e.g. how and what will agents communicate with one another in the future; which behavioural patterns will become fashionable and which ones will soon be outdated; what sense will labour and leisure make to them, etc. It is however not hard to envisage that any evolution will originate from a multitude of face-to-face contacts and will be based on a tacit understanding (i.e. an informally and orally codified knowledge base). Offering sufficiently attractive places – easily accessible, well connected, pleasing to the senses, intellectually stimulating and encouraging the formation of all kinds of relations between agents – is certainly a requirement of urban planning for such contacts to take place and for new understandings to grow. Through an analysis of the historically and currently existing relations between occupational categories (e.g. architects, product developers, artist, etc.), between and within socio-economic and cultural sectors and between institutions (e.g. political, educational, etc.) a number of relational nodes should be identified. Next, relational nodes – that make up a part of the city's second identity – should be studied for their liaisons with the physical (or first) urban identity. Improving place attractiveness and at the same time anticipating for phenomena such as congestion, gentrification and consumptive exploitation, then becomes more rational even if the actual outcomes of place-based, creative behavioural agency remain unpredictable. However, this does by no means reduce the problem of the divide between the “knows and the know-not's”. For example gentrification may be prevented through such a comprehensive approach but it will not automatically result in the involvement of all agent-inhabitants – irrespective of their educational attainment – in creative agency. Mutual tolerance and trust between (occupationally) creative agents and agents in other (occupational) positions will not necessarily result from urban planning and spatial transformations which aim to enable creative agency; maybe even on the contrary. Doing blindly away with all historical social structures that run seemingly counter to creative agency may well entail the alienation of the better part of the city's population which is not directly involved in creative or innovative practices or industries. Any urban planning for creative agency therefore immediately and irrefutable requires planning for non-creative agency. Any urban planning must be inclusive of all the city's stakeholders. Otherwise, the sustainability of city's social structures may be unattainable as the agent-members of the creative class, in an Orwellian manner, are all equal but more equal than the city's non-creative agents.

4. Conclusion

A paper of this size is always too short to fully develop a case study – especially if it concerns creative agency because it distinguishes itself by the innumerable unintended consequences it can have. Several North American and European cities have seen a reversal of their economic misfortune through young knowledge workers who seem to have developed a taste for the historical but sometimes derelict neighbourhoods in the city centres. Entrepreneurship in knowledge/technology/creativity driven industries has already boosted the riches of the *horeca* in Antwerp and Amsterdam and eventually it may well give whole cities a brighter future. Urban authorities should plan for this but without neglecting the potentially detrimental effects – which can chase away the very group of agents that support the economic development – and without neglecting the majority of agents which finds itself outside of the category of creative professionals in a supportive position (and *dito* economic sectors). This author refuses to believe in the possibility of ‘a mechanistic engineering of society and its cities through democratic rule and professional urban planning’ unless it aims to remove constraints and to enable agents to pursue a sustainable future. This sustainable future marries economic competitiveness, social equity, diversity and good governance. Such an outcome will fundamentally influence the city's identity and the identity of its agent-inhabitants. Local extelligence – being an evolutionary concept – will eventually reflect that identity and will be instrumental in the socialisation of new inhabitants – whether they are immigrants or newly-born.

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¹ We distinguish innovation from creativity: creativity is the generic term and applies to all forms of social behaviour while innovation is specific term in the sole context of the economy. The latter is far more dependent on contingent conditions and informal agential processes while the latter is a goal-driven and means-oriented process in which the analysis of and – if possible – the control over contingencies is strongly pursued. Creativity distinguishes itself most easily from innovation by the fact that the former has potentially many more unintended societal consequences.

² The described evolutions have been collected from numerous statistical sources – several produced by a workgroup of civil servants employed by the city of Antwerp. For the sake of legibility and in order to save space no extensive references are made nor are the colour-intensive geo-statistical maps used to formulate these comments reproduced in this paper. The sources can be made available digitally by the author on simple request.