

PhD thesis “*Spatial quality of cultural production districts*”

[Dutch title: “*Ruimtelijke kwaliteiten van creatieve werkmilieus*”]

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Press release

“If I have a telephone, a computer, and a bike, I could be located anywhere”

Within large cities, creative firms are often concentrated in a limited number of districts. Cities across the globe aim to develop such creative zones. What’s new? Many creative work tasks are perceived as quite “footloose,” that is, place-independent: “If I have a telephone, a computer, and a bike, I could be located anywhere.” However, creative entrepreneurs do attach importance to their direct environment, because their district’s visual quality, atmosphere and creative reputation catalyze their productivity. This place-independency leads to a paradox of place: Because creative entrepreneurs can be located “anywhere” within cities, the quality of place becomes even *more* important in their location decisions.

This is found in the PhD research of Annet Jantien Smit from the Department of Spatial Sciences at the University of Groningen, which was co-financed by the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, Cambridge, USA; NICIS (Netherlands Institute of City Innovation Studies), and the municipalities Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Groningen.

In this explorative study, sixty-three visual artists, photographers, architects, designers, and filmmakers are interviewed within three creative clusters on the district spatial scale: the Eastern Docklands in Amsterdam, the Lloyd Quarter in Rotterdam, and the Hortus Quarter in Groningen.

Summary (250 w)

Within large cities, creative firms are often concentrated in a limited number of districts. Cities across the globe aim to develop such creative zones. What’s new? Many creative work tasks are perceived as quite “footloose,” that is, place-independent: “If I have a telephone, a computer, and a bike, I could be located anywhere.” However, creative entrepreneurs attach importance to their direct environment, because their district’s visual quality, atmosphere and creative reputation increase their productivity. This place-independency leads to a paradox of

place: Because creative entrepreneurs can be located “anywhere” within cities, the quality of place becomes even *more* important in their location decisions.

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Remarkably, visual quality is very important in location decisions by creative entrepreneurs. Moreover, there is more than one visual model for cultural production districts. Urban design, architecture, waterfronts, and parks may have various forms, provided that they single out one place from other, mainstream places.

Second, it appears that a district’s concentration of creative firms is perceived as beneficial because of a creative atmosphere and a creative reputation. Notably, actual collaborations between creative firms within walking distance are hardly important in location decisions.

The implication for planning of cultural production districts is that visual quality, atmosphere and reputation are important in location decisions and daily functioning of creative firms.

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The weblink to download my PhD thesis, which is written in english, is:

http://www.denkbeeld.info/phdresearch/Thesis_AJSmit_Final_20120924.pdf