

‘Arnhem Artport’ Chances for the creative economy in the city of Arnhem

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Introduction

The urban economy of the city of Arnhem has a strong orientation to commercial and public services. Traditionally also specific branches related to tourism are of rather importance. The latter is related to the location of Arnhem, bordering on the National Park De Hoge Veluwe and the presence of some touristic attractions of national importance.

The decision on the level of national spatial planning to link the city to the international high-speed-train-network, becoming a stop and linkage between the economic core-areas of the Netherlands (Randstad) and Germany (Ruhr-area), had an enormous impact on the city’s spatial strategy. The station-area is now being transformed into a new urban environment in accordance with the new claimed international potential, multi-modal equipped, creating a new business centre including a World Trade Centre. The architecture of the project, a remarkable design by Ben van Berkel’s UN Studio, attracts the international attention (see figure 1). Recently a masterplan is developed for the bordering city centre, created by the well known Spanish architect De Sola Morales.



Figure 1 Design new station area by Ben van Berkel UN Studio

An economy, traditionally oriented to public and commercial services and branches like tourism, new urban ambitions and transformations, names of famous architects designing the new silhouette of the city; a few years ago Arnhem’s policy-makers on urban development realised they might had forgotten something. Something of importance, something that might have been always there but never attracted special attention: Arnhem’s creative economy. Is there any ?

There must be, decided Arnhem’s policymakers in the field of economy, culture and spatial planning. In relative terms Arnhem is the town in the Netherlands with most artists after Amsterdam, the city is a.o. the domestic harbour of ArtEZ, school of arts, famous for her departments graphic design (‘Dutch design’) and fashion, networks of design and media

(Hoofdkwartier), 'cultural producers' with (inter)national impact like Introdans (dance), Oostpool (theatre) het Gelders Orkest (orchestra), platforms like the Museum of Modern Arts Arnhem and organisations as 'SLAK', for years facilitating the housing of artists (ateliers, dwellings).

The 'creative economy' recently is recognized as an item that matters in the urban development of Arnhem; recent policy-documents reflect the new acknowledged importance not only in the field of economy and culture (Arnhem Attractieve Stad, Kadernota Economisch beleid 2003-2006, Artport Arnhem 2004, Startnotitie culturele infrastructuur 2005) but also in spatial planning (update of the Strategic document on spatial planning: Structuurplanrapportage 2000-2004).

There is really something going on? There really is a creative economy in Arnhem or is it only existing in the brains of town's policy-makers and stakeholders, recently infected by the Richard-Florida-virus? Analyses were carried out on the scale of Arnhem and on a regional scale (De Stad b.v., 2005, Kansen in de creatieve sector van Arnhem, idem, 2004, KANsen voor de Regio). Arnhem, with 140.000 inhabitants, is part of the urban network 'KAN', counting 21 local authorities and around 700.000 inhabitants

The employment ratio was analysed on the local and regional level. It appeared that there is a fast growing creative industry in Arnhem and the region KAN. But also a remarkable paradox appeared: there is no fast employment-growth in the general economy of the city and the region. Their economic performance is less than could be expected, looking at the size and grow of the creative class in the city and the region; it is the creative industry that should be the modern motor of the economy, as Richard Florida promised us.

The following analysis can be made.

The creative economy of the city of Arnhem has strengths and weaknesses: there certainly is a firm creative basis but there are too few links and interaction with other stakeholders in the creative industry but especially the linkage with the urban economy as a whole is weak. Too often enthusiastic initiatives, born in the creative sector of arts and culture, get 'lost in space' because they fail in finding smart and commercial roots in the local economy. The creative sector is introvert. People, dedicated to arts, have their autonomous way of life in the city while the number of the more 'extravert' professionals (media, industrial design, ICT) in relative terms is small.

There are lots of ideas, concepts and initiatives but the linkage to the market is weak; there is no well functioning creative-business-chain: suppliers - producers - retail - consumer and commissioner. The necessary cooperation with stakeholders inside and outside the creative sector is weak, there is no existing network and experience of looking and finding venture capital.

The result is a certain 'art-drain' of creative entrepreneurs to the western part of the Netherlands (Amsterdam) or -for the break-through-artists- to the international platforms like Paris and Milan. This especially applies to entrepreneurs working in the fashion-industry. They enjoyed their education on the Arnhem School of Arts ArtEZ, they started their business in an incubator's milieu in Arnhem and, seeing potential for commercial success, leaving the city for Dutch or international capitals of fashion. Examples of these are Viktor & Rolf, People of the Labyrinths, Spijkers & Spijkers, the inventors of labels like Diesel and G-sus and coming-up entrepreneurs like Marck & Mo (still in Arnhem but looking with a wider scope to the surrounding fashion-world).

Creative lifecycle and spatial strategy

Arnhem is aiming at a more solid commitment of his own creative class. Interaction is the mission link. The ambition is to create interaction-milieus for art and entrepreneurship, an environment for creative industry with a display to the market. A basic display for starting entrepreneurs or first-class locations in the city-centre with glamorous display for the arrived and successful creative entrepreneurs.

Creating these opportunities there is good chance of completing the chain:

- the business-chain: suppliers → producers → retail → consumer;
- the chain from education to platform or market;
- the creative chain as Jeroen Saris puts it: inspiration → interaction → transaction (Saris, 2005, Space for the creative economy, presentation Isocarp). Inspiration needs interaction between professionals from different branches to result in product development and application. Inspiration and production need transaction (consumers and commissioners) to result in the selling of products.

The aim of Arnhem is to create urban milieus in which this interaction can flourish.

To analyse the spatial conditions for the creative lifecycle Saris introduced a crosswise model (see the case study 'Creativity as a production factor' by Jeroen Saris). The vertical axis is open – close, the horizontal axis is experimental – commercial. The four quadrants represent four kinds of creative environments each with their specific conditions:

1. Incubator (keywords: divers, starters habitat, trial & error)
2. Creative workshops (open & divers, complementary)
3. Transactional environment (urban, interdisciplinary, multifunctional)
4. Creative production (uniform, industrial, brain park).

Creative environments

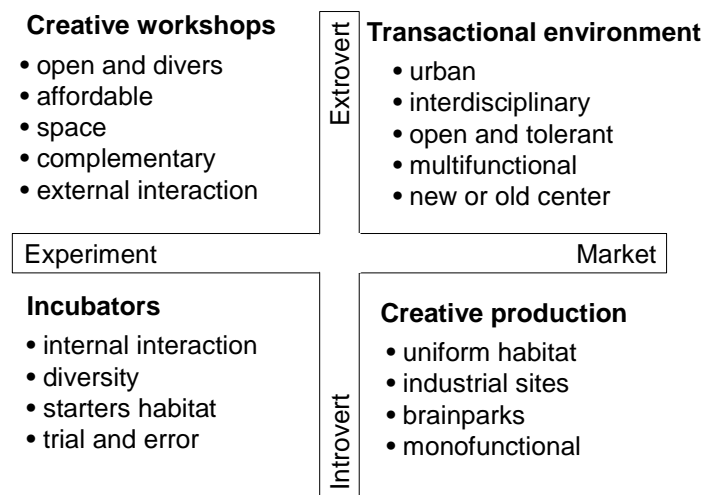


Figure 2. Two axes, 4 creative environments (Saris, 2004)

When it comes to economical robust urban networks with a sustainable creative industry all four habitats are represented in the urban setting (locations may vary from city centre, the surrounding urban zone, the suburban neighbourhood until even parts of the surrounding rural area).

Looking to the Arnhem setting, the conclusion must be that in the present situation there are enough incubator-milieus. Partly these are in temporary use by (starting) artists; for instance former industrial buildings in the older parts of the city or former military sites in the urban edge. The earlier mentioned SLAK-organisation manages these projects of housing and small-scale-activities in ateliers. The other types of habitats are few or even lacking: this especially applies to the transactional environment, the crucial link that is missing in Arnhem's creative industry. The transactional environment, meeting point between creativity and market, art and entrepreneurship, creative producers, consumers, commissioners.

The spatial strategy in practice; creating new habitats for the creative industry

In a similar approach as Saris, Arnhem has determined several habitats, necessary for a well functioning creative industry (figure 3). The lifecycle of the creative industry needs an incubator's milieu, a production milieu, and a transactional milieu: cultural platforms and/or especially economic platforms (market: retail, display).

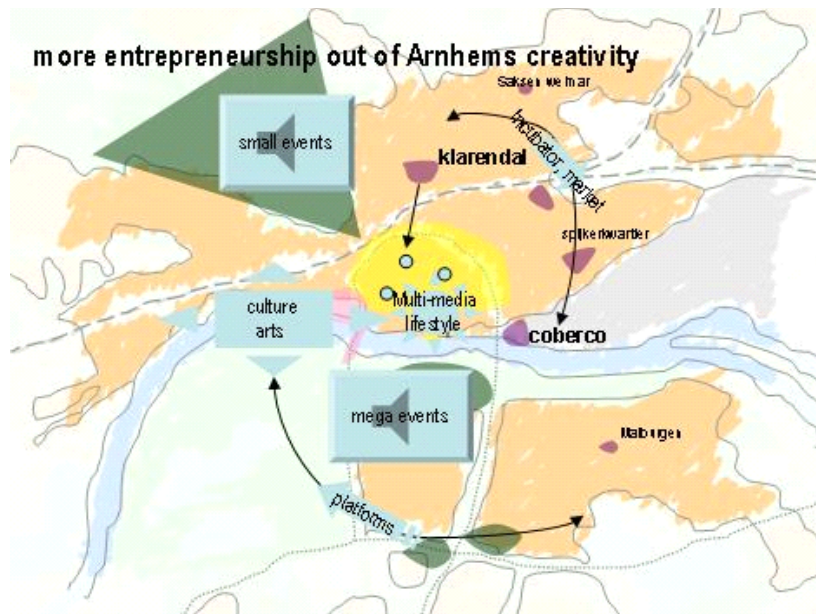


Figure 3. City-wide concept of creating different habitats for art and entrepreneurship, tailor-made to different steps in the life-cycle of creative business-initiatives (locations Klarendal and Coberco are indicated).

An example of a new creative business-cluster is the planned fashion-cluster in the district of **Klarendal**. The project is based on a public-private partnership of the municipality and a housing-corporation that has the ownership of real estate in this district (2500 houses). The decline of this district was a threat for the real-estate values on the long run. The corporation was looking for economic incentives for this part of the city bordering to the old centre of the city.

Together with the municipality a strategy was made up to redevelop 34 houses, located on the central axes of the district, to a new cluster of small-scaled fashion-related business-units and revitalizing the physical and economic opportunities of this district. It is to be regarded as an investment in a production milieu in Arnhem's fashion-industry ('creative production' in the scheme of Saris). The idea is to strengthen this part of the fashion-chain by creating synergy and more possibilities for common facilities. At the other hand it is to be regarded as an important instrument in city's spatial policy, aiming at transformation and revitalisation of this older and declining part of the city. Interests of the creative industry, value-adding of real estate in the district as a whole and targets of spatial policy are being served by the project. In an attempt lowering the financial threshold furthermore, the project applies for an EFRO-incentive.



Figure 4 Coberco, industrial site. Temporary use for events of arts, fashion, architecture before redevelopment to a new quarter of housing and culture and creative entrepreneurship.

In another part of the city the municipality cooperates with a real estate developing combination in accommodating fashion-entrepreneurs. Being the new owner of an old industrial plant (former milk-producing industry) this commercial combination is aiming at redevelopment of this site into a new quarter of housing and culture: the **Coberco-kwartier**. Over 300 apartments are planned in combination with a mix of functions like culture, commercial, restaurant. The location, nearby the city centre on the border of the river Rhine, is a perfect location ('transaction-environment') for creative firms before the last leap is made to the highest transaction segment on top location in the city centre, located on a new projected harbour-site in the heart of the centre (in figure 3 indicated as 'multimedia, lifestyle' as part of the new city design masterplan by De Sola Morales). Several fashion-firms, after their start in an incubator's milieu, are interested: they are looking for an alternative location with a good display to the market, (transactional milieu), less expensive compared to the top-transaction-milieu, to be created in the centre of the city.

Parts of the old industrial buildings of Coberco will be preserved and integrated in the redevelopment-plan. In these buildings there is a high potential of space for cultural events as was proved last years by the temporary use for fashion-shows, expositions of art, temporary housing of a centre of architecture ('Casa') etc. (see figure 4).

The last success in this range was the so-called Mode-biennale ('Fashion-biennale') in Arnhem; a newly organised 2-year-event. Coberco was the central location in this city-wide event which attracted (inter-)national attention; the 'longest cat-walk in the world' through the inner-city started in the Coberco-site.

The conclusion appears to be: nice chances, nice successes, nice branding of the site and therefore optimal conditions for a quick redevelopment for permanent use for fashion, culture and housing.

However, after three years, the redevelopment still has to start.

Together with municipal planners and an urban design agency the real estate owners have worked out a first plan. A delicate balance was sought between the quality of design and the costs of redevelopment. The location, nearby the old centre on a former industrial site, is complex. The project has to deal with subterranean infrastructure, soil pollution, environmental regulations (industrial noise, traffic-noise, air quality), the obligation to create

sufficient parking capacity within the site, the realisation of a certain number of social housing etc. etc.

The market did change in between; a number of high-segment-apartments in high rise had to be skipped. At the same time a high financial output from redevelopment was and is necessary on this expensive location with high redevelopment-costs. A new plan was necessary. In the meantime developers and municipality were working on the creation of a certain fashion-cluster of firms, projected in the old parts of the factory, which will be preserved and upgraded. An existing intermediate-organisation was involved in forming this cluster. This appeared to be a difficult path as well; there was and is hesitation by the post-incubators to make the step to entrepreneurship; taking the risk, commitment to investments, cooperation as part of a chain of entrepreneurs instead of working as individual artists, was and is complex.

Recently the idea is born to create a 'fashion-service-centre' in Coberco (for instance with production-facilities for try-out first-collections and marketing-functions), supported by several stakeholders. This could work out as the catalyser to get the fashion-cluster started.



Figure 5 Fashion- Biennale 2005; the 'longest catwalk'. Performance of local politicians on the 'longest catwalk in the world', starting in Coberco.

Essential for successful development of these new transactional habitats in old industrial environments are amongst other things:

- the notion by development-agencies, (municipal) authorities or housing-corporations of value adding by introducing culture and creative industry as future functions (value of the real estate and value adding in the larger environment): investments will pay;
- creative entrepreneurs, willing to make the leap from individual initiative to cooperation in a chain, from artist to entrepreneur, willing to invest in a new transactional milieu;
- an intermediate organisation, involved in the local creative industry and trusted by the future creative entrepreneurs;
- interactive cooperation between municipality and development-agency in tuning the design, the financial output and environmental/ spatial demands;
- awareness of the position of the habitat in the city-wide concept of creative milieus (incubator, production, transaction on a top-location or transaction on a 'second best' -location).

Under these conditions an ambition can succeed, that focuses on the creation of different interaction-milieus for creative entrepreneurs, and –in the same time- using it as a tool in spatial renewal of certain parts of the city.



Figure 6 Coberco industrial site as centre for Fashion- Biennale 2005