

Urban Governance for Innovative Practices: the Theoretical Case of Amsterdam and Antwerp

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ABSTRACT

Florida's *Rise of the Creative Class* (2002) seemingly offers city officials a formula to assure their city's economic prosperity. Some strong correlations between several, at first sight, unrelated phenomena – technology, talent and tolerance – have inspired him to declare that we are witnesses to the dawn of the creative society. The *Creative Class* is apparently particularly demanding of 'over-all urban quality of life' when choosing a place to live and work. His suggestion that a city is a social engineering problem requiring some fine-tuning by enlightened spirits wholly disregards its path dependent nature.

We start from extelligence, which is both the sum of all the forms of human capital – present and past – and the capability to presently or in the future add to it or change it. We define emergence as the phenomenon whereby a system apparently transcends anything that can be offered by its components. A city is a system wherefrom recombinations of meta-capitals (specifically relational, intelligence and identity capitals which are mostly of a tacit nature) and productive capitals (e.g. natural resources, finance, labour, and knowledge capital) emerge. We envisage these recombinations as either tangible (saleable) outcomes or intangible (untraded) interdependencies – i.e. potentially advantageous outcomes from tacit meta-capitals and face-to-face contacts. In his seminal work, *Cities in Civilization*, Sir P Hall illustrates how certain cities through specific socio-cultural structures –resulting mostly from untraded interdependencies– were apt at reaping the benefits of an era.

Urban governance needs to manage demands for sustainable development, social equity and economic prosperity and is a balancing act between homo- and heterogenization. All of this under the limiting condition that innovative practices – resulting in saleable goods and services or in untraded interdependencies – should not be constrained but rather enabled. This paper aims to offer a theoretical framework from which urban governance can be studied.

Between 1480 and 1585 Antwerp was Europe's premier merchant city. Its economy went into decline throughout the war between the Dutch Republic and the Kingdom of Spain. Amsterdam recuperated this role for Northern Europe – and along the way a large part of Antwerp's merchant class – until London became predominant in the 1660's. The methodology aims to research recent history and collect secondary and

primary data (planned for April-august 2007) on questions of governance and innovation. This should contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between historically inherited social structures, innovative agential practices and demands on urban governance.

Key Words: governance, creative society, untraded interdependencies