Connecting the Creative Scene of Amsterdam

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ABSTRACT

This project aims to uncover, create and facilitate networks having Amsterdam as the creative playground. This study is about providing nets between the creative professionals and the creative scene of Amsterdam. A combination of desk research and field research gave insights on the creative scene question that lies not in the 'direct connecting' part of a network but in the 'finding' part. However there is a need to identify information about the creative scene in Amsterdam and then combine it, make it open and useful for creative professionals. Based on this information a responsive web platform was developed. This platform provides a way to creative professionals to access the creative database of Amsterdam, searching through people, organisation, places and events to in the end connect the creative scene of Amsterdam.

Keywords: Creative industries, Amsterdam, network, web based platform.

1. INTRODUCTION

Cities are changing as globalization trends interact with the intensifying use of media in social, economic and cultural life. The challenge for cities is to effectively use their resources in order to organize environments that host creativity. The issue is to make sure that these two driving forces - creativity and innovation are distributed throughout society in order to have economic, technological, social and cultural trends meeting and interacting.

According to the Design Thinkers Group¹ (DT Group, 2013) "People and organisations in the creative industries are missing a comprehensive overview of the city's rich infrastructure and knowledge, skills and tools that will help them build new relationships and share values. Trying to find their way into the creative industries, people encounter a vast network of established organisations, gatherings and funding infrastructures that is hard to navigate". This makes it harder for creative professionals to enter the workforce and connect with others.

There is a need to identify information about the creative scene in Amsterdam, and then combine it, make it open and useful for creative professionals. From disperse, close and not very useful information to combined, open and useful information. By information about the creative

scene one can include: government studies, websites, social media, personal blogs, portfolios, company websites, news and articles that talk about the creative industries, the agendas of the venues that organize events around creative work and the knowledge of people. All of this information are facts of how people work, live and belong to the creative scene.

By putting all these different types of information together, the following can be obtained: the macro picture, the collective, the group behavior and the networks, the patterns and the trends. This information can then in turn be used to help developing an innovative way to connect the creative professionals with the creative scene.

To tackle this problem, the DT Group is collaborating with MediaLAB Amsterdam and the Amsterdam Creative Industries Centre of Expertise. An international multidisciplinary team of students from the MediaLAB will collaborate on this project together with professionals of the DT group and Natalia Sanchez, an embedded researcher² of the University of Amsterdam to build this project.

2. RELATED WORK

In this section we consider a more in-depth reading of the creative industries and the creative professionals.

2.1 Creative industries

A fast growing global market for unique experiences has made the creative industries a large and growing sector. Creative economy refers to the socio-economic potential of activities that trade with creativity, knowledge and information.

The United Kingdom government has assumed a lead role in developing the creative economy by mapping as well as establishing further policy strategies and interventions. The UK's definition of the creative industries is "those industries that are based on individual creativity, skill and talent with the potential to create wealth and jobs through developing intellectual property" (DCMS, 2010). According to UK's Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), "at the heart of the creative economy are

¹ http://designthinkers.nl (Retrieved 20th of January, 2014)

 $^{^{2}}$ An embedded researcher works for a determined period of time with a creative company. Her objective is to make humanities based research contributions to the development of a specific product or service.

the cultural and creative industries that lie at the crossroads of arts, culture, business and technology"(2010). Their classification is the most used to identify this industry and according to the DCMS's Mapping (2001), the following industries are part of the creative industries:

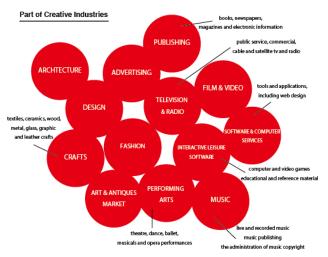


Figure 1: Part of the Creative Industries, Creative City (2013).

According to the Dutch Creative Value Report (2009) in the Netherlands, the creative industries is classified by the following industries:

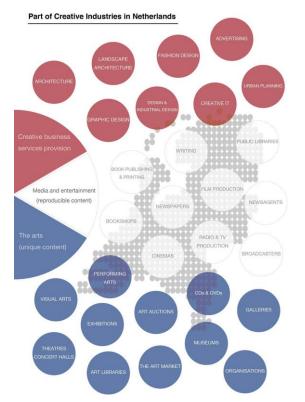


Figure 2: Part of the Creative Industries in the Netherlands, Creative City (2013).

Increased globalization has meant that many businesses in the Netherlands need to bet on design and branding to distinguish their product. In this way, the creative industries plays an important role in the Dutch economy, contributing to both production and service chains and furthermore to an attractive environment for businesses and their employees. "The Netherlands has a strong reputation when it comes to design, architecture, fashion, games, advertising and TV production". (Creative Value, 2009).

2.2 Creative Professionals

The creative professionals as a cluster is really diverse. For the purpose of this research, one concentrates on the emerging creative professional that have more difficulty to get in this creative scene.

The Rise of the Creative Class written by Richard Florida has a definition for them: "The creative class consists of people who add economic value through their creativity" (Creative Metropoles, 2002). Moreover, the author defines the creative class as consisting of two components. Firstly, the super creative core which includes scientists and engineers (including software programmers), university professors, poets and novelists, artists, entertainers, actors, filmmakers, designers and architects as well as (the thought leadership of modern society): nonfiction writers, editors, cultural figures, think-tank researchers, analysts and other opinion-makers. Secondly, creative professionals who work in a wide range of knowledge-intensive industries such as high-tech sectors, financial services, the legal and healthcare professions, and business management (people such as physicians, lawyers, managers, also technicians and others who apply complex bodies of knowledge). (Creative Metropoles, 2002)

The creative core is most active in the production of new ideas, technologies or content in science (and technique), architecture and design, education, art, music and entertainment. The creative professionals solve problems that require independent thinking and a high education level. Both groups share a creative ethos whereby value is attributed to creativity, individuality, distinctiveness and performance. Their main focus is in the production of significance or symbolic content, which manifests itself as information. They are much more likely to define themselves as individual creators, entrepreneurs, artists, or even social activists rather than as industrial workers. Vital part of this economy, they play an increasingly important role in driving innovation and growth in other parts of the economy.

"In Europe, the Netherlands has the highest proportion of creative class in the labour force - 47%" (Creative Industries as a Flywheel, 2011). A report by the UK's National Endowment for Science Technology and the Arts (NESTA, 2008), concluded that more creative people work outside the creative industries than inside them. Moreover, a recent survey in the UK (NESTA, 2008) found that 30% of all young people want to work in the creative sector, even though, at that moment, only 11% achieved that ambition.

To comprehend the broad significance of the creative industries for innovation, competitiveness and growth, it is essential to broaden ones outlook. Those involved in creative occupation groups outside the creative industries sector, form, together with their colleagues within the sector, a highly productive potential labour pool for companies. Furthermore, because of their mobility in the labour market, they bring a knowledge climate of great importance to innovativeness and competitiveness in the regional economy.

3. RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question of this project is:

How can we uncover the digital and physical network of creative industries in Amsterdam and develop innovative means to make them available to emerging creative professionals?

From this main question, the following subquestions have been derived:

a) What and who are the creative industries?

b) Who are the emerging creative professionals in Amsterdam?

c) How are creative professionals and the creative industries connected?

4. METHOD

A thorough research has been conducted to be sure this project covers the current state of the creative industries. The research brought insights in the creative scene and the current problems they are facing. It was divided mainly in two parts, desk research as well as field research.

The desk research existed out of a literature study and the Digital Methods Initiative³ (DMI) research while the field research consisted out of interviews and observations. These various methods of research gave insights into different aspects of the creative scene in general and Amsterdam in particular.

The research was kick started with an interview with Geert Lovink, research professor of Institute of Network Cultures⁴ at the Hogeschool van Amsterdam and Richard Florida's video "Rise of the Creative Class". Brainstorming sessions with the DT Group allowed provided glimpses of scalability and how creative professionals do their networking.

To get insights in the current state of the creative industries and the problems that this particular industry is facing research started with articles and reports. Reading these gave besides insights in the industry insights about emerging creative professionals and already existing social networks.

Next to desk research, also DMI tools have been used which specializes in repurposing online devices for research that goes beyond the study of online culture only. Google Scraper is an online crawler that tracks the searched word or sentence and publishes the frequency of occurrence that allowed us to generate statistical data and do a visualization of the available word cloud.

In order to gain a more comprehensive overview of our target audience, 22 interviews were conducted with people who are now part of the creative industries in Amsterdam. The network started with contacting creatives listed on HOT100⁵ (2013) - an annual talent program with the most talented and promising alumni of media and art in the Netherlands. The flow to get other interviews was the recommendation of respondents on other influential people in the creative scene.



Figure 3: Interviewees, Creative City (2014)

The questions for all the professionals were the same so as to be able to compare them. These questions were broadly classified into three categories: personal, network and future. The interviews were compared in a cross-case analysis. While doing research, it became clear that the emerging creative professionals are the ones who do not have an existing network or agency to complement their efforts. Therefore, a group of students who were in the final year of their entrepreneurship program were chosen and interviewed.

The questions (See Appendix A) for the emerging professionals were the same as the established professionals

³ Reworking method for Internet research (http://wiki.digitalmethods.net, Retrieved 20th of January, 2014)

⁴ http://networkcultures.org (Retrieved 20th of January, 2014)

⁵ http://virtueelplatform.nl/activiteiten/hot100 (Retrieved 20th of January, 2014)

so as to see whether there is a point of contact or point of conflict. In the end, the data has been analysed across all of the interviews in order to identify similarities and differences that provided further insights into issues concerning the formalization of the ordering process by (analytically) generalizing the case study results.

Observations were done when some key places were visited and each of these festivals gave us different insights in the creative scene. The Amsterdam Urban Innovation Week⁶ is a gathering of creative professionals who try to reflect upon the principles of growth of the city of Amsterdam. This year it was organized at the Pakhuis de Zwijger. TEDxAmsterdam⁷ is an independently organized event which encompasses Technology, Entertainment and Design ideas. TEDx provides a platform for an idea to go viral and help collaborate professionals. The Discovery festival⁸ is a festival which brings artists, designers and technology stalwarts all under one umbrella. These places allowed us a first-hand glimpse into the functioning of the creative professionals and how they all came together to execute a show or event. It also provided a platform for people to network and interact with exciting talent.

5. RESULTS

The desk research as well as field research brought insights in the creative scene in Amsterdam and the current problems they are facing.

For this project, the definition of the creative industries in Amsterdam leans more towards the skillset of the creative professionals as this different input from the HOT100 that summarised and labelled the main e-cultural disciplines and skills in 17 tags.

HOT100 Skillset

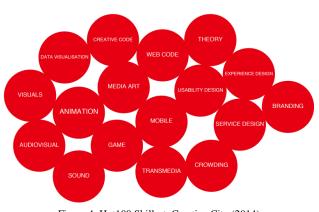


Figure 4: Hot100 Skillset, Creative City (2014)

To conduct the interviews, it was necessary to realize that the so-called creative industry was not the best naming to include the current creatives. Their doubt is not about being creative or not (they all feel creative), but mostly about the belonging to the industry: they do not think to fit the industrial market-space or they do not even want to be part of the term "industry" which has a negative connotation. What is interesting to notice is that the most of the interviewed people think that "being creative" is sufficient to be considered part of the creative industry.

Moreover the research focused on the way professionals build and keep on building their network. In short, insights suggested that physically meeting people is still considered more important than any digital connection. The interviews with creative professionals tell us that with the digitalization of networks it became easier to find the people you need but without a physical connection mostly it doesn't lead to anything useful for the professional. About the requirements for a network to be successful, an opinion was mostly shared: "A network needs diversity in its members both in terms of skill-set and experience". The backgrounds of creative people need to be different to create an useful network and it will give to the network more quality.

Also from the research it appeared some challenges that the creative industries currently are facing and some trends that can exert a powerful influence on the development of this industry in the Netherlands. Edoardo Costa, Italian interaction designer, said that the biggest challenge has been knowing each other: "When you start from scratch, it's hard. Even if you're doing digital and physical networking, there is always something that you are missing out on". It is becoming important for people working together: the ability to collaborate is relevant to achieve innovation and increasing numbers of crossovers and cocreation.

About the future in the creative environment in Amsterdam, in his words, Michel Le Roux, concept developer, believes that these creative professionals will form a "constellation of small structures willing to cooperate and being flexible". The interviewees believe in a lot "more blended and co-creative" and "interdisciplinary ideas" to build up a more harmonic world. Besides a healthy combination with technology.

Creatives in Amsterdam state that the issue lies not in the direct connecting part of a network, but in the finding part. They are not aware of each other. Part of a big diversity, creatives find useful to collaborate with people with different skillset. However, they are part of the hidden information at the bottom of the 'Google Iceberg', opposite side where big companies and established network are. This term revolves around the information not available on Google⁹ to the creative professionals; the information that is hidden and desegregated.

⁶ http://dezwijger.nl/78319/nl/auiw (Retrieved 20th of January, 2014)

⁷ http:/tedxamsterdam.com (Retrieved 20th of January, 2014)

⁸ http://discoveryfestival.nl (Retrieved 20th of January, 2014)

⁹ http://google.com (Retrieved 20th of January, 2014)



Figure 5: Amsterdam's hidden information, Creative City (2014)

The definition of creative professionals for this research does not remain localized to the industry per se but to all those with a creative mindset. The creative scene looks like an ecosystem. Every system is characterized by its relations. We want to facilitate it focused on knowing, contacting, joining, adding.

6. CONCEPT

The research shows that the issue of the creative professionals in Amsterdam lays not in the direct connecting part but in the finding part of creating a network and that is where our product comes in. There is a need to identify information about the creative scene in Amsterdam, and then combine it, make it open and useful for creative professionals.

As our research interviews pointed out, creative professionals want to get in touch with other creatives and a platform where they would get to know each other will facilitate this. Therefore, our product is a web based platform to facilitate the access of Amsterdam's creative database.

The web-based platform would provide a comprehensive understanding of the creative scene in Amsterdam and would facilitate connections using geolocalized mapping system. This feature was chosen as to make sure the product is easy scalable to every interactive media namely: smartphone, tablet, desktop and combined with a gestured layered interface. It would not force users to join but still provides relevant information at the bottom of the 'iceberg'. In this way we ensure that the platform would be self-sustaining and has a minimum entry barrier.

The creative ecosystem thrives largely on the efficient collaboration amongst each other; which essentially fosters a crossover of ideas. The responsive web platform allows anyone to access our services on any device and contribute to the database at any moment.

To develop mobile first, an analysis was made to revise what and how many functions and visuals applications are considering. Four apps based on geolocation were evaluated: Couchsurfing¹⁰, Trip Advisor¹¹, Trip Advisor City Guide¹² and Around Me¹³. The Couchsurfing app brings forward references of each profile with rating system and comments from other users. It also displays a good approach on how to show zones in maps instead of showing the exactly address of users. Trip Advisor app has a very clear way of selecting filters. Around Me is more focused on showing what is around the user in that moment and it has a good design with colorful icons. Leaning towards professional networks, three apps were evaluated: Here On Biz¹⁴, LinkedIn¹⁵ and Behance¹⁶. Here On Biz is like Around Me but with emphasis on a professional network. LinkedIn was not a good example of a search solution app because it was very confusing due to the amount of available information. The most important aspect of Behance is the creative professional tags of how to define your work and consequently your profile. More of this analysis, information architecture and flowchart in Appendix C, B, D respectively.

7. CREATIVE AMSTERDAM

The responsive web platform has a clean layout: light blurred background with thin and smooth lines. Helvetica is the chosen font together with outlined icons and rounded design frames. Four different colors were selected to easily identify each filter combined with a grey scale. A set of creative images of Amsterdam were selected as dashboard background.



Figure 6: Colors and icons, Creative City (2014)

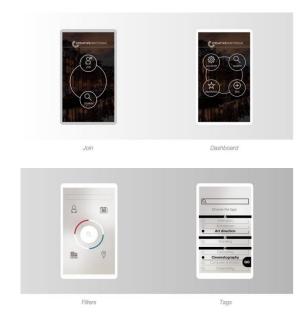
- ¹⁰ http://couchsurfing.org/n/mobile (Retrieved 20th of January, 2014)
- ¹¹ http://tripadvisor.com/apps (Retrieved 20th of January, 2014)
- ¹² http://tripadvisor.com.br/apps-icityguides (Retrieved 20th of January, 2014)
- 13 http://aroundmeapp.com (Retrieved 20th of January, 2014)
- 14 http://hereon.biz (Retrieved 20th of January, 2014)
- ¹⁵ https://linkedin.com/mobile (Retrieved 20th of January, 2014)
- ¹⁶ http://behance.net/apps (Retrieved 20th of January, 2014)

As mentioned, the web platform will not force users to join, anyone can search as anonymous. However, if the user wants to join one can do it as a creative professional or an organisation. As a user, one is allowed to add places and events to the database and mark as favorite relevant results.

The search flow will be the same for both users. It is possible to search by typing keywords or using four categories as filters: user, organisation, places and events. Besides, the search can reach results by tags based on Behance¹⁷ thus one would know the domain in which the creative professional or organisation has experience in. Based on your location, it provides results based on distance from the user and they will be shown on a map or on a list. The user can then easily navigate to ones nearest creative professional or organisation and favorite relevant results.

Accessing the account settings, the user can edit or delete own account or created places and events. Contact information that is displayed on the profile are: name, own website, phone number and embedded links to social media, for example Facebook, Behance, LinkedIn, Google+, Instagram, Youtube, Vimeo or Soundcloud. The idea of the platform is to allow user to improve further contact and collaboration amongst creative professionals.

As portfolio, the user can upload at maximum three work samples, including image, video or sound formats. After, at least add one tag is requested to better identify the user's skills and works. Lastly, the user can add an exact address as his location or only select the zone that one is located.



¹⁷ Showcase of creative work by using skillset tags

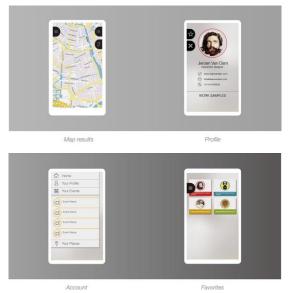


Figure 7: Creative Amsterdam's views, Creative City (2014)

8. FUTURE WORK

For next steps, we would like to develop a selfchecking algorithm which automatically checks the authenticity of the created events and also validates the creative places. We also want a rating system allowing users to provide feedback and rate the places that they visited. For this network idea, it will be a good understanding to have a visualisation of the relation between users. And eventually we would like to develop a platform which can be scaled globally so we can have a Creative Earth platform instead of Creative Amsterdam.

The future lies in developing a platform that would be a creative hub providing information and can be installed at various places like supermarkets, bars, cafes, metro and trams or conferences and meet-ups. The 'Hub' will allow you to interact with the information and therefore facilitate communication. The geolocation of users also helps build a feeling of community and sharing. Since the results are displayed depending upon how close the creative professional is from your place, it is an added incentive for people to physically meet each other. This would not only solve the problem of making the hidden information more visible, but it would also provide physical places to meet and share ideas.

9. CONCLUSION

The aim of our platform is to uncover the information about the creative scene of Amsterdam and to map all the creative organisations, people, places and events in the city. Based upon our desk and field research, our findings are:

- The creative industries needs not be defined thus allowing it to be more adaptable;

- A successful network needs to combine the digital as well physical aspects i.e. people in the network should be able to follow each other online which in-turn facilitates physical meet-ups;

- Creative professional found it easy to contact people around them but they are not aware of each other. Thus, there is no need for an extra 'social network' but a way to find information in an easier and more useful way;

- Google Iceberg: The term 'Google Iceberg' revolves around the fact that this project should present information at the bottom of the "iceberg". The information that is hidden and desegregated.

At the moment, the developed web platform takes care of all the aforementioned points digitally. It solves the problem of making the hidden information more visible and by listing results on a map based on their distance from the device we have made it easier to find your creative neighbor and thus promote physical meet-ups. Since, the whole back-end of the web-platform is based on Hypertext Preprocessor (PHP) it provides a secure way of creating a database and thus, keeps all the information private.

10. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

Personal

- Name
- What are creative industries for you?
- Do you feel part of the creative industries? Why?
- Do you work as an independent organization/freelancer or for a company? Why do you prefer to work as _____?

Network

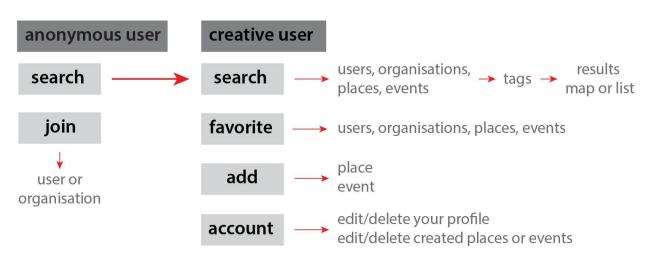
- How and where do you get in touch with others creative professionals in Amsterdam?
- What is the most important thing that a network should have to be successful?
- What are the 3 most important values for you as a creative professional?
- Who do you think are the 3 most influential people in the creative scene in Amsterdam?
- What are the 3 most important sources to access as a creative professional?
- What are the 3 most important places to go as a creative professional?

Future

- What challenge are the creative industries facing at the moment?
- How do you think the creative industries will look like in 10 years?

APPENDIX B





APPENDIX C

App analysis

	functions	search	results	profile	visuals	settings
Image: Section of the section of t	search, map, inbox, itinerary, profile	filters: msg, to surf, to host, people around me, all	map, list, references	facebook or email, profile, photos, references, friends	layers, map, list	terms, use your current location
Constanting Constanti	search	keyword, around me , hotels, attractions, flights, favorites, forum	map, list, rates, filters: price, food, attraction, etc	facebook	half of page with map, half with list of results	current location, feedback, account
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Image: state stat	search	keyword, bank, bar, cinema, etc	list (name, distance) or grid, map, favorites, contact	no login, foursquare link	list, grid, map, colourful	ads, terms
functions search results	nearby profiles, event, my network, chats	nearby, checkin event, network	filters (everyone, visitors, locals)	linkedin, name, profession, company, location, profile pic, member since	grid with pics of profiles nearby	on-offline, notifications
functions profile searchersults	search connections, jobs, companies, groups, news	keyword, suggestions	list (photo, name, profession)	pic, name, profession, company, location, skills, friends, cv	list	connections, terms, feedback
Image: state	find activity, search, galleries, follow creatives	keyword, tags, mostly viewed, recent	list (photo, tag, likes), info, post, add collection, apple tv, share	email, add project, portfolio, collections, connections, statistics	airplay to apple tv	notifications, terms, feedback, website and app

APPENDIX D

Flowchart

