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## **City becomes inspiration.**

When you're asking for the ideal creative environment or city, you have to touch the very personal core of creativity. What do I need to be creative? And how can a city accommodate those needs? It's hard to pinpoint the exact aspects that make you creative but for me there are some basic needs that a city can provide for.

The answer is threefold. First of all you need a place to get inspired; after that you need a place to process and create and at last you need a place for production.

The third need is very rational and practical and is not bound to one city. With the constant growth of the internet and globalisation, production can take place everywhere. A good creative city does not necessarily have to provide for those production needs. Nevertheless they have to offer excellent access to wireless internet so it's possible to connect with the world anytime, any place.

So you're left with two basic needs for creativity that are far more personal than the last one. For me as a starting designer, and still student, I can design in the strangest places (e.g. my bed, in the train etc) all day long. Therefore for me living and working aren't separate things; it's designing, a 24 hour process that never stops. At the starting point of my career it would be great to have a city that can accommodate this kind of living/working ethic. You can think for example of cheap housing in renovated old factories where designers have their own studios/apartments and have the opportunity to work and live together with other creatives. This could be a place to start-up your own company or design studio. There are some nice examples across Europe of the re-use of old factory buildings for a creative purpose (e.g. Westergasfabriek, Amsterdam or Kulturbrauerei, Berlin). What I miss in these examples is the mixed-use facilities for living and creating. So I ask myself a question, is it possible to build new creative areas that are as interesting as these old factories with lot of character? I think that is possible and cities should definitely try to achieve that. With a mixture of cheap studio housing, nice working spaces, interesting small shops and some nice cafes and restaurants you can create a nice new area. It's simply said but cities should really strive for this because otherwise all cities become alike.

This brings me to the second basic need for creativity, inspiration. I can get inspired by a lot of things and at a lot of places all over the world. But it would definitely be nice to get inspired around the corner of your studio apartment, in your own city. But what is it that inspires me? It's not my city, where every time I am walking in the city I see the same shops, cafés and what seem to be the same people. I need spontaneity, surprise, change and temporary events.

These are things a city can rather easily provide for with the initiation of all kinds of temporary cultural events. However they should never lose sight on the permanent basis of the city, the shops. For me a place for inspiration but not how the inner cities are being shaped today. All city centres are the same, with the big franchises like V&D, H&M, CoolCat and so on. Cities should make an effort to make the shopping area's more diverse and create a good mix of independent shops and big franchises. The local government or big companies can for example help small independent shops with expertise, space or special subsidies. Otherwise creatives always leave the city in search for inspiration and they never spend time and money in their place of residence. Small shops are also good for starting designers to sell their goods; this keeps them in the city.

Next to the temporary cultural events there should also be a wide range of cultural institutions. Next to art house, movie theatres and experimental theatre, there should also be a place for big 'commercial' concerts and blockbuster movies. For me it's the mix that makes a city interesting and inspiring.

The most important thing in the creative city should be the combination of big commercial companies and small independent initiatives. I think cities should definitely stimulate the collaboration between those two in all facets of the city; shops, culture institutions and work places. A great example is the CS building in Amsterdam where they made a good start with such a collaboration, it can be better and broader. Let's start building.

## **Maastricht *selling* inspiration.**

After visiting Maastricht a couple of times I can't image it as a city for creatives. It's too clean and luxurious. The inner-city looks like a historical theme park with perfect facades and no rough edges. The mixture of small and big stores is nice but it's too much focused on the well-fortunate. Although the city centre is too clean, the rest of the city has a lot of potential. The new part of town near the Bonnefantenmuseum, Céramique, is really nice and with the library and museum in its centre, it can become a new cultural heart of the city. A heart where creatives can meet and organize all kinds of events. For living it is too pricey, I guess therefore there can be some new initiatives for loft living in old factories (e.g. Sphinx) or new working/living buildings for starting designers. For me rough cities are very inspirational but a lot of my fellow students find their inspiration in nature or quiet places. I can image that Maastricht, with its lack of roughness, sells itself to designers as a place for calm inspiration. On the border between the city and the nearby hills and nature the city can maybe build a *inspirational centre* where all kinds of designers, artists and public can work, meet and exhibit. It's the total opposite of the normal *design centres* which are normally placed in old factories like in Eindhoven, Berlin or Amsterdam. When Maastricht wants to stand out in the battle for the creative class of tomorrow, they should definitely use its most important and unique strength, its cleanness. With such an *inspirational centre* they can do that and attract designers with the hunger for fresh inspiration. First on a temporary basis and if it works maybe the city can start thinking about building some nice affordable housing around this *inspirational centre* so designers can actually settle themselves in the city of Maastricht.