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Spatial quality of cultural production districts

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Chapter 6

Conclusions and reflections

This chapter summarizes the conclusions of this dissertation. It also reflects on the used theories, methods and data; and discusses its policy implications and avenues for further research. To avoid repetition, however, I refer the reader to the previous chapters for the conclusions, and the research and policy implications in more detail for each of the topics of these chapters: visual quality (Chapter 3), creative clusters (Chapter 4), and district features pertaining to work-life balance (Chapter 5) of cultural production districts.

6.1 Conclusions

6.1.1 How and why is the spatial quality of cultural production districts important?

The literature review in Chapter 2 concluded that a stronger evidence base on the spatial quality of cultural production districts is needed if local governments are to be provided with sufficient knowledge to develop meaningful planning policies for cultural production districts. In view of the knowledge gaps and questions in academic and planning circles, the aim of this study was to provide insight into whether, how, and why physical and socio-economic features of districts influence the location decisions of creative entrepreneurs. The thesis's main research question was: *What is the influence of perceived physical and socio-economic features of districts on the location decisions of creative entrepreneurs?*

I will now answer its four key subquestions. The first subquestion was:

Are physical and socio-economic features of districts perceived as important by creative entrepreneurs in their location decisions?

This can be answered positively on the basis of findings from the 63 interviews

reported in Chapter 3, 4 and 5: Physical and socio-economic features of districts are perceived as important by creative entrepreneurs in their location decisions, albeit to varying degrees.

Turning to the second subquestion, *Which salient characteristics of physical and socio-economic features of districts are perceived by creative entrepreneurs as contributing to their location decisions?* Here, the salient characteristics found, unsurprisingly, differ by type of physical and socio-economic feature.

- In terms of district visual features, the urban design, architecture, waterfronts, and a mix of old and new buildings and objects were the four broad categories of perceived features. Over-all, a district's visual appearance needed to be distinctive, singling it out from other, more mainstream places, if it was to be perceived as positively contributing to a location decision (Chapter 3).
- Turning to the socio-economic features of districts, specified here as a creative cluster on the district spatial scale, informal face-to-face contacts, a creative reputation, a creative atmosphere, and formal collaborations within walking distance were aspects perceived as contributing to location decisions (Chapter 4).
- As for the physical and socio-economic features of districts pertaining to the work-life balance, proximity to their homes, schools, and parks, and like-minded families were perceived as positively contributing to the location decisions of the sub-selection of 23 interviewees with working partners and dependent children (Chapter 5).

The general answer to the third subquestion: *Why are these perceived physical and socio-economic features of districts important in their location decisions?* is that all of these salient characteristics are perceived as contributing to increased creative productivity. As such, the answers to the open questions revealed that these salient characteristics were not only perceived as important in location decisions, but also for daily work.

A distinctive district visual appearance was perceived as important in location decisions for three reasons. These were in order of importance: First, the visual appearance needs to be inspiring in a broad sense for their work process (thus, for what they do rather than for the product they make). Second, the visual appearance of the district needs to “radiate creativity” because doing so enhances the creative image of their firm and their products. Third, a distinctive visual

appearance makes it attractive for clients to pay a visit. This was important, because clients were considered to then be more open to the ideas and products proposed by creative entrepreneurs than if meetings were held in the client's office (Chapter 3).

The salient characteristics of a creative cluster on the district spatial scale were perceived as important in location decisions, in order of importance, for the following reasons: First, a creative atmosphere was important for obtaining inspiration, for being among like-minded entrepreneurs, and for feeling more comfortable and accepted by working in a district with people and firms like themselves, such as other creative firms and entrepreneurs who worked from home. Informal face-to-face contacts were mentioned by a few interviewees as a way of exchanging experiences, and for potentially building new relationships for formal collaborations. A creative reputation of their district was perceived as giving their firm and their products a more professional image. For a quarter of the 63 interviewees, formal collaborations within walking distance were perceived as unnecessary, but nevertheless convenient (Chapter 4).

The physical and socio-economic features of districts that pertain to the work-life balance, including proximity to their homes, schools, parks, and like-minded families, were perceived by more than half of the 23 interviewees with working partners and dependent children (in particular with children up to 12 years of age) as important in their location decisions in order to ease their daily schedules of combining work with caring and household tasks: Proximity reduces traveling time to work, and simplifies chauffeuring children to and from school, and to children's and household-related facilities (Chapter 5).

The fourth subquestion: *To what extent are the physical and socio-economic features of districts perceived as important by creative entrepreneurs in their location decisions vis-à-vis other location factors?* was answered by measuring the relative importance of five features of cultural production districts, including the three types of physical and socio-economic features discussed above, using ranking and open questions. The seventh interview question was a ranking question used to gauge how the entrepreneurs perceived the relative importance of district qualities as against features of their office building and the proximity of clients and collaborators within the city. I also analyzed the responses to the other open interview questions for the degree of importance attached to the five features of cultural production districts in their location decisions and/or daily work. As such, I was able to count how many interviewees perceived these five features as "important, as a welcome bonus" or as "very important, or even decisive".

These analyses enabled me to quantify the research results: How many of the 63 respondents attached importance to each of these five features? Table 4.3 in Section 4.9 shows this analysis of the entrepreneur's priorities as measured by the ranking and the open questions.

The perceived physical features of districts (visual features and features pertaining to the work-life balance) were found to be more important than I had expected from the literature (e.g., Drake, 2003; Municipality of Amsterdam, 2006; Scott, 2010). In contrast, the socio-economic features of a district, specified here as a creative cluster on the district spatial scale, were less important than I had premised based on the creative cluster literature (e.g. Scott, 2010).

6.1.2 Which kinds of spatial quality?

To respond to readers interested in conclusions per type of location factor examined in this dissertation, this section will present the conclusions in a different order. The literature review in Chapter 2 substantiated why these research questions should be examined for three types of location factors linked to creative entrepreneurs: physical location factors, socio-economic location factors, and location factors pertaining to work-life balance. From the data that the 63 interviews provided, this thesis demonstrates that three types of district features are important in the location decisions of creative entrepreneurs, albeit to different degrees:

- *District visual features for professional purposes.*
- *District socio-economic features, specified within this dissertation as a creative cluster on the district spatial scale.*
- *District physical and socio-economic features pertaining to work-life balance.*

Chapter 3 shows how and why a district's visual quality influences the location decisions of creative entrepreneurs. It demonstrates a significant relationship between district visual quality and the location behavior of 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. The overall visual character of the district needs to be perceived as distinctive, whether deliberately designed as such or not. Because the visual quality of the district contributes to increased creative productivity, creative entrepreneurs use their

relative freedom of location within cities to achieve quality of place at work.

Chapter 4 shows that creative entrepreneurs exchange less knowledge with similar firms within their district than could be premised based on cluster theory. Informal face-to-face contacts, a creative reputation, and the atmosphere of a district are more important than formal collaborations with similar firms within walking distance. Furthermore, the findings indicate that two location factors may also be relatively under-researched localization externalities, since they emerge from the district's creative clusters. First, a creative cluster brings about a creative reputation for a district. Having such a creative reputation was perceived by the interviewees as giving their firm and their products added professional value. This is important for current and potential clients and collaborators. Second, a spatial concentration of creative entrepreneurs gives their neighborhood a "creative atmosphere." Notably, this creative atmosphere was experienced from monitoring and watching other creative entrepreneurs, that is *without* actual direct interactions with them. Moreover, the "observation" mechanism has a different, rather symbolic, meaning for creative entrepreneurs than that proposed by localized learning theory (Malmberg & Maskel, 2002, 2006). Theoretically, the benefit of monitoring and watching is comparing oneself with the undertakings and performance of local competitors. In contrast, the findings indicate that such a creative atmosphere was more important for its symbolic value: the interviewees spoke of a creative atmosphere being important for obtaining inspiration, for being among like-minded people, and for feeling accepted.

Chapter 5 shows how and why creative entrepreneurs with children make carefully weighed decisions on where to live and work within cities. Their choice of a place to work is partly based on proximity to their homes, to schools and child care facilities, to parks, and to local shops. This finding particularly applies to creative entrepreneurs with children up to 12 years of age, both those working from home and those with separate business premises. The latter were mostly deliberately living close to their office in order to ease their daily schedules of combining work with caring and household tasks. Thus, creative entrepreneurs do not only act as individuals, but also take into account their household dynamics in their location decisions of a place to work.

6.2 Reflection on the research results

In this section, I will reflect on the significance and the robustness of the research results given the explorative nature of the study. Moreover, I will make recommendations for further research that are directly related to these issues.

6.2.1 The significance of the research results

This explorative, qualitative study has clearly *indicated* that creative entrepreneurs perceive district features as important in their location decisions. I do not claim to have demonstrated causal effects, because this would require a much larger sample of interviewees. Rather, my case study research design is of value in better understanding the causal mechanisms in the “black box” of cultural production districts: Which motivations do the entrepreneurs use to explain their location decisions? To obtain detailed empirical evidence about these motivations, I conducted 63 semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Given this relatively large number of interviews, compared to most qualitative studies based on interviews, the findings of this study can be taken as clear indications of certain effects. These can be used as hypotheses to be further investigated in large-N (using larger sample sizes), hypothesis-testing studies.

6.2.2 The robustness of the research results

Given that this study explores effects that have not been studied widely elsewhere, it is not replicating previous studies. To assess whether the research results presented in this dissertation are truly reliable, this study needs to be replicated. A replication study is a study that repeats a previous study as precisely as possible (Lakens, Haans & Koole, 2012). These authors argue in favor of more replication studies in order to enhance the robustness of scientific findings. If replication studies demonstrate effects repeatedly, then more robust indications can be given about the question whether the observed effects are real, and how large the observed effects are (Lakens, Haans & Koole, 2012, pp. 10-11). The former aspect is important for the further development of theory, which should not be informed by coincidentally measured, insignificant effects. The latter is important for the practical application of the research results in planning practice, where choices have to be made in terms of investments in time, money and effort in pursuing a purported policy aim.

In the same vein, Pellenbarg (2012) makes a case for replicating the same research designs in different places and at different points in time. According to Pellenbarg, repetition of a study leads to true insights into effects (e.g., regional images): Whether they exist or not, how they change over time and place, and what are the trends over time (Pellenbarg, 2012). Incidental measurements may lead to a failure to interpret the results correctly.

In relation to this dissertation, I would therefore advocate replicating this study both within the Netherlands and abroad. Replicating this study in the same three cities in the Netherlands, could provide more reliable insights into the influence of perceived district features on the location decisions of Dutch creative entrepreneurs at different times. Such a study would advance our insight into, for instance, the importance of district visual quality in times of economic crisis. I held my interviews in the summer and autumn of 2008, shortly before the economic crisis was widely perceived to have begun. It may be that decreasing profits influence the perceived importance of district features, such as visual quality, for the location decisions of entrepreneurs .

Another avenue for replication research would be to explore whether and how district features are perceived as professionally important in other places. This dissertation used evidence from creative entrepreneurs located in the Netherlands. Would, for example, creative entrepreneurs in the United States be equally sensitive to the visual form, to the presence of other creative firms, or to the presence of schools, parks and daily facilities in the district where their firm is located? As for visual preferences, Nasar (1984) found in a cross-cultural comparison between Japan and the US that people in different cultures perceive different features of their environment as characteristic. For example, while American citizens more frequently recognize new buildings as essential or typical features of urban street-side environments, Japanese citizens mentioned vehicles much more frequently. A replication of my study in other places with other cultures may find different features that are perceived as contributing to the location decisions of creative entrepreneurs. Second, these features may be perceived as important in a different ranking order than my study indicated for Dutch creative entrepreneurs. Such knowledge could advance location theory for creative industries, and it could inform the practical application of the research results in other places and cultures.

6.3 Reflection on the data and methodology

In this section, I reflect on the research design, the measurement of perceived features, the respondent selection and the question list. I will hypothesize how the choices made in the research design influenced the research results and the generalizability of the data. Furthermore, I will make recommendations for further research that are directly related to these methodological issues.

6.3.1 The research design

To explore the influence of perceived physical and socio-economic features of districts on the location decisions of creative entrepreneurs, I chose a research design that included three case studies and sixty-three interviews with creative entrepreneurs. Case studies are appropriate for research of an explorative nature. Compared to large-N (using large sample sizes), hypothesis-testing studies, they are more appropriate for the generation of hypotheses and for the investigation of causal mechanisms, that is, in uncovering the way in which causes are plausibly connected to effects. Moreover, I wanted to obtain detailed qualitative information, for which interviews are a more appropriate method. Within three districts, I interviewed sixty-three creative entrepreneurs.

While semi-structured interviews are mostly used in research of a qualitative nature, my sample size was sufficient to use large-N research methods (Gerring 2001, p. 165, p. 207). The relatively large sample size, as compared to most interview-based qualitative studies, allows the results to be evaluated in both qualitative and quantitative ways. Quantitative analysis with such sample sizes is however limited to descriptive analyses.

Thus, my case study research design is of value in that it can contribute to in-depth insight into the causal mechanisms in the “black box” of location decisions of creative entrepreneurs: What motivations do the entrepreneurs claim in explaining their location decisions? Through the research method employed, and the findings obtained from the open interview questions with the entrepreneurs themselves, new and detailed empirical evidence is offered.

Further research could operationalize and test these findings in a quantitative, hypothesis-testing approach and use a much larger sample size to investigate causal effects.¹ Such research would be able to demonstrate whether the location factors found in this dissertation are also found to be important for a larger population of creative entrepreneurs, and estimate more precisely how important

these factors are as compared to other location factors.

6.3.2 The measurement of perceived district features

This dissertation has focused on the influence of physical and socio-economic features of districts, as perceived by creative entrepreneurs, on their location decisions. The literature review established that there was a gap in the knowledge on the spatial qualities of mixed-use live-work milieus. A second finding from the literature review was that these spatial qualities cover both physical and socio-economic features of districts, which can be perceived by creative entrepreneurs as contributing to their location decisions.

Moreover, due to the policy-driven nature of this research it was particularly useful to measure the type of physical features that planners can influence. These features include physical features with possible professional value, such as facilities and visual features; as well as physical features pertaining to the work-life balance, such as household facilities. These are tangible features that are the nuts-and-bolts of urban design and architecture.

Policymakers working in economic development often target socio-economic features of cities, for instance by subsidizing creative business incubators in order to stimulate collaboration and innovation. While it seems more difficult to exert influence on collaboration and innovation, it is useful to examine whether proximity, on the district spatial scale, does have a relationship with knowledge exchange, and therefore is perceived by creative entrepreneurs as contributing to their location decisions.

Reflecting on the aim of measuring perceived district features, I conclude that the open questions used in the interviews have produced more detail and more unexpected aspects of these variables than I had expected from the literature review.

Having already I described the rationale behind the question list, (see for instance

¹ Within this dissertation, I follow Gerring's (2005) discussion on causality in the social sciences: The aim is to obtain insight into which X (e.g., the perceived district features) *enhance the chances* of effecting Y (e.g., location decisions by creative entrepreneurs).

According to Gerring (2007, pp. 43-44), there are two sorts of causal insights: causal effects and causal mechanisms. Research that estimates causal effects is concerned with (a) the magnitude of a causal relationship (the expected effect on Y of a given change in X across a population of cases) and (b) the relative precision or uncertainty of that estimation. Estimations of causal effects are mostly grounded on large-N cross-case evidence. Case studies, on the other hand, are used to investigate causal mechanisms. Causal mechanisms describe the way in which causes are connected to effects in a plausible fashion.

Section 5.5), I reflect here only on three sequential questions (question 4, 5 and 6; see also Appendix A). In these three sequential questions interviewees were asked about the district features that the interviewees regarded as important for their firm: one framed in words, one aided by a map, and one involving photograph selection. The fifth question was accompanied by a map of the district on which retail facilities, schools, parks, cafés, and restaurants were indicated. Interviewees were asked to show on the map how they used the district for their firm, and, in a follow-up question, in their private lives. The sixth question involved picture selection. A set of fifteen photographs displayed a broad range of district features, including shopping centers and street-front retail outlets, schools, parks, cafés, and restaurants. These photographs represented district features that, based on the earlier literature review, I had premised would be attractive to creative entrepreneurs for both professional and private reasons. As such, the picture selection was also a means to ask about specific district features without apparently repeating the fourth and fifth questions, which had used words and a district map. Thus, with these three questions, I was aiming to measure, at least three times and in different ways, my main variable of interest: the perceived spatial and social features of cultural production districts.

Reflecting on the answers that were given in response to these questions, it is remarkable that often the sequential questions, in words (question 4), with a map of their district (question 5), and with pictures (question 6), each produced additional information. Second, it is notable that the picture selection not only elicited comments from interviewees about visual aspects of their district, but also many answers on, for example, which cafés they used, or the routes they liked to walk and cycle along.

Reflecting on the method used to measure perceived district features, I would recommend further studies into perceived features (physical, social, or economic) to use and refine such questions aided by maps and pictures.

For example, it might be useful to have interviewees draw sketch maps in order to examine how they perceive distances between places. Lynch (1960, p. 140) summarized such sketch maps by interviewees in a common map, which was thus based on a user perspective, rather than being imposed by planners' perception of the city. Lynch regards such a map as the "first steps toward the preparation of a design plan" (1960, p. 25).

Such a map could be useful in planning the development, over time, of a cultural production district. For example in examining where better physical connections (cycle paths, bridges over canals) are needed to improve people's accessibility of

other neighborhoods, districts, or cities.

A second recommendation for further research into perceived district features would be to take into account the influence of the history of an area. Golledge and Stimson (1997, pp. 197-198) defined perception as, apart from direct observation, also being a result of secondary information about people's environment, for example from the media or from hearsay.

The aim in adopting these two research perspectives could be to understand perceived district features as part of a broader narrative of a place, a sense of place that also includes its cognitive distance to other places, and its past and future storyline. A question then is: Could such an inclusive sense of place influence how locational or real estate disadvantages are perceived? For example, can visual quality, or the presence of a cluster of creative entrepreneurs, drive development of farther-out places, or of places with a "seedy" history? Such questions are currently very relevant for assessing the potential development of, for example, farther-out and partly vacant harbor and office areas in cities.

6.3.3 The respondent selection

The process for selecting interviewees has been described in the previous three chapters. Table 4.2 gives most of the details of the interviewees in terms of firm size (1-9 workers) and subsectors of the creative industries (visual artists, photographers, architects, filmmakers, advertising agents and graphic designers). Section 4.7 describes the criteria used in the respondent selection process in most detail. The composition of the respondent selection in terms of size corresponds to the structure of all firms in the creative industries in the Netherlands. About two-thirds of all Dutch creative firms have the owner-manager as the only worker, and 95% of all creative firms have fewer than ten employees (Stam, De Jong & Marlet, 2008). I opted not to include the age of the firm as a selection criterion. The age of the firms therefore ranges from new to 36 years, and of the interviewees from 24 up to 78 years.

This broad range of firm ages may influence the applicability of the results. For example, if the findings of this study are applied in the development of cultural production districts, this should be done with some caution. If entrepreneurs with start-up firms are being targeted in the development of a new cultural production district, the policymakers should be cautious in assuming that the findings presented in this dissertation, based on interviews with entrepreneurs of firms in

various life cycles (ranging from start-ups to mature firms) apply to the start-up entrepreneurs they are targeting. Start-up entrepreneurs may, for example, attach more importance to cheap office space than would older, more established, firms.

6.3.4 The question list

An interesting finding during the fieldwork was that the salient characteristics of a district's physical and socio-economic features were not only perceived as important in the location decisions of the creative entrepreneurs, but also for the daily functioning of their firm and their work.

This is probably a consequence of the formulation of the interview questions (see Appendix A). While the first two questions specifically asked for considerations in their location decisions, the other questions asked about currently important district qualities, in terms such as: "What kinds of district qualities do you *currently* find important for your firm? Why?" Then, in a follow-up, after the eighth question, interviewees were asked what kinds of district qualities would be important, or decisive, in future location decisions.

I deliberately chose these formulations when I drew up the interview question list because I had defined location factors of creative firms and workers as consisting of (1) their needs and preferences related to firm location at the time of settlement, and (2) their current implicit or explicit needs and preferences that play a role in decisions to remain in their district. This definition in part stemmed from the policy-oriented aim of this thesis, given that policymakers are interested in both attracting and retaining firms. Second, I thought that entrepreneurs could perceive different features of their district as important at the time of settlement as compared to at the time of the interview. This could be for several reasons including a change in their firm (e.g. growth in the number of employees, or receiving more clients); a change in their household (e.g. having children); or the district itself (e.g. it had obtained, or lost, an image as the place to be for creative industries).

Third, asking for what features are currently perceived as important may well provide more reliable answers than asking about what features were perceived as important in the past.

Nevertheless, in line with the aim of the question list, the interviews did produce answers about past and current needs and preferences that played a role in deci-

sions to locate and to remain in their district. The questions about what features were currently perceived as important for their firm, and why, produced much information about the importance of district features for the daily functioning of their firm and their work.

Initially, I analyzed the interviews to see what mechanisms the entrepreneurs perceived as important in their location decisions. I found, however, that answers to questions such as “How do you *currently* perceive the Hortus Quarter as a location for your firm?” would be, for example, “It is quiet, which is of course useful if you want to concentrate on your work.” Although such answers could not be coded as “important for location decisions,” they still provide relevant knowledge for planners. Therefore, I coded such quotes as “important for the daily functioning of the firm and work processes.” To summarize, the interviews produced results that were unforeseen, but still relevant for policymakers, who are interested in how they can support firms, entrepreneurs and their employees in order to enhance their performance. Consequently, we² analyzed all the interviews, and coded all the responses in the transcripts about their district’s physical and socio-economic features (as well as two other items: features of their office building and the proximity of clients and collaborators within the city) with two types of labels: important in location decision and important for daily functioning of the firm and work processes. We also analyzed the responses for the degree of importance attached to their location decisions and/or daily work. We closely followed the words of the respondents in coding responses, a prerequisite for counting quotes given the same labels (Bryman, 2004). Our qualitative analysis focused on investigating the professional reasons and the underlying mechanisms that explained why these features were perceived as important to location decisions and for daily work.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 present the features that were perceived as important for both location decisions and daily work, and why. I have chosen not to distinguish explicitly between these two aspects in the results sections for various reasons. First, the interview questions did not explicitly ask for both types of motivation. Second, many quotes could be coded as both important in location decisions and in daily work. Thus, in further research aiming to distinguish between which district features are important in location decisions and which in daily work, I would recommend asking more explicitly about each type of motivation in the

² I analyzed all the 63 interviews in this way as part of an undergraduate research project with four honours students of the University of Utrecht and one student of the University of Groningen.

interviews.

6.4 Reflection on the theories used

In this section, I will reflect on the theories used in this study. I will try and identify assumptions, limitations and specific perspectives that I observed while working with these theories. Furthermore, I will make recommendations for further research that are directly related to these issues.

6.4.1 Place-making theory

Place-making theory addresses both *physical characteristics* and *planning processes* in order to identify and create “good” places. In part, this dissertation is a physical planning and design-oriented study. It seeks to expand this literature by focusing on the perceptions of physical features by creative entrepreneurs as users of places, in their roles as both entrepreneur and as a member of a household.

Through its focus on creative entrepreneurs, this dissertation specifically adds to the field of creative place-making. Creative place-making has been defined by Markusen and Gadwa (quoted from Gadwa, 2012) as

“In creative place-making, partners from public, private, nonprofit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, tribe, city, or region around arts and cultural activities. Creative place-making animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired.”

To my knowledge, the creative place-making literature seems to have focused more on planning processes than on physical characteristics. Creative place-making studies that do cover physical characteristics tend to offer visions and theoretical notions (e.g. Florida, 2002; Landry, 2000; Ley, 2003; Lloyd, 2004), rather than offering concrete specifications for physical planning based on empirical evidence of perceptions of place from a user perspective. Further, very few such studies focus on entrepreneurs as a specific user group (but see e.g Drake, 2003; Markusen, 2006; Markusen, Gadwa & Shifferd, 2008).

Another stream in the creative place-making literature takes a different approach and focuses on creative *places*, rather than on *people* as users of those places. This is a very valuable approach to investigate what works and what are the success factors in both planning and designing actual places. Many such studies focus on planning processes and the actors involved in developing cultural quarters, and to a lesser extent detail the physical features of these places (e.g., Markusen & Gadwa, 2011; Municipality of Amsterdam, 2006; Wansborough & Mageean, 2000).

Based on these observations of the literature content, I would propose further research that integrates the functioning of places and with their physical form³.

I would particularly recommend such studies in the field of work locations of creative knowledge workers, because places such as cultural production districts, and science and office parks, have not yet been studied widely in academic circles (but see e.g. Van Dinteren, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011). Both the functioning of places and the physical form of work locations, such as their urban morphology, public spaces and architecture, can be measured through the perception of users, for example through using maps, interviews and participatory observations. Such studies could integrate thinking and actions in planning of places for creative knowledge work from both human geography and planning perspectives.

I also propose such studies because they may offer evidence on how the planning and design of places for work influences the economic functioning of cities and regions. Such evidence may help in integrating the fields of economic and urban geography, and of planning and design; as well as inform urban economic development and planning. These fields, urban economic development and planning, are currently, in my experience, looking at different factors that nevertheless all influence the economic functioning of cities: Economic developers focus on large firms, clusters, and their output, in terms of employment, value added and patents. City planners observe that mixed-use, diverse urban environments attract many small knowledge-based firms and highly-skilled workers, because their work and private lives are increasingly integrated (Gadet & van Zanen, 2005).

In the creative knowledge economy, an increasing number of work tasks will be perceived as quite footloose due to the possibilities of working anywhere due to digital communication technology. This dissertation has illustrated this development in the case of creative entrepreneurs. Second, creative entrepreneurs indeed seem to integrate their work and private lives more than entrepreneurs in the

³ These reflections have in part been inspired by many discussions with Jos Gadet and Koos van Zanen, Municipality of Amsterdam.

wholesale trade, construction and manufacturing industries located on industrial estates (Smit, 2010). This “footloose” aspect of production and work in the creative and knowledge sectors may therefore lead to a paradox of place: For firms and workers that can be located “anywhere,” the quality of place becomes *more* important in location decisions of where to work and live.

Therefore, visions of the future functioning of work, and the work locations of the future may be enlightened by studies that examine both the functioning and the physical form of places to work. I would propose, then, to not only look at places deliberately designated as places to work, such as creative zones, and science and office parks, but also at residential neighborhoods and mixed-use, diverse urban environments, as these are places with many, often invisible, firms (PBL, 2010). Such studies could help in making plans for both people and places, rather than for one or the other (cf. Sawicki, 2009; J. C. Scott, 1998).

6.4.2 Cluster theory

Chapter 4 showed that creative entrepreneurs often appreciate the symbolic value over the utility value of being located close to other creative firms. A large majority of the interviewees did not collaborate with other creative entrepreneurs within walking distance. Rather, knowledge exchange within their district occurred through informal face-to-face contacts. Further, the results show that creative entrepreneurs value being located in a district with many other creative firms for its creative atmosphere (which gives the advantages of obtaining inspiration, being among like-minded entrepreneurs, and feeling accepted) and its creative reputation.

Reflecting on these results may lead to the conclusion that cluster theory in general has a rather utilitarian vision of relationships between firms in clusters. Cluster theory focuses mostly on relationships between firms that have utility value, because formal collaborations and informal face-to-face contacts save transaction costs, both in time and money, and offer access to tacit knowledge. The symbolic value of such relationships has been little addressed in cluster theory. This may be a result of interviews not being the most common method used in economic-geographic studies into local inter-firm collaborations, knowledge spill-overs and social networks. Martin and Sunley (2003) critically commented on the types of methods used in cluster studies. They criticized the top-down approach used in the majority of cluster studies involving cluster mappings of concentrations of

employment, the number of businesses, or value-added.

Given that this dissertation has provided some empirical validation of the symbolic value of relationships between firms in clusters through using in-depth interviews, I would propose using this and other inductive research methods in future academic studies into clusters.

6.4.3 Gentrification theory with a consumption-side perspective

Gentrification theory with a consumption-side perspective has been helpful in explaining the influence of district features pertaining to the work-life balance, as perceived by creative entrepreneurs with children, on their location decisions for their firm. These creative entrepreneurs with working families do actually take their time-space constraints, as members of busy households, into account in their choice of a place to work, with motivations that resemble those of family gentrifiers as described by, for instance, Karsten (2003, 2007).

Still, as Table 5.4 in Section 5.7.4 showed, location factors having a professional importance, including features of a firm's premises and a district's facilities and visual quality, were perceived as more important for their location decisions and daily work. Third in rank, however, were their district's household facilities and quality of life. Table 4.3 shows the same ranking order for all 63 interviewees, thus, also including those interviewees who were single, or lived with a partner but without children.

These data suggest that district spatial and social features perceived as pertaining to the work-life balance must be understood as but one set of location factors in a complex variety of considerations on daily quality of work and life, both for entrepreneurs with and without time-space constraints due to living with a working partner and dependent children. To conclude whether creative entrepreneurs, both with and without families, would generally take such district assets into account in making their firm location decisions, requires further research involving a larger sample of creative entrepreneurs.

Such research would also be very useful for a broader range of economic sectors, given the increasing supply of flexible business space offered in properties named for instance as "seats 2 meet," and other alternative workplace strategies in offices such as hotdesking and part-time homeworking. Statistical evidence from the UK shows that many non-manual workers have shifted their work from

conventional places to homes, cafés, hotels, trains and planes. Particularly the self-employed work increasingly from home, or in various places using then home as their base (Felstead, Jewson & Walters, 2005, p. 422; see also Mason, Carter, & Tagg, 2011). To an extent reflecting this releasing of work from office premises, high vacancy rates are observed in office parks along belt ways (DTZ Zadelhoff, 2011, pp. 6-8). These phenomena could indicate a shifting geography of work in post-Fordist economies. The place of work may shift to homes and other small-scale or temporary places. Often, such work places do without internal facilities such as catering or child-care provision inside the office.

Future research could investigate whether such services are important in location decisions of firms and workers in advanced service sectors; and how this changes their needs and preferences in terms of business and live-work properties, the surrounding districts and its facilities (see e.g. van Dinteren, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011). Such location studies should be informed by gentrification theory with a consumption-side perspective to integrate research into location choices based on both professional and private reasons.

6.4.4 The multidisciplinary approach using place-making, cluster and gentrification theories in a location study

After reflecting on the individual value of each theory for this study, I would like to briefly reflect on the multidisciplinary approach using place-making, cluster and gentrification theories in a location study: What can these theories learn from each other? As noted earlier, each of these theories has been useful in explaining part of the physical and socio-economic characteristics of districts that are perceived by creative entrepreneurs as contributing to their location decisions, and of the motivations that creative entrepreneurs used to explain their location decisions. Consequently, what these theories could learn from each other is the need to broaden their perspective by including variables that are commonly treated as exogenous variables.

For example, the general cluster literature commonly treats physical features as exogenous variables. Exogenous variables are seen as those variables that are not linked to the presence of other firms, such as natural resources (B. McCann & Folta, 2008, p. 535). After the transition from economies dominated by manufacturing industries to services, it may have been sensible to exclude physical features, such as coal mines and harbors, in investigations to explain the existence of clusters. However, this dissertation has indicated that *both* physical

and socio-economic features of districts are perceived by creative entrepreneurs as influencing of their location decisions. Therefore, cluster theory could usefully take physical features of places into account, as independent variables, in order to measure whether they explain part of the location decisions of firms. Although this dissertation has only focused on one specific sector, namely creative industries, it may well be that other knowledge-intensive sectors also profit from facilities and amenities, in particular given the increasing digitalization of production processes.

Therefore, I would propose that future location studies take account of independent variables that are provided by all of these theories: The physical, socio-economic and work-life balance features of places, and investigate both their professional and private values for their research subjects.

Such a multidisciplinary location study using place-making, cluster and gentrification theory may, especially in a longitudinal research design, be able to answer questions such as those recommended in the conclusions of Chapter 4: Why do creative clusters exist? Are they formations or clusters? Are these terms even useful in describing different life cycles of firm concentrations?

Whereas formations can be explained by a common orientation on certain physical location factors; clusters are often explained by functional relationships or forward / backward linkages with other firms (see Chapter 4 for the literature on this point). A longitudinal research design, analyzing location decisions of entrepreneurs located in a concentration of related firms over time, may be able to answer the question as to whether such a concentration is alternatively a formation and a cluster.

For example, in the case of cultural production districts, especially those that are not designated as such by urban planning, I would premise that creative entrepreneurs are first attracted by a district's physical features, and only later by the creative atmosphere and reputation of such a concentration of creative firms. If so, the concentration of creative firms would first be a formation, and then later a cluster of firms that profit from each other by knowledge exchange. Such a study could be an example of a multidisciplinary approach using place-making, cluster and gentrification theories in a location study. It could also inform urban policy on advancing the development of cultural production districts, since questions are always raised in terms of what are the "right" locations in a city to do so; and, over time, what are the sufficient investments to attract creative entrepreneurs.

6.5 Concluding remarks and research prospects

This explorative, qualitative study has clearly indicated that creative entrepreneurs perceive district features as important in their location decisions. I acknowledge explicitly that district features are not the only factors affecting the location decisions of creative entrepreneurs. Yet, they do seem important among other key location factors emphasized in the academic, peer-reviewed economic geographic literature. Until recently, location factors at the spatial scale of the district were generally overlooked⁴. Their surprising importance, as compared to what is emphasized in the academic literature, displays a need for future research into such location factors.

First, further work is needed in the field of location theory of creative industries. Other types of physical district features, such as cafés and clubs, restaurants and take-aways may be perceived as important assets of cultural production districts by creative entrepreneurs. Are these the places to be for buzz, to see and to be seen? To what extent do creative entrepreneurs, often having none or only a few employees, rely on restaurants and take-aways as external catering facilities and meeting places? And what about a district's location within a city? How important are the physical and cognitive distances of districts to existing creative clusters in cities? Can district features drive development of farther-out places? Further research could also explore the relative importance of district features, as compared to other factors involved in location decisions and daily work practices. Other factors include features of office buildings, creative clusters within cities, local labor pools, and educational institutions. It would be interesting to assess such priorities on different spatial scales: Which factors are important in location choices *between* cities, and which ones determine location choices *within* cities? A better understanding of such priorities of creative entrepreneurs is needed if the debate on the importance of place for these fairly footloose professionals is to advance.

Second, I propose a new line of research for general location theory. This suggestion is based on the reflections in the previous sections, and on a comparison of my findings about creative entrepreneurs located in cultural production districts on the one hand, and entrepreneurs in the wholesale trade, construction and manufacturing industries located on industrial estates (Smit, 2010) on the other.

⁴ It must be noted, however, that there is a large so-called "grey" literature, i.e. studies about the needs and preferences of creative entrepreneurs and workers in terms of business milieus in the studies of municipalities, urban consultants and planners.

Both studies found that, in order to better understand how and why the spatial quality of work locations (cultural production districts or industrial estates) matter to entrepreneurs, it is very useful to obtain more insight into various facets of their entrepreneurship. I termed the collection of these various facets of their entrepreneurship “work styles” (Smit, 2011).

This new line of research into work styles merges industrial and occupational approaches in research on location decisions. I found that some district features catalyze creative production, by reflecting the creativity of individual firms and their products (what they make), and by inspiring their work process (what they do). For example, a district’s visual form can “radiate creativity” through its distinctive visual appearance, which was perceived to enhance the creative image of a firm and their products (what they make) and also to inspire their work process (what they do). The presence of a cluster of creative entrepreneurs was perceived to provide a district with a creative image that rubs off on firms and products (what they make); and to enhance meeting or just seeing other creative entrepreneurs which inspires the work process (what they do). These findings suggest that it would be useful to combine both a focus on what they make, thus on the product produced (the industrial approach; see for this approach in the literature on creative industries e.g. Kloosterman, 2004; A. C. Pratt, 1997; A. J. Scott, 2000a) and on what they do, thus the nature of work tasks and skill content (the occupational approach; see Markusen, 2004; Markusen et al., 2008) to more fully appreciate the behavior that drives the location decisions of both firms and workers.

My suggestion is to merge both approaches in the new concept of “work styles.” Although one must be careful in introducing new terms to fields such as economic-geography, already full of near-synonyms, I think it is more useful to introduce a new term than to reconceptualize existing terminology which already has different connotations and usage history.

Thus, when applying Gerring’s criteria of conceptual goodness (Gerring, 2001, pp. 39-40), the concept of work styles should meet eight criteria. In this chapter, I elaborate only on the most relevant for the concept of work styles. First, concepts must be coherent, be clear what they are about, not fuzzy; grouping things that are alike, and externally differentiated from neighboring concepts. Work styles, then, are clearly about the ways in which people work. This makes it clear that work styles apply to entrepreneurs, workers, self-employed workers, and freelancers, and thus can be used to describe the features of entrepreneurship of a wide range of firms. In addition, the “work styles” concept is clearly differen-

tiated from the concept of *lifestyles*; although the resonance with this word helps readers grasp its meaning. Work styles as a concept therefore has field utility. The term makes clear that the characteristics and practices studied are related to those in the research about lifestyles, but they focus on people in their professional role as a worker, not on people in their private time. Importantly, work styles is a concept that can be operationalized using characteristics of products, work processes, and firms of entrepreneurs (see Smit, 2011).

In its conceptualization, the term “work styles” includes both characteristics of products and of firms, and of their daily work tasks. For example, product and firm characteristics could include product content, ranging from symbolic to functional, and product mobility, ranging from digitally mobile to requiring physical transportation, as well as zoning constraints on particular industry sectors. The characteristics of work tasks could include the nature of work, ranging from knowledge-based, desk-bound work to hands-on, physical work, as well as the type of cultural capital required. This inclusive perspective, of what workers make, and what they actually do, adds to our understanding of location decisions (see Smit, 2011 for a first exploration of this topic on industrial estates). This augments our existing knowledge on the constraints and opportunities driving firm location decisions, including often overlooked variables, such as visual appearance, facilities for integrating work and private tasks, and the insider and outsider identities of a production district that emanate from a district cluster. The concept of work styles also pays closer attention to the personal characteristics of entrepreneurs (such as their integration of work and private activities during the day, and their home-work distance) than is common in neoclassical and institutional location theories. These elements of work styles more naturally belong to behavioral approaches to location factors. As Arauzo and Manjon (2010) note, behavioral factors have been studied less than neoclassical and institutional factors. Yet, they could help explain findings that are, to date, less well understood, such as different location patterns of large and small firms. These location patterns seem to be mostly guided by “objective factors” (such as market characteristics) and by the entrepreneurs’ preferences respectively (Arauzo, Liviano, & Manjon, 2010, pp. 704-705).

Research into the personal characteristics of entrepreneurs has also been recommended by Scott (2000b, p. 33), who noted that economic-geography has increasingly been influenced by cultural geography. This literature reconceptualizes “spatial economic phenomena not just as instrumental outcomes, but also as interpretative events that can best be understood in terms of habits and lifestyles,

gendered interests, [and] the semiotics of consumption.”

To summarize, district features merit more recognition as an additional way to advance urban development. Pursuing several types of district quality as a component of economic development strategies requires local policymakers and economic developers to adopt a wider perspective. This perspective includes cultural, visual and social factors that are difficult to measure in conventional ways. Nevertheless, other studies have come to similar conclusions. Gentrification studies with a consumption-side perspective also show an increasing role for taste and lifestyle in neighborhood upgrading processes (Ley, 2003; Lloyd, 2002). The value of a broad range of urban amenities, including visual quality, is also suggested in studies focusing on broader constituencies (Carlino & Saiz, 2008; Carr & Servon, 2009; Clark et al., 2002; Florida, 2002; Florida et al., 2009; Glaeser et al., 2001; Hoppenbrouwer & Louw, 2005). As for the value of district concentrations of firms from specific industry sectors, Van Dinteren (2009) found that many entrepreneurs who were located in district clusters of high-tech firms and universities attached much value to the image of being located among other high-tech firms on such science campuses. My findings, combined with these studies, lend support to the argument that deliberate district and industrial estate planning should be an important element in future economic development policies.

6.6 Lessons for planning practice

The results and policy implications discussed in the preceding chapters have indicated that developing cultural production districts can proceed along two main avenues: District-focused or project-focused policies as a means of attracting and retaining creative entrepreneurs to certain districts. This section lists the proposed policy measures by type of district feature. Please see Section 3.7, Section 4.10 and Section 5.9 for more detailed propositions for policy measures, and their underpinning based on the empirical research results.

District visual quality

In order to build on and further develop the existing visual quality of place, Chapter 3 primarily proposed including district-focused policies as a means to promote arts-based economic development:

- Reviewing the existing visual quality, so as to recognize and preserve existing visual markers and the over-all quality of place and design of districts.

- Adopting form-based codes, so as to pursue development of a special sense of place. These codes should include criteria to move development toward visual distinctiveness, authenticity, and diversity of architectural styles, built forms, and public spaces.
- Incentive zoning, so as to stimulate private developers to add to a district's visual distinctiveness by building visually innovative buildings and their immediate surroundings.
- Government investments, which enhance a district's quality of place and design by developing new and contemporary distinctive architecture in buildings and public spaces. Such investments could include government commissions or brick-and-mortar subsidies for visually distinctive flagship architecture.

District creative clusters

To attract creative entrepreneurs to certain districts, Chapter 4 primarily proposed project-focused policies that offer premises dedicated to creative firms. Such premises could include business incubators for creative firms in renovated warehouses or in vacant company halls and office buildings within and near city centers.

A second-order effect may then emerge: Such a newly created creative mini-cluster may further attract creative entrepreneurs, by enhancing the chances that a creative atmosphere and a creative reputation for the district develop.

District spatial quality for creative entrepreneurs with children

To attract and retain creative entrepreneurs with working partners and children to specific districts, Chapter 5 proposed pursuing both district-focused and project-focused policies. Furthermore, the location of a district is important. District-focused policies for cultural production districts should aim to develop mixed-use districts. Creative entrepreneurs with families value the opportunity to mingle daily life activities and work routines. Such districts should therefore provide schools, day care centers, parks, stores, and the presence of like-minded families. The last feature, the presence of like-minded families, is hard to influence through planning, but could for example be pursued by a district being zoned regarding its housing stock. Zoning of cultural production districts should also include criteria to encourage development of live-work premises. These premises need not be exclusively dedicated to a combination of living and working, but zoning should allow for large dwellings and for business space within dwellings. Project-focused policies could offer business space in, for example, business incu-

bators for creative firms.

Taken together, the results reported in this dissertation indicate that several types of district features are perceived as important or very important by creative entrepreneurs in their location decisions. As a word of caution, providing these features in urban districts does not automatically attract creative entrepreneurs. I do not claim to have demonstrated causal effects here. As discussed before, my case study research design is of value in better understanding causal mechanisms in the “black box” of cultural production districts: Which motivations do the entrepreneurs use to explain their location decisions?

Second, the perceived district features are a sub-set of location factors. Entrepreneurs also consider, for example, price and the size of premises. Therefore, the perceived district features may not be decisive in the firm location decisions of creative entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, they may incite opportunity-driven location decisions, provided that other conditions are satisfied by the specific context. To sum up, physical and socio-economic features of districts merit more recognition as an additional way to encourage urban development. For planning practice, such knowledge could help in understanding how district features can be a new type of support structure for creative entrepreneurs in arts-based economic development strategies.

6.7 References

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