

The Fourth Place; The new workplace in the Creative City

Corresponding author

Dr. Miguel Goede is President of The Association for Public Administration of the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba. Miguel Goede can be contacted at: mpgoede@gmail.com.

Published September 2012, Curaçao

Copyright Miguel Goede

The global economy has changed. We live in a postindustrial society. Some refer to it as the information society. I prefer the term “creative economy”. The creative class (Florida, 2002, 2007, 2008) in the creative city (Landry, 2000) plays key role in this new economy.

As the economy has changed, so has the workplace. This change was driven by ICT. It became possible to work 24/7 and place does not matter (Castells, 1996; Friedman, 2006). Many do not work any longer in the factory or the office, and many workers start to work at home, to avoid the morning traffic. It was expected that people would work from home all the time, but research indicates that many people do not like to work at home. They prefer to

work in the third and fourth places¹. This paper examines the nature of these new workspaces.

Methodology

This study begins with a review of the literature on the third and fourth place. The ten most popular third places in Curaçao were observed, and the researcher actively participated in activities in these locations. The researcher observed 186 visitors and recorded their activities systematically. Interviews with staff and visitors in these locations were conducted, based on an unstructured questionnaire. The views of experts were also sought by means of other interviews. The draft of this article was reviewed and discussed with other researchers.

Literature review

We live in the era of the creative economy. Creativity is the main economic driver. Creativity has become more highly valued in today's global society. The Creative Economy is driven by the creative class (Florida, 2002, 2007, 2008). The creative class consists of workers whose job it is to create meaningful new forms, such as artists, designers, media people, scientists, innovators, entrepreneurs, professors and athletes, to name but a few. Their designs are transferable and useful on a broad scale. Another aspect of the creative class is that its knowledge is intensive. Examples are health

1

<http://www.creativeclass.com/rfcgdb/articles/The%20Fourth%20Place.pdf> (Accessed on 8 March 2012)

professionals and business management personnel (Florida, 2002, 2007; Hospers and van Dalm, 2006).

Creativity resides within the creative class. Dean and Kretschmer (2007, p. 577) highlight the pairing of production factors and economic actors: landowners, labourers and capitalists. They point out that there are three hybrid concepts of capital: human capital, social capital and intellectual capital. They argue that they cannot be paired with any one social class but stand at the interstices between economic actors. However, according to Florida and Howkins (2001) intellectual property or creativity is paired with the creative class. They further argue that this is not an elitist approach because everybody is creative (Florida, 2007, p. 34).

The creative class lives in the creative city. Creative cities attract the creative class because of three Ts: Talent, Technology and Tolerance (Florida, 2002, 2007, 2008; Landry, 2000).

Space and place are important considerations for the creative class. Availability and price are important considerations in the selection of a space or place. The creative class lives and works in three places; the first two are the house and the workplace. But there is also the third place, a public place between home and work, where they meet. The concept of the third place was first posited by the sociologist Ray Oldenburg in 1989. It is the home away from home, where you invite your friends to meet, and where you share something to eat and to drink and discuss topics and concepts that matter to you.

With the arrival of free WiFi network access and mobile smart products, the creative class takes work into the third place. They integrate work and social life. Because of the increasing number of self-employed people and the success of the third place, there is now the need for a fourth place. The fourth place is an internet café or third place, especially dedicated to the mobile working force (Florida, 2002, 2007, 2008). The need for the fourth place is not only a development of the third place, but also to meet the needs of people working in an office building who want to escape the office.

The fourth place is a café and a club where the creative class meets not only to relax, network and socialize but also to work. They avoid the overhead cost of renting an office and ICT. The fourth place offers tables, desks, offices, boardrooms, meeting rooms and lounges. The fourth place is defined as a third place dedicated to the knowledge worker for work related activities. In addition to open WiFi, coffee and parking space are important. If a café has WiFi but it is password protected, for the purposes of the present research it is regarded as having no WiFi.

Curaçao

For more than two decades Curaçao has struggled to adapt to a changing world. Some believe that transforming the economy into a Creative Economy is a viable strategy (Goede, 2008, 2009).

Curaçao, with its area of 444 sq km, is a Dutch Caribbean island inhabited by approximately 150,000 inhabitants of over 40 nationalities. It has three official languages:

Dutch, Papiamentu and English. The Dutch Kingdom is currently made up of the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao and St. Maarten. Aruba, Curaçao and St. Maarten are Dutch overseas self-governing countries in the Caribbean. Defense and foreign affairs are Kingdom responsibilities, while the people hold Dutch nationality and citizenship and have full mobility to the Netherlands. The other three islands Bonaire, Saba, St Eustatius, are a sort of Dutch municipality. These constitutional arrangements were put into effect on 10 October, 2010.

“This Caribbean Region is an amazing part of the world marked as it is, for good and bad, by the differential impact of exclusively European colonization and exploitation. The legacy left behind has been manifested in religion, culture, social structures and infrastructure, languages and dialects, in political systems and administration, in economics, race and ethnicity – all adding up to vibrant yet challenging Caribbean societies.

These societies have not been entirely divorced from their origins and some have diverged quite considerably given the cultural and seemingly instinctive inheritances from the ethnic and racial origins of those who occupy this space and the inter-blending of them producing special and differentiated societies. Marcus Garvey had once said

that the peoples who occupy this region – this Caribbean, this Antilles – would one day form a civilization on which the sun would shine as ceaselessly as it shines on the empire of the North. Maybe he should have said civilizations (plural) based on the linguistic, ethnic and cultural admixtures which marked the predominant Dutch, Spanish, French and English traditions of Caribbean countries”. (Duncan, 2007)

Curaçao is a hotspot for the global creative class (Goede, 2008, 2009). The present study is designed to explore the presence (if any) and the characteristics of third and fourth places in Curaçao, and how knowledge workers work there.

The places

There are a number of office buildings with shared services: Pos Kabai, The Ritz Building, The World Trade Center, and Waaigat Offices. The occupancy of these buildings is good. There is no business incubator in Curaçao. For several years investors and NGOs have been looking at the possibility of starting an incubator.

There are several third places in Curaçao that are visited by knowledge workers during regular working hours, but the question is whether any qualify as fourth places.

		WiFi	Coffee	Meals	Tables	Lounges	Desks	Meeting rooms	Loyalty program
1	Mc Café Salina	x	x	x	x	x			x
2	Mc Café St. Maria	x	x	x	x	x			x
3	Mc Café St. Rosa	x	x	x	x	x			x
4	Starbucks	x	x		x	x			
5	De Heeren		x	x	x				
6	Rituals	x	x	x	x	x			x
7	Coffeelious	x	x	x	x				
8	Café Barista		x	x	x				
9	Café Barista Avila	x	x	x	x	x			
10	The Traders								
11	Hotel lobbies				x	x			
12	Library				x	x	x		x
13	University		x	x	x	x	x		

Table 1: Café scores on criteria of the Fourth Place

Location is important. Cafés outside the business areas (Punda and Sanliña) are noticeably less well frequented by knowledge workers during the prime hours between 9:00 AM and 1:00 PM. The reason is that the member of the creative class wants to meet his or her peers to exchange ideas. Other factors are the function of surrounding locations. Workers from surrounding offices visit the third place to escape the office for a while. Hotel lobbies and Starbucks are dominated by tourists and might accommodate the visiting knowledge workers but do not cater for the local knowledge worker. In spite of this the Starbucks brand and the very personalized

service attracts the creative class. But the brand is relatively expensive and offers only half an hour of free WiFi internet. The McCafé brand also appeals to high school students. They visit the café to meet and to surf the web.

The most successful cafés offer ample parking space. The knowledge worker usually starts his or her visit for a quick cup of coffee and a quick look at the local newspaper. He or she wants to park in front of the shop.

The public library and university library have the potential to become a third place or even a fourth place, because they meet many basic requirements. But these locations are, at this stage, unaware of this growing market and because they are focused on their traditional function they do not identify this opportunity.

A Survey of Visitors to the Third and Fourth Places

The researcher conducted a survey of the people who were visiting the cafes and spaces that might be fourth places. It is noticeable that in most cafés the staff were not aware of the knowledge workers and their needs. They do not differentiate between different customers when providing a service.

Slightly more than half the visitors to these locations are female (56%), and the rest are male (44%). 29.5% of the visitors are knowledge workers. The other visitors are housewives, high school students, tourists and senior citizens.

Examining how the knowledge workers use the facilities provided, 57.2% of the knowledge workers make use the Wifi. 97.7% of the knowledge workers hold meetings in the third place and 34.5% read the newspaper.

These are overall figures, averaged over all the locations observed. In that sense they may understate the use that knowledge workers make of the more popular venues. Two of the cafés observed scored very low on use by knowledge workers. A possible explanation for their low score is the fact that their location is unfavorable and their brand is not strong enough.

90% of the people interviewed state that they would make use of a fourth place. Some have doubts, and thought they would maintain their autonomy as independent knowledge workers or believe that independent knowledge workers are extremely individualistic.

However, in spite of this independence, people gravitate to the fourth place because people need people. Our society is high tech and we long for it to be high touch (Naisbitt, Naisbitt and Philips,1999).

Conclusions

In the creative economy a growing number of knowledge workers are looking for an alternative to the office and home. They work in the third place. In Curaçao the number of third places and visitors is growing. None of the third places qualifies as a fourth place. But several of them have the potential to reposition themselves as the

fourth place. And there is a growing need to develop this fourth place. There is a need for a fourth place in Curaçao.

References

Castells, M. (1996, second edition, 2000). *The Rise of the Network Society, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Vol. I*. Cambridge, MA; Oxford, UK:Blackwell.

Dean, A., Kretschmer, M. (2007), "Can ideas be capital? Factors of production in the postindustrial economy: a review and critique", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 32 No.2, pp.373-594.

Duncan, N. (2007), "The Netherlands Antilles in the Caribbean".

Florida, R. (2002), *The Flight of the Creative Class: The New Global Competition for Talent*, Basic Books, NY.

Florida, R. (2007), *The Rise of the Creative Class: and How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*, Harper Collins Publishers, NY.

Florida, R. (2008), *Who's your City?*, Basic Books, NY.

Friedman, Th. (2006), *The World is Flat*.

Goede, M. (2008), "Globalization of small islands: The case of Curaçao", *International Journal of Social Economics*, vol. 35 no. 5, pp. 344-363.

Goede, M. (2009), "Can Curaçao become a Creative Economy?: A case study", *International Journal of Social Economics*, Vol. 36 No. 1/2.

Hospers, G-J., van Dam, R. (2006), "How to create a creative city? The viewpoints of Richard Florida and Jane Jacobs", *Foresight*, Vol. 7 No.4, pp.8-12.

Howkins, J. (2001), "Something will come of nothing", *Economist*, Vol. 359 No.8227, pp.82.

Landry, C (2000), *The Creative City: A toolkit for urban innovators*, London, Earthscan.

Naisbitt, J., Naisbitt N. and Philips, D (1999), *High Tech/High Touch: Technology and Our Search for Meaning*, New York, Broadway.