

WEB 2.0 AND THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW PLANNING CULTURE

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ABSTRACT: In this essay I argue that the incorporation of Web 2.0 culture and underlying principles in the organizational models for metropolitan governance is a good alternative to planning institutions. The challenge is to develop an open and collaborative culture of planning and creation, and to give the floor to the ‘creators’ of the metropolitan area. Most ‘creators’ don’t plan, they create. They adjust to the new realities of metropolitan life. Their day-to-day decisions and actions are transforming metropolitan regions. Civic leaders will have to learn to plan – or better co-create – the future of metropolitan regions together with these ‘creators’. There is a new kind of leadership emerging, not based on making decisions, but on offering conditions through which ‘creators’ can contribute. It is an open process, without a masterplan. I suggest to call this new planning style: co-creative planning

KEYWORDS: planning culture, top-down and bottom-up, urban strategies, web 2.0 culture, leadership, open-source

1 INTRODUCTION

Based on personal experiences – developing policies for creative industries in Amsterdam - on literature and discussions with peers, this essay explores possible implications of web 2.0 culture and principles for the role of public planners in the (re)development of metropolitan areas. The paper starts with a short description of web 2.0 culture and its underlying principles, which focuses on the concept of open source communities. This concept seems well-equipped to open new ways of planning. So the main question that I address is: Is it possible to organize the planning of metropolitan areas like an open source community?

The answer to this question will be highly speculative at this point. It is based on promising, but small-scale cases in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area and on a limited, exploratory study of literature.

2 WEB 2.0 CULTURE

The web 2.0 concept marks a turning point in the development of the web (O’Reilly, 2005). Web 2.0 refers to fundamental and structural changes. Users are becoming participants. On the web they participate in social and professional networks, and they download, share, produce and develop music, photos, movies, opinions, articles, ideas, software, projects, and so on. On the web new forms of collaboration, like Linux and Wikipedia, are emerging. It is a new set of principles and practices, like ‘the web as a platform’ and ‘rich user experiences’.

2.1 Open source communities

The open source definition, formulated in 1998, is not a legal document, but a specification for software licenses to be accepted as open source. The user of open source software has the right to make copies, to improve it, and to redistribute copies or derived works. The specifications include that open source doesn’t discriminate against persons or fields of endeavour.

Open source is more than a specification. It is part of a culture of collaborative creation. This culture can be applied to other fields than software development. O’Reilly (1999), Leadbeater (2008), Shirky (2008) and others have described the ethics and underlying principles of this culture. Open source users help themselves. The first principle is that open standards, protocols, mechanisms and licenses allow people to connect with,

and build on the work of others without having to get permission. A second principle is the ease of contribution. The modular architecture of open source projects allows users to make small contributions, according to their own needs, skills, time and motivation. The third principle is community development. Open source communities start around an actor – individual, group, institution, company and so on – that expresses a real need (issue, problem, passion, common cause). This unity of original actor and need is the core of the open source community.

Open source communities are often governed by their founders. The communities are not self-organising, but leadership tends to be open and accountable for, not focused on making decisions, but on offering conditions through which others can contribute. ‘They focus on creating the norms and rules through which many other people can take responsibility for small parts of what the community does’ (Leadbeater, 2008). By decentralising decision-making to smaller self-governing communities, open source communities succeed to structure large numbers of small and occasional contributions around a common cause.

3 OPEN SOURCE IN PLANNING

Planning is, like politics, a creative process, a way for people to work on their shared concerns, to *‘call something into being which did not exist before’* (Arendt, quoted in Stone, 1995). The governance of metropolitan areas is a matter of large-scale coordination, it is a ‘multi-actor and multilevel game’ (Hooghe and Marks, 2001), in a context of institutional fragmentation. Formal authorities are limited, and often absent at a metropolitan scale. This weakness of (formal) authority makes leadership a formative experience, ‘mobilizing various resources by giving direction, identity and a shared aim to a group of actors’ (Stone, 1995).

Web 2.0 culture and the underlying principles seems to be well-equipped to open new ways of planning. Is it possible to govern metropolitan areas like an open source community? A community with a wide range of actors, who govern themselves, and work together on the (re)development of metropolitan areas.

The open source movement is one of the reflections of networked collaboration, so it is not surprising that elements of this movement are already present in our day-to-day experiences.

3.1 Policies for creative industries in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area

In the last decade many metropolitan areas throughout the world have developed policies using creative as an adjective. The first policy document on creative industries is probably published by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport of the United Kingdom in 1998. In 2001 their Creative Industries Mapping Document presented the creative industries as the fastest sector of economic growth in the UK. ‘The rise of the creative class’ (Florida, 2002) declared creativity as the driving force of economic growth in regions, at the same time acclaiming poets, novelists, artists, entertainers, actors, musicians, architects and designers as members of the core of the creative class. The seductive image of the creative industries as driver for economic growth was born, and quickly developed into a ‘creativity script’ with ‘routinized practices’ (Peck, 2005).

One of the goals of the Amsterdam City Council (Amsterdam Topstad, 2006) is : ‘Amsterdam will continue to be a place where creativity can thrive’. The aim is ‘to ensure that Amsterdam carves out its own unique niche among Europe’s world-class cities’. These goals are challenging, open, and attract attention. There is an unlimited amount of ways to realize them, and this will involve public, private and non-profit actors. It is all about: ‘the right mix of entrepreneurial know-how, creative energy, and public policy’ (Scott, 2000). The ‘Programme Creative Industries 2007-2010’ (Amsterdam City Council, 2007) is a collaboration of the cultural, economic, spatial and social departments. City officials are coordinating the programme and they report periodically to city council. The programme functions like a platform, and enables various actors - with different values, interests and resources – to work on the implementation of a set of 6 headlines.

They work on better links between creative industries and education, utilize the cultural diversity as an asset for the growth of the creative industries, stimulate creative entrepreneurs, make connections between creative industries and other industries, or between media, culture and ICT. They accommodate the growth of the creative industries (appropriate places to live and work, planning for an attractive and diverse city) and market Amsterdam as a world-class creative city. Public, non profit and private partners are involved in the realization of the goals that are set for these headlines. Some of these efforts are part of their day-to-day work. But often they depend upon new connections between actors, ideas, money and other resources.

Within the headlines 'autonomous' programmes operate. Affordable and suitable studios and (living and) working spaces for 'creatives' are a rare commodity in Amsterdam, so the city plays an active role to maintain the existing stock of affordable studios and working spaces and to find locations for the development of new working spaces. The objective of the Art Factories Programme is to create 100-150 new workspaces for artists and creative groups, each year. Art factories have been set up in more than 40, mostly old buildings in the city, providing a total of 1.250 spaces, offering a place to work and occasionally live to more than 2.000 artists, creative businesses and artisans. The City Council has allocated over € 40 million for the programme (2000-2008). The Bureau Broedplaatsen (Artfactories) defines policies and objectives in cooperation with all those involved: housing corporations, architects, estate agencies, project developers, user groups, banks, city boroughs and other local authorities in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area. It is a platform (or a community of practice) for a wide range of partners, who exchange experiences, create common values, and collectively provide all the commitment, expertise and resources needed to create new art factories.

The programmatic approach incorporates features of open source. Like in open-source communities the difficulties of collaboration - and managing creative work in general - are resolved by partly decentralizing decision-making down to small groups. Discussions on what to do, and how to do it, are not only time and energy consuming, but also often frustrating collaboration. Another important feature is to accept that various actors - who differ in values, interests and goals - can work in a great variety of ways on a common cause.

3.2 Supporting unconventional choices

Creating a platform around the programme creative industries, and working together with institutions like the Chamber of Commerce or the Tourist Board, is relatively easy. In projects such as the Artfactories the city officials were already experienced in real estate projects. It seems less easy to involve citizens, creative individuals and small businesses in to these kind of programmes.

Ettliger (2009) argues that business networks, 'forging connections in the everyday economy', offer an often overlooked context for meaningful interaction. In her approach respect and trust among people (social capital) develops through working relations. Her social agenda entails multiple mixed networks that overlap and interact. Each network has a business signature, but is socially mixed in terms of gender, age, class, race or ethnicity. She argues that networks that explore unknown economic, cultural and other territories, start with individuals, who choose to make a living in an unconventional way. These individuals act like founders of a open source community. A network will take-off when enough people are able, and willing to participate. Together they develop a kind of prototype that resembles the core of an open source community.

From the point of view of metropolitan governance it is a matter of supporting these unconventional choices and 'scaling up' prototypes with financial and technical support. It implies a shift from output to process, and from control to setting the conditions for unconventional, creative and innovative communities to develop.

3.3 The transformation of the NDSM-site

On the northern bank of the River IJ, to the north-west of the Central Station of Amsterdam, is the site of the former Netherlands Shipbuilding and Dock Company (NDSM). Ships have been built here since the end of the nineteenth century. Like so many shipyards in Europe NDSM closed in the eighties of the last century. During the eighties and nineties the site was discovered and gradually squatted by all kinds of people who used the large buildings and open spaces for all kinds of experiments. Nobody else was interested in the site. This situation changed dramatically in the second half of the nineties. The city decided to redevelop the docklands and real estate developers started turning the warehouses into apartments, offices and leisure or retail spaces.

To preserve the character of the NDSM-site a private (citizen) initiative of artists, craftsmen, skaters and non-profit organisations, calling themselves Kinetic North, presented a plan for the redevelopment of the former shipyard.(86.000 m²) into a cultural hotspot and largest hotbed for artistic and young talent in the Netherlands. In 2002 they were given the opportunity to start the redevelopment and lobbied with success for a 10 million euro credit to restore the derelict NDSM Warehouse, owned by the local city council of Amsterdam North. The NDSM hall - a hangar-like structure 20,000 sq. meters, 20 meters in height - houses now an art city with studios and workspace, a skate park and a hip-hop school.

The redevelopment is based on the methods of an alternative town planning strategy called 'City as a

Hull'. A philosophy which aims to develop urban areas the bottom up, and to create a living city where people take personal responsibility. Citizens are not seen as passive consumers but as equal partners in the development and control of buildings, neighbourhoods or even cities. At the NDSM Wharf Kinetic North approached and organised 200 artists and cultural entrepreneurs who were willing to contribute time, ideas, and money to the development of the plan. Casco's were developed wherein the end-users take responsibility to build their part of the Art City. Kinetic North invested 2 million euro to build a metal framework with concrete floors. These basic units - over 100 'casco' have electricity, water and sewerage connections. The units are then completed by the individual artists and companies (end-users), who together invested 5 million euro. Together the units form a small city of artists' studios and workshops on one or two levels, connected by a network of long broad streets and narrower side streets. The Art City opened in 2007 and the result proves that it is possible for a large number of end-users to organize themselves in a true open source spirit.

The former wharf, a site of 32 hectare, is divided into several development areas with a mix of developers and development strategies. Mediawharf is a project of Red Concepts, a private company with a focus on the development of creative city zones. Their aim is to turn parts of the former shipyard into an international media-centre and to give creative companies the opportunity to turn the derelict buildings into their own statements. In 2005 MTV Networks decided to make theirs in NDSM's former carpentry spaces. The monumental facade of this hall (6.800 m²) was renovated and the interior was transformed into offices and studios, that opened in 2007.

Near the NDSM a 270 metre long crane jetty was discovered by an architect. On top of this concrete construction, with a width of 10 metres and standing on 14 metre high pillars, she designed a 3-story building, with more than 12.000 m² flexible floor space. She convinced the local authorities not to demolish the construction, and together with a private developer turned her vision into reality.

The former shipyard is gradually transforming into a cluster of creative industries. In this process different actors, like end-users, architects or traditional developers, have taken the lead, from time to time, and from site to site. Through their individual actions evolves a creative milieu.

3.3 The creative milieu

Hippolyte Taine developed the concept of an artistic milieu in 1865 (see Hall, 1998). For him it was a state of manners and mind, a ruling personality that stimulates particular talents to flourish in a certain place, and at a certain time. He also argues that, at the same time, this ruling personality suppresses the development of other talents.

Contemporary concepts of the creative milieu reflect the fragmented and individualised character of society. Features like diversity, openness, personal freedom, tolerance, (free) access to information, and creative atmosphere are often mentioned (Florida, 2002, Howkins, 2007, Leadbeater 2008, and others). To be creative and build communities or platforms people need 'places' to develop and to share their creativity. These 'places' are communities on the web, newspapers and magazines, festivals, museums, theatres, art-schools, clubs and bars, places to live and work, squares, and so on. Like the internet, cities are prominent examples of the potential of networked collaboration and open source communities. Both offer infrastructures and spaces for people to 'mix and mingle, sharing and combining ideas from different vantage points and traditions' (Leadbeater, 2007).

Creative milieus often develop in 'run-down' parts of the city, e.g. abandoned industrial sites like the former NDSM wharf and inner city areas. The 'creatives' are not only attracted by affordable places to work and live, but also by the opportunities to adjust spaces to their own needs. In this way they co-create their own neighbourhood, which develops through individual decisions to turn a space into a workplace, club, or gallery. The individuals share a common 'creative attitude' and they benefit from each others presence (spill-over effects). In a way they choose certain neighbourhoods as a platform to co-create their own creative milieu. The creative milieu develops without a masterplan. The 'creators' share 'a way of living'. It is this 'state of matters and mind' that organizes the ongoing process of cultural and physical transformation of creative milieus.

4 CO-CREATIVE PLANNING

Nowadays it seems nearly impossible to plan the development of metropolitan regions. How to develop, and more important implement, an integral plan for an open, fragmented, expanding and globally connected

metropolitan region? With the participation of stakeholders and citizens. In a context where metropolitan authority is lacking; where citizens, companies or governmental institutions don't like to be told what to do anyway. They will not feel represented by metropolitan government. From their perspective, political and administrative integration on a metropolitan scale is just a technocratic or bureaucratic solution for institutional fragmentation. And even if there was (public) support for metropolitan planning institutions it would be next to impossible to coordinate the 'multi-actor and multilevel game', and to develop and implement metropolitan planning in a 'traditional' way. The incorporation of Web 2.0. culture and principles in the organizational models for metropolitan governance might offer an alternative for planning institutions.

Open source communities succeed to structure large numbers of contributors around a common cause by decentralizing decision-making to smaller self-governing communities. This kind of collaboration seems well-equipped in a context where (formal) metropolitan authority is weak, like in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area, which is a collaboration of 27 'autonomous' local authorities, 1 regional body and 2 provinces. Is it possible to govern metropolitan areas like an open source community?

The realization of the Development Scenario 2040 for the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area, a process that started in 2007, is primarily an administrative collaboration aimed at developing a shared point of departure for 29 structural visions to be formulated by the 'autonomous' authorities concerned. The Development Scenario 2040 is also the base for deliberations with national authorities. The process was primarily caused by the new national Planning Act and the development scenario started as a 'traditionally' public-sector led process, with consultation of private partners, not-for-profit organizations, international essayists and children who illustrated their dreams for the future. A side effect of this process however is that the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area is becoming a recognizable platform for collaboration. This might set the stage for the development of open source communities.

The programmatic way in which policies for the creative industries in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area were developed, and implemented, already incorporates features of open source communities. The difficulties of collaboration are resolved by partly decentralizing decision-making down to small groups, at the same time accepting that various actors – who differ in values, interests and goals – can work in a great variety of ways on a common cause.

The Development Scenario 2040, and the already involved actors, has the potential to transform into the core of an open source community. One of the basic principles of open source communities is that users - in our case citizens, companies and other actors - are allowed to make contributions without permission. Community development often starts with an intense collaboration of capable and passionate, early creators, who in turn attract a larger crowd. In an open process the community generates different viewpoints, different ways of working, and many possible solutions, which are simultaneously tested, developed, rejected or put into practice.

The transformation of the NDSM-site, and especially the development of the Artcity, shows the possibilities of 'bottom-up' development of urban areas, where citizens organize themselves in an open source spirit. In this process of transformation different actors, end-users, architects and traditional developers and planners take the lead - from time to time – and gradually transform the former shipyard into a cluster of creative industries. The 'creators' are not only attracted by affordable places to work and live, but also by the opportunities to adjust these places to their own needs. The individuals share a 'creative attitude'. In a way they choose certain urban areas as a platform for an ongoing process of cultural and physical transformation. They co-create their own creative milieu. This milieu develops without formal planning.

Open source communities take off when enough actors are willing and able to make a contribution to the core. So the real challenge is to develop an open and collaborative culture of planning and metropolitan creation. To close the gap between the 'planners' and 'creators' of the metropolitan region. Most 'creators' don't plan. They create. They follow the flow. They adjust to the new realities of metropolitan life and the globalizing world. They participate in social, cultural and professional networks. Often they (re)act local and global at the same time. Their day-to-day decisions and actions are transforming and developing metropolitan regions.

Planners will have to learn to plan - or better to co-create - the future of metropolitan regions together with 'creators' (public, private, non-profit actors and citizens). There is a new culture of planning emerging, not primarily based on making plans or decision-making by planners, but on decentralizing decision-making to self-governing communities of 'creators'.

These open source communities are not self-organizing or without leadership. And collective action,

where a group acts as a whole, is still needed to organize metropolitan areas. Real-time coordination in every day life offers an often overlooked context for meaningful networks and collective action to develop. From the point of view of metropolitan governance, ‘planners’ can act as the core of an open-source community, or they can join open source communities with a non-public core. For ‘planners’ this implies a shift from output to process, and from control to collective action. The collective action of metropolitan areas is organized through a wide range of open source communities that overlap and interact. These open-source communities govern themselves.

The National Spatial Strategy of the Netherlands (Nota Ruimte, 2004) aims to create space for development, to decentralize where possible, and to give greater responsibilities to ‘the provincial and municipal councils, the institutions of civil society, and not least to individual citizens’. They want to move from a permission-based to a development-based planning. The incorporation of web 2.0 culture and underlying principles - and organizing the implementation of the National Spatial Strategy through a set of self-governing open-source communities – implies radical changes to planning culture, theory and practice. In the business world the concept of co-creation refers to the growing practice of company and consumers working together on the development of products and services. So I suggest the term co-creative planning for ‘planners’ and ‘creators’ working together on spatial strategies.

Co-creative planning starts with a culture of collaborative and collective creation. The open source definition was formulated 10 years ago, and social media that make collective action work, and socially accepted, are one or two years old. We are just starting to learn, by doing, how open source communities work. So the first outlines of co-creative planning is highly speculative at this point.

Co-creative planning aims to structure large numbers of contributions around a common cause by decentralizing decision-making to smaller self-governing communities. Actors are allowed to make contributions without prior permission. Decentralizing decision making from planners to self-governing communities of ‘creators’ is crucial. But also decentralizing responsibilities within the public sector in a way that planners are allowed to co-create with creators in open source communities.

Co-creative planning needs a recognizable platform for collaboration. Spatial strategies, like the Development Scenario 2040 for the Amsterdam Metropolitan area, can function as a platform, and develop into an open source community. As long as the spatial strategy expresses a real need, is open for improvement and attracts actors with different skills.

Co-creative planning accepts that various actors, with different values, interests and goals, can work in a great variety of ways on a common cause. The diversity of actors is seen as a source for innovative collective action. The collective action is organized through a wide range of multiple mixed open source communities that overlap and interact.

Co-creative planning supports unconventional choices, made by citizens and other actors who are able and willing to do so, by ‘scaling them up’ to open source communities, that will create unknown and unpredictable outputs.

Co-creative planning implies a shift from an output-driven process to setting the conditions for collective action. Planning becomes an open process, without a masterplan, and the ‘planner’ is just one of the actors in an open source community. But paradoxical: in working together with ‘creators’ in an everyday setting, planning becomes part of its own implementation, and the impact of the ‘planner’ on spatial development will increase.

‘When the outcome drives the process we will only ever go where we’ve already been. If process drives outcome we may not know where we’re going, but we will know we want to be there’. (Bruce Mau, 2000).

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