**‘Becoming local’ in Amsterdam: The synergy between creativity and city branding in strengthening local identity**

**Abstract**

Cities are continuously changing due to economic conditions, demographic changes, urban planning policies etc. Newly emerging economies contribute to the consolidation of different outlooks in urban planning practices such as city branding, which has been widely connected with cultural policies. Nevertheless, this approach has been widely criticized since there have often been negative outcomes for the existing places and residents, as for example gentrification or loss of local identity. During the last years, a shift is observed towards the emphasis on the social aspect of city branding. Also, a new economy based on creative professionals appeared, enriching the theoretical approaches of the creative city and adding new dimensions in cultural policies. Strategies are now observed to be directed more to the preservation of the local identity and the collective memory of the city.

Two case studies in Amsterdam show two different ways of ‘becoming local’ processes. The first refers to the ‘broeplaatsen’ initiative – the ‘Art Factories’ program. This creative policy led to the construction of meaningful places with multiple uses, housing the creative professionals of the city and hosting multiple activities. Besides, the abandoned places were part of the history of the city and this evolution resulted in the preservation and strengthening of local identity. The second case study concerns Amsterdam’s festivals, combining both global and local characteristics. Festivals are mostly situated in public spaces and offer an easy access for the visitor to the life of the city, thus a different way of ‘becoming local’.

**Key words:** *creative city, local identity, city branding, Art Factories, Amsterdam*

**References**

Johansson, M. & Kociatkiewicz, J. (2011) ‘City festivals: creativity and control in staged urban experiences’. *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 18 (4) 392-405.

Kalandides, A. (2012) ‘Place branding and place identity. An integrated approach’. *Tafter Journal*, 43 (1).

Kavaratzis, M. & Ashworth, G.J. (2008) ‘Place marketing: how did we get here and where are we going?’ *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 1 (2) 150-165.

Peck, J. (2012) ‘Recreative City: Amsterdam, Vehicular Ideas and the Adaptive Spaces of Creativity Policy’ *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 36 (3) 462-485.