



FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT:

The metamorphosis of the Witte de Withstraat street in Rotterdam
in the years 1999-2019

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Abstract

The Witte de Withstraat is one of the most popular streets in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. International students, visitors to the city as well as locals, are familiar with the street that holds the reputation of the 'coolest street' in the city. However, its character and state used to be rather different in the past. Prostitution, drug dealership and use along with heavy drinking, gave the WdW a bad name. It was only at the end of the 1990s that the first conscious actions towards its improvement and regeneration were organized. In accordance with Richard Florida (2002), the presence of arts in a street can aid to its regeneration and prosperity. A neighbourhood with cultural institutions is appealing and attracts people to inhabit it. Therefore, the city of Rotterdam followed this example and proceeded, first in the removal of shady bars and brothels from the WdW and next, to the establishment of arts institutions there, in an attempt to make the street safer and more approachable. The emergence of the street into a cultural hub attracted creatives to group there, turning it into a cluster. Smog (2016) notices that creative clusters can have great impact in the growth of an area and this is precisely what has happened in the case of the WdW. Its popularity excited the interest of the business world, soon deciding to locate their ventures there. Nevertheless, in line with the cluster life cycle theory, the successful phase of the street's development was to be followed by deterioration. In detail, the street managed to replace its infamous reputation by becoming Rotterdam's cultural hotspot, but tensions between the creatives and the business world came to the surface. This paper sets out to examine the changes in the street, starting from the 1990s and moving towards the 2010s, via the contribution of the arts and culture. To this end, the personal accounts of the people who work there will be consulted. The participants in the study come from different backgrounds; three employees of the biggest cultural institutions in the street (Witte de With Centre for Contemporary Art, V2_Lab for the Unstable Media, Theatre Rotterdam), a hotel manager, three business owners, a post-doc researcher, a member of the Rotterdam Centre area committee, an employee at the cultural department of the municipality were interviewed for this research.

Keywords: cluster life cycle, gentrification, creative class, third places, pioneers

“Cities are an immense laboratory of trial and error, failure and success, in city building and city design”, Jane Jacobs

1. Introduction

Have you ever wondered how the street you live in used to be in the past? Probably its surroundings, buildings, and even the people living there have been subject to changes through the decades. Change is part of human nature and cities are no strangers to it. This is why when I first visited Rotterdam for my studies, I was intrigued by one street; the Witte de Withstraat (WdW). Its liveliness and atmosphere made it my favourite street in the city and peaked my curiosity. By talking with colleagues and friends, I soon discovered that this street has not always been like this. Drug dealership in the daylight, prostitution and violence were an everyday occurrence in the street where art institutes and trendy cafes are located today. This paper aims to study the changes in the Witte de Withstraat - the street that has come to be one of the most popular ones in the city of Rotterdam. What makes the street so interesting to examine, is the manner of its development. The Witte de Withstraat used to be a deteriorated street that blossomed into an internationally known hotspot via the contribution of culture. How this was made possible will be discussed in the following chapters.

First, information about Rotterdam in general and the WdW in particular will be introduced to acquaint the reader with the history and character of the street, along with the research question and sub-questions. Further, the contribution of the paper to academia as well as the social relevance of the topic will be discussed. Next, existing literature associated to the topic of discussion will be presented in detail and theoretical concepts will be explored in sub-sections. In addition, the methodology utilized for the purposes of the research question and sub-questions will be explained. The methodology chapter will include information about the semi-structured interviews along with details on the sampling method, the data collection and analysis. The fourth chapter of the paper will exhibit the results of the study via the interviewees' quotes and the respective literature. In the final section, the conclusions drawn by the study will be manifested, references to the societal and academic contribution will be made, ideas for further research will be suggested and any limitations that emerged during the process will be addressed.

1.1 Background information about Rotterdam

Rotterdam resembles the Phoenix, the mythical creature that is born from its flames and rises from its ashes. The rebirth of the Phoenix marks a complete new start, a second chance in life. After being bombarded during the Second World War in 1940, Rotterdam has evolved into a metropolis that is quite different from the rest of the Dutch cities. The Rotterdam Blitz, as the bombarding has been recorded in history, resulted in the city becoming a white

canvas for architects and urban planners upon which they built it anew. The sky-high and unconventional buildings all over Rotterdam prove that it really is a work in progress. For McCarthy (1945), Rotterdam's reconstruction is defined by distinct stages of development and planning; from the 1940s until the 1950s, the restoration of the port was the main priority. From the 1950s until the 1960s, the expansion of the population in the country resulted in a scope change - it was mandatory that the issue of city housing was addressed. The 1970s was a decade when the regeneration of decayed urban areas started whereas in the 1980s and 1990s, the spotlight was on the inner city and on ways to make it culturally richer.

The beginning of the new millennium marked a new era for the city. In 2001, Rotterdam was the European Capital of Culture, thus gaining a competitive advantage over its older sibling, Amsterdam (van der Schoor, 2010). Nevertheless, in the 2010s, street crime and affairs of public safety called for critical measures by the city. This mapping of the different phases of development of Rotterdam corresponds to the idea, hugely embraced in the urban studies literature, that a city evolves through an intricate life cycle - just like an organism. "The city life cycle is an application of organic analogy. Specifically, the city life cycle rests on an organismic metaphor" (Roberts, 1991, p. 432). This brief timeline of the history of Rotterdam presents essentially its life-cycle; this cycle consists of the phases of deterioration, development, success, and once again, deterioration. Interestingly enough, these four stages are not limited to the level of the city - smaller areas, neighbourhoods and even streets can be characterised by a similar life-cycle. Such an example is the widely known WdW street.

1.2 A brief history of the Witte de Withstraat

Rotterdam has a great tradition in urban design and is proud of its distinctive architecture. Nevertheless, culture is also one of its main foci. Rotterdam takes pride in its rich collection of museums, art galleries, theatres, and festivals. In the inner part of the city, the WdW is an exemplary model of a street that breathes and lives culture. Situated in the Cool - Zuid, the WdW runs from the Schiedamsevest to Eendrachtsweg and it is considered the most cultural and creative area of the city. The WdW is home to art galleries and institutes, restaurants and cafes as well as hotels and hostels. What is more, the street is abundant in artsy shops, stores selling second vintage 'treasures' and galleries with contemporary, modern and ceramic art, sculptures and paintings. The street is daily visited by diverse groups; tourists and international students along with the locals and professionals living and working there respectively, are all elements of its rich audience. However, the street has not been like this since day one. On the contrary, the WdW has undergone a significant amount of changes before it was transformed into the street that has often been characterized as the cultural district and artistic center of Rotterdam. In the 1970s and 1980s, it used to be a disreputable place where crime, prostitution and illegal gambling intensified. Moreover, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the street had turned into an area where drugs consisted the micro-

economy of it; drug use and trade were common practices there. Additionally, the 1970s was a time when unemployment was on the rise, no investments were aimed towards the city and a wave of suburbanisation was prominent (Mommaas, 2004). All in all, in their article “The creation and management of cultural clusters” (2002), Hitters and Richards also refer to the condition of the street in the 1970s; it was an isolated area in the city of Rotterdam due to its notorious nature and was experiencing a phase of decline, both socially and physically. The street was a “no-go” area which was avoided during night time. The WdW began to take the character and form it has today only after the beginning of the 1990s. In the city of Rotterdam, attempts were made by the local authorities to enhance its urban character. This was one of the first deliberate and conscious endeavours for the street’s renewal (Mommaas, 2004).

Knowledge, innovation, creativity and multiculturalism are all interconnected factors that gave shape to the new identity of the street. In order for a street to develop, amenities like cafes or shops are not enough; cultural establishments such as art galleries or restaurants are also needed in the revitalization of a street and in accordance with Patch (2006), alterations in the amenities of a neighbourhood can change its identity and complement the process of gentrification. In the case of the WdW, this was the plan that needed to be implemented in order to change its image from an unquestionable street into a popular and safe attraction. The 1990s was the time when the first changes occurred in the street. Rotterdam proceeded in the establishment of arts institutions and other businesses of cultural interest for the rejuvenation of the WdW, playing the Richard Florida card. The latter proposed the creative cities discourse (2002) which suggested that rundown areas can be regenerated with the aid of the creative class. Therefore, empty spaces in old buildings in the WdW were offered to organizations or shops with the intention to upgrade it and consequently, attract people and families to reside there. Artists, students and squatters occupied these spaces and transformed them into areas for cultural production and representation (Mommaas, 2004). The ultimate goal was to create a friendlier and livelier neighbourhood; “a limited territory within a larger urban area, where people inhabit dwellings and interact socially” (Galster, 2001, p. 2111).

Neighbourhoods have the ability to develop into key cultural districts for artists and other creatives, generating new employment opportunities, thus functioning as determining sources for growth (Hitters & Richards, 2002). It would be acceptable to characterize these neighbourhoods as cultural or creative clusters; i.e. the heart of creativity and social interactions where cultural differences are encouraged as well as exchanged and where these neighbourhoods function as a meeting point for artists and creatives to work together (Wijngaarden et al, 2019). “[C]ultural clusters come in a great variety of cultural, spatial and organisational forms, with a lot of different backgrounds and developmental paths” (Mommaas, 2004, p. 514). It has been observed that the production of cultural products

oftentimes tends to concentrate in specific areas. This way, clustering is not happening in a random fashion but rather, is identified with a particular form of space (Pratt, 2008).

Sometimes, derelict and negligent areas experience a total transformation and turn into clusters where creativity and innovation are celebrated. Artists are drawn to neighbourhoods that do not aim at the conventional middle classes. The working-class denies any ties to conventions, choosing freedom of expression and creativity instead - elements that long before have been correlated to the bohemian lifestyle of the artists (Caulfield, 1994). Naturally, the WdW can be considered a successful creative cluster in Rotterdam. Slowly but steadily the street was improved; the cultural institutions that were established there, along with the artists that were attracted to the street, all helped in its recovery from a decayed neighbourhood into a cluster that promotes creativity, originality and talent.

1.3 Research question and sub-questions

Considering the above, the WdW has undergone a total transformation from an underground street to an A-location that is worthy of mentioning in city guides. In fact, it has turned into a tourist attraction with people of different nationalities visiting it during their trips in the Netherlands. The renewal of the street was “part of a new urban development plan, formulated... on the basis of a broader debate concerning the future of the city” (Mommaas, 2004, p. 510). On that account, cultural policies such as the establishment of arts organizations were actively implemented. However, how did the WdW become so popular and manage to reverse its image? Taking into account the history of the street and the time period from its decay towards its blossom, it would be of interest to explore how change occurred in the street and further investigate how this change led to the street becoming a vital creative cluster in Rotterdam today. Withal, the last two decades (1999-2019) will be on the focus of this study since this period has been critical in the development of the street. First, city policies involved the removal of shady bars and brothels from the street. The same policies promoted the establishment of arts organizations there, an act that gave the WdW the reputation of Rotterdam’s cultural hotspot. Soon afterwards, gentrification made its appearance and the tensions between the creative class and the businesses followed. These last sentences demonstrate that the WdW has experienced its own, unique life cycle pattern which is worthy of studying. Therefore, the research question this paper aims to explore is:

“What has been the contribution of city policies focusing on culture in the changes of the Witte de Withstraat in the last two decades (1999-2019)?”,
followed by the sub-questions:

- a) “How does the creative core¹ reflect on the changes in the Witte de Withstraat?”,

¹ The creative class – or otherwise called creative core – is the class of those workers whose job revolves around the creation of substantial new forms (Florida 2002).

- b) "How do the non-creatives, i.e. the entrepreneurs, reflect on the changes in the Witte de Withstraat?",
- c) "How do the policy making agents and an academic researcher reflect on the changes in the Witte de Withstraat?".

The research is going to investigate in depth the transformation of the WdW since little is reported about its evolution from a shady neighbourhood into one of the most creative and popular districts in Rotterdam. From being a street where drug-dealing was happening even during the day, the WdW has now turned into a gentrified street with shops, trendy restaurants and art galleries. What is of interest in this paper is that the discussion on the metamorphosis of the street is based on the accounts of people actively involved in it. In particular, employees at arts institutions and organizations, shop, bar, and cafe owners, a hostel manager, people working in the city as well as an academic researcher were interviewed. The decision for these diverse groups of people stems from the intention to form an accurate and wholesome picture of how the WdW has developed into its today's condition. It is important to explore how the people working in this street, but also the people who have contributed to the change or have studied it, perceive this transformation and the overall success and popularity of the WdW. How has a street with the notoriety of the WdW become a tourist attraction and a source of revenue? How have businesses and arts institutions decided on locating to this street, given its bad name?

The focus of the paper is on the three groups mentioned above (people from the arts and culture world, people from the hospitality field and other businesses, and lastly, people of the municipality and academia). The first group was chosen for the reason that the WdW is a street known for being the center of the artistic scene in Rotterdam. The arts institutes located in the street (Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, V2_ Lab for the Unstable Media, WORM, TENT, MAMA and CBK) have been organized in a collective and founded "Kunstblock"; a collaboration for the promotion and sustainability of the arts and culture in the street. It stands to reason that their presence in the WdW has supported its transformation and its branding as creative. In addition to these institutes, the "Theatre of Rotterdam" will also be included in the research; located in the WdW, it is the only theatre in the area. As it will be further explored, the founding of arts institutes in previously underdeveloped streets or areas have proven to be contributory in their revival and as it can be endorsed by Evans, "cultural activity is seen as the catalyst and engine of regeneration—epithets of change and movement" (2005, p. 968).

The second group, i.e. the people working in Horeca² or other businesses such as retail shops, was chosen because they contribute to the street financially, strengthening the local market. The relation between culture and economy has been identified through the years and the value of the “cultural industries as drivers of advanced urban economies” has been recognized by the academia (Brandellero & Kloosterman, 2010, p.74). The shop owners that were interviewed are all proud residents of the WdW. Some of them have been in the street for years whereas others have just launched their businesses. Nevertheless, it is enlightening to discuss their perspectives on the character of the street and the changes that have taken place in it. Especially, the shops that have been located in the WdW for long time will provide the researcher with details on how the street used to be whereas the newest additions will add to the paper a fresher outlook on the street’s current atmosphere. Retail shops and cafes, restaurants, and hostels or hotels consist the financial vein of a street and should not be excluded from this paper.

Lastly, the third group, i.e. people working for the city or are familiar with the topic of neighbourhood change, is essential for the discussion since they are well aware of the policies that have been implemented towards its revitalization of the WdW and the plans that are being organized. It goes without question that municipalities seek to stimulate the transformation of neighbourhoods and support creative - and non creative - businesses. A member of the city center area committee and a member of the cultural department of the municipality of Rotterdam will be interviewed on the topic of the changes in the street, having policy making at the center of the discussion whereas an academic researcher will further reflect on the street’s metamorphosis. Costa et al (2008) are of the opinion that the city can have a highly contributing role to the regeneration of an area; “[c]reativity-led planning and initiatives have been promoted in search of local development, urban renewal operations or regional development actions... in order to provide an economic boost to cities’ growth and vitalisation” (p. 394). Thus, this group’s views on the reorganization of the street will further enhance the literature on policy making as an instrument for street change.

1.4 Social and academic relevance

In an ever changing world, cities and neighbourhoods are also bound to change and evolve. Hence, the reason behind the conduct of this research is to explore the changes in the urban city - especially via the aid of the arts and culture - at the level of neighbourhood. The example of the WdW is the ideal one for the exploration of these changes since this street is of importance for Rotterdam - both because of its central location and cultural character.

² Horeca is an abbreviation for the food service industry. The term is a syllabic abbreviation of the words Hotel/ Restaurant/ Cafe

Formerly known as the neighbourhood where drug dealership was one of the main activities, today the WdW is popular for its art and entertainment scene. It is a creative cluster with more than five arts institutions located to it, cultural events taking place inside and outside said institutions and it is the meeting point for locals and expats alike. The WdW is now an overly gentrified street that has been at the focus of many city policies. The city along with the initiative of individuals - usually representatives of the creative class - have worked intensively towards the street's transformation into a livable and welcoming environment.

The discussion on city changes, gentrification, and creative clusters is not exclusive of this paper. Throughout the years, many scholars have referred to the changing nature of cities and the cycle life of clusters. Mommaas (2004) has discussed that neighbourhoods are constantly under change and it is the creative individuals and policy makers who hold critical roles in this change whilst Stryjakiewicz et al (2018) have referred to the process of urban regeneration and how this can transform degraded areas. Previously published academic work has focused on gentrification and urban change via the contribution of culture in Dutch cities. The paper in question aims to dive into the changes the WdW has undergone in the last twenty years. The conduct of this research is limited by geography, since it is studying just one street, and time, since it covers the time period 1999-2019. The objective of this paper is to bring attention to the WdW and demonstrate how the above theories and practices have been present in the city's attempts to reconstruct the street. The relevance of this research lies in two levels; on the one hand, new perspectives and information will be added to the neighbourhood regeneration studies on how city policies focusing on culture can have stimulating effects on a street's revival. On the other hand, insightful findings from the interviews can be of aid to policy makers. The ways the WdW has been rejuvenated can be imitated by other city planners and policy makers in need of a scheme for the advancement of an underdeveloped area. In particular, the organization of cultural institutions in a degenerated street - just like in the example of the WdW - may potentially have similar positive results in any other city.

2. Theoretical and previous research

For the exploration of the research question and sub-questions, the development of a theoretical framework is mandatory. This framework will provide the theoretical rationale for the study, present current theories associated to it and contribute with new knowledge on the topic in question. The theoretical concepts that are to be explored in the following pages are associated with the level of the individual actors, the socio-economic perspectives and the element of space. In detail, these theoretical concepts are the creative core, the non-creative class, (neo) bohemia, the creative city, cultural clusters, the cluster life cycle and pioneers, urban change and regeneration, gentrification, third spaces, networking, and neighbourhood reputation.

2.1 The creative core

To begin with, a creative street like the Witte de Withstraat is comprised by the creative class and particularly, the branch of the creative class called the creative core. Richard Florida (2002) defines the creative core as the group of those professionals who are the most creative and whose products can be of assistance to others thus, improving everyday life. They are “performing under the economic, social and cultural dynamism, especially in urban areas” (Levickaite, 2011, p. 86). In detail, representatives of the creative core are architects, researchers, artists, designers and people working in the field of entertainment (Bille, 2010). The people consisting the creative core share a mutual trait - they all produce economic value via creativity. For Florida, cities that provide to the creative core the necessary cultural infrastructure, opportunities and freedom are certain to grow (Zimmerman, 2008).

Alternatively called as the ‘creative worker’, the member of the creative core differs in many aspects from other workers in an industrial economy. The creative worker has a more flexible and autonomous work pattern in comparison to a ‘typical’ worker, who needs to comply to the requests and demands of the work position in question. What is more, another characteristic of creative work is the lack of intermediaries; those belonging to the creative class are working for themselves and if necessary, they will search for an intermediate arrangement on their own, adding even more to their freedom and flexibility (Thiel, 2017).

Additional elements of the creative core are diversity, openness, individuality and talent (Levickaite, 2011). Kong (2014) recognizes any artistic activity as a central part and main feature of both the creative industries and the creative class. The creative core is more accepting in including people of diverse backgrounds, ethnicities or social groups that have previously been marginalized (Thiel, 2017). Hence, it is more than reasonable to include this group in the examination of the street. These are the active agents for a great number of changes in the Witte de Withstraat. Their experiences and memories of the street can undeniably be of fundamental contribution to this paper.

2.2 The emergence of the creative class in a working class city

Rotterdam is also known for being the city with the largest European port; it has always been a working-class city. Rotterdam has eyewitnessed working class professions decreasing and others, more middle-class oriented, being on the rise. There has been “a decline in traditional working class occupations to an overall replacement of the working class by middle-class fractions” (Hochstenbach & Musterd, 2018, p. 30). In the same fashion, working-class neighbourhoods are being obtained by members of the middle and upper classes with the intention to create establishments and institutions that will be of benefit to them (Wacquant, 2008). Such establishments can be, among others, museums and galleries, arts institutions, schools, libraries and others. The creation of such establishments was approved and further

enhanced by policies for the revival of urban neighbourhoods and cities, resulting in new businesses and professionals appearing in the urban sphere of Rotterdam.

Bereitschaft (2016) underlines that in order to “remain competitive, cities throughout the urban hierarchy have taken an increasingly entrepreneurial role in recruiting and retaining professionals with high-skill... creative or knowledge occupations” (198). These professionals and businesses, other than the creative core, are expected to contribute with their innovation and production in the growth of local economy and if possible, identity. In line with the creative cities discourse of Florida (2002), amenities like retail shops, cafes and restaurants, coffee shops, vintage and antique stores as well as bookstores or record stores are all considered to increase the quality of a neighbourhood or street, even its reputation. Workers of the cultural realm are expected to be active and/ or reside in urban areas within inner city; that is the space where oftentimes, cultural experiences are mostly shared and promoted (Bereitschaft, 2017).

Zimmerman (2008) suggests that businesses and professionals are drawn to more cultural and artistic areas because they provide “just the right sort of material and cultural infrastructure” along with “an exceptionally wide range of experiential activities” (p. 232). The class of the ‘non-creatives’ has surely contributed to the development of the Witte de Withstraat because it introduced a more commercial aspect to it; bars and restaurants along with shops, hotels and hostels further revitalized the street and turned it into a source of revenue. Therefore, by including the non-creative businesses that are present in the Witte de Withstraat, this research aims to investigate the wider ecology contributing to the emergence of creative clusters.

2.3 (Neo) Bohemia

The creative core has the potential to make a change, not only in a city’s socio-economic development, but also in reconfiguring the spatial characteristics of a city through their neo-bohemian properties. In other words, artists and professionals often tend to choose as their base neighbourhoods of a city that are neglected. When it comes to spaces, the aforementioned groups do not hesitate to locate in less developed areas of the inner city. In fact, their location there can be critical in the growth of said areas (Hatuka et al, 2018). Creatives and other professionals see the beauty at all places, even at those with apparent signs of decay and abandonment. Places that once were derelict, this way can become the base for new restaurants, hip cafes, boutiques and galleries (Lloyd, 2002). The group of creatives that choose these neglected areas is the neo-bohemians. The neo-bohemians “incorporate the cumulative culture inscribed on urban spaces into their definition of the situation, including fantasies of urban grit and vice” (p. 524).

The neo-bohemians is another branch of the people working and living in the street,

along with the members of the creative class and the people working in amenities such as the ones listed above. However, they differ from the creative class since they are not interested in financial or other profits; they choose less popular spaces to freely practice their art in. Neo-bohemians are intrigued by the idea of building their professional and personal lives at marginal spaces and neighbourhoods. For them, the neighbourhood along with its residents contributes notably to the urban renewal and regeneration. This argument can be further strengthened by Ley (1996), who pinpoints that it is the artists and creative people who can turn “ugliness into a source of admiration” (p. 301). “[P]ostindustrial ‘bourgeois bohemianness” (Hatuka et al, 2018, p. 168) is mostly met in downtown and urban areas.

A creative city fosters people to openly think and create (Kong, 2014). The social climate of a creative city concentrates values such as diversity, social tolerance, openness to people and cultures. Romein and Trip (2009) communicate that bohemian populations can be an accountable and indicative index of how diverse, social tolerant, accepting and welcoming an area is. If an area combines more than one of the aforementioned values, then it is insured that more creative and diverse people will be attracted. Neo-bohemians’ work life can be defined by insecurity, unpredictable work patterns and anti-commercialism. However, it is this “blend of bohemianism and entrepreneurialism” (Oakley, 2009, p. 285) that is apparent in any creative city and necessary for its advancement.

Lloyd (2002) declares that the phenomenon of bohemia is not only a social one, but a spatial too. Artists, creatives and (neo) bohemians gather around previously degenerated areas that have been turned into cultural centers and museum districts. In Lloyd’s words, what is “new in neo-bohemia is the interaction between these spatialized social practices and the post-Fordist economy in which they are embedded” (p. 518). The Witte de Withstraat is an amalgam of businesses, artists, creatives, and bohemians. As such, the study of literature on the various social groups can aid the researcher in her study of the street and its diverse changes through time, by taking into account said groups’ personal accounts and experiences.

2.4 The creative city

The aforementioned social groups, i.e. the creative core, the non- creatives and the (neo) bohemians, all hold a fundamental role in the establishment and growth of the creative city. Working towards a definition of the creative city is not an easy task. However, “[o]ne way of defining “creative cities” is through their industrial base. In particular, one facet of creative cities is that they may be those with high concentrations of employment in the creative industries” (Lee & Rodríguez-Pose, 2014, p. 496). This means that a creative city is characterised by a density of employees in the creative field. A creative city may generate products of symbolic cultural significance and value in the areas of arts, films, architecture,

marketing, the web and more (Cunningham & Higgs 2009). In fact, it provides the space and encouragement for creatives to work and further contribute to its urban and artistic character.

The individuals a creative city attracts are educated and talented young professionals of various fields. These individuals do not only reinforce the local economy, but also highly contribute to city regeneration and growth, the establishment of cultural or other amenities and overall, city - or street - reputation and lifestyle (Hatuka et al, 2018). Cohendet, Grandadam and Simon (2010) add that these individuals' common point is that they are deeply interested in culture and arts - these two are actually defining for their work and activity. They also claim that the individuals working in a creative city are inspired by the city itself, which functions as a lab for their ideas and productions. A creative city "may develop by providing, through investment in cultural related facilities and other related amenities, a fertile place for a creative class of workers to imagine new products or processes that will ultimately bring economic growth and wealth" (Cohendet, Grandadam & Simon, 2010, p. 91).

In recent years, the city of Rotterdam has been turned into a creative city. After the majority of its inner city was destroyed in the 1940s, freedom to experimentation with architecture and urban planning were slowly becoming welcome. Especially in the beginning of 2005 and onwards, an advisory board for the revitalization of the city and generation of new and fresh ideas was created with a focus on an innovative, attractive and creative city (Romein & Trip, 2009). Rotterdam is nowadays a wholesome creative city "where production, work, leisure, the arts and the physical milieu exist in varying degrees of mutual harmony" (Lee & Rodríguez-Pose, 2014, p. 496). As a creative city, Rotterdam can be 'broken down' into smaller creative clusters and neighbourhoods or streets. Formerly a derelict area, the Witte de Withstraat is now home to arts and culture institutions, businesses and other amenities. Therefore, the street befittingly can be acknowledged and studied as part of a bigger creative city.

2.5 Cultural clusters and the cluster life cycle (CLC)

The concept of clusters is not new. In 1920, Marshall studied the industrial areas of the 1890s England. In his article, Hans Mommaas (2004) indicates that cultural clusters are alternative locations and spaces that can further enrich the urban landscape and creative city. "Mixtures of cultural functions and activities, from production to presentation and consumption and from theatre and the visual art to pop music and the new media, are grouped together in a great variety of spatial forms. Projects may restrict themselves to standalone buildings or larger building complexes, or they may include entire quarters or networks of locations" (p. 507).

Simply put, clusters are groupings of people and the decisive factors for the creation of a cluster are two; space and theme. Skog (2016) highlights that these two factors can indicate or not the possibility of a collaboration between spaces and consequently, the

establishment of a creative cluster. Notwithstanding, geographical proximity is an important factor for the bloom of the creative industries and clusters since they further encourage the communication and networking among the artists and other creatives (Hitters & Richards, 2002). Working under the same roof or nearby spaces makes the exchange of ideas and opinions immediate and easier. Support and collaboration are ever present in creative clusters.

A cluster can be further considered as being an assembly of companies or smaller businesses and institutions of the same or relevant field, linked together by geographical adjacency and common interests. Even an area as small as a neighbourhood or a street can be termed as a cultural cluster. Clusters can be of different size, shape or form depending on their character and nature (Ingstrup & Damgaard, 2013). By grouping together in the street, businesses and institutions have added to the re-making of the geography of the street and its new character as an urban and cultural district. Ergo, clusters are of service to the development of a region, its growth and further sustainability (Skog, 2016).

Nevertheless, a creative cluster is not limited to creative institutions and establishments. Mommaas (2004) suggests that creative clustering can also involve and integrate the setting up of leisure spaces such as restaurants, cafes, bars or businesses. These can be of great assistance to the economy since they are significant sources of creative inspiration and finally, wealth. On many occasions, creative clusters have been promoted as an efficient tool for city policy and remaking. O'Connor and Gu (2010) make an engaging reference to the concept of clusters. The latter was first introduced in the UK local policy making in the end of the 1990s and pinpointed the weight of "the work of social and economic geographers concerned to identify those unique, often intangible, qualities of place that gave rise to competitive advantage" (p.126) and further ignited said place's possible growth and change. Cluster policy making attempts to complement the performance of clusters and strengthen their function (Brenner & Schlump, 2011). This can be evidenced by the WdW's metamorphosis; the city intervened and boosted the street by establishing institutions such as the Witte de With Center for Contemporary art, so as to detach the street's reputation as a 'bad' neighbourhood and promote its new artistic and revived nature. Even so, it needs to be mentioned that the life of a creative cluster might have an expiration date or otherwise, that it follows a specific pattern.

Santner (2018) stresses the emergence of the cluster life cycle (CLC) concept. "CLC concepts... assume that cluster development follows a sequence from an... emergent stage, via a growth stage, to a stage of maturity and end in the downturn of a stage of decline (p. 175). The latter stage begins when there is maturity in an industry, competitiveness and saturation in the markets and the cluster show no signs of advancement (Brenner & Schlump, 2011). A cluster does not develop on its own but rather, it is influenced by the market and

industries - either in the private or public sector. Interaction and cooperation are pivotal in the life of a cluster (Ingstrup & Damgaard 2013). Nonetheless, Brenner and Schlump (2011) suggest that the last stage - the stage of decline - might also be an introduction to a new phase; i.e. the transformation of the cluster.

“[A]t some point in time, changes in the surroundings of clusters can force them to either close down or reinvent themselves” (Ingstrup & Damgaard 2013, p. 559). So, the cycle of a cluster continues to develop and/ or take another turn. What is more, in agreement with Brenner and Schlump (2011), a cluster may acquire a whole new identity after the reinvention stage. Swann (1998) pinpoints how a cluster reaching the decline phase can gain a momentum within the same cluster and industry and introduce a newer identity. The CLC concept should be considered when studying a creative cluster. Henceforth, in the study of the Witte de Withstraat and its evolution, the theory of the cluster life cycle will also be taken into account. As a street that has experienced great changes in the last decade, its cluster life cycle will be explored so as to form a thorough depiction of the street’s metamorphosis through time.

2.6 Urban change and regeneration

Urban change and regeneration are at the forefront of this research paper. To borrow Klunzman’s view on regeneration, “[e]ach story of regeneration begins with poetry and ends with real estate” (Evans, 2005, p. 959). Definitions of urban regeneration focus on the improvement of areas. Lejano and Kan (2015) define urban regeneration as an active process for tackling urban problems, with the intend to positively transform a run-down area financially, socially or physically. By the same token, as urban regeneration is defined the ‘process of lifting degraded areas from a state of crisis’ (Stryjakiewicz et al., 2018, p. 319). Part of this process are strategies for attracting businesses and other cultural or creative institutions to locate to these areas. In the case of the WdW, regeneration occurred after the arrival of art galleries and institutions as well as shops and cafes at the neighbourhood. Their advent to a city is conducive to its remaking, socially and geographically, paving the way to its new future (Smith, 1996).

Any change in a neighbourhood can lead to it acquiring a new status and character. Regeneration and urban change oftentimes use culture for addressing, mediating and expressing residents’ needs. Moreover, “themes such as community self-development and self-expression” are central (Evans, 2005, p. 960). A neighbourhood is of dynamic nature; it is not fixed but rather, an on-going work. Areas or neighbourhoods are overtaken informally by artists or other creatives, and officially by policy makers with the intention to convert them into alternative spaces to live, work and create in (Mommaas, 2004). Aspects such as the environment, culture, arts, and social sustainability are mainly present in the agenda of urban regeneration and planning (Rabbiosi, 2016). Most importantly, urban change and regeneration

involve a “wide range of actions aimed at re-establishing the quality of urban life and exploring the relationships that connect the social and built structures of cities” (p. 832). Change is taking place at a quick pace and everyone should adjust to the accelerated changes in today’s world. The case of the WdW street can be instrumental in exploring how changes in a neighbourhood can lead to it acquiring an ultimately new image and character and how the previously mentioned actors can be part of the changing process.

2.7 Gentrification, gentrifiers, and pioneers

Gentrification is a profound form of neighbourhood or area change. For Smith (1996), gentrification is closely linked to the arts and can reshape the urban landscape drastically. According to Zukin, gentrification “refers to a profound spatial restructuring” (1992, p. 187). Changes and developments in a city can often be regarded as a means of gentrification and in accordance with Cameron and Coaffee (2005), artists can be instrumental in the gentrification process of neighbourhoods. Furthermore, they argue that gentrification can be operative in urban renewal and advancement since it can alter an area by giving it a completely new character. Active agents in the process of gentrification are two groups, the ‘pioneers’ and the gentrifiers. In this paper, the two groups are presented in order of their appearance in the process.

As pioneers are defined those who decide to become residents in not yet established neighbourhoods where the rent and accommodation are still relatively low, thus affordable. As the term suggests, pioneers are the first to ‘take the jump’ and reside in declined urban neighbourhoods, ergo subscribing to a district’s gentrification and overall transformation. Usually, the pioneers are students or upcoming artists, well educated, and in search of an affordable space to both work and live in. The pioneers, otherwise defined as the ‘first in-movers’, decide on such declining neighbourhoods on grounds of “aesthetic preferences and higher tolerance or desire for racial, ethnic, and/or class diversity” (Zuk et al 2017, p. 2). This ‘terra incognita’ intrigues them; they want to explore it, experiment with it and make it their home. Their activity in the neighbourhood in combination with policy practices improve the establishments and other services in the area.

Consequently, the group of the gentrifiers appears in the picture. In contrast to the risky pioneers, who are eager to first move to deteriorated spaces and neighbourhoods, the gentrifiers are disinclined to risks (Blasius, Friedrichs & Ruhl 2016). Fear of financial loss and failure intensifies their reluctance towards being the first inhabitants of underdeveloped locations. The words of Weiler (2000) describe best the dissimilarity of the two groups; “the pioneers get the arrows, and the settlers get the land” (p. 170). Put differently, the pioneers inhabit marginalized and disadvantaged spaces, work towards their improvement, and afterwards, the gentrifiers have at their disposal a new, popular area where they can live and/or initiate their business ventures. Unlike the pioneers, they are of an older age and have

higher incomes. Gentrifiers settle on a space only after it has become - with the contribution of the pioneers - an appealing and inviting neighbourhood where the risk of investment is now low (Blasius, Friedrichs & Ruhl 2016).

Regardless, gentrification is a tool for the upgrade of a neighbourhood and it can further be examined as a noteworthy aspect of urban restructuring (Wang, 2011). Gentrification “has evolved into a vehicle for transforming whole areas into landscaped complexes that pioneer a comprehensive class-inflected urban re-make” (Wang, 2011, p. 366). Especially David Ley’s work (1996, 2003) recognized how the artist can be instrumental in the process of gentrification. He suggests that the artist can turn a place “from junk to art and then on to commodity” (p. 2529). To quote Stephen Wei-Hsin Wang (2011), “[w]hat the artist values is not only the aesthetics of the old urban quarters but also factors such as affordable spaces, and the society and culture of a working-class locale (p. 366). Patch (2006) firmly believes that culture is a driving force for urban growth and development. Museums and other creative institutions can attract people to move to specific areas thus contributing to the creation of gentrified neighbourhoods. Additionally, Ley (2003) denotes that till today artists have been linked to urban spaces and naturally, a number of avant-garde movements have also been linked to urban life and scenery.

As a rule, the effects of gentrification become apparent in previously deteriorated spaces and decayed neighbourhoods of a city. These are “transformed into a flourishing agglomeration of creative studios, art galleries, independent stores, trendy cafes and restaurants” (Wang, 2011, p. 364). Undeniably, gentrification is influential to the overall economic development and growth of an area. Policy makers and businesses have now shifted their attention to the inner-city neighborhood as a new financial source (Catungal et al., 2009). Wang (2011) suggests that gentrification has a commercial character. Older or historic neighborhoods are utilized as new areas to shop, dine and enjoy arts and culture thus, considering gentrification an updated and efficient procedure of neighborhood and street revival. The example of the Witte de Withstraat can be said to be illustrative of ‘commercial gentrification’, as this has been indicated by a number of authors. From a street that used to be avoided when the sun went down, now it is an all-day round hotspot for locals and tourists alike.

2.8 Third places

Creative clusters tend to be rich in what Oldenburg (1999) termed as third places. These are public spaces of any type, other than the workplace or home, where people meet, socialize and connect. For Oldenburg, public spaces are of vital significance in the organization of a community since they promote citizens’ participation and involvement as well as instill onto them feelings of belonging and connection to it (Yuen & Johnson, 2017). Hoogerbrugge and Burger (2018) suggest that neighbourhoods consist “an important source

of social capital... where social capital can be regarded as the “connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (p. 1485). Furthermore, the authors state in their article that particularly in the Netherlands, neighbourhoods are indeed a noteworthy form of social capital. Oldenburg proposes that the term ‘third places’ is a generic one and it includes gatherings of people in other spaces, in addition to their ‘natural habitat’, i.e. workplace and home (1999). By the same token, spaces where individuals participate in leisure activities, workshops or other social activities are all considered to be ‘third places’; it is in these places that communication and bonding between them can take occur. What is more, Oldenburg views third places as spaces where people can perform civic services, participate in democracy and engage with their fellow citizens in matters of public life (Lin, 2012).

Deshano and Robinson (2011) state “conversation, accessibility to communal gathering, a culture of equality and familiarity, and non-institutionalized, non-special-interest and non-conglomerated oversight” (p. 644) as the main characteristics of third places. Drawing by Oldenburg’s theory of ‘third places’, the authors remark that these spaces inspire feelings of ‘being at home’, where individuals feel at ease and respect one another. Thompson (2018) adds that third places can facilitate the cohesion of a community and bring people closer, forming social ties. These spaces encourage spontaneous communication and even offer opportunities for relaxation and entertainment. The Witte de Withstraat can be regarded as an example of a third place; it is a vibrant and busy street where networking takes place on a daily basis. Third places in the street have a contributing role in its continuous development.

2.9 Networking

The Witte de Withstraat is a street with a high potential for social networks. Arts institutions are based next to creative businesses, cultivating their relationships and working together, side by side. Namyślak (2014) expresses that, “[n]etwork-forming contributes to the development of creative industries by strengthening the potential of cooperating cities (p. 2412). Professionals working together in a cluster, oftentimes in the same field, form a network where ideas and knowledge are exchanged. Within these networks, people develop and maintain social relations with each other, always having in mind how these relations can contribute to culture. Moreover, these relations - product of networking- can further stimulate support and sharing of common ideas, aesthetics or validation (Gu, 2010).

Artistic clusters and neighbourhoods encourage the sense of community among their members and social ties are enhanced. Personal encounters are instrumental in the development of informal, interpersonal networking (Gertler, 1995). Felton, Collis and Graham (2010) remark that despite the progress of technology and the expansion of the Internet, people still place great importance on person-to-person communication. A network is none other than a community, characterized by coherence, collaboration, a common

enterprise or goal and sharing of available resources. Madden (2005) claims that networks can have an indirect impact on the cultural agenda; they can “ influence the research agenda in other ways – for example, by “displaying” topics of interest to network members; managing, editing and “curating” (p. 132). On the other hand, “[s]ocial interactions in cultural industry clusters take place within a framework of associative utilitarian logic typical of economic transactions” (Zarlenga et al., 2013, p. 9). Lee (2015) acknowledges that networking can also assist in the establishment of economic relations. Since more artists and individuals choose a creative cluster as their basis for work, networking can provide more opportunities for employment and encourage collaborations and new positions. In addition, the positive effects of networking are no stranger to the city itself. “[S]ituating arts and culture alongside urban economic development strategies has become a worldwide phenomenon” (p.140). The collaboration of arts, culture and city policy can have effective outcomes in the revival of a run-down or less developed area. Cultural projects can transform said areas, not only physically, but also in financial terms. A well-developed space where arts are at the center can positively support overall city’s marketability, advance economic activities there as well as promote tourism. Without a doubt, the WdW can be accounted as an experiment of the aforementioned. Rotterdam’s policy makers trusted the capacities of arts and culture in the revitalization of the street in the 1990s, thus investing in arts institutions and other establishments there.

2.10 Neighbourhood reputation

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the Witte de Withstraat is a laboratory for art and culture (Witte de Withstraat, 1997). In the early 1990s, the WdW acquired the reputation of the arts and entertainment center in the city of Rotterdam. As neighbourhood reputation can be defined the implicit or explicit significance of a neighbourhood. In detail, Permentier (2009, p. 17) defines it as “the meaning and esteem that residents and other involved parties attribute to a neighbourhood. Reputation also refers to the relatively stable image a neighbourhood has among city residents and to its place in the urban neighbourhood hierarchy”. A particular reputation can be attributed to a neighbourhood from factors such as the social status of the people residing in it, the establishment or not of public housing in the neighbourhood, the presence of ethnic minority groups, the character of the estates in the neighbourhood in question and lastly, whether or not there are any sites or institutions of historical importance in it (Osborne, Ziersch & Baum, 2011).

A neighbourhood’s reputation can be divided into two categories; the internal and the external one. As internal reputation is considered the reputation that has been formed by the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. Oftentimes, this kind of reputation is regarded of greater value than the external one. On the other hand, the latter type of reputation is formed by lack of exposure or knowledge (Permentier, 2009). Browne-Yung, Ziersch and Baum (2016) suggest that if one was to evaluate or estimate neighbourhood reputation, this would have

been possible by taking into consideration and/ or measuring how individuals who do not live in a particular neighbourhood, contemplate upon it and its value. What is more, the authors point out the social aspect present in neighbourhood reputation - it is a social construct.

In accordance with Permentier (2009), “[p]laces are no exception to the labelling process: people attach a reputation to most countries, states, cities or neighbourhoods” (p. 29). Interestingly enough, Pais, Batson and Monnat (2014) propose that “[n]eighbourhood reputations are based on common perceptions of neighborhood disorder and common perceptions about a neighbourhood’s ability to cope with disorder” (p. 343). In other words, neighbourhood reputation is of a double nature; it can take on both negative and positive connotations. In the case of the Witte de Withstraat, this could not be truer. Prostitution and crime along with drug use and trade fall under the ‘neighbourhood disorder’ category. From the 1970s and until the beginning of the 1990s, social disorder was at its peak. The street was a remote part of the city of Rotterdam and thus, avoided. However, in the early 1990s, the city managed to alter the situation. The establishment of cultural institutions, the organization of festivals and events as well as the active contribution of the municipality’s department of arts and culture succeeded in ‘coping with disorder’ and ultimately changing the character of the street.

2.11 Place branding

Since 1992, the Witte de Withstraat has been labeled the ‘art boulevard’ of Rotterdam (Witte de Withstraat, 1997). In recent years, it has become a popular attraction for locals and tourists alike, resulting in being one of Rotterdam’s most well-known streets for entertainment, arts and culture. In other words, the Witte de Withstraat has turned into Rotterdam’s hotspot and one of the city’s brands. In accordance with Ye and Bjorner (2018), “place branding is commonly understood as an umbrella term encompassing the branding or marketing of nations, regions, cities and other places (p. 30). For others, place branding is a tool for the competitiveness and sustainability of a place (Hospers, 2010). Cities become brands for the attraction of investors, tourists and creatives as well as residents and locals. Lucarelli (2012) proposes that city branding is not limited to the purposes of advancing a city’s image and reputation, but it also aims towards social, economic, cultural, and other developments.

DeChernatony and McDonald (1998) regard a brand as successful when that has become “an identifiable product, service, person or place, augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceives relevant, unique added values which match their needs most closely (p. 20). Another factor for successful place branding is visual evidence. Spaces that used to be derelict, neglected or abandoned but have been metamorphosed into vibrant and attractive ones, consist the visual, real evidence people need to confidently believe in these spaces anew, as successful brands (Trueman, Klemm & Giroud, 2004). Culture holds

principal role in city branding; it determines how a city is perceived, both by other people and itself. Further, culture is a tool that can be utilized for the accomplishment of management and commercial goals (Ashworth, Karavatzis 2015). Culture can be regarded “in some form as public amenity enhancing the experience of the place and adding value to it as a location in which to live, work, recreate or visit” (p. 122). This is one of the reasons why city councils and local instruments turn to arts, culture and architecture and invest in them as a means of promoting the city - both to its residents but the rest of the world to boot. City branding can be realized by implementing in the urban environment cultural institutions and facilities, creative clusters and quarters as well as arts installations and public works of art (Graeme, 2015).

By use of these theoretical frameworks, I will attempt to contribute with my paper in the understanding of the Witte de Withstraat street’s metamorphosis into an arts and cultures cluster in the 1990s and early 2000s, whilst maintaining this character well into the 2010s. This research is going to investigate in depth said metamorphosis by examining and understanding the perspectives of the people working in the street. Thus far, a research paper focusing on the viewpoints of the workforce of the street - either in the cultural or business field - has not been conducted thoroughly. Ergo, this extensive research paper is proposed; to fill certain gaps that have come to the fore and further contribute to the academic society on how changes in the street landscape are perceived by its workforce, the individuals studying it and people working in the municipality or area committee.

3. Methodology

The intention of this paper was to explore the research question ““What has been the contribution of city policies focusing on culture in the changes of the Witte de Withstraat in the last two decades (1999-2019)?”, and sub-questions. For this purpose, ten semi-structured interviews were conducted. The method of interviews was considered to be the most suitable since it allows the researcher to focus on collecting the informants’ perspectives and views on the topics in question. Via the utilization of semi-structured interviews, the accounts and experiences of the interviewees came to the fore, enhancing the research paper with diverse and detailed input.

3.1 Qualitative research analysis

For this study, a qualitative research approach was chosen. With such a method I was enabled to study aspects of social life at a natural environment, emphasizing on the participants’ input such as their opinions and feelings on a particular topic. A qualitative research analysis is appropriate when seeking to explore the ‘how’ or ‘what’ of a social experience (Pope & Mays, 1995). Qualitative research can be applicable and useful not only in the creative industries but in a wide range of studies and fields. In fact, qualitative research can assist in exploring individuals’ accounts (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017). This study is an attempt towards the exploration of a social phenomenon, i.e. street changes. It is a “purposive,

systematic... undertaking designed to maximize the discovery of generalizations leading to description and understanding of an area of social... life” (Stebbins, 2011, p. 3). Hollis (1994) declares that the purpose of the qualitative research is to provide a better understanding of social phenomena and a glimpse of the world, as it is experienced by the population during their everyday life.

Chesebro and Borisoff (2007) have detected five characteristics that are common in all qualitative research studies. Indeed, during this research I realized coming across these characteristics too. Firstly, the collection of data occurs at a space and time that are best preferred by the subjects participating in the study. For this paper, not all the interviews took place in the same space; cafes at the center of the city, workplaces, businesses - even the Museumpark (!) - were considered by the participants as fitting spaces for the interviews. Secondly, the researcher holds the role of the participant as well. For instance, in the case of an interview, s/he is not the authority that poses questions and awaits for an answer but rather, an active participant in the discussion (Holstein & Gubriun, 1995). This is exactly how the process of interviewing felt; it was not a monologue on the behalf of the interviewee but rather, a ping-pong game between the me and each participant. The two parties immersed into purposeful discussions on the character of the Witte de Withstraat, the changes it has undergone over time and their views on the changes. The semi - structured interviews were friendly and casual chats over the subject matter, always with the participants’ privacy taken into consideration. The latter was ensured by stating, before beginning with the recording of the interview, that the audio file will be destroyed after the transcription and their names will not be revealed at any point of the study. In response to this, the subjects of the study have the freedom to “provide transitions from one topic to another, and provide any qualifiers they see fit” (p. 9). A fourth characteristic of qualitative research studies is subject intentionality. This means that the researcher strives to “capture and preserve the communication and symbol-using of subjects as the subjects understand and intend them” (p. 9). Understandably, there was no alteration of the participants wordings or phrases, hence ensuring their originality. Lastly, qualitative research studies are pragmatic; they can immediately be implemented for the discussion and understanding of a social phenomenon or problem.

Truly, this is the end goal of this very thesis - to explore the history of the WdW from a very specific angle, i.e. the reflections of people who work in the street, of those who study it, or those are actively involved in its development as members of the municipality or area committee. These groups of people will enrich the understanding and knowledge about the street’s transformation in the years 1999 - 2019. In this paper, the qualitative research analysis was of aid to the investigation of the Witte de Withstraat’s remake over time. The participants’ narratives and experiences consisted the main tool that helped the researcher delve into the discussion of the changes in the street. Networks of professionals in creative clusters hold

central role in their development and the input of these participants was of assistance to the study of the development of the street.

3.2 Semi-structured interviews

Regarding the semi-structured interviews, these are regularly used in qualitative research and can be a valuable source of information to the researcher. They can be conducted with one individual or a group of people. However, in this paper only individual in-depth interviews were conducted. This way, it was possible to explore in greater detail the information received by each one of the interviewees. The qualitative method of semi-structured interviews helped me collect the data, interpret them and examine light on the topic of this paper, i.e. the changes in the Witte de Withstraat and how these are perceived by the people working there or the people that are actively engaged in these changes - which are of considerable social and cultural interest.

According to DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006), “[i]n-depth interviews are used to discover shared understandings of a particular group” (p. 317). Qualitative interviewing is all about paying attention; the responsibility of the interviewer is to attentively listen rather than talk. The process of qualitative interviewing is mainly characterized by flexibility and adaptability. The interviewer has a prepared list of topics and aspects of inquiry she intends to cover during the interview but also she can alter her research design at any given moment, if necessary (Babbie 2014). Steinar Kvale parallels the qualitative interviewer to a traveler who “wanders through the landscape and enters into conversations... wanders along with the local inhabitants, asks questions that lead the subjects to tell their own stories of their lived world” (1996, p. 3-5).

Further, Kvale points out that a qualitative interview is not a process for merely collecting facts and opinions. Rather, the interviewer collects this information and plans to deliver a concrete meaning out of it. An interesting perspective on qualitative interviewing has been offered by Gubrium and Holstein (2002). They reflect that during an interview, “individuals are seen as significant commentators on their own experience” (p. 5). Considering that networks are instrumental in the development of creative clusters, I decided on the method of semi-structured interviews of the creative and non-creative groups of the WdW for studying its evolution into a successful creative cluster. For the needs of this paper, ten semi-structured interviews were conducted between April 2019 and June 2019. According to Oltmann (2016), qualitative interviews are of paramount contribution to the qualitative research. Via an interview, the research acquires “thick descriptions” of social and cultural phenomena, patterns and themes (Geertz, 1973). Understandably, the interviews consist primary data since they are firstly introduced to the interviewer at the moment of their production, i.e. during the interview (Furseth & Everett, 2013).

3.3 Sampling

When deciding upon sampling, knowledge on the topic of the study is one of the main factors for selecting an interviewee. Cropley suggests that researchers show preference over 'samples' that can enhance the research with their knowledge and experiences on the topic in question. Similarly, narrative competence is also vital; this means that - depending on the topic - everyone has the capabilities to "reflect upon and talk about themselves, about their connections with their objective" (p. 75). For this paper, I decided upon the interviewees by purposive and snowball sampling. The first one is a type of sampling where participants are chosen depending on the richness and depth of knowledge about the study. As regards the non-probability sampling technique, this "begins with interviewing an initial set of research participants who serve as informants about not only the research topic but also about other potential participants" (Given, 2008, p 816). Snowball sampling is thought of as a technique that can lead to interesting and unexpected revelations (Babbie, 2014). Since I am not directly familiar with the respondents and their backgrounds, it is intriguing to start a conversation with them on the topic in question and see how this discussion can evolve.

In this paper, I either emailed the possible interviewees or directly visited them at their workplace to ask if they would be interested to participate in the research and after scheduling a meeting at the place and time most convenient to them, an interview of 30'-60' was conducted. The duration of the interviews varied since some interviewees were able to dedicate a full hour on the interview whilst others had more limited time. However, they were still willing enough to shortly reflect on the topic and contribute with their own experiences to this paper. The entirety of the interviews was performed in English and for some instances, Google Translate was also used by the participants when needed. In relation to the tool employed for the conduct of interviews, it must be noted that qualitative interviews consist an inexpensive and affordable method of research where no special devices are needed - so, just a voice recorder was utilized for every interview.

The respondents who participated in the interviews come from different backgrounds. They are representatives of the cultural world, the business world, the policy world and lastly, the academic world. The first were selected since they constitute the creative core and as such, an indispensable part of the Witte de Withstraat's history. Their accounts on the street's metamorphosis and evolution into a creative cluster helped answer the research question of this paper. These creative institutions have been in the street for many years, with the Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art being the oldest, founded in 1990. Apart from the art institutions and galleries, the WdW is a street with a wide range of businesses. Therefore, representatives of the business world were also included in the sampling process. For this research, I did not limit my focus on artistic shops, but widened my scope to include businesses in the hospitality and the food service industry as well. I considered it mandatory

to include more points of view in the research so as to form a better image of the street, its transformation and classification as a creative hub. In addition, the perspectives of the people of the policy world were taken into consideration. These interviewees offered their insight on the development of the WdW from another viewpoint, since they are part of the governance structure of the city and are well acquainted with the city's practices and policies on city planning. Finally, this would not be a complete research about the WdW street's unfolding into a creative cluster without the input of the academic word. The academic researcher that participated in the research offered her expertise in two ways; firstly, by sharing her knowledge of the street's past and present condition and secondly, by shedding light on the topics of creative clusters and gentrification.

3.4 Validity and reliability

In any research analysis, the principles of validity and reliability are fundamental and as such, they need to be addressed in this section of the research paper as well. Validity is all about accuracy whilst reliability is all about consistency. In detail, both validity and reliability are of necessity in research since they function as a way to establish to fellow researchers evidence that their findings are to be trusted and can be reproduced if needed. Establishing credibility is especially of importance in qualitative research for fear that the researcher may influence the trustworthiness of the data by letting her subjectivity interfere with their interpretation (Brink, 1993). "The qualitative researcher seeks basically the same ends through different methods" (Brink, 1993, p. 35). Thus, it stands to reason that being able to reproduce the same results with consistency as the qualitative researcher did is where success stands at. In order to secure reliability and validity, the researcher needs to provide a clear and detailed plan of the methods and the research design she has used along with the setting or context where the study occurred.

With the purpose of ensuring validity and reliability in mind, I followed a number of steps. First, I ensured that the question and sub-questions were clear and lacked any confusion that might lead to misunderstandings. Further, I developed a list of questions appropriate to the overall theme of the paper and used the same list for all the interviews so as to guarantee the ability of replication of the research. In line with Silverman (2011), I asked the same questions, established that all questions were understood the same and provided all the interviewees with the same clarifications - when needed. Lastly, the word-for-word transcription of the interviews can be considered a relevant tool for transparency; the recordings from the interviews were transcribed verbatim - no words were added or deleted from the interviewees' input.

3.5 Ethics and the use of pseudonyms

Of course, the issue of ethics is of priority when conducting an interview and it was taken into consideration for this research paper. By composing a form of consent and

distributing it to the interviewees, the latter are informed about the research's topic and purpose as well as about any benefits or risks that can result from it (Kvale, 2011). Oftentimes, issues of ethics come to the surface during the conduct of interviews since through asking questions, the interviewer gets a glimpse of the interviewee's private life and presents it to the readership (Mauthner et al., 2002). No ethical problems were expected to arise and I made sure that every interviewee participated voluntarily and not otherwise. Ergo, before starting the interviewing process, the participants were given a form of consent. After reading it and agreeing to its terms, they signed it and proceeded to the interview. The informed consent guaranteed the participants' confidentiality and by signing it, they expressed their agreement to be involved in the study.

A consideration imperative in the qualitative research is the use of pseudonyms for the participants. Especially in the case of interviews, anonymity is of primary concern to the researcher. Ogden (2012) defines a pseudonym as an imagined name that is allocated to a person - in the case of interviews, to the interviewee - to protect her from being recognized. A pseudonym is assigned for the sake of practicality and also, ethical reasons. On the one hand, knowing that a pseudonym will be assigned to her, the interviewee feels more comfortable sharing her experiences and views on a topic. On the other hand, the use of a pseudonym is encouraged - if not obliged - to preserve the privacy of the interviewee. Van den Hoonaard (2003) suggests that a researcher should include an inventory containing general information about the interviewees. Details such as age, ethnicity, or sex may indeed reveal the identity of the research participant. Nevertheless, these details are often required in order to better understand the target group of the research. Further, it is highly likely that the reader of the published paper will be interested in having a more complete view of the participants. Hence, said inventory will be of aid to that end.

Lahman et al (2015) state that, "[g]iven the potential vulnerability of any participant... pseudonyms are a vital part of increasing confidentiality in human research" (p. 450). For the needs of this paper, pseudonyms were assigned to each of the interviewees. As far as the inventory mentioned is concerned, a list of the interviewees along with details about each one of them was produced. In specie, the list contains characteristics about the research participants such as age, origins, profession and education background. Additionally, a sentence or two are also included to indicate their position in the street i.e. if they are the owners of a store in the Witte de Withstraat or working at an arts institute located there as well as how long they have been active and the type of store or institution they are working at. The inventory of the research participants is a detailed yet practical and brief way to acquaint the reader with the participants and their identity without the latter being fully exposed, hence jeopardizing their privacy and anonymity.

3.6 Data collection and analysis

As soon as the data from the interviews were collected, the first step was to transcribe them. Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2017) suggest that the main purpose in qualitative content analysis is to transform the data available into an organized list of results and themes. To this end, the browser-based tool “oTRANSCRIBE” was used. This is a time - efficient tool that aided me in the transcription of the recordings by changing the speed of the recording in accordance to my preferences. By choosing the slower pace, I was able to transcribe the voice clip into words and consequently, a coherent and data-rich text. The end result of the transcription is not merely words and phrases; it is an orderly and meaningful story that explores people's attitudes about culture and society.

After the collection of data through the method of semi-structured interviews and their transcription into a consistent unit of text, the researcher needs to code said data in aim to answer the proposed research question and sub-questions. Thus, the process of coding is the next, crucial step in the analysis of data. For this paper, manual coding was preferred over computer assisted coding. In the case of manual coding, the researcher closely reads the transcribed interviews and any excerpts that appear to fall under a broader category, are organized together. Manual coding is ideal when the number of raw data, i.e. interviews, is relatively limited. Ten interviews were conducted for this study so manual coding was possible. Further, manual coding gives the researcher a sense of freedom and control over the data and subsequently, the codes generated. Lastly, via manual coding the researcher becomes more familiarized with the data on her disposal since she needs to read the interviews line-by-line more than once in order to organize them into codes.

Strauss and Corbin (2008) acknowledge the existence of three coding categories; open coding, axial coding and selective coding. These categories can be further considered as succeeding one another with open coding being the first step, axial coding being the second and naturally, selective coding being the third and last step in the process. In open coding, the researcher puts all the data gathered under the microscope; she reads the data attentively and organizes them in fragments. These fragments are then “compared among each other, grouped into categories dealing with the same subject, and labelled with a code” (Boeije, 2008, p. 96).

During the initial stage of open coding there are some general guidelines but altogether, the coding is open to all possibilities, i.e. there is no limit - in terms of context or quantity - in the codes can be generated (Saldana 2013). Henceforth, open coding is for the researcher a starting point from which she can explore the data gathered from the interviews that have previously been conducted and attempt to organize them in ideas, concepts or broader categories. For the exploration of the research question and sub-questions, the transcribed interviews of the participants were carefully and repeatedly examined before they

were fragmented and grouped into categories that refer to the same ideas. A total of 91 open codes was the outcome of the initial stage of coding. The names for the open codes resulted from the ideas these fragments echoed and I tried to give to the codes a name that summarized the essence of the specific fragment. For instance, some of the open codes that resulted from the open coding process were: high rent prices, longer opening hours for bars and restaurants, tourist attraction, city hotspot, partying street, less artistic, accessible, cool, versatile and more.

After the initial open coding, axial coding was conducted. In accordance with Boeije (2008), axial coding is a more complex process because several open codes - not all codes in this stage need to be utilized - are to be combined and connected to produce new, meaningful axial codes. As in any step of the coding process, axial coding also expects to “constantly compar[e] emergent themes within one’s data set in order to make theoretical claims regarding one’s communicative conduct” (Simmons, 2017, p. 2). Axial coding is all about identifying central themes in data, via constant comparison and interpretation, that consequently can lead to new categories or subcategories. Further, axial coding can be regarded as the phase where categories begin to be more discernible and connections among them are made. During the axial coding phase, the 91 open codes from the previous, initial open coding stage were reduced - or, reorganized - into 16 axial codes. Some of these axial codes are: networking between arts institutions, city policies, city and entrepreneurs, street reputation today, diversity in the street and more. As one can infer, axial coding is helpful to the researcher in the way that it reduces a great number of open codes into a smaller and more organized sum. By this stage, the data have started to be more focused and meaningful to the researcher while concepts and theories start to emerge.

Selective coding is the last stage in the coding process. After the open coding, which has initially indicated possible codes, and axial coding, which has divided the open codes in fewer axial codes and made connections between them, selective coding is utilized to provide coherence among the codes generated and define the concepts that have resulted from coding. Eventually, these concepts were taken into consideration to answer the research question and sub-questions posed in the beginning of the paper. Selective coding “functions like an umbrella that covers and accounts for all other codes and categories formulated” (Saldana, 2013, p. 223). The main objective of selective coding is to unveil concepts that are present in the interview data, explain the phenomena that have surfaced and create a storyline for the readers to better understand the context of the research. Naturally, selective codes are even less in number than the open and axial ones since they carry the very essence of the paper. The final concepts that resulted during the coding process of the raw data were four; creative clusters, street character, gentrification and city intervention. These four concepts will be defined in the Results chapter of this paper for further clarity.

4. Results

Following the processes of data collection and analysis, the results from the in-depth interviews are to be discussed in this chapter. During the analysis of the ten transcribed interviews, four main themes came to the fore. These were 'city intervention', 'creative clusters', 'gentrification' and 'street character'. The first term will explore the ways in which the city has been involved in the metamorphosis of the WdW. The second theme will address the establishment of the WdW as a creative hub for individual artists and cultural organizations. The third theme will refer to the development of the WdW from a run-down street to a commercial spot for bar and restaurant owners as well as hotel and hostel managers. Last but not least, the fourth term will focus on the character the WdW has acquired during the years – considering the diverse phases it has been through. In this chapter, the themes in question will be further explained.

4.1 City intervention

The city of Rotterdam held an outstanding role in the transformation of the Witte de Withstraat. City policies were organized and implemented so as to make the street a safer and friendlier space. The city's intervention took two forms; a) it involved the clearing of the street from drug users and questionable bars and b) it encouraged the establishment of arts organizations and galleries there. To begin with the clearing of the street, many respondents revealed that the city took licences off from businesses and closed down brothels and shady bars. Tim, manager at Theatre Rotterdam, claimed that a lot of bars were closed down and Pieter, member of the Rotterdam Center area committee, continued that businesses where illegal acts were taking place, were closed down as well. As far as Anna is concerned, the municipality removed the brothels and re-owned their properties as a policy strategy to improve the image of the street. However, the main 'tool' of city intervention was the establishment of cultural organizations in the WdW, hoping that this would revitalize the street and bring more visitors to it.

In his article on Rotterdam, McCarthy acknowledged that "the municipality in Rotterdam encouraged clusters of smaller cultural facilities, as for instance along the Witte de Withstraat... Furthermore, the municipality... also pursued cultural development on a wider basis by means of the promotion of festivals and other cultural events" (1999, p. 304). The opinion that culture can have positive effects on the reclamation of decayed areas strongly held by Brandellero and Kloosterman (2010), who suggest that arts and culture can be instrumental in the advancement of the image and quality of an area. In an attempt to boost the image of the WdW, investments were made in the cultural infrastructure of the city by introducing museums and arts institutions (Deinema, 2012). Such an example is the organization of the 'Museum Triangle' area, or otherwise named, the 'Rotterdam's 'Axis of Art'. The latter consisted of the Witte de Withstraat street, the Maritime Museum and the Museum

Park. The project was one of the city's many attempts to make the street more appealing by establishing institutions of cultural interest, thus inviting people to visit and eventually, inhabit the inner part of the city - and the Witte de Withstraat in particular. The ultimate goal of the municipality was to unite the cultural sector, with the city and the society by promoting and encouraging the organization of arts institutions as well as supporting and subsidizing their work.

Bearing this in mind, it did not come as a surprise when most of the participants reacted positively to the contribution of cultural institutions to the improvement of the street. The majority responded categorically to the question whether or not the presence of arts and culture in the Witte de Withstraat was beneficial for its regeneration. Regarding the encouragement of establishing arts organizations and galleries in the street, Phillip - employee at the Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art - reflected on the intentions of the city. He remarked that one of the best ways to improve a street is not only by having people living in it but also, by making sure it includes arts institutions and film houses. All these collectively will give the street a safe and lively character. Jasper, director at the V2_ Lab for the Unstable Media further confirmed Phillip's viewpoint; the V2_ was moved from De Bosch to Rotterdam in 1994 with the idea that through culture, the WdW could revive. Similarly, the Witte de With Center for Contemporary art was founded in the street in 1990.

4.1.1 The revival of the Witte de Withstraat

It appears that the above practices really did the trick; the Witte de Withstraat became one of the most visited streets in Rotterdam. Bars and restaurants on the street have been featured on the "Lonely Planet" guides among the best in the world whilst high profile magazines such as "Vogue" have referred to it as "the single coolest street in all of Rotterdam" (Marcus, 2017). As Richards (2013) has pointed out, frequently "cultural sites are not just destinations, but... spaces, in which 'being there', 'being seen' and 'being cool' are just as important as the cultural content itself" (p. 9). The street is recognisable, but this time for its highly acclaimed arts and night scene. Swan (1998) is of the opinion that it is possible for downturned areas - or clusters - to revive, while at the same time Russo and van der Borg (2010) are confident that culture-led revitalization is possible to turn around the condition of deteriorated locations. This is exactly how the character of the WdW was influenced and shifted from an impoverished area into a lively attraction.

Certainly, the city policies improved the Witte de Withstraat via culture. The interviewees agreed that the street is a point of reference for the city. "Rotterdam is currently the biggest growing city as a travel destination... and Witte de With is one of the hotspots" (Phillip). Similarly, the street has become a symbol. It is "vibrant, diverse, and more important than just being a street; it is also a symbol or an icon of the city," said Mihael, who works at the cultural department of the municipality. The WdW is a symbol of the city's energy and

liveliness since it is known as the street where there is always something happening. As a matter of course, the WdW can be considered as a cultural brand. Ashworth and Kavaratzis have raised the topic of place branding; “a place is both an entity whose meaning is interminably being renegotiated through its culture... but also is a commodified and marketable product” (2015, p. 131). Yang et al. (2018) express that place branding can be a decisive tool in the hands of a city, when the latter attempts to enhance the quality and atmosphere of the former. So in that sense, Rotterdam has played the card of place branding to draw attention to the street. The Witte de Withstraat is now a cultural brand that adds value to the overall area, inviting people to visit it and why not, reside in it. More than that, the street has become a brand from which the creatives and non -creatives alike have gains in a financial or recognisability level. Shops, cafes, restaurants, and hotels - next to the already established arts institutions - have arrived to the street and enhanced its revival and growth.

Mihael agrees that the bars, cafes and restaurants have made the street even more popular than the cultural program and a lot of people came to the street especially to experience its night scene. Primarily in terms of the non - creatives coming to the street, the answer to that is simple; the Witte de Withstraat offers a cultural experience and they want to be part of that experience. Pine and Gilmore (1998) discuss that people do not only want to buy products but also, buy experiences. As Russo and van der Borg (2010) argue, “businesses derive advantages from mutual proximity and close contact with their customers” whilst the production of “intangibles” uses little space, thereby favoring city centers” (p. 669). A visit to the WdW can be considered such an intangible product and experience. There are events happening at any corner of the street and it is busy with people everyday. A trip to Rotterdam is not complete without strolling by the WdW and this is a fact that businesses have come to understand. The street has become the cultural and material basis upon which entrepreneurs set up their businesses and prosper.

Tim also feels that the WdW has become a popular destination in the city and the reason why a lot of businesses have decided to be based there. He remarks that it is an interesting street in Rotterdam that has changed a lot in the last decade and many bars and restaurants have been placed there now. The revival of the street would not be possible without the collaboration of the city and the people there. Phillip suggested that the city’s intervention and the people’s hard work and collaborative spirit are what has made this ‘city experiment’ actually work. In detail, he noted that: “[O]ne of the biggest factors is (sic)... all those Rotterdam based cafes and retail and shops. It sort of grew on its own. The municipality kickstarted it and then the people that were there took it a bit on their own, to make it a better street. So, this is what makes it so successful”. By the same token, Mihael confirmed that the revival of the WdW was made possible thanks to the diversity of program. The street has all different types of bars and restaurants - all with a specific identity - next to cultural institutions.

Also, the location has played an important role to that; WdW is part of the inner city and you can reach it from the Rotterdam Central station in more or less than ten minutes.

4.2 Creative cluster... or how the WdW turned into one

The high concentration of arts institutes and organisations in the WdW held pivotal role to its advancement and metamorphosis from a run-down street to a celebrated artistic scene. Today, the Witte de With Centre for Contemporary Art, the V2_ Lab for the Unstable Media, MAMA, Tent, Worm, CBK as well as the Theatre Rotterdam are all accounted for the street's cultural vibe. Zarlenga et al (2013) notice that many cities in Europe adopt a positive attitude towards culture and its ability to help in the promotion of an area. The notion of promotion does not refer only to the financial gains but also, to the reputation of the area as having a creative identity. It is no wonder that creative entrepreneurs making their first steps on their artistic journey, choose to locate to such areas because it will enhance their self-image. "For co-located creative entrepreneurs, being surrounded by other entrepreneurs who have shown themselves to be successful in the organizational aspects of their business seems to transfer to the entrepreneurs' self-image" (Wijngaarden, Bhansing, Hitters, forthcoming, p. 16). Frequently, creative clusters include institutions that foster cultural ventures such as museums, theatres, cinemas and other creative formations (Namyslak 2014). Consequently, recognizability and popularity of the cluster are bound to increase too.

During the interviews, it was intelligible that the street has become a better place and has grown in recognition after the advent of the arts institutions there. The concentration of arts institutions, all in the same street, led to the birth of Kunstblock; a foundation initiated by the Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art to preserve and support the art institutes on the street. Kunstblock is a collaboration among the six arts institutions located in WdW or around it, all just within two-minute distance from each other. The institutes that consist Kunstblock are CBK Rotterdam, MAMA, TENT, V2_, Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art and WORM. They are all part of the same contemporary art field, but the focus varies. For instance, the Witte de With Center exhibits international contemporary art, TENT showcases national and Rotterdam-based contemporary art, V2_ is a new media and Internet based arts center, WORM is all about performance based art, MAMA is an institute for graduated artists or still studying artists and lastly there's CBK, an arts institution focused on the preservation of public art spaces. The interview with Phillip was conducted in the Witte de With Center, inside the very room where Kunstblock holds weekly meetings on Tuesdays and as described by Phillip: "[W]e sit on [sic] this table and... at least one staff member of every institution is here and we do an hour talk with each other to see how we can link our programs together, do something together and make sure that we can program or organize things that aren't possible for just one institution and then, every Friday we open our doors for free".

4.3 Gentrification

4.3.1 Early gentrifiers in the street

“The institution is here, but I think the biggest part why this street is seen as a creative part of the city is because all the people that are still here from the beginning had to make something out of it. So, they had to be creative to change the whole street. And that’s what the street still does. The city still feels as it is... building something... like, we made it together”. This is what Phillip replied when I asked him why he thinks the WdW is considered Rotterdam’s creative hub. The circumstances described in the introduction make it clear that the state of the street called for serious changes. To that end, initiative was taken by two agents; the early gentrifiers - or pioneers - that decided to first move to the neighbourhood, and the municipality. As it has already been stated in the theoretical framework of this paper, the pioneers are the risk-takers; they are the ones who did not hesitate to base their professional lives on the Witte de Withstraat during a period of time it was not the safest street to be at, as illustrated by the above quotes.

The street’s international recognition nowadays is mainly attributed to two cultural establishments, the Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art and the V2_ Lab for the Unstable Media. These cultural organizations held critical role in the gentrification of the WdW. Regarding the first one, Phillip explained that the city wanted to uplift the street from the prostitution and drug use that were commonalities there. Hence, in 1990, the city offered this space for cultural events, with the ultimate goal of utilizing it as a cultural center. Originally, the space was given to the Witte de With Center for a specific period of time but as Phillip noted, today it is completely owned by the Center. To this day, the Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art is located on the number 50 in the Witte de Withstraat and daily exhibitions and activities are part of its cultural agenda.

In parallel, the V2_ Lab for the Unstable Media arrived in the WdW in a similar manner. As Jasper disclosed, the V2_ Lab for the Unstable Media was originally founded with the squatting of a building in Den Bosch, in the early 1980s. It began at first as a small collective, focusing on technology as a means to produce art. It was in 1994 when the city council of Rotterdam, following the same approach as with the Witte de With Center, offered to a culture entrepreneur a building for a very small amount, to use it a cultural center. Today, next to the organization, V2_ owns a small publication company where work on recent and important developments in media art is published.

A second reason that drew the first ‘settlers’ to the street in the 1980s was the aspect of cheap rent. Mihael expressed that the affordable rent prices at the Witte de Withstraat motivated many artists and cultural organizations to locate there; “the locations were cheap; it was a nice place to start cultural organizations like... avant garde and a little bit edgy”. Tim revealed that this is how the Theatre Rotterdam chose the WdW; back in 1996, the theatre

wanted to relocate to a more central area and at the time, the Salvation Army was willing to sell its building at an affordable price. Without giving it a second thought, the theatre bought the property marking it as the second location for the theatre (its first location is at Schouwburgplein). Remaining in the discussion of cheap rent in the WdW, Phillip made an analogous reference to the existence of antikraak in the street. As antikraak are defined the houses or buildings that are being demolished or renovated, but in the meantime, they are rented for a very cheap price by artists. Zukin's work "Loft Living" made a case of older spaces being occupied - and successfully transformed - by artists, leading to the overall improvement and prosperity of the area they are located at (1982). Indeed, young and creative individuals are intrigued by scruffy, imperfect spaces and choose to inhabit older and unused buildings where their creativity can run wild.

4.3.2 Tensions between the creatives and the business world

Wang (2011) suggests that the arrival of cafes, bars, and restaurants along with stores and galleries in previously disadvantaged neighbourhoods reflects the powerful effects of gentrification. The Witte de Withstraat is a bright example of a disinvested neighbourhood that draws the attention of the business world. The popularity and prosperity of the street intrigued business people to locate there and benefit from its status as the most well-known street in Rotterdam. The previously mentioned concept of place branding is once more prominent; bar and restaurant owners want an A-location to begin their businesses and to that end, choose areas that are trendy and commercial - just like the WdW. "[P]lace branding shapes and develops both the internal and the external identity of a place and attracts both tourism and investment that contribute to the socio economic development of a place" (Maheswari et al 2014, p. 107).

During the interviews, it became apparent to me that when businesses are positioned next to the arts, opposition is usually ensured. The greater part of the participants communicated their disapproval of the materialistic attitude of the businesses; the free-spirited creatives are against commercialization. Chris, a hotel manager, believes that the arts and culture scene is less active because of the cafes and restaurants in the street. The arts institutions have "disappeared. We still have some... But, it (sic) used to be more". Another point raised by the interviewees is the fact that the street has changed its character overall; commercialism has taken over and the focus is on financial gains rather than on the advancement of the arts in the street. The same participant suggests that business owners are all about the profit; "they see dollar signs". Businesses decide on this specific street since the recipe has been successful – Witte de Withstraat is a well-known spot in Rotterdam and anyone situated there can benefit from its visibility, popularity, and central location.

As it has been proposed by Strykiewicz et al (2018), neighbourhood change can be part of the "resolution of urban problems and... seeks to bring about a lasting improvement in

the economic... condition of an area that has been subject to change” (p. 319). Money makes the world go round as the famous song muses, and the participants are not indifferent to this fact. The street is now more of a commercial and gentrified street rather a culture and arts destination. There are more new bars and cafes opening at the street than arts institutions and cultural spaces. Pieter thinks that the WdW is becoming a street where you only go for the bars and restaurants there; it is no longer “a cultural street you go to”. Similarly, Tim commented on the busyness of the street and lack of the cultural atmosphere it used to have; “[i]t’s a very living street but, especially for the Horeca; there are the bars, you can eat and the restaurants and so... It’s really crowded”. Walking down the WdW one will see the arts spaces being empty and the cafes and bars being packed with people. Dea, a young entrepreneur in the WdW suggested that the street is divided into two halves; the upper part (close to Beurs) still holds the identity of the artistic street whilst the lower part (situated towards Rotterdam West) is the one where hotels, restaurants, cafes, and bars are all located – making it the commercial part of the Witte de With. She explained that the identity in the street is parted in two and would not like to witness these two parts in competition.

4.3.3 Festival gone wrong

Festivals and other cultural events are said to be an effective instrument for promoting the cultural growth of an area. Being a valuable tool of city branding, festivals can add to the buzzing atmosphere of a city and increase its international visibility (Ooi & Pedersen, 2010). Ergo, among the plans for the regeneration of the street was the organization of the Wereld van Witte de With festival - or the Witte de With festival. The interviewees recounted the time when the arts and culture event was organised there. Jasper experienced the festival up close since he was an active member in its planning and organization during its first years of event. “It used to be the opening of the cultural season in this area. The organizations here collaborated on making... a big good art festival with quality programming but for a broad audience - particularly for the people living in this neighbourhood”.

A lot of people visited the festival thus promoting the street and the arts institutions there. However, the character of the event did not remain the same for long. From a cultural event it soon transformed into a commercial venture: “The bars and restaurants started to notice that this was their time to make a lot of money. So, they started expanding their terraces for the weekend and at some point at the... I think we had done it for 10 years or so and at the end of it, we had to quit doing it because most of our cultural budget went into security and fencing to basically organize the big mess that the entrepreneurs would make. There would be beer and as much bar as you could place on your space because the more bar you could place outside, of course, the more money you could make. They would have Dj’s that would try to overpower each other so, bigger sound systems were placed”.

Seeing the festival was not headed to the direction it was supposed to according to Jasper, he knew it was time for him and his team as well as the whole institution to stop participating in it: “The last year we opened an exhibition here as part of the festival and people couldn’t even find it because our whole street was cluttered with the terrace stash and beer containers. I was actually one of the first that put on the argument that maybe we should pull the plug because this is not... It was just costing a lot of cultural budget while other people were making tons of money out of it and the art in the festival became less and less visible”. Tim is of no different view; “it was a cultural thing and every cultural organization attributed to it... But then, came so many people and the character changed from a cultural event to a drinking and partying event... The success killed the festival”. Allegedly, the Witte festival is a clear example of the tension between the creative core and the business people at the street. For yet another time, the commodification of culture was prevalent since the conflicting interests of the two groups ensued the street’s slow but steady decline.

4.4 Street character

4.4.1 A dangerous street

The city of Rotterdam used to have the notoriety for being the most unholy city in the Netherlands during the 1970s (Van Ulzen, 2007). “Rotterdam is not really seen as a cosy city... Rotterdammers feel... unsafe... perhaps because they are more aware of the crime that does take place” (Richards & Wilson, 2004, p. 1941). Since it is one of the most popular streets in the city, it is no surprise that the Witte de Withstraat was at the center of criminal activity. The street is part of the broader area of Cool-Zuid, a neighbourhood that dates back to the nineteenth century, and used to be known mostly as a grim area where prostitution, crooked bars and drug dealership were uncontrollable (Blokland & van Eijk, 2010). The majority of the respondents agreed on the fact that the Witte de Withstraat in the last two decades (1999 - 2019) has been witness to a rollercoaster of changes, both negative and positive. The street was at the peak of disorder in the early 1990s. To borrow the description by Osborne, Ziersch and Baum (2011, p. 241), disorder is accompanied by “anti-social behaviour, such as visible drunkenness and drug use, verbal harassment and public displays of intimidating behaviour”. These behaviours accurately depict the atmosphere in the Witte de Withstraat in the at that time. It used to be a ‘no-go’ street that people avoided after five pm. Street fights, drug users, drinkers, prostitution, and gambling were commonalities at the street. These can be verified by the participants in the interviews. The word ‘dangerous’ was the one mostly used by the respondents when asked to describe the street during those years.

Jasper stated that the Witte de Withstraat “was the part of the city where people go [sic] to either party or to find prostitutes or find drugs basically”. Similarly, Tim commented that “the Witte de With was a very heavy street with the criminals, with a lot of gambling, with the nightclubs. Even with the... girls for selling”. A third participant revealed that the presence of

prostitution resembled “the red light district” in Amsterdam (Anna, academic researcher). “[I]n the Witte de With street there were not so many cultural activities and there were some newspapers situated there but also, the prostitution gave it a bad name” (Mihael). Concerning the fights at the street, Dea referred to her neighbour and the stories he has told her about the unsafe environment there. He would wake up in the middle of the night to break up fights that were happening, either among drug users or drunk people. In addition, Vincent, a decorations and gifts shop owner, claimed that, “there were prostitutes, bad bars, gambling... it wasn't a good street”. Not surprisingly, money laundering ventures were also taking place at the Witte de Withstraat. Shops were used “as a front to white wash the money... made by selling drugs” (Pieter). So, it was within reason that the street carried the reputation of a corrupt street. Let's not forget that Hastings and Dean (2003) have discussed concerning reputation that it is often correlated with feelings of uneasiness, danger and lack of safety. In that case then, one can surely define the WdW as a street with an infamous reputation.

4.4.2 The culture of drinking in the Witte de Withstraat today

The WdW has been successfully transformed into a popular hotspot. The bars, restaurants, and terraces on the street are favored by locals, international students, expats, and tourists alike. It is in these ‘third places’ where people socialise with a group of regularly attending patrons as well as strangers. Therefore, the WdW can be defined as a ‘third place’ and today, it is widely recognized for its exciting nightlife - apart from its cultural scene. The previously decayed street has become Rotterdam's best known going-out destination, a fact that many of the respondents touched upon. During the day, the WdW is popular among those who visit the street's many arts institutes, galleries and shops. During the night though, heavy drinking has become the norm - especially at weekends. Chris described the street as “the biggest bar street in town”, a description that can be further endorsed by Vincent, who thinks that the street today is popular mostly for its nightlife and less for the arts.

Jasper commented on the street being always crowded during the night and compared it to the Stratumseind street in Eindhoven and De Wallen street in Amsterdam. Both streets are two of the busiest ones in their respective cities where heavy drinking holds starring role. Jasper is not fond of the WdW's new notoriety as a drinking street and having been working in the V2_Lab for the Unstable Media for over 15 years, he has witnessed the street's transition from a cultural hub to a heavy drinking neighbourhood. For him, the image of the British bachelor parties coming to WdW for their celebrations consists a bad sign for the street's future. Anna described a typical weekend in the WdW as being busy with people, making it difficult to navigate among the ever expanding terraces of the bars and restaurants, all in the narrow sidewalks of the WdW. In line with the CLC, the aforementioned show that the street has reached the point of decline. The city policies employed for the revival of the WdW resulted in the establishment of arts institutes and organizations there. However, the

transition to a street where there are more bars than cultural organizations and heavy drinking is happening on a daily basis - with people passing out on the residents doors as Pieter recalled - is definitely not the desirable direction. A recurring word the respondents used when discussing this situation was 'balance'. They all believe that yes, the bars, cafes, and restaurants in the WdW are an interesting addition to it. Notwithstanding, there needs to be a balance among them. More Horeca is welcome but in moderation - the cultural earmark should be more prominent in the street.

4.4.3 Tourists at the Witte de Withstraat

Richards suggests that tourism holds an integral role in urban regeneration given the fact that tourists are "attracted to the same 'buzz' as the creative workers" (2013, p. 4). It should not go unnoticed that the latter are naturally the first to settle to formerly degraded areas - as it has been discussed earlier. A telling fact of the street's commercial character nowadays is the presence of five hotels/ hostels to accommodate the flocks of tourists visiting Rotterdam. It needs no expert to realise that the amount of hotels aligned in one street is rather exaggerated. Russo and van der Borg (2010) find Rotterdam to be one of the top regional destination for tourists, visiting the city for its impressive architecture as well as annual events such as the Rotterdam Film Festival or the North Sea Jazz Festival. Witte de Withstraat has the reputation of the going-out street of Rotterdam, as it has already been mentioned by the interviewees. It is the neighbourhood where the heart of Rotterdam's nightlife beats. Pieter comments that in a nutshell, the street has become an exclusively going-out street. One could say that the street aligns with Zimmerman's concept of the "buzzing, trendy neighbourhood, characterized by plenty of "on-demand entertainment", and a multitude of casual "third places", like coffeehouses..." (2008, p. 232).

In like manner, Vincent declares that the tourists are only coming to the WdW to drink and eat; culture in the street is not among their interests any more. When asked to characterize the atmosphere in the street today, Jasper disclosed that 'drinking culture' would be first, cultural would come second and a space or a meeting point, third. In accordance with Phillip, the number of tourists coming to Rotterdam are on the rise. "[T]here is a growth. The tourists in Rotterdam grow per year around 50%. And if you think like a million tourists a year, then 50% is a lot! And there are (sic) way more tourists per year". The same participant strongly believes that the street is becoming more "gentrified and touristy". During the weekends, the most visitors are tourists as Anna notes. Continuing the discussion on the tourists, Tim states that: "[I]f you came here 20 years ago and you saw a tourist, that was very interesting; someone's coming to the city!". This quote testifies the wave of tourists to the street in the latest year as long as the fact that this is a result of the growth of the street.

From the accounts of the interviewees, it becomes apparent that the multiplication of tourists in the street contributes to the overcommercialization of the WdW. The member of the

area committee is not thrilled about the popularity of the street; he thinks that this is the reason why Witte de Withstraat “is going under” (Pieter). As Anna put it, “Rotterdam flourishes and suffers under its boom of tourism”. Understandably, the same applies to the street as well. Tourism is undeniably positive for the visibility of the street on an international level but as discussed earlier, the reason for visiting the street is mostly the nightlife and on a lesser note, the arts.

4.4.4 Diversity in the street: a) residential diversity

What makes a street is its people and when it comes to WdW, the people who contributed to what it is today are gone. Gentrification and tourism are considered the two main causes for the change in the residential composition of the street today. During the interviews, the participants stressed that there are no ‘native’ residents in the street. Gentrification has left its mark on WdW in two ways; on the one hand, more and more apartments are turned into Airbnb’s and on the other, social housing is slowly being taken out of the picture. As a result, people who used to live in WdW have left and the ones that live there now are unaware of the changes that have occurred and the processes it has undergone towards its improvement. Anna commented on the residents in WdW today: “[T]he kind of people living there has massively changed. So, it used to be a very mixed neighbourhood and has always been mixed; there were really rich and really poor people in the neighbourhood. But by now, most of the really poor people are being driven out. Also, there are some housing corporations that had social housing in the area. There were huge blocks of social housing even 25 years ago. None of these social housings (sic) is still there. So basically, there is very little space now for people that cannot afford high rents, high coffee prices. So, that's really a consequence of that as well. By now, most people there are of middle or upper income. Of course, there are some relatively small apartments in the area so a lot of singles, a lot of couples (live there), a very few families... The old people are also slowly disappearing, they would move elsewhere”.

On a related note, Pieter and Dea respectively mentioned the renting of apartments as Airbnb’s in the street as another factor that brings residential diversity to WdW. Pieter claimed that Airbnb’s have resulted in less people actually living on the street - it has slowly begun to be inhabited temporarily by tourists. Dea openly expressed her disapproval of Airbnb’s. She feels that the people who live in the street are the ones who care about it, want to take care of it and see it flourish whereas an entrepreneur who buys a space and rents it out as an Airbnb has only the financial profits in her mind. Dea is convinced that having constantly new people staying for short periods of time in WdW will not aid to any new developments to the street. Similarly, Phillip revealed that new skyscrapers will be built a few blocks away from the street and the view from the Witte de With Centre for Contemporary art will be changed. On the event of the new skyscrapers new residents will come to WdW but

just like Dea, Phillip fears that they will not be very concerned about the street and its further cultural development. He is hypothesising that they will spend time on WdW only to eat at one of its many restaurants or have a drink - not really investing to its advancement.

4.4.5 Diversity in the street: b) ethnic diversity

Having one of the largest ports in the world, Rotterdam is known for being home to many different nationalities. Just before the beginning of the decade (2009), people with Dutch origins consisted the 52.4% of Rotterdam when at the same time, the 46% of Rotterdam's residents had an immigrant background. In detail, people of Suriname, Turkish and Moroccan origins belong to the largest minority groups present in Rotterdam (Intercultural cities, 2012, p. 3). Therefore, it is no surprise that the WdW is a multi-cultural hotspot. This diversity in ethnicities is apparent especially in the various kitchens one can try during a visit at the Wdw. Suriname food places can be found next to the highly gentrifying Ben & Jerry's ice shop, blending the old with the new. Jasper emphasizes that what is incredible about the WdW is that you can find a little Asian food house next to a Suriname place, all in the same street. Similarly, Paul commented on the diversity of ethnicities at WdW by also referring to the different kitchens one can come upon there. He stated that nothing looks alike at the street. When at WdW you can visit a Shoarma place or go for pizza. Other options can be Asian food, Mexican or Dutch kitchen.

Continuing the discussion on diversity, the respondents replied positively to the presence of ethnicities other than the Dutch. Mihael expressed that he really enjoys the presence of different nationalities and people living all together. The co-existence of 80 nationalities in Rotterdam is indeed a celebration of this diversity. Similarly, Jasper emphasized that the street reflects a lot what he likes about Rotterdam itself - the vibrant, cultural diversity that "really sort of mixes through each other, instead of separating". For him, a visit at WdW gives you "a perfect representation of Rotterdam". It is a mosaic of different people and stories, all merged together, but without losing their authenticity.

4.4.6 Diversity in the street: c) diversity in audience and purposes for visiting the street

The reasons for visiting a place can vary. "Neighbourhood hosting clusters of cultural activities tend to become trendy, diverse, and to some extent pacified" in accordance with Zukin (1995, p. 28). The Witte de Withstraat is a street that has everything; gift shops and stores with flowers and plants are next to hipster fries shops, coffeeshops selling cannabis, classy restaurants and wine bars and of course, cultural institutions. Needless to say, this street can accommodate every need, budget and taste. Chris suggests that the different branches one can visit at the Witte de Withstraat – either a restaurant, a bar or a cultural organization – consequently attract a lot of different people coming to the street, and he recognizes that there are people coming for the arts especially. Richards (2013) refers to those

visiting cultural sites such as museums, theatres or spaces of architectural significance as “creative tourists”. In that sense, the WdW is a popular attraction for this type of tourists. Hugo, owner of a wine-bar in the street, stated that the people who usually visit his business are those admiring the arts. Following an arts exhibition or a cultural event, they want to discuss and relax with a glass of wine.

In like manner, Jasper mentioned the diverse spaces present at WdW which in return, attract visitors from diverse walks of life. The street is an amalgam of “a hipster bar and like, a low-brow cultural organization and a super high-brow culture. Performance art, photography... all that (sic) attract these completely different target groups”. Of course, people visit WdW for its nightlife scene as well. “[I]f you walk here on a Friday night now, I think you see a lot of white people drinking beer” he adds. According to the respondents, the groups of white millennials and tourists are the main visitors of the street. The audience that is visiting the street is young in age, as Phillip has observed, and he associates this fact with the new bars and franchises coming to the WdW. He notices that the street has become “way more touristy, more of a hotspot for people travelling here, not only from outside the Netherlands but also for people who are here just for a day - for example people who live in Amsterdam”.

5. Conclusion

A research paper cannot be complete without reference to the conclusions drawn from the study. The fifth and final chapter of this paper functions as an encapsulation of all the main points of the research. The final answers to the central research question and sub-questions will be conveyed. The researcher will include how this paper can be of substantial addition to the society and the academia, what limitations emerged during the process of conducting this study and make suggestions for further research on the topic.

5.1 Arts and culture to the rescue

The aim of this paper was to explore how the arts and culture can have regenerating effects on a street, by examining the case of the Witte de Withstraat in Rotterdam. It has been rather intriguing to study a street from a variety of different angles, such as the arts and culture sphere, the commercial and entrepreneurial world, the city and policy realm and the academia. During the period of conducting the research, it became evident that a street is not a soul-less part of a city map but a living and dynamic organism with its highs and lows. The Witte de Withstraat is a street that does not fail to amaze its visitors - or those studying it, in the case of this very paper. What this study has accomplished to demonstrate is that the Witte de Withstraat is a street that has changed a lot in the last two decades, thanks to the assistance of arts and culture.

Based on a qualitative analysis of the ten interviews conducted in the months April 2019 - June 2019, it can be concluded that culture can indeed benefit and rejuvenate previously underdeveloped streets. Literature on gentrification and neighborhood change

cite culture as one of the most essential factors in urban regeneration. The metamorphosis of the WdW is an undeniable proof of this. The drug, prostitution and heavy drinking scene that were common practices there were finally eliminated when the city planners encouraged the establishment of arts institutes in the street. The entirety of the interviewees were confident that the rebirth of the WdW would not be possible without the advent of arts there. People employed in the cultural establishments located at the Witte de Withstraat expressed with certainty that the culmination of a creative atmosphere in the street, the organization of the Witte de With festival and the overall open attitude to creativity's power for change and improvement were all deciding factors in the street's recovery. Two of the first arts institutes located to the street, the Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art and the V2_ Lab for the Unstable Media, laid the foundation for the creative character of the WdW. Having been present in the street since the 1990s, both cultural centers are striving to promote and preserve the arts in the WdW.

This thesis can confirm that clusters experience the four distinct phases of cluster life, as they have been presented earlier in the theoretical framework, drawn from the work of Brenner and Schlump (2011). In agreement with the CLC theory, the WdW has not turned into a successful creative cluster overnight, but it followed a cyclical pattern towards its development. At first, crooked bars and prostitution in the street were removed with the help of city policies. Next, the street was established as a cultural hotspot via the contribution of culture, leading to its commercialization. Soon, hotels, restaurants, and cafes entered the street and set their businesses. However, tensions between the former and the creative core were next. The interviewees appeared to have mixed feelings about this; on the one hand, they are pleased the street had finally shaken off its bad reputation but on the other, they worried the commercialization of the WdW will change its cultural identity. To preserve the latter, balance between Horeca and culture is imperative according to them.

5.2 Limitations

The point of this study was to answer the research question and sub-questions that were posed in the very beginning of this paper. The topic of the changes in the Witte de Withstraat in the last two decades (1999-2019) was reflected upon by the creative class, by representatives of the business and entrepreneurial world, by policy people and an academic researcher. The entirety of the participants agreed that the role of culture was instrumental in the rejuvenation of the street. Withal, it would be an exaggeration to say there is no room for improvement in a research. A research paper is a constant work in progress, bringing to the fore new data and input. In the case of this paper, there are limitations that should be acknowledged and suggestions for future research that should be taken into account.

Originally, the main limitation of the study was the number of respondents. A larger pool of responses would lead to a greater diversity in opinions and views. Perhaps, this

limitation can be avoided in the future if the number of interviewees is extended. In this paper, data was collected from interviewing ten people. Evidently, this is not a very large number of participants. For future reference, it would be useful if more than ten participants were included in the paper. More participants will surely offer the researcher a greater variety in responses and consequently, richer results. Also, it is highly probable that more points of view can lead to the emergence of more themes.

A more practical implication was the issue of time allocated for the interviews. A Master thesis requires interviews with the duration of 40' - 60'. Many possible interviewees declined to participate in an interview because they could not dedicate that amount of time. Sadly, input of significance was never explored because of limited time. I contacted some restaurants, bars, and retail shops that have been in the street for a long time - hence being invaluable sources of information for the reason that they have witnessed many of the changes there - but their busy schedules restricted them from participating in the interviews. Naturally, this is not an issue that can be worked out by the researcher; it is up to the respective individual whether or not they have the ability to devote some time for the interview.

5.3 Societal and academic contribution

Paramount objective of this paper was to offer insights on the changes in the WdW and further contribute to the society and the academia. On a social level, this research can be regarded as an article that chronicles the story of the Witte de Withstraat in the last decade - including all the developments and changes it has undergone. Visitors of the street, people interested in city planning and development, individuals intrigued by the street and its atmosphere, or students can turn to this paper to enrich their knowledge on the street in question. In all honesty, this was how this very paper was born - out of my admiration and curiosity about the Witte de Withstraat during my Master studies in Rotterdam.

Another group of people that might be interested in the paper and benefit from its findings is people working in and for the city. Taking into consideration the literature presented as well as the results of the paper, city planners can gain new insights on how a street can be regenerated with the help of culture. Practitioners of urban planning can be informed about the gentrifying and restoration abilities of creativity on decayed urban areas. Likewise, employees in cultural institutions in other Dutch cities - or in any other place in the world - can be inspired by the actions and work of the arts institutions situated in the Witte de Withstraat and follow their example. On an academic level, this research can enhance the literature of urban change via the contribution of culture in the Dutch cities and especially in Rotterdam. The study of the transformation of the WdW in the decades 1999-2019 can be an instrumental addition to the already established literature on the topics of gentrification, creative clusters and urban change. What is more, this paper can be of use to city planners and policy makers

since it narrates the “experiment” of neighbourhood regeneration via culture. The city policies implemented by the city of Rotterdam may inspire other cities to follow the same example.

5.4 Suggestions for future research

In continuing the discussion on the changes in the WdW, an angle that could enrich the study of the street can be that of the creative tourism. In today’s experience economy age, people choose destinations of cultural and artistic value. Tourists seek experiences that they can enjoy but also, they can actively participate in and learn from. The WdW is a street with six arts institutions that cover a wide range of different types of arts. Cultural establishments in the WdW present acts of international and national art, media and Internet based art, performance art and more. For the avid enthusiast of the arts, this street is a heaven on Earth. Therefore, the question whether or not these cultural institutions can function as sites for destination attractiveness, and consequently destination economy, could offer a new perspective on the debate of changes in the WdW.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Overview of the participants

1. Jasper: director at the V2_ Lab for the Unstable Media. He holds a PhD in artificial intelligence and is a curator at various art venues. He is in his early 40s and he is Dutch.
2. Tim: manager at Theatre Rotterdam. Theater Rotterdam has two locations in the city; the one is at Schouwburgplein and the second one at Witte de Withstraat. Tim has been working at the latter for over 15 years. He is in his mid 50s and he is Dutch.
3. Anna: post-doc researcher and lecturer at the Erasmus University Rotterdam, in the department of Arts and Culture studies. She has participated in a small research project about the relationship between a specific arts institute in the street and the neighbourhood. She is in her early 30s and she is Dutch.
4. Dea: young entrepreneur who launched her first chocolate boutique cafe in Witte de Withstraat in the first months of 2019. It is a “bean-to-bar” shop with craft chocolate from all over the world. She is in her early-mid 20s and she is Dutch.
5. Vincent: owner of a decorations and gifts shop in the street. The store used to be located in Rotterdam South before relocating in the Witte de Withstraat. Vincent has been the owner of the store for over 45 years, he is in his mid 60s and he is Dutch.
6. Pieter: freelance journalist and for the last year, member of the Rotterdam Center area committee. He is in contact with the street’s residents and residents’ associations. He is in his 30s and he is Dutch.
7. Phillip: employee at the Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art since 2017. He has studied Art History in Utrecht, with a focus on Contemporary Art. He is in his late 20s and he is Dutch.
8. Mihael: architect, currently working at the culture department of the municipality. He is in his mid 40s and he is Dutch.
9. Hugo: owner of a wine bar/ restaurant in the street. It first opened in 2011 and since then, it continues to be located in the Witte de Withstraat. Hugo is in his 40s and he is Dutch.
10. Chris: manager at a newly opened high-tech hostel in the Witte de Withstraat. The hostel has been open for about a year in Rotterdam while the first hostel of the franchise opened in Amsterdam in 2015. Chris is in his early 30s and is Dutch.

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Historical narrative respondent/institution:

- Can you tell me about how X was founded?
- What is its mission?
- How long have you worked at X?
- How did you end up there?
- Has X always been located here?
- If yes: why was chosen for this particular location?
- If no: where was it before? Then proceed with the question why it is now at the WdW street.

History of the WdW:

- How would you describe the atmosphere of the WdW street when X first moved there?
- How do you remember the atmosphere in the early years? How do colleagues reflect on the atmosphere back then?
- Has it changed since then?
- What do you know about how it was in the 1970s?
- What do you know about how it changed in the 1990s?
- What do you think caused these changes?
- How has it changed in the recent decade(s)?
- What do you think caused these changes?

The transformation of the WdW

- Often, derelict and negligent areas experience a total transformation and turn into clusters where creativity and innovation are celebrated. What is your opinion on this?
- Is this the case for the WdW street?
- Why has the WdW street been successful in this?
- What factors contributed to the success of the WdW?
- Could this also be possible elsewhere in the city?
- Do you think X played a role in this transformation? If so, how?
- Do you think X has benefitted from this transformation? Why? Why not?
- Do you think that the street's creative and cultural character has origins in the fact that your institution is located to it?

- Which (other) institutions/organisations/actors played a major role in the transformation?

On the reputation of the WdW:

- How would you characterise the street?
- How would you define the identity/reputation of the street:
- Is this image beneficial for you,
- Would you change it? If so, how?
- How do you feel about the fact that it is becoming more and more popular with new cafes, restaurants and shops opening on the street?
- Do you think their decision to locate to this street stems from the street's reputation? (as a cultural and artistic street).
- Do you think these businesses have contributed to the street's becoming a creative cluster?
- Who are the main visitors of the WdW street? Has this changed? What do you think of this?
- How is the WdW street reflected upon in the media? What do you think of this? Do you benefit from this (or the contrary?).

On creative clusters:

- Have you ever heard of the term "creative clusters"?
- What does it mean, in your opinion?
- Do you think the WdW is a creative cluster? Why? Why not?
- Can you name other clusters in Rotterdam?
- Do you think the WdW is unique in Rotterdam?
- How do you think your institution contributes to the development of such a creative cluster?
- Do you have a network within the street or other parties you collaborate/ interact/ connect with?
- Do you believe that networking can have a contribution to the creation of an artistic identity?
- Is it important for you to have other creative/ cultural institutions close by? How do you benefit from this?
- Do you feel there is a sense of community in the WdW?
- Are you "afraid" cafes, bars, and restaurants might turn the street into a more commercial and less creative and cultural one?

- What other kind of businesses would best fit in the street and which ones wouldn't?
- As regards your institution in particular, does the government and/ or the municipality offer any financial help for its support?
- If yes, does this mean that the government and/ or the municipality are also sources that contribute to the street's development and growth?

Wrapping up:

- What do you love most about this street?
- Is there anything I haven't asked, but you think should be included in the research/ is relevant for my thesis?
- Which other institutions and businesses do you think I should interview?

Appendix C

Codebook

OPEN CODES	AXIAL CODES	SELECTIVE CODES
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Big spaces 2. Old buildings re-used 3. No more social housing 4. Apartments turned into Airbnb 5. High rent prices 6. Retail shops 	Real estate	GENTRIFICATION
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hotels and hostels opening in the street 2. "Bazar" is an iconic hotel 3. Bars 4. Restaurants 5. Franchises 6. Longer opening hours for Horeca 7. "Biggest bar street in the city" 8. Opening of new businesses 9. Increase in terraces 	Horeca	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A tourist attraction 2. Point of reference for the city 3. International franchises 4. Partying street 5. British bachelor parties take place in the street 6. City hotspot 	Tourism	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Urban myth 8. City icon 9. Day travellers 10. Blogging about the street 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Middle and upper class 2. Working professionals 3. 25-40 year olds 4. Singles 5. Poor people are driven out the street 	New residents	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cultural organizations 2. Art galleries 3. Cultural bars and cafes 	Co-location	CREATIVE CLUSTER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Antikraak (artists working and living there) 2. Bohemia 3. Use of old buildings for arts initiatives 	Spaces	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Formation of "Kunstblock" 2. Coordinating events and opening hours 3. Collaboration 4. Provision of spaces 5. Linking of arts programs 6. Unity against commercialism 	Networking between arts	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Witte festival 2. Discounts from collaboration of Cityhub with spaces in the street 	Networking between arts and businesses	

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Location of arts institutes in the street 2. Intentions to make the street more cultural 3. Arts organizations important for the growth of the street 4. Arts as a tool for street regeneration 	City policies	CITY INTERVENTION
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Removal of brothels 2. Removal of questionable bars from the street 3. Removal of businesses licences 4. Properties re-owned by the municipality 	"Cleaning up" the street	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. City's offer of spaces for cultural initiatives 2. Limit to number of new businesses opening 	City and entrepreneurs	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rotterdam locals 2. Tourists 3. Party goers 4. (International) students 5. Day travellers 6. Couples 7. Families 8. Arts and culture enthusiasts 	Street audience	STREET CHARACTER
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Drinking street 2. Going out street 3. Less artistic 	Street reputation today	

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. More commercial 5. Central 6. Accessible 7. Busy 8. Popular 9. Versatile 10. Diverse 11. Cool and hip 12. Vibrant and lively 13. Unique 		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prostitution 2. Gambling 3. Drug use and dealership 4. Dangerous 5. Unsafe 6. Money laundering 7. Violence and fights 8. Sailors' street 9. Underground street 10. Questionable bars 	Street in the past	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In terms of audience: people of different ethnicities visiting the street 2. In terms of purposes: visiting for the arts or for Horeca 3. In terms of Horeca: different bars and restaurants, multi-culti cuisines (Dutch, Suriname, Mexican) 4. Arts and Horeca 	Diversity in the street	

<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Less networking between current residents2. Locals' alienation3. Disappearance of cultural traditions4. Less authentic5. No neighbourhood cultural center	Neighbourhood today	
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