



# Can Curaçao become a Creative Economy? A case study

Creative  
Economy

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to present a case study of the creative class of Curaçao, which is a small Caribbean island coping with globalisation. The paper will contribute to the development of a framework for the discussion of the Creative Economy.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The paper contributes to the development of a framework for understanding the Creative Economy. This framework is then applied to the case of Curaçao. After analysis, conclusions are drawn.

**Findings** – In Curaçao there are many conditions present which support the development and creation of the creative class or attract it from other locations. On the other hand, policies should be put in place to retain the creative class. The theories and methods relating to the creative class are not yet fully developed.

**Originality/value** – The paper contributes to a framework for understanding the Creative Economy of small Caribbean islands.

**Keywords** Knowledge economy, Globalisation, Islands, Caribbean, Curaçao, Netherlands Antilles

**Paper type** Case study

## Introduction

For more than two decades Curaçao has struggled to adapt to a changing world. Some believe that transforming the economy into a Creative Economy is a viable strategy. The purpose of this paper is to explore whether Curaçao has the potential to become a Creative Economy and what role the creative class plays in this process of globalisation of a small Caribbean island economy. Another purpose is to explore how useful theories about the Creative Economy are in the analysis of small island economies.

Creativity has become more highly valued in today's global society. The Creative Economy is driven by the creative class (Florida, 2002, 2007, 2008). The creative class consists of workers whose job it is to create meaningful new forms, such as artists, designers, media people, scientists, innovators, entrepreneurs, professors and athletes, to name but a few. Their designs are transferable and useful on a broad scale. Another part of the creative class is knowledge intensive. Examples are health professionals and business management personnel (Florida, 2002, 2007; Hospers and van Dalm, 2006).

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

The questions that are addressed in this paper are: Does Curaçao has the potential to become a Creative Economy? What is the value of theories about the Creative Economy?



The rest of this paper is organised as follows: the next section presents a discussion of a theoretical framework developed to analyse the Knowledge Economy, Creative Economy and Experience Economy. This is followed by a section in which the framework is applied to evaluate the potential of Curaçao. Then the case of Curaçao is analysed. The paper concludes with some overall remarks.

### **A theoretical framework to analyse the Knowledge Economy**

There has been a lot of discussion about how to label the post-industrial age. The post-industrial society is associated with many concepts: Globalisation, the New Economy, the Information Economy, the Knowledge Economy, the Weightless Economy (Coy, 2000; Dean and Kretschmer, 2007, p. 573; Greenspan, 2007, p. 493), the Creative Economy (Florida, 2002, 2007; Howkins, 2001a), and the Experience Economy (Pine and Gilmore, 1999).

Globalisation is the process of growing interconnectedness of national states, societies, organisations and corporations, households and individuals (Brinkman and Brinkman, 2002; Greenspan, 2007, p. 363-76). Globalisation is an umbrella term referring to increasing interdependence in the economic, social, technological, cultural, political and ecological spheres.

The Information Economy (1970-1995) is characterised by high levels of investment in analytical power to process data and information more quickly. In the information age, jobs require more brain power than muscle power (Bolkin, n.d.).

The Knowledge Economy (1995 to date) is characterised by connecting power to share data and information faster and further. Technology enables us to tap into each other's creativity. The Knowledge Economy is the result of bringing together powerful computers and well-educated minds to create wealth. Technology enables people to work 24 h a day, 7 days a week. Work and personal lives merge. Work without being personally present is possible (Kamberg, 2007). Kamberg states that we are moving to the Conceptual Age where employees are the source of creativity that will make the difference when competing in the marketplace. This makes employees a major asset (Bolkin, n.d.; Handy, 1996, p. 201), "But when the vital assets are people, there can be no true ownership by corporations. The best corporations can do is to create an environment that makes the best people want to stay." (Coy, 2000) "The twenty first century may see the emergence of a kind of 'welfare capitalism' in which corporations try to recruit and retain employees by providing services that in another area were provided by government agencies or families. . . (Coy, 2000)." "The time has come for a company to treat its employees as real assets. In the broadcasting industry they refer to their people as 'the talent' (*The Economist*, 2007a)."

In the Creative Economy the creative class will bring their country to great economic growth. Countries and cities compete to attract this creative class. Cities that attract this class are characterised by Talent, Technology and Tolerance (Florida, 2002, 2007; Hospers and van Dalm, 2006; Carrol del, 2005). "At the heart of such an effort is recognition of the vital roles that art and culture play in enhancing economic development and, ultimately, sustaining a 'creative community' – a community that exploits the vital linkages among art, culture and commerce. "Communities that consciously invest in these broader human and financial resources are at the very forefront in preparing their citizens to meet the challenges of rapidly evolving, and now global, knowledge-based economy and society (Eger, 2006, p. 18)."

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Unesco (2005) posed the question of whether we must endorse the hegemony of the techno-science model in defining legitimate and productive knowledge. They stress the importance of the digital divide and the knowledge divide. In the first Unesco World Report, *Towards a Knowledge Society*, the emphasis was on the need to renew an ethic for guidance of the emerging Knowledge Economy[1]. Unesco states that history and anthropology teach us that all societies are knowledge societies[2]. The knowledge society is about connecting traditional knowledge with the knowledge economy model. The Knowledge Economy is based on freedom and expression, the right to education and the right to participate freely in the cultural life.

According to Unesco, in the late 1970s the growth of new technology seemed like a panacea for many nagging domestic problems. But the growth of ICT networks alone will not be able to lay the foundation for the knowledge society. While information is a knowledge-generating tool, it is not knowledge itself. There is still a long way to go to achieve genuine knowledge societies. The question is whether the knowledge society will be based on knowledge-sharing for all or on partition of knowledge? Will division and schisms emerge between North and South, and within each society? The closing of the digital divide is not enough to close the knowledge divide. It is not only about connectivity but also about content and education[3].

Unesco also embraced the concept of the Creative Economy. They even established The Creative City Network[4] in 2004. In 1986 Unesco published its Framework for Cultural Statistics. This defined ten distinct categories: (0) cultural heritage; (2) printed material and literature; (3) performing arts; (4) visual arts; (5 and 6) audiovisual media; (7) socio cultural activities; (8) sport and games and (9) environment and nature. Unesco is trying to standardise a methodology for statistics on arts and creativity and to refine the cultural mapping methodology (Unesco).

Unesco's focus is on cultural diversity in developing countries and countries in transition to a market economy. The following policy issues are highlighted by Unesco: copyright, fiscal schemes, technological infrastructure, capacity building, promotion activities, investment, export strategies and international partnerships. They also refer to Florida's three Ts (Talent, Technology and Tolerance). Unesco states that to develop a cultural economy all relevant government agencies, civil society and the private sector must be involved (Carrol del, 2005).

Siems and Ratner state that:

[...] findings suggest that innovative ideas and entrepreneurship are at the heart of economic growth. However, if not supported by institutional policies and practices that create and sustain growth, innovative ideas may not be enough to cause the economic spark that emerging economies are so desperate to kindle (Siems and Ratner, 2006, p. 17).

The policy implication for developed nations is that they need to focus more on people, ideas and technology. Developing nations first need to put a good policy in place to protect their citizens and property (physical and intellectual); in other words they need good governance (Siems and Ratner, 2006, p. 27; Greenspan, 2007, p. 251). According to Lee Kuan Yew the basic principle for the progress of Singapore is: "Social cohesion through sharing the benefits of progress, equal opportunities for all, and meritocracy, with the best man or woman for the job, especially as leaders in government (2000, p. 691)."

The conclusion can be drawn from the literature that there is no clearly defined framework and therefore we need to construct a framework that shows how the Creative Economy can be seen as an aspect of the post industrial age. It is an integral

part of the Knowledge Economy. The main actor is the creative class. And the following factors are identified as contributing to the rise of the creative class in different sectors:

- *Talent*: Talent is a personal gift that cannot be owned by corporations.
- *Technological infrastructure*: The availability of internet connectivity and other ICT infrastructure and services, but which presupposes the presence of traditional infrastructure such as harbours and seaports.
- *Tolerance of the people*: Tolerance is the right of people to be different and to be included and not ignored or excluded.
- *The level of education of the people*: The HOOP report (2004) stated that the Knowledge Economy becomes feasible if 50 per cent of the working population has a higher education background (HOOP, 2004).
- *The development of real estate*: This is not only about the price but also about the availability of (old and historic) buildings: "Where are the places where you can actually have money left over after rent, taxes and other costs?" (Gertner, 2004).
- *Institutional framework*: Especially, the protection of property rights and intellectual property. "To keep the Creative Economy growing, governments will have to strike a delicate balance: enforce patents, copyrights, trademarks, and non-competitive clauses to preserve incentives to create, but not so much that it suppresses competition (Coy, 2000)."
- *(Re-)distribution of income*: This is part of the institutional framework. Together with education, this is the main strategy in the fight against poverty and so strengthens social cohesion. A community with a just distribution of income is a condition for further development (Maris, 2005; Kuan Yew, 2000).
- *Meritocracy*: Appointing people based on their talents and capabilities (Kuan Yew, 2000).

The sectors of the Creative Economy that transfer knowledge between them are:

- Arts.
- Tourism.
- International Financial Services.
- Science.
- Higher education.
- Sports.
- Information and Communication Technology.

This framework is combined with the classical analytical frameworks of the Strengths and Weaknesses Analysis (SWOT-analysis) and the Boston Consultancy Portfolio Matrix (BCG Matrix).

According to the SWOT-framework, strengths and weaknesses refer to internal factors of the actor being analysed, over which the actor has direct influence. Opportunities and threats refer to factors outside the actor and over which the actor has no direct influence. Strengths are helpful in achieving the objective of the actor, while weaknesses are harmful to the achievement of the objective. Opportunities are

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external conditions that are helpful, while threats are external conditions that are harmful to achieving the objective of the actor.

According to the BCG Matrix, sectors can be categorised into four groups: cash cows, dogs, question marks or stars. Cash cows have high market share in a slow-growing, mature market and generate a cash surplus. Dogs have low market share in a mature, slow-growing market and break even. They are kept because of the social benefits of providing jobs and possible synergy. Question marks are growing rapidly and thus consume large amounts of cash. They have the potential of gaining market share and of becoming a star if successful, or a dog if not. Stars have high market share in a fast-growing market. To sustain this position extra cash may be required. When growth slows down they become cash cows or dogs.

### Applying the framework to Curaçao

Curaçao, with its 444 sq km, is the biggest island of the Netherlands Antilles and is inhabited by approximately 135,000 inhabitants of over 40 nationalities. It has three official languages: Dutch, Papiamentu and English. The Dutch Kingdom is currently made up of The Netherlands, the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba. The Netherlands Antilles and Aruba are Dutch overseas self-governing countries in the Caribbean. Defence and foreign affairs are Kingdom responsibilities, while the people hold Dutch nationality and citizenship and have full mobility to the Netherlands. The Netherlands Antilles is a federation of the five islands: Curaçao, Bonaire, Saba, St Eustatius, and St Maarten. At this moment the Netherlands Antilles are going through a process of constitutional change. Curaçao and St Maarten will become countries within the Dutch Kingdom on the same footing as Aruba has been since 1986. The other three islands will each become a sort of Dutch municipality. These changes are planned to take effect after 2008.

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

These societies have not been entirely divorced from their origins and some have diverged quite considerably given the cultural and seemingly instinctive inheritances from the ethnic and racial origins of those who occupy this space and the inter-blending of them producing special and differentiated societies. Marcus Garvey had once said that the peoples who occupy this region – this Caribbean, this Antilles – would one day form a civilisation on which the sun would shine as ceaselessly as it shines on the empire of the North. Maybe he should have said civilisations (plural) based on the linguistic, ethnic and cultural admixtures which marked the predominant Dutch, Spanish, French and English traditions of Caribbean countries (Duncan, 2007).

Curaçao, as a Caribbean society, has passed through several transitions, from the pre-industrial era to the post-industrial era:

- Nomad society.
- Agriculture colonial slave economy.
- Industrial economy.
- Information economy.
- Knowledge economy and Creative Economy (Covey, 2002, p. 13).

When the Spaniard Alonso de Ojeda arrived on the island in 1499, Curaçao was part of the domain of the Caquetios, a branch of the Arowak Indian tribe that had its centre of governance on the mainland of Venezuela. In 1513, the Indians were deported to Hispaniola (Gibbes *et al.*, 1999).

The Dutch conquered the island in 1634 and the West Indian Company started a plantation economy and the slave trade that would last for 200 years. Curaçao made the transitions towards an agriculture system and then a mercantile society, both based on the import of black slaves from Africa. Slavery was abolished in 1863 (Gibbes *et al.*, 1999).

With the arrival the Dutch Petroleum Company at the beginning of the twentieth century, Curaçao abruptly entered the industrial area (Gibbes *et al.*, 1999). Between 1945 and 1970 several hotels were constructed on the island. From 1968 to 1972 Texas Instruments established itself on the island (Gibbes *et al.*, 1999). In the 1940s the international financial sector of Curaçao started, and it took off in the 1960s and flourished for 25 years, after an attractive fiscal regime was put in place. The sector declined as a consequence of measures taken by the governments of the United States and The Netherlands in the 1980s (Curiel, 2005; Gibbes *et al.*, 1999).

The tourism phase started at the beginning of the twentieth century and increased dramatically in the 1950s and 1960s, but was temporarily stopped after 1969. But in the mid-1980s tourism was again promoted. It was difficult to stimulate the economy and mitigate the consequences of the decline in the economy which came about as a consequence of the decline of the international financial sector, the departure of Shell and the takeover of the management of the refinery by the state-owned, Venezuelan company, PDVSA (Curiel, 2005).

Curaçao is a service island with a large Financial Service Sector and a growing Tourism Sector (Table I).

#### *The factors*

The following paragraphs discuss the factors involved in developing and attracting the creative class in the case of Curaçao.

#### *Talent*

The first T which is important for the Creative Economy is talent. The people of Curaçao are multi-cultural, multi-lingual and musical, as well as mentally and

	Employment (per cent)
Agriculture, fishing and mining	0.8
Manufacturing	7
Electricity, gas and water	1.2
Construction	6.7
Trade, restaurants and hotels	26.8
Transport, storage and communication	6.4
Banking, insurance and business service	16.7
Other services	34.4
	100

**Table I.**  
Employment in Curaçao  
by sector 2005 (three-year  
average)

**Source:** Central Bureau of Statistics (2005)

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physically intelligent. It should also be mentioned and not taken for granted that Curaçao has developed a language of its own: Papiamentu. Although the population of Curaçao is very small (135,000) it includes among its inhabitants World Champions in Little League Baseball (2004)[5] and World Champions in the Senior League (2002)[6], Baseball Big Leaguers like Andruw Jones and Jair Jurrjens, and 100 and 200 metre dash athletes like Churandy Martina, as well as leading physicians, musicians, plastic artists, architects, scholars, lawyers and entrepreneurs.

The local carnival is the manifestation of creativity and is internationally renowned and has been successfully exported to Rotterdam in The Netherlands. Rotterdam is now the host of one of one of the biggest carnivals in the world[7].

The list of talents is endless and illustrates that Curaçao has always been fruitful ground for the creative class. This was already known by great thinkers like Adam Smith, who mentioned Curaçao in his book in 1776 (Smith, 1937).

Talented people are footloose. They travel year round all over the world. This has two sides. The local creative class is often off island, but on the other hand the island is visited by other members of the global creative class. For example, it is not unusual to spot the yacht *Octopus* of Paul Allen of Microsoft on the island.

Talent is a strength of Curaçao in almost all sectors. But the concentration of talent is poor. The infrastructure to develop it is poor. The talent is footloose but keeps in close contact with the island and is starting to organise itself virtually[8].

### *The technological infrastructure*

The second T is technological infrastructure. Keeping up with technology is a challenge because of the diseconomies of scale; resources are limited and the market is limited. This makes it a challenge to recover the large investments involved. Despite this limitation, Curaçao has great achievements in this area. For example, Curaçao has been having E-elections since the early 1990s. This has reduced the counting of the votes to less than two hours after the closing of the polls.

Stimul-it is a foundation that stimulates small and medium businesses to apply ICT solutions[9]. According to their research, 55.5 per cent of the population has access to personal computers and 38.6 per cent has access to the internet[10]. A total of 85 per cent of the businesses use computers, 81 per cent have access to the internet and 42 per cent have a web site. This is the digital divide in Curaçao (Stimuli-It, 2007). There are also foundations stimulating organisations in the area of quality[11] management and in the area of innovation[12].

Curaçao has a School of Technology that is part of the University of the Netherlands Antilles. Information and Communication Technology is one the subjects that can be studied as a major, but for the most part the ICT professionals are educated abroad, mainly in The Netherlands and, to a lesser extent, the United States.

The harbour and the airport infrastructure are good. The harbour is the second largest within the Kingdom of The Netherlands. Curaçao has one of the biggest oil refineries in the middle of the island. This creates a great dilemma, whether to keep the refinery open, to move it or to dismantle it (Amigoe, 2007b).

Technology is not yet a strength of Curaçao. Broadband internet connection has a low penetration and is expensive (Amigoe, 2008a); the digital divide is big. The School of Technology is young and needs to be developed. On the other hand the harbour and the airport are performing very well.

*Tolerance*

Throughout its history Curaçao has been known for its tolerance. In the seventeenth century the Jews established themselves here to escape the Spanish Inquisition[13]. Today Christian, Jewish, Muslims, Indians and others live peacefully together and even get married. There is only some residual hostility towards the Dutch as a consequence of the colonial past. The tolerance of the community is not only illustrated by its multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-religious nature, but also by its tolerance towards minorities, for example gays. This gay-friendliness is even promoted by the Curaçao Tourist Board and is internationally known (*The Toronto Star*, 2007). Curaçao is unique in this area because gay marriages can be registered with the government.

Curaçao has a tradition of tolerance and it is apparent in all sectors.

*The level of education of the people*

In total, 11 per cent of the population has a third level education. 13 per cent of households are headed by a person with a third level education (Table II)[14]. This is the knowledge divide of Curaçao.

The student drop-out rate has decreased from 50.3 per cent in the census of 1992 to 41.8 per cent in 2001, although this is still very high:

The decline in teacher and education quality in Curaçao is widely acknowledged. To effectively provide a supply of skilled labour in sectors such as financial services, tourism, E-commerce and call centers, Curaçao urgently needs to orient education to meet the skills needed for the market place (Netherlands Antilles Fiscal Commission, 2007).

In September 2007 the government announced the objective that in every household at least one person should attend higher education (Government of the Netherlands Antilles, 2007).

The level of education of the people is a weakness of Curaçao. The people with higher education are very well trained but their number is small. The knowledge divide is significant.

*Real estate*

Curaçao is an attractive real estate market. This is stimulated by several factors. In the first place there is the strong Euro. This makes local real estate very affordable for Europeans, especially the Dutch, who purchase a (second) house on the island. Another factor is the historical city. Because of this, many old buildings that need reconstruction are on the market. Also the fact that local law gives a lot of freedom to builders stimulates experimentation with architectural design.

Real estate is an opportunity for Curaçao.

**Table II.**  
Level of education of the head of the household in Curaçao

	Percent
First level	26.9
Second level, first stage	43.1
Second level, second stage	16.5
Third level, first stage	9.2
Third level, second stage	4.4
	100.0

**Source:** Census 2001, Central Bureau of Statistics[14]



*The institutional framework*

The legal system of the island is part of the Dutch legal system. It is possible to take an appeal to the High Court in The Hague. This provides citizens and corporations extra security. There is political stability on the island. The tolerance of the island is also reflected by the electoral system that allows a great number of political parties (at times 14) to participate in elections, to compete for the 21 seats in local elections or the 14 seats in federal elections. The Netherlands Antilles are unique in the sense that they have already elected five female Prime Ministers. Another illustration of the tolerance of society in Curaçao is the size of the media. Although the population is small, Curaçao had 26 radio stations, three television stations and nine newspapers (Goede, 2006).

The Bureau for Intellectual Property of the Netherlands Antilles, located on Curaçao, takes care of trademarks, copyright, and patent registration and promotes the importance of protecting intellectual property[15].

The institutional framework is well developed and is a strength of Curaçao.

*Redistribution of income*

The income distribution in Curaçao is poor (Table III). This leads to poverty (Jaffe, 2006)[16]. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, in 2007 over 20 per cent of the population lived below the poverty line (Vierbergen, 2007). “The Netherlands Antilles agreed with the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank to undertake a poverty reduction programme” (International Monetary Fund, 12 December 2005).

The income distribution is a weakness leading to poverty in Curaçao[17].

*Meritocracy*

Curaçao is a strange mixture of patronage and nepotism on the one hand and meritocracy on the other. The meritocracy is only dominant in global organisations: all others are prone to patronage and nepotism. This is explained by the cultural and historical development, and the small scale of society (Denter *et al.*, 2006).

Meritocracy is a weakness of Curaçao.

	Percent
No income	1
1-500	7
501-1,000	17
1,001-1,500	16
1,501-2,000	12
2,001-2,500	8
2,501-3,000	8
3,001-3,500	10
3,501-4,000	1
4,001-4,500	5
4,501-5,000	3
5,001-7,500	7
More than 7,500	4
Unknown	2
	100

**Source:** Census 2001, Central Bureau of Statistics[17]

**Table III.**  
Level of income of the  
population of Curaçao

*The sectors of Curaçao*

In the following paragraphs, the sectors of the Creative Economy of Curaçao are described.

*Arts*

Curaçao has developed its own music and dance, combining African and European influences, creating the Tumba and Tambu. Curaçao has produced great talents in music and dance. These talents are constantly being spotted in Europe. Curaçao has a great number of plastic artists that have built a name for them self internationally. Lately, there is even interest on the part of local artists for movie and television production. The fact is that in Curaçao artists are not subsidised. This is not necessarily a bad thing (van der Ploeg, 2005).

Curaçao has numerous art galleries, virtual galleries[18] and museums exhibiting local artist and small theatres. It should be noted that a few years ago the government stopped the subsidy of the local art school and privatised the national theatre, leading both to close. Historically Curaçao has always had a place in the world of beauty queens and models[19]. And recently, in 2006, the Curaçao talents in this area of the model industry have been spotted by the international players like *Vibe Magazine*, *Shabeau Magazine*, *Ocean Drive Magazine*, *Bazaar Magazine*, *Elle*, *Glamour* and *Gloss Magazine*.

Regarding architecture, Curaçao has been on the (World Heritage List since, 1997)[20]. Many historical buildings have been restored over the past ten year. This was financed with local and international funds. Hotel Kurá Hulanda, in central Willemstad (the capital city of Curaçao), is one such project financed by a Dutch investor. The 65 buildings that comprise Hotel Kurá Hulanda are the Museum Kurá Hulanda's largest exhibit – a collection of eighteenth and nineteenth century architecture[21]. Over the years government has invested in the upgrading of the infrastructure of Willemstad, especially in the infrastructure of the public parks.

Arts in Curaçao are a question mark treated as a dog. This area has high potential to become a star.

*Tourism*

For years Curaçao has marketed itself as The Curaçao Experience and The Best Kept Secret in the Caribbean. The number of visitors is increasing consistently (Table IV) In 2007 Curaçao hotels had an occupancy rate of 83.44 per cent[22]. Curaçao does not offer only sand, sun and sea, but also history, art and culture. This attracts the creative class. Currently Renaissance and Hyatt are building five star hotels. This will add to the attractiveness of the product and further increase the number of visitors[23].

	Cruise	Stay over	Rooms
1950	10,969	13,442	29
1960	45,133	30,858	
1970	110,854	101,641	
1980	169,002	184,671	1,258
1990	160,000	207,673	1,460
2000	309,373	191,246	2,518
2005	276,217	221,395	3,580

**Table IV.**  
Number of visitors  
and hotel rooms

**Source:** Curaçao Tourist Board[23]

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One of the main attractions of the island is the underwater park. The Underwater Park Curaçao was established in 1983. It encompasses 20 km of south-coast reefs, but has no legislative support and therefore no legal protection. Park management is performed by the Carmabi Foundation, a local NGO. Coral collection and spear fishing are banned (Hoetjes *et al.*, 2002).

Curaçao's tourism is a star (Tromp, 2007).

### *International Financial Services*

In the past, the Netherlands Antilles was considered a tax haven, because of its ring-fenced offshore tax regime. As a consequence it appeared on the blacklist of the OECD. But in 2001 the Netherlands Antilles abolished its off shore regime and introduced a new state of the art international taxation regime, and is no longer considered a tax haven. Despite a decline, this sector is still the second most important economic sector for Curaçao after tourism. It is a high-quality sector, both in terms of technology and human capital, and therefore makes a high-value contribution to the economy (Department of Economic Affairs, 2007, pp. 80-2).

The consultancy branch can be considered a spin off of the financial service sector. This branch took off in the late 1980s and went through four stages: start up and survival, success, take-off, and resource maturity (Goede, 2001).

International Financial Services are a declining star struggling to keep shining (Romero, 2005) and not to become a dog like the consultancy branch.

### *Science*

The centre of scientific research in Curaçao is the University of the Netherlands Antilles. Traditionally the university has focused on education. Only over the last few years has the university been putting more emphasis on scientific research. Carmabi (Caribbean Research and Management of Biodiversity)[24] has an alliance with the University of the Netherlands Antilles and the University of Illinois.

“Dinah Veeris is on a one-woman crusade to preserve traditional medicinal plants. In the early 1980s she began Den Paradera, a magnificent botanical garden where she propagates over 300 species of wild medicinal plants”[25]. Veeris is an example of how traditional knowledge is being preserved for the next generation by adopting the knowledge economy model.

The Jacob Geltdekker Institute[26] conducts advanced cultural studies.

Science in Curaçao is a question mark treated as a dog.

### *Life sciences/medical science*

There are several medical tourist ventures on the island. The Curaçao Dialysis Centre is located in Willemstad, and has taken the first step toward providing those in need of this life saving treatment with the ability to tend to their medical needs while vacationing[27]. Sentro Orthofiko Korsou offers people in need of a prosthesis to order it from abroad, visit the island for a two week vacation and walk away with a state of the art prosthesis at a better price than they would get in their own home town[28].

Seaquarium offers dolphin therapy and has developed a unique project that offers treatment to autistic patients and does research. It is part of the tourist product.

Curaçao Laser Institute has the potential to offer the visitor the possibility of laser surgery on the eyes while on vacation[29].

By now the medical sector, the tourist sector and government have discovered the potential of health tourism, and have prepared a plan to develop the sector (Naaman, 2007).

Life science is a question mark.

*Higher education*

In the 1950s the government of Curaçao set up a scholarship programme. Nowadays about four hundred students leave the island annually to study abroad, mainly at universities in The Netherlands. Of these students only 30 per cent return to the island after they graduate. This means a considerable loss to the creative class, the so-called brain drain. To reduce this drain the University of the Netherlands Antilles (UNA) was founded in January 1979 as the successor of the School of Law that was founded in the early 1970s (Heiligers, 2004). Since the year 2002 the number of students has increased significantly (Table V).

The UNA is based on a unique concept, working with European, American and regional universities, attracting many scholars, students and interns to the islands. There are 30 nationalities studying at the UNA. "Students are leading indicators of global talent flows" (Florida, 2007, p. 11). Obtaining European accreditation of the educational programmes and building new facilities are crucial to the plan (UNA, 2005)[30].

In recent years Dutch students in higher education have discovered Curaçao as a location for their internship. In the old, decayed part of the historical city, whole blocks of ruins have been reconstructed to house these students and they are attracting artists, cafes and restaurants[31]. This is in line with the following statement of Gertner:

It's important to understand that even if you are not looking for a hot new city in which to live – and even if you are over 40 – the 18- to -39 demographic can be crucial to you and to your region's health. A recent census report on the late-1990s migration of young, single, college-educated men and women made the point that they bring to a city large amounts of human capital, which helps increase entrepreneurship and deepen the area's talent pool. The same migration brings people who stimulate development by moving to neglected neighbourhoods and making long-term investments in schools, homes and businesses (Gertner, 2004).

In 2005 St Elisabeth Hospital in Curaçao celebrated its 150th anniversary. The St Elisabeth Hospital is a general hospital in the centre of the historic city. It has a good reputation and functions as a hospital where Dutch students can do their final internship before graduating as physicians. This work is conducted in collaboration with the Netherlands Antilles Foundation for Clinical Higher Education (NASKHO). NASKHO is a leading supplier of medical training, post-graduate courses and medical conferences[32].

Curaçao is in the final stages of taking the decision to construct a new, modern hospital.

Higher education is a question mark treated as a dog.

Year	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08
Students	701	670	767	1,041	1,339	1,658	1,953	2,032

**Note:** Number of students of the University of the Netherlands Antilles

**Source:** University of the Netherlands Antilles

**Table V.**

*Sports*

The talents of Curaçao have all ready been mentioned in this paper. These talents are footloose. They travel around the globe and frequently visit the island, inviting friends from their scene to visit the island. In some cases this has given a boost to sport tourism[33].

Sport is a question mark treated as a dog.

*Information and Communication Technology*

According to the telecom regulator:

The Netherlands Antilles has one of the most advanced telecommunication networks in the Caribbean. The telecommunication legislation is among the most progressive of the region. Recently, BT&P drafted state-of-the-art legislation to replace the Telecom Act of 1996. This 'new telecom law' will align telecommunication policy with worldwide requirements[34].

The main actor in the telecom market is the state owned United Telecommunication Services (UTS). This company owns the fixed telephone network and offers a whole spectrum of value added services including open air and cable television[35]. Recently, the UTS has lost its monopoly on the land-line infrastructure (Amigoe, 2008b). Another player is Digicel, a fast growing regional company. There is an E-Commerce Park (ECP) operating in the government appointed E-Zone. This means ECP customers pay two paper annual profit tax. This park was opened in 2001 and has been expanding ever since[36]. There are number of internet providers, but, even so, in general, telecom costs are considered relatively high.

The harbour is an important part of the infrastructure and the architecture of Willemstad. The harbour is the second largest sea port in the Dutch Kingdom of the Netherlands after Rotterdam (Table VI)[37].

Curaçao opened a new airport in 2004 which plays a crucial role in developing Curaçao as a regional hub (Table VII). There are plans for expansion of the airport.

ICT is a question mark for Curaçao, while other infrastructure is a star.

*Analysis of Curaçao*

At first glance many factors that could support the Creative Economy are present in Curaçao. The factors do not have the same impact on all sectors. Sectors like Tourism and International Financial Services are doing well and there is even transfer between some of the sectors. On the other hand, sectors like the Arts, Sport, Science and Education look promising, according to a portfolio analysis of the economy of Curaçao.

	Piloted vessels
2000	3,085
2001	3,339
2002	3,538
2003	2,704
2004	2,787
2005	2,823
2006	2,889
2007	3,038

**Source:** Curacao Port Authorities, 2007[37]

**Table VI.**  
Piloted into the harbour  
of Curaçao

IJSE		Passengers
36,1/2	1986	951,000
	1987	891,000
	1988	1,039,000
	1989	1,097,000
60	1990	1,109,000
	1991	1,048,000
	1992	1,107,000
	1993	1,148,000
	1994	1,193,000
	1995	1,200,000
	1996	1,208,000
	1997	1,222,002
	1998	1,279,000
	1999	1,273,463
	2000	1,293,095
	2001	1,255,331
	2002	1,121,600
	2003	1,149,689
	2004	1,121,877
	2005	1,005,181
	2006	1,081,932
	2007	1,200,000

**Table VII.**  
Arrivals at Curaçao Airport

**Source:** Curaçao Airport Partners Management

This is illustrated in Table VIII which shows the results of the SWOT-analysis combined with the BCG portfolio matrix for Curaçao.

On the other hand, if we examine key performance indicators, like population growth, economic growth, unemployment rate, budget deficit and government debt, Curaçao has not performed so well over the last 20 years. But the signs indicate that the economy has taken off in 2006 and 2007 (Table IX).

One possible explanation for the poor performance of the recent past might be the fragmentation of society (Goede, 2006) and the lack of integration. The converse of fragmentation and integration are cohesion and diversity. Diversity is a condition for creativity because it increases the number of options. But diversity also leads to high transaction costs and high costs of doing business.

To stimulate integration or alignment, Curaçao must engage in a social dialogue with the social partners in order to develop a Master Plan for the island. This dialogue is called Kolaborativo (Eilandgebied Curaçao, 2007). Currently there is also a process to bring NGOs into alignment, called 5 Stars Curaçao[38]. In a way these two processes illustrate the fragmentation of culture on the island. These attempts to create a shared vision and Master Plan are not new. In 1997, Arthur Andersen presented a vision for the island in 2020 (Andersen, 1997). In the late nineties there was the initiative of Vishion Korsou which was coordinated by an NGO. The project ended when the government subsidy was withdrawn and there were not enough funds available from the private sector to continue. The current Master Plan and Social Economic Initiative are a continuation of past initiatives and an integral part of the constitutional changes. Curaçao aims to follow

	Talent	Technology	Tolerance	Education	Real estate	Institutional frame	Redistribution	Meritocracies	BCG matrix
Tourism	++	+	++	+	+	+	-	+	S
International Financial Services	++	+	+	++	+	++	+	+	S
Harbour and airport	+	++	++	+	++	++	+	+	S
Arts	+++	-	+++	-	+	-	-	+	Q
Science	+	-	++	+	++	++	+	+	Q
Life science	+++	+	+++	+	+	+	+	++	Q
Higher education	+	-	+	+	++	++	+	+	Q
Sports	+++	-	+	-	+	-	-	+	Q
Information and Communication Technology	+	-	+	+	+	++	+	+	Q
Refinery	+++	--	-	++	-	-	+	+	D
SWOT-Analysis	S	w	S	w	o	S	w	w	

**Notes:** Q, question mark; S, stars; C, cash cow; D, dog; s, strength; t, threat; -, negative; --, very negative; +, good; ++, very good and ++++, excellent

**Table VIII.**  
The analysis of the Creative Economy of Curaçao, based on the weight of the factors attracting and developing the creative class

Year	Population	GDP growth (per cent)	Unemployment rate (per cent)	Budget deficit (millions)	Debt Curaçao (millions)
1985				-57.1	396.8
1986				-24.9	489.0
1987				-13.3	640.6
1988			23.2	20.6	612.1
1989			20.1	-37.8	649.2
1990			17.8	-102.1	768.4
1991	144,844		14.6	-82.6	868.4
1992	143,964		16.9	-154.4	927.6
1993	143,861		13.6	-108.3	993.6
1994	144,522		12.8	-222.9	1615.0
1995	144,522		13.1	-125.8	1684.4
1996	145,759		14.0	-146.5	1646.8
1997	146,855	-3.4	15.5	-62.6	1691.5
1998	147,057	0.0	16.8	-70.6	1824.2
1999	141,932	-2.3	14.8	-15.5	1785.5
2000	136,969	-2.3	14.2	-29.7	2150.9
2001	130,822	-0.7	15.8	42.4	2155.1
2002	126,715	0.4	15.6	-89.8	2368.1
2003	129,665	0.3	15.1	-79.9	2447.3
2004	133,350	0.2	16.1	-134.9	2676.8
2005	135,474	0.8	18.2	-75.3	2492.4
2006	135,513	1.5	14.7	-101.6	2660.7
2007	135,513	3.0	12		

**Table IX.**  
Some economic indicators. The population of Curaçao over time

**Source:** Bank van de Nederlandse Antillen. Central Bureau of Statistics

the best practice employed by states such as Singapore, Barbados and New Zealand. Future research should indicate if this Best Practice is applicable in Curaçao.

For centuries Curaçao has been the gateway to Latin America, Europe and North America. Curaçao has developed a vision of being a logistical hub by 2016 as part of the Master Plan. This vision stresses a number of factors: the people of Curaçao (Talent), the international airport, the seaport, the Financial Services Sector and the IT sector (Technology) (Eilandgebied Curaçao, 2007a). But this vision does not explicitly focus on creativity, or higher education and science on the island, although transnational education is mentioned as part of the economic sector. The consequence is that the plan underutilises the main assets of the island. The vision leads to the idea of investment in the current stars, cash cows and dog, but it neglects the question marks. In the two sectors with the most talent, Arts and Sports, there is neither technology and nor infrastructure, and little education and training. In the sectors of science and higher education all the ingredients are present but they are not an integral part of the vision. A possible explanation is that the business and union elites involved in the visioning process are related to the stars and the dogs.

Interfaces between government and other organisations are not effective (Netherlands Antilles Fiscal Commission, 2007). This results from different notions of governance (Ardalan, 2007). The consequences are high transaction costs and low effectiveness. The government does not focus on facilitating developments, but gets involved in practices of clientelism, implementation of structural adjustment programmes and implementation of constitutional changes (Goede, 2003, 2006; Denter *et al.*, 2006). This lack of effectiveness in



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government steer is indicated by the high levels of debt and the budget deficit of the government. This is not unique to the island (Murray, 2006). Good governance is important for the development of the Creative Economy, but this is currently taking place in a cultural and historical context that favours other concepts of governance (Ardalan, 2007).

Even so, on 4 June 2006 at 1.00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, CBS2NY broadcast a Times TV NY Production called; Curacao, the best kept investment secret in the Caribbean. The programme focused on the business pillars of Curaçao: Logistics, Telecommunication, Finance and Tourism. The programme drew a very positive picture of the business development opportunities on the island. It was produced to attract US investors to explore their possibilities and to expand their business in Curaçao. The New York (-) Curaçao air connection provided by Continental Airlines creates access for US investors to look at Curaçao for the first time[39].

### Concluding remarks

The main reason that Curaçao has not developed into a Creative Economy is because there is no shared vision of how this should be achieved. The government needs to understand the importance of the creative class and implement policies to support its functions, by focusing on institutional arrangements and on people, ideas and technology and not weaken the vital factors.

There has been criticism of the study by Florida: "Analysing creativity is like wrestling with jelly: grab a bit and it slithers away. Being hard to define may well be one aspect of creativity (Howkins, 2001)." "For starters, there's been debate over what makes a city attractive or 'creative' in the first place (Gertner, 2004)." Gabe concluded, after his study: "The result of this study suggests the same warning that, when examining the growth of the creative economy, past performance is no guarantee of future results (Gabe, 2006, p. 412)." He states that the factors that encourage the growth of the Creative Economy are changing over time; areas that were once hip are now out. The theory presented by Florida does take into account factors like climate, security and safety, and logistics for attracting the creative class. However, it pays insufficient attention to the fact that time and place are irrelevant in the Knowledge Economy. The ideas advanced by Castells (1996) of a network society are much more helpful in understanding the creative class and the Creative Economy. Florida's concept of the creative city is too heavily focused on bricks and mortar which is in direct opposition to the virtual world. Florida, in his latest book, *Who's your City?* (2008), maintains his point of view that although we live in a network society, where one lives is more important than ever. But the creative class is looking for the best of both worlds; the sophisticated city and the sophisticated island. "It is becoming more normal for the well-educated and wealthy to spend a large part of the year in someone else's country... The market for talented people is increasingly fierce – and global (*The Economist*, 2007b, p. 76)." So the strategy of Curaçao should not be to attract the creative class as permanent residents but to encourage them as frequent visitors with a second home on the island. To achieve this a paradigm shift is necessary. A member of the creative class who leaves the island should be considered a hero and not a traitor who has turned his back on his people. People who leave the island should be considered part of the virtual Curaçao. Part of this virtual citizenship is the right of suffrage for citizens living abroad. Good examples of this new paradigm are the national soccer and hockey team. Both teams reside in The Netherlands and train in

The Netherlands, but compete for the Netherlands Antilles and Curaçao. Another aspect of the new paradigm is a new emigration policy attracting the creative class. An important factor in this context is the tax regime. Taxes for citizens and corporations in Curaçao are very high (Amigoe, 2007a)[40]. Another factor is the implementation of a student visa programme for foreign students.

It is difficult to be certain which factors determine the attractiveness of a location. In the case of Curaçao one wonders whether small scale is a positive or a negative factor. Florida argues from the perspective of the big Western metropolis. Is the perspective of islands different? Other sociological factors, such as the colonial past, may also have an influence. But, in addition, factors like the quality of health care and connectivity by airlines may have an effect. Taken all in all, the various theories provide a rich inspiration for the analysis of a location such as Curaçao, especially when combined with analytical frameworks like the SWOT-analysis and the BCG-matrix.

### Notes

1. This is what I call the prelude of the Wisdom Economy (Covey, 2002). The Knowledge Economy will present societies with great dilemmas, like sustainable development and poverty, that must be resolved with wisdom. Wisdom is when you develop both character and competence. Character is integrity, maturity and the Abundance Mentality. Competence is about technical competence, conceptual knowledge and interdependence (Covey, 2002, p. 149-51).
2. As an example I quote Andriessen and van den Boom: "We estimate that the concepts of knowledge are cultural and context-dependent concepts and are semantic reference systems defined by a given historical, scientific and cultural environment (Andriessen and van den Boom, 2007, p. 649)." In the West knowledge is perceived as a thing that can be controlled and manipulated. In the East knowledge is perceived as spirit and wisdom, the unfolding of truth (Andriessen and van den Boom, 2007, p. 648).
3. According to HOOP (2004) higher education is key in the strategy of the Netherlands to become a leading knowledge economy by 2010. Rich countries are well-educated countries. The per centage of people who have had higher education in The Netherlands is 26 per cent, compared to 39 per cent in the USA. Students must acquire skills like networking and entrepreneurial skills. It is not all about IQ but also about EQ. In the knowledge society government should take a back seat.
4. [http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID = 28053&URL\\_DO = DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION = 201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID = 28053&URL_DO = DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION = 201.html)
5. [www.littleleague.org/Series/2004divisions/lbb/series.htm](http://www.littleleague.org/Series/2004divisions/lbb/series.htm)
6. [www.littleleague.org/Series/2002divisions/slbb/series.htm](http://www.littleleague.org/Series/2002divisions/slbb/series.htm)
7. [www.zomercarnaval.nl](http://www.zomercarnaval.nl)
8. [www.janera.com/janera\\_blog.php?id = 23&PHPSESSID = 8aaa457711a1b207a3ea9fc89138a10e](http://www.janera.com/janera_blog.php?id = 23&PHPSESSID = 8aaa457711a1b207a3ea9fc89138a10e)
9. [www.stimul-it.com](http://www.stimul-it.com)
10. The Minister of Telecommunication of the Netherlands Antilles states: "Overall the Curaçao internet penetration defined as the ratio between number of internet connections and the amount of households is projected to be about 50 per cent and still increasing. This number is however including all internet connections including dial up connections. If the dial up connections are excluded and we look to the "always on" penetration rate the per centage drops to a projected 35 per cent. If we measure the penetration rates based on the FCC definition of broadband the per centage drops to a projected 22 per cent. If we measure the

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penetration rate based on the ITU definition the per centage drops to a projected 1 per cent[. . .] The FCC definition of Broadband is a connection with a speed of 200Kbit\s and higher. The ITU definition of Broadband is a connection with a speed of 1.5Mbit\s and higher. One can conclude that the Curaçao internet penetration on itself is at a respectable number and still increasing. But at the other hand one can also conclude that the internet penetration level based on international broadband definition is too low and needs to be increased. To facilitate the future of Curaçao as information society the Broadband internet penetration rate definitely needs to be improved” (Adrieans, 19 November 2007).

11. [www.cqf.an](http://www.cqf.an)
12. [www.innovatiecentrum.an](http://www.innovatiecentrum.an)
13. [www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Curacao.html#Religious](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Curacao.html#Religious)
14. [www.cbs.an](http://www.cbs.an)
15. [www.bureau-intellectual-property.an](http://www.bureau-intellectual-property.an)
16. [www.redesosial.org](http://www.redesosial.org)
17. [www.cbs.an](http://www.cbs.an)
18. [www.hicuracao.com](http://www.hicuracao.com)
19. Anne Marie Braafheid became the first black woman to attain the position of 1st runner-up in the Miss Universe contest. She represented Curaçao in the 1968 pageant, and was featured in Ebony Magazine after achieving 1st runner-up status ([www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)).
20. “The people of The Netherlands established a trading settlement at a fine natural harbour on the Caribbean island of Curaçao in 1634. The town developed continuously over the following centuries. The modern town consists of several distinct historic districts whose architecture reflects not only European urban-planning concepts but also styles from The Netherlands and from the Spanish and Portuguese colonial towns with which Willemstad engaged in trade” (United Nations, 1997).
21. [www.kurahulanda.com](http://www.kurahulanda.com)
22. [www.chata.org](http://www.chata.org)
23. [www.ctb.an](http://www.ctb.an)
24. “Carmabi was founded as a marine biological research station in 1955. From the start, aside from research, applied nature conservation and education were also important areas of activity. Carmabi mission is to contribute to the sustainable development and management of the natural resources of the Netherlands Antilles through research, nature management and environmental education. Thousands of scholarly studies produced throughout the years, and the many nature conservation achievements on the various islands of the Netherlands Antilles where achieved” ([www.carmabi.org](http://www.carmabi.org)).
25. [www.rootsandmedicine.com/curacao](http://www.rootsandmedicine.com/curacao)
26. <http://partner.pdx.edu/node/107>
27. [www.curacao-dialysis.com](http://www.curacao-dialysis.com)
28. [www.sofk.com](http://www.sofk.com)
29. [www.curacaolaserinstitute.com](http://www.curacaolaserinstitute.com)
30. At the beginning of the new millennium a group of investors presented the report: “Curacao – the Island of Education and Sophistication.” The essence of the plan, supporting the strategic plan of the university, is “the combination of leisure and education supported by sophisticated business services sector open up the corporate retreat and business training opportunities”. The content of this report is crucial because it identifies the sectors: Education, Business Services, Niche tourism and ‘Experience’. As well as the factors: Transportation and Logistics;

IT/E-commerce; Residential, Retail, and Commercial Development. The University of the Netherlands Antilles is crucial in this vision ([www.investcuracao.com](http://www.investcuracao.com)). The potential of this sector has been identified not only by the University of the Netherlands Antilles, attracting more foreign students. But also recently started privately owned institutions like International Caribbean University, who took over the state owned World Trade Center in late nineties, Saint Martinus Medical School and The Dutch Caribbean University.

31. [www.wereldstage.com](http://www.wereldstage.com)
32. [www.naskho.org](http://www.naskho.org)
33. For example, in 2006 Curaçao hosted the World Cup Mountain Biking ([www.uci.ch](http://www.uci.ch)). In 2007 the Amstel Curaçao Race was held for the sixth time and brought to the island the members of the elite of the sport like the winner of the Tour de France 2007, Alberto Contador ([www.amstelcuracaorace.com](http://www.amstelcuracaorace.com)).
34. [www.btnp.org](http://www.btnp.org)
35. [www.uts.an](http://www.uts.an)
36. [www.e-commercepark.com](http://www.e-commercepark.com)
37. [www.curports.com](http://www.curports.com)
38. [www.5starscuracao.org](http://www.5starscuracao.org)
39. [www.ca-holding.com](http://www.ca-holding.com)
40. In the past, the Netherlands Antilles attracted the creative class with a special tax regime (Penshonado regeling), but this regime was abandoned due to Dutch pressure.

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