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THE
CREATIVE CLASS
PARADOX





Image 1: Cuba St: Wellington's creative ecosystem, 2005.

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THE --- CREATIVE CLASS --- PARADOX ---

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TIM PARKIN, 2007

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ABSTRACT

In an effort to encourage Wellington's economic growth the Wellington City Council (WCC) integrated the principles of Richard Florida's (2002) Creative Class theory into their strategic vision – *Creative Wellington – Innovation Capital*. This initiative influenced the WCC's resource policies with the aim of attracting and retaining creative people and innovative businesses.

Within the Creative Class paradigm the value system used is predominantly economic, with creative assets and success being defined in terms of commercial gains. Consequently, the types of creative individuals, innovative businesses and physical environments that the WCC's policies prioritised were ones with high revenue earning potential.

Such a restricted definition of creativity raises the question of how do Wellington's alternative forms of creativity and innovation fit into the WCC's *Creative Wellington – Innovation Capital* strategy? Are their contributions to be ignored and their futures compromised in the WCC's drive to attract members of the Creative Class or do they have a role to play within the Creative Class paradigm?

My thesis investigates these questions by critiquing the WCC's implementation of the Creative Class theory. I also investigate the impact that the WCC's actions have had on Te Aro, a suburb on the outer edge of Wellington's central business district that is home to a diverse array of creative practices and small innovative businesses.

Through this investigation I discover parallels between Te Aro's unique characteristics and the criteria Florida argued as being necessary to attract the Creative Class. I argue that for this reason Te Aro, and the forms of creativity and innovation that it supports, meets the value and lifestyle needs of the Creative Class and are therefore assets in the WCC's *Creative Wellington – Innovation Capital* strategy. My thesis concludes by using these findings in a graphic design led strategy that seeks to enhance Wellington's unique creative dynamic by broadening both the community and Council's concept of capital, assets and success.

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