



Living Rooms for the City

LocHal Tilburg and V&A Dundee: Small City Regeneration in Historical Perspective, 1990-Present

Master's Thesis

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Port Cities and Maritime History Research Workshop

31 July 2020



Image 1 (above): **LocHal Library in Tilburg, the Netherlands.**

Source: *spoorzone013*, <https://www.spoorzone013.nl/ondernemen/lochal/>, accessed 20 Feb 2020.

Image 2 (below): **V&A Museum in Dundee, Scotland**

Source: *The Times*, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/v-a-dundee-landmark-building-boosts-renaissance-qp067gtfv>, accessed 20 Feb 2020.

Abstract

This thesis aims to interrogate two cases of culture-led regeneration in the context of small post-industrial European cities. Using the phenomenon of the urban 'living room' as its starting point, the thesis asks how this hegemonic policy doctrine, made most famous by the arrival of the Guggenheim Bilbao in 1997, has evolved into the present day, and how its fundamentals have diffused into smaller peripheral cities. A historical perspective is used to trace the origins and justifications for the arrival of two self-professed urban 'living rooms': the LocHal public library in the city of Tilburg, the Netherlands, and the V&A design museum in Dundee, Scotland. Both of these cultural institutions opened within a few months of each other in two former textile cities united by post-industrial restructuring and serious image deficits. Despite the seemingly very different functions between a design museum and a library, the thesis is able to draw a variety of conclusions related to the concept of the 'living room' which unites these institutions in several shared economic, social and cultural aims. Such aims prove the evolution of this hegemonic policy doctrine in response to its acknowledged failures, and highlight the agency of small peripheral cities to shape their own economic futures.

Key Words

culture-led regeneration, urban development, cultural infrastructure, libraries, museums, knowledge economy, small cities, textile towns, heritage, city branding, Dundee, Tilburg, living room.

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1. Introduction

The 1997 opening of the Guggenheim museum in Bilbao marked the start of a period of dominance for iconic cultural buildings in post-industrial regeneration strategies. The combination of spectacular star-studded architecture with a famous New York art institution formed the flagship project of an extensive city-wide strategy deployed by the Basque authorities to revitalise a port city which had declined in industry and stature. Its success in reinvigorating the city through tourism and inward investment has made Bilbao the envy of cities facing similar challenges. In an era of globalised development policies, cities the world over have sought to replicate the 'Bilbao effect' through iconic architecture and related strategies as they chase the ubiquitous titles of 'creative' or 'global' city.

Two recent examples of cultural icons can be found in Northern Europe. In September 2018 a new branch of the renowned Victoria and Albert design museum opened in Dundee, a post-industrial coastal city on the North-East of Scotland. A few months later, in January 2019 a library opened in the renovated building of a former railway warehouse in the city of Tilburg in the southern North Brabant province of the Netherlands. Although one was a design museum and the other a library, the rhetoric around the opening of the buildings was strikingly similar. The Japanese architect of the V&A museum Kengo Kuma commented: 'the big idea for V&A Dundee was bringing together nature and architecture, to create a new living room for the city.'¹ The Dutch architect firm Mecanoo who collaborated on the LocHal project claimed they were building a 'new, world-class urban living room for Tilburg in an iconic former locomotive shed.'²

¹ 'V&A Dundee · V&A Dundee Opens to the World', Victoria and Albert Museum Dundee, accessed 10 January 2020, <https://www.vam.ac.uk/dundee/info/va-dundee-opens-to-the-world>.

² 'LocHal Library', accessed 10 January 2020, <https://www.mecanoo.nl/Projects/project/221/LocHal-Library?t=0>.

The shared rhetoric of the project developers in Dundee and Tilburg is the starting point of this thesis. Putting aside a natural reflex against comparing these two seemingly different cities and institutions, the phenomenon of the urban 'living room' manifested at this particular historical moment suggests there exists a commonality that must be investigated. In seeking to find this, insights about the evolution of culture-led redevelopment strategies - in particular their relation to small northern European cities - will surely be gained. To what extent do these institutions represent a novel approach to the economic development of a small city? Although their iconic form may hint at an alignment with a trophy project such as the Guggenheim, aimed at willing global cosmopolitan status for their host cities, the 'living room', with its cosy, civic, connotations, suggests that an alternative type of thinking has been incorporated to this well-worn formula.

To interrogate this claim means unearthing the true meaning of the 'living room' in its particular urban context. Using a historical perspective this thesis will seek to understand the processes which created these cultural institutions, and in doing so shed light on the struggles of small city development and the agency of cities to construct their own narratives in the face of the economic and political pressures of the globalised world. To achieve this goal it will be vital to establish exactly what is meant by the 'living room', a concept loaded with connotations but extremely vulnerable to elusiveness. Such a definition is inextricably linked with the economic, social and cultural justifications of these flagship projects, which altogether will provide a valuable insight into the policy frameworks used by these small European cities.

Despite these similar intentions, the two projects have been met with different popular reactions. The LocHal has been handed unbridled praise, winning the Building of the Year prize at the 2019 World Architecture Festival and has been labelled a 'successful social mechanism' which the Tilburg population has totally

embraced from 'homeless person to professor.'³ Design publication *Frame* claims that not only is the LocHal the city's living room, it is 'the dining room, the kitchen, the garden shed and the corridor' as well, pointing to the success of the building as a multi-use inclusive and inviting space.⁴ The V&A on the other hand has been subject to a different sort of reaction. Some have criticised the accessibility of the space and its appeal to the broader city population.⁵ Others have called the space 'boring' and little more than a café.⁶

As media critiques of these cultural buildings, the different responses do not so much inform the research as prove the necessity for it. In the first place, their widely reported opening and reception highlights the iconic nature of these institutions which represented hugely important moments in the urban histories of these cities. Most importantly though, these differing reactions highlight the need to understand the relative ambitions of these cities, the goals and intentions of the project developers, the intended purposes of these buildings and how these issues were framed in relation to national and international contexts. This is necessary context to understanding the significance of such popular responses.

³ Tijs van den Broomen, 'Architecture: The LocHal in Tilburg', *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 18 September 2019, <https://www.groene.nl/artikel/een-goedlopend-sociaal-mechaniekje>.

⁴ Rab Messina, 'A Dutch City Gets a New Public Living Room – and so Much More', *Frame Publishers*, 2 August 2019, <https://www.frameweb.com/news/mecanoo-lochal-tilburg-netherlands-public-library>.

⁵ Graeme Ogston, 'Is Dundee's V&A "a Living Room for the City"?', *BBC News*, 15 September 2019, sec. Tayside and Central Scotland, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-tayside-central-49647729>.

⁶ Paul Huchon, 'Dundee's £80m Museum Is "Boring" and Little More than a "Cafe", Say Experts', *HeraldScotland*, 8 September 2019, <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/17888405.dundee-39-s-80m-museum-quot-boring-quot-little-quot-cafe-quot-say-experts/>.

1.1 Research Questions

To address the issues set out so far, the following primary research question was formulated:

- **Why were urban 'living rooms' built in Dundee and Tilburg, and what does this phenomenon reveal about the status of culture-led redevelopment as a tool for regeneration in small European cities?**

This is complemented by four secondary questions:

1. **Which historical successes and failures associated with the doctrine of culture-led redevelopment constitute the context for strategies in Dundee and Tilburg?**
2. **Why was an urban 'living room' built in Tilburg?**
3. **Why was an urban 'living room' built in Dundee?**
4. **What is the significance of the 'living room' concept in the context of culture-led regeneration and its evolution in small European cities?**

1.2 Comparative Approach

The reasoning for the comparison of Tilburg and Dundee is three-fold. Firstly, the cities are of similar size and importance within their national contexts. Dundee has a population of 150,000 (fourth-largest in Scotland) and Tilburg 220,000, (sixth-largest in the Netherlands) situating them outside of the range of first-tier (London, Paris, Berlin) and second-tier (Glasgow, Liverpool, Rotterdam) cities which dominate the research of culture led-redevelopment. These two Northern European cities are thus somewhat 'off-grid' in terms of their relative global influence.

Secondly, the two cities are textile towns. Dundee's history has been shaped by its role in the processing of jute, a natural fibre imported from India, which from the mid-nineteenth century dominated the city's economy and fundamentally shaped its built environment through factories and workers housing, leading to the

nickname 'jutetopolis'.⁷ Tilburg's textile history was based on wool which had been historically produced in the area since the Middle-Ages. Industrialisation of the process led to the centralisation of previously dispersed communities and indeed created what can today be understood as the city of Tilburg.⁸ The textile industries and their dominance in Tilburg and Dundee thus shaped the rise of these cities, but also dictated the terms of their decline. By the 1980s both the jute and wool industries had all but disappeared, leading to economic crisis, unemployment and social malaise, for which a new development strategy was required. Also important was the negative image left in the cities by this process, with Dundee described as a 'national joke'⁹ whilst Tilburg 'just happened to be on the map'.¹⁰ Although this may seem no different to another type of industrial city dominated by a single industry, a mining town for example, it has been argued that the importance of the textile industry lies in the construction of a post-industrial identity focussed on the knowledge economy.¹¹ 'Dundee City of Discovery' and 'Make it in Tilburg' represent two recent city branding campaigns that illustrate this rediscovered identity as innovation and knowledge centres rooted in their shared histories as textile towns.

Finally, the two cities opened these iconic institutions within a matter of months from each other: the V&A in September 2018 and the LocHal in January 2019. This is important because it means the historic processes for which these projects are

⁷ Jim Tomlinson, 'City of Discovery?', in *Jute No More*, ed. Jim Tomlinson and Christopher A. Whatley (Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 1, <https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9781845860905.003.0012>.

⁸ Michiel Scheffer, 'The Evolutionary Pathway of the Tilburg Wool Industry,' in Nienke van Boom and Hans Mommaas, eds., *Comeback Cities: Transformation Strategies for Former Industrial Cities* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2009), 203

⁹ Kevin McKenna, 'Thanks to the V&A, Dundee Will No Longer Be the Butt of a Nation's Jokes', *The Guardian*, 15 September 2018, sec. Opinion, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/sep/15/thanks-to-the-victoria-and-albert-dundee-no-longer-butt-of-a-nations-jokes>.

¹⁰ Gert-Jan Hospers, 'Creative Cities in Europe: Urban Competitiveness in the Knowledge Economy', *Intereconomics* 38, no. 5 (September 2003): 269, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03031728>.

¹¹ Nienke van Boom and Hans Mommaas, eds., *Comeback Cities: Transformation Strategies for Former Industrial Cities* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2009), 56.

the result evolved simultaneously and were formed within the same global contexts. This temporal alignment leaves both buildings fresh in the memory and has also led to a natural comparison in popular commentary, for example, with shortlists for Building of the Year at the World Architecture Festival or the RIBA Awards. The newness of the buildings provides the opportunity to evaluate these strategies of redevelopment in their most up-to-date form.

1.3 Relevancy and Innovative Aspects

Firstly, this thesis will be most innovative in the way in which it places two cities and two institutions which might seem otherwise unrelated into conversation with each other. Using original source material and interviews two urban 'micro-histories' of these particular developments will be constructed, providing insight into the nuances and struggles of urban development at a local level. Placing these local developments into international, or at least European, conversation provides a platform for learning between the two contexts. Although scholarship has dealt with these two cities separately in the context of regeneration, this thesis represents a contemporary update to this work which deals with two new institutions that remain fresh in the memory. The phenomenon of the urban 'living room', as here argued, is a novel response to the doctrine of culture-led redevelopment and as such exploring its meaning and utility is a useful task within the context of contemporary urban studies.

Perhaps more importantly however, the relevancy of this thesis relates to the way in which it will interrogate a globally hegemonic strategy of urban development. Plans for a new National Art Museum of China in Beijing as well as the Louvre in Abu Dhabi highlight the ongoing ubiquity of this approach. However, for cities that lack the financial power and status of such examples, blindly parachuting in these policies carries serious dangers that may add to the social stratification and divisions that such projects may seek to remedy. This thesis will seek to understand the extent

to which this has been the case in Tilburg and Dundee, and if not, highlight the alternative possibilities and futures open to small cities. In line with South African urbanist Jennifer Robison's plea to better conceptualise 'the ordinary city' this thesis will interrogate the ways in which the needs and desires of the local population were factored into projects that on the surface may appear to replicate globally fashionable paradigms through iconic strategies.¹² As such, the negotiation between the 'ordinary' and the 'iconic' and the factors that underpin this relationship will be a fundamental point of study in this thesis. By examining two under-studied small-sized cities the thesis will itself resist the lure of showcasing high-profile trophy examples and will contribute to a greater understanding of the global-local dynamics of policy making in cities otherwise understood as 'off the map.'

1.4 Chapter Outline

The overall aim of this thesis is to put two local urban development histories into the wider narrative of culture-led redevelopment, in order to understand how this policy doctrine and its associated critiques have been negotiated at the local level. To begin this endeavour, Chapter Two will first interrogate the concept of culture-led redevelopment, including its origins, successes and the interdisciplinary scholarly critique of its failures. Chapter Three reconstructs the historical process which produced the LocHal 'living room' in Tilburg. Likewise, Chapter Four reconstructs the historical process that produced the V&A museum in Dundee. Chapter Five seeks to place these case studies into conversation with each other, informed by the critique of Chapter Two, to produce a number of insights related to novel approach adopted by Dundee and Tilburg towards their regeneration.

¹² Jennifer Robinson, *Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development*, (London ; New York: Routledge, 2006).

Altogether, two urban histories will be presented and interrogated through the lens of culture-led redevelopment.

1.5 Sources and Methodology

In order to reconstruct and inscribe the histories of these two cultural institutions, a number of sources were consulted. In the first place, policy documents were analysed that examine the official approaches to redevelopment adopted by the urban governance regimes. For example, in the case of Tilburg, the first 2011 Masterplan for the Spoorzone redevelopment site was vital. In the case of Dundee, the 2009 City Culture Strategy was also crucial, followed by a number of documents collected as a result of interviews. These were used in order to construct a context and broad understanding of the intentions and goals behind the respective city strategies.

Secondly, a number of semi-structured interviews were carried out with influential members of the urban governance during the development process:

1. Henriëtte de Kok, director of Central Brabant Libraries, Tilburg, 2014-2017, interviewed June 17, 2020.
2. Jop Verweel, project manager Spoorzone development, Tilburg, 2017-present, interviewed April 8, 2020.
3. Georgina Follett, dean of Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, Dundee, 2005-2018, interviewed May 15, 2020.
4. Jennifer Caswell, team leader, City Promotion, Dundee City Council, 2001-Present, interviewed April 13, 2020.
5. Maurizio Mucciola, lead project architect, V&A Dundee, 2014-2018, interviewed March 20, 2020.

These interviews were used to interrogate the intentions and goals behind the respective institutions by those implicated in shaping their development and defining the needs of the city. To a certain extent, the physical products were also

interrogated, particularly in the case of the project architect at V&A Dundee, although the focus was very much on the tracing the historical narratives rather than judging the physical products.

This decision is owed partly to the Covid-19 pandemic which significantly altered the research methodology. It had been originally intended to include further interviews and an ethnography of the spaces in a further attempt to conceptualise and critique the 'living room'. However, visits were not possible during this time and interviews were much harder to gather. In response, particularly to a lack of material for Tilburg, the decision was made to incorporate press reports on the development process. In the case of Tilburg, this focused on reports from local newspaper *Brabants Dagblad* on the development of the Spoorzone dating from the mid-1990s until present. Reports often included statements from local decision makers and prominent cultural practitioners, amongst other urban commentators, which made them a rich insight into the dynamics of this process. Google Translate was used to translate the articles into English. To complement this material, a certain amount of press articles covering the V&A in Dundee were also found. Whilst local press carries its limitations and cannot be said to be entirely representative of the broad range of interests in the city, it was hoped that in combination with policy documents and interviews, they would serve as an adequate base for assessing the goals and intentions behind these projects.

2. The Dilemmas of Culture-Led Regeneration

Which historical successes and failures associated with the doctrine of culture-led regeneration constitute the context for strategies in Dundee and Tilburg?

To understand the true significance of the 'living room' phenomenon, the policy doctrine associated with the flagship cultural projects in Dundee and Tilburg must first be examined. Culture-led regeneration had, by the time these buildings opened, proven itself a ubiquitous approach to the development of post-industrial cities in Europe and across the west since the end of the 1980s. The global economic restructuring of the 1970s and onwards led to the obsolescence of industrial and manufacturing economies in the cities of Western Europe and North America, predicated a new model for economic growth. Competition and polarisation, both within and between cities, became the reality for those left to the advances of the global neoliberal economy. In this environment, the city's image ascended to the top of the urban agenda as formerly industrial centres sought to clean up, revitalise, and attract investment, multinational business and creative talent to underwrite post-industrial economies characterised by such labels as 'service', 'knowledge' and 'creative.' The spectacularisation of the urban environment which the new global inter-urban competition prefigured has been the basis of strategies for culture-led redevelopment as well as the focus of intense critique from scholars who question the economic validity and social repercussions of this process. To understand how the V&A and LocHal place themselves within this history and respond to it with the 'living room' phenomenon, the concept of culture-led regeneration must first be elaborated to highlight the relevant origins, example and critiques.

2.1 The Urban Crisis

Two interrelated global economic trends created a crisis in the urban economy and precipitated the need for a new growth model. The first was the comprehensive programme of privatisation and deregulation that occurred under the imposition of neoliberalism, following the election of Margaret Thatcher in the UK in 1979 and Ronald Reagan in the US in 1981. This took place on a global scale under the auspices of the IMF and World Bank. The deregulation of financial markets, as well as advances in communication technology, facilitated heightened inter-urban competition as a small number of cities began to hold the command and control functions of the increasingly intertwined global economy.¹³ The handling and movement of international finance became increasingly profitable in and of itself as global networks facilitated greater speculation. As the traditional manufacturing and heavy industries were freed from state support and left to the unfettered hand of the market, they came up against a second economic trend: a new international division of labour. Formerly peripheral states began to rapidly industrialise, leading to the flight of industrial activity away from the 'former heartlands of global capitalism', such as Detroit or Manchester, and towards the developing economies.¹⁴ Accelerated globalisation had thus created the conditions where the former industrial zones of Europe and North America were stripped of their economic impetus and placed into competition with each other as they sought a new growth model under the neoliberal global economy.

The urban centres of post-industrial centres became derelict edge-zones characterised by disused polluted brownfield sites, factories and derelict waterfronts and port areas. The general trend in sub-urbanisation and the relocation

¹³ Saskia Sassen, 'The Global City: Introducing a Concept', *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 11, no. 2 (2005): 27-43.

¹⁴ Xuefei Ren and Roger Keil, *The Globalizing Cities Reader*, 2018, 4, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315684871>.

of employment and leisure facilities to the peripheral areas of the city that had occurred in the post-war period was accelerated by this economic restructuring, leaving urban city centres as forlorn dangerous places not to be visited at night. The overall picture of post-industrial cities by the mid-1980s was indeed bleak, with limited economic opportunities, widespread unemployment and physical and spatial degradation.

2.2 The Cultural Renaissance

For derelict post-industrial cities such as Glasgow and Liverpool, eradicating a pervasive image of crime and depravity was an extremely pressing need in this new economic climate. A new tool was found to remedy these ills: culture. The vacuous setting of the post-industrial city, both in physical and economic terms, created the context necessary for a new understanding of culture's role in society, where from the 1980s it began to be seen as a tool for achieving a revitalised image. Towards the end of the 1980s there was a new found acknowledgement of the contribution of the arts and culture to Britain's economy rather than just its social life. As part of this acknowledgment, what had previously been known simply as 'the arts' had by the 1990s become 'the creative industries' and now defined in policy documents as 'industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property.'¹⁵ This signalled the transition of culture to an economic commodity that could be exploited in the service of wealth and job creation in the post-industrial city.

¹⁵ Graeme Evans and Phyllida Shaw, 'The Contribution of Culture to Regeneration in the UK: A Review of Evidence' (LondonMet, January 2004), 4.

Simultaneous to this shift in the valuation of culture came a 'new urbanism' which sought to reclaim the city as the engine of the post-industrial economy.¹⁶ This was a 'wholesale reinvention' of the symbolic as well as material importance of cities and their urban centres.¹⁷ Urban policy and cultural policy became increasingly intertwined as these newly defined 'creative industries' were tasked with remedying the urban problems of dereliction and social malaise created by post-industrial economic restructuring.¹⁸

2.3 The Pioneers

Three strategies marked the early materialisation of this policy doctrine: 1. the hosting of international events, 2. the remodelling of urban districts into 'cultural quarters', 3. the building of iconic cultural infrastructure. By the turn of the century, several examples of these were already visible and set the trend for further developments.

Glasgow was a pioneering city for the meeting of culture with urban strategy. The former 'Second City of Empire' had been a world leading manufacturer of ships on the Clyde famous also for its trains from Springburn and sewing machines from Singer. Post-war economic restructuring had devastated the city's industrial base, killing these industries and leading to huge fiscal problems in the city as well as a notorious image for violence, squalor and substance abuse. An international event

¹⁶ Frank Webster, 'Re-Inventing Place: Birmingham as an Information City?', *City* 5, no. 1 (April 2001): 28, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13604810125315>.

¹⁷ Paul Chatterton and Robert Hollands, 'Theorising Urban Playscapes: Producing, Regulating and Consuming Youthful Nightlife City Spaces', *Urban Studies* 39, no. 1 (1 January 2002): 97, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00420980220099096>.

¹⁸ Malcolm Miles, 'Interruptions: Testing the Rhetoric of Culturally Led Urban Development', *Urban Studies* 42, no. 5-6 (May 2005): 889, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00420980500107375>.

was the catalyst for Glasgow's turn around, as it was the first city to use its year as European Capital of Culture in 1990 to advance regeneration, implementing a wide-ranging programme of temporary festival activities along with investments in permanent cultural infrastructure backed by 'unprecedented' public and private investment.¹⁹ Scholars claim it was able to produce a shift in its image through a celebration of culture under a broad definition which included elements particular to Glasgow's history such as design, shipbuilding and sport, and a Capital of Culture programme that attempted to reach out to marginalised communities in the city.²⁰ The festival contributed to an attempted place-making strategy on the banks of the Clyde river as the former industrial wasteland was reclaimed and brought back into the city's imagination.²¹ As such, scholars claim Glasgow's fortunes were 'turned', mainly through a transformation of the perception of the city, both from the outside and within.²² This was a deliberate and orchestrated strategy of combining events with urban regeneration which reached a pinnacle with the 2014 Commonwealth Games in the city. In 2016 leading UK newspaper *The Times* voted Finnieston - a former derelict industrial area to the north of the Clyde - Britain's 'hippest neighbourhood' owing to a wealth of arts venues, restaurants and cafes in the area.²³ This was a sign that Glasgow had totally reinvented itself as a bohemian destination, far from the miserable squalid place depicted by Ken Loach's films of the 1990s about alcoholics and petty criminals such as *My Name Is Joe* (1998) or

¹⁹ Beatriz García, 'Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration in Western European Cities: Lessons from Experience, Prospects for the Future', *Local Economy: The Journal of the Local Economy Policy Unit* 19, no. 4 (November 2004): 319, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0269094042000286828>.

²⁰ García, 319.

²¹ Georgiana Varna, 'Place-Making and Place-Breaking on the Banks of the Clyde', in *Urban Transformations Geographies of Renewal and Creative Change* (London: Routledge, 2017), 119.

²² Miles, 'Interruptions', 890.

²³ Laura Whateley, '20 Hippest Places to Live in Britain', *The Times*, 14 March 2016, sec. unknown section, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/20-hippest-places-to-live-in-britain-5dsjccxkrt8>.

Sweet Sixteen (2002). The focus on culture through high-profile events had been crucial to this revitalised urban image.

The 1992 Olympic Games were a similar catalyst for event-based regeneration in Barcelona which is now regarded as one of the most successful cases of culture-led regeneration.²⁴ The creation of a 'cultural cluster' in the central Raval neighbourhood was instrumental in this. Several cultural institutions were implanted in the area throughout the 1990s including the Museum of Contemporary Art (1995) and the Centre of Contemporary Culture of Barcelona (1994), attracting creative industries and workers to the area in the process. Previously considered marginal and dangerous, the area is now 'a unique and authentic urban space by virtue of the district's multicultural and Bohemian character.'²⁵ This was a coordinated policy of urban regeneration through the planned cultural cluster model. Today, Barcelona has one of the most revered city brands in Europe, based on Catalan culture such as the architecture of Gaudi and the celebrated cuisine, making it a leading global tourist destination. This has been a sudden transition that took place after 1992 in which culture played a primary role, as demonstrated by the coordinated culture cluster strategy deliberately implanted by the city to regenerate the former edge-zone of Raval.

In terms of iconic infrastructure, the most famous example is that of Bilbao. The 'Guggenheim effect' is the term coined to describe the rejuvenating impact of the Frank Gehry designed spectacle art gallery which opened in 1997 on the banks of the Nervión river in the declining port city. The combination of dramatic

²⁴ Joaquim Rius Ulldemolins, 'Culture and Authenticity in Urban Regeneration Processes: Place Branding in Central Barcelona', *Urban Studies* 51, no. 14 (November 2014): 3026, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098013515762>.

²⁵ Rius Ulldemolins, 3027.

architecture, renowned art collection and global publicity meant it could claim 'phenomenal success' particularly in economic terms as related to tax returns and job creation.²⁶ Its ability to attract tourists and foster a new image for the city were crucial in this.²⁷ It has also been noted that the museum had a positive impact on the art scene generally in the city which has grown as a result of the museum's influence.²⁸ In 2016 it was claimed the museum still attracts a million visitors a year and 'Bilbao is booming' owing in part to the museum's success in integrating itself into an already successful tourism infrastructure based on the Camino de Santiago and the nearby city of San Sebastian.²⁹ Similarly, in 2000, the Tate Modern art gallery opened in a former power-plant in Southwark, at that time one of London's poorest boroughs, on the banks of the Thames. The new gallery in its iconic repurposed industrial setting established itself as 'cool', brought employment opportunities to the area and shifted the cultural centre of London across the river.³⁰ These two flagship iconic cultural institutions serve once more as success stories of culture-led urban regeneration.

These early examples emerging from the 1990s in Glasgow, Barcelona, Bilbao and London are frequently cited as models to follow for cities in similar post-industrial predicaments. They serve as examples for the three strategies in which culture came together with urban policy at this moment in time to produce economically driven outcomes in the form of regeneration: iconic infrastructure, cultural clusters and high-profile city-wide events. They demonstrate a return to the

²⁶ Evdoxia Baniotopoulou, 'Art for Whose Sake? Modern Art Museums and Their Role in Transforming Societies: The Case of the Guggenheim Bilbao', *Journal of Conservation and Museum Studies* 7, no. 0 (1 November 2001): 1, <https://doi.org/10.5334/jcms.7011>.

²⁷ Beatriz Plaza, Manuel Tironi, and Silke N. Haarich, 'Bilbao's Art Scene and the "Guggenheim Effect" Revisited', *European Planning Studies* 17, no. 11 (November 2009): 1712, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09654310903230806>.

²⁸ Plaza, Tironi, and Haarich, 'Bilbao's Art Scene and the "Guggenheim Effect" Revisited'.

²⁹ Adrian Franklin, 'Journeys to the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao: Towards a Revised Bilbao Effect', *Annals of Tourism Research* 59 (July 2016): 90, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2016.04.001>.

³⁰ Miles, 'Interruptions', 891.

city and drive to reclaim and repurpose the waste spaces of industrial decay. In policy terms they set the trend for producing a new economic model for post-industrial cities and areas focussed on cultural institutions, image rejuvenation and tourist revenues. Forming the canon of celebrated examples, they constitute the backdrop to the seemingly similar strategies in Dundee and Tilburg.

2.4 The Policy Dilemmas

Although such successes had given the culture-led policy regime an impetus across the world, its actual implementation at the local level in cities less prestigious was not such a straight forward process. The policy 'dilemmas' identified by Franco Bianchini in 1993 demonstrate that there was no such thing as a 'one size fits all' model of infinite cultural regeneration.³¹ This was as an appreciation of the dangers of parachuting in this model on the basis of anecdotal evidence and instead serves as an acknowledgement of the messy reality of negotiating this fashionable paradigm with local specificities. The various critiques of culture-led regeneration that have appeared across a wide-range of scholarship broadly echo these dilemmas.

2.4.1 Economic

Firstly, the 'economic development dilemma' reflected the difficulty in balancing production and consumption in this new strategy as a conflict grew between the immediate economic gains of consumption activity for city centres and

³¹ Michael Parkinson and Franco Bianchini, eds., *Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration: The West European Experience* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1993), 202.

the long term sustainability of this model if it is not supported by cultural production.

The productive goals of culture-led redevelopment were well set out by two highly influential policy toolkits advanced by Charles Landry's 2000 book *The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators* and Richard Florida's 2002 book *The Rise of the Creative Class*. For Florida, cities had to attract the mobile and talented creative classes through the creation of cool and trendy urban environments with a focus on bohemian bars, restaurants and other entertainment offerings. He stressed the role of diversity and created his own systems to rank the creativity of cities based on such markers as the 'Gay Index'.³² Landry focused more on the 'soft infrastructure' of the public realm in which the city provided institutional support – such as physical spaces and facilities – for networks of creatives facilitating their 'bumping' or connections in 'cultural milieus'.³³ The argument underpinning both these theories was that such districts and offerings would lead principally to economic *production* through their contribution to the working of the creative or knowledge industries, attracting highly skilled professionals and leading to the creation of new and innovative firms to drive economic growth in the city.

Scholars have noted how, particularly in the British context, this did not materialise. The rise of culture and the prevalence of image over material reality was seen to represent the triumph of consumption over production. Whilst high-profile events, iconic museums and cultural clusters were possible in cities with the necessary cultural capital and financial backing, in the 'off the map' cities the policy doctrine was seen to be skewed in its final realisation. An example of this was the concept of the night-time economy, a somewhat warped cousin of the cultural

³² Richard L. Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2002).

³³ Charles Landry, *The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators*, 2nd ed (New Stroud, UK: London; Sterling, VA: Comedia; Earthscan, 2008).

economy. Towns and cities set about creating night-time entertainment zones and deregulating licensing hours in order to promote economic activity after-dark. This was however labelled 'regeneration on the cheap' in which many British town centres aligned themselves with the alcohol industry and corporate venues for their urban regeneration.³⁴ UK city centres thus became places primarily of consumption - particularly of alcohol - and although the creation of up-market or exclusive nightlife spaces was seen to improve a city's image, the opposite was often true with the moral panics in the early years of the 2000s at the descent of town centres into 'no-go areas' after-dark populated by a drunken violent youth.³⁵ This contrast between the productive possibilities of cultural districts and their actual manifestation in the alcohol-dominated entertainment zones of regenerating British town centres points to a split between the lofty ambitions of culture-led regeneration with its corporatised roll-out in the centres of UK towns. The perversity of this skewed manifestation of culture-led regeneration was that the spread of mainstream consumption had in fact led to a loss of diversity, social exclusion and a homogenisation which has actually *reduced* cultural production in the city.³⁶

What must be learned from this analysis of the night-time economy is that fashionable policy doctrines can be translated to local contexts in such a way that the economic justification for them is in fact lost in favour of strategies which provide the image or allure of their success. Projects that rely on the iconic to demonstrate

³⁴ Marion Roberts, 'From "Creative City" to "No-Go Areas" - The Expansion of the Night-Time Economy in British Town and City Centres', *Cities* 23, no. 5 (October 2006): 337, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2006.05.001>.

³⁵ Chatterton and Hollands, 'Theorising Urban Playscapes', 108.

³⁶ Laam Hae, 'Dilemmas of the Nightlife Fix: Post-Industrialisation and the Gentrification of Nightlife in New York City', *Urban Studies* 48, no. 16 (1 December 2011): 3461, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098011400772>.

their success simply through their very existence may not generate significant economic outcomes, let alone social and cultural ones.

2.4.2 Spatial

Another of Bianchini's dilemmas was 'spatial' which considers the uneven effects of culture-led regeneration on the city environment, as an increasing polarisation takes place between centre and periphery.³⁷ The implication that such regeneration is a gentrifying process poses the accusation that certain populations are excluded in favour of a revitalised urban image. The dilemma is to ensure that the whole city's population benefits from policies which are often designed to appeal to an elite pool of creative and knowledge workers.

More critical scholars contend that in reality there is no such dilemma but that in actual fact the construct of culture-led regeneration is a 'trojan horse' that seeks only to benefit a select few in the neoliberal economy. The 'new urbanism' of culture-led regeneration and its language of reclamation and rejuvenation serves as a form of urban revanchism which seeks to sanitise and exclude those who might previously have occupied the spaces of the cities reclaimed for culture.³⁸ This has been seen as the imposition of middle-class values on the urban core, but also as symptomatic of the colonisation of the public realm by the forces of the market. As city authorities behave in increasingly entrepreneurial ways in the global economy, their job under conditions of neoliberalism has become simply to 'lure consumption

³⁷ Parkinson and Bianchini, *Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration*, 202.

³⁸ Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1996), 32.

flows into its space.’³⁹ Consumption drives the construction of the contemporary city and its ‘urban glamour zones’⁴⁰ or ‘temples of consumption’⁴¹ that consist of

glittering office and hotel atriums, themed leisure zones, upscale shopping centres, gentrified housing, and aesthetically enchanting cultural districts.⁴²

For American sociologist Sharon Zukin, these ‘non-places’ of globalised urbanism constitute the ‘landscapes of power’ in which the consumption ideology of the neoliberal market economy has asserted its power over the shared civic values of public space.⁴³

Similarly, British sociologist Leslie Sklair argues a transnational capitalist class of investors and consumers assert their ideological dominance through the trope of iconic architecture: buildings and spaces deemed aesthetically spectacular and/or those designed by the transnational elite of starchitects including Daniel Libeskind (Jewish Museum Berlin, Royal Ontario Museum, Imperial War Museum Manchester), Zaha Hadid (London Aquatics Centre, Guangzhou Opera House, Glasgow Transport Museum) and Frank Gehry (Guggenheim Bilbao, Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris). The goal of such architecture, according to Sklair, is to turn all public space into consumer space including otherwise unsuspecting cultural spaces

³⁹ Steven Miles, ‘The Neoliberal City and the Pro-Active Complicity of the Citizen Consumer’, *Journal of Consumer Culture* 12, no. 2 (July 2012): 218, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540512446881>.

⁴⁰ Miles, 218.

⁴¹ Kevin Ward, ‘The Limits to Contemporary Urban Redevelopment “Doing” Entrepreneurial Urbanism in Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester’, *City* 7, no. 2 (July 2003): 209, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360481032000136778>.

⁴² Gordon MacLeod, ‘From Urban Entrepreneurialism to a “Revanchist City”? On the Spatial Injustices of Glasgow’s Renaissance’, *Antipode* 34, no. 3 (June 2002): 605, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8330.00256>.

⁴³ Sharon Zukin, ‘Changing Landscapes of Power: Opulence and the Urge for Authenticity’, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 33, no. 2 (June 2009): 544, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2009.00867.x>.

like museums and sporting venues. Standardised aesthetic strategies of glass and angular metal are used to create a spectacularised 'must-see' quality to see these buildings. The result is that museums are visited more for their buildings than their collections allowing them to incorporate more consumer functions such as larger gift-shops and cafes.⁴⁴ Such iconic projects are judged on their capacity to open up consumer spaces in the surrounding areas as regeneration comes to mean the expansion of retail opportunity. Culture-led regeneration in these analyses signifies the intrusion of the ideology of consumerism into the public spaces of the city in which image and the symbolic rule over the material reality.

These views position culture-led regeneration as a neoliberal project that favours economic values over social and civic ones. From this perspective, products such as the V&A museum or the LoCHal library are neoliberal spaces which are not designed to promote culture, foster creativity or serve as public spaces for the healthy civic life of the city. Instead they exist to promote consumption, maximise profits for investors and lure in foreign capital. In this way they fail to successfully negotiate the spatial policy dilemma. These accusations must be put into conversation with the strategies set out by the cities of Dundee and Tilburg. The language of the scholarship which hints that this is a subversive 'trojan horse' process means that engaging critically with the intentions of policy makers is vital.

Furthermore, the primacy of economic values over social and civic results in a number of negative externalities which must also be used to assess any contemporary products. First is a crisis of authenticity in the creative city. As each city in the global network competes for investment and talent by constructing apparently distinct brands and identities, the reality is the strategies they use and the architects they employ for their iconic projects are increasingly standardised.

⁴⁴ Leslie Sklair, 'Iconic Architecture and the Culture-Ideology of Consumerism', *Theory, Culture & Society* 27, no. 5 (September 2010): 146, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276410374634>.

Cultural infrastructure such as museums, galleries, regenerated waterfronts, repurposed market halls and bohemian coffee shops no longer actually have to be authentic as organic places of urban life, but simply function to *invoke* authenticity and to sell this as a commodity to be bought, photographed and consumed in service of the urban image, according to urban sociologist Steven Miles.⁴⁵ This rift between the surface image and underlying reality is the ever-present concern of such cultural critics who deride the vanity project of global inter-urban competition and the harm it causes to urban imaginaries and creative possibilities which are increasingly restricted. The values and virtues of public space are diluted and corrupted leaving only 'a simulacrum of civic public space' in its place – hybrid, vacuous, non-places that may appear public on the surface but which are contained and controlled by the logic of consumerism.⁴⁶ A library or design museum may easily fall into these designations. The question is: how, if at all, were they intended to be different?

Secondly, the primacy of economic values results in the social exclusion of those who cannot afford to take part in the cultural offerings of the regenerated city. The 'geographies of hype' produced by city-boosters through festivals, sporting events and trophy buildings have been shown to be oppressive for those not included in the urban agenda.⁴⁷ The 'non-places' built to reclaim urban city centres such as corporate entertainment zones, shopping centres and museums are increasingly structured by a mode of regulation associated with spatial and social control through formal mechanisms like security guards, surveillance, by-laws and the design of buildings.⁴⁸ The £1 billion Liverpool One shopping district was

⁴⁵ Miles, 'The Neoliberal City and the Pro-Active Complicity of the Citizen Consumer', 218.

⁴⁶ Miles, 218.

⁴⁷ Gordon Waitt, 'Urban Festivals: Geographies of Hype, Helplessness and Hope', *Geography Compass* 2, no. 2 (March 2008): 513–37, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2007.00089.x>.

⁴⁸ Chatterton and Hollands, 'Theorising Urban Playscapes', 108.

championed as one of the key developments of the city's year as Capital of Culture in 2008, but it has been shown to highlight the privatisation of public space in the city, with security guards working to exclude

gangs of 'hoodies' or 'chavs', minority groups, skaters, sex workers, alcoholics, drug users, homeless and fly posters who give the wrong impression to potential investors, tourists and shoppers.⁴⁹

Similarly in Glasgow, the city's homeless population is subject to disciplinary tactics and restrictions in line with the sanitisation of the city centre, representing the 'fundamental contradiction' of Glasgow's renaissance.⁵⁰ The cleaning-up and beautification of town centres has thus succeeded in reinforcing rather than undermining inequalities in the city as gentrification changes 'how the city works, and for whom it works, with less expensive and more inclusive outlets forced to relocate out of city centres as rents rise.'⁵¹ Regeneration has been shown to marginalise many sections of the urban populations, reducing the shared value of communal public space to the domain of wealthy consumers and tourists, creating inhospitable and exclusive city centres.

This overview of the spatial dilemma confronting policy makers highlights the pitfalls in aligning the urban economy in favour of culture, tourism, and the creative industries. Despite the fact that diversity of both people and spaces is seen as a vital asset of a city by theorists such as Richard Florida, this form of urbanism is a form of sanitisation which produces inauthentic 'non-places' and excludes those without a

⁴⁹ Philip Boland, "'Capital of Culture—You Must Be Having a Laugh!'" Challenging the Official Rhetoric of Liverpool as the 2008 European Cultural Capital', *Social & Cultural Geography* 11, no. 7 (November 2010): 635, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2010.508562>.

⁵⁰ MacLeod, 'From Urban Entrepreneurialism to a "Revanchist City"?', 614.

⁵¹ Ward, 'The Limits to Contemporary Urban Redevelopment "Doing" Entrepreneurial Urbanism in Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester', 209.

middle-class sensibility or spending capacity. Once again it is clear that the actual existing manifestation of creative city policy is quite capable of damaging the shared economic and social opportunities that it is supposed to create in the first place. In resolving this dilemma it becomes vital to ask: how do urban policy makers intend to include the whole city in their narratives of regeneration?

2.5 A New Path? The Urban 'Living Room'

The V&A and LocHal's use of the concept urban 'living room' implies that policy makers, particularly in these small cities, intend on addressing these accusations by creating inclusive and welcoming spaces. It suggests that the culture-led regeneration framework has evolved and adapted to the concerns and wider-debate of urban theorists, commentators and city populations. This assumption is one that must be thoroughly tested, as the language and rhetoric of city boosters may be well-separated from the reality of their products. This has been shown to be the case in the Dutch context where the Markthal in Rotterdam was shown to represent the phenomenon of a public space 'simulacrum'. The spectacular iconic building which includes a vast market, impressive ceiling mural and multitude of surrounding apartments opened in 2014 lauded with the image-changing potential of the Guggenheim,⁵² apparently offering a carnival of choice with the conviviality and sociability of a traditional shared market space in the heart of the city. Due to the reality of its predictable and unaffordable offerings, commentators claimed it actually represents:

⁵² Paul Miles, 'Will Rotterdam's Markthal Be Equivalent of Bilbao's Guggenheim?', *Financial Times*, 18 September 2015, <https://www.ft.com/content/ba62aed2-57a0-11e5-9846-de406ccb37f2>.

gentrification, segregation, and neoliberalism; fake authenticity, sustained by reverent journalism...a vulgar shopping mall packed as spiritual experience.⁵³

Here the language of public space evoked by the 'market hall' was in fact not realised, and was instead shown to be simply the marketing rhetoric used to drive the success of a consumer space. This aptly demonstrates the prevalence of landscapes of consumption that dominate regenerated city centres where the very concept of shared public space has been colonised by the logic of the market. The need to interrogate the use of the living room discourse is made clear by this example.

Grouping together all iconic cultural projects is also a flawed approach, since nuance must obviously be used when comparing a library with a design museum. Compared to the types of cultural buildings critiqued by scholars such as Sklair as edifices of neoliberal consumerism, libraries have been offered up as examples of the combination of iconic with public benefit. They have been shown to replicate many of the iconic place-making functions of trophy buildings whilst contributing to community cohesion and supporting local innovation.⁵⁴ For example the RIBA Stirling Prize winning Peckham Library which opened in 2000 in London supports 'learning and fun' for a local diverse Afro-Caribbean community and functions as a 'splash of colour in the otherwise monotone area.'⁵⁵ The Bibliotheek Amsterdam was successful in regenerating a forgotten docklands area, creating a multipurpose

⁵³ Arjen van Veelen en Zihni Özdil, 'Die Rotterdamse Markthal is een bedrieglijke yuppenhut,' NRC (7 October 2014), cited in Agnese Cretella and Mirjam Stella Buenger, 'Food as Creative City Politics in the City of Rotterdam', *Cities* 51 (January 2016): 6.

⁵⁴ Dorte Skot-Hansen, Rasmussen Casper Hvenegaard, and Henrik Jochumsen, 'The Role of Public Libraries in Culture-led Urban Regeneration', *New Library World* 114, no. 1/2 (1 January 2013): 7–19, <https://doi.org/10.1108/03074801311291929>.

⁵⁵ Skot-Hansen, Hvenegaard, and Jochumsen, 11.

'lounge' space for the creative classes to work or normal people to read magazines and books.⁵⁶ Other such examples of successful city library projects can be found in Birmingham, Aarhus and Helsinki. These examples offer alternatives and responses to a narrative which critiques the devaluation of public space and the loss of urban centres to consumerism. Nonetheless, lived realities and their own structures of surveillance and control must equally be interrogated.

3.6 Conclusion

Culture-led regeneration has been a global urban phenomenon since the 1980s, deployed to counter the dereliction and economic malaise brought on by economic restructuring that left former industrial centres in the West in desperate need of a new economic purpose. Apparent success stories in Glasgow, Barcelona and Bilbao created a canon of replicable examples for policy makers in even the most peripheral of European cities. The notion of a straightforward replication was warned about by proponents such as Bianchini who claimed there were dilemmas to be balanced in implementing this policy. Critique over the last two decades has often emphasised the inability of urban governments to avoid a slide towards gentrification, exclusion, and economies driven by consumption, and indeed often accuses developers of actively encouraging these outcomes through the use of iconic architecture and the creation of urban glamour zones.

Onto this narrative is imposed 'the living room.' What does this phenomenon say about the ability - or desire - of a small peripheral city to negotiate this history of iconic successes and warped failures? How is the line between iconic profit-maximiser and utilitarian civic space balanced by these flagship cultural projects? To answer these questions, the local histories of these projects must be explored.

⁵⁶ Skot-Hansen, Hvenegaard, and Jochumsen, 13.

3. The LocHal Tilburg

Why was an urban 'living room' built in Tilburg?

The opening of the LocHal library in January 2019 in the former workshop of the Dutch railway in the central railway zone in Tilburg was the result of a tumultuous process of urban development which had gripped the city from the mid-1990s. As the city sought to broaden its economic base and improve its image, the development – or sometimes the lack-of – was seen to epitomise the future vision of the city and was the site of multifaceted struggles between competing actors and interests. The central location of the area seemed to magnify its importance and put these developments under the microscope of public debate. This narrative is a rich case study in the urban development of a small city, highlighting the negotiation between fashionable paradigms, ambitions, economic realities and local interests. The 'living room' was the deliberate outcome of this divisive process in which the need to foster the city's endogenous strength became apparent. Uniting the population by championing their shared history, placing it on display as a functional element of the city's living room was one way to do this: an ultimate acknowledgement of the importance of the city's past for its future.

3.1 The Spoorzone: Tilburg's 'Forbidden City'

The Spoorzone refers to an area of land, around 75 hectares, that runs for 3 kilometres along the central line of the railway in Tilburg. The main development area under question here is known as the *werkplaats* – the 13 hectares most closely adjacent to the railway station, which up until 2011 was owned and operated by Nederlandse Spoorwegen (NS), the Dutch railway corporation (Image 3). The centrality of this space meant that long before then planners and citizens alike were anxious to re-claim the space for the public domain and relocate the railway workshops. Part of the rationale for this was the socially divisive impact of the



Image 3: Werkplaats area of the Spoorzone. Source: Gemeente Tilburg, 'De:Werkplaats - Masterplan Spoorzone, Tilburg', 2011, 13.

railway, which was seen to carve the city-centre into two areas, to the particular detriment of the northern part of the city which was considered ghettoised and isolated from the rest of the city by the division. A director of a local architect firm in a 1996 local news article on urban development commented:

The railroad in Tilburg is a real barrier: physical but also social. You have two types of city: the real one on the south side, and a 'working-class

neighbourhood' on the north side... In the long term it is socially unacceptable.⁵⁷

This opinion reflects the anxiety around the divisive nature of the Spoorzone, urging the municipality to work towards overcoming this physical and metaphorical border in the city. The closed-off and private nature of the area, dubbed 'the Forbidden City', added to its divisive status, as made clear by the first masterplan for the redevelopment in 2011:

The area has been a closed, forbidden area in the middle of the city with fencing for a century and a half, with its own character of rails, trains and largely invisible activities.⁵⁸

This adds an almost sinister quality to the *werkplaats*, with its inner workings concealed from the general public, but highlights its inaccessible nature as an urban frontier in the heart of the city. Altogether the impression is that this area was an anomaly in Tilburg city centre, a point of mystery and contention and one that the municipality would soon see as a vital asset to be tapped into.

The desire to conquer this frontier came from a broader climate of urban development in the city which was taking place in the 1990s. Developing the city centre of Tilburg into an attractive, cohesive area came to be one of the main goals of the city administration at this time. A 1994 article calling for a redevelopment of the Spoorzone quotes: 'Tilburg calls itself a "modern industrial city", but without a beating heart, the city has no future.'⁵⁹ The parallel drawn between this central area and the future of the city is indicative of the broader trends taking place across

⁵⁷ Stephan Jongerius, 'Wethouders En Critici Aan Het Woord / Councilors and Critics Have Their Say', *Brabants Dagblad*, 26 November 1996, Tilburg edition.

⁵⁸ Marieke Moorman, Gemeente Tilburg, BDP.khandekar, and Credo Integrale Planontwikkeling BV, 'De:Werkplaats - Masterplan Spoorzone, Tilburg', 26 April 2011, 5.

⁵⁹ Max Pauman, 'Tilburg Wil Stationsbuurt Met 'Charismatische Uitstraling'/ Tilburg Wants Station Area with "Charismatic Appearance"', *NRC Handelsblad*, 2 November 1994.

Europe and North America in which there was a return to city centres as engines of growth, reversing suburbanisation through the arrival of the 'network society' in which city centres were cleaned up and given a new economic impetus. As such, a vast, isolated industrial area in the heart of the centre came to be unacceptable. The plan suggested in this same article, to build 80,000 square meters of offices on the site along with a hotel and conference centre, is demonstrative of this shift taking place towards the service economy. Simultaneous to this was also the utilisation of culture in this project for which Tilburg was a frontrunner in the Netherlands. In 1997 the city received government funding for a culture cluster, the Veemarktwartier, consisting of a pop music venue, the Tilburg Arts Foundation, exhibition spaces and business incubators on the eastern side of the city centre. Although this area formed organically through a number of cultural entrepreneurs, the arrival of central funds marked it as 'one of the first Dutch examples of a full-blown recognition of the possible role of the arts and culture in urban regeneration' according to geographer Hans Mommaas.⁶⁰ As such this period in the 1990s can be seen as crucial for instigating urban renewal in the city centre and initiating calls to reclaim the Spoorzone in the service of economic regeneration.

3.2 Tilburg: The Office City

Despite the apparent success of the pioneering culture cluster, early discussions around redevelopment of the Spoorzone focused on the construction of an office district. An article in the *Financial Times* from 2002 succinctly outlines the economic condition of the city, claiming that Tilburg was 'industrial par excellence' owing to the strong presence of chemical, metal and transport industries in the city. The impression is that the city at this time was still very much

⁶⁰ Hans Mommaas, 'Cultural Clusters and the Post-Industrial City: Towards the Remapping of Urban Cultural Policy', *Urban Studies* 41, no. 3 (March 2004): 512, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0042098042000178663>.

industrial, and without a catastrophic need for a new economic. Nevertheless, the article indicates the desire to reduce the dependency on these industries by targeting the office sector. The Spoorzone redevelopment is sited as crucial in this strategy:

In order to attract more large-scale business service providers, the development of the railway zone as a high-quality office boulevard has been elevated to spearhead office policy. For the period up to 2015, 120,000 m² of office space should be built here.⁶¹

This points to the types of businesses that the Tilburg administration was attempting to attract to the city: business services, in the form of the banking, legal and communication sectors.

It is also immediately clear that such a strategy was a concern to both professional urban developers and the city's general population. Residents of the Theresia district directly to the north of the Spoorzone complained that they felt excluded from this development plan and were worried that they would be burdened with the negative overspill of office developments in the form of traffic and parking congestion. The resident's association commented in 2000 that 'Tilburg does not involve us enough in plans'⁶² and several years later in 2006 established their own website to campaign for greater transparency and involvement.⁶³ The Spoorzone can be seen as a point of conflict between an administration with goals of attracting businesses through the building of an office district, those who questioned the city's ability to compete in these sectors, and a local community disillusioned with their lack of involvement.

⁶¹ 'Tilburg Schroeft Kantoorambities Terug / Tilburg Reduces Office Ambitions', *Het Financieele Dagblad*, 11 February 2002, Netherlands edition.

⁶² 'Theresia Is Boos over Stationszone / Theresia Boos the Spoorzone', *Brabants Dagblad*, 22 February 2000, Tilburg edition.

⁶³ Toine van Berkel, 'Website Involves Theresia in Spoorzone / Website Betrekt Theresia Bij Spoorzone', *Brabants Dagblad*, 25 October 2006, Tilburg edition.

For many, the strategy of becoming an office hub was equated with the a negative, uninspiring image of the city that had become entrenched in those both inside and outside. At this point, many began to argue for a new strategy that would complement a revitalised image. In response to a national retail market survey from 2004, in which the city scored poorly, a headline reported: 'Tilburg residents are not proud of their own city.'⁶⁴ A local councillor for economic affairs responded that: 'It is desperately needed that things have to change. We are trying to make the city more attractive.'⁶⁵ The notion of creativity was emphasised in an opinion piece by the City Manager for the municipality, who claimed 'Tilburg cannot compete with cities such as Breda and Den Bosch when it comes to a beautiful historic city centre and a compact shopping area' but that 'this also has a positive side: it means potential opportunities for Tilburg when it comes to innovation in the cultural, architectural and urban areas.'⁶⁶ This suggests the way that not being a good shopping city, and falling behind in the competition with neighbouring cities to develop office districts, could in fact inspire originality and innovation. To achieve this, the city had to find a new paradigm.

3.3 Tilburg: The Creative City

In March 2005, a local arts organisation *Forum*, organised an exhibition in which it presented a vision for a creative district in the *werksplaats*. Titled 'Het Nieuw Atelier' or 'The New Atelier', it focused on the 'past, present and future' of Den Ateljee, another popular term for the *werkplaats* or NS railway zone, and included

⁶⁴Anton Jungehans, 'Tilburgers Zijn Niet Trots Op Hun Eigen Stad / Tilburg Residents Are Not Proud of Their Own City', *Brabants Dagblad*, 17 November 2004, Tilburg edition.

⁶⁵ Hans Rube, 'De Gemoederen: "Leuke Winkels, Maar Slecht Stadsbestuur" / The Mood: "Nice Shops, but Bad City Administration"', *Brabants Dagblad*, 13 October 2004, Tilburg edition.

⁶⁶ Jungehans, 'Tilburgers Zijn Niet Trots Op Hun Eigen Stad / Tilburg Residents Are Not Proud of Their Own City'.

an exhibition, walking tour, and a debate. Member of the organisation and local artist Ernest Potters claimed that the goal was 'to convince the people of Tilburg that the future of the railway zone lies in culture.'⁶⁷ Accordingly he suggests creating a complex which would include a workplace for artists, in collaboration with the textile or Du Pont museums and the local art school, an exhibition space, a theatre and a cinema:

We can also leave the area to project developers. But then you know that you will lose control. The studio is a unique place in the city. It is an industrial monument that is 150 years old. We have to keep that and create a new destination for inventing.

Crucial here is Potter's notion of control, which once again highlights the workshop's status as a point of conflict in the city, in this case between the forces of creativity that would see the workshop nurtured and maintained, and those of corporate interests in the form of for-profit 'project developers' who would see it demolished and replaced with offices. Potters emphasises the need for 'dreaming out loud' in designing a new area in the city which can be valued by its residents.

It seems such dreaming was happening in the city council also around this time, as a change in leadership took place that brought, on a surface level at least, a new attitude towards the development. Ruud Vreeman became mayor of Tilburg in June 2004, and supported a plan to 'allow the Spoorzone to grow into a place where knowledge, culture and creativity are central.'⁶⁸ This kind of assertion seems purposefully ambiguous in order to make the urban strategies seem modern and relevant in response to simultaneous worries in the city about its poor image and the possibility of grey offices. The city's culture councillor H. Backx also reiterated

⁶⁷ Gerrit van den Hoven, 'NS-Zone Biedt Tilburg Grote Culturele Dromen / NS Zone Offers Tilburg Great Cultural Dreams', *Brabants Dagblad*, 16 March 2005, Tilburg edition.

⁶⁸ Rob Oostelbos, 'Onderdak Creatieve Bedrijven / Shelter Creative Companies', *Brabants Dagblad*, 23 December 2004, Tilburg edition.

the possibility of a new strategy, hinting that this could be achieved through the arrival of a 'culture strip' in which 'people come to eat, drink, dance and art, but also shop and especially work.' It was announced later that year that the policy was to construct an arts centre on the site, which was to include a cinema, theatre, exhibition spaces and artist studios.⁶⁹ For a moment then, culture was to be the key paradigm for the redevelopment of the Spoorzone.

When assessing the origins of this enthusiasm, Vreeman himself refers directly to the work of Richard Florida. An article on the mayor claims: 'He heard the American speak in Amsterdam in 2003 about the flourishing of the dilapidated industrial city of Pittsburgh and immediately sat on the edge of his seat.'⁷⁰ This anecdote highlights the importance of Florida's thinking on even provincial local politicians in the Netherlands, who were gripped by his ideas to the extent of excitedly attending his live performances in Amsterdam like an international pop star. This generally highlights the popularity of his theory of the creative class, and improving the image of the city to attract them, and provides a tangible origin for the mayor's enthusiastic support of culture which must surely have been replicated in national, as well as international, policy circles. This was a moment then, when culture and Richard Florida's notion of its utility for city development, was high in the policy agenda.

3.4 Over-Development

Simultaneous to these developments were a number of not-so-cultural projects that were proposed to further revitalise the city centre. These were

⁶⁹ Ben Ackermans, 'Tilburg Wil in Hal Op Terrein van NS Een Kunstencentrum / Tilburg Wants an Arts Center in the NS Grounds', *Brabants Dagblad*, 6 May 2005, Tilburg edition.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

ambitious, high-profile, projects designed to attract people to the city. In March 2007, the city council announced €70 thousand to conduct a feasibility study for the construction of a 'sports and events palace', including a velodrome, running track and space for six thousand seats for large concerts.⁷¹ Importantly, this would have to be 'within walking distance' from the Spoorzone. 'Ambitious and impressive' plans for the Tilburg Dome were later revealed in 2008, which was to become part of an entertainment complex that would 'become a major driver of the Spoorzone.'⁷² The concert venue would be larger than the Heineken Music Hall in Amsterdam, an excited local journalist observed, highlighting the scale of the ambition surrounding the project. Whilst this might fall under the bracket of culture, the corporate backing (from Black Box Real Estate, partner of concert promoter Mojo) definitely positions this as top-down exogenous culture from large travelling acts, rather than fostering local talent. Similarly, residents appeared horrified at the plan, at this same moment in 2007, to construct a one hundred thousand square-foot 'mega-mall' in Tilburg North. This would have made it the largest shopping centre in the Netherlands – much to the concern of retail organisations and municipalities in the rest of Brabant.⁷³ Several reports indicate much political tension in the region around this project, to which Mayor Vreeman retorted 'Now that Tilburg is doing something, all arrows are pointed at us', somehow accusing the neighbouring cities of jealousy. This kind of reply highlights the scale of the ambition in the city: that it would rise above its small-time neighbours through high-ticket trophy developments, typical of lavish investor-driven plans seeking high returns. It is curious, given the wider focus on the centre of the Spoorzone, that city

⁷¹ 'Plan Voor "volkspaleis" in Centrum Tilburg / Plan for "People's Palace" in the Center of Tilburg', *General Dutch Press Office ANP*, 28 March 2007.

⁷² Hans Rube, 'Een Arena Op Palen En Popmuziek in Een Aparte Box / An Arena on Stilts and Pop Music in a Separate Box', *Brabants Dagblad*, 19 November 2008, Tilburg edition.

⁷³ Marten van de Wier, 'Mega-Mall Leidt Tot Ruzie Tussen Brabantse Steden; Detailhandel Tilburgs Winkelcentrum Zou Stadscentra Leeg Trekken / Mega-Mall Leads to Arguments between Brabant Cities; Retail Trade in Tilburg's Shopping Center Is Said to Empty City Centers', *Trouw*, 1 July 2008.

should have wanted to allow an out-of-town mega-mall, which surely adds further colour to the impression of a frenzied, lavish, city development plan, with its focus on glamour and prestige rather than coherence and rationality.

3.5 De Kruikenzeiker: Negotiating Tilburg's Heritage

With this sudden lust for popularity, the issue of the city's identity comes into sharp focus. An opinion piece written by a local journalist and marketer Toine van Corven in 2010 still bemoaned the lack of ambition from city hall claiming that it should 'show some balls' in order to improve the city's image, after a study comparing the quality of the tourist image of eighteen Dutch cities had placed Tilburg in number fourteen. The author surmises the impression of the city:

The outside guard mainly expects a dull city. The funfair, conviviality, pitchers, textile industry (still) and Willem II, that's about it. The image is disastrous.⁷⁴

The natural conclusion here is that these traditional aspects of Tilburg culture are antiquated and not fit for purpose in the modern inter-city competition for tourists and creative classes. Corven seeks 'bigger, more compelling thinking' and asks 'Could Tilburg finally be given a serious nightclub, a night restaurant, a brothel if necessary? And culture too.' Culture is unsurprisingly placed at the end of this long list of dubious possibilities in the new city vision, reflecting the uneasy coalition between culture-led redevelopment and its night-time consumption practices focused on alcohol, and somewhat surprisingly, prostitution.

This juxtaposition between out-dated small-town heritage and modern, 'bigger' image is a familiar trope from the commentary at this time. Jan Doms,

⁷⁴ Toine van Corven, 'Samen Werken Aan Juist Beeld van Tilburg / Working Together on a Correct Image of Tilburg', *Brabants Dagblad*, 30 October 2010, Tilburg edition.

founder of *Stadsdynamica* – a Tilburg based think-tank on urban development issues – visited Manchester with a delegation to investigate the city's redevelopment, and saw it as an example of a success in areas where Tilburg had failed:

We were there [Manchester] to get ideas for cultural and creative activity in the Veemarktkwartier. The city council then offers us an advert containing a *Kruikenzeiker*. You don't want to be known like that. This is folklore from a lesser past. Tilburg should portray itself as a powerful city with creative people.⁷⁵

Kruikenzeiker (literally translated as 'person who pees in a jar') is the nickname for a resident of Tilburg, and refers to the city's textile past where residents in the 18th century would collect their urine in jars to use for the cleaning of wool. It is now also a term describe a negative person inclined to complaining, which may not be a bad term to describe Doms in this article. He seems embarrassed by this historic image of Tilburg, when it is placed in contrast to the post-industrial revival of another textile town, Manchester, and its modern associations with media, music, and the arts. This nostalgic vision of Tilburg's heritage was no longer fit for purpose in a city, according to one article, with the 'unrestrained ambition to grow and to develop itself more emphatically as a music city, sports city, student city, industrial city and economic centre.'⁷⁶ That the city could have been all of these things seems unlikely, but what was certain was that its past was of no use to the malls and sports stadia of its future.

⁷⁵ Hans Rube, 'Vele Stipjes Aan de Horizon van Tilburg / Many Dots on the Horizon of Tilburg', *Brabants Dagblad*, 2 February 2010, Tilburg edition.

⁷⁶ Raoul du Pré, "'Het Is Een Mooie Burgervader'"; Profiel Peter Noordanus Nieuwe Burgemeester van Tilburg / "It Is a Beautiful Citizen Father"; Profile Peter Noordanus New Mayor of Tilburg', *De Volkskrant*, 1 July 2010.

3.6 Tilburg: The Student City

In a column addressing the incoming mayor, the chairman of the board of directors of local university Fontys, Marcel Wintels, stakes his own claim for the future vision of the city: one with higher education as the principal driver of urban development. The vision for a student city can be seen from the turn of the century in Tilburg, and serves almost as an antidote to the creative, or culture-led, city. Rather than Tilburg's student qualities remaining a 'well-kept secret', Wintels argues students need to be purposefully placed at the heart of city policy in Tilburg:

Higher education can be even more intertwined with the DNA of the city. Students no longer have to go unnoticed on the outskirts of the city.⁷⁷

One such material way to attract students was to turn the Spoorzone into a central university campus, and move Fontys University to the city centre where it could be a magnet for students to commute by train and walk just a short distance to their classes and the rest of the offerings available in the Spoorzone redeveloped in their image. This was an expensive and ambitious development, for which the council would pay the university €20 million.⁷⁸ One commentator remarked that the development was 'increasingly taking on the character of an educational and knowledge area' reliant on the cooperation of the university, college and local administration.⁷⁹ Students as the engine for regeneration is yet another vision for

⁷⁷ Marcel Wintels, "'Breng Tilburg Met Ons Naar Olympisch Niveau" / "Take Tilburg to Olympic Level with Us"', *Brabants Dagblad*, 14 July 2010.

⁷⁸ Ben Ackermans, 'Geld Naar Mensen of Naar "prestige" / Money to People or to "Prestige"', *Brabants Dagblad*, 6 November 2010.

⁷⁹ Rob Oostelbos, 'Spoorzone - College Wil Bieb Achter Station / Spoorzone - College Wants Library behind Station', *Brabants Dagblad*, 18 December 2010.

the city imposed onto the Spoorzone which once again serves as the canvas for future visions of the city.

In 2008 a major media campaign was launched to promote the city's young-person-friendly assets. The need for such a campaign was motivated by the same anxiety that had prompted plans to build a mega-mall and a sports stadium, that is the lack of an old city centre that might allow Tilburg to compete with other heritage-centred cities in the Netherlands: 'Tilburg is not Utrecht or Groningen. We are historically not known as a pleasant student city' claimed Mayor Vreeman, demonstrating this complex in relation to other similarly-sized Dutch cities.⁸⁰ A 2010 article claims 'there is a real battle for students in Brabant' and sites the loss of a social studies course to Eindhoven, losing with it 500 students, of great alarm to this particular commentator.⁸¹ The author accuses the municipality of under-appreciating their contribution: 'somewhere in 2008...the town hall slowly realizes that the city can benefit much more from the 25,000 students', with employment in the higher education sector accounting for 7.3 percent of jobs in the city at this time. This same year a marketing campaign targeting students was launched by Mayor Vreeman :

We must promote all facets of our city...nice bars, good living facilities, youth culture and sports opportunities are very important for the choice. And of course a city must have beautiful girls.⁸²

⁸⁰ Agnes de Goede, 'Tonnen Voor Campagne Om Studenten Te Trekken / Tons for Campaign to Attract Students', *Brabants Dagblad*, 24 May 2008.

⁸¹ Linda van Gorkum and Alex van Lanen, 'STUDENTENSTEDEN Populariteit Als Studentenstad Is Voor Veel Gemeenten Goud Waard - Strijd Om de Student Is Een Dans Om Vele Miljoenen / STUDENT CITIES Popularity as a Student City Is Worth Gold to Many Municipalities - Struggle for the Student Is a Dance for Many Millions', *Brabants Dagblad*, 7 January 2010.

⁸² Goede, 'Tonnen Voor Campagne Om Studenten Te Trekken / Tons for Campaign to Attract Students'.

The notion of offering amenities such as these relates very much to ideas around the creative city, where cultural milieu was to be fostered through the creation of trendy, liveable central areas (with an extremely masculine focus in this case⁸³).

2008 marks a key moment in which this began to take shape.

As one vision ascends, another fades away. The arrival of the knowledge concept was severely detrimental to the creative one, and the contest between the two represents a key struggle for influence in the Spoorzone. By contemporaries, this was viewed as a debate between the values of economic rationality and culture and creative vitality. In 2010, the news broke that the municipality was not designating space for cultural institutions in the Spoorzone. One columnist claimed 'the word "culture" has been erased from the municipality's short-term memory.'⁸⁴ The shifted policy was represented by the updated slogan for the redevelopment: 'Knowledge-Plus' indicating the centrality of education and innovation to redevelopment plans. Continued desire to attract the clothing chain Primark to the area puzzled this same columnist, remarking: 'That falls under Plus.' The curious combination of a discount retail store with innovative educational institutions spoke apparently to the over-financially driven motivations of the city administration who had once again reverted to using the Spoorzone as a site to generate capital through consumption. The scale of repulsion to this idea was demonstrated by a joint letter written by eight of the city's leading cultural practitioners who claimed the developers risked the creation of a 'a desolate area where there is only activity during the day.'⁸⁵ Accounting for this they claimed:

⁸³ Critics have often spoken in class terms about the inequality that arises through policies designed to attract the creative classes, but Vreeman's throwaway comment about beautiful girls, matched in tone with the plea to bring a brothel to the city, poses an interesting question about how this form of urban development is gendered in its bias towards male knowledge and creative workers.

⁸⁴ Ed Schilders, 'Ambities / Ambitions', *Brabants Dagblad*, 23 December 2010.

⁸⁵ Gerard Tonen, 'Gemeenteraad Moet Deur Niet Definitief in Slot Doen - Cultuurkwartier Uit Spoorzone / City Council Should Not Lock the Door Permanently - Cultuurkwartier from Spoorzone', *Brabants Dagblad*, 15 January 2011, Tilburg edition.

We heard several local politicians wonder aloud what all these investments in the cultural climate have actually delivered. It is a pity that politicians often think in periods of four years.

Here the cultural institutions claim they are only being judged based on economic rationale, rather than the softer, social outcomes which they are most obviously implicated in. The complaints they identify from the local politicians indicate the presence of a rejection of the creative city model, a re-appraisal of the elevation of culture's place to the top of the urban agenda that had been seen the reign of Mayor Vreeman. The sudden need for economic outcomes suggests there was a never a proper appreciation of culture in the city, but a thinly veiled acceptance of its economic utilisation.

The first Masterplan for the area, assembled by the city council along with the appointed developers including VolkerWessels, made concrete this shift highlighting the primacy of the 'Knowledge Plus' profile in which the Spoorzone was 'responding to the trend that Tilburg is developing into a knowledge economy.'⁸⁶ This shift in policy had tangible outcomes, including the city losing the Netherlands Institute for Animated Film who indicated they would be forced to move their studios to Eindhoven instead of the Spoorzone.⁸⁷ Culture, then, was taken off the urban agenda and its place was erased from the Spoorzone.

⁸⁶ Gemeente Tilburg, BDP.khandekar, and Credo Integrale Planontwikkeling BV, 'De:Werkplaats - Masterplan Spoorzone, Tilburg', 26.

⁸⁷ Ton Crone, 'Investeer in Essentie Samenleven / In Essence, Invest Living Together', *Brabants Dagblad*, 23 October 2010, Tilburg edition.

3.7 The Impact of the 2008 Financial Crisis

This shift in policy must be taken against the backdrop of the 2008 global financial crisis. In 2009 the impact of the crisis on the Spoorzone redevelopment was suggested as somewhat of an inevitability: 'the danger of stagnation is great...the financial crisis can have major consequences.'⁸⁸ Indeed, the consequences appeared to be a curtailment of ambition and an increasing scepticism of the value of culture when finances were under pressure. An article discussing drastic cut-backs in council expenditure began to ask: 'should we still invest in "prestige projects" or instead do everything we can to preserve the social foundation in the city?.'⁸⁹ The author of this piece once again labels cultural spending as frivolous when compared to supporting the city's population through a time of scarcity. Another article observes that 'suddenly, the culture sector is known as a grinder of subsidies and it is easy prey for the parties who have to use the austerity knife.'⁹⁰ The economic and political pressures caused by the global financial crisis were causing a re-evaluation of the utility of cultural expenditure, and forcing a change in the plans for the Spoorzone redevelopment.

The atmosphere of crisis and uncertainty is palpable, demonstrating the severity of the impact of the crisis and its corresponding nation-wide austerity. One interviewee in an opinion piece claimed: 'There is a danger that Tilburg will sink in the coming years', focussing on the notion of stagnation: 'standing still is like going backwards.'⁹¹ In 2011, one piece declared that 'the urban dreams in Tilburg are

⁸⁸ Gerrit van den Hoven, 'KUNSTSERIE - 'Controverseis Voorwaarde Vitaliteit'e / ART SERIES - "Controversy a Requirement for Vitality"', *Brabants Dagblad*, 7 August 2009, Tilburg edition.

⁸⁹ Ackermans, 'Geld Naar Mensen of Naar "prestige" / Money to People or to "Prestige"'.

⁹⁰ Ben Ackermans, 'Ambitie Stad Komt Onder Zware Druk Te Staan / City's Ambition Is under Heavy Pressure', *Brabants Dagblad*, 20 February 2010, Tilburg edition.

⁹¹ Ben Ackermans, '"Inzetten Op Spoorzone, Dat Mag Geld Kosten" / "Betting on Spoorzone Can Cost Money"', *Brabants Dagblad*, 20 February 2010, Tilburg edition.

over', blaming 'the economic malaise and the huge government cuts.'⁹² In a melancholic fashion the author writes:

The dream of metropolitan areas has come to an end. Citizens have already shot down the plan for the mall, the city council wrote off the T-Dome itself, Nieuw-Stappegoor [the local swimming pool] and the top sports ambitions are further slumped.

This is a painful summary of the state of the urban agenda in Tilburg following the 2008 financial crisis which had forced the council to curtail its ambitions, here embodied in the failure to realise the mall and the decision not to invest in the sports stadium. This negativity, the sense of failed ambitions and stagnation, would ultimately create the conditions necessary to re-evaluate the inclination towards prestige and expenditure and instead predicate a shift towards inclusivity, utility and civic value.

3.8 The Search for Alternatives: From Exogenous to Endogenous Assets

Tilburg's metropolitan dreams had been crushed under the weight of financial and political pressure. For the Spoorzone, however, inaction and stagnation were not viable options for a council that had already invested significant sums in purchasing the land from the Dutch railways. Instead, alternatives had to be found. As one commentator put it: 'groggy administrators must look for ambitions that citizens also want to embrace.'⁹³ Implicit here is the laborious nature of the discussions to date, which had drained the energy of a city council whose vision and enthusiasm had been quashed. As the referendum on the mall showed, this vision had not always been favoured by the local population, and indeed this lack of

⁹² Stephan Jongerius, 'Zoeken Naar Een Ambitie Waarvoor Stad Warm Loopt / Searching for an Ambition That the City Warms To', *Brabants Dagblad*, 18 June 2011, Tilburg edition.

⁹³ Jongerius.

support contributed to the flimsiness of the vision which enabled it to quickly succumb to political pressure once the finances were no longer so readily available. As this quote shows, a new vision had to be found, one that could bring the local population along with it and enable its own success.

In 2011, an event took place that provided the city with much impetus for this vision. The 'Day of the Spoorzone', in May that year, was an open day organised by the city council, including talks, debates, and historical exhibitions that reminded the municipality of just how valued a location the *werkplatz* was to the people of the city, and highlighted the way in which success could be made of a project otherwise understood to have stagnated. According to a report, 'several thousand' people attended the event which was full of discussion, nostalgia, and creativity.⁹⁴ Councillor Marieke Moorman, representing the Spoorzone, drew the following conclusions: 'People want the zone to be a connection in the city, to become a meeting place. And the ambitions are piling up.'⁹⁵ These ideas which the councillor learned here, of connectivity and centrality, form the central foundation of the 'living room' concept. A local journalist identified a similar 'light-bulb' moment the city council experienced following the 'Day of the Spoorzone', as they finally began to take stock of the identity of the people of Tilburg:

The eye-opener is mainly the 'discovery' of the characteristic of the Tilburger: social, involved with the other, and traditional: in this 'we' really deviate from Eindhoven, Den Bosch and Breda.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ 'Tientallen Ambities Voor Nieuw Deel van Centrum / Dozens of Ambitions for the New Part of the Center', *Brabants Dagblad*, 30 May 2011, Tilburg edition.

⁹⁵ 'Tientallen Ambities Voor Nieuw Deel van Centrum / Dozens of Ambitions for the New Part of the Center'.

⁹⁶ Stephan Jongerius, 'Vergezichten Worden Spannend Bij Concrete Vertaling / Views Become Exciting with Concrete Translation', *Brabants Dagblad*, 30 May 2011, Tilburg edition.

Here is the acknowledgement not only that Tilburg people had distinct qualities, but it was these same qualities that could be used to the competitive advantage of the city. That these conclusions came as somewhat of a surprise hints at the way in which the city had excluded the strength of feeling about the area from its planning process previous to this, focussing on exogenous assets, creatives and knowledge workers. This marks a key moment at which the strategy began to re-align.

One of the assets 'discovered' by the city was that it was traditional. Whilst pre-2008 the notion of tradition, or nostalgia as it had also been put, was ridiculed by the modernisers who associated it with the kind of backwardness that was stifling the city's potential, in this climate of shortage this same tradition could be deployed in the service of development. Prior to 2011, the heritage buildings of the Spoorzone had been earmarked for demolition. Despite a city heritage committee nominating six of the twenty-eight buildings to become protected monuments, the city refused the advice because the area was considered a 'large-scale and ambitious new-build location that should strengthen the city centre' – heritage buildings did not fit in this vision and should not be allowed to get in the way of development.⁹⁷ Fast forward less than two years, and a Spoorzone project architect claimed: 'Activating the economy with old buildings, that's what we're going to do here in the Spoorzone.'⁹⁸ This was a remarkable U-turn in the attitude towards heritage in such a short space of time.

The crisis had allowed the city to pause and reconsider its frenzied, competitive development model. As the council took a collective breath, alternative views of the city's development emerged from the discourse. Local architect Bas

⁹⁷ Toine van Berkel, 'Monumentenadvies Spoorzone in Prullenbak / Monument Advice Railway Zone in Trash', *Brabants Dagblad*, 30 May 2011, Tilburg edition.

⁹⁸ 'Gemeenschap Op de Groei in Zes NS-Hallen / Community on Growth in Six NS Halls', *Brabants Dagblad*, 11 October 2012, Tilburg edition.

Horsten commented in a column: 'the city now seems to be filled with anonymous and, above all, interchangeable buildings.'⁹⁹ A concerned member of the public launched a petition to build colourful houses in the city, commenting: 'the city is black and dark, it looks so neglected', finishing 'don't make Tilburg into a prison.'¹⁰⁰ Bas van der Pol of the Centre for Urban Planning and Architecture claimed 'There is a kind of grief in the city about what has been demolished and disappeared.' This is a vivid assessment of the popular experience of the urban modernisation drive, one which had gradually shifted the image of Tilburg away from being seen as grey and dull, but one that had side-lined the city's pride for itself, bulldozing through its collective memory, leaving grief, nostalgia and regret in its wake. Horsten summed up this process:

After the rigorous demolition years under the rule of Mayor Becht in the 1960s, Tilburg appears in 2012 still have not learned from that past. The last pieces of architectural identity of the textile industry are being demolished to make way for office buildings.¹⁰¹

In this view, 2012 can be seen as the tipping point for this destruction of heritage and its role in forming collective identity. Beginning with the 'Day of the Spoorzone' and the urban populace finally began to assert their ambitions. It was becoming increasingly important that this central area, which the local residents saw as fundamental to their understanding of themselves and their city, would have to heal the wounds and grief of a divisive development process.

⁹⁹ Bas Horsten, 'Stadsontwikkeling Crisis Biedt Kans Om van Stationszone iets Eigens Te Maken - Niet Grote, Maar Kleine Schaal in Spoorzone / Urban Development Crisis Offers the Opportunity to Turn Station Area into Something Unique - Not Large, but Small Scale in Spoorzone', *Brabants Dagblad*, 3 November 2012, Tilburg edition.

¹⁰⁰ 'Petitie: Bouw Kleurrijke Huizen in de Spoorzone / Petition: Build Colorful Houses in the Spoorzone', *Brabants Dagblad*, 10 November 2012, Tilburg edition.

¹⁰¹ Horsten, 'Stadsontwikkeling Crisis Biedt Kans Om van Stationszone iets Eigens Te Maken - Niet Grote, Maar Kleine Schaal in Spoorzone / Urban Development Crisis Offers the Opportunity to Turn Station Area into Something Unique - Not Large, but Small Scale in Spoorzone'.

3.9 'Knowledge-Plus' becomes the 'City Campus'

This shift in values facilitated yet another change in development paradigm for the Spoorzone, as the 'Knowledge Plus' label came to be swapped with the 'City Campus'. Prior to this moment, the renewed focus of the city council had been on attracting highly-skilled workers and students who would bring economic vitalisation from outside. In 2011 plans were made, elsewhere in the city centre, to build the Tilburg Talent Square, a complex including two hundred apartments, an employment agency, student travel agency, and an office to arrange insurance, banking and municipal facilities for the new resident upon arrival.¹⁰² This was part of a policy to attract technology and medical workers led by a specific employment agency Cardan tasked with this outcome. Its director, Joost Eijkens, claimed: 'We are already seeing more and more people come from India, China, Brazil, Chile and Turkey. You have to make sure you catch them and stay here.' This new development embodies a view of the city's development that placed outside forces as central to success, with such resources seen as a way to ensure these mobile economic agents would stay in Tilburg.

Planners in the Spoorzone however, began to see that purely aligning the development to such workers would not ensure its success. In 2012, the plans were advanced for Fontys university to move to the Spoorzone, along with the city library, to create a 'City Campus.' The emphasis on 'city' was here to offset a representation of the area as elements originating from outside the city – students and knowledge workers – a point that Pieter Bon, director of the Fontys Creative Academy pointed out in the local press: 'We want to think together about a city campus with Fontys

¹⁰² 'Kennswerker Krijgt Alle Égards / Knowledge Worker Gets All Égards', *Brabants Dagblad*, 5 February 2011, Tilburg edition.

where everyone feels at home, because it is built for everyone and intended for everyone.’ The library, it was claimed, would be central in this:

I am glad that we no longer speak of a knowledge and culture campus, but of a city campus, a place that every Tilburger wants to go to because there is a lot to experience. Shops, catering, housing, culture, entertainment and education will soon merge. The arrival of the city library, which then became the city library, will be a connecting factor.¹⁰³

The 2011 Masterplan made specific reference to the inclusion of the city library in the ‘Knowledge Plus’ profile. Thus the library as a connecting factor was not a new addition to the plan. All that has changed here is the rhetoric which Bon uses, emphasising the way in which the Spoorzone would be a shared space for everyone to use, after this had been proven necessary when the council ‘discovered’ the value of the area to the public. The concrete plans, though, had not changed.

Jan Doms, director of a city development agency, was sceptical of whether ‘people can be lured to Tilburg’ with plans such as this centre, or knowledge-driven plans in the Spoorzone. Instead, he argued that the city should not place their faith in the university but in institution who ‘know what program making is.’ Such an institution, Doms thought, was the library. In an almost complete foreshadowing of the eventual LocHal realisation, Doms suggested:

I immediately thought of the Mediathèque by the architect Toyo Ito, which was realized in 2001 for the resuscitation of the Japanese provincial town of Sendai. Imagine something like that. Beautiful transparent industrial architecture. The reading rooms, smart booths for digital media, cinemas and lounges are filled with people who quench their cultural thirst, enjoy the soothing silence and want to meet or eat together in the family restaurant.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Pieter Bon, ‘Stadscampus Wordt Plek Voor En Door Tilburg / City Campus Will Be a Place for and through Tilburg’, *Brabants Dagblad*, 10 March 2012, Tilburg edition.

¹⁰⁴ Jan Doms, ‘Unieke Inhoud Trekt Mensen Naar de Spoorzone Toe / Unique Content Attracts People to the Railway Zone To’, *Brabants Dagblad*, 30 July 2011, Tilburg edition.

Here, the notion of high quality, human centred design, with soft elements such as good sound design, light and social functions, is seen as central to creating a striking environment in the Spoorzone. Creating a liveable area for all would naturally have the side-effect of attracting foreign talent and students, rather than concrete resources designed solely for these groups. The library, as it had been in a town of Sendai – certainly not a world-famous prestigious case-study – would be a vital resource for achieving this. In hindsight, Doms's description seems entirely obvious, but given that the 2011 Masterplan planned for the LocHal to become a parking garage on the knowledge campus, this highlights a radical shift in thinking that once the status of the library as a key agent was secured, would create the necessary vision for the arrival of the LocHal.¹⁰⁵

What truly triggered the pioneering role played by the library was the end of the university's cooperation. To the horror of the council and developing firms, Fontys University declared in 2013 that they would no longer be moving to the Spoorzone. After deliberating, the university decided the €36 million investment was ultimately 'irresponsible' and would not improve the standard of education. Although contrary to the exuberant declarations of support from university spokespeople in the years before, it does reflect an economic climate in which institutions were far more cautious about large investments. The Spoorzone once again was left with a vacuum at its centre. The press reported the fear of a 'crisis' with a widening 'gap between the once sky-high ambition and the harsh reality in the Spoorzone.'¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Gemeente Tilburg, BDP.khandekar, and Credo Integrale Planontwikkeling BV, 'De:Werkplaats - Masterplan Spoorzone, Tilburg', 83.

¹⁰⁶ Stephan Jongerius, 'Vrees Voor Crisisbouw in Tilburgse Spoorzone / Fear of Crisis Construction in Tilburg Spoorzone', *Brabants Dagblad*, 19 June 2013, Tilburg edition.

As ambitions hit rock bottom, amidst fury at the university and talk of a deepening crisis that looked at humiliating the local council, a modest focus on the city library became the new impetus for the area. Spoorzone Alderman Rodney Weterings highlighted that the attention had turned to 'bottom-up developments' in the hope that 'partners will follow.' As former director of the Middel-Brabant libraries, Henriette de Kok, claimed in an interview for this present research:

Developers always want a library in a new project, because they can bring a lot of people, create a lot of talk and buzz, a lot of people come to the area. So they [the project developers] wanted that, otherwise it could have been a very quiet piece of the city.

De Kok highlights how the motive for having a library in the Spoorzone, from the point of view of the developers, was not that they cared deeply about creating a valued public space, but that they could use the library in the service of place-making: to ensure the success of the rest of the development by drawing the public to the area. Without the university, the library was given this key function. Thus plans for a central library in the Spoorzone could become the focus.

3.10 The LocHal

Although the needs of the project developers facilitated this move, it also coincided with the changing strategy of the library as it sought to alter its functions and ensure its continued relevancy. Former director of the Middel-Brabant libraries, Henriette de Kok, explained that the financial crisis had changed the landscape of cultural funding in the Netherlands in which 'libraries were forced to think about what they wanted in the future.' For the central library in Tilburg, this meant transitioning from a basis of 'information' – books, lending, services – to a basis of 'knowledge', which acknowledged the less tangible assets that a library could bring to the city, including meeting spaces, milieu, and community cohesion. This

constitutes what de Kok refers to as 'the library of the future', in which the focus on lending was replaced by a focus on meeting and sharing. For this 'we had to have another *place*', meaning they had to move to a new building in order to trigger this transformation, both for the institution and its staff, and the visiting public. Originally it was thought they would construct a new building for this, but

then came the crisis. And everything's changed. There was no money for a big development of the Spoorzone. More and more people were thinking: "can't we use the buildings already there?"

Once Fontys had withdrawn their support for the City Campus, the council then devised a plan to keep the LocHal, renovate it, and fill it with the library, a co-working space, and some offices of the local council. The library agreed, and thus a coalition of architects was put together to realise the renovation. A commentator claimed this was the imperative of a city council desperate to push through a new plan 'because a mayor gasping for your neck wants to achieve something.'¹⁰⁷ Indeed, 2014 was a local election year and devising a popular plan on which the council could be re-elected was an imperative. However, as the testimony of de Kok proves, this was a cooperative effort, led by the municipality, and supported by the library executives who saw it as a fine opportunity to advance their plans to create the 'library of the future.'

To realise their plan to build the 'library of the future', the library had to experiment on their theory and methods. To do so, the Kennismakerij, a temporary 'garden library' was opened in the Spoorzone in September 2014 which existed until just prior to the opening of the LocHal. This was vital to the place-making process, creating a multi-purpose, usable community space in amongst the 'sand

¹⁰⁷ Stephan Jongerius, 'Spoorzone: Praten Met Fontys / Railway Zone: Talking to Fontys', *Brabants Dagblad*, 28 June 2014, Tilburg edition.

and muck' of the un-developed central area, affirming the future role of the library as a place for meeting and exchange. According to de Kok, the main motivation here was to communicate the importance of the new location to current users of the library but also possible new users from within the city. Therefore the Kennismakerij included a 'very intensive programme' in which the library cooperated with many relevant parties within the city, including the police, social services, but also community groups, most importantly, the organisation of the former railway workers. They brought with them their knowledge and experience of the area, with which they created exhibitions in the temporary library and exposed the area to their extensive network within the city. They were 'a very important group for us' according to de Kok. This highlights the importance of forging connections with the city in order to secure the success of the library. De Kok cited the inspiration of particularly the city library in Birmingham, England, that informed the model of a flagship city-centre meeting place, but as the experience with the temporary Kennismakerij here indicates, the library at this time was completely focused on Tilburg itself rather than recreating such an iconic example. Taking great care to embed the future library was the priority, achieved by reaching out to the contemporary users and groups within the city and acknowledging them as vital to the future success of the project.

This process of trust building was indeed why the library was seen as a vital tool in the project by the city council. Opposition still remained in the local community to the residential housing projects that had been set-out in the original 2011 masterplan, including plans for the 130m *Clarissentoren*. According to Jop Verweel, the Project Manager of the Spoorzone redevelopment for the city council since 2017, in an interview for this present research, creating a successful public library was a crucial strategy to create leverage for developments elsewhere in the project:

It's easier for us now to redevelop the rest of the area because the locals are really happy with the LocHal you know, so they say, 'well, we got our LocHal, we are really happy with that, so, I'm OK with you building those new offices there.' It's easier for us now to develop than before, because people see the result of the development and they're really, really happy with it. There's a kind of trust now which was which wasn't there before. It's a facilitator, a catalyst for the rest of our redevelopment.

The library as a catalyst, a place-maker, that would attract pioneering businesses into the Spoorzone was also needed to justify the investment from the municipality in the redevelopment which had created political opposition in the city. Opposition parties in the city council denounced the spending of nearly €30 million euros on a 'glorified playground'¹⁰⁸, to which Alderman Berend de Vries had to respond: 'I am convinced that we will attract companies' – it would be the 'starter motor' for the area.¹⁰⁹ Thus the LocHal had to carry a justification outside of simply an excellent modern library and meeting space. It had to justify its high-cost as a leverage-maker in the Spoorzone, facilitating further development of offices, residential housing, and as a magnet for incoming businesses. Far from a philanthropic gesture from the city council then, it was very much a public space with an economic justification.

¹⁰⁸ Stephan Jongerius, 'Rondedans Met Stadscampus, Stadhuis En Stadshart / Round Dance with City Campus, City Hall and City Center', *Brabants Dagblad*, 22 February 2014, Tilburg edition.

¹⁰⁹ Stephan Jongerius, 'De Vries: De Bibliotheek Gáát Naar de Spoorzone, Voorstel in Najaar / De Vries: The Library Is Going to the Spoorzone, Proposal in the Autumn', *Brabants Dagblad*, 13 June 2014, Tilburg edition.

From this backdrop emerges the urban 'living room.' Alderman Berend de Vries used this phrase upon an announcement of the collaboration with local designer Petra Blaisse, known for her textile architecture, who planned to create textile curtain walls as 'cozy covering for the glass facades' as well as space dividers for the large halls. The Alderman claimed this would create 'the largest living room in Tilburg.'¹¹⁰ Thus, the term embodied the familiar domesticity of household textiles that would be used, along with an array of plants and bookcases - to fill out

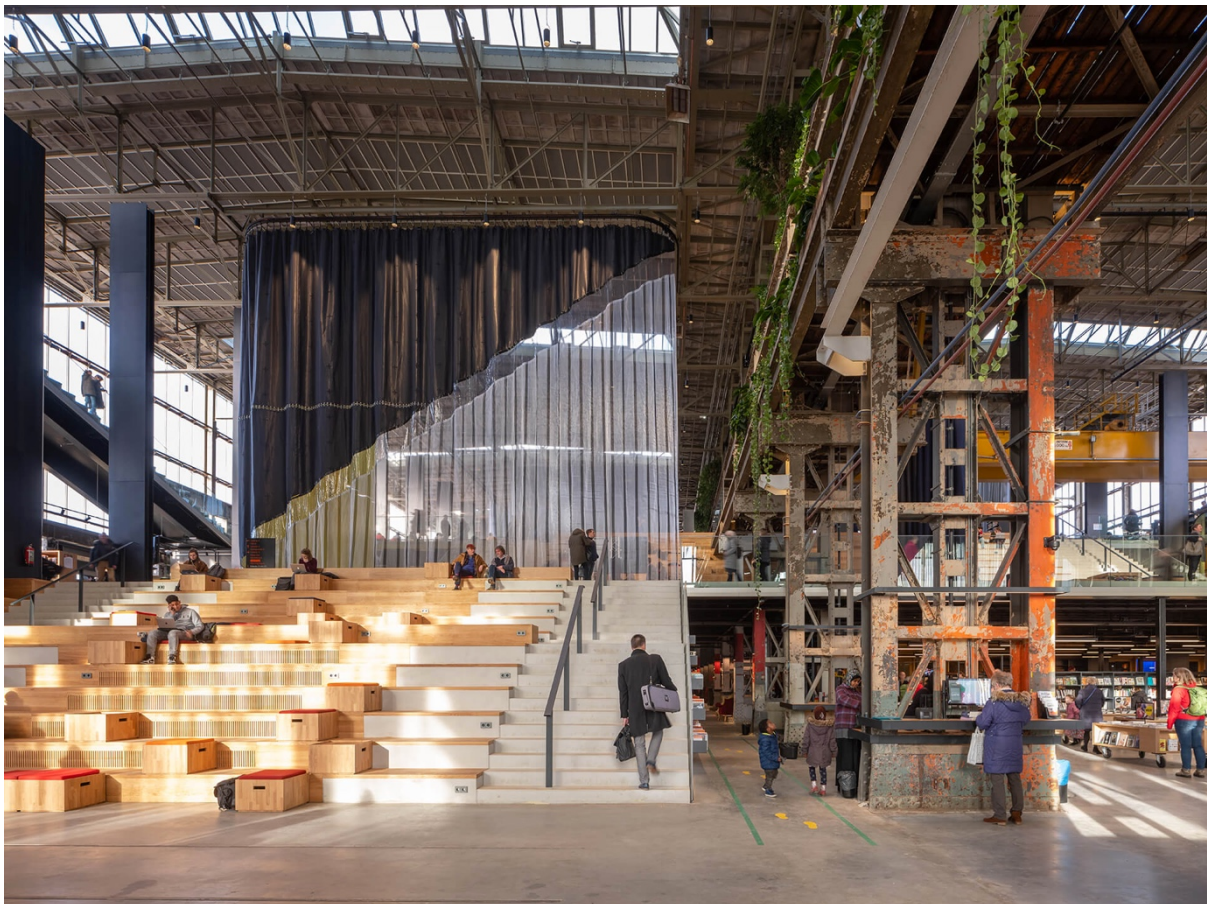


Image 4: LocHal interior, showing civic lounge space, exposed industrial elements and curtains produced in collaboration with the TextielMuseum. Source: *Frame*. <https://www.frameweb.com/news/mecanoo-lochal-tilburg-netherlands-public-library>.

¹¹⁰ Stephan Jongerius, 'Textieltouch Voor de LocHal / Textile Touch for the LocHal', *Brabants Dagblad*, 12 March 2015, Tilburg edition.

the immense space of the former locomotive hall and create the living room design. He continued that 'It will be a large public place where you can simply be without having to consume.' The definitive aim was to create a comfortable, welcoming place in the heart of the Spoorzone where everyday citizens would feel safe and warm, meet and collaborate. The curtains, produced in collaboration with local students at the TextielMuseum, were a way to link this comfort with the industrial heritage of the city, as had been done via the placemaking in the Kennismakerij, and through the chosen strategy of occupying the former building of the Dutch railways. As a local city tourist guide Kees Vissers claimed 'you can still smell the grease and lubricating oil of the old industry here.'¹¹¹ Although oil was hardly a signifier of comfort, this demonstrates that to create a living room for the people of Tilburg needed a firm attachment to the industrial past. These tropes can be seen together in Image 4.

These mixed symbols were combined with the mixed use of the building. Although culture had officially been chalked off the drawing board with the invention of the 'Knowledge Plus' profile, the new urban living room at the LocHal was imbued with cultural functions in order to boost its community credentials. This included housing Kunstloc Brabant - a knowledge centre for art and culture - as well as the multi-function co-working space Seats2Meet. In 2015 the municipality purchased the famous glass concert hall of the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra which had been housed at the Beurs van Berlage in Amsterdam, and planned for it to be housed within the LocHal as a space for concerts and performances, adding further prestige to the project and contributing to yet more excitement for the building.¹¹² Despite the fact that de Vries still spoke of the LocHal in 2015 as 'the living room of Tilburg, where encounter and knowledge development are central',

¹¹¹ 'Tilburg Komt van Ver / Tilburg Comes from Far Away', *BN / DeStem*, 19 December 2015.

¹¹² Bas Vermeer, 'Glazen Zaal Naar de LocHal / Glass Hall to the LocHal', *Brabants Dagblad*, 30 January 2015.

(always keen to emphasise its business and innovation potential) culture was indirectly made a part of the building. This effort to embed a multifunctionality was crucial to realising the LocHal living room which, according to de Vries in 2018, was 'a place to be proud of.'¹¹³

3.11 Conclusion

At the turn of the century Tilburg was caught in a modernising drive spurred by regional competition in Brabant where the desire to diversify into service and communication sectors became a priority of policy makers. The *werkplaats*, or 'Forbidden City', symbolised an urban frontier to be conquered in the name of this modernisation. Global policy trends that prefigured iconic structures, urban glamour zones, and temples of consumption were variously considered for this blank city-canvas as the prospect of sports stadia and mega-malls were debated. This was met by an increasing public aversion to the lofty ambitions for the Spoorzone that would have seen its heritage buildings demolished and the LocHal turned into a car park. The 'city campus' emerged as a first alternative to heal the 'trauma' of the city's apparent modernisation, but the financial crisis of 2008 meant that this, along with all the other expensive plans, was put to bed.

The LocHal ultimately represented a compromise between the varying ambitions and plans between stakeholders in Tilburg. In this way, the 'living room' can be considered a message of unity and solidarity between the urban developers and the rest of the city's stakeholders. Although a public library may seem like benevolence from the city towards its public, in the context of this history the library also served the needs of the project developers to gain trust and act as a place-making pioneer to supplement further development. The process highlights the

¹¹³ Elsbeth Grievink, 'Oude Industrie, Nieuwe Hotspots / Old Industry, New Hotspots', *FD.NI*, 2 March 2018.

unstable reality of economic development in which there is no clean break between community provision and profit-maximising ambition. It is a fine example that to eventually realise a successful project, a strong coalition of support had to be constructed.

This need to garner public support was matched by a shift in the role of heritage for a city known to an inferiority-complex in relation to other historic cities in the Netherlands. The 'living room' was also a design concept manifested in the spectacular vacuous environment of the locomotive hall, incorporating elements of the city's past such as giant textile curtains, and other industrial facets such as exposed railway tracks, which came together to create a shared civic meeting space imbued with the city's identity. It's economic justification was also a signal of the shift from a creative Tilburg under Mayor Vreeman to Tilburg as a knowledge city. These altogether serve as a novel, negotiated manifestation of culture-led redevelopment paradigm.

4. The V&A Dundee

Why was an urban 'living room' built in Dundee?

The V&A Dundee, the first outpost of the world-renowned Victoria and Albert design museum based in Kensington, London, opened its doors in September 2018. Designed by Japanese architect Kengo Kuma, the building is a striking piece of architecture which converses with its surroundings on the equally inspiring banks of the river Tay. To citizens of a city reeling from post-industrial decline, such a building may have seemed almost improbably a mere 20 years previous, but its arrival was a testament to a sustained and coordinated policy of culture-led regeneration orchestrated by the University of Dundee. This is a narrative of coalition building and economic justification for a museum which had been implanted onto an existing waterfront redevelopment scheme. The simultaneous use of the iconic waterfront form, with a narrative of civic value through that of the 'living room', is here the product of a process of coalition building that created an apparently unlikely alliance between an elite cultural institution and general public benefit. Each of the key interest groups that forms this coalition will here be examined separately: the university, the city and the nation. This is a narrative which affirms the position of the museum as an imagined living room for the city of Dundee, one which raised the city's ambition in contrast to the scorn of the rest of Scotland, but also one which was required to go far beyond this symbolic potential to carry with it real economic justification.

4.1 Industrial Re-Structuring in Dundee from 1990

Dundee had grown as a prominent manufacturing town from the 19th century, but in just a few short decades at the end of the 20th century, this sector had all but disappeared. The last bale of jute - the low grade textile chiefly responsible for Dundee's economic growth - was processed in 1999 as the final mill

in the city closed its doors. The decline had materialised decades before however, and hit a sharp rise in the 1980s when the loss of the jute industry combined with the decline and flight of multinational companies such as watch manufacturer Timex which wound up its operations from 1973 before the final closure of its factory in 1993, as well as ATM manufacturer NCR which ceased manufacturing in 2009.¹¹⁴ Relations between Timex and the city were particularly bitter as the company laid-off hundreds of staff members in their later years, with arduous strikes and labour disputes symbolising the trauma of this 'rapid' industrial decline that had taken place in the city.¹¹⁵

With the loss of the manufacturing industries came a sharp restructuring of the city's economy based on the strong presence of education institutions. It was noted that in the early years of the 21st century the university sector carried 'an economic weight in the city which is among the highest of any place in Britain', with 2007 numbers reaching 40 thousand students and 5 thousand staff across the two main universities, the University of Dundee – home to the Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design (DJCAD) – and Abertay University, as well as Dundee College.¹¹⁶ The influence of universities was reflected in success at this time of two associated industries: digital media and life sciences. Abertay launched the world's first computer game design course in 1997, and the city subsequently became known as a hub for video games with the success of company Realtime Worlds founded in 2002 in the city and producing classics such as *Lemmings* and *Grand Theft Auto*, and 4J Studios founded in 2005 who were developers of *Minecraft*

¹¹⁴ Jim Tomlinson, 'City of Discovery?', in *Jute No More*, ed. Jim Tomlinson and Christopher A. Whatley (Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 293, <https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9781845860905.003.0012>.

¹¹⁵ Tomlinson, 294.

¹¹⁶ Tomlinson, 296.

which has been termed the best-selling game of all time.¹¹⁷ There also grew a strong presence of a large number of small companies working in the life-sciences sector making it the city's 'fastest growing area of economic activity in the decade up to 2007.'¹¹⁸ These economic successes were combined with efforts to resuscitate the city's heritage, beginning with the acquisition in 1986 of the RSS Discovery ship as the city's main tourist attraction, combined with the 'City of Discovery' branding campaign in 1982, signifying efforts to construct a tourist-friendly image. To this end the Verdant Works jute museum was opened in 1996, won the Luigi Micheletti Award European prize for innovative museums in 1999, and was renovated once more in 2016. The Dundee Contemporary Arts Centre was opened in 1999 to praise in the media. Scholars thus note that the city has been 'dramatically re-imaged and restructured' removing the 'doom and gloom.' The multifaceted development strategy focusing on leisure and heritage tourism which by targeting the waterfront turned the city's gaze back towards the river in order to embrace their maritime past to make the city 'more attractive to residents and tourists alike.'¹¹⁹

Despite such positive signs, there is an obvious sense to which the successes that the city has experienced in these relatively niche areas has not been spread across the population. Scholars note a 'residual culture of poverty, social exclusion and welfare dependence'¹²⁰ An article from national newspaper *The Herald* in 2002 notes the acute inequalities produced by this transition by juxtaposing a claim that

¹¹⁷ Derek Healey, 'Success for Dundee Developer as Minecraft Becomes Best-Selling Video Game of All Time', *The Courier*, 20 May 2019, sec. Dundee, <https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/local/dundee/895538/success-for-dundee-developer-as-minecraft-becomes-best-selling-video-game-of-all-time/>.

¹¹⁸ Tomlinson, 'City of Discovery?', 299.

¹¹⁹ Catherine Di Domenico and Marialaura Di Domenico, 'Heritage and Urban Renewal in Dundee: Learning from the Past When Planning for the Future of a Post-Industrial City', *Journal of Retail & Leisure Property* 6, no. 4 (October 2007): 338, <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.rlp.5100074>.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 290.

'we need more Dundees' owing to the innovative successes in the arts and sciences, with the report of a study which showed an area on the city's outskirts 'has the worst record for child poverty in the UK.'¹²¹ The image of the city nationally was very much skewed towards such negative outcomes of this economic restructuring, epitomised by such images as 'flat-capped extras from *The Broons* [a Scottish comic book] trudging through the wind and rain to the jam factory.'¹²² An article from *The Scotsman* in 1999 claimed: 'Industry has died, the population is in decline and Dundee has struggled to shake off its image of being Scotland's forgotten city.'¹²³ The image of the city at the start of the 21st century was dreadful, and this was matched by the reality of poverty in peripheral areas of the city, but successes in the university-led sectors of life-sciences and digital media suggested that this was not the entire story.

4.2 The University: Filling the Cultural Vacuum

Out of this context emerged the inception of the V&A museum in 2007. In the most straight-forward of terms, this can be attributed to the Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, who were instigators for the project. This was, in the first place, an act of self-interest for an institution which considered itself world-class in its research output, but one whose home city was failing to provide it with the necessary cultural context to build its reputation and ensure the success of its graduates. Georgina Follett, the Dean of the college from 2005 makes this point clear:

¹²¹ Brian Donnelly, 'Dundee Tops Child Poverty Table; 96% of Youngsters on City Estate Live in Deprivation', *The Herald*, 17 September 2002.

¹²² Neil Cooper, 'Striking a Post-Industrial Pose', *The Sunday Herald*, 28 February 1999.

¹²³ Tim Winkler, 'Take a Good Peek - This Is No Ordinary Gallery', *The Scotsman*, 1 December 1999.

The first problem I encountered was there is no reference for designers in Scotland. How can you educate 5 thousand students a year in a cultural vacuum? That was something that concerned me. You'd speak to students about the cultural context of what they were doing. They didn't even know what you're talking about. They'd never seen it.

Follett acknowledges that the success of the university is linked intrinsically to the cultural infrastructure of the wider city. Ensuring that the output of such an academic institution remained relevant and world class meant creating partners in the city that the university could connect with in a rich cultural infrastructure. Thus the initial idea was to support student learning and their future job prospects, by filling a deficit in the cultural landscape of the city. It was this notion that triggered Follett to suggest that the University reach out to the V&A – particularly logical given the then university secretary Dr David Duncan's personal relation to Mark Jones, the director of the V&A and former Director of National Museums of Scotland. Thus in 2007 contact was made, a pitch given, and an invitation given to Jones to come to Dundee to see the prospects, which he accepted. This is the most direct origin of the V&A project.

The university's confidence and ambition is here crucial. There was increasingly the concern that the city did not match this world-beating ambition of the university, a bitterness that 'practitioners and students alike travel outside of Scotland to ensure that they are aware of the international movements within their disciplines.' As Follett then argued: 'We have to be able to demonstrate that the products and the intellectual arguments expounded through research are comparable with the best in the world.'¹²⁴ The university, in this case, are the ambition-setters for the city. Although a small city, with a negative image even within Scotland, the university and art college considered itself amongst the most

¹²⁴ Janet McKenzie, 'V&A at Dundee: Making It Happen', *Studio International* (blog), 5 March 2009, <https://www.studiointernational.com/index.php/v-amp-a-at-dundee-making-it-happen>.

innovative in the world. Squaring these two different levels of ambition would be a fundamental task of the subsequent development process.

4.3 The V&A Museum: Investing in a Brand

From this initial inception, the university and its representatives began to establish the necessary support from the other actors in the development. First, and obviously most crucially, was that from the V&A museum and its London-based management. Vital context here is that of world-leading museums opening outposts in smaller regional cities. This includes Tate Liverpool (opened 1988), Tate St Ives (opened 1993), the Guggenheim Bilbao (opened 1996), Pompidou Metz (opened 2010) and Louvre Lens (opened 2012.) These satellite museums serve as both an outlet for the extensive collections that these museums hold, and as ways to advance and strengthen the brand identities of the institutions. Crucial to this latter goal was to choose a city in which the museum's impact can be best amplified. The V&A had been cautiously considering the possibility of such a development at this time, meaning the approach from Dundee was welcomed. Follett, as one of the university representatives, had argued that a V&A in Dundee would give them 'visibility' and 'political acumen, because it was in a place where it wasn't expected' as well as supplementing the work of a well-regarded university:

I just said "well, Mark, you have the best Art College in Scotland, we have the highest research rating. We are a research driven organisation, we would be your ideal partners." And he said to me: "now that that's the reason I will come."

Aligning the values and ambitions of the university and the museum were clearly vital to securing the viability of the partnership. The V&A did not want to partner with a city that considered itself down-trodden and in need of charity, but rather one which was home to a respected and innovative research institution. Such

alignment in attitude was clearly vital in creating a solid foundation for the relationship, as proven by the threat of the 2008 financial crisis which rather than hamper the development deemed it even more necessary, according to Jones:

Recession is a time when one has to think very carefully about what needs to be cut and what needs to be invested in. It does seem to be that if we are to come out of this recession stronger, investment needs to be wisely targeted and, in that respect, this is a great time to go for projects like the museum in Dundee.¹²⁵

A museum in Dundee was thus seen as a solid investment, highlighting that such a small city as this with a well-renowned university was good platform for the V&A to advance its brand and spread its assets in the uncertain years surrounding 2008.

This alignment of ambition of institutions which considered themselves world-class was to shape the eventual manifestation of the building. The need for an iconic, trophy building here becomes apparent, according to Follett:

Everything was set in place at the highest possible level. The V&A could not commit to some kind of 'street project', because it would lose its world class reputation. If we were going to do this, we were going to do it properly, and we were going to use the highest design principles throughout the project. We needed a world class site, we needed a world class building, and we needed a world class architect.

The need for a striking building on the waterfront was necessitated by this collaboration between the V&A brand and the DJCAD art school, which both considered themselves to be world-class. Thus, an eye catching building which could serve as a testament to this reputation was prefigured.

The other partner in this relationship, the city, struggled to keep up with this ambition and indeed distanced itself from it, existing in the entirely different realm

¹²⁵ Gillian Harris, 'Curator with Designs on Dundee', *The Sunday Times*, 22 February 2009, London edition.

of local politics and a city dealing with endemic social problems. 'The word iconic is banned,' said Mike Galloway, the head of City Development in 2010, reflecting this aversion to the 'world-class' narrative.¹²⁶ This was similarly reflected in the ways in which the developers would distance themselves from comparisons with what was considered a monumental success with the Guggenheim Bilbao, as alluded to by Jones in a 2007 initial press conference to announce the commissioning of a feasibility study:

I don't think the Bilbao effect is replicable...It would be mad, and ultimately doomed, to suppose a spectacular building can have the same power as it did in 1997, when the Guggenheim opened.¹²⁷

That the developers would want to disassociate from this success, rather than claim it as inspiration, reflects the need to align the relative expectations between the city, museum and university, underplaying their world-beating ambitions in order to sell the project as a modest local improvement.

4.4 The City: Economic and Social Development in Dundee

As hinted to above, the city more generally could not function here as simply a powerless receptacle for a world-class design institution. The interests of the city council and the population would have to be manifested in the eventual project in order to secure its success. This was justified in two broad categories: the economy of the city, and the people of the city.

¹²⁶ Rowan Moore, 'V&A Museum: Dundee Looks for a Taste of Bilbao', *The Observer*, 2 October 2010, sec. Art and design, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2010/oct/03/v-and-a-dundee>.

¹²⁷ Anna Burnside, 'An Icon on the Tay', *The Sunday Times*, 13 May 2007, London edition.

4.4.1 The Economy

The V&A project was able to slot into an already existing development scheme to regenerate the city's central waterfront. This began in 2001 as a way to reverse some of the chaotic planning decisions made previously, specifically the road bridge connecting the city with Fife and Edinburgh to the south. The landing site for traffic was the city centre, rather than further along the Tay, meaning effectively 'the loss of the harbour and the severance of the waterfront from the city.' Image 5, from 2002, highlights the domination of the area by the motorway, showing the 1970s Olympia Swimming Pool adjacent to the RSS Discovery (bottom left) which would eventually be cleared as the site for the V&A. Another point of controversy further west along the central waterfront was a supermarket megastore, which was (and still is) seen to occupy of the prime waterfront locations in the city. Generally, Dundee at the time of the first redevelopment masterplan was



Image 5: Central Waterfront, Dundee, showing the RSS Discovery (bottom left) and the landing point of the Tay Road Bridge (top right). Source: *Discover Dundee Waterfront*, www.dundee waterfront.com/about/history

completely detached from its waterfront, serving as an untapped resource and a point embarrassment and symbolic mis-use of resources.

Reconnecting the city to its waterfront was thus the main goal of this waterfront redevelopment. Subsequently, the 2001 masterplan – with a £1 billion budget – professed:

Not only will the project remove one of the last remaining major blights on the city's image and townscape, it will create a high-quality, mixed-use, riverside urban-quarter right in the heart of the city which will come to signify the extent of Dundee's renaissance as a post-industrial city.

This affirms the location's symbolic importance to the city – one that was in dire need of resurrection, a point made once again by the 2009 city culture strategy:

Dundonians retain a tremendous interest in and affection for the docks and Waterfront of the City, which provide a spectacular visual gateway to Dundee from the south. Many consultees felt the existing plans to re-develop the waterfront area present an opportunity to integrate the existing heritage attractions and to consider introducing more.¹²⁸

This same strategy document makes the commitment to 'ensure the public realm of the City is a space for culture and creativity' through strategies which include developing 'the proposed civic space at the Waterfront as a high quality focal point for the city centre.'¹²⁹ Thus the central waterfront harbour area was earmarked as a place for civic space and culture, and although here a heritage landmark is suggested, the V&A would eventually fulfil this strategy.

Although supposedly banning the word iconic, and eschewing comparisons with Bilbao, the developers of the V&A project were simultaneously seeking to learn

¹²⁸ Dundee City Council, 'Creative Dundee: The City's Cultural Strategy 2009-2014', 1 July 2009, 13, https://www.dundee.gov.uk/dundeecity/uploaded_publications/publication_2348.pdf.

¹²⁹ Dundee City Council, 43.

from and indeed replicate the 'Bilbao effect', as evidenced by the close collaboration that the partners had with those responsible for the Guggenheim in the Basque capital. Following the release of the first feasibility study in December 2008, a university spokesperson claimed: 'We feel a strong similarity with Bilbao. They spent billions on improving their city but nothing made any difference to public perception until the partnership with the Guggenheim.'¹³⁰ The success of the Guggenheim project is here used as justification for the iconic spectacle. In a conference held the following February to discuss the feasibility of the project, titled *Making It Happen*, Juan Alayo of the Bilbao Ria 2000 organisation was invited to speak on the successes they had developing the Guggenheim:

I think a building like that makes a statement of people's ambition and confidence. The Guggenheim has given people from Bilbao self-esteem and pride back because the city was in a very poor state in the 1980s, a desolate place to be in, grey, dirty... It has to be the piece that animates that waterfront and can become an image of Dundee.¹³¹

The impact of the iconic building on 'self-esteem and pride' are here emphasised in a comparison between the two cities which relies on the symbolic potential of a new building to embody the 'ambition and confidence' of the city. The fact this was a public conference in the planning stage of the process certainly refigured the need to appeal to these emotional qualities rather than economic ones, but the apparent success of the Guggenheim in Bilbao would have still been a vital factor in proving the V&A's similar worth to Dundee. Follett, then the dean of DJCAD, also recounts a visit to Bilbao that the project developers made in 2008:

¹³⁰ Julia Horton, 'V&A Gallery in Dundee Will Create 900 Jobs, Says Study', *The Herald*, 29 December 2008, Glasgow edition.

¹³¹ McKenzie, 'V&A at Dundee'.

We went there and we had a fantastic meeting with the Bilbao Ria group. They were absolutely wonderful with us. They just they opened all their books. They told us everything we wanted to know - about the mistakes they made and about the successes they had.

The desire to directly replicate the building's success is here obvious in the visit made by the developers to Bilbao and the will to learn from their experience. This certainly highlights the ubiquitous appeal of the Bilbao effect to the developers of the V&A Dundee, but rather than just taking for granted the assumed potential of an iconic building serving as an idealistic target, the visit proves the desire to learn and collaborate with the actors who carried out the Bilbao project and its particularities. This was clearly both a key selling point for the project as it built support in the city, and also a vital way in which the strategy was developed.

Fundamental to this strategy was the economic potential of tourism. From the inception of the project, creating a tourism base in the city was seen as a vital function of the building. In 2007, as the university were orchestrating their partnership with the V&A, a survey was conducted by VisitScotland, the national tourism agency, that found Dundee was amongst the poorest performing cities in Scotland in terms of tourism. This was particularly related to domestic tourism, finding that only nine per cent of native Scots had visited Dundee for a short break in the previous five years. An article on the findings claimed: 'it is hoped that the V&A will do for Dundee what the Guggenheim has done for Bilbao.'¹³² Jennifer Caswell, the head of City Promotion, made clear the impact of an iconic building on this negative trend in an interview carried out for the present research:

When we did the perception studies, we would ask a particular question around tourism and say "well would you come and visit the city?" And people would say "no, not really, there's not really anything there" - so that's what I

¹³² Charlene Sweeney, 'Dundee Has Grand Designs for Future with £42m Guggenheim on the Tay', *The Times*, 26 February 2009, London edition.

think the V&A did. By promoting the wider waterfront it gave us that “wow factor”, which is what the city needed. You know, you need that hook.

The V&A, then, was to make Dundee a tourism destination, an economic policy that was justified by figures such as Follett as being ‘egalitarian’ because of its ability to create jobs across the economic spectrum, in comparison to some of the city’s more technical industries:

You have to have a high level as well as the low. You've got to have a ladder of opportunity. The life sciences were generating very, very particular specialised jobs, but they weren't jobs for the population. And you know, there are more bed and breakfasts, more taxi drivers, more hairdressers.

The ability of the tourism industry to create low-skilled jobs is the most well-rehearsed argument for this economic model. The drive towards the creation of the tourism industry is thus posited as one of general public benefit as opposed to the otherwise elitist opportunities created by the success of the university.

Although tourism was an obvious tool used to promote the museum’s utility in Dundee, this was not the focus of the museum’s economic justification. The V&A as an illustrious design institution would support the research output of the university, which was not only useful in cultural terms, but more importantly in business terms. This was a vital synergy used to underwrite the museum’s importance both to the city and to the national economy. In Scotland, the 1992 Education Act had awarded art and design academic status, and began its inclusion within national academic research exercises. This had triggered the creation of a research portfolio at DJCAD. According to Follett, the institution began to push forward the ‘design agenda’:

Fine art is a is very much an esoteric practice. If you look at crafts, that's an individual practice. What we were advocating was: don't see design as an art

practice. Design is a business practice. Design is a commercial operation. It's about making business work. And that that was the message.

This agenda was vital to enshrining the relevancy of the V&A museum which would propel the design economy in the city. Emblematic of this was the *Design In Action* research project, led by Follett at the University of Dundee and funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council from 2012 to 2016 which she describes as a 'forerunner to the V&A's development.' This was a project which brought together academics and business practitioners from different industries and sectors across Scotland in order to develop working methods and best practice for combining design theory and business. Design's links to culture were blurred as it was re-defined as 'a non-sectorial discipline that operates across discipline boundaries as a system of thinking [that] can bring innovation into every aspect of business practice.'¹³³ Design was posited as a way to invigorate sectors of the Scottish economy previously seen to have no use for it, thus creating a value for a prominent design museum's arrival in Scotland that went far beyond softer cultural arguments, and to a large extent, beyond the rhetoric around low-skilled jobs in the city. The V&A was not simply a gallery for gawping tourists: it would be a driver of innovation in the city and in Scotland.

The promotion of the 'design agenda' was fundamental to embedding the museum in the city, building its value and ensuring its relevance. Fundamental to its creation was the utilisation of the heritage of the city in service of this agenda. Dundee and design have come to be synonymous, but this is the result of a conscious construction of this identity based on selective representations of the

¹³³ Michael Marra and Georgina Follett, 'Design in Action - Building a Model for Knowledge Exchange Between Industry and Academia, Using Design as a Strategy for Business Growth in Scotland', 2013.

city's past. The 2009 Culture Strategy makes very sparse explicit references to the concept of design, but does stress that Dundee 'has been a creative city for many centuries' owing to the 'extraordinary range of creative enterprise in the fields of commerce, science and the arts in 19th century Dundee led to the famous branding of the three J's'.¹³⁴ These of course were jute, jam and journalism, each carrying with it the potential to fall under the murky category of design but in this document serving as evidence of the city's creativity. In 2014 however, the city became the UK's only UNESCO City of Design. Follett, who led the bid as part of a partnership between the university and the city council explains the way in which this was constructed:

We had to stretch it a little. Before, the city wouldn't back me. They wanted UNESCO City of Digital Technology. As the V&A gathered pace, and as *Design in Action* got working, they suddenly agreed with me, we should go for UNESCO City of Design, and we won it.

The fact that the city's past was spun to match the UNESCO label highlights its very constructed nature and the malleability of a city's history. As the very concept of design had eschewed its creative connotations, so had Dundee's, where a city of creativity emphasised by the Culture Strategy document had been swapped for a city of design, a rhetorical strategy that aimed to depict Dundee as a modern innovative city with burgeoning economic potential. This hints at the elitist connotations that culture, creativity and a design museum had come to carry, instead emphasising the industrious and inter-disciplinary potential of design practice. The city's heritage was re-written and deployed in line with this new agenda created to support, justify and best utilise the incoming V&A design museum.

¹³⁴ Dundee City Council, 'Creative Dundee: The City's Cultural Strategy 2009-2014', 9.

4.4.2 The People

Despite these strong economic arguments, linking the museum with local communities in the city and ensuring its social and cultural relevance were also key intentions of the project developers. As the 2009 Culture Strategy document highlights, culture was framed holistically as enriching the people of city, its children, and providing them with education, ambition and creative jobs. This is evidenced by the nine commitments made which encapsulate the vision for culture in the city. Commitment number one is to 'cultivate sustainable cultural ambition in Dundee's communities' by promoting local arts and culture activities that support the wellbeing of the city's citizens.¹³⁵ By emphasising the value of culture to Dundee's community, and placing national and international goals secondary to this highlights that, in official policy at least, the wellbeing of the city's communities were shown to be central to the thinking around culture at this time. Goal number four, to 'turn local talent into jobs', makes no mention of low-skilled tourism jobs, but refers to the local crafts and artists, digital industries, and apprenticeships for theatre jobs, for example. The V&A, as an iconic 'capstone' to this cultural policy, would stimulate this cultural ecosystem and provide widespread benefits.

Such a commitment to public benefit was a key justification for the V&A. Ensuring transparency and support from the general public was vital to the developers. This was a lesson they had learnt from the Guggenheim developers, who had claimed it was one of their failures:

Beatriz Plaza who did the economic evaluation said they didn't properly consult the city. They did it on their own initiative as a single organisation. They didn't bother with anybody else. They just built it, and everybody was against it right up till the day it opened. They made the job much harder by not bringing the people in onboard.

¹³⁵ Dundee City Council, 35.

Bringing people on board was thus a key goal of the project developers. Jennifer Caswell, director of City Promotion, also made this strategy clear:

There is that kind of view politically that whatever changes you make within the city, we need to bring our citizens along on that journey with us. We've made sure that we've linked into schools and universities, regular communication with local stakeholders and the local paper etc. so that they knew exactly what was going on.

Jennifer suggests that such inclusion and consultation was a political trend, but as the experience at the Guggenheim proves, this was also vital to ensuring a smooth development process, and ultimately, a relevant and embedded institution in the city.

As a result, a number of strategies were put in place to ensure the public were made a part of the development process through constant communication and consultation. The architectural competition held to select the final building design was one such way to make the process feel open and inclusive. Once the shortlist was made, six models were placed on display at the Abertay University library in the autumn of 2010. The public were asked to vote on their favourite design (although the winner was not in fact the chosen design.) This was also the location of the initial *Making It Happen* conference in which the goals and actors involved in project were made immediately visible to the public. Regular lectures were also given on the project. When Kengo Kuma's design was selected in 2011 he came to the city to give a lecture on the project, which was 'so heavily oversubscribed that an extra session had to be added to accommodate over 1400 interested people.'¹³⁶ He gave

¹³⁶ 'Press Release: Kengo Kuma to Give Public Lecture', Victoria and Albert Museum Dundee, accessed 11 July 2020, <https://www.vam.ac.uk/dundee/info/kengo-kuma-to-give-public-lecture>.

another lecture in 2013. Such strategies highlight the importance of transparency and involvement to the V&A developers.

This process of embedding a cultural institution in the city came with precedent for the museum developers. Although Follett calls Dundee at the time of the museum's initial inception, 'a cultural vacuum', the university had set about filling this vacuum some years previous. They had led the development and arrival of the Dundee Contemporary Arts Centre which opened in the city's West End in March 1999. As a multipurpose centre, the DCA was a combination of a bar, restaurant, galleries, cinemas, a printmakers workshop and the University of Dundee's Visual Research Centre, which contained a studio space, an artist's residence and a multi-media laboratory. Such a combination was a means to ensure the centre could cater for both high-level creative practice as well as attractive leisure activities, thus ensuring a coalition of interest from across the city's communities. Follett explains this approach to ensure a broad base of support:

We knew that the culture was secondary to most people, but there was no good public venue. The restaurant was on the main entrance floor and as people came in, they enjoyed the bar, they enjoyed the restaurant, they enjoy the outside space, and the galleries were all around that and facing the river. That was how we drew the people in.

The local press at the time labelled this strategy a success, praising its broad appeal to the local population:

The place seems to attract every type under the sun - obviously no one feels intimidated by arty types; there are a few, but not enough to put you off. "You even get pensioners in here for their morning cuppa and a scone." It takes a lot to faze a Dundonian.¹³⁷

¹³⁷ Alison Young, 'Spellbound', *Daily Record*, 28 August 1999.

The author's preconception here is that an arts centre would somehow be out of place as an elitist entity in an otherwise humble and working class city, an opinion which upon a visit proved unfounded. Without actually using the term, it seems that what the author is describing is a multi-purpose living room for the city. As such, it was not seen as an alien entity parachuted in by a self-serving university:

The DCA could have been a white elephant bestowed on an uncaring public in blind benevolence by authorities, but...it will be a success because its organisational roots are in the local community. The centre is unique in the UK, as it has been formed by a combination of local council, university and private enterprise, providing a solid base of tentacles into the community to draw in crowds.¹³⁸

At the initial *Making It Happen* conference for the V&A museum, Joan Concarron, Director of External Relations at the University of Dundee, explained how the DCA had been a forerunner and inspiration for this strategy of embedding a cultural institution in the city through its multi-use:

We wanted to go back to our successes with the DCA on a bigger scale to revitalise economic development, develop greater opportunities for inward investment and job creation and most crucially develop a project that by its sheer audacity would help change the perception of Dundee.¹³⁹

This demonstrates the importance of the process that the museum developers had developed with the DCA. Crucial to this was ensuring that the museum would not be a 'white elephant': an elitist, alien institution targeted at tourists without relevancy to the city. As a precedent, this proves the desire to embed the museum as culturally relevant to the people of Dundee.

¹³⁸ Winkler, 'Take a Good Peek - This Is No Ordinary Gallery'.

¹³⁹ McKenzie, 'V&A at Dundee'.

In the initial stages of the V&A project, the success of this strategy was seen evident in the support that the development found across the city. The notion of audacity that Concarron alludes to highlights the way in which the pride of local residents in their city was a key resource used by proponents as they sought political and financial backing. In a 2011 article, Follett explained:

The support of the people of Dundee meant so much to the project because they backed it so unanimously and they almost launched it themselves. We know Dundee backs and supports the project because of the attendance and response to the *Making It Happen* exhibition last year, so now it's about communicating that excitement to the whole of Scotland and the UK and building expectations.¹⁴⁰

The notion that the city would have built the museum without support from outside, even from the V&A, demonstrates the enthusiasm and desire for this iconic development which would bring international prestige to the city. This display of local support of reiterated by Maurizio Mucciola, lead project architect who claims:

Since the beginning we were very happy to have a lot of support from the local community. There was a degree of pride in Dundee for having such a sort of iconic or important cultural institution in their city. A lot of people never thought there could be such a special building in Dundee . Nobody ever thought much about Dundee. Well now we are proud of having something in Dundee!

The developers thus harnessed this local pride to generate enthusiasm for the museum which was then used to secure the necessary financial and political backing on a national level, and result in the realisation of the project.

Rather than simply a way of winning support for a museum which would then betray its enthusiastic public, the egalitarian purpose of the building as a civic space

¹⁴⁰ 'Benefits of V&A "milestone" for Dundee', *The Courier*, 15 January 2011, sec. Books.

was enshrined in its design. Fundamental to this was ensuring that the space would function as a gathering place. This social ambition sits in contrast to earlier development strategies employed by the city, which in 2000 celebrated the opening of the £150 million Overgate shopping centre (a budget nearly twice that of the V&A museum) which it was claimed would 'transform Dundee into a leading shopping and tourist destination.'¹⁴¹ A shopping centre fulfilled none of the social, cultural or economic goals that had been advanced by the DCA opening only a few months prior. The city was still without a focal point for its burgeoning ambition, according to Follett: 'A shopping centre is not the beating heart of a city.'

This ethos was fundamental to the particularities of the design of the building, particularly its internal spaces according to Mucciola:

You are in a high quality design museum, but you should always keep in mind that this is in Dundee and not just a gallery that could be the Tate in London or the Pompidou. We made sure that each of the classrooms where all the students from primary to university go for design workshops will have views back to the city, so that in each space, people could relate back to Dundee and to their context and to their local reality. You're always able to see outside and remember that you are in Dundee.

In this respect, the building was designed to converse with its local context. The design competition brief made clear the need for a 'memorable' entrance hall which would 'capture the imagination of visitors' and encapsulate the 'the context and purpose of the building', representing this ambition enshrined from its inception to create a spatial living room aesthetic in the form of a striking welcome area. Image 6 shows the final manifestation of this, highlighting the use of an expansive, vacuous space. Although the architectural form may be that of iconic waterfront architecture, the particularities of it must be understood as being tailored to the

¹⁴¹ Jane Smernicki, 'Dundee Mall Promises Shopping Revolution', *The Scotsman*, 2 February 2000, sec. Books.

environment. This again refutes accusations that it was an alien structure that could have landed anywhere:

If we were asked to make or design a museum in Belfast, Liverpool, or in Rotterdam, it would definitely have been a completely different design. Dundee is very specific because the Tay estuary is about 1km wide. There's this enormous body of water under your eye, it's very beautiful, and that's a very different condition in other cities.

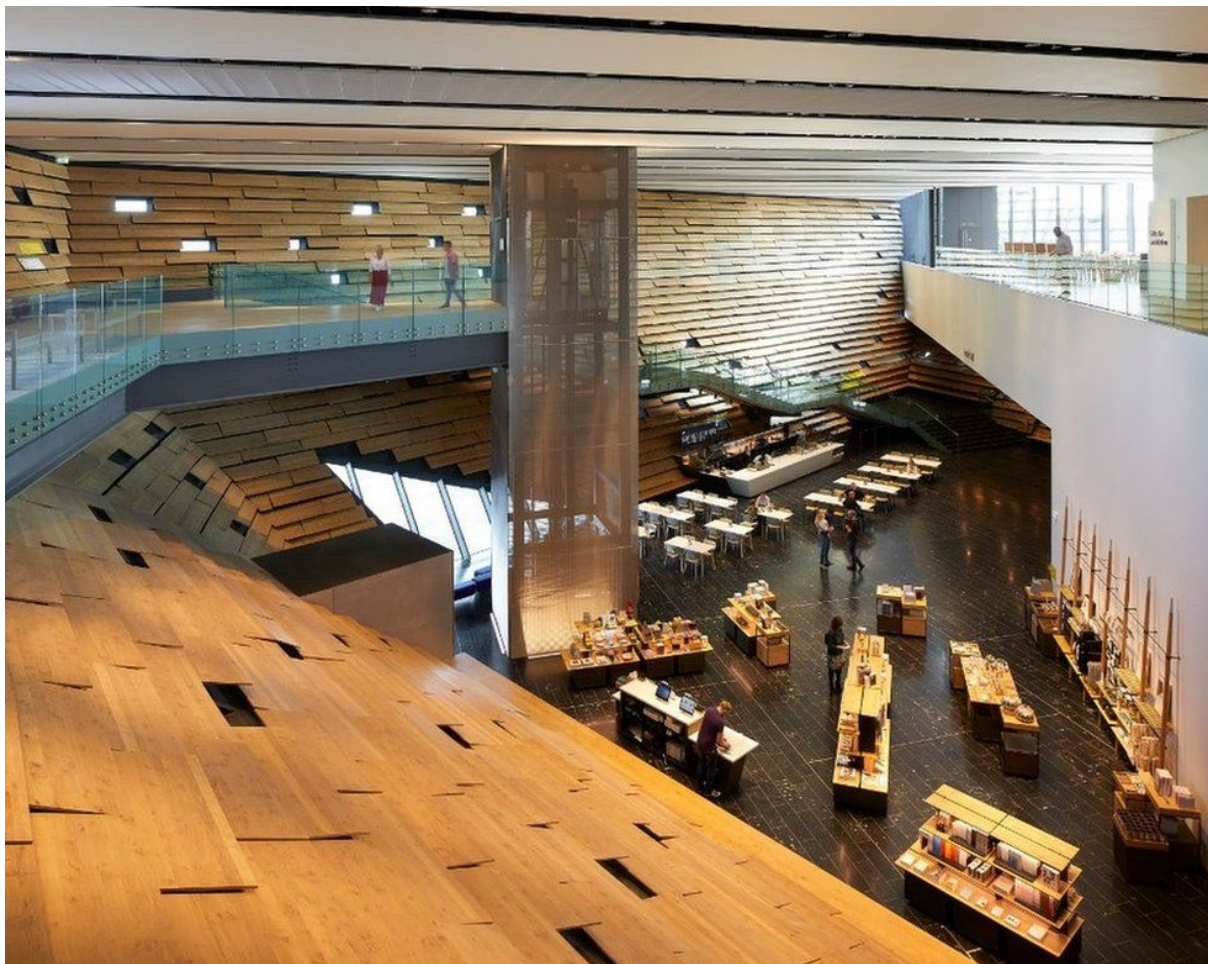


Image 6: V&A Dundee interior, showing the vast expanse of the entrance hall, with shop and café visible as well as windows onto the urban context. Source: *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-tayside-central-45432993>

Utilising the natural beauty of the waterfront location is again seen as vital to the creation of a valued civic space for the city, a resource particular and unique to Dundee according to the project architect, and one that prefigured an original design. The physical manifestation of the museum embodies the ambition to make it the 'beating heart', or 'living room', of the city.

4.5 The Nation: Achieving Success in Scotland's Forgotten City

The way in which the building was embedded in its local context through both a transparent development process and a well-tailored design speaks to the museum's enshrined relevancy to the city of Dundee. The support it thus had within the city was made clear by interviewees and press reports from the time. Where the developers had more difficulty generating enthusiasm was in the rest of Scotland's cultural landscape. A 2010 article on the design shortlists alludes to this: 'some doubt whether the population of Dundee is large enough to justify such an institution.'¹⁴² Follett thinks this concern about the size of the city was really a veiled snobbishness from the cultural elite of Scotland towards a city they deemed unworthy of hosting a renowned design museum, a point manifested in the lack of support from the art colleges in Edinburgh and Glasgow throughout the process. When securing funding from Scottish Enterprise, a government economic development body, she claims she was told:

Georgina, I can understand you wanting a comic museum because you've got DC Thompson's [comic book publishers]. I will certainly support you in a comic museum. But, really, the V&A? You can have a shed on the Tay.

To this she apparently thought: 'right you bastards, that's it.' This suggests the drive towards the iconic was a reaction to this kind of condescension experienced by the

¹⁴² Moore, 'V&A Museum'.

developers: a symbolic affirmation of Dundee's presence in Scotland's cultural landscape. This supports the narrative of civic pride whereby the people of the city, including its local political representatives, were in fact hugely supportive of the project as a means to gain recognition and attention for the city.

Although met with condescension from other cultural actors in Scotland, the timing of the V&A development was aligned with the national political agenda in Scotland following the Scottish National Party election to the Scottish Parliament in 2007. As the government pushed forward an agenda supporting independence for Scotland, with a referendum on the issue held in 2014, nationalist politicians in Scotland wanted to be seen to be supporting otherwise peripheral cities and projects. Dundee was the only truly SNP city following the elections of 2007,



Image 7: Scotland's First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, celebrates the results of the 2019 General Election outside the V&A Museum, Dundee. Source: *The World*, <https://www.pri.org/stories/2019-12-16/after-elections-could-johnson-face-disunited-kingdom>

meaning they want to assert their success there, as comments from Cabinet Secretary for the Economy John Swinney made clear in 2015:

The V&A project will complete the transformation of the city. When I was first elected to parliament in 1997, Dundee was absolutely struggling, it was dealing with the post-industrial situation and a whole host of economic challenges. The waterfront project will essentially sweep aside all the mistakes of the 1960s that were made in the landscape and open the city up to its estuary.¹⁴³

Swinney places Dundee's recovery in the timespan of his own involvement in Parliament, asserting the SNP's success in writing the wrongs of previous economic decision making. Follett claims that a meeting with Alex Salmond, who became Scotland's First Minister in 2007, was when 'things clicked' for the project, highlighting the importance of this political regime change and a political agenda which sought successes in Scotland's periphery to assert their status as a positive force in Scotland. Image 7 amply demonstrates this agenda, showing the SNP elected Westminster Members of Parliament gathered for a photo opportunity outside the V&A following the 2019 general election. Nicola Sturgeon – Scotland's current First Minister – has raised fists, once again linking this political victory to the success of the V&A as an iconic museum project.

4.6 Did they build one at all?

This narrative so far has highlighted how the V&A Dundee museum developers had sought to design a 'living room' for the city which would pull the population down to the waterfront, provide economic impetus, and work across a variety of social and cultural spectrums to meet a range of needs and uses. Architect

¹⁴³ Brian Ferguson, 'SNP Back V&A Museum to Transform Dundee's Image', *The Scotsman*, 5 March 2015.

Mucciola suggest that such concrete intentions do not always result in concrete results:

It's important not to pretend as architects or clients that we always are in control in how spaces are used especially when we talk about public space. A successful public space is a space that is there and then people can use it freely and enjoy it freely in the way that they choose.

This notion of control highlights the need to consider the space's flexibility, both inside and out, and assume that visitors and public will be able to write their own uses and intentions into the building outside of its official narrative. The MACBA contemporary art museum in Barcelona is a famous example cited by Mucciola, one where the civic credentials of the museum are in fact to be found in the use of the outside space adjacent to the museum by the city's skateboarding community. As such, it is wrong to conflate intention with outcome when considering the city's living room which should be viewed as a flexible space, open to re-interpretation.

According to Follett, one such reinvention took place to the detriment of its civic intentions. She claims the interior space was 'over-commercialised' by those tasked with filling it:

The internal curation was done for commercial purposes, not for design values. I think it fails. Everybody I've spoken to feels the same. They go in to that magnificent entrance hall, and it's full of crap. They've put the shop there in the ground floor, then they put a bloody stupid cafeteria in there which is just a mess. They haven't even got decent design furniture!

They should have kept that as an open space where people could have milled and gathered as was its original intention.

In Follett's view, the museum entrance hall had been designed and realised to make a large, magnificent living room capable of performing civic functions and providing a gathering space. The problem is that those running the museum have

not fulfilled this function. When considering iconic architecture as a commercial enterprise this fact is particularly interesting. It is not the architecture itself that prefigures the commercial – in fact, it encourages against it – but those running the daily operation of the building have shoe-horned in commercial functions which serve to the detriment of the very design values that the museum is supposed to fulfil and that the design prefigured. This closing point suggests that the manifestation of the living room does not match the intentions of those who developed it, but also provides hopeful possibilities for a future in which the space is reimagined once again and can assume the open civic functions that were once intended.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has provided the history of the V&A Dundee development project, from its initial inception in 2007 by city's the art school at the University of Dundee. It was originally intended to fill a shortage in cultural infrastructure that was hampering the work of the school and its students, who after graduating would leave the city because of a lack of cultural context and opportunity. To make this project viable however, it had to have the support of: the V&A institution in London, the city council, the local population and the national political agenda. At this point, the value of a rhetorical 'living room' becomes clear: a means to claim the museum would meet the needs of all of these groups. Having found success in 1999 with the DCA art centre, the university sought to write a similar multi-functionality into the design museum, which far from simply an iconic tourist destination would be a political symbol, a site of civic gathering and education, and a catalyst for the design economy. This multi-functionality and the particularity of the building's design which was made to converse with the local surroundings explain the label of the V&A as the city's 'living room'.

5. The Evolution of Culture-Led Redevelopment

What is the significance of the 'living room' concept in the context of culture-led regeneration and its evolution in small European cities?

In seeking to understand why these institutions were built, ascertaining an understanding of what exactly an urban 'living room' means in Dundee and Tilburg is vital. Synthesising these historical narratives, the 'living room' is defined by three central characteristics:

1. An aesthetic of open civic space defined by a vast interior imbued with domestic elements such as textiles, plants and design furniture.
2. A multi-functionality related to an economic justification based on knowledge and innovation, and to a lesser extent, culture.
3. A message to the city populace that these spaces are welcoming and created in their name, complementary to their role as place-makers in marginalised urban spaces.

These narratives of negotiation and collation building produced 'living rooms' marked by this combination of real and rhetorical elements which reflect the messy reality of striving for economic development in a small city, in which options are limited, stakes high, and critique intense.

Achieving a perfect balance between the dilemmas invoked by culture-led redevelopment as had been set out by Franco Bianchini and colleagues from the concept's inception is an impossibility, but the arrival of this phenomenon suggests a desire to if not solve then at least address the controversy that culture-led redevelopment had provoked. The urban 'living rooms' of Tilburg and Dundee, defined as such, represent an evolution of culture-led urban regeneration strategies. This chapter will seek to explain why, by exploring the innovative approach taken to a series of policy dilemmas by these flagship cultural 'living rooms.'

5.1 'Prestige or Community'?

These two narratives of urban development in Dundee and Tilburg are united by a central theme: ambition. In Tilburg, the urban populace had the ambition to re-claim for the public domain a forbidden central district. City-boosters posited a variety of ways to do this: an arts centre, a sports stadium, a university campus. Out of this frenzy of ambitious schemes came a dispiriting failure and a humbling turn to the city library to realise the city's goals in the name of place-making and collation building. In Dundee, a city seen to lack ambition by its resident art school, ridiculed by the rest of Scotland, was given the chance to house an iconic world-class design institution, one that local politicians grabbed with both hands by mobilising civic pride to proclaim that the city was on the up and worthy of the affection which its natives always felt it deserved. In Dundee, small dreams had turned big. In Tilburg, big dreams turned small. But in both cases, the final product was described as a living room for the city.

The very notion of ambition is indeed a dilemma. What exactly does it mean for a city to be 'ambitious'? For Charles Landry, the pioneer of the creative city concept, ambition is the key characteristic of those cities considered 'the best' – Barcelona, Copenhagen and Manchester. Their urban leadership pre-empts, identifies and tackles problems with confidence, dynamism and creativity. Forwarding thinking drives the notion 'it is not OK to be OK.'¹⁴⁴ These may be rousing words, but when faced with budget cuts and social problems, perhaps it is perfectly fine to be just OK, to aspire for the 'normal city' as Jennifer Robinson argues.¹⁴⁵ Ambition in her view symbolises lavish spending and iconic architecture projects: the divisive ambition that drives a city to host the Olympic Games when

¹⁴⁴ Charles Landry, 'Cities of Ambition', 2 April 2015, <https://charleslandry.com/blog/cities-of-ambition/>.

¹⁴⁵ Jennifer Robinson, *Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development*, Questioning Cities (London ; New York: Routledge, 2006).

half of its population live in slums. Graeme Evans and Jo Foord argue this kind of ambition is something that small cities in particular should be wary of:

Small cities by thinking big, have been seduced into entering a culture-led city competition in which the stakes are high and the prospects of success limited.¹⁴⁶

Thinking big is dangerous because, according to Greg Richards and Lian Duif, it aligns cities 'towards a consumption-based economy and ignoring social goals' - one based on tourism, flagship cultural intuitions and urban glamour zones.¹⁴⁷ One side claims ambition is a necessity, whilst the other claims it represents reckless opulence. Landry and Matarasso frame this as a choice between 'prestige and community.'¹⁴⁸

The Tilburg narrative perfectly demonstrates the high-stakes involved in negotiating this dilemma. The 'living room' here was a product of negotiated ambition. The Spoorzone served as a canvas onto which city developers could project their ambitions for the future. This was obvious in some of the grand schemes devised, including the sports stadium and the city campus. But the extent of the ambition seems to have alienated the community to the extent that it created a 'trauma.' The symbols of that could be said to represent the collective past of the city - textiles, Willem II, carnival, De Kruikenzeiker - were side-lined and indeed ridiculed as backward elements standing in the way of realising the city's lofty ambitions. But, ambition of course cannot be realised without investment and when

¹⁴⁶ Graeme Evans and Jo Foord, 'Small Cities for a Small Country: Sustaining the Cultural Renaissance?', in *Small Cities: Urban Experience beyond the Metropolis*, ed. David Bell and Mark Jayne, Questioning Cities (London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2006), 151.

¹⁴⁷ Greg Richards and Lian Duif, *Small Cities with Big Dreams: Creative Placemaking and Branding Strategies* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), 12.

¹⁴⁸ François Matarasso and Charles Landry, *Balancing Act: Twenty-One Strategic Dilemmas in Cultural Policy*, Cultural Policies Research and Development Unit, Policy Note No. 4 (Strasbourg : Croton-on-Hudson, N.Y: Council of Europe Publishing, 1999), 28.

this dried up following the crisis, a negotiation occurred between the public and the project developers whereby this collective past was co-opted into a public library space. This certainly was not blind benevolence and as the interview with Jop Verweel the project manager highlights the creation of this public space, soaked as it may be in heritage symbols, serves as a place-making tool and a way for the developers to attract businesses and activity to their costly development project. The 'living room' is thus the product of a negotiated ambition, highlighting the severity of this dilemma in cultural development, but also serving as an example of a progressive policy choice that has produced a tangible product for the community.

The Tilburg case highlights very clearly that the choice between social goals and commercial ones is a false contradiction. No city is an island, and in the neo-liberal economy which small cities are subject to these goals are interrelated. Indeed it is very easy for a cultural commentator to deny a small city its ambition, to claim they should make policy choices in favour of the community, but for those on the inside, this can appear an act of condescension. Evans and Foord in their article on small cities use a critique of the Dundee Contemporary Arts centre to claim that its use of 'copycat tactics undermines any potential uniqueness of Dundee's cultural renaissance.'¹⁴⁹ The very claim that there is an 'authentic' Dundee which the city has not tapped into and utilised subscribes to a kind of nativist thinking that says an art centre or design museum could simply be of no use to a working class town, an opinion which pervades the opposition to the V&A by art schools in Edinburgh and Glasgow and its critique in the national press. The appeal here for uniqueness is surely contradictory to an appeal for normality, asking for more 'unique' icons, more 'unique' ambition.

¹⁴⁹ Evans and Foord, 'Small Cities for a Small Country: Sustaining the Cultural Renaissance?', 165.

This scornful view of the DCA and to a large extent the V&A museum makes the assumption that as 'trendy' institutions they must be appealing to outside forces, because they could not possibly serve residents of a city too down-trodden to have an interest in culture. As head of City Promotion Jennifer Caswell makes clear, this is once again a false contradiction between the visiting public and the resident public :

People are people and whether they're a visitor or a local resident or talent that you're trying to recruit, you all want the same thing. We want a really nice environment where you can eat, drink, you can go out and enjoy social aspects, all the reasons that a visitor wants to come to your city are the same reasons that you want to live in it.

Pleasant, well-designed cultural infrastructure should be the right of all the city's users. The analysis of the DCA institution in Chapter 3 suggested that vast efforts were made to link the institution to the local community, and indeed it was labelled unique in the UK for doing so. The pre-conception that an arts centre must equal elitist market-driven ambition has influenced this critique which is here refuted.

The benefit of constructing such a historical case-study is that the final products in Dundee and Tilburg can be judged not against an ideal type, but against the other choices and options that could have manifested themselves in these cities. In a report following the initial shortlisting of the designs following the architect competition, a reporter for *The Guardian* was struck by the audacity of all options, claiming that one possible reason for this was the lack of ambition that the city had for the surrounding area which forced the architects to be 'overwrought' in their designs:

The masterplan for the surrounding buildings, as currently presented, is dull. Beige oblongs are shown, which could easily translate into dumb blocks of a kind that are all too familiar from regeneration projects up and down the

country. The gallery designs respond by taking upon themselves the task of making the place interesting, diverting, unusual and different.

The V&A, as a piece of iconic architecture on the waterfront, can be seen as a reaction to the otherwise 'dull' masterplan in which an aversion to the 'iconic' by the city planners prefigured exuberance on the extreme from architects. Going further back in time, Dundee had celebrated the opening of a £150 million shopping centre in 2000, an option also considered by planners in Tilburg when they deliberated on a 'mega-mall' until a referendum in quashed the idea in 2009. When asking whether the cities adequately balanced prestige and community, perhaps these cultural buildings should be judged against their local precedents such as these malls and the 'dull' masterplan, which hardly offer community-oriented alternatives.

Georgina Follsett makes it clear that in the intentions behind the V&A, social goals were very much aligned with cultural and economic ones:

I was on a number of working groups in city looking at poverty and the problems in the city. The ambition of the city was to increase the reading age of the population at the lowest level. They were working really hard to improve people's educational standing.

But what do you do when people achieve things? What was happening was everybody was leaving. Those who went to university those who went to college left, because there were no decent jobs. There was nothing in the city to be ambitious about. So you had to have something that was generating economic value for the city and making people want to stay. The only way you're going to do that is to have something in the heart of your city.

The ambition was as modest as improving the reading age of the population, but when framed in the broader terms of education, this goal has a much greater potential. As such the cultural institution was seen as part of a ladder of opportunity whereby raising the top of the bar has a direct effect on the bottom. The 'living room', as a symbolic 'beating heart of the city', can thus be understood as

welcoming Dundee's citizens into this world of ambition, raising the ladder of opportunity and providing a target for hope and prosperity in support of modest education goals.

5.2 The Spatial Dilemma

The notion posited of the 'beating heart' of the city is perhaps the most important symbolic function of these urban living rooms. Bianchini asks in his spatial dilemma: 'how can the growing divide between lively, convivial city centres in which cultural activities are flourishing and increasingly marginalised peripheries be bridged.'¹⁵⁰ Landry and Matarasso claim 'a stunning new opera house or gallery which focuses on an international audience may inadvertently signal to those who live nearby that they are not welcome', a polite way of saying these projects are instigators of gentrification and exclusion.¹⁵¹ Bianchini himself suggests the idea of neighbourhood cultural centres. In working locally however, other goals as related to prestige, tourism and image improvement may have to be sacrificed. Balancing this was a vital intention of developers in Dundee and Tilburg and once again highlights a conscious negotiation of this dilemma. Here, the strategic value of a small city which retains its 'human scale' is clear. As Richards and Duif argue of small cities:

Because of their relatively compact form, they offer many spaces where residents and visitors can interact. They are readable and navigable for people on foot.¹⁵²

This suggests that smaller cities are much more able to overcome this spatial dilemma, because the distances involved are much smaller. This may serve as a

¹⁵⁰ Parkinson and Bianchini, *Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration*, 201.

¹⁵¹ Matarasso and Landry, *Balancing Act*, 28.

¹⁵² Richards and Duif, *Small Cities with Big Dreams*, 10.

prerequisite for the urban living room, a place that is navigable on foot that does not feel far from those in the city's periphery.

Nevertheless, in both Dundee and Tilburg, the locations of the living rooms highlight a progressive negotiation of this dilemma in which previously underutilised central locations were made accessible to the public once again. The creation of the living rooms reversed previous planning decisions which had left these areas 'forbidden', misshapen and under-valued in the city. In Tilburg, the 'forbidden city' of the *werkplaats*, owned for more than a century by the Dutch railway corporation served as a symbol of division between neighbourhoods, and one that occupied the most central area of the city. Reclaiming this space opened up a valuable development site that could attract incoming investment, as was taking place across the railway zones of the Brabant region during this time. It also carried with it a huge unifying potential in overcoming a blight on the city centre that had been forbidden to the public. In creating a living room in this location, developers acknowledged the conquest over this space, emphasising a shared benefit for the city – a victory that could be shared by numerous groups in the city.

Similarly in Dundee, the waterfront development plan sought to correct planning mistakes of the 1960s that had detached the central waterfront area from the city by making it the landing place for a motorway bridge across the Tay river. A huge investment project sought to rectify this and re-attach the city to this location because of its visually stunning qualities. The V&A as an urban living room for the city serves as a symbol of this rectification and the re-opening of the waterfront for the public. The concept of gentrification, of expulsion of groups from these central areas in favour of tourists and visitors, does not then figure here. These were urban frontiers that, according to this evidence, were largely devoid of activity prior to their arrival. The very conscious rhetorical choice of the living room highlights the desire to see these institutions as place-makers and pioneers that could welcome

residents and visitors alike, whilst also creating a location for inward investment and an improved image. Once again, a coalition of interests was here served.

Also evident in the arrival of these institutions is the use of extensive strategies to embed them into the city. Such efforts at placemaking, through participatory approaches, heritage, and the mobilisation of civic pride, work against accusations of 'copycat' or 'parachuted' strategies made previously by John McCarthy:

While there are accepted examples of "good practice" in culture-led regeneration, acceptance and application of such good practice would seem to be frequently based not on formal evaluation or analysis but largely on anecdotal grounds. The process of policy transfer may therefore be one of "serial replication" rather than sensitive adaptations to context that take into account the peculiarities and specificities of local aims and circumstances.¹⁵³

In Dundee, the inspired case of 'good practice' was certainly that of the Guggenheim in Bilbao. It would be easy to claim that they blindly sought to replicate its successes, but as the account of the process shows, its success was not taken on anecdotal grounds. Extensive efforts were made to collaborate with the Guggenheim developers, to learn from their mistakes and apply these to local 'peculiarities and specificities.' It was the experience in Bilbao that had demonstrated to the developers the importance of using a participatory process, one that was subsequently deployed through conferences, a lecture series and the design competition. Similarly in Tilburg, although the library identified other cases of flagship library projects in Birmingham and Aarhus, the opening of the Kennismakerij as a precursor to the LocHal sought manifestly to engage with the local communities, retaining existing users of the library and reaching out to new

¹⁵³ John McCarthy, 'Promoting Image and Identity in "Cultural Quarters": The Case of Dundee', *Local Economy: The Journal of the Local Economy Policy Unit* 20, no. 3 (August 2005): 287, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02690940500190978>.

ones, with the former railway workers acting as a key group in doing so. These were altogether strategies that highlight that in Dundee and Tilburg the policy transfer that took place was very much focussed on local issues and foregrounded a participatory rather than a mere copycat approach.

Heritage also played a vital role in overcoming the spatial dilemma in both of these cases. Richards and Duif highlight the importance of storytelling for achieving successful urban development projects which mobilise the 'DNA' of a city 'to develop new stories and icons to attract attention and mobilize stakeholders.'¹⁵⁴ This very argument serves as further evidence of the possibility of an alliance between outside attention and internal stakeholders. Developers in Dundee were very much aware of this fact, and consciously made attempts at writing the V&A museum into this DNA, constructing a narrative of 'design' which although certainly was congruent with certain elements of the city's past, should not be taken as fact. The bid to become UNESCO City of Design – a concept not particularly visible prior to the museum's development – highlighted this need, linking the tradition of textiles, comic books, and more recently video games with the V&A to ensure a continuity of the city's narrative. This demonstrates that often there is no stable DNA to be extracted from contested urban histories, but that for the institution to be relevant to the city rather than simply the outpost of a London institution such selective storytelling was vital.

In Tilburg, as already highlighted, drawing on the heritage of the city was vital in securing the place-making credentials of the LocHal. As also pointed out by Richards and Duif:

¹⁵⁴ Richards and Duif, *Small Cities with Big Dreams*, 23.

Sometimes the unique features of a place consist of things that locals have turned their back on, because they are not modern, or trendy or popular, or have simply been forgotten.¹⁵⁵

This was very much the case in Tilburg, where the scale of the ambition had trampled over the city's unique features in favour of the kind of iconic urbanism manifested through malls, sports stadia and urban glamour zones. The near total demolition of the city's textile past and its replacement with corporate office architecture was said to have left a trauma in the city. The living room, in the old railway shed, represents a reversal of this: the meeting of the industrial heritage of the city with its modern development strategy. The use of giant textile curtains to divide the internal spaces manufactured at the city's TextielMuseum was a tangible manifestation of this alliance.

The utilisation of these heritage narratives highlights the value of civic pride to urban developers in Dundee and Tilburg. In Tilburg the eventual recognition of the heritage elements of the city represented a need to mobilise civic pride as a resource to secure the success of the project. In Dundee, civic pride drove the ambition of the city in face of condescension from the rest of Scotland, epitomised by the offer of a 'shed on the Tay.' Local politicians supported the V&A project and its iconic prestige to the point where it was claimed they were prepared to make it happen even without government or V&A backing. Scholars have been critical of the use of civic pride, claiming invariably that it is a tool of neoliberal governance that seeks to mask aspects of civic shame, arguing that if there is a geography of hope, there must also be a hidden geography of helplessness.¹⁵⁶ In negotiating the spatial dilemma in such a way as to conquer these spaces previously of civic shame these narratives sit better in line with argument of geographer Tom Collins in which

¹⁵⁵ Richards and Duif, 21.

¹⁵⁶ Waitt, 'Urban Festivals'.

civic pride 'can also be a force for resistance and transformation' by making 'certain narratives of urban change more meaningful (and more convincing) to local people.'¹⁵⁷ The use of the living room label is particularly relevant to his conclusion that

The urban poor may not need 'civic pride' as much as they need good jobs and housing, but these kinds of messages are important because they let local communities know that their local government is (or appears to be) taking matters of social justice and welfare provision seriously.¹⁵⁸

The 'living room' as such is a message – one that lets the public know that these spaces are for them, that the development is in their name and that they are welcome in them. Whether or not this message holds true is of course a matter for further study. As a solution to the spatial dilemma however, these spaces acknowledge the importance of mobilising public support through participation, heritage and civic pride.

5.3 The Economic Dilemma

The potential of these 'living rooms' does not stop at their messages however. The way in which these cultural institutions negotiate the economic dilemma serves to further underline their progressive negotiation of the balance between prestige and community. Bianchini was wary of the possibility that culture-led redevelopment be misinterpreted in its realisation as to focus on the consumption of culture rather than its production, which often manifested itself in such paradigms like the night-time economy and the alliance between urban regeneration and the sale of alcohol. Foregrounding the productive goals of the creative city was thus a priority in Dundee and Tilburg. The urban living rooms are

¹⁵⁷ Tom Collins, 'Urban Civic Pride and the New Localism', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 41, no. 2 (April 2016): 179, <https://doi.org/10.1111/tran.12113>.

¹⁵⁸ Collins, 181.

deliberate products of this anxiety. So much so that the concept of 'culture' is in fact removed from the economic foundation of these projects in favour of the concepts 'knowledge' and 'design'. As such they represent an evolution of the policy of culture-led redevelopment, in line with urban theorist Malcom Milles's suggestion of the 'post-creative city' in which the 2008 financial crisis created 'an opportunity to re-assess the idea of a creative city and the values implicit in it.'¹⁵⁹ The mixed functionality of these buildings suggests an acknowledgement that consumption, tourism, and low skilled jobs no longer constitute a legitimate justification for a regeneration project.

In Dundee this can be seen clearly in the formation of what Georgina Follett terms the 'design agenda.' This was the key strategy through which to justify and embed the V&A museum by positing it as an instigator of the design economy in the city. This would be achieved through the museum's positive effect on the output of the art school which had been pioneering interdisciplinary collaborations between such fields as life sciences and art and design. The *Design In Action* research programme which took place in the run-up to the museum's opening aimed to crystallise such collaborations, generating theory and creating networks for the strategic use of design practice for business and innovation. The notion that design should not be seen as an esoteric artistic practice but as a business practice was a key semantic shift that took place in the time of the museum's development, reflecting the anxiety created by the economic dilemma which clearly came with higher stakes following the 2008 financial crash. As such the productive capability of this cultural intuition was emphasised, with its relevancy to Scottish economy at large enshrined. This provides the necessary context for further research which should seek to go beyond this intention to quantify the museum's impact on the

¹⁵⁹ Malcolm Miles, 'A Post-Creative City?', *RCCS Annual Review*, no. 5 (1 October 2013), <https://doi.org/10.4000/rccsar.506>.

design economy in the city, which would enable a clearer analysis of the gap between this rhetoric's ability to sell the project to stakeholders, and its genuine impact on the city.

The building competition brief made clear specifications for the 'Design in Action Zone' which highlights that this productive capacity was to be reflected in the mixed functions of the museum.¹⁶⁰ This included learning and practical facilities as well as the 'knowledge exchange zone' which would provide 'facilities to encourage knowledge exchange / networking between practitioners, academics, industry and general business.' Thus the building's utility for innovation and business was built into its design, sitting alongside other functions which included the public welcome space, the design galleries, restaurant, café and shop. This strategy of combining functions was pioneered in the city previously with the DCA project when it opened in 1999, which attempted to combine modern attractive consumption activities – the bar and restaurant – with practical facilities supporting the university's artistic functions, including a print studio and research space. The university as an instigator of change and a coalition builder is here evident, ensuring that projects developed for its own purposes carried relevancy to the city more generally through their mixed-use civic functions. The term 'living room' symbolises this combination of functions, both productive and consumptive, coalescing under the same roof.

A similar shift took place in Tilburg, where the Spoorzone shifted from a space of culture to a space of 'knowledge.' Many cultural practitioners in the city were horrified when it was announced in 2010 that the project developers refused to designate space for cultural infrastructure in the Spoorzone which would instead be built around the concept of 'Knowledge-Plus.' Culture was deemed not to be

¹⁶⁰ Design Dundee Limited, 'V&A AT Dundee: Architectural Competition Brief Design and Performance Specification', 21 June 2010: 11.

generating economic activity after considerable investment in cultural infrastructure pre-2008, an accusation labelled as short term thinking for politicians desperate to prove their successes. The LocHal however was aligned perfectly with this vision as the public library sought to transition to become the 'library of the future' in which the core concept of information was changed for the concept of knowledge. This once again is a semantic choice which foregrounds the capacity for economic production, through meeting, collaboration and innovation, rather than the mere consumption of information through lending. This relates more broadly to the strategy of the city which sought to advance and move beyond the creative city paradigm. The TextielMuseum in the city also very consciously calls itself the 'museum of the future.'¹⁶¹ This claim is based on a shift from heritage as consumption – museums as visitor attractions, collectors of infinite objects and information – to a utilitarian view of heritage's role in economic production. The TextielLab is a workshop facility in the museum in which artists, designers and students experiment with new techniques and produce original work with an array of historical as well as ultra-modern equipment. The *New York Times* claims this is the most well-regarded aspect of the museum which is 'internationally recognized as a highly specialized work space focused on innovations in woven and knit fabrics.'¹⁶² Heritage is here deployed in the service of innovation.

Future plans to build a 'maker's hub' adjacent to the museum also further this ambition. This will be a manufacturing and design space for partner organisations of the museum, who will benefit from proximity to the museum's resources as well as the possibility for networking and collaboration. The city's industrial heritage is

¹⁶¹ Errol van de Werdt et al., 'Toekomstvisie TextielMuseum 2020 - 2024 (Future Vision Textile Museum)', 19 January 2020, https://www.textielmuseum.nl/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/191217_visieboek_binnenwerk_NL_lores.pdf.

¹⁶² Diane Daniel, 'A Dutch Laboratory That Paints in Yarn', *The New York Times*, 5 December 2018, sec. Fashion, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/05/fashion/textiles-laboratory-tilburg-netherlands.html>.

thus the basis of a new mode of production in the city, and presents an progression of the strategy of culture-led redevelopment in line with the arguments of Carl Grodach et al. who advocate for a return of small-scale manufacturing in the post-industrial city as an alternative narrative 'to those geared towards corporate investment and redevelopment of old manufacturing districts into high rise real estate and tourism and leisure landscapes.'¹⁶³ The TextielLab and new 'maker's hub' constitute part of such a narrative focussed on craft and small manufacturing industries. According to Grodach this policy will create

middle-class, skilled and semi-skilled job opportunities and incorporate more people into the creative economy – rather than relegate them to the side-lines as "outmoded" workers forced into low-end service jobs.¹⁶⁴

The TextielLab produced the large space-dividing curtains for the LocHal, symbolising a collaboration and synergy of goals between these institutions. The 'library of the future' as a meeting place and knowledge exchange hub in the former locomotive hall should be viewed in the context of this 'museum of the future' where heritage becomes functional in the service of small-scale manufacturing, craft, and the return of textiles to Tilburg. The multi-purpose credentials of the LocHal which includes cultural functions such as the philharmonic concert hall, the offices of a cultural consultancy firm, and co-working spaces, once again highlight the economic utility of the space and again underline this fact as fundamental to the concept of an urban 'living room'.

¹⁶³ Carl Grodach, Justin O'Connor, and Chris Gibson, 'Manufacturing and Cultural Production: Towards a Progressive Policy Agenda for the Cultural Economy', *City, Culture and Society* 10 (September 2017): 23, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ccs.2017.04.003>.

¹⁶⁴ Grodach, O'Connor, and Gibson, 23.

5.4 Conclusion

Although comparing a design museum and a public library may seem like a fruitless task, the fact that both of these are self-proclaimed 'living rooms' says a lot about their shared intentions. Neither conscribes to the confines of what is expected of such institutions, but instead attempt to incorporate a variety of functions. This multifunctionality speaks to the way in which coalitions of support were built amongst a variety of stakeholders in the city to facilitate the arrival and success of these buildings. It is this same multifunctionality, symbolically represented by the label of the 'living room' that enables them to negotiate the various dilemmas of culture-led redevelopment developed by Franco Bianchini and Charles Landry. These projects prove that you can square the dilemma between prestige and community and that there is a value in an iconic project above and beyond advancing consumerism and the creation of low skilled jobs. This signifies an evolution of the strategy of culture-led redevelopment in which the critiques of the past have sought to be resolved. They do not simply represent culture to be looked at and consumed, but foreground their productive economic contributions to their home cities. This economic rationale underlines appeals to ambition in the city, proving that it is not an empty promise but a chance to raise the ladder of economic opportunity in the name of all communities of the city.

6. Conclusion:

The urban 'living room' as a small-city solution to culture-led regeneration

Why were urban 'living rooms' built in Dundee and Tilburg, and what does this phenomenon reveal about the status of culture-led redevelopment as a tool for regeneration in small European cities?

The V&A Dundee and LocHal Tilburg are flagship cultural institutions that on the surface are trademark examples of culture-led regeneration in post-industrial cities seeking to improve their image and find a new economic base from disused urban spaces. The conscious use of the 'living room' rhetoric from project developers highlights the nuanced ways in which these small cities have negotiated an otherwise hegemonic and much critiqued development strategy. The historical processes that created these institutions demonstrate a conception of urban 'living rooms' based on:

1. An aesthetic of open civic space defined by a vast interior imbued with domestic elements such as textiles, plants and design furniture.
2. A multi-functionality related to an economic justification based on knowledge and innovation, and to a lesser extent, culture.
3. A message to the city populace that these spaces are welcoming and created in their name, complementary to their role as place-makers in marginalised urban spaces.

By incorporating these three characteristics, these institutions serve as novel strategies aimed at balancing the policy dilemmas posited by Franco Bianchini and his colleagues who theorised on the multifaceted dangers of blindly parachuting in a development policy made famous by showcase examples such as the Guggenheim Bilbao. The small-city contexts that produced these institutions prefigured this approach whereby iconic institutions would otherwise be seen as alien forces with little relevance to the variety of stakeholders in the city, and thus

fail to provide significant economic, social and cultural outcomes worthy of such high-profile, costly and contested developments.

Differing levels of ambition, shaped by national and regional contexts, were crucial in the final realisation of these projects. In Tilburg, the Spoorzone was an urban frontier, forbidden to the city for more than a century that formed a division between the centre and neighbourhoods to the north. It was always a place dearly significant to the city due to this central location, and even more so given the workshops of the railway represented the industrial identity as lived by many former workers and their families. It was a long and contested process of planning before the urban developers could see this significance and acknowledge the necessity for elements which could make this space truly accessible and useful for the citizens. Plans for a sports stadium, a culture cluster and a university campus were all downgraded as an alliance was formed between the project developers and the city library who each saw opportunity in the space. The financial crash of 2008 and the subsequent shortage of investment saved the industrial heritage of the Spoorzone which was co-opted into the library to ensure the building's uniqueness and relevancy in its urban context.

In Dundee, the university - particularly the art school - sought to build on a process of culture-led regeneration that it had driven in order to create a relevancy for itself and the work of its students, serving to improve the quality of research in the institution and to improve the reputation of the art school and its host city. A relationship was formed with the V&A museum who were looking to maximise their impact by finding a new home in a small city, a goal related to that of the nationalist political agenda in Scotland post-2007 which sought to show success in a peripheral city with a poor image. The city administration were similarly delighted to support a chance to garner prestige and attract investment. A coalition of interests were united in this 'living room' which strove for iconic status in fitting with that of a world-class design museum.

It may seem far more obvious for a library, with its clear civic functions, open spaces and shelves of books to stake a claim to 'living room' status than a design museum. The V&A, with its vast entrance hall and teaching facilities may claim it shares these qualities, but looking below the surface this thesis has shown that in the context of culture-led regeneration there are far more similarities than meet the eye. Both were place-makers and messages to the urban populace that these spaces were for them, a point made so crucial by the small size of these cities and the need for cohesion. This need similarly prefigured the necessity to embed these buildings into the history of the place, a point stretched and constructed in Dundee which became a City of Design reunited with its historic waterfront. In Tilburg, the city's heritage which had been vilified as anti-modern prior to 2008 became valued by developers as a tool for building support and cohesion.

Most importantly, these two projects are united by their economic justification based in the knowledge economy. This point suggests the way in which cultural development by itself, and the tourism and image-based outcomes of this approach, were not viable or ambitious enough in these contexts. Culture in both cases was seen as too narrow and elitist a concept in these post-industrial cities. Instead, these institutions were drivers of production based in business and innovation, through the modernisation of the library into a 'knowledge factory' in Tilburg, and the forging of a design economy in Dundee where the very concept of design lost its connotation with art and culture and instead became a useful concept for all sectors of the economy. In Dundee the intention was more symbolic, an icon, raising the ladder of hope and opportunity in the city, than the tangible space of meeting and collaboration in Tilburg. As such, both these buildings were bespoke, tailor-made institutions designed to meet the contemporary challenges of development in the small-city context, creating urban 'living rooms' which underpin local economic development strategies and symbolise, if not provide, cohesive civic products for their respective cities.

6.2 Final Reflection

This thesis was a response and an homage to the GLOCAL master's programme which is partly based between Scotland and the Netherlands. Examining case-studies in Dundee and Tilburg was intended to contribute to the course's spirit of cosmopolitan exchange between European cities and its belief in the usefulness of sharing best practice and knowledge at a time when a reactionary political climate might otherwise seek to look only within for answers. Choosing these two cases was also an argument for the concept of 'ordinary cities', those that exist for themselves and their citizens without cultural or financial prestige, that might be otherwise understood as boring or uninteresting, in an attempt to prove that research must support these 'everyday' examples as a counteraction to neoliberal urbanism and its divisive effects predicated on image, glamour and paradigms. Through this simple choice it attempts to redress the balance in the study of culture-led redevelopment between trophy and everyday examples and contribute to a burgeoning field of small city research.

The thesis was also faithful to this ideal in its final research methodology, which used newspaper sources and interviews to construct 'micro-histories' of two urban cultural projects, highlighting the relevancy of the mundane and interrogating the everyday process of development. The use of such a historical approach to urban development was a novel contribution to the area of study, which is often dominated by sociologists, geographers and economists. Applying a historical framework meant that the nuances and curiosities of these projects could be inscribed, which although certainly a valuable contribution to the urban histories of these cities, should also be seen as a vital first-step which identifies aims and intentions before critiquing outcomes and impacts. In the case of Dundee for example, the fact that the critiques of the DCA after it opened in 1999 in many ways mirrored the criticism of the V&A in 2018 highlights the need to check such critiques against the biases of those who make them, which in their elitism are often

from outside the city without acknowledgement for the civic pride of the place. Such historical research has the potential to define the starting point an impact analysis should be made and deeply influence subsequent conceptions of these projects.

Critiques of the research carried out in this thesis may relate to an over-reliance on the rhetoric of developers and the commentary of cultural elites in Dundee and Tilburg. This choice, based on interviews and newspaper material, is certainly unrepresentative of all the views in the city and may serve to silence alternative voices of dissent. Indeed, a more comprehensive research process may have sought out interviews with such dissenters and opposition forces to provide balance and further illuminate alternative paths. However, as set out previously, using the testimony of those in positions of power and influence in the city allows the eventual results to be judged against their claims. A critique may also be made that there was a lack of balance between the material collected for Dundee and Tilburg, in which the LocHal case made much greater use of newspaper material and the V&A relied on interviews. This was a reaction to the difficulties of finding willing participants in the time of a frightening global pandemic. Indeed the lack of interviews for Tilburg pre-figured a switch to newspaper sources, which could be said to have produced a more illuminating and reliable narrative than from interviews, even if local press may often be inclined to hyperbole and sensation. With a limited remaining time, it was impossible to properly redress this balance by examining a similar quantity of newspapers in Dundee. Finding a greater balance between source types, and also perspectives in the two cities, would be a key lesson to take forward into further research.

The natural next step for such further research is to move beyond the intentions and aims of these projects and to study their actual realisation and impacts. For example, it was briefly described how dissatisfied the developers of the V&A project were with the eventual manifestation of their living room which has been over-commercialised and unfaithful to design concepts. This was a fascinating

discrepancy, and it might therefore be useful to ask exactly how this happened, and the damage this can have on the original goals of the project. It could also be investigated to what extent the living room is simply a message rather than a tangible reality, as related to the inclusivity and social utility of these spaces. Perhaps a most valuable contribution would be to interrogate the conclusions here related to the economic goals of the respective developments. In what ways has the design economy actually been stimulated in Dundee since the opening of the V&A? Has the LoCHal contributed to increased knowledge or manufacturing activities in Tilburg? A quantitative analysis of such impacts would be able to separate the rhetoric from reality of these buildings and contribute to a fuller comprehensive analysis of these projects. This would be an extremely valuable contribution to the continuing study of culture-led regeneration and allow other small peripheral cities to truly consider the potential of new cultural infrastructure.

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