

Master of Science in Human Geography

**The City by Night:**  
A Study on the Night-time Entertainment Economy in Tilburg,  
the Netherlands

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## Executive Summary

In this master thesis, I explore the development of the night-time entertainment economy in Tilburg, the Netherlands. What makes this subject particularly interesting to research in Tilburg is the city's transition from a strong manufacture economy to a post-industrial, services oriented urban centre. The main research question that guided my inquiry is: *What makes the night-time economy possible in Tilburg?* To answer this question, I engaged in three months of ethnographic fieldwork. The account that follows in this thesis is the outcome of interviews I conducted with civil servants at the municipality of Tilburg, with bar managers and with the consumers of night-time entertainment.

In writing the thesis, I focused my analysis on three spatial levels. In chapter 2 I explored the development of the night-time entertainment economy at the level of the city center. I argued that the urban regeneration plans directed at the (re)creation of the city centre have contributed significantly to the spatial development of the night-time entertainment economy, determining where nightlife would take place in the city, in what buildings and even on what parts of the streets. In the third chapter, I moved my analysis at the level of the street. There I argued that the ways in which the night-time economy functions on a night to night basis, is highly embedded in the materialities of the street, such as the layout of the street, traffic, dimensions of terraces, public illumination provisions, CCTV cameras, parking areas and so on. It is the interactions that take place between these materialities which are cross-cut by the interactions in the public-private partnerships between the municipality and the bar owners that make the night-time entertainment economy possible in Tilburg.

Lastly, in chapter 4 I scaled down my analysis to the spatial level of the entertainment venue itself. I argued in this chapter that the night-time entertainment economy is not a "packaged offer" given to the clients by the bar owners and their managers. Rather, it is the outcome of a continuous negotiation around the concept (brand) of a bar and the experiences the clients have in that bar. An interesting thing about these nightlife negotiations is that they bring together a whole range of elements, both human and material, ranging from the bar managers to clients and to bar decorations, types of music, drinks, atmosphere, night-time services, provision of smoking rooms, discount actions and so on. The night-time entertainment economy in Tilburg is therefore a dynamic process that comes about through the interactions that take place between the municipality, the bar investors and their managers, the physical materiality of the street, traffic, services provisions, CCTV cameras, customers, drinks, experiences, music, atmosphere and so on. It is all these elements together that make nightlife possible in Tilburg.

The insights of this research give way to a series of suggestions for both the municipal servants and the investors in the night-time economy. An important suggestion for the municipal servants is that urban plans and policy making should adopt an integrative approach in which economy, culture and space are addressed simultaneously. This research indicates that the night-time entertainment economy is not only an economic process but also a cultural and a spatial one. As such, an integrative approach to

municipal planning is necessary for a more adequate response to the urban developments. For the bar owners and their managers one important suggestion is not to let themselves be limited by the concept of their entertainment venue. Rather, they should encourage the clients' suggestions and negotiations as they are the fertile ground for a more clients' friendly entertainment as well as for ideas for new entertainment concepts that can be the starting point of new business.

## Introduction

We entered the bar at around 11.30 pm. We took off our coats and looked for a place to hang them. After disposing of our coats, we looked around to see if we knew anybody there but we didn't see any familiar face. 'It is still early, a friend told me, the night hasn't started yet'. We got a drink from the bar and stood leant against the side of the bar. There were no tables to sit at, just two or three tall tables where people could put their drinks on. A bit after 12 o'clock, the bar became more crowded and we had to move from the bar to make space for the greater and greater number of people that wanted a drink. Already the two bar tenders on duty that night were working without a moment break. The bar became now the center of attraction, like a jar of honey for hungry ants. The people are dancing, the music is loud, the lights are dimmed, the place is hot, the street is full. The night has begun.

The night-time entertainment economy has attracted in the last decades a lot of attention from policy makers, urban planners, urban citizens, private investors, governmental institutions and academics. Each of these groups has an interest in the ways in which the night-time economy develops and some, more than others, are trying to understand and get a grip on the processes that encompass this particular development. What the night-time entertainment economy means for the different groups is not hard to see, all one needs to do is enter a bar at 11.30 at night and they will get the answers. The night-time entertainment economy is a hedonic space directed at pleasure and relaxation. The charming fact is that this hedonic space is occupied by all the members of the groups mentioned above, varying of course in the degree of participation and the places where you can find them. Similarly, the night-time entertainment economy is a time-space for profit, for selling and buying. The private investors and their associates are here particularly advantageous. Also, the night-time economy is a space for urban revitalization, spatial regeneration and economic revitalization of the city. Policy makers and urban planners seem to have discovered their El Dorado that can help them bring life and development back into their post-industrial cities. For the academics, the night-time spectacle is expanding in front of them as a time-space of order and disorder where sociality meets and mingles with materiality and where social relations and identities are continuously negotiated and redefined. With them, cities are changed both in space and time. And this happens when a great part of the city population is sleeping.

It was this particular mixture of meanings, functions and materialities that the night-time economy is encompassing in the particular context of Tilburg that attracted my interest. Tilburg is a former textile manufacturing city in the Netherlands that in the last decades has seen its economical basis changed into one of culture, entertainment and services. The fact that Tilburg is still experiencing this economical and cultural transition makes it an excellent case for the study of the development of the night-time entertainment economy. The following research questions have formed the basis of my inquiry: What makes the night-time economy possible in Tilburg? How is this mixture of meanings, functions and materialities brought about in the night-time economy? What does this mixture mean for the ways in which the city is experienced and acted upon by its

inhabitants, its legislators and its investors? These are relevant questions that can provide us with significant insights not only into the economical and cultural transformations Tilburg is experiencing at the moment but also into the contemporary urban transitions that take place in Western cities in general and their effects on the city. These insights can help us better understand what the change in the economical basis of contemporary cities from manufacturing to services and entertainment entails for the ways in which sociality is fostered in the urban arena as well as in the ways in which the physical materiality of cities is transformed and redefined in a continuous negotiation between local, regional, national and global forces.

In exploring these research questions, my aim is twofold. On the one hand, I intend to approach the night-time economy both as a subject and as an object; or, in other words, as a product and a process. As such, I see the night-time economy as a product of the various urban policies, legislations and investment practices of urban entrepreneurs. As a process, the night-time economy can have a life of its own, determining the future decision making related to the entertainment economy itself as well as the ones related to the whole urban fabric: the urban spatial aspects and its social composition. On the other hand, I want to explore the night-time urban economy by paying attention to the ways in which it is embedded in the physical urban structure of the city. In particular, it is my conviction that the night-time economy is, as any other urban phenomenon, highly intertwined with the locations in which it takes place, such as bars, cafes, concert halls etc, with the physical patterns in the city, such as street layouts, infrastructure etc. and with the municipal provisions of services such as electricity and street cleaning. My academic objective in this research is to offer an understanding of the ways in which the night-time economy develops in Tilburg and of the ways in which its development is intertwined with the physical materiality of the city itself.

Besides the academic interest, the study of the night-time entertainment economy in Tilburg is also of importance to the non-academic audience. In particular, for civil servants this study will offer valuable information about the ways in which the night-time entertainment economy develops in the city of Tilburg, how it is experienced by the urban population and what its interconnections are with the spatial structure of the city. Likewise, they will gain new insights into the role the materiality of the city such as the street layout and the provision of electricity plays in influencing what kind of entertainment activities take place in what areas of the city and who takes part in them. The study is also of interest to the local and national investors in the night-time economy of Tilburg. For them, the study will reveal what the entertainment expectations are of the population of Tilburg, what the city of Tilburg has to offer them in terms of types of venues, services provision and cultural environment. I do not intend to offer a recipe for urban regeneration in terms of the entertainment industry. Yet, I am confident that this study will bring valuable information that can form the basis for future policy formulation and implementation in regard to the development of a dynamic and vibrant night-time entertainment economy in Tilburg.

In the chapters that follow, I focus on the following aspects. In chapter 1, I present the theoretical framework of this paper. In addition, I offer a brief literature review of the

works that have proved insightful for my research and I present the research methods I used during fieldwork. In chapter 2, I look at the temporal development of the night-time entertainment economy in Tilburg and analyse how its relations with the physical materiality of the city influenced this development. In chapter 3, I focus my analysis on the ways in which the production and regulation of the night-time entertainment is negotiated between different forces at the level of the street. Moreover, I analyse the impact of these negotiations on both the physical as well as the social dimensions of the night-time entertainment economy. In chapter 4, I scale down my analysis at the level of the entertainment venues themselves and analyse the role of the consumers and their interactions in the night in giving shape and meaning to the night-time entertainment economy. In the last chapter I present the conclusions of this paper, at which I add some suggestions for municipal policy makers, for bar owners and their managers and for students of the city that intend to do further research on the night-time entertainment economy in any city.

## Chapter 1

### Theoretical Framework

#### *Brief literature review*

Before I lay down the ways in which I intend to explore the night-time entertainment economy in Tilburg, I consider necessary to provide a brief literature review. The present study is embedded into and was inspired by the work of such academics as Binachini and Parkinson (1993), Chatterton and Hollands (2002a, b), Harvey (1989), Zukin (1995) and Hobbs *et al.* (2000). This literature review is not complete and I do acknowledge that it does not do justice to the amount of intellectual work done on this topic. Yet, given the limited space I have here, I am forced to limit myself to those works that I consider to be the most useful and insightful for my own research project.

One of the first academics to address analytically the transformation in the political economy of cities as a result of de-industrialisation was David Harvey (1989). Harvey argues that the transition from managerialism to entrepreneurialism was the outcome of the urban governments' search for better solutions to improve the post-industrial economic basis of the city. The city governments had to be more "innovative and entrepreneurial" (Harvey 1989: 4) in order to be advantageous in the inter-urban competition for resources, jobs and capital. Following Harvey, this transition to urban entrepreneurialism was paralleled by a transition in the political arena, namely that from "urban government" to "urban governance". Starting from the 1980's the political powers were decentralized from the state level to the local level. The national government was not the financial provider for local development and regeneration anymore. Rather, the local government had to find the resources on its own, and it did so by engaging in partnerships with local and national entrepreneurs. It is under these conditions, Harvey argues, that urban regeneration takes the form of selective investment in those economic areas that are bound to bring the highest profits, such as building of luxurious housing and office centres, gentrification of city centres and particularly important in my case, the revitalisation of the entertainment industry especially during the night-time. The outcome of such selective investments is the creation of a dual city in which certain areas and certain urban groups are left behind, excluded from the regenerated urban environment of luxury and entertainment (see also Zukin 1995).

Hobbs *et al.* (2000) develop Harvey's arguments further and explore more closely the ways in which the transition to entrepreneurialism and urban governance are intimately connected to the development of the night-time economy. An interesting argument Hobbs *et al.* (2000) make is that the formation of a night-time entertainment economy was not just the outcome of only economic shifts but also that it was equally brought about by changes in the cultural system of the city. In the post-industrial period, the working classes have more time and money available to take part in leisure activities. It was under these changing cultural elements, they argue, that the night-time economy became the realm in which the new, post-industrial man could enjoy himself unconstrained by the regulating nature of the industrial working ethic. Similarly, for others the night-time economy became the source of flexible employment.

Chatterton and Hollands (2002a) explore as well the political and economical powers inherent in the night-time economy. As they themselves put it (2002a: 96), their focus in the paper “moves beyond the many post-modern textual readings of these transformations to explore critically the role of corporate capital and the local state in urban restructuring”. In exploring the night-time economy, they focus on what they termed “urban playscapes” – young people’s night-time activities in bars, night-clubs and music venues. In analyzing these urban playscapes, Chatterton and Hollands (2002a) explore three interrelated aspects of the urban night-time economy: its production, its regulation and its consumption. Their main argument is that the three aspects of the night-time economy “combine to create a dominant mode of ‘mainstream’ urban nightlife [...] a standardised, sanitised and non-local consumption experience” (2002a: 105) in which the national and foreign investors dictate the style and form of the night-time entertainment. Other forms of nightlife such as alternative or hip-hop bars, as well as the type of the clientele frequenting such bars (ethnic groups, low income) are excluded and marginalized (cf. Zukin 1995).

Many authors have pointed out the tendency of many cities, particularly in the West, to become culturally and economically uniform, with global ‘serial reproductions’ (Harvey 1989: 10) overtaking the local cultural initiatives. Yet, authors like Bianchini and Parkinson (1994) and McNeil and Write (2001), through particular case studies, try to demonstrate that such a global urban cultural homogenisation is not to be feared. Binachini and Parkinson (1994) argue that every city was affected by the processes of de-industrialisation to different degrees. The urban revitalisation strategies the local governments implemented, even in the framework of culture or entertainment, were based on local situations and so they were not following a global agenda. Similarly, McNeil and Write (2001) argue that the urban regeneration strategies the local governments followed were not tautological responses to the de-industrialisation processes. Rather, they were the products of particular local and national political decisions, with public structures having more power to influence the ways their cities are redeveloped than it is generally assumed. Bianchini and Parkinson (1994) and McNeil and Write (2001) argue that in the study of urban regeneration processes, such local political and economic forces should not be disregarded.

The above reviewed literature has brought, undoubtedly, a significant contribution to the understanding of the urban revitalization processes, especially the formation of the night-time economy. Yet, there are three important aspects that these studies fail to address and that I consider of vital importance for fully understanding what has been happening in and with the cities in the last decades. Firstly, the transition from the industrial economy to the entertainment economy is presented in many studies as being the outcome of a historical determinism. The cultural and entertainment economy is portrayed as ‘the only way out’ of economic degradation for the cities under study. Little attention is given to why the entertainment economy was chosen in the first place and what other initiatives have been left behind and why. Secondly, the urban spaces in which the entertainment economy takes place, such as bars, night clubs, multiplex centres etc. are seen simply as containers of urban activity. Analytical attention is given only in passing to the ways in which such entertainment venues influence the consumers’ behaviour in and around such

spaces or on how the consumers' identities are shaped by the places they frequent. Lastly, I follow Hubbard (2006: 3) in arguing that in the studies on the new urban phenomena "all too often the materiality of the city is overlooked in accounts that emphasize individual genius, collective endeavor or historical happenstance". None of the studies I reviewed looked at the ways in which the infrastructure in a city or the municipal services such as electricity or street cleaning help to maintain and develop an adventurous, lively and profitable entertainment economy.

### *Theoretical approach*

In this paper, I intend to address these academic shortcomings by approaching the night-time entertainment economy from a networks perspective. I follow Hubbard (2006: 207) in the belief that the city "is a unique and profligate combination of 'stuff'- buildings, practices, rituals, technologies, texts, animals, screens, networks, objects, people". Such an ontological view will help "take the city seriously" (Hubbard 2006: 3) as an object of study in itself and so to avoid seeing the city as an unproblematic container of urban life. Likewise, it will help me avoid such ideas as 'material determinism' in which the physical structure of the city is perceived as influencing the ways in which urban life is performed in the city. Not less important, such an ontological perspective will help me go beyond simple considerations as that which portrays the immaterial world of the city (economy, politics, ideas, images etc) as being separated from the material one (infrastructure, municipal services etc) (see Latham and McCormack 2004). In order to capture the urban 'combination of stuff' as it takes place within the context of the night-time economy, I will make the actor-network theory the backbone of my research. Let us see briefly what ANT's principles are.

ANT is an approach that emerged in the 1980's and is mostly associated with the work of Bruno Latour, John Law and Michel Callon. At the basis of ANT lies the concern of uncovering the heterogeneous relations among a variety of actors, be they human, non-human, discursive, material etc. and of analysing their particular outcomes. According to Bosco (2006: 136) the main principle in ANT is that actor-network theory "is a framework that suggests that knowledge, agents, institutions, organisations, and society as a whole, are *effects*, and that such effects are the result of relations enacted through heterogeneous networks of humans and non-humans" (*italics in original*). From such a perspective, the night-time economy can be seen therefore as the outcome of a series of network relations between non-material elements (for example: political decisions, global markets, people's expectations and desires) and material elements (such as buildings, streets, electricity lines etc). An interesting point in ANT is that such network effects are as much part of the network as the actors that get engaged in those very networks (Bosco 2006). Analyzing and understanding such network effects requires, within ANT, to trace the networks such effects form as well as the changing relations that develop between the various actors (human and non-human).

A controversial point in ANT is that all the things engaged in such heterogeneous networks have the capacity to act and to initiate change (Bosco 2006). In the context of my research then, electricity - for example - acts to determine the ways in which the

night-time economy is performed in the city. Such a ‘capacity to act’ could be seen from other perspectives as ‘material determinism’. Yet, within ANT such a ‘capacity to act’ or ‘agency’ is not seen as a property possessed by any actor in the network (as would be the view of the mainstream social theory), rather it is seen as a ‘network effect’. Such a view on agency could be better understood when we consider the elements involved in the network not as being actors but *actants* “something that acts or to which activity is granted by others... [An actant] implies *no* special motivation of *human individual* actors, or of humans in general (Latour 1996, cited in Bosco 2006: 137, original emphasis). Under such a conceptualisation, agency is seen as decentralised, as part and parcel of the network itself. “Once we conceptualise agency as a network – Bosco (2006: 137) argues – uncovering the heterogeneous actor networks of associations allows us to explain the mechanisms of power and organisation in society, and to understand how different things (from language to institutions to material artifacts to technologies) come to be, how they endure over time, or how they fail and exit our lives and our world”.

Another principle of ANT I will mention here, one that is particularly relevant in the geographical study of the urban phenomena, is the view that actor networks and their effects are highly embedded in (and were built upon) the geographical setting in which such networks occur. The spatiality of these actor networks influences the ways in which institutions, knowledge, social systems etc are created, how they perform and how they evolve (Bosco 2006). Following such a view then, I could hypothesize that the factors that influence the formation and the development of the night-time economy in Tilburg as well as the manner in which it is performed are part and parcel of the specific urban composition of Tilburg. The night-time economy would, per definition, be different in Tilburg than in other cities (such as Amsterdam or Barcelona) and that is the case as their urban configurations (social, physical, economical, political, cultural, historical) are different. The aim in this paper will be to discover and analyse this specific context of Tilburg and the ways in which it contributes to the formation and development of the night-time economy.

In order to make this theoretical framework more concrete and so easier to apply in my analysis, I decided to use three particular concepts I borrowed from the literature. I invite the reader to see these concepts as a tool to ‘zoom in’ on the complex and fluid actor-networks that make up the night-time economy in Tilburg. A first such concept I will use is that of the *urban frontier*. Hobbs *et al.* (2000), inspired by Turner’s (1893) frontier theory, developed the concept of urban frontier to refer to the formation of a particular urban time-space in the night-time economy. As such, this urban frontier has two particular properties. On the one hand, it has a spatial dimension, visible in the urban physical structure of the city. On the other hand, it has a temporal dimension, seen in the bar managers’ practices of closing their bars at ever later hours in the night. The concept of urban frontier is an insightful one for exploring the practices of the urban entrepreneurs in the night-time entertainment economy, their investment strategies and, most importantly, the ways in which these strategies are mingled and interacting with the materialities of the city, such as the buildings, the street, the decoration of the bars to give shape and meaning to the night-time entertainment economy.

A second concept I will use is that of *night-time urban playscapes* introduced by Chatterton and Hollands (2002a). For Chatterton and Hollands (2002a: 95), urban playspaces refer to the “young people’s activities in bars, pubs, night-clubs and music venues within the night-time entertainment economy”. I would like to expand this concept to include the materiality of the night-time economy (pubs, streets, interior decorations) not as spaces in which the young people’s social activities take place but as part and parcel of those very activities. This particular concept will help me ‘zoom in’ on the practices of the night-time entertainment consumers, mostly students and on the ways in which their social activities are intertwined with the physical environment in which entertainment takes place. The third concept I will use is that of *liminality*, developed by Hobbs *et al.* (2000). Hobbs *et al.* (2000: 710) argue that the night-time economy is a ‘largely unregulated zone of quasi liminality’ characterized by negotiations, transgressions and redefinitions. It is in this zone of liminality that urban policies, spatial plans, investment strategies and the city’s materialities all come together to give shape to the night-time entertainment economy. The concept of liminality will help me focus on the negotiations between the urban entrepreneurs and the civil servants and analyze the ways in which the materiality of the city is intertwined in these very negotiations.

### *Research methods and techniques*

Before I begin applying this theoretical framework in my thesis, I consider necessary to say a few words about the research methods and techniques I used to gather my data. Throughout my field research, the research method I used the most was semi-structured interviews. As such, I conducted interviews with managers of different bars and cafés in Tilburg, of both mainstream cafés but also more alternative ones, with civil servants at the municipality of Tilburg and with the members of the largest population of night-time customers, namely students. From the student population, I interviewed students of the University of Tilburg but also students of the technical and professional schools, namely Avans and Fontys. I recorded almost all the interviews I took and later transcribed them. In some cases, the interviews took place in the bar itself, and because of the noise in the bar, I was unable to record and understand the interviews. Or, in other cases, the managers themselves refused to give a recorded interview. In these situations, I took extensive notes during the interviews and where necessary I returned to the manager with extra questions that emerged while I was reading the notes.

These interviews were supplemented by unstructured discussions I had in bars with students and bar tenders. From these discussions as well, I made notes that I used in my data analysis. Besides interviews and discussions, another research method I used was participant observation, which I conducted in different bars and cafés. This method helped me get an insider’s view into the practices and experiences of the night-time entertainment. In addition, they also served as sources for interview questions for students and managers, whom I asked to comment or reflect on certain observations I made during the night. These observations also served as material for personal reflection on the research topic of my study, which was particularly useful in the process of data analysis.

## Chapter 2

### Night-time economy between policy and practice

#### *Historical background*

The ways in which the night-time entertainment economy has developed in Tilburg is very much influenced by the historical context of the city, its economical background and its cultural sphere. In this section, I would like to outline the historical background of Tilburg, with a particular focus on how it developed economically from an industrial city to one of culture and entertainment. Likewise, I will focus as well on the physical development of the city, on the spatial plans that were written and put in practice in the city and on the ways in which these spatial transformations of the city centre in particular contribute to the development and expansion of the night-time entertainment economy.

Tilburg is a middle sized city in the Western part of the Netherlands, accommodating a bit over 202.000 inhabitants (Municipality of Tilburg website). Historically, Tilburg is known in the country and abroad as an industrial city, its economical basis being dominated in the past by the textile industry (Doormans 2008). According to the municipality of Tilburg's website, in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, Tilburg was perceived to be the wool manufacturing center in the Netherlands. In 1865, Tilburg was for the first time connected to the railways system, fact that further contributed to the city's economical development. In 1871, there were no more than 125 wool factories in Tilburg, most of them being family businesses. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the economy became more diversified as other industries became functional in the city. It was at that time that Tilburg's population grew significantly, as more and more people migrated from the surrounding villages to work in the expanding industries (cf. Municipality of Tilburg website).

At that time, the night-time entertainment economy was, according to Louis Houet, spatial planner at the municipality of Tilburg, very underdeveloped. In the city centre one could find pubs and theaters (significantly fewer than today) and could participate in many leisure activities. Yet, such participations were modest. The reasons why, in those times, the Tilburg's population did not enjoy the night-time entertainment as much as they do today were presented to me by Mr. Houet. He linked them to the industrial work ethic of that time:

People during the night were supposed to be in bed to rest. There was no 24 hour economy. I think there were even some factories that stayed opened during the night but very few (Interview with Louis Houet, 9<sup>th</sup> of March 2009).

Hobbs *et al.* (2000) as well link the low intensity of the night-time entertainment economy in the industrial cities of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the work ethic. Yet, they also argue that during industrialization, the leisure activities of the working class were highly regulated and contained "to ensure that they did not threaten the interest of the capital, or the sensibilities of the 'respectable classes'" (Hobbs *et al.* 2000: 703). One direct regulation came from the local government that limited the opening hours of the

entertainment venues. Another regulation came from the factory owners that, by imposing strict working shifts, deterred many workers from spending their free time on anything else but rest. And yet another regulation came from the people themselves. As Chatterton and Hollands (2002a) argue, there has been a cultural predisposition towards seeing the night and its entertainment possibilities as a site of vice, excess and crime. Morality played then a significant role in shaping the public participation in the night-time entertainment economy (as far as it existed) and in further influencing the very development of this economical and cultural sector.

Starting with the 1950-1960's and continuing well into the 1980's, the manufacturing economical basis of Tilburg began to change, as it did in other cities throughout the Western Europe (Paddison 2004, Chatterton and Hollands 2002b). It was at that time that many textile factories were closed in Tilburg, while their production was transferred overseas. Louis Houet told me that the manufacturing sector began since then to be replaced with a large variety of service industries, such as logistics, food, health care, education, culture and entertainment (see also Doormans 2008). Mr. Houet explained to me that since the transition from Fordist modes of production to post-Fordist ones was one that took place gradually, over the years, Tilburg did not experience a deep economic crisis as other cities in Europe did at that time. Yet, a significant challenge for the city was that it had to redefine itself and to build an image of itself that could bring a competitive advantage in the competition with the other cities in the region for the attraction of capital, jobs and creative people (see also Harvey 1989). One important policy the municipality began to put in practice at that time and continues to do so today, is spatial planning directed at urban regeneration and modernization.

It was therefore with the decline of the manufacturing sector and with the rise in the inter-urban competition for financial and human capital, that the municipality began systematically to plan its city to make it attractive and fit for the accommodation of new and diverse economic functions. Conscious of the fact that the image of a city is summed up by the image of the city centre, the urban planners and designers directed a great deal of attention to the development of this particular area. The city centre was perceived as 'the space for salvation' from the post-industrial urban physical decline (see also Doormans 2008). As Louis Houet put it:

During the 60's and during the decline of the textile industry the municipal board had to deal with the problems of decline. So they tried to make the city centre more interesting and better to come there with cars, and to attract new industries, new employment (Interview Louis Houet, 9<sup>th</sup> of March 2009).

Yet, a significant handicap Tilburg confronted itself with at that time was that it did not have a proper, historical city centre as its neighbouring cities of Breda and Den Bosch did (and still do). There are no mediaeval walls, cathedrals or a gothic town hall that could serve as city centre landmarks (Doormans 2008). The spatial structure of Tilburg was a fragmented one, as the city was formed by the unification of different villages. Consequently, before creating a competitive image for Tilburg, the urban planners and

designers had to physically and symbolically (re)create the very city centre. And the task is far from being completed.

As such, older streets are being redeveloped, older buildings are renovated, new office tower buildings are being constructed, particular streets are designated car free and the ring road around the city center is enhanced with more space for cars and bicycles. In addition, the old city squares such as the Heuvel (and next year Piusplein) are redesigned and made to accommodate terraces for the neighbouring cafés. New squares like Pieter Vreedeplein are being constructed from scratch to accommodate new shops, cafés and entertainment venues such as a cinema and a casino. Likewise, more space is reserved and designed for cars and bicycles parking (cf. Municipality of Tilburg website).

This post-industrial 'return to the city centre' is of course not unique to Tilburg. Cities throughout Europe and North America have seen their salvation from economic and social decline in their city centres which offered the opportunities for new corporate investments, jobs creations, middle-class consumption and entertainment vibrancy (Oc and Tiesdell 1997, Chatterton and Hollands 2002b, Zukin 1995). Functionally, Tilburg is building a competitive image for itself in the following ways. On the one hand, the municipal board is trying to develop the consumption sphere of Tilburg by attracting more shops in the city center, particularly the more exclusive ones (Interview Louis Houet). The municipality is also planning to build a shopping mall on the fringe of the city, yet at the moment of writing it is uncertain whether these plans will be materialized as the inhabitants of the city voted against them. On the other hand, Tilburg is investing a lot of money and energy in developing its cultural industries (Interview Louis Houet). Behind these plans and policies rests the Floridian philosophy that cultural industries in the city will act as a magnet for talented and creative people. It is assumed that the presence of these creative people in the city will have a positive influence on the cultural vibrancy of the urban arena, including the development of an entertainment industry (Florida 2002). As Louis Houet put it:

[...] the cultural basis in this town and the high school for arts, music, drama, design, that is a very good basis to get the talents to Tilburg. And the talents will give performances, theater and so we are going to put more emphasis on that. Then the nightlife will come (Interview Louis Houet, 9<sup>th</sup> of March 2009).

The night-time entertainment economy therefore, is addressed only indirectly by the municipality of Tilburg, both in spatial planning and in economic policies. The municipal efforts are directed at redeveloping Tilburg into a pleasant and livable city during the day. This focus on the day-time experience of the city was nicely put on the municipality's website:

All these projects [for the development of the city centre] are intended to make the city centre of Tilburg ready for the future. A city centre where on every moment of the day there is something to experience and where one can work and live with pleasure (Municipality of Tilburg website).

As Aart Verheggen, from the municipal department of entrepreneurial affairs, acknowledged as well (Interview, 26<sup>th</sup> of March 2009), the municipality of Tilburg has no direct plans or policies to address the development of the night-time entertainment economy. And there are two reasons for this. As Louis Houet told me, Tilburg is not a metropolitan area and as such there is little demand for a 24 hour economy, with a highly developed and diverse night-time entertainment. In his view, nightlife in Tilburg brings more problems to the city than it brings economic benefits and as such it is not of interest to the municipality:

I don't think there is a task for Tilburg to develop a night-time economy. It is a very small part, mostly youth from 16 to 25, they get to the town, drink a lot, and they make problems. [...] The area is beautiful [Korte Heuvel, where most of the bars are located] but it is very hard to be there on Friday and Saturday night because of criminal problems (Interview with Louis Houet, 9<sup>th</sup> of March 2009).

Another reason for the lack of direct municipal policies addressing and encouraging the development of the night-time economy was presented to me by Mr. Verheggen who argued that "We have a free market economy" (Interview, 26<sup>th</sup> of March 2009). The municipality is not getting involved in the investment strategies of the various entrepreneurs that have businesses in the night-time economy of the city. Likewise, there are no policies that encourage either local or national capital investment into the night-time economy; the job is let into the market's hands. The trend nowadays, he argued, is that the municipality retreats from intervention in the night-time economy and into regulation by means of licenses, laws and permits.

This retreat of the municipality from the night-time entertainment economy does not mean however that there is no collaboration between the political arena and that of the capital investors. On the contrary, there are close partnerships between the two parties particularly formed around issues of social security, organization of festivals or traffic (I will return to this subject in the following chapter). Likewise, we should also acknowledge that the plans and policies developed for the day time city do have an influence on the ways in which the night-time economy is developing and functioning, even though these influences are indirect. The spatial plans, for instance, for regenerating the city center contribute significantly to making the city centre more accessible and more attractive during the night as well. Parking areas for cars and bicycles are being used by the night-time visitors of the city as they are used during the day. What this municipal retreat does imply however, is that the night-time entertainment economy has a free hand to develop itself. As such, the night-time economy is acquiring a life of its own, shifting and moving in time and space. How this is happening can be best understood through the concept of the night-time urban frontier.

### *The night-time urban frontier*

The night-time entertainment economy is a relatively new phenomenon in Tilburg. Of course cafés existed in Tilburg in the past as well, but the night-time economy as it can be experienced today started to develop itself approximately ten years ago. Since then, it has

been expanding and shifting, conquering both the night-time and the night-space of the freshly created city centre. And it is this development that I would refer to as the night-time urban frontier.

The concept of frontier has originally been used for the first time in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by American historian Frederick Jackson Turner. In 1893, he wrote his famous collection of essays “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” in which he discussed and analyzed the importance of the ‘pioneers’ migration into the Wild American West for the development of the American nation and identity. His analysis is known now in the academia as “the frontier thesis”. In his essays Turner (1893: 2-3) wrote:

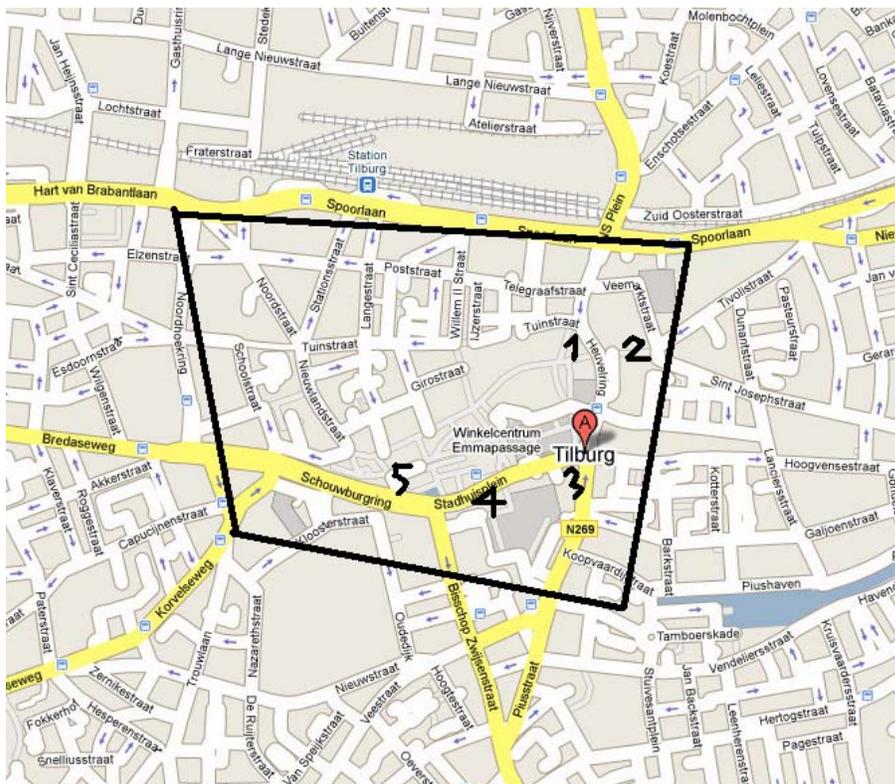
American social development has been continually beginning over again on the frontier...In this advance, the frontier is the outer edge of the wave – the meeting point between savagery and civilization.

For Turner, therefore, the image of the frontier represents much more than a geographical space. The frontier is the conquering of new spaces, a pure physical, geographical movement into a new place. It is also an economic phenomenon, a movement for the search of new economic opportunities to sustain a new life. Also, it is a meeting place between the unknown and the known, savagery and civilization. And, the frontier is a space in which everything is redefined, receiving a new identity and a new meaning.

Starting with the 20<sup>th</sup> century (and continuing in the 21<sup>st</sup> one), the frontier thesis has been transposed from the study of plains to the study of the city, particularly the Eastern American cities. Neil Smith (2005) borrowed the frontier idea to study the processes of gentrification in the post-industrial American cities, where the city centres were perceived by civil servants and estate developers as urban wilderness that needed to be tamed and brought to civilization. Melbin (1978) expanded the frontier thesis even further to include the time dimension as well. By looking at the ways in which human activities have started to occupy parts of the urban night as well (not only the day), he argued that the frontier can be perceived not only as a movement in space but also as a movement in time. Similarly, in 2000, Hobbs *et al.* have used the frontier imagery to study the urban night-time entertainment economy in the post-industrial British context. One important argument they put forward is that just like in the Western frontier, which was far away from the governing structures in the East, the night-time entertainment economy develops itself independently from the official governing structures. As such, it is dominated by those ‘urban pioneers’ who take the risks of capital investment. It is them who transform the night-time economy into a “commercial frontier” (Hobbs *et al.*, 2000: 706). Let us now take a close look at the ways in which the night-time urban frontier is taking form in Tilburg, both in space and in time.

According to Stef van Kessel, student born and raised in Tilburg, nightlife in the city centre has developed extensively in the last 10-15 years. This argument was also presented to me by various bar managers I talked to. It was in this period that the city centre acquired more bars and cafés than it had ever before. This development, I would argue, was closely influenced by the municipal plans of constructing a proper city centre.

As I have mentioned above, an important objective in creating a city centre in Tilburg was that it could serve for consumption, entertainment and capital investment, with positive effects for the city at large. An important step that the municipality took in meeting this objective was the designation of the Heuvel area in the city centre as the ‘Horeca Concentration Area’. This particular area is reserved especially for hotels, restaurants and café (from where the abbreviation horeca) and as such, they enjoy more regulatory freedom in terms of opening hours, the noise volume etc. than entertainment venues outside of this area (Interview Louis Houet, 9<sup>th</sup> of March 2009). I could argue, therefore, that the night-time urban frontier was initiated and remains closely tied to the creation of the city centre in Tilburg.



**Map 1:** Tilburg’s city centre and the locations of night-time entertainment

1. Heuvelplein
2. Korte Heuvel
3. Piusplein
4. Stadhuisplein and Koningsplein
5. Oude Markt

A second important group of players that would move the frontier deeper into the city centre space, were the national (by now international) breweries. In the last decades many national breweries such as Heineken, Amstel and Brand have acquired property in the city centre by buying buildings from private owners. As Mr. Houet told me, many of these buildings were previously the homes of private people, who decided to sell them. In other cases, the buildings functioned previously as shops or as fast food places. Café Bolle, for example, a very popular place for student night-time entertainment, functions

now in a location that used to be a pizzeria (Interview Onne van den Ven, bar manager Bolle, 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2009). After these buildings were acquired, their ground areas have been renovated and transformed into cafés, bars and restaurants. These entertainment spaces were then rented to private investors who wanted to open a bar in Tilburg (Interview Louis Houet, 9<sup>th</sup> of March 2009). There are also cases in which the private investors buy the location directly, without the intervention of breweries, yet these cases are very few. A good example in this sense is Drie Gezusters, the chain bar owned by the national investor Sjoert Kooistra. No matter who acquires the buildings and who transforms them into entertainment venues, one thing is certain: that as more urban places are transformed into bars, restaurants, cinemas or cafés, the night-time urban frontier is moving deeper into the physical structure of the city center. The purchasers and the investors can be here seen as the new ‘urban pioneers’ that conquer, occupy and transform ever more locations.

Who are the pioneers of the night-time urban frontier and how do they become pioneers is an interesting thing to look at. From the interviews I took, I learned that most of the investors in the night-time economy in Tilburg are local entrepreneurs. Some of them only have businesses in Tilburg, while others have opened their first businesses here and extended them in other cities in the country. National investors are very few in Tilburg, the most prominent ones being Sjoert Kooistra, the owner of Drie Gezusters, who has bars all over the Netherlands and the owner of the club Havana, who has bars in the major cities in the country. The management of these bars, however, is done by local managers, originated either from Tilburg or from the area around it. There are no international investors in the night-time economy in Tilburg (Interview Jan Kinds, manager of music café Cul de Sac, 19<sup>th</sup> of March 2009 and Interview Aard Verheggen, 26<sup>th</sup> of March 2009).

As Jan Kinds explained to me, a bar is owned and managed by different layers of people. At the top are the investors, who are divided in two groups. On the one hand, there are the property investors, the breweries and the local entrepreneurs that buy the buildings. On the other hand, there are the concept developers, namely investors that think of a bar concept. At the middle are the bar managers, responsible for the overall functioning of the bar itself. And at the lower level are the bar tenders and the rest of the staff, whom also have their own responsibilities in managing the day to day bar. In some cases, the local entrepreneurs and the concept developers are one and the same group: they own both the building and the bar concept itself. They run their business on their own, with the support of the managing team. This construction can be seen in Cul de Sac. Yet, in most of the cases, the concept developer rents the location from property investors and then he further rents the business (concept and location) to a third party who manages it with his team of managers. This latter arrangement is called “*pacht constructie*”. Under this arrangement, a part of the revenues of the bar go to the concept developer. An example in this sense is café Philip, also a popular student bar. The building in which the bar is located is owned by Heineken, the concept of Philip was developed by the investor Rien van de Heuvel who rented the business to a group of three investors (Interview Erik, bar manager café Philip, 17<sup>th</sup> April 2009).

Keeping in mind that the night-time entertainment economy is a space for economic ventures and risk taking for its investors, we can safely argue that the urban frontier, just like its Western equivalent (Turner 1893) is never stable, never limited by well defined boundaries. Rather, it is always shifting its geographical edges, at times moving into new physical spaces, at times retreating and at times re-conquering older spaces located on its former edges (see also Chatterton and Hollands 2002b, Melbin 1978). I have argued above that the frontier moves forward as the property investors acquire new buildings and transform them into bars or cafés. When we look however at the temporal development of the night-time urban frontier in Tilburg, we can see that the reverse processes of retreat and re-conquering are taking place as well. Stef van Kessel told me that as he grew up and completed his studies in Tilburg, he got very familiar with the different bars and cafés in the city centre. Throughout the years, he told me, many night-time entertainment venues went bankrupt as they could not attract the clientele they targeted for and that they needed to survive. An example in this case is the bar Loco, the last bar in a row on Korte Heuvel. The bar went bankrupt within months of its opening and now it is an empty space, with doors locked. With the closing of this bar, I could argue, the night-time urban frontier retreated inwards towards the street. Other bars, Stef told me, that were on the verge of bankruptcy were later bought by various investors, who transformed their locations into new types of bars and cafés. An example in this case is café Philip that previously used to be a dining café. It was bought by local investors and changed into a mixed café (mainstream, club and disco). Café Philip then is an example of the night-time urban frontier re-conquering spaces on its former edge.

#### The time frontier

Murray Melbin (1978) argues that in the study of the frontier, time is as important as space in understanding how this phenomenon takes place and what developments are brought by it. As such, he argues that

Since people may exploit a niche by distributing themselves and their activities over more hours of the day just as they do by dispersing in space, a frontier could occur in the time dimension too (Melbin 1978: 6)

An important argument Melbin (1978) puts forward is that time, like space, can be occupied by humans and their activities. He argues that as space is too limited in many cities to accommodate all the diverse human activities, people begin using the night as a new space of sociality, economy and entertainment. The use of the night for human activities, Melbin argues, is made possible by the provision of public illumination in the city. Without public illumination, the human activities would not take place later than the evening, when natural light is still available. An important hypothesis Melbin accounts for in his article is “that night is a frontier, that expansion into the dark hours is a continuation of the geographical migration across the face of the earth” (1978: 1).

Taking a closer look at the development of the night-time entertainment economy in Tilburg, we can easily see that the night-time urban frontier has a temporal dimension as well. The provision of public illumination throughout the night is one of the most

important municipal provisions that make possible the move of the entertainment economy deeper into the night (Interview Louis Houet, 9<sup>th</sup> of March 2009). According to Mr. Houet, the city streets are artificially lit starting from sunset and until sunrise. He told me as well that whereas in the rest of the city, starting from midnight, the public lights are diminished to 50% of their capacity, in the city centre they are kept to their full capacity until sunrise. An important outcome of this public provision of electricity is that it makes the city centre more suitable to accommodate night time entertainment, by making the streets look more open and feel more secure. Likewise, the provision of electricity in general assures that the night-time entertainment with its music, atmosphere lights, artificial smoke, fridges for drinks and so on is there to meet the customers' demands.

An important indication of the time dimension of the urban frontier is the opening hours of the various entertainment venues. Starting with the de-industrialisation of Tilburg and the shift towards a post-Fordist service economy, the night-time entertainment economy has moved deeper into the night. Whereas during the industrial period (until 1980's) most bars closed their doors at midnight, today they are opened well over that time (Interview Louis Houet). There is a difference in opening hours between week and weekend days. As such, from Sundays to Wednesdays bars and cafés are opened until 2am and from Thursdays to Saturdays they are opened until 4am. Tilburg also has an erotic club, and this is opened in the weekends until 6am. The bars of the student associations are also opened until 6am in the weekends. There is also a discotheque that closes its doors at 4am but reopens them at 6am for the after party which lasts until noon (Interview Aart Verheggen, 26<sup>th</sup> of March 2009 and Stef van Kessel, 12<sup>th</sup> of March 2009).

Many bar managers I talked to described the night as the 'time for profit' (Interview Erik, bar manager café Philip, 17<sup>th</sup> of April 2009), a description that both Hobbs *et al* (2000) and Chatterton and Hollands (2002b) have obtained as well in their studies of nightlife in Britain. Erik told me that as most people have to work or study during the day, the night is then reserved for entertainment and relaxation. Every bar manager, he argued, is conscious about the importance of the night for the income of the bar and as such, everybody is doing his best to attract as many clients to his bar. He does that by coming up with discounts, different actions, nice decorations, clean bar and so on. This view was also expressed by another bar manager who told me that the night, rather than the day, is the time when money is made (Interview Tijs, bar manager Drie Gezusters, 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2009). In his words:

During the night, especially from Thursday to Saturday nights you earn your money. During the week you earn money but the big money is during Thursdays to Saturdays, especially on Saturday nights. Now with the terraces, it's nice but you have to have more employees working, you have to invest more. If you work behind the bar and just have to give the people their drinks it goes 8 or 9 times quicker than when you have to go to a table, ask what do you want etc. You have to do 9 times more work during the day than during the night on Thursdays to Saturdays. It is in those nights that you earn your money.

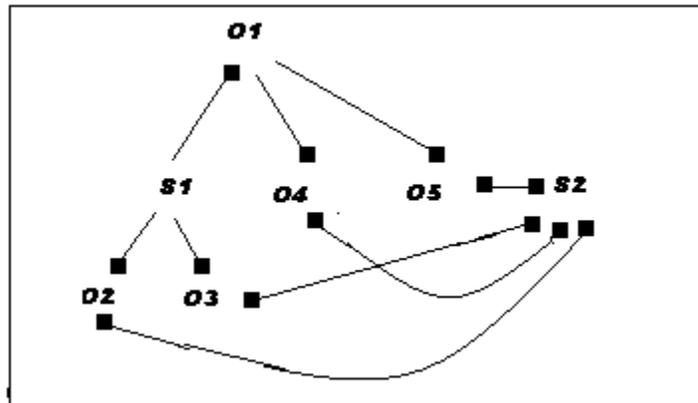
The commercial move towards the night time is however not particular to bars and cafés. Other venues such as restaurants, cinemas and theaters are prolonging their opening hours to deeper and deeper into the night. Likewise, supermarkets are now opened until 10pm, while just a few years ago they were opened only until 8pm. Many banks have a clients service that can be reached every day until 10pm. Car service, gas stations, call centers, TV and radio stations and taxi's offer their services on a 24/7 basis. Yet, none of these services attract as many people and have as much impact of the night—time urban frontier than the bars and the cafés. The bars and the cafés are the pioneers of the night-time urban frontier, and it is through the activities they foster that this frontier brings life into the city centre during the night. As one bar manager put it:

The move towards the night is not particular to bars, restaurants and supermarkets are also opened until later hours. This has not changed. But, the bars were always the kings of the night (Interview Onno van der Ven, bar manager café Bolle, 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2009).

Just like with the spatial dimension of the frontier, a particular characteristic of the urban time frontier is that it is never stable. Rather, its outer edges are constantly on the move, depending on the different days of the week, on the kinds of activities that take place in the bars and the number of people that are present at those activities. As such, we have seen that during the weekend days (Thursdays to Saturdays) the outer edges of the time frontier are deeper into the night than on weekdays (Sundays to Wednesdays), until 4am and 2am respectively. Likewise, we have seen that certain bars and cafés are opened for longer than others are. For example, whereas the mainstream cafés have to close their doors at 4am, the bars of the student associations can stay opened until 6am. A characteristic of the time frontier that cannot be seen in the spatial one is that it can be much more easily extended by its urban pioneers. Some bar managers told me that when there is still a party going on in the bar at the official closing time, they do not close their bar immediately. Rather, they close the doors and the windows, put the music lower than it used to be and let the party to continue until most of the clients are gone. The night-time urban frontier is extending its outer edge then ever deeper into the night.

In this chapter, I argued that the night-time entertainment economy in Tilburg develops itself like a frontier, having both a spatial and a temporal dimension. According to Turner (1893) and Melbin (1978), a particularity of any frontier (be it in space or in time) is that it is a meeting point of old and new, of civilization and wilderness, of order and disorder. The urban frontier of the night-time entertainment economy in Tilburg is as well such a meeting point, bringing together city centre development policies, spatial plans, buildings, people, wishes, money, and the list could continue. And it is all these things together, through their active or passive interactions that give shape and meaning to the night-time entertainment economy. Without government policies and spatial plans there will be no well defined and developed city centre where the night-time entertainment economy could be enjoyed by the city's population. Likewise, without the investments the different entrepreneurs make in the night-time entertainment there will be no bars and cafés opened during the night to bring life into the city centre at night.

If we were to express in a schematic form the combination of human and non-human elements that I described in this chapter as important for the creation of the night-time entertainment economy in Tilburg, this scheme would look as in Figure 1 below. I encourage the reader to keep in mind that this scheme shows only a part of all the actor networks that make the night-time economy possible in Tilburg. In the following chapters, I will add more and more actants to this scheme until, at the end of the paper, we will have a complete representation of all the actor networks of the night-time entertainment economy in Tilburg.



**Figure 1:** The actor networks that make possible the advancement of the urban frontier of the night-time entertainment economy in Tilburg.

- S1 – the civil servants at the municipality of Tilburg
- S2 – the investors and managers of the night-time entertainment economy
- O1 – the spatial plans for the city centre
- O2 – the time regulation policies
- O3 - the electricity provision in the city centre
- O4 – the city centre
- O5 - the city centre buildings (cafés, bars, clubs etc.)

What can be seen in Figure 1 is therefore a brief summary of this chapter. The civil servants at the municipality of Tilburg have created and developed the city centre by means of the spatial policies they wrote for the city, while the city centre influences what kind of spatial policies the civil servants develop (> S1 -> O1 -> O4 <-). Also through these policies, the civil servants determined what buildings in the city centre will be reserved for night-time entertainment venues such as cafés, bars, clubs, discotheques etc. (remember the policy called ‘The Horeca Concentration Area’, mentioned on page 18 above) (S1 -> O1 -> O5) . The buildings reserved for entertainment venues influence the investment practices of the investors in the night-time entertainment economy, by directing their investment to certain areas of the street and by determining how much money should be invested in the building to transform it into a bar or a café (based on whether there used to be a bar there before or not). Likewise, the investors influence the functions and looks of the buildings by means of their investments (O5 <-> S2). The investors and bar managers’ practices into the night-time entertainment economy are also influenced by the electricity provision in the city centre, which is regulated by the civil servants (S1 -> O3 -> S2). Similarly, the time regulation policies developed by the civil

servants have an influence on the time until when the investors can keep their bars opened during the night and conversely the investors influence the time regulation policies by keeping their bars opened longer than the official closing times (S1 -> O2 <-> S2).

Viewing the night-time urban frontier as a meeting point between human and non-human elements, between spatial planners, urban policies, the city centre, buildings, investors and electricity, helps us move away from categorical thinking. As such, we can argue that the city centre is not a simple container of night-time economic and social activities. Rather, it is part and parcel of these activities, with both being tied in a close dialectical relationship. Similarly, the ways in which the night-time entertainment economy develops in Tilburg, in both time and space, are closely linked to other developments, such as the spatial regeneration of the city and the public provision of street illumination. And we should not forget that all these networks were formed against the particular historical background of de-industrialisation in Tilburg, fact that influenced what material and human elements got engaged in these networks in the first place.

Now that we have seen how the urban frontier of the night-time entertainment economy developed (and continues to develop) in Tilburg, let us move our attention to what happens politically inside this frontier, during the day to day nightlife of the city. In the next chapter, I will explore the political, economical and material negotiations that take place between the local government and the investors in the entertainment economy.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Negotiations in/of the night-time economy**

In the previous chapter, I described the development of the night-time entertainment economy as an urban frontier that moves both in space (on the streets of the city centre) and in time (later opening hours). Yet, what is particular about this urban frontier is that in the post-industrial context, its movement forward is not the outcome of the work of one group of people only. Rather, it is the outcome of continuous negotiations between different actors: the local government, investors, bar managers, customers, police, fire department, and so on. An important aspect of these negotiations is that they bring together both the materiality and the immateriality of the city, forming a liminal space of transformations (Hobbs *et al.* 2000 and Shields 1991). In this chapter, I will focus my attention on what happens inside the night-time urban frontier. As such, I will describe the negotiations that take place between the different actors inside the frontier and analyse the ways in which these negotiations give shape, materially and symbolically, to the night-time entertainment economy.

#### *Urban governance*

In the last decades, many cities in Western Europe, Tilburg included, have experienced a significant shift in urban politics, namely that from urban government to urban governance (Harvey 1989, Hobbs *et al.* 2000, Goodwin and Painter 2005). Tilburg, in particular, is an exemplary case of this shift. The city attracted a lot of attention in the literature, particularly for its adoption in the 1980's of the new public management paradigm (Hendriks and Tops 2003; see also Ferlie *et al.* 1996 and Denhardt and Denhardt 2007). Under the new public management, the municipality reorganized itself putting the basis of what is known in the literature as the "Tilburg Model". A significant characteristic of this new model was that the whole process of governing at the local level has been reorganized to be more efficient and effective in meeting the social and economical demands of the local citizenry. This model however has been criticized for restricting the democratic process by carrying top-down politics. As such, in the 1990's, the municipality of Tilburg reformed its Tilburg Model by shifting its attention from an efficient and effective internal management to a more interactive and communicative relationship with the external, namely the citizens in all their roles. As Hendriks and Tops (2003: 312) argue, in the new Tilburg Model of the 1990's, the most used terms in public policies were "interactive policy-making", "co-production of policy" and "participative decision making". It is under this new model that the municipality collaborates closely in policy making and implementing with its citizens from every sector of the city, with a particular focus on consultation, consensus and compromise between all the parties involved.

This political shift towards collaboration between the government body and its citizens, or in other words towards urban governance, has been closely tied (among others) to the processes of de-industrialisation which began to materialize in the 1970's. With de-industrialisation, many cities lost their manufacturing economic basis, making it more and more difficult for the local governments to respond to the social and economical

demands of the urban population. This difficulty was further amplified by the processes of government decentralization, in which the national governments began to retreat from the local affairs (Harvey 1989). The local governments were given more responsibilities in dealing with their local and regional problems. In the situation of post-industrial urban social and economic decline combined with financial austerity experienced by the local governments, the local authorities had to find new and innovative solutions to acquire capital and investments in their cities. It was believed that these capital investments would bring about economic development and with it a relief from the social distress of the urban population.

What we have seen therefore in the last decades has been an engagement of the local government in public-private partnerships with partners from the social (citizens) as well as business sectors, together creating the broader field of urban governance. As Goodwin and Painter (2005) argue, the concept of governance is broader than that of government. In urban governance, the local authorities do not have that most power in decision making. Rather, the financial partners have as much say in the decision making as the elected public administrators do. In some cases, the local authorities play only a facilitating and a coordinating role in these partnerships (Harvey 1989). Likewise, the rules of the game are not decided by the local political convictions of the different partners, but by the rules of the market. And, the aim of these partnerships is not only to bring about social provisions to the urban population, but also to bring about capital accumulation. As Hobbs *et al.* (2000: 703) put it:

We have entered a new era of urban politics, in which the ideological rationale of the local government has shifted away from a ‘municipal socialist’ stance, whose central function axiom was the provision of local welfare services, toward a ‘municipal capitalism’ which seeks primarily to facilitate local economic growth and development.

It was with this shift towards urban governance that the local municipalities became more engaged in what Harvey (1989: 6) calls “urban entrepreneurialism”. The entrepreneurial stance that the local authorities take is particularly important in the competitive race contemporary cities engage in for the attraction of the mobile financial and human capital. As Harvey (1989) argues, the activities of the public-private partnerships are particularly entrepreneurial as they engage in speculative investments meant to bring about both physical and economical regeneration in the city (see also MacLeon and Ward 2002). As such, some cities invest enormously in city centre redevelopments (both physical and social) or in flagship projects while others direct their attention to reviving their cities by developing the entertainment economy, particularly during the previously ‘dead time’ of the night (Bianchini 1995). The municipality of Tilburg is part of a large network of public-private partnerships, from which I will mention here the ones related to the logistics and services sector, to the cultural sector and to the one I focus on in this research, namely the entertainment/leisure sector (Interview Louis Houet, 9th March 2009).

In the night-time entertainment sector, the municipality collaborates closely with the business investors active in the city centre of Tilburg. These investors are associated in bars associations, one for each area of the city centre where the cafés and bars are located. As such, there is a bars association in the area Heuvel and Korte Heuvel, one at Puisplein and Palaisring and one at Stadhuisstraat and Oude Markt. There are also bars that are not part of any association, yet they are generally located outside the city centre. Onno van der Ven, bar manager of café Bolle (Interview 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009), told me that the bars located in one area form one association because it is easier for them to organize street events, such as Carnival, Tilburg Fair or summer festivals. He told me that one bar alone is not allowed by the municipality to organize an event on its own, it has to collaborate with the other bars on the street. Also from a financial perspective, Mr. van der Ven explained to me, it is easier for an association to arrange a street event, as all the members contribute financially to preparing these events.

Another reason why the bars in one area are collaborating with each other was brought to me by Jan Kinds, bar manager of Cul de Sac (Interview 19<sup>th</sup> March 2009). Mr. Kinds argued that united, they form a stronger group in the negotiations they conduct with the local authorities, particularly in terms of licenses, permits and laws. In his words:

Well, we are all combined in a community, this street. So we can have one voice if we don't agree with a law or statements made by the mayor. We can have one voice all together.

As Tijs, bar manager of Drie Gezusters told me (Interview 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009), it is not obligatory to be part of the bars association in your street. Yet, the advantages of being a member of the association are enormous: they get to participate as well in the street events organized in their area by putting out a bar for example and as such, they increase their revenues significantly; they get aware of the developments that take place in the area; they can bring their own views and suggestions for solving problems related to the entertainment economy in the area; and they become stronger in the competition with the other bars in the city, particularly concerning the prices offered. Mr. Verheggen from the municipality of Tilburg told me (Interview 26<sup>th</sup> of March 2009) that a well known practice of these bars associations is that they control the prices in the night-time economy. The bars association on Korte Heuvel seems to be the strongest one in this affair as it is composed of a small group of investors that own a significant number of bars in Tilburg. It is this small group that sets the prices, while the rest of the members have to follow. The non-member bars can set their own prices. This practice was conformed by many bar managers I talked to.

Prices, discounts, upcoming events and other internal affairs are discussed on a monthly basis with all the members of the bars association (Interview Jan Kinds and Onno van der Ven). Also at these monthly meetings, external affairs are discussed as well, such as traffic problems or street renovation plans. It is at these meetings that the different members of the association (try to) develop one view on the different problems at hand that they will discuss and negotiate with the municipal authorities. As Mr. Verheggen told me (Interview 26<sup>th</sup> of March 2009), there are two types of meetings that take place

between the bar owners and the municipality. Twice a year, there is a meeting at a high level. The issues discussed at these meetings are related to the opening hours, the allocation of licenses, what kind of entertainment should be offered during the night-time and which one is appropriate to get a special license (with longer opening hours, for example). Likewise, every three months there is a meeting between the bar owners and municipal servants. At these meetings, the following issues are discussed: trash baskets, smoking law, parking problems, street traffic (pedestrian or not) and so on. At these meetings, the bars associations are represented by one or two bar owners from each association.

### *The liminal space of negotiations*

All these meetings between the bar owners, civil servants and other governmental agencies like the fire department, form together a liminal space of negotiations. I follow Hobbs *et al.* (2000) and Shields (1991)'s thoughts on liminality in arguing that what gives these meetings the attributes of a liminal space is that they bring together actors that would otherwise not be connected (think also of the new Tilburg Model described above), that they represent an "in between" space linking politics, economics, culture and place and that they have transformative powers as new ideas, new behaviours and new materialities come about through them (cf. Turner 1974 and Madge and O'Connor 2005). As such, it is in this liminal space of negotiations that the night-time entertainment economy is continuously defined, shaped and given a material existence. Examining what happens inside this liminal space of negotiations is of utmost importance in understanding the production and regulation of the night-time entertainment economy. Three particular observations can be made in this space: 1. that the municipality occupies a decisive role in shaping the development of the night-time economy; 2. that the materiality of the city comes to the front and enters these negotiations with as much power as the rules and regulations do; and 3. that it is through these negotiations that the night-time entertainment economy is given both a material and a symbolic shape. Let us look at these observations more closely.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, both municipal servants I talked to told me that the municipality of Tilburg has no policies directed at the development of the night-time entertainment economy (Interview Louis Houet and Aart Verheggen). They both gave the impression that the municipal affairs and the night-time entertainment economy are two separate things, both developing following their own dynamics. Yet, looking at the different negotiations that take place between the municipality and the bar owners we can see that the municipality has much more influence in deciding the destiny of the night-time entertainment economy than the two civil servants acknowledged. Firstly, it is the municipality that offers licenses and permits to investors. An investor cannot open a bar or any other venue without having the necessary permits. The most important permits one investor has to acquire from the municipality are the horeca permit and the building permit. At these permits are added other regulations regarding the environmental pollution, the size and decoration of the terrace, fire regulations and so on (Municipality of Tilburg website).

Secondly, when the bars associations want to organize a street event, they have to ask permission from the municipality. As Jan Kinds, bar manger of Cul de Sac explained to me, the municipality of Tilburg has a yearly agenda of all the events that take place in the city. When the association wants to organize an event, they have to check that the days in which the event is planned are not occupied by other city events. Unless the days the associations want to organize their event are free, the municipality will not allow the association to organize their event as that will mean an “overkill of city events” (Jan Kinds, Interview 19<sup>th</sup> of March 2009). Lastly, the municipality is enforcing a large number of rules on the night-time entertainment economy as regards the opening hours, sound volume of the music played in the bars, smoking inside the bars, selling alcohol to underaged customers, and so on. By means of these rules and regulations, the municipality imposes itself as a powerful regulatory institution, influencing the ways in which the night-time entertainment economy develops, how and when it functions and what happens inside the different bars.

Yet, all these rules and regulations are not received by the bar owners uncritically. As I mentioned above as well, many of these rules and regulations are an important subject of discussion at the meetings organized between the municipal servants and the bar owners. The bar owners’ negotiations of these rules can best be seen in the day to day activity of the night-time entertainment economy: while some of these rules are followed closely by the bar owners, other rules are negotiated and at times even altered. Through these negotiations, the bar owners and their managers make clear that the municipality is not an imposing authority, a controlling government that decides what can be done or not in the night-time entertainment economy, but rather a partner, part of the space of Tilburg’s urban governance. As many bar managers told me, one of the most negotiated rules in the night-time entertainment economy is the opening hours (as we have seen in the previous chapter as well). They told me that when there is a party still going on at the time the bar should close, they do not stop the party immediately, but rather put the music volume lower, close the doors and windows and let the party continue for some time. Only then do they ask the customers to leave, after which they close the bar. As Onno van der Ven, bar manager of café Bolle told me, when the municipality finds out that a bar was opened longer than the allowed time, the bar gets a warning. Only when the bar is been opened longer than allowed for the third time, does the bar get a fine (Interview 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2009). Yet, many times the municipality is not aware of these longer opening hours.

An interesting situation the bar owners and their managers find themselves in is that some rules they have to follow are in contradiction with rules given by other governmental departments. Such a contradiction of rules is particularly interesting in that it opens endless possibilities for the bar managers to play with these rules and to chose the ones that best suit their own situations. In this situation, it is not only the municipality and the bar owners engaged in the rules negotiations, but also other governmental departments. A clear example in this sense was given to me by Jan Kinds. It involves the fire regulations from the fire department:

...an example, the front door - the fire department says that it has to open outside because if there is panic inside they [the customers] have to be able to push the

door away, otherwise it creates more panic. The municipality says it is not allowed to open the door on our [the municipality's] terrace, so there are two rules conflicting with each other and that is the other side of the medallion, that some of the departments that make the rules do not know what rule the other departments are making. and that opens possibilities for us because when they are conflicting you can do anything you like because ok...what is the right one?

Another rule that some bar owners and managers negotiate, and some of them even alter in their daily practices is the look of the terrace. As one bar manager told me, the municipality requires that all the terraces should have round tables and that they should be covered with parasols in the colour dark red or dark green. When asked whether he is meeting all the rules, including those regarding the look of the terrace, one manager told me:

Yeah...most of them of course...sometimes we play with them a little bit, in a normal way. [...] The chairs and the tables law is something we play with. Maybe the colour of the parasol, normally it should be green, red, but we were the first ones to put a black one. They said nothing about it, but they were not very pleased. It was not allowed but I think I got lucky when I applied. You have to tell them what you are going to do, and when they saw that the colour is black, they did not deny my permit, so it is ok. Now you see a blue one and a black one further on so also the municipality is looking through the fingers right now (Interview 19<sup>th</sup> of March 2009).

One important observation that can be made from the words of this bar manager is that this liminal space of negotiations is not dominated by one group of people or by one institution. Rather, it is created by a negotiative move back and forth between the municipality, the bar owners and their managers and other governmental institutions. It is a game of give and take that fits so well in the whole atmosphere of the night-time entertainment economy, which is commonly seen as a space to let go of constraints and regulating norms (see also Schlor 1998). Another, equally important observation is that the materiality of the city is brought to the front in these negotiations. The materiality of the city, seen in terraces but also in streets, parking areas, traffic and electricity provisions are as much part of the night-time entertainment economy as the rules and regulations are, and as much as the municipality and the bar owners and managers are. They all come together in this liminal space of negotiations.

Let us look more closely at the ways in which the materiality of the city comes to the front in these negotiations as an important part of the night-time entertainment economy. The street Korte Heuvel, where most of the bars are located is a great illustration in this sense. Korte Heuvel is one of the most vivid streets in the night-time economy in Tilburg. On both sides of the street there are cafés, bars and restaurants. Each venue has a terrace, which extends into the street. Korte Heuvel, as all the other streets in the city centre, has been designated by the municipality as car free. Yet, it is opened for people on bikes and for pedestrians. The fact that people are allowed to ride their bikes on the street, is seen by the bar owners and managers as a problem for the development of the night-time economy. They argue that they cannot expand their terraces and that the street is not safe

for pedestrians. The bars association on Korte Heuvel is discussing this traffic problem in their meetings with the responsible civil servants from the municipality. In the words of one bar manager whose bar is located on Korte Heuvel:

For instance, this street...here it is allowed to cycle here. But what we like is to not allow bicycles anymore but just to walk on foot. Because we can expand our terraces. Also we could easily close the street when we organise events. And there will be fewer accidents because people on bikes go fast and sometimes they clash with the people that walk here. It is like a dream for us, the owners to close this road to put a terrace around here. There is an initiative taken in this regard by the group [association]. We propose it at the municipality; it is still a wish for us to close this street to get more people in the street to drink or something. That is more cosy and we will make more money in our business which is good for Tilburg (Interview Jan Kinds, bar manager Cul de Sac, 19<sup>th</sup> of March 2009).

The municipality responded critically to this proposal. They argued that if they close this street for bicycles, the people on bikes will have to make a large detour to reach the city centre, which of course is not ideal. The city centre, they sustain, should be easy to reach from any direction, both during the day and during the night. City centre accessibility, it seems, is more important for the municipality than economic profit. However, the traffic problem on this street might change in the future. The municipality is planning to develop the area next to Korte Heuvel into a 'creative neighbourhood' called Veemarktkwartier where the creative industries will be located. This economic redevelopment will also include a physical restructuring of the area, as some streets will be made more accessible and some buildings will be renovated (Municipality of Tilburg website). The bar owners on the Korte Heuvel see this redevelopment as a great opportunity to ask the municipality to make the street free of bicycles and therefore more suitable for the extension of terraces further into the street. The regular meetings between the bar managers and the municipality become a significant space to address and negotiate the materiality of the street, its layout, functions and uses in relation to the night-time entertainment.

An important aspect of these negotiations is that they have the potential not only to reshape the materiality of the street itself but also to construct and reconstruct the very physical manifestation of the night-time entertainment economy as it can be seen at the street level. At the moment on Korte Heuvel, as at Piusplein for that matter, what gives the night-time entertainment economy its physical shape are the buildings where the bars are located and the presence of terraces on the street, particularly the dimensions of a terrace (how further into the street does it come). Each bar owner rents from the municipality an equal number of meters from the public street which he occupies with a terrace. The limits of the terrace are marked on the street itself with a small stone marked with the letter T (the letter T is the logo of Tilburg). As such, I argue, this small stone with the letter T on it marks the limit – the outer edge - of the physical manifestation of the night-time entertainment economy in Tilburg. If through the negotiations between the municipal servants and the bar owners Korte Heuvel becomes free of bikes, then the night-time entertainment economy is deemed to have a different physical manifestation: bigger terraces and less traffic. Whether this will happen or not, remains to be seen in a

few years. The decision will not be taken by any group alone, but by the partners that take part in Tilburg's urban governance.



**Foto 1.** Korte Heuvel. Own picture.



**Foto 2.** The T sign marking the outer edge of a terrace. Own pictures.

The organization of street events and parties is another interesting case to explore the materiality of the city in relation to the night-time entertainment economy. Two particular street events that took place during my fieldwork were Carnival and Queen's day and Queen's night. What can be observed during these street events is that the materiality of the street itself becomes part and parcel of the entertainment economy, both during the day and during the night. As in the particular case of Korte Heuvel, in the general case of street events the materiality of the street, and with it the physical manifestation of the entertainment economy, is closely negotiated. In these negotiations, the materiality of the street plays a vital role in influencing the decisions on where stages for concerts will be set and where will the bar owners put their bars on the street: will the bars be in the middle of the street so as to be easily reached by those wanting a drink? If yes, this might hinder the movement of people on the street as too many people will gather around the bars; will they be closer to the stage or further away? What effects will one of these locations have for the movement of people on the street? Another important aspect is whether the street is accessible enough for fire fighters or whether it is easy to evacuate it in case of panic during the street event. Korte Heuvel for example is not an easily accessible street as it has no side streets at all. It can only be reached by the fire fighters or the ambulance only from the beginning and the end of the street, while the middle of the street remains hardly accessible during an event. Piusplein, on the other hand, is more accessible as it is opened to the main road on two sides. In case of panic during the event, Piusplein is easily evacuated and reached by the help services (Interviews with bar managers Jan Kinds and Onno van der Ven).

During these street events and parties, the street itself is not a simple container of the entertainment economy, be it during the day or during the night. Rather, during these events the street becomes a malleable place that takes the shape of the event itself, slowly changing from a street in the common sense as a place to move through on your way towards your destination into the destination itself, a place to stay, to dance, to meet people, to listen to music, to drink. Whereas during the regular entertainment nights, the physical manifestation of the night-time entertainment economy is well demarcated on the surface of the street (with the T sign), during these events, the whole street becomes part and parcel of the physicality of the night-time entertainment economy. The street, the bars, the stages, the people, the drinks, the street lamps, the sound systems etc. all come together in these city events and give a material shape to the night-time entertainment economy.

### *The liminal space of (dis)order*

The discussions and negotiations that take place within the night-time entertainment economy are not limited to the ones between the municipality and the bar owners. Above, I mentioned the involvement of the fire department in the night-time entertainment economy. They make rules and regulations regarding the fire safety of the bars in general and the safety of the customers during street events. Similarly, they regularly discuss with the bar owners and managers about how to deal with particular safety problems, such as evacuations and first aid (Interview Jan Kinds, manager Cul de Sac). Another important governmental department that takes part into the night-time economy is that of the police.

As Louis Houet from the municipality of Tilburg told me (Interview 9<sup>th</sup> of March 2009), Tilburg confronts itself with significant rates of criminality, particularly in the city centre and at night. The most persistent criminal offenses in the night-time entertainment economy are related to fighting and drugs. As such, the bar owners and members of the police department meet regularly to discuss the difficulties with which the bar owners and managers confront themselves in dealing with criminal behaviour and to come up with new solutions and approaches to making the city centre safer at night.

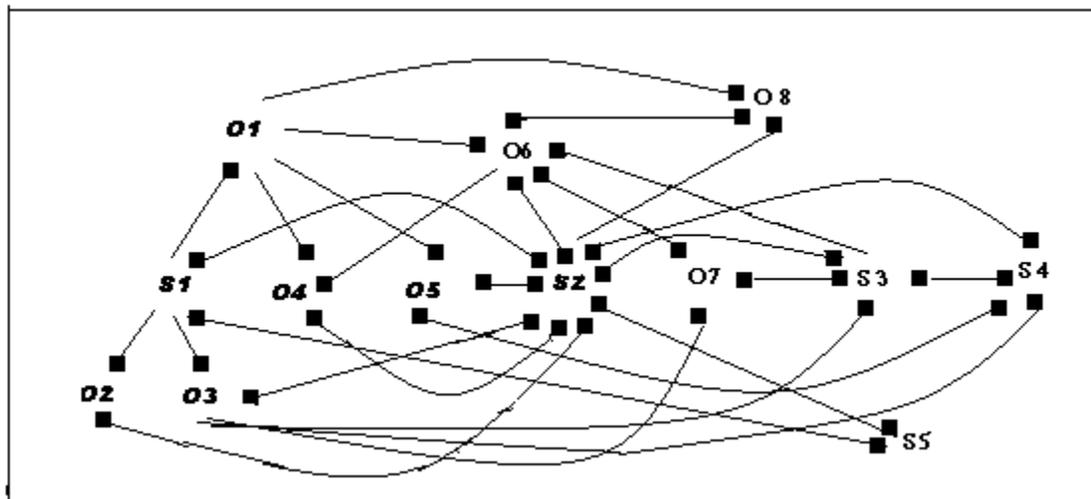
In order to curb criminality in the city centre at night, the municipality in collaboration with the police and the bar owners have adopted three particular initiatives. One is that the streets in the city centre are systematically patrolled by police officers on foot or on bikes. Another initiative is the installation of CCTV cameras. These cameras are particularly useful in identifying criminal offenders (cf. Oc and Tiesdell 1997 on CCTV in city centres). An interesting observation Louis Houet made in relation to the CCTV cameras is that their adequate functioning is dependent on the provision of public lighting. As such, he told me, the public lights in the city centre are kept on to full capacity all night, not to make the streets more attractive or more pleasant. Rather, they are kept on to facilitate maximum visibility for the CCTV cameras (Interview 9<sup>th</sup> of March 2009). Public lighting therefore, is part of the night-time entertainment economy not only as facilitator of the advancement of the night-time urban frontier (as we have seen in the previous chapter) but also as a catalyst for a safer night-time urban frontier in general (see also Townshend 1997). Another initiative, one particularly meant for the weekend nights, is the programme called “A weekend away” (in Dutch Weekendje Weg). In this programme, all those arrested in the Horeca Concentration Area between Friday 5pm and Sunday 5pm for any kind of criminal activities are detained until Monday. Those arrested also receive a fine or are assigned to community service (Municipality of Tilburg website).

Security in the night-time entertainment economy is not only a matter of the governmental departments. The bar owners bring as well their contribution in assuring a safe entertainment atmosphere during the night. They do that by hiring bouncers or by acting as bouncers themselves (cf. Rowe and Bavinton 2004 for an extensive study on bouncers). As Jan Kinds told me, in many cases the fights begin either in the bar itself or around the premises of the bar. In these situations, the bouncers intervene in breaking up the fight and taking the fighters out of the bar. When they do not succeed in breaking up the fight, they call the police. A significant effect of the presence and activity of bouncers in the night-time entertainment is that they create a visible, physical separation between inside and outside, between private and public, between muscles and law. Their sheer presence at the front door of a bar is a clear indication of this separation (see also Hobbs *et al.* 2003).

In this chapter, I tried to look inside the night-time urban frontier as it manifests itself in the context of the night-time entertainment economy in Tilburg. I showed that what happens inside this night-time urban frontier and the ways in which it happens is not the outcome of the decisions taken by one group of people, be it the municipality, the bars owners and their managers, or any other party. Rather, it is the outcome of continuous

negotiations between civil servants, bar owners, police department, fire brigade and so on, all coming together and giving shape economically and spatially to the night-time entertainment economy. What I showed as well in this chapter, is that the materiality of the city is not left out as insignificant but that it comes to the front through these continuous negotiations as an important actor in defining and giving meaning to the night-time entertainment economy. The materiality of the city, of the city centre and of the street are part and parcel of the night-time economy, as it is for that matter of any social activity that takes place in the city (see also Latour and Hermant 1998).

In Figure 2 below I expand the actor networks I introduced in Figure 1 on page 19 to include the new actants and their networks that I identified in this chapter. The actants written in *Italic* are the new additions to Figure 1. Looking at Figure 2, we now have a bigger picture of who and how makes the night-time entertainment economy possible in Tilburg. As such, we can see 1. that the civil servants, the bar owners and the fire brigade negotiate with each other the ways in which the night-time entertainment economy is regulated and made to function adequately (> S1 <-> S2 <-> S3 <-> S5); 2. that the civil servants, the bar owners, the police, the bouncers and the CCTV cameras come together to assure that the street and the city centre as well as the night-time entertainment itself is safe for those being there (> S1 <-> S2 <-> S3 <-> S4 <-> O7 <-> O6 <-> O4 <->); and 3. that the civil servants and the spatial plans they write and enforce in the city centre come together to delimit the physical dimension of the night-time entertainment economy (> S1 <-> O1 <-> O6 <-> O8 <->).



**Figure 2:** The actor networks visible in the liminal space of negotiations of the night-time entertainment economy in Tilburg.

- S1 – the civil servants at the municipality of Tilburg
- S2 – the investors and managers of the night-time entertainment economy
- S3 – *the police*
- S4 – *the bouncers*
- S5 – *the fire department*
- O1 – the spatial plans for the city centre
- O2 – the time regulation policies

- O3 - the electricity provision in the city centre
- O4 – the city centre
- O5 - the city centre buildings (cafés, bars, clubs etc.)
- O6 – the street*
- O7 – the CCTV cameras*
- O8 – the T sign on the street*

What I hope Figure 2 is able to illustrate is that these networks between the different actants are not stable or fixed in this pattern all the time. They are, however, the result of continuous negotiations between the different actants and as such we should keep in mind that these networks might look differently at other times. For example, if the bars association on Korte Heuvel succeeds in making the street free of bicycles, the relationship between the bar owners and the T sign on the street will disappear or it will be transformed into a different one. At the moment, the T sign on the street is the limit until where the bar owners can expand their terraces and with them their entertainment business into the public street.

Now that we have seen what happens inside the night-time urban frontier and how this frontier is negotiated on the street between the different actants, let us now move inside the bars and clubs themselves. In the next chapter, I will use Hollands and Chatterton (2002a)'s concept of "urban playspaces" to analyse the ways in which the night-time entertainment economy is made possible and is experienced by the customers themselves.

## Chapter 4

### Nightlife

Entering a bar, a café or a club is in essence an entrance into the cathedrals of night-time entertainment. It is here that the night-time economy is experienced and lived as nightlife by customers, bar managers and employees. In this chapter, I will analyse the ways in which nightlife is produced, negotiated and consumed within the premises of bars, cafés and clubs. My focus will be on what Chatterton and Hollands (2002a) termed “urban playscapes”, loosely defined as the customers’ activities in and around entertainment venues. According to Chatterton and Hollands (2002a), urban playspaces can be unraveled on two levels. On the one hand, they can be seen as the outcome of processes of entertainment production, regulation and consumption, or what the authors called a “circuit of culture” (2002a: 99). On the other hand, they can be understood as a mixture of nightlife spaces, each with their own specificities and complexities. To these two levels, I add a third one, that of the material. This level, I argue, cuts across the other two levels, being part and parcel of both the processes that give shape to nightlife (production, regulation and consumption) and of the nightlife spaces in which urban playscapes become visible.

In chapters 2 and 3 I showed how night-time entertainment is produced and regulated. In this chapter, I will look at the other element of the “circuit of culture”, namely that of consumption. I must say, however, that I will use the term consumption in this chapter to describe a much broader activity than it is generally referred to in the economic theory. Consumption of nightlife is not simply a matter of going to a bar, buying a drink and getting out again. On the contrary, it is also about experience and is closely related to issues of lifestyle, identity and status (see also Chatterton and Hollands 2002a). Moreover, during fieldwork I observed that some customers go in a bar and enjoy the music and the atmosphere without making any purchase, or buy just one drink during the whole hours they spend in the bar. This type of behaviour is, in my view, also consumption of nightlife: the customer is consuming [read: experiencing] what is offered in that bar: the music, the atmosphere, the company of other people in the bar and so on.

What makes nightlife a consumption-related experience becomes visible when we compare the ways in which customers use bars and cafés during the night with their use during the day (see also Bromley *et al.* 2003). The difference in the ways in which these locations are used during the day and night was nicely described to me by a customer I interviewed. In his words we can read that whereas a bar during the day is *a place among others* where you can have a relatively quick drink (in your break from work or school), the same bar at night becomes *the place from others* to experience and enjoy, seen in the reasons for choosing that bar instead of another and in the long hours spent in that bar:

When you go to a bar during the day it is usually just to have a drink and then you go away. You are not there to stay. When the weather is nice, many go to a terrace. They go to a terrace because of the nice weather and not because of the bar. During the night they go there because they like the bar, the atmosphere, the

people in the bar and the music. They are there to stay longer (Interview with Ruben, 11<sup>th</sup> of May 2009).

In this chapter more concretely, I will look at the ways in which customers give shape to the night-time entertainment by means of the consumption choices they make, the negotiations they engage in with different actors in the nightlife and the interactions they foster with the materialities of the nightlife itself. Yet, before bringing the customers' activities into the picture, let me offer an overview of the different nightlife spaces that are developing within the night-time economy in Tilburg, see what genres of entertainment is offered within them and what kind of customers they attract.

### *Genres of night-time entertainment in Tilburg*

Most people I talked to during fieldwork described nightlife in Tilburg as diverse, as having something for every customer. In the city centre a client can find an array of mainstream bars and cafés, such as Bolle, Polly Magoo, Drie Gezusters and BrandPunt, characterized by bruin, wooden interiors with music from the top 40's. A particular characteristic of these cafés is that they adopt what Chatterton and Hollands (2002a: 102) call a "chameleon approach". As such, these locations operate differently during the day than during the night, have a different clientele and a different atmosphere. During the day, they operate as cafés where clients go to have a coffee, a drink on the terrace, to have lunch or dinner. Then the music is low and the location is well lit. During the night, they function as bars/clubs. The tables are put aside or taken away to make space for dancing, the music is louder and the lights are softer. Besides these chameleon cafés there are also a number of bars that have no kitchen and as therefore they maintain the same functions during the day as during the night. Among these bars are also the alternative ones such as Cul de Sac and Extaze where rock and alternative music is being played. Paradox is a jazz café where on a regular basis clients enjoy life music and comedians. There are also dance clubs such as Studio and Zino and a night club. Next to these bars, cafés and clubs, Tilburg also has concert venues such as 013, Concertzaal Tilburg, Schouwburg and De Link, three mainstream and two alternative cinemas, five museums among which the modern art museum De Pont and the Textile Museum and three theaters (Municipality of Tilburg website). As I did in the rest of the paper, in this chapter I will focus only on the entertainment that takes place in bars, cafés and clubs.

A particularity of night-time entertainment in Tilburg is that it is not dominated by large, noisy discotheques seen in the bigger cities in the country or by impersonal locations where thousands of people gather at the same time. On the contrary, it is characterized as small scale, cozy, personal or what many bar managers called "easy entertainment", driven by a "no nonsense mentality". As two bar managers stated:

Here is it more easy entertainment; people like to enjoy the food, the good music, good beer. It is not trendy, just cozy (Interview Onno van den Ven, bar manager café Bolle, 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2009).

There is more a no nonsense mentality, they just want good service. Drie Gezusters are having now a hard time, because they do not meet the clients wishes, they are too different, too sophisticated (Interview Erik, bar manager café Philip, 17<sup>th</sup> of April 2009).

The decoration of the different locations also seems to fit into and reflect this concept of easy entertainment. Different bar managers described the decoration of their bars as “homey” and “cozy”. Café Bolle, for example, is reminiscent of a student house. There are beer signs and traffic sign on the wall, signs that can be seen in many student living rooms. There is a mix and match in colours, shapes of tables (round and square) and in posters (music posters combined with announcements). Jan Kinds, bar manager of another bar in Tilburg described the decoration of his bar in the following way:

It is really low fi. It is only that the walls are orange and there are some beer signs on it and that's about it, I think. A lot of people say that it is an ugly bar, and I like that because other bars are just so fine, sophisticated, neat and stylish. And I don't want that, I want it to be old, and ugly and gross. Not dirty or something, it is clean. Well, you feel like home immediately when you enter the door, so... it is always warm, not in temperature but in ambience (Interview 19<sup>th</sup> of March 2009).

Many bar managers I talked to explained the predominance of easy entertainment in Tilburg by relating it to the industrial past of the city. They told me that Tilburg is a workers city, with simple people that do not like sophisticated things. The inhabitants of Tilburg, I was told, are loyal to their bars. They know the people there and are used to the physical appearance of the bar. They do not like changes as they enjoy the coziness of the bar and the personal relations that are tied in that bar. The presence of students in the city has not changed much this social mentality. Also among students, coziness and the homey feeling given by a known brand came out in interviews as important characteristics of the bars they go to. A particular outcome of this mentality is that it is very difficult for investors to come up with a new entertainment concept in Tilburg. When a new bar is opened it has to meet the demands of easy entertainment. If it is too different, or too sophisticated, its success will be very limited. This lack of openness of the local population towards new entertainment types has however a particularly negative effect on nightlife: there will be more of the same genre of entertainment and so more monotony in the city's entertainment economy (Interviews with the bar managers of Drie Gezusters and Cul de Sac).

The local and historical embeddedness of nightlife is an interesting observation, particularly when it is compared with other conclusions of studies of nightlife in other cities. The mainstream literature laments the disappearance of the local culture of entertainment under the great pressure of the international corporate capital invested in the night-time economies of many cities. Chatterton and Hollands (2002a) argue that the general trend in night-time entertainment is a global uniformisation with the same brands and the same sanitized and exclusive entertainment seen in more and more cities, while the local or more alternative types of entertainment are marginalized and underdeveloped. The case of Tilburg is a good example that dispels this global doom scenario. We have

seen in chapter 2 that most of the investors in the night-time entertainment in Tilburg are locals, coming from Tilburg itself or the surrounding areas. The local culture, social mentality and socio-economic history all have an impact on the ways in which night-time entertainment develops and is experienced in a city, and that should not be overlooked. The same argument was also put forward by Barbazon and Mallinder (2007: 170). In their words:

Nightlife experiences emerge from specific localities that are unique to each urban centre. Despite similarities in night-time economies in a global context, for most activities, location and socio-temporal conditions are vital.

Yet, what the night-time entertainment economy in Tilburg does share with the global entertainment trend is its focus on the young clients, marginalizing the older ones (see also Hollands 2002, Hobbs *et al.* 2000 and Barbazon and Mallinder 2007). The great majority of those taking part in nightlife in Tilburg are students or young people in their first years of employment (Interviews with diverse bar managers). Older people or families are nowhere to be seen in the city centre at night. If they do go out, they are usually seen in just one or two bars on Korte Heuvel: Buitenbeentje and Burgemeester Janssen. The fact that the night-time entertainment is not older generations friendly was nicely described to me by Louis Houet, spatial planner at the municipality of Tilburg, himself a man in his 50's. He told me that the night-time in Tilburg is dominated by young men who drink a lot and create problems, which gives the feeling that the city centre is not a safe place to be. As such, he told me, older people and those with young families prefer to have an evening program only, like going to the cinema or the theater and avoid the city by night (Interview, 9<sup>th</sup> of March 2009). A particular trend therefore is that by means of the music played (top 40's, MTV loud music), the decoration of the bars (dark, dirty-looking), the atmosphere created in the bar (male dominated, heavy drinking), the bars attract the younger clientele, determining from the beginning who, literally, is invited to the 'party' (see also Chatterton and Hollands 2002a for a similar argument).

Another means that the bar managers use to attract the younger clients is the discounts and cheap drinks actions directed at students. Café Bolle, which was described by its manager as "the students' living room" (Interview 31<sup>st</sup> of March), is well known among students for its free drinks actions. Every Tuesday, between 10 and 12pm, students can throw the dice for drinks. If they throw even, then they get a free drink, if they throw uneven then they have to pay for their drink. Another very popular action is that offered by café Philip, also a venue that targets itself at students. In Philip, all those students buying a drink after 11pm every day receive free blue coins (one for beer and soda, two for wine and cocktails and three for stronger drinks). These blue coins can be exchanged the next day before 11pm for free drinks. Another attractive action, also offered at café Philip, is free beer for groups of students, such as a sports team, housemates or members of a student association. For this action, the group has to register itself in advance, has to have at least 10 members and has to be in the bar on Tuesday before 10pm and Thursday before 11pm. The group then receives one liter of beer per person (Interview Erik, manager café Philip, 17<sup>th</sup> of April 2009).

An interesting observation is that most of the bars offer their discounts and actions on the same days of the week, usually on Tuesdays and Thursdays, the days when most students go out. It is hard to say which come first: whether students go out on these days because of the discounts or whether the discounts are offered on Tuesdays and Thursdays to attract the sea of students that are out on these two days. Yet, one thing is certain: these discounts reinforce each other, transforming nightlife into a youth dominated, alcohol loaded type of entertainment. As Chatterton and Hollands (2002a) argue as well, the fact that bars offer discounts on the same days as their competitors should not exclusively be seen as direct competition (even though many bar managers described it that way). Rather, it should also be seen as a way “to create a varied and cheap drinking environment, multiplying custom rather than competing for it” (Chatterton and Hollands 2002a: 707). As the different bars attract more students to the city centre on a given day, the whole night-time entertainment economy will benefit from this. Besides discounts and actions, the bars attract a younger audience also by organizing theme parties such as “Ladies nights” or “Seduction Parties”, live music concerts of young bands and comedy shows. In brief, nightlife spaces in the night-time entertainment economy in Tilburg are different in the genres of entertainment offered within them and are dominated by the younger section of the city’s population.

#### *Consumption in the night-time urban playscapes*

In understanding the ways in which the customers, namely the students, experience and consume nightlife in Tilburg, we need a close examination of the different relationships that exist within the nightlife spaces between the students and the bars themselves. A particular characteristic of many bars in Tilburg is that they collaborate closely with different student associations or with schools in general. Café Bolle, for example, is the sponsor of two fraternities and two sororities and is the main sponsor of Olof, a large student association of Tilburg University. As Onno van den Ven, manager of Bolle told me (Interview 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2009), there are around 1500 students associated with the café and each receives a discount card. In addition, these student associations also organize parties at Bolle for their members. Café BrandPunt is associated with the rowing committee of Tilburg University. As such, the members of this committee get discounts and sponsorship from the café. Philip is also working in close collaboration with student associations and is a very popular location for parties organized by these associations. Café de Heren is associated with the Fontys University of Applied Sciences. Students of this school get discounts in this café. Paradox, the jazz café, is also working closely with Fontys. Many students of the Rock Academy perform in Paradox and they get to participate in jam sessions organized every Tuesday. Many music students even give their performance exams in Paradox, in front of their teachers and the café’s customers (Interviews with Fontys students, 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of May 2009).

What this collaboration between bars and student associations indicate is that consumption in the night-time urban playscapes is fragmented between those customers who are members of student associations and as such receive special benefits in the bar (discounts, parties organized for them) and the non-members, who do not have these

benefits. Similarly, consumption of nightlife is also fragmented between the students following different studies or studying at different institutions. Students following programs in economics and law at Tilburg University (students from these programs also make up the membership of the larger student associations) usually go out to bars like Bolle, BrandPunt, Philip and Stoffel. Fontys students, studying music, theater or dance usually go out to places like Paradox, Cul de Sac, Extaze and Polly Magoo, where the music played and the atmosphere is more alternative.

Despite the fact that participation in and consumption of nightlife is fragmented between the different groups of students (and as we have seen above, between students and the older population), one thing does cut across the groups and unites them in the broader field of the urban playscapes. That thing is experience. Participation in nightlife is for all groups of clients a consumption generated experience. This becomes clear when we see that the students do not receive the entertainment offers uncritically. Rather, they interact with the bar managers, they give suggestions and negotiate with the managers what is offered for consumption and experience in the bars they go to. An example of a successful negotiative communication between the clients and the manager was given to me by Onno van der Ven, manager of Bolle. In the case of Bolle, therefore, I would argue that the nightlife experiences of students are a co-production between the students and the management team of the bar. In Onno van der Ven's words:

The students come up with ideas for parties, for bands, for comedians, music, entertainment. They approach me by e-mail, phone or in person in the bar. They know what young people want and I do follow their advice. This is not my type of entertainment; I am older than the students. Yet, I do follow their advice and organize the kind of parties they want. I know a lot of students, maybe 60% of them [members of student associations]. There is a good interaction. We have to rely on them and them on us; we build a kind of trust (Interview, 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2009).

In some cases however, the suggestions the students make to bar managers are in contradiction with the concept of the bar, itself designed to bring about specific nightlife experiences through the music played, the parties organized there, the decoration of the bar and so on. The concept of a bar is particularly important in the night-time entertainment economy, even more so than in the day-time one, as the bars and cafés have to differentiate themselves in the highly competitive, spatially compact nightlife (see also Chatterton and Hollands 2002a). If the bar managers allow the negotiation and even the change of the concept, the fear is that the bar would lose its identity, its competitive edge and its loyal customers. Different bar managers told me that while they do take many entertainment suggestions into account, they only select those suggestions that fit the concept of the bar itself. As one bar manager said: "it has been a success so far, so why change the winning team?" When asked whether his management team takes the clients' entertainment suggestions into account, Tijs, bar manager of Drie Gezusters told me:

Sometimes we do. But we have to see if it is feasible and if it fits into the concept. We still have our concept and we do not want to go outside of it. We can sometimes change things but not go into a different direction. If they come up with suggestions that do not fit, then we do not take them into account, then they have to go to a different bar (Interview 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2009).

What seems therefore to happen in some bars and cafés is that the bar investors and their management team offer the concept of the bar to their clients as “a packaged offer” (Interview Erik, bar manager café Philip, 17<sup>th</sup> of April 2009). In this situation, the clients seem to have no other choice but to appropriate the nightlife experiences generated by this “packaged offer” or to leave it if it is not what they want. The same argument was put forward by Chatterton and Hollands (2002a) following their study of the British nightlife. In their words: “consumers of mainstream nightlife have few opportunities to influence the nature of the mainstream production process outside simply buying or not buying certain products” (p. 103). This seems to be yet another doom scenario in the night-time entertainment economy. From this perspective, I would be tempted to argue that the network links between the clients, the concept and the investors and their managers are weak or even non-existent. However, this does not have to be the case. Whereas the clients have little power to determine the concept of such a bar or café, in the ways they experience and consume the entertainment offered in that bar they already influence the ways in which the bar is perceived among customers in general. In other words, they influence the ways in which the concept of the bar comes across to the nightlife clients.

A clear example of this indirect process of concept negotiation was given to me by Bas, student at Fontys (Interview 25<sup>th</sup> of May 2009). His pattern of going out (one that I identified in interviews with other students as well) indicates that the way in which he consumes nightlife is based on a set of experiences that are not necessarily pre-given in the concept of a bar, but that are generated from his interaction with the concept, the people in the bar, the discounts and material facilities offered in the bar and so on. As such, he told me that he goes to different bars during the week, depending on a whole range of reasons related or not related to the concept of the bar. When asked on what basis he chooses the bars he goes to, he said that he goes where there is cheap beer and other discounts. He also said that he goes where his friends want to go, where there are beautiful women and where he can smoke:

I usually go to Philip, Bolle, de Heren. Especially in Philip, there are a lot of beautiful women, there is good atmosphere, you get blue coins, there is different music, and there is a smoking room, which is particularly nice when the weather is not that nice outside.

From this array of reasons to go to Philip, only the “different music” is related to the concept of the bar. Café Philip functions on three floors, each with different types of music: club music upstairs, Dutch music on the ground floor and party music in the basement. Bas mentioned nothing of the decorations of the bar or the type of service offered there – all part of the bar’s concept. Yet, Philip is experienced and consumed by

its clients in many more ways than the concept would indicate. As such, it is experienced not only as a bar/club/pub where every taste in music is satisfied (the concept) but also as a place where you can get easy dates (in comparison with other bars), where you can smoke (which is not allowed in other bars) and where you get discounts (which other bars do not offer). It is in the interaction between the students as consumers, the investors, their managers and staff and the concept of the bar that takes place in the nightlife space of the café, that the nightlife consumption experiences are created. What is even more interesting about this interaction is that it combines a whole array of elements: expectations, third persons that have no idea that they are part of this interaction (the other clients in the bar), music, smoke rooms, cigarettes, lighters, smoking law, drinks, bottles or glasses, money and blue coins.

What comes as no surprise in any study of nightlife is that alcohol, and particularly beer, plays a significant role in constructing night-time entertainment consumption experiences (see also Chatterton and Hollands 2002a, b and Barbazon and Mallinder 2007). Both during the week (Tuesdays to Thursdays when most students go out) and during the weekend, large amounts of alcohol are being consumed. Predominantly among students, beer contests such as estafette and circuit drinking are particularly popular. As many bar managers and students I talked to argued, heavy drinking is part and parcel of what one student called “the culture of going out”. Going out, students told me, is about enjoying, relaxing and drinking with your friends. This drinking environment is encouraged and supported by the diverse discounts and actions offered by the different bars, such as ‘throw the dice’ in Bolle and the blue coins and group drinking in Philip I mentioned above. These discounts not only make the heavy consumption of alcohol more affordable for students but they also normalize it as something that you do in bars.



**Foto 3:** Party in BrandPunt. Source: <http://www.cafebrandpunt.nl/fotoalbum> , retrieved on 3 July 2009.

Also the interior decorations of the bars are encouraging and supporting the consumption of alcohol. The walls of many bars are decorated with posters advertising drinks and signs that make reference to drinks, such as fake traffic signs reading “Heinekenplein” (Heineken square, seen in Bolle). Likewise, the bars where drinks are sold are set in places that are easier to reach by the clients and are better lit than the rest of the venue to make them more visible. In Drie Gezusters, for example, there is a bar in the middle of the venue and it is surrounded by chairs and tables. The decoration of a bar or a club comes to the front as important in this heavy drinking environment in yet another way. A particular activity that some students engage in especially in the later hours of the night is dancing on tables and on the bar itself. It is therefore in this hedonic space of pleasure seeking that clients, staff, alcohol, music and the materiality of the venue itself come together to create and give shape to yet other consumption experiences of nightlife.



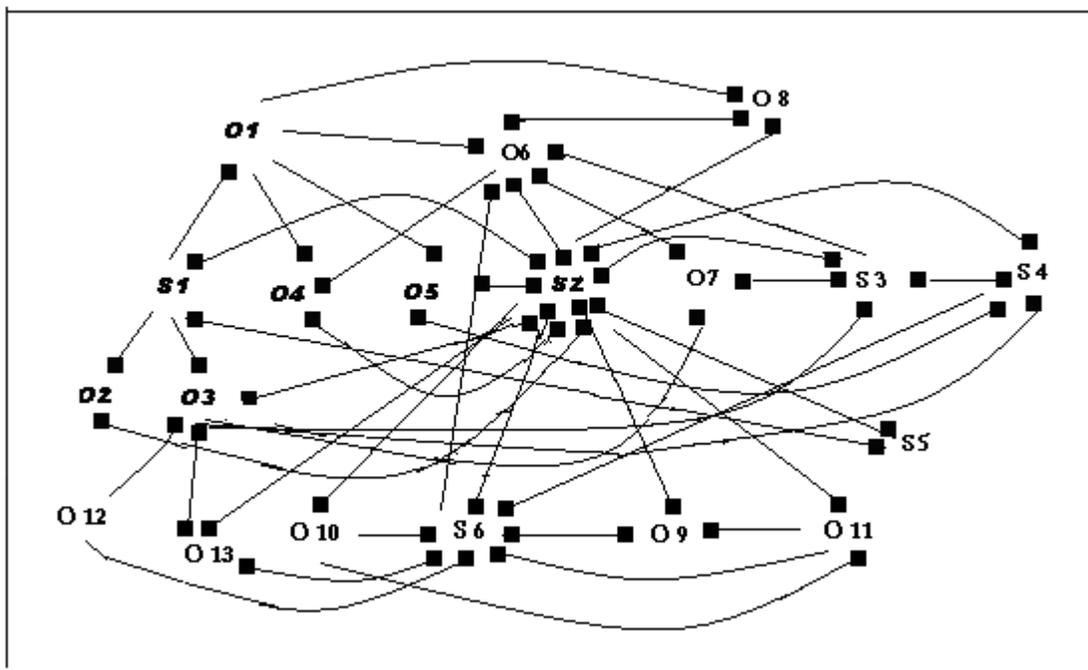
**Foto 4:** Dancing on tables in Polly Magoo. Source: [www.pollymagoo.nl/fotos](http://www.pollymagoo.nl/fotos) , retrieved on 3 July 2009.

Light is yet another element in nightlife that influences the ways in which customers consume and experience the entertainment offers in a bar or a club. Besides playing a significant role in highlighting certain areas in the venue, such as the bar where the drinks are sold, light is also important for the atmosphere in that venue. As many bar managers and students told me, it is the type of lighting used in a venue that transforms it from a café during the day into a bar/club during the night. In some bars during the night, the lights become softer, giving a feeling of magic and intimacy. What these soft lights also do is give the feeling of freedom from day-time norms, constraints and peer evaluations (see also Schlor 1998, Hobbs *et al.* 2000). As one student put it:

Lights and loud music make a pub look more special than during the day, it is more charming. The disco lights are part of the nightlife; they make a pub look more intimate. You think that nobody can see what you are doing and you don't care anymore what other people think of you (Interview Ellen, 18<sup>th</sup> of May 2009).

In other venues, particularly in clubs, the lights become more strident, more dynamic and more coloured than during the day, giving a feeling of energy and vibrancy and stimulating dancing. Some students I interviewed argued that the type of lighting in clubs also create an atmosphere of aggression, determined by the fast moving, strident lights (Interview Evelyn, 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2009). Light therefore, by means of the atmosphere it creates in a bar (relaxed, intimate, vibrant, aggressive), has a significant influence on the ways in which customers experience that bar. Based on that experience they make judgments of the whole bar, which will influence whether they will visit that bar again or not.

If we were to represent in a schematic way all the material and non-material actants present in the night-life spaces of consumption, their networks would look as in Figure 3 below which expands on Figure 1 (page 19) and Figure 2 (page 31). The actants written in *Italic* are the ones I presented in this chapter. A particularly of this figure is that it comprises all the actor networks that I indentified in this entire paper as being involved in the creation and development of the night-time entertainment economy in Tilburg. I will return to it in the conclusions as well where I will address the implication of this larger set of networks for the future development of the night-time entertainment economy in Tilburg.



**Figure 3:** The actor-networks part of the nightlife spaces of consumption in Tilburg. S1 – the civil servants at the municipality of Tilburg

- S2 – the investors and managers of the night-time entertainment economy
- S3 – the police
- S4 – the bouncers
- S5 – the fire department
- S6 – the students*
- O1 – the spatial plans for the city centre
- O2 – the time regulation policies
- O3 - the electricity provision in the city centre
- O4 – the city centre
- O5 - the city centre buildings (cafés, bars, clubs etc.)
- O6 – the street
- O7 – the CCTV cameras
- O8 – the T sign on the street
- O9 – the concept of a bar*
- O10 – discount cards, blue coins*
- O11 – drinks*
- O12 – lights*
- O13 – the decoration of a bar*

What we have seen in this chapter is that the nightlife clients, namely the students, have a great influence on the ways in which the night-time entertainment economy develops and is consumed in Tilburg. I argued that the students engage in nightlife by means of consumption generated experiences. These experience are formed in the interaction between the students and the bar owners and their managers, the concept of the bar and the materiality of the bar itself (> S6 <-> S2 <-> O9 <-> O13 <-). Likewise, I argued that drinks play a significant role in forming the students' nightlife consumption experiences. Drinks, at their turn, are closely interacting with the discounts cards and the bar owners who make them available in the bar (> O11 <-> S6 <-> O10 <-> S2 <-). Lastly, I argued that the lights in a bar are also important in shaping the atmosphere in an entertainment venue and with it the consumption experiences of the nightlife clients (O12 <-> O3 <-> S6). In the next chapter, I will present the conclusions of this research.

## Conclusions

In this paper, I presented and analysed the night-time entertainment economy in Tilburg. The main research questions that guided my inquiry were: What makes the night-time entertainment economy possible in Tilburg? How is the mixture of meanings, functions and materialities brought about in this night-time economy? What does this mixture mean for the ways in which the city is experienced and acted upon by its inhabitants, its legislators and its investors? To answer these questions, I adopted an actor-network theory approach. The reason why I chose this particular approach is that it helped me move away for categorical and static thinking in which the city is seen as a container of human activity, with clear divisions between the material and the non-material reality. In my research, I tried to unravel the complexity of the urban environment by looking at the networks that are formed among the human and the non-human actants. Particularly in the framework of the night-time entertainment economy, I tried to bring forward the actor networks that are formed between the urban population, investors and managers, civil servants and the materiality of the city itself.

I argued in this paper that what makes the night-time economy possible in Tilburg is particularly the interactions that take place in the networks formed by the city's infrastructure, streets layout, spatial plans, CCTV cameras, buildings, investment practices, management skills, consumption experiences, the T sign on the ground, rules and regulations and so on. In Figure 3 on page 42, I represented schematically all these networks. A danger in the ways in which I represented these networks is that the reader might see them as static and that would be a pity as they are anything but static. I encourage the reader to see all the three figures as snapshots of the actor networks I identified during my three months of fieldwork. I am aware that these networks are very dynamic, with different actants being more important at one moment than others and that their dynamics influence the ways in which the night-time entertainment economy develops. If I were to return to Tilburg in a year, or maybe in winter, there are chances that these networks will look differently than now (spring-summer), with new actants and new interactions. Just to give an example, in winter the terraces are little if at all used and as such they will play a less dominant role in marking the physical manifestation of the night-time entertainment economy. Similarly, if the bar owners on Korte Heuvel are successful in their negotiations with the municipality to make the street bikes free, then the street in particular and the city center in general will have different roles in the larger network of actants in the night-time entertainment economy. Keeping in mind therefore, that the figures in which I represented the actor networks are snapshots, let me briefly summarise what these snapshots tell us about the night-time entertainment economy at the moment I researched it. I will do that by going through each chapter separately.

After outlining the theoretical framework of the paper in chapter 1, in chapter 2 I explored the development of the night-time entertainment economy at the spatial level of the city centre. There we have seen that the municipality of Tilburg has no policies directed at the development of the night-time economy and that this is left into the market's hands. However, this does not mean that the municipality has no influence in the ways in which the night-time economy develops and functions in the city. I argued in

this chapter that the development of the night-time entertainment economy is closely tied to the redevelopment of the city centre in Tilburg. As such, the regeneration policies reinforced by the municipality for the day-time city centre are also influential of the ways in which the city centre is used and experienced at night. I argued as well that the development of the night-time entertainment economy can best be understood from the perspective of the frontier theory (Turner 1893). Through the investment strategies of breweries that buy buildings in the city centre and the bar investors who establish a bar in those buildings, the night-time urban frontier moves further into the night, both in space and in time. Whereas the frontier's movement in space is facilitated by municipal spatial plans, investment strategies and the availability of buildings, its movement in time is made possible by licenses, the provision of electricity and the managers' own decisions in the night. It is through the interaction between these material and human actants that the night-time entertainment economy is created in Tilburg.

In chapter 3, I moved the exploration of the night-time entertainment economy inside the urban frontier, at the spatial level of the street. Using the concept of liminality (Hobbs *et al.* 2000) I analysed the ways in which the production and regulation of the night-time entertainment is negotiated between the different actants. I argued that the production and regulation of the night-time economy is not carried out through the actions of one group of actors, but rather it takes place in the arena of urban governance. It is here that bar owners, managers, municipal servants and other governmental workers come together to put the basis of how the night-time entertainment economy is regulated, organized and how it is embedded in the uses of the street. I argued as well that the street is not a container of night-time entertainment, but rather it is part and parcel of the night-time economy itself. I showed how the street becomes the place where the outer edges of the physical manifestation of the night-time economy become visible (until the T sign) during the day to day entertainment activities. I showed as well that during street events and parties, the street takes the shape of the night-time economy, transforming the street from a place for movement into a place to say and have fun. Lastly, I argued as well that the collaborations in the night-time economy also extend to the matters of safety on the street. I showed that the police, bouncers and CCTV cameras all come together in an attempt to assure a safe entertainment environment on the streets at night.

In chapter 4, I took the exploration of the night-time economy even deeper into the urban frontier, namely into the entertainment venues. Using the concept of urban playscapes developed by Chatterton and Hollands (2002a), I engaged in an analysis of the ways in which the customers themselves influence the development of the night-time economy by means of consumption experiences. In this chapter, I showed that the local culture has a great influence on the types of entertainment offered during the night and on how these offers are consumed and experienced. This observation counteracts the global doom scenario that the global entertainment trends overtake the local ones. I showed as well that nightlife in Tilburg is dominated by the younger segments of the urban population, particularly by students, while the older generations are marginalized and excluded. This observation is in line with studies on nightlife conducted in other cities in Europe. Lastly, I argued that the ways in which nightlife is consumed and experienced are not determined by a 'packaged offer' given to customers by investors through the concept of the bar.

Rather, these consumption experiences are formed in the interactions that take place between a whole range of actants: customers, the concept of a bar, drinks, decoration and furniture of the bar, lights, bar managers and so on. The development of the night-time entertainment economy in Tilburg is also closely linked to the ways in which the night-time consumption experiences are formed and lived by the customers themselves.

The conclusions of this research give way to a number of policy suggestions for the municipality of Tilburg. Firstly, the materiality of the city as seen in the layout of the streets, provision of municipal services and traffic goes hand in hand with the economy and culture of the city. As such, urban policies that address these issues simultaneously will be better equipped to meet and solve the urban problems of the night-time economy, particularly those related to traffic, security, used spaces and used times. Secondly, night-time entertainment economy can be made part of the city branding policies (see also Vanolo 2008). When I started doing research on nightlife in Tilburg, many people outside the city asked me ironically “is there such a thing as nightlife in Tilburg?” The present research showed that yes, there is nightlife in Tilburg and a very dynamic one. By getting involved in branding the nightlife, the municipality can have more say in the production of night-time entertainment, for example by requiring certain types of entertainment and by demanding that the wishes of night-time entertainment of the working population are met as well. Branding nightlife would have positive effects for at least two groups of people: 1. the general population of Tilburg, as they will be able to overcome their stereotypes that the night is dominated by violent drunken young people and as such, they will participate more in the evening and night activities and 2. the outsiders who would have a clear picture of what type of nightlife Tilburg has, which can act as an attraction for them to visit Tilburg. Thirdly, the municipality should get involved, through nightlife branding and city marketing, in making the night an attractive time for national or even international investors. These non-local investors can stimulate an innovative environment in the night-time economy. A balance between the local types of entertainment and non-local cosmopolitanism would prove attractive for investors and workers in other, day-time sectors, such as the creative industry and education.

Suggestions can also be made for the investors in the night-time economy in Tilburg. Firstly, they should be more flexible with their bar concepts and leave room for or even stimulate improvisations, suggestions and negotiations. These negotiations and improvisations might be the fertile ground for ideas for new entertainment concepts that can form the starting point of new businesses in the city. Likewise, as we have seen in chapter 4, customers create their own ideas of the concept of the bar. A too narrow and inflexible definition of the concept might not leave space for the formation of personal experience of nightlife, which is very important in how the customers consume the night-time entertainment. Secondly, they should not be afraid to come up with new types of night-time entertainment. Indeed, the inhabitants of Tilburg do not like change, but they do not like monotony either. Some students suggested that they would like to see more variation in the music offered in bars and brought forward the idea of organizing theme nights or hours in which a different genre of music is played. Lastly, they should broaden their focus on the students to include the larger segment of working population as well. One way to achieve this might be to develop evening programs (possibly until 11pm)

with music and services that appeal to the non-student population. Many students I talked to told me that they go out only starting from 10 or 11pm (see the field notes extract that opened this paper). As such, by preparing an evening program the bar owners would achieve two things at once: make the city centre more attractive to the local population and transform the dead time of the evening into a time for profit.

The present study also lends suggestions for further research on the night-time entertainment economy either in the Netherlands or in any other country. One suggestion would be to analyse not only the entertainment side of the night-time entertainment economy but also the work that is done within it, both in the venue itself by bar tenders, bouncers and DJ's and behind the scene by the investors and bar managers. As Barbazon and Mallinder (2007: 168) argued "this evolving economy [night-time entertainment] provides an important dichotomy where employment for some is signified by a suspension of work for others". This play between work and entertainment is particularly interesting in the present post-industrial, post-Fordist economies and as such it should not be overlooked as it can provide us with a better understanding of what the night-time entertainment economy is all about (definitely more than just drinking and relaxing). Another suggestion is that no matter what city's night-time entertainment economy is researched, one thing should not be forgotten: that it does not develop and function in a cultural, material and political vacuum. Rather, the night-time entertainment economy, as any economy for that matter, is the product of a highly complex and dynamic web of networks between material, human, discursive or a combination thereof. Avoiding the importance of these networks would do no better than fixing us in categorical and static thinking and making us unable to leave room for the unexpected. So what makes nightlife possible in Tilburg? Everything and everybody and no night is the same.

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