

# TRANSFORMATION OF THE SPOORZONE



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preface

Dear Reader,

This research on the Spoorzone is conducted to combine all of the theory which I have learned in the past years of my education “Geografie, Planologie & Milieu”. This bachelor thesis focusses on the transformation and redevelopment of the Spoorzone, which is a recently developed part of the city centre of Tilburg. It combines the interest which I have developed for spatial planning with the city where I am born and raised, Tilburg. Since the Spoorzone project is one of the first large urban redevelopment projects which I have first handedly seen happening it has always caught my attention, making it all the more special for me to be able to write my bachelor thesis about this area.

During the research I have spoken with different delegates from several stakeholders in the area. I would like to express great appreciation for everybody who took time to partake in the interviews, shaping my thesis to what it has become. And also by providing information which I would have never been able to access myself. The recent period has been of great educational and personal value to me. The researching process has not only had influence on my understanding of the theory but it has also affected the perception which I have on urban redevelopment, further strengthening my interest for the discipline.

Enjoy reading my bachelor thesis on the redevelopment in the Spoorzone,

Ruben Doppert

Tilburg, 7 August 2024

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# H1 Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

Tilburg is a city in Noord Brabant, a province in the Netherlands. It has 227.000 inhabitants (statistischegegevens,z.d.) making it the 7th biggest city of the Netherlands. According to “Visit Tilburg” (reference), the city started growing exponentially in the 16th century. Because Tilburg was surrounded by meadows, sheep were very common in the area, which enabled the city to grow a strong sheep wool fabric economy. This industry became so strong that it overtook the identity of the still growing city. Large proportions of the population of Tilburg worked in the factories. Before the invention of chemicals, urine was used in the processing of the wool. People who worked in the factories could bring urine in jugs to work to earn extra money. This extra source of income is still imbedded in the identity of the locals. Inhabitants of Tilburg still proudly call themselves “kruikenzeikers”, which roughly translates into: those who pee in jugs (kruikenstad carnavaalstichting tilburg, z.d.). The pride for their history, which is showcased in this example, is reflected in the city, even when parts of the city are redeveloped. For example, even though the history of the ‘spoorzone’, an area in the city centre of Tilburg, has not been extremely integrated with the city of Tilburg, the pride of the inhabitants can still be seen throughout the ideas and architecture in the redevelopment.

The ‘spoorzone’ was targeted for major innovation. The key aspect of this innovation is the location of the spoorzone, located on the north side of the central railway station of Tilburg. According to Bogdan & van Broeck (z.d.) the story of the spoorzone starts in 1863, with the birth of the Breda-Tilburg-Eindhoven railway. The national government wanted two big workplaces where trains could be built and repaired. In 1866, two areas were selected by the national railway company, one in Zwolle and one in Tilburg. The area in Tilburg was located north of the railway and named spoorzone. ‘Spoor’ from the Dutch word spoorwegen, which means railways, and ‘zone’ is the Dutch translation of area. In the busiest period for the spoorzone (1920) it produced work for more than 1400 persons. It looked like it was a great opportunity for Tilburg and its inhabitants, creating many jobs. However, in reality many people from Tilburg were not allowed to enter the Spoorzone. The district was only for people working at the facility and the majority of the people who worked in the spoorzone were not residents of Tilburg but professionals from all over the country. This caused the feeling of the spoorzone being a whole different forbidden city in the middle of the heart of Tilburg. (Bogdan & van Broeck, z.d)

After the introduction and use of diesel-powered trains in the Netherlands in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, followed by electric powered trains, the need for a workplace like the spoorzone decreased. Aware of this decrease of use of the spoorzone by the NS, in 2005 the municipality gave the spatial planning department the order to create a “structuurplan” to develop ideas on what the spoorzone could become. Around 2009, the NS stopped using the

spoorzone for the renovation of trains with the consequence that this huge area with all of its buildings became stripped of life. However, based on the structuurplan, which will be discussed in more detail below, the municipality of Tilburg saw great opportunities for reconstruction of the area and in 2010 the municipality bought the spoorzone from the NS (Sporzone Tilburg, z.d.).

## 1.2 Rationale

The structuurplan incorporated the many opportunities that the spoorzone could offer, such as improving the accessibility to the city centre from the north of Tilburg. For example, the plan proposed to optimise bus routes to the city centre, by making them more accessible and by relocating the bus station to a less crowded part of the city centre. Steering the buses away from the already busy spoorlaan, enhanced the safety and mobility in the city centre (Gemeente Tilburg, 2005). The spoorzone was also meant to make the area attractive by creating space for residences and social amenities. These social amenities are not only meant for exercise or meeting places, but can also be vital in the business core of the area. The key goal of the project was to use the newly created area to strengthen the interconnection within Tilburg, not only physically by for example accessibility, but also nonphysical by giving space where people can meet and knowledge can be shared. Now, almost twenty years after the structuurplan was drafted, we can assess the effects that the redevelopment of the spoorzone has had on the city of Tilburg and whether the development of the spoorzone has fulfilled its promise of creating an attractive area in the city centre of Tilburg.

## 1.3 Objective

This research on the Spoorzone aims to analyse the effects that the redevelopment of this area has had on the city of Tilburg with a focus on the attractiveness of the area for residents. According to Azhimov & Manukhina (2023) 'redevelopment' is the transformation of existing urban space to optimise the land use and create sustainable and liveable cities. This description is useful for the purpose of this research as it connects well to the original aims of the redevelopment of the spoorzone, as described in the above discussed structuurplan. Various case studies such as in the work of Azhimov & Manukhina (2023) on the Russian city Kazan, and Copenhagen in the work of Gehl (2010), have shown the positive effects of city redevelopment and the question is whether this is also the case for the Tilburg spoorzone. 'Attractiveness' is a central concept that will form the basis of the study, a term that will be worked out in more detail in the theoretical framework (Ch.2).

Different theories written by renowned thinkers, such as Jane Jacobs, are set to be the base setup for my research. In the theoretical framework the different theories which are used in the research are listed and analysed briefly to explain which part of the theory can be applied to the case study. These theories are then tested by taking interviews with actors in and

around the spoorzone. These interviews give more in depth understanding of which parts of the Spoorzone have had the most effect on the attractiveness of the area. The findings in the interviews and the theories are then combined to create an analysis of the effects. The analysis of the effects will be used to formulate a conclusion on the success of the redevelopment and on which factors have had the greatest effect on the success. The outcomes and particularly the factors that have had the greatest effect are then integrated into an advice for other cities.

Thus, the objective of this research is to analyse the effects and relevant factors of the spoorzone redevelopment in Tilburg with a focus on increasing attractiveness, and to translate outcomes of the research into advice for other cities for the development and implementation of inner-city development in a semi-large city.

## 1.4 Research question

Against the above backdrop, the main research question of this thesis is:

Has the transformation of the spoorzone impacted positively on the attractiveness of Tilburg, and if so, which factors have been instrumental in this change?

To answer the main research question thoroughly a few sub questions have been formulated to identify different functions and measuring the total effect. These functions can be seen as different categories in which space is planned, the function that this space is given is key in the analysis of the effects. Examples of this functions are public space, entertainment, residential, etc.. By following the steps of the subquestions, the functions that have had the most impact on the attractiveness of Tilburg can be distinguished. These functions can then be used for eventual implementation in different cities which are keen on improving attractiveness.

Firstly: Has the Spoorzone subsequently transformed in a way that realisation of new projects can actually have true impact compared to the old situation?

To understand whether the Spoorzone transition has had significant positive impact on the attractiveness of Tilburg, it is important to study whether the Spoorzone has transformed in such a way that the implementation of the redevelopment can actually have true positive impact on the attractiveness of Tilburg.

Secondly, which areas of the spoorzone have had the largest impact on the attractiveness of the area?

To identify which factors or functions have affected the change in attractiveness of Tilburg, it is important to highlight first which (sub)areas of the Spoorzone have had the most influence

on this change. The identification of these areas is what makes the next step in the process possible, which is identifying the functions of these areas.

Thirdly, which functions do these most impactful areas within the spoorzone have and what makes them so influential on the attractiveness?

Through this subquestion the designations are specified and a more clinical analysis of the pure impact on attractiveness can be evaluated. This third sub question assesses the different functions that are present in the spoorzone, and linking them to the attractiveness that the places have. By linking the attractiveness and place to the function a clear overview of which function has the biggest influence on attractiveness can be made. This generalises the case study, making it valid for reuse in different cities.

## 1.5 Relevance

### 1.5.1 Societal relevance

The city of Tilburg is a big city for the Netherlands, but not as big as other cities like Amsterdam and Rotterdam. This causes the city to have less resources and still urges the inhabitants to have to travel to the bigger cities for some services. Should the spoorzone project attract visitors to Tilburg, more potential customers would visit Tilburg and boost the local economy, creating more opportunities for local entrepreneurs and other local projects. It also makes the city more appealing for businesses because of the larger pool of potential customers. The increase of all this business activity causes more jobs and more daytime activities for the inhabitants, which on its term causes increased attractiveness for new inhabitants of the city. The increase of these dynamics also creates opportunities for other factors which could improve the attractiveness of the city such as more budget for public spaces and increase in diversity of urban areas, positively impacting the overall quality of life in the area. Research into whether a project like the spoorzone impacts visitation numbers and boosts tourism in the city therefore helps us understand how mid-sized cities can use redevelopment to increase their attractiveness for visitors and possible residents. This part is key in the research because mid-sized cities tend to not have the resources available which large cities do. This relatively smaller resource pool expresses itself in the fact that larger cities like Amsterdam have far more advanced economic dynamics, which makes it easier to kickstart projects. Tilburg on the other hand has less economic dynamics, which forces the city to be more creative (Frenken, 2024). Knowledge of the effects of certain factors in making a city more attractive may provide lessons for other cities with the same characteristics. The Tilburg Spoorzone case can be a role model in inner city innovation in planning.

The effects which are concluded through this research will not only bring advantages to Dutch society by improving overall knowledge on the effects of city revitalisation, which can lead to improved implementation in other cases with similar characteristics. But also by

reflecting on the current state of the plans, highlighting which elements had the most influence on the attractiveness of the city, these factors can be reused in different projects across the country. All of these effects converge into improved city vitality for locals and tourists. The improvement of city vitality and the gain of knowledge on which factors support attractiveness both influence the possibility for a more dynamic and lively city. The impact which these analysed factors can have on cities in making them more dynamic and lively is what will truly influence the dutch society. Helping cities in gaining the edge in liveliness and vitality making them more attractive for new inhabitants.

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### 1.5.2 Scientific relevance

The topic of revitalising the city has been covered in numerous scientific theories. Cities' attractiveness can be improved by many factors, like mixed-use development. A mix of residential, commercial and recreational spaces within neighbourhoods fosters a lively environment where people can live, work and recreate (Jacobs, 1961). The amenities that create these conditions are essential in the success of the redeveloped area. The preservation and reallocation of aged buildings assist in creating identity, which provides a sense of continuity. These buildings contribute to the attractiveness by generating unique and iconic locations that can be used for new designations (Jacobs, 1961). The spoorzone with its incorporating design can be used to analyse the impact the identity, which is carried on through the old characteristics in the design, has on the experience of the area. By doing this the theory of Jacobs will be tested to see if it is still up to date, since it originates from the 1960's.

Mixed-use development is also highlighted in the work of William Whyte. Whyte emphasises the importance of well-designed public space, inviting people to the facilities (Whyte, 1980). The mixed use of amenities provides an inviting sense to attract people and a way to keep liveliness in the public space. With different activities increasing the flow of the area, and benefitting the other amenities present. The effect on economic vibrancy is also key in the maintainability of the area, whereas the increased pedestrian-traffic improves the accessibility for people to the local businesses, creating a stronger local economy which can contribute to the sustainability of the quality of the area. Whyte stresses the importance of human scale design with which he advocates that urban spaces have to prioritise human comfort and accessibility, which in turn improves the attractiveness of the space (Whyte, 1980). Whyte writes about the sociability of spaces as the core of his work. The sociability of spaces is about the idea that the design of urban spaces can significantly influence social interactions. According to Whyte, urban spaces have to be designed correctly to achieve social interactions. *“What attracts people most, it would appear, is other people”* (Whyte, 1980). This quote captures Whyte's observation that successful urban spaces are those where people can easily see and interact with each other, highlighting the intrinsic social nature of

humans and the importance of designing spaces that facilitate these interactions. Since a large part of the spoorzone is public space the theory of Whyte (1980) is applicable to the case. By analysing the aspects which are named in the theory by Whyte (1980) in the spoorzone the effects which they can have are filtered. Again, testing the relevance of the theory of Whyte. And applying the theory on a dutch city which integrates the theory into the dutch paradigm of spatial planning.

The challenges with implementing mixed-use development are researched by Hoppenbrouwer & Louw (2015). The case study they did on the eastern docklands of Amsterdam showed that the strategic goals of mixed-use development, such as enhancing urban vitality and promoting balance between residential and employment possibilities, is difficult to achieve because of the lack of concrete definition. This lack of definition leaves space for chaos which can be disastrous for the project. Mixed-use development is well represented in the research, this is why it is important to analyse the theory with knowledge on situations in which the implementation has not been successful. Incorporating these other views and related critical research in the assessment, decreases the risk that the outcome on mixed-use development may be biased.

The paper “amenities and the attraction of Dutch cities” by Garretsen and Marlet (2016) targets the Dutch cities and its amenities. While the title of the article includes the term ‘attraction’ it does not really go into depth into the attractiveness for visitation. The key of the paper is in the housing prices and the effects of amenities in this. Nonetheless, the article makes sufficiently clear that amenities are found crucial for the attractiveness of Dutch cities. By researching the effects that amenities have in an areas, such as the Spoorzone in Tilburg, the effects that they have had on the project and how it is experienced, can be analysed and used in further research. This showcases the effects and importance of amenities in the Spoorzone, which can be generalised for the advice.

The function of the city centre has always been flexible (Evers et al.,2015). According to Evers et al. the function of the average dutch city centre has shifted a few times over history. In the twentieth century industrial business activities moved away from the city centre. The societal facilities, such as hospitals and universities, have also been relocated. The function of the city centre shifted towards recreational shopping, whereas the city centre also became more attractive for residential purposes. The switch in the needs of the city in the 21st century can be assessed in this research, because the spoorzone project is fairly young. The research will therefore check the applicability of the theory on a mid-sized dutch city.

## H2 Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 Introduction

The theoretical framework of a research project establishes a foundation for the research and eventually for finding the answer to the main research question, which framework is generally based on existing academic literature. The theoretical framework must fit to the central question of the research and consequently also provides the boundaries within which the research is set (the 'scope' of the research). This clarity on the scope assists the researcher in filtering out which literature, information, actors, etc. are relevant for the research. The character and content of a theoretical framework depends on the type of research. For instance, if a study is 'normative', the theoretical character will consist of a theoretical set of norms against which a particular situation or case study is being assessed. If a study is 'comparative', the theoretical framework will consist of a set of criteria or issues that constitutes the basis for comparison between two situations, case studies, or other research objects. Again, another type of research is a research project that aims to test a particular theory, for instance through a particular case study.

To some extent, this research has a normative character as the research assesses the extent to which the aim of the 2005 structuurplan for the redevelopment of the spoorzone to improve the attractiveness of the Tilburg area has been achieved. However, more clarity is needed on what 'attractiveness' may mean and which type of factors may be of relevance in improving attractiveness, elements that may be recognized in the subquestions of this research. The existing literature on city redevelopment has been studied to shed more light on the concept of attractiveness and possible relevant factors. A summary of this literature will follow in subsection 2.2 below and will be translated into a theoretical framework that is provided in subsection 2.3. Subsection 2.4 describes relevant actors to establish a better understanding of the selection of experts for interviews.

### 2.2 Literature relevant for the theoretical framework

"When Tilburg's municipality decided to renovate the Spoorzone, their main desire was to re-energize that area of the city by investing in the re-development of its old industrial areas. In her work entitled "the Death and Life of Great American Cities", Jacobs (1961) mentions two key factors in the successful redevelopment of a city. First, she highlights the importance of "mixed-use development", which she describes as neighbourhood planning practices that provide spaces for people to live, work and recreate (Jacobs, 1961). This mix of functions can also be seen in the structuurplan of the Spoorzone, where all of the parts of the mixed-use development are directly mentioned; residential, recreational and commercial destinations

(Gemeente Tilburg, 2005). Even though Jacobs' work is essentially based on American cities, the effects which she describes in her work are universal for cities worldwide and therefore also implemented in different case studies around the world. This implementation of "American" theory in a European case study shows the universality of her work. An example of this can be found in the book 'Public Space and the Challenges of Urban Transformation in Europe' by Madanipour et al. (2014). Jacobs is used to reflect on the urban redevelopment in European cities. In the case study on Vienna found in this book, the ambition for the masterplan on restructuring the public space of the old airfield of Aspern, is described as: *"Our ambition has been to provide a master plan that creates public spaces that are fundamentally human, lively, intimate and secure"* (Madanipour et al., 2014). The goals present in the masterplan are direct reflections of the work of Jacobs. Showcasing the influence that the ideology of Jacobs has had on the modern school of public space design. This work also shows that the work of Jacobs can be implemented in European cities, which will help in the analysis of the public space in the Spoorzone. Jacobs is also directly referred to later on in the book in the case studies of Naples and Dublin, again showing the effect that her work has had on the field of urban planning.

Secondly, Jacobs mentions the importance of historical identity and preservation of buildings on the attractiveness of urban areas. The preservation and reallocation of aged buildings assist in creating identity, which provides a sense of continuity. These buildings contribute to the attractiveness of an urban area by generating unique and iconic locations that can be used for new designations (Jacobs, 1961). The spoorzone states on their website that it is designed to show the pride that they have or the history of the city. And that they mix old renewed buildings with new buildings for living, working and inhabiting. (Spoorzone, zd) This clarification of the purpose of the spoorzone aligns directly with both the factors of the theory of Jacobs. These variables can therefore be of value in the research. Another important aspect in the work "The life and Death of American" cities is the need for amenities to ensure a vital and sustainable urban area. According to Jacobs amenities ensure the diversity of social interactions in a mix with the economic vitality and safety. These three factors lead to the fact that an area with sufficient amenities creates a more comfortable feeling, which in turn keeps inviting people back to the area, improving its attractiveness (Jacobs, 1961). Even though Jacobs' work 'the life and death of great american cities' dates back to 1961, the theories which she states in this book are still relevant. Even though the age of the work does not affect the relevance of the work, the implementation of the theory does not come without any challenges. These challenges are analysed by Hoppenbrouwer & Louw who have done research about the implementation of mixed use development in the dutch capital Amsterdam.

Hoppenbrouwer & Louw (2005) published research on the challenges that occur with the implementation of the mixed-use development method. The paper starts off with the analysis of the main components of mixed use development, which are then used in the case study of the eastern docklands of Amsterdam. The case study on the eastern docklands of Amsterdam is quite similar to the case study of the Spoorzone, given it is a dutch city and it revolves

around the redevelopment of an industrial area to an urban environment. This case study is focussed around the challenges and successes of the implementation of the mixed-use development. Some features of the mixed-use development will be addressed and analysed but the critical implementation is only reflected upon and not done itself. The article will be used for reflection and to balance out the article on mixed-use development by Jane Jacobs, to give a more overseeing view about the usage of mixed-use development in the spoorzone. Given the fact that the research by Jane Jacobs is focussed on American cities, and the lens of Hoppenbrouwer & Louw (2005) is considering the city of Amsterdam, this article is helpful in understanding the implementation in Dutch society.

One aspect of the mixed used development described by Jacobs (1961) is the recreational part. The example which Jacobs (1961) uses in her work to illustrate the importance of recreational space in the urban area is the Washington Square Park. Jacobs uses this example to stress the importance of public space in order to create successful mixed use development areas. Another thinker which specialises in the utilisation of public space in urban areas is William Whyte. William Whyte focussed his research on the social interactions that humans made in urban space (Whyte, 1980). His work can be split up into two key variables for the research: Public spaces as social arenas and design principles for public spaces. Both variables have effect on each other but in the research they will be split into two to create a comprehensive overview of effects. The public spaces as social arenas variable will be used in the analysis of the open gathering space in the Lochal as well as in the usage of the Spoorpark. The Lochal and the Spoorpark are two parts of the Spoorzone, where the Lochal is a redeveloped urban hall which used to have an industrial function, the spoorpark is a large green park. Pictures of both the locations are included in the appendix to give a more explicit view on the different locations. These two different cases project two of the scenario's in Whyte's work, the public space in the Lochal is designed for recreational purposes but also as a meeting point where knowledge spillovers are possible. The Lochal houses lecture rooms where courses are taught, as well as seats for companies to work, the facilitating of these kinds of events is possible by the design of the Lochal. The human scale interpretation by Whyte can be seen in the design, with the main focus of the Lochal is to attract, unite, meet and create (Lochal.nl, z.d.). This in combination with the study spaces for working people and students create a high potential for knowledge spillovers and cross-pollination of ideas and companies.

The Spoorpark on the other hand is mainly focussed on the recreational part of public spaces. The Spoorpark hosts a few festivals a year and is open all year long for people who prefer some green space inside the predominantly urban city centre of Tilburg. The second variable " design principles for public space" is vital in the effect of public space on social interactions (Whyte, 1980). Whyte has conducted his research on this design in public spaces by visiting them on several occasions and observing humans interacting around them. For the research it is not possible to go and observe these separate locations and their effects on people on enough instances to formulate an inclusive result. That is why people who do have enough

experience in these locations will be interviewed. Their expertise on the locations will provide intelligence on cases and be used to analyse the effects of the design.

Another important thinker who addresses the importance of design of urban space for liveliness and sustainable urban environments is Jan Gehl. In his book *Cities for People*, written in 2010, Gehl stresses the importance of design of urban space to encourage social interaction, community activities and civic engagement. Gehl and Whyte both advocate for the importance of planning in urban areas but what really stands out in the work of Gehl is his emphasis on the “human scale”. With human scale Gehl stresses that the planning has to be changed to promoting active transportation instead of car dependency. A key factor in this is the ground-level lens, in which he highlights that the way people experience surroundings has to do with the way they see it. If the ground-level view of a place is designed well, it achieves much more of the potential of the overall quality of urban life. According to Gehl the priority for pedestrians and cyclists enhances the public health and safety in the city, but it also contributes to more sustainable living. Another aspect which is found in his work is the active frontage which supports the continuity of an urban area. Active frontage is a factor which has influence on the experience of pedestrians in the area, which on its turn is positive in the total experience of the human scale. These active frontages do not only give visual interest, but they also encourage people to walk by, stop and interact (Gehl, 2010). Gehl also advocates for the incorporation of greenery in his works. According to Gehl an abundance of greenery in an urban area enhances the feeling of comfort and the sustainability of the urban space. Gehl backs this up with his research which he has done in different cities all around the world. Some of these cities were Copenhagen, New York and Melbourne showcasing the versatility of his ideology. The implementation of the work by Gehl in the spoorzone is evident, and will be addressed in the interviews.

Gehl advocates for the human scale in his work, part of the human scale is the transparency of urban areas, especially the active frontages. According to Gehl (2010) these active frontages tend to improve the attractiveness and experience of urban areas. The active frontages consist of different amenities which open up the buildings by giving access to them. The attractiveness which amenities create are not only mentioned in the work by Gehl, but also by Garretsen and Marlet. Amenities and attraction of Dutch cities by Garretsen and Marlet is a research on the effect of amenities on the attraction of Dutch cities. These amenities are urban attractors to new residents for the city (Garretsen & Marlet, 2017) The effect that they have on the attractiveness of a city is significant and can be used in the research about the spoorzone. Because the Spoorzone has specifically been designed to reallocate their buildings to gatekeep the identity of the area, amenities are of key importance in the acceptance of the newly redeveloped area. However Garretsen and Marlet measured the effects on the attractiveness using the housing prices and which effect the amenities have on them. The housing prices of the spoorzone themselves cannot be measured because the residential buildings have only started being built. The surrounding neighbourhoods such as Theresia could be used to see the effects on housing prices by the amenities in the spoorzone. But by

involving Theresia in the research, it is taking away the focus of the case study on the Spoorzone itself. This is why the research amenities and attraction will only be used for small references and not be integrally included in the research of the spoorzone. The paper does provide interesting perspectives on the usage and effects of the amenities in dutch cities and that is why it will still be utilised in the research. Even though the focus in the majority of the paper is on the housing prices, the plain effects of the amenities on the area and its attractiveness are also listed. Garretsen and Marlet (2017) state the importance of amenities on agglomeration effects, which can be seen as a positive feedback loop where more amenities attract more visitors which on its term can attract more businesses and people. The amenities also provide jobs for residents and with the increase of jobs, the attractiveness for residents is also improved.

As mentioned earlier on in the thesis, the societal needs for city centres has changed over the past decades. In the work by Evers et al. (2015) this change in what the keeps the city attractive and vital is addressed and analysed. The policy study by Evers et al. (2015) commissioned by the Centraal Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving about the resilience of Dutch cities, states that the function of city centres has changed over time. Whereas the city centre firstly was filled with big industry, such as the fabrics industry in Tilburg, the composition of city centre exploitants has shifted more towards residential and retail activity. According to Evers et al. this change has been caused by the introduction of the internet and modernisation of work and retail environments. The report also concerns the vitality of the city. Emphasising the role of historical heritage, social and cultural significance in the vitality of the city. The variable vitality of the city therefore is also key in the research about the spoorzone, since these factors are mentioned as the key redevelopment goals by Frenken (2024). The second variable taken from the report is the strategy for enhancing city resilience which overlaps with earlier variables such as the mixed-use development, and the designing of urban space. By comprehending these variables in the research both the effects and the plans behind the project can be illustrated. Giving the research more depth and specification for the case.

## 2.3 Theoretical framework

The above theoretical subsection has placed several thinkers in the spotlights, who all have their impact on the creation of a theoretical framework which has been used in this study. This framework does not consist of a fixed and detailed framework on which the spoorzone will be assessed. This would probably steer the interview questions too much, which would limit the space for interviewees to give their views on the issues mentioned in the subquestions and particularly the concept of 'attractiveness'. Instead, based on the literature

a number of 'red lines' have been identified that inspire and steer the interviews, while leaving sufficient space for additional views or possibly even surprises that are relevant for the main research question. The choice for a more flexible theoretical framework to fully incorporate the output which is obtained during the interviews, is in line with the qualitative method which is used to analyse the output. The holistic method which is used for analysing the output, is focussed on securing all the different lenses which can come to light during the interviews (Vennix,2016). That is why the flexibility of the theoretical framework is key in the application of the research. *(more on the methodological choices in Ch. 3)*

The theories which specially create the red line in the rest of the research are the **mixed use development** theory by Jacobs (1961), and the **human scale approach** by Gehl (2010). Both the theories cohere in some specific parts such as the importance of **well-designed urban areas** to the vitality of the urban areas. Both thinkers advocate a common vision where urban areas improve in **vibrant, human-centric urban environments** and where humans feel **comfortable and safe**. Another theory which is of key importance to the research is the theory by Evers et al. (2015) in which the recent **change in the vitality of city centres** in the Netherlands is addressed. This work is relevant for the study of the spoorzone, which is in fact a project that aims to create space in the city centre for other designations than only plain shopping, just as the analysis by Evers et al. had prescribed. One of these other designations is **public space**, which is concretely investigated by William Whyte (1980). In his work Whyte (1980) assesses the effect of the design of public space on the **social interactions** which take place in the public space. Aspects of his work can therefore be traced back into the redevelopment of the spoorzone where together with the 'human scale' by Gehl (2010) the importance of the designing of public space is reflected.

Based on the discussed literature and inspired by the above highlighted 'red lines', it is now also possible to describe the term '**attractiveness**' – as used in the main research question - in some more detail: for the purpose of this research, attractiveness of a city is described as the extent to which a city enables people to feel comfortable and safe, while:

- acknowledging that this may mean different things for different people, and
- being aware of the fact that attractiveness may be influenced by several different and probably interconnected factors, including:
  - o the level of mixed use developments; the presence of residential, commercial and recreational functions.
  - o the extent to which different use functions (designations) have been clearly defined and well-designed to prevent unclarity or even chaos;
  - o the extent to which the city may be considered vibrant;
  - o the extent to which public space with opportunities for social interactions have been established.
  - o the extent to which urban space is designed to increase the experience of the location

## 2.4 Actors

The redevelopment of the Spoorzone is a huge and expensive project which has its influence on the whole city of Tilburg. This influence is so substantially large that it affects different stakeholders in the process. The first stakeholder that will be addressed is the municipality of Tilburg, which orchestrated the creation of the Spoorzone. The second stakeholder in the process is the inhabitants of the surrounding neighbourhoods, since these people are the ones who experience the most change because of the redevelopment. Because not all of the inhabitants of the surrounding neighbourhoods can be interviewed and even if they would be, the differences in experiences would interfere with the data. This is why I have chosen to take the Spoorpark as a stakeholder to represent the voices of the surrounding neighbourhoods. The spoorpark is well connected with the local community and therefore the organisation can generalise the public opinion which is present in the local community. How the spoorpark is connected to the local community is explained in the part about the Spoorpark. Another stakeholder in the redevelopment is the NS, which previously owned the land on which the Spoorzone is redeveloped. The NS still is the owner and operator of the railway station of Tilburg which is adjacent to the Spoorzone, and used to isolate the old city centre from the area in which the Spoorzone is located now. The NS is not only of importance to the region by the offselling of their land but also in providing commotion through the constant traffic it creates in the area, which is of importance to the local entrepreneurs and the accessibility of the region. The actors in this research are analysed and highlighted to clarify the different stakeholders in this case study. The clarification of the interests and roles of these stakeholders were key in the selection of interviewees, focussing on addressing all stakeholders, incorporating all of them in the interview process.

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### Municipality of Tilburg

The municipality of Tilburg is the first and biggest actor in this case. The spoorzone was a large vacant area situated in the city centre of Tilburg.

After purchasing the spoorzone from the NS in 2010 (Spoorzone Tilburg, z.d.), the municipality immediately started with the realisation of their plans. Their plans started in and around 1994 with the idea to break the barrier between the south and north of the railway. (Frenken, personal communication, 11 april 2024)

According to the Commissie MER report from 2005 these plans started with exploration of the exploitation costs. The spoorzone then kicks off with different views on how it should be reallocated. The spoorzone was firstly meant to become a highly modern urban area. With space for a lot of tall buildings. Increasing the city's identity as modern and dynamic. But previous projects in Tilburg taught the municipality council to steer towards a more "history embracing" approach. The real estate crisis in the early years of the spoorzone project also caused the municipality to reconsider what to do with the buildings that were already present. (Frenken, personal communication, 11 april 2024)

*“ Tilburg heeft ingezien dat grootschalige sloop- en nieuwbouw niet de beste manier is om een gevarieerde stadswijk te ontwikkelen. Het is juist een kans om de unieke gebouwen van de Werkplaats in te kunnen zetten om nieuwe initiatieven uit het onderwijs en het midden- en kleinbedrijf te faciliteren. Dat past bij de Tilburgse identiteit als creatieve maakstad. “ (Bogdan & Van Broek, z.d.)*

According to Bogdan & Van Broek this challenge with the leftover real estate was not seen as a problem by the municipality and other stakeholders, they saw it as a chance. The unique buildings in the area illustrate the history of Tilburg. The usage of these buildings also help with underlining the identity of what Tilburg always has been. A city of creative makers.

Frenken mentions that the process of the spoorzone has not been a linear process. The goal of the spoorzone has shifted a lot in the years, but with hard work and dedication Frenken is proud of what they have achieved till now. The process is still ongoing, with several projects being explored for even more expansion. With the municipality leading the way, project leader Joep Frenken used the following description: “de stad is nooit af”. Inciting that the municipality will keep on focussing on improvements for the city of Tilburg.

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### Spoorpark / Local community

The spoorpark is a major part of the spoorzone, not only by sheer surface area but also by the connection it has with the neighbourhoods surrounding it. The creation of the spoorpark was not the original plan for the large area that became available for the municipality, in the first plans it was used for building residential areas. But when the municipality was thinking over these plans they acknowledged that they had an opportunity which they would not get again. An area this large, in the middle of the city centre of Tilburg, had to be used differently than just a regular building programme. And this is how the idea of the spoorpark was born (Frenken, personal communication, 11 april 2024). The college of B&W, translated roughly the council of councillors and mayors, then passed the decision on what to do with the terrain. They decided that the area had to be used for the implementation of green and space to recreate in the city centre. The area was also intended to facilitate the action plan created by the different actors (College van Burgemeester en Wethouders van Tilburg, 2015). The different actors were mostly civilians making the spoorpark the biggest civilian initiative of the Netherlands (Anja Eijkmans, personal communication, 18 April 2024). The process of including the surrounding neighbourhoods into the plans is what makes this project that strong and important to these neighbourhoods. In 2016 82 different initiatives from the surrounding actors were sent in and pitched. These initiatives were all ideas for what to do with the area in the spoorpark. These ideas were then heard and discussed by the directing group, which picked eight of these ideas to welcome into the park. These eight partners got the help to start up their vision in a few places present in the spoorpark, with the spoorpark facilitating this (*Spoorpark Tilburg - Spoorpark Tilburg*, z.d.). These eight stakeholders on their part attract people to the spoorpark and provide liveliness and diversity, giving the park a true connection to the people living around the park. Even though the park was set up for the inhabitants of Tilburg to have a green space to recreate and relax in the city centre, the influence of the spoorpark has grown to become a major attractor of tourists too. Hosting large events and being incorporated in the event calendar of

Tilburg, the steps the spoorpark has made are evident and of great importance for the general picture and identity of Tilburg (Eijkmans, personal communication, 18 April 2024).

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## Nederlandse Spoorwegen (NS)

The spoorzone, which translates to the area of railways, previously was a workplace for repairs on trains and railways. The spoorzone Tilburg was appointed as the big workplace where all of the rolling material of the NS from the southern part of the railway network would be sent for repairs and maintenance (Bogdan & Van Broeck, z.d.). Before the spoorzone was taken over by the municipality it was more or less known as a forbidden part of the city (Frenken, personal communication, 11 april 2024). This stresses the singular interests of the NS, not being in line with the city of Tilburg. Therefore the purchase of the area by the municipality was in best interest for both parties, whereas the NS Workplace had been abandoned for several years and the large area of land was vacant. Even though the NS has not had any direct influence on the concrete transformation of the spoorzone, the historical influence the company has had on the area and its broad influence in the Netherlands. The NS has stations in most large dutch cities and by utilising the NS as an actor it does not only showcase the history of the spoorzone but also the potential which these areas in inner cities could have. The railway station still is one of the biggest attractors if not the biggest attractor of public to the Spoorzone, showcasing the importance of the railway station in the commotion which leads to the vibrancy in the Spoorzone.

## H3 Methods

### 3.1 Strategy

To answer the research question as comprehensively as possible, the research method used is qualitative research. The qualitative research will consist of interviews with people who have had experience with the effects of the transition of the spoorzone. These experiences can differ from someone working in the spoorzone, to someone who has worked on the project itself. Qualitative research is characterised by the holistic approach (Vennix, 2016).

The holistic approach considers including the whole system with all of its interconnections, instead of focusing on individual components. This approach implies the importance of different stakeholders and their views. According to Vennix qualitative research is characterised by the holistic method. This method is a cornerstone in qualitative research, offering a comprehensive lens through which researchers can oversee the bigger picture instead of focussing on specific parts. The holistic method takes the possibility that all factors influence each other into consideration, this leads to an open view. This open view is backed up by the fact that during interviews the researcher will not be fixated on specific terms, but will listen to all the different experiences the respondent shares. This leads to the possibility that a researcher encounters new views which were not expected on forehand, giving the respondents opportunity to answer questions or state experiences in their own terms, allowing them space to incorporate their own view into the conversation.

This research is carried out in the city of Tilburg. This is because the subject of the research is located there. The city of Tilburg can be singled out and used for an in-depth research on the effects of the transition of the spoorzone. Therefore, the study format used for the research that will lead to the best probable research method will be a case study. According to Crowe et al. (2011) case studies can be used to shed light on the effects which the redevelopment of the spoorzone has had on Tilburg through different angles, which is exactly what this research requires to be as complete as possible. Whereas other approaches can mostly require specific methodologies, the case study approach is more focussed on the case and not on the specific methodology used. *“Your case study is defined not so much by the methods that you are using to do the study, but the edges you put around the case”* (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). These edges that will be put around the case will be gathered from different actors surrounding the spoorzone project, using interviews with specialists and people connected to the project as well as visitors to the area. The mix in respondents which will provide different views on the project and its influence will also be measured next to the personal observations the researcher will do in the spoorzone. According to Cresswell & Poth (2018) these multiple sources of information contribute to the in-depth understanding of the case which on its part contribute to the quality of the research. The main challenge for the case study approach described by Cresswell & Poth is the outline of the case. The boundaries for the case study spoorzone are easily noticeable since the project has not started long ago so can be taken into the research from the beginning, whereas the geographical boundaries for the area are also clear.

Even though the different qualitative methods share sufficient similarities the choice for case study is pretty clear from the start. The narrative research method is possible in the study on the spoorzone but it would focus on the experiences of one respondent (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). This respondent would be the leading source of the whole research, giving a biased view on the results of the research. The research on the Spoorzone exists mainly of views of actors on the project, and the strength of the research lies in the different lenses it sheds on the project. By using the narrative research method and therefore focussing on one certain lens, the research would not give the wide societal view which suits the project best, since it is orchestrated by the municipality and affects many different kinds of people and their environment. Another approach which proved a mismatch for the research on the spoorzone

is the ethnographic methodology, since the ethnographic methodology aims to describe and analyse groups which have a common culture (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). Since the spoorpark project is not particularly focused on one cultural group but on all visitors of the area, this approach is deemed not fitting for the research. Both the phenomenological approach and grounded theory analysis could be used in the research but the choice for the case study approach is because of the freedom in the methodological part surrounding the case, giving opportunity to not only use interviews but also the personal observations. The case study methodology also aligns with the holistic approach which the research consists of. The goal of the research by using the case study approach in the mix with the holistic approach is to create a broad but precise analysis of the experiences which the respondents have in the Spoorzone. This will

### 3.2 Data Collection

The data collection for the research will consist of interviews and personal observations in the spoorzone. For the interviews several actors will be selected and contacted to embed their opinions on the project into the project. These respondents will be taken from several instances which are active in the spoorzone, as well as plain visitors. The data collection with the specialists will have to be on appointment and these are aimed to be finished as soon as possible. These interviews will immediately be transcribed and analysed so that the answers given in them could be used in other interviews. Whereas the specialist interviews are taken on appointment, the randomised street interviews will be taken on a random day, this day will also be incorporated in the journal. This random day will be planned to occur after the analysis of the specialist interviews so that some theories and experiences from these interviews can be tested on the street interview respondents.

During the interviews and during the development of the research I will spend a lot of time in the spoorzone, using its amenities and experiencing the area. This will all be interpreted in the personal observational part of the research, where the experiences in the area which I have had will be analysed and compared to the responses from the interviews. The consistent and frequent visits to the spoorzone on different occasions will contribute to the overall analysis of the transformation in the spoorzone. During the visitations I will take pictures of the spoorzone, showcasing the identity of the area which is mentioned on several instances in different interviews and the analysis of them, these pictures are self made and will be inserted in the appendix. The photos can be referred to throughout the research, and therefore are of importance to the creation of a view on the area. By incorporating the pictures in the research, the idea of the identity of the spoorzone will become clearer to the reader of the thesis.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

When the literature study was finished, different theories on the subject had been analysed and weighed against each other. These theories formed the framework of the interview guide. The interview guide worked as a red line in all of the interviews to keep the respondents on track and to try to get the respondents to share their experiences on the topics in which they have the most expertise. Kept in mind that using the holistic approach prescribes open ended interviews so that the respondents could answer freely, the interview guide was only used to provide a red line and start a conversation. The conversations which followed from the questions were of significant importance in analysing the responses, because these conversations shed light on different views which the respondents had. When the interviews were finalised, they were transcribed (and in some cases translated). After the interviews were transcribed, all of the interviews were analysed apart from each other to make sure all the details per interview which are useful are highlighted. The analysis of the interviews happened in the form of a contextualisation linking the content of the interviews to the literature, this provided a test for the modern implementation of certain theories. And it also rooted the research in the theory, so that during the analysis of the empirical factor with the biggest effect the theoretical background is covered. When the interviews were finished analysing, the analysis' were held next to each other to find overlap between certain findings and factors. This overlap gave verification or gave different angles which both were analysed again to create a comprehensive insight in the experiences and why they differ. The experiences of the different respondents did cohere on several occasions and therefore provided a wide lens from which the most influential factors of attractiveness in the transition of the spoorzone were be filtered.

### 3.4 Phasing of the research:

The first phase of the research was brainstorming which topics were essential to be addressed in the interviews. All of the key topics had to be reshaped into questions or remarks that could be used in the interviews. The interview guide kept the interviews close to the subject, making sure the data collected could be analysed properly. The next step was the acquisition of the right respondents. The respondents were carefully selected and contacted to see if there were any possibilities for an interview. The interviews were planned to follow each other up quite quickly so that the process of interviewing would be finished as soon as possible. The interviews did have some time in between them to give me some time to transcribe and analyse the interview so that some aspects of the interviews could eventually be used in other

later interviews. As mentioned, the transcriptions were done as quickly as possible following the interviews so that the information was fresh when transcribed. The analysis of the interview were done as soon as possible after the transcription ensuring the freshness of the details presented in the interviews. After the analysing of the interviews was completed, the contextualisation of the interviews started. During the contextualisation of the responses the overlap between different analyses was acknowledged by rerouting them through the literature. The overlap in the interviews was then used in the conclusion of the thesis.

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Agenda</b>
2-24	topic selection
22-03-2024	deadline proposal
11-04-2024	interview municipality of Tilburg (Joep Frenken)
18-04-2024	interview spoorpark (Anja Eijkmans)
24-04-2024	interview Erik Meijer (NS)
02-05-2024	interview Niek Lintermans
06-06-2024	Street interviews in the spoorzone

## H4 Research

### 4.1 Interviews and Data Analysis

During the period between April and June I took time to plan and interview some stakeholders which I had previously selected for the research. For a thorough and clear conclusion, several different actors were interviewed. These different actors all had different roles and interests in the spoorzone and its renewal. By interviewing different kinds of stakeholders the research became more widespread and shined light on various aspects, which all partook in the analysis of the increase of the attractiveness of the city of Tilburg. These interviews did not

only consist of specialists but also a few street interviews, providing different views and angles not only from the project side of the spoorzone, but also from the aspect of the consumers. According to Wagenaar (2011) the quality of interviews depends on the work behind it. Good quality interviews with usable responses have to be steered towards the topic to become usable, but not steered too much otherwise it will interfere with the strength of the qualitative research method by suppressing the meaning and interpretation of the respondent. To reduce the chance of poor quality interviews, an interview guide was created to provide a red line through the interview. This interview guide consists of several topics in the form of questions or statements, which the interviewer may ask the respondent. Wagenaar (2011) states that a key aspect of a good quality interview is the element of surprise. By surprising the respondent with a question or a statement which they could not have prepared for, the interviewer can get answers out of the respondent which could have different impact, providing the interviewer with the opportunity to cling onto the answer and dive in more deeply.

The interview style which was used in the interviews was the semi-structured interview style. According to DiCocco-Bloom & Crabtree (2006) the semi structured interview style is the most frequently used method in the field of qualitative interviewing. "The semi structured interview are generally organised around a set of predetermined open-ended questions, with other questions emerging from the dialogue between interviewer and interviewee" (DiCocco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The choice for the semi structured interview method coheres with the function which the interviews have in this research. The semi structured interviews are held with the specialists on the spoorzone, these interviews can also be categorised as individual in-depth interviews. During these in-depth interviews the interviewer has the chance to delve deep into the social and personal matters and opinions of the experts (DiCocco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). This provides the chance to incorporate views from the respondents into the research which could be overlooked in any other setting.

The street interviews on the other hand were more unstructured, this was because the respondents were selected randomly and therefore could not be expected to have any predestined knowledge. The street interviews therefore were of a fairly superficial level, purely focussing on the experiences of the respondents in the spoorzone. These interviews provided the bold view of the respondents on the spoorzone without the influence of any actors surrounding the spoorzone project. Therefore their experiences created an unbiased, pure and critical lens on the possibilities which the spoorzone has to offer.

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#### 4.1.1 Interview Joep Frenken (Municipality of Tilburg)

The process of identifying suitable interviewees for the municipal inquiry proved to be relatively easy, as one name kept popping up on several websites and in different articles: Joep Frenken. Joep Frenken is the project leader of area development and real estate

development of the municipality of Tilburg. He has been involved in the development of the spoorzone from the initiation phase to the starting phase, as well as his work in the design and realisation phase (Frenken, personal communication, 11 april 2024).

When I inquired about his perception of the spoorzone project Frenken replied with: “the spoorzone is my child”. This reaction underlines the election of Frenken as the representative of the municipality of Tilburg in this research, and the involvement of him in this project. The inclusion of Frenken in interviews is of key importance to the research, since he is one of the founding fathers of the project, being involved from the beginning till now.

### **The Lochal as main attraction point**

Frenken starts off his interview with appointing the Lochal as one of the key factors in the attractiveness of the Spoorzone, with a side note that the spoorzone is not finished yet and this project is one of the first to be realised. According to Frenken the part of the spoorzone which really stood out in a way that people started to realise that the spoorzone was going to be successful, is the Lochal. The **mix of functions** which are present there attract a big public. “The biggest impact on the attractiveness in the Lochal is the possibility to meet people.” (Frenken, personal communication, 11 april 2024) This function of **placemaking** also had a big role in the layout of the Lochal. “*De grootste gebruiker, de bibliotheek, had dezelfde doelstellingen als wij: een plek creëren voor kennisoverdracht en ontmoeting.*” (Frenken et al., 2023). Creating space for people to meet and socialise are key in the identity of the Lochal, and therefore one of the major aspects of this amenity. The Lochal is, according to Frenken, designed for people to come together and recreate. The several partners installed in the building coherently provide the possibility for visitors to use the functions the Lochal has to offer. These partners such as the Library and the business seats2meet are key in the functionality of the Lochal, not only by creating a continuous stream of visitors, but also by providing these visitors with a comforting environment. This comforting environment is produced by the different areas which are present in the Lochal, such as the Stadscafe, a little bar area in the Lochal where people can enjoy a drink and have a chat. There are a lot of workplaces varying from silenced to more open, a big stairway where lectures are also possible and sitting together. Different conference halls where groups can be invited for example a lecture or a course, and of course the immense collection of books which are portrayed through the entire Lochal. The building is also home to some expositions which attract different kinds of public to the Lochal. To summarize the second paragraph of the interview, the Lochal’s strength lies in the flexibility and abundance of the amenities which are present. **Amenities** are indispensable in the vitality of an urban area, whereas the different functions provided by the amenities not only give a more lively environment for the visitors, it can also help in the economic vitality of the building (Jacobs, 1961).

### **Cultural identity**

The Lochal does not only provide the space for people to recreate, study and work, it also works as a pull factor through its aesthetic design with Frenken mentioning the Lochal as a sign that the spoorzone is gaining in quality (Frenken, personal communication, 11 april 2024). The interior design and space that it creates is not the only aspect of the massive building that catches eyes. The Lochal is an old workspace from the NS, this history can well be seen in the design of today. The big hall has been renovated but kept its **raw and industrial identity**, which matches perfectly with the surrounding spoorzone. Frenken emphasises that this raw identity also works as a pull factor for businesses and people. *“People think: I can go to a newly developed office at the edge of the city, or I can go to this place in such an environment. For creative businesses this place is very inspiring, and in that way it also works as a pull factor.”* (Frenken, personal communication, 11 april 2024). The design of the Lochal with the restoration and reallocation of the historical aspects of the building is, according to Frenken, important in the identity of the Lochal. In her work “the life and death of american cities” Jacobs also stresses the relevance of the incorporation of historical buildings in the identity of the area. Jacobs emphasizes that the old buildings embody the **historical and cultural identity** of the area which helps maintaining a feeling of continuity. The mix of modern aspects and older aspects also influence the architectural variety which on its term makes the Lochal area a more appealing and interesting area. Frenken underlines this theory by Jacobs by mentioning the personal experiences he has with partners and locals surrounding reflection around the Lochal.

### **Lochal as a meetingplace**

Frenken mentions that the Lochal works as a meeting point, he refers to it as a central place. Next to the Lochal is Mindlabs, a project in which business and education are placed in one building. According to Frenken this **mix of functions** could lead to cross pollination during activities. The usage of mix functionality in buildings is what the municipality strive for, but it is difficult to realise. Investors are not keen on having different functions in a building. Frenken states that investors prefer monofunctional building so that it is easier to offsell them on the market. This shows the difference with projects in the west of the country because the market in Tilburg is not as economically dynamic as in the Randstad. Making these projects even harder to realise. Even though the Lochal and Mindlabs are more focussed on the educational and recreational aspects, Plan T and the Brabander which are on the same turf, house workplaces and apartments to live completing the **mixed use development** approach in the area.

### **Spoorzone and its functions**

The spoorzone was deliberately not planned to become a shopping area. *“We hebben bewust gezegd van als je ziet dat het winkelvloer oppervlakte onder druk staat door bijvoorbeeld het webwinkelen. concentreer dat dan, want dat is de enige manier dat zo’n winkelcentrum overeind blijft.”* (Frenken, personal communication, 11 april 2024)

Frenken mentions the effect of the internet on the change of the floor plan of the city, and indicates that the **key factors for a lively city centre** have changed over the years. These changes affect the dynamic of a city centre and therefore are vital in the planning of a city. With the placement of the spoorzone a little bit outside of the commercial shopping area, but close enough to the central station it gives opportunity for new functions to arise in the centre, such as the spoorpark. These new functions also help the city in regaining its dynamics by luring people to the city centre for other purposes than just plain shopping. Frenken mentions the deliberate choice of the municipality and its partners to restrict the spoorzone area to residency, services, work and public space. This is fairly unusual since inner cities are mostly known for the abundance of shops. The fact that these functions are not wished for in the spoorzone is in line with the article by Evers et al. (2015) in which they describe that the **dynamic of modern inner cities** has changed over the last years. The influence of the internet affects the numbers of people who travel to the city centre to shop, which on its term has an impact on the numbers of shops which can still survive. This shift in shopping behaviour tends to push the city to innovate itself and become attractive by focussing on other activities such as services or public space.

### **Public space (and its design) in the Spoorzone**

Frenken asserts the **importance of green space and place to recreate in the city centre**. The spoorpark was held clear of building plans just to give the surrounding neighbourhoods a place to recreate. Frenken also mentions “the binnentuin” which is an area behind the mindlabs buildings which is purely dedicated to the hospitality industry. Bars, cafes and a club all in the raw industrial Spoorzone style. This recreational space is also vital in the event **identity** of the spoorzone, because this specific area hosts amenities which are not present in other parts of the spoorzone. Think of the Club Smederij which is a sort of industrial nightclub which offers small festival like evenings in an industrial environment which is not present in other parts of the city centre. Public space is also appointed as one of the key factors in the development of the spoorzone by Frenken. He mentions the spoorpark as a large area in which people can recreate but also the binnentuin and a walkable boulevard which will connect the spoorzone directly to the rest of the city centre. Even though this boulevard has not completely been finished yet and is more or less unknown to many people at this point, it shows the idea behind the spoorzone and the usage of public space. In his work on public space William Whyte explains that the area in which people can interact has to be designed in a way that these **social interactions** are stimulated. The better the area is designed, the more interactions can be achieved, which on its terms help the people to accept the area and feel welcome there. Which then on its terms works as a catalyst for people to start visiting and keep on visiting the area. This design of public space can easily be found in the spoorpark where different areas are arranged for different audiences, but this will be handled in the spoorpark interview. Frenken mentions the Turia River project in Valencia to showcase the idea around the boulevard, with special attention for sporting activities and space to wander. This mix of public space for recreation (spoorpark), activities alongside the boulevard

(locomotief boulevard) and amenities (binnentuin etc.) moving through a residential area (talentsquare etc.) is also a fine example of the intention of **mixed-use development**. Jacobs described the mixed-use development method in 1961 but the effect it has had on urban planning can still be seen today, the spoorzone consists of the several aspects which Jacobs described in her work: residential, commercial, service amenities, public space, cultural facilities and workplaces. This mix in functionality is also mentioned on different occasions by Frenken in his interview, stressing the fact that the **mixed use development** indeed still is of importance in the field of spatial planning.

### **Human Scale in the Spoorzone**

The importance of the design in the spoorzone was also mentioned when Frenken gave some insight into future plans for the spoorzone with as example the “Clarissentoren”. The Clarissentoren is a building planned to be built in the spoorzone with a height of 130 metres, this will impact the environment of the spoorzone significantly. That is why the design of the tower has to be orchestrated correctly, making the **ground level** appealing for passer-bys, otherwise the tower could be interpreted as a disruptive object (Frenken, personal communication, 11 april 2024). When giving insight on a future project “the clarissentoren” Frenken stresses the importance of the design on the ground level. This is in line with the theory of Gehl as characterised in the work *Cities for People*, where Gehl stresses the importance of **active frontages and the humans scale**. These factors are also mentioned by Frenken in his remarks on why the clarissentoren should be multifunctional. According to Frenken the active frontage of the clarissentoren is key in the acceptance of the enormous building in the area, making the rest of the building available for residential or other commercial operators. Which on its term vacates for more **mixed-use development** in the area.

An interesting view which Frenken gave on the Clarissentoren was also that the funding of the tower is not that easy. The funding of such a large project in an area like Tilburg is more difficult to obtain than in for instance the Randstad. This is because investors mostly prefer mono-functional buildings, this is because when investors would like to offsell the real estate it is more easy to put a price on monofunctional buildings (Frenken, personal communication, 11 april 2024). This is an obstacle which is key in the casestudy of Tilburg, because when the project is to be replicated on other situations or cities the financial ability and economic dynamics of these areas have to be strong enough to enable a project like this to take place.

### **The transformation in attractivity of Tilburg**

Frenken was listed some terms which could describe Tilburg. Frenken chose “bruisend”, which translates as ‘vibrant’. *“Bruisend sowieso, net als het hele evenementenprogramma met alle activiteiten met het culturele voorzieningenniveau. Wij hebben inderdaad wel het bruisend middelpunt van deze regio”* The **event sector** and culture in Tilburg is upcoming, and even won the prize: evenementenstad van het jaar (Gemeente Tilburg, z.d.). Frenken mentions a news article that he had seen in the *Gazet van Antwerpen*, a belgian tabloid, in a

series which covered different Dutch cities the Belgian tabloid chose Tilburg as the city which made the best impression. *“Van de vijf Nederlandse grenssteden die we de voorbije weken bezochten, maakte Tilburg de meeste indruk.”* (Janssen, 2022). Frenken uses this article to showcase the pride that he has for the steps that Tilburg has made in the last decades, with the spoorzone as the latest addition to the process. Even though Frenken proudly speaks of the transformation that has occurred in the past years, he mentions (on several occasions) that the spoorzone is not finished yet. And that the project will keep on improving the area and its connectivity and attractiveness to really stun the rest of the city with the message: *“hier is gewoon een aantrekkelijk stuk stad bij gekomen met een aantrekkelijk woon en leefmilieu.”* (Frenken, personal communication, 11 april, 2024).

To conclude, the spoorzone is designed and orchestrated in line with several theories by thinkers on what could help in the **vitality** in the region, with examples such as the **design of open space** and the **mixed use development**. But what are the key factors in the transformation and which functions specifically gather the most visitors? According to Frenken the design of the urban space is what keeps the people coming back to the spoorzone. Focussing on the experience people have in the area, the handles that are given to give people the facilitate their needs. Think of **green space to recreate, amenities to provide, and centrality and accessibility**. But what really stand out the spoorzone until this point is the event sector, with Tilburg even winning awards for being the event city of the year. According to Frenken, the spoorzone is not finished yet but the steps which are made in the past decades are honourable, indicating that the spoorzone indeed has improved the city of Tilburg.

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#### 4.1.2 Interview Anja Eijkmans (the Spoorpark)

Anja Eijkmans is working as the assistant park manager of the Spoorpark, focussing mainly on the communications and volunteers in her daily work. Anja was so kind to welcome me in the office of the Spoorpark during the Roadburn Camping. This gave me the opportunity to stroll through the Spoorpark after our interview and see some of the things which she mentioned with my own eyes. Eijkmans mentions her previous job at the municipality in which she was focussed on city marketing, giving her experience in the field of city marketing in Tilburg too. Eijkmans is engaged in the local community, being the main point-of-contact for the many volunteers and involved in the many gatherings which occur with the locals in the park. This gives Eijkmans a strong position in knowing what is going on in the local community. Regarding the major impact of the spoorpark on the build up of the spoorzone it is clear why the Spoorpark has to be included into the interviews as an stakeholder. The Spoorpark is not only the largest piece of public space, but also the voice of many inhabitants of the city centre.

The spoorpark cafe is a meeting which is held a few times a year in which everybody can just join in and discuss what they would like to have differently in the spoorpark. The spoorpark cafe is also meant to inform people from around the neighbourhood of new plans or new events (Eijkmans, personal communication, 18 april 2024).

### **Spoorpark as a civilian initiative**

Eijkmans also proudly mentions the fact that the spoorpark was formed through a civilian initiative, also highlighting the extensive bonds that the spoorpark has with its visitors and locals. A civilian initiative is a project which is organised from a bottom up perspective, giving the local community space to give input for the project. This ensures the interests of the local community being incorporated in the setup of the project. This can also be seen on the website of the spoorpark where they list the following actors as stakeholders: the board, park manager, park partners, locals, visitors, the municipality, volunteers and advisors (*Spoorpark Tilburg - Spoorpark Tilburg, z.d.*). The connectivity with the locals and their needs is what makes the spoorpark a vital part of the city centre fairly quickly from its opening.

*"Het is een onderdeel van de wijk geworden, onderdeel van de stad, en van het centrum."* (Eijkmans, personal communication, 18 april 2024) In the work of Jacobs (1961) the importance of social stability, which is essential in the vitality of the local community is mentioned on several occasions. According to Eijkmans the local community is well included in the set up of the park, with the park being stamped as a civilian initiative. The inclusion of the old aspects in the design of the spoorpark is what Jacobs means with the **preserving of the old buildings** so that the local community fabric will still be held intact, creating a sense of continuity in the area. According to Jacobs (1961) this stability is crucial for fostering a sense of belonging and **community engagement**. The community engagement is key in the idea of the spoorpark, as Eijkmans states that the spoorpark is not only made for the local community but also made by the local community.

### **Multifunctional amenities in the Spoorpark**

By appointing eight different park partners with each different ideas and possibilities, the directive team steered towards a mix of functions present in the spoorpark. With some park partners being more focussed on space to exercise such as the Urban sports area or the Beach area, where different sports such as beachvolleyball or bicycle racing are facilitated. And other park partners such as the T-Huis are more focussed on providing a place for visitors to eat, drink and socialise. According to Eijkmans the spoorpark is much more than just a park, this is also because of the amenities present to facilitate the people. Schools visit the spoorpark on regular basis on trips, and use the nature and the Kempentoren for educational purposes (Eijkmans, personal communication, 18 april 2024). According to the theory of Jacobs (1961) the different kinds of **amenities** present in the spoorpark should also contribute to the liveliness and attractiveness of the park. The park has all kinds of different amenities such as the T-Huis which serves as a meeting place where visitors can sit

and have a drink, this also supports the economic dynamics in the park. Other partners of the spoorpark are the scouting and the beach sports club, which both attract people to the park on a regular basis. This regular attraction of visitors helps in the liveliness of the park, because the **buzz** in the park stimulates the feeling something is going on in the spoorpark. Jacobs (1961) also stresses the importance of these different amenities on the attractiveness of an urban place, placing the spoorpark in the vision portrayed by Frenken with its wide view on functionality.

### **Spoorpark as an attractor**

In the guidebook of the Spoorpark five “rules” are listed, these rules are there to protect the values of the park, and they work as a kind of common thread through all of the developments. The first rule in the guidebook is the following: *“Het Spoorpark is een park van en voor alle Tilburgers en door ideeën vanuit de bevolking vormgegeven. Belangrijke basisgedachten in de beleving van het park zijn: verbinden, uitdagen, uitnodigen en verrassen.”* (Spoorpark Tilburg - Spoorpark Tilburg, z.d.). This first part of this rule roughly translates to the spoorpark is a park created by residents of Tilburg for the residents of Tilburg. This was quite a surprising point of view for me, whereas the spoorpark is designed by the residents of Tilburg it is not only meant for the locals. When Eijkmans was asked about this position she quickly refuted the rule as being outdated, stressing the fact that the park indeed was orchestrated for the locals, but by the years its impact on the city had grown so much that it even attracts people from all over the country. The effect which the spoorpark has had on the city of Tilburg was not only acknowledged by visitors but even municipality councillors from other cities have visited Tilburg to take a look at the spoorpark and listen to its story. How did they do this? Where do you start? Is this something implementable in our own city? The spoorpark has made a good impression in the world of municipalities (Eijkmans, personal communication, 18 April 2024). Eijkmans has noticed that many visitors of the spoorpark have given positive feedback on the transition of the spoorpark. Where some visitors from festivals only visit it once in a long time while others visit it on a weekly basis, most of them are fairly positive on what has become from the earlier barren area. The success of the spoorpark has not only attracted normal visitors but also visitation from other municipalities which are interested in how the park has been orchestrated and how they can set up something alike in their own working area (Eijkmans, personal communication, 18 april 2024). This interest from other municipalities indicates the acknowledgment of what is done in the spoorpark by other parties, displaying the success of the project, and the generalisation of the project with the possibility to regenerate it in other cases.

### **The design of the Spoorpark**

The design of the public space in the spoorpark was outsourced, hiring a landscape architect to design the layout of the park. The first step from which this architect worked was the top view of the total park. Following up from the art work “de Rits” , which means the zipper in english, the railway which flows through the park is split by the zipper to figuratively make two railways of one. These railways represent the railways to Breda and to Eindhoven just like the real railways which depart from Tilburg. The use of the railways which were still present in this way adds to the identity of the park and the city, creating connectivity with the history of the area (Eijkmans, personal communication, 18 april 2024). The theory of Jacobs on the importance of the **preservation of historical artefacts** in the area of the spoorpark is also well portrayed in the design of the park. Eijkmans points out in het interview that the office of the spoorpark which is located on the edge of the park has a significant name in the history of Tilburg. A history which is known by most of the inhabitants of the city through the horrifying story it is and the educational program for primary school kids which followed through on it, the Marietje Kessels Project. The historical context of the area is also evident in the rest of the park, with a railway through the park and aspects like a train wagon. All of these examples are in line with the historical and **cultural identity approach** which Jacobs writes about in her work.

The landscape architect also used different kind of pathways to indicate the flow of the specific route. Whereas hard paved roads are meant for passing through quickly, these are used as the “highway” roads to disclose and direct people faster. The soft paved pathways on the other hand lead to more sitting and relaxing areas, with the soft paved pathways being more or less designed for strolling about (ibid.). Eijkmans specifically talks about the tribune when asked about design of the public area, mentioning the idea behind the location and its function. The location of the tribune on the slope at the edge of the spoorzone, but still central and close to the open green space, offers a possibility for people to gather and zone out of the open green space. While still offering an overview over the park and everything that is happening there. These hard and soft pathways which are designed by the landscape architect discreetly show the **importance of designing the land plan**. By designing different areas for visitors to go to, the total experience of the spoorpark can be different. People are able to seek which they desire, enhancing the experience of the park and therefore also improving the chances that people will return.

The open green space in the centre of the park is meant to be green and open, whereas other parks in Tilburg like the Wilhelminapark have a lot of greenery in the form of trees, the spoorpark is quite open. Visitors have even complained about the lack of shade, but with the close bonds the organisation of the spoorpark has with its visitors a solution was found on short notice. In the east side of the park several trees are planted to provide for a canape which will create shade for the visitors, but the central grassfield has to stay open for the possibility to host events (ibid.). The **events** which are hosted in the spoorpark are of

great influence on the attractiveness of Tilburg, with them being incorporated in the event calendars of the city. A clear example of this is the Roadburn Festival, a festival which is held in the spoorpark, providing a camping for visitors from all over the world. Visitors which normally would not visit Tilburg if the Roadburn festival would not be held there. The Roadburn festival attendees are, according to Eijkmans, from an eccentric audience, displaying a whole different culture in comparison with the Tilburg locals. This difference in culture could normally be a barrier for **cross pollination** with the locals, but it has proven to be working vice versa. With programs introducing the locals into the camping and Roadburn culture it has worked as a catalyst for the acceptance of the festival (ibid.). The cross pollination of culture which occurs during these events creates support for opening up to new cultures, enriching the local experience of living. The **planning of the public space** in the spoorpark is done by a landscape artist, this is noticeable because the park has a lot of different faces when analysed. According to Eijkmans this is also a strength that the park prizes, with the different areas providing different settings for visitors to recreate. Eijkmans mentions the different walking routes with one more urban and created for “fast walking”, whereas the other route is more unpaved and through greenery. This is in line with the theory of Gehl on the **human scale**, because the way people travel over these paths already insists on the feeling they can cause. The green paths are more to the sides of the park where the paved path is in the middle of the park. The green paths also connect places where people can just sit down and relax and zone out of the busy city in which the park is located. The large square at the entrance of the spoorpark also has the aspects of active frontages with some businesses and **amenities** located there. This aspect is also in line with the theory of Gehl on **active frontages**. The **street furniture** amenities in this part of the spoorpark are also of high quality. Providing a close perimeter to several amenities with the possibility to reside in the shadow or in the sun. There are plenty of benches and other places where visitors can sit and enjoy the greenery. The **open street level view** which occurs in this area is also a good example of what Gehl prefers to his ideal urban area, the **transparency** of the area invites a feeling of safety and stimulates the walkability (Gehl, 2010). The street furniture amenities and engagement with nature which Gehl advocates in his work are also recognisable a little bit further in the park. Approximately in the middle of the park adjacent to the railway, a sort of arena of sitting stones on which large groups can gather. This arena does not only resemble the ideology of Gehl, but it also coheres with the practices of William Whyte. Whyte’s work specifically focussed on the **human-centred design** of spaces so that **social interaction** is motivated. This design can be characterised by creating enough and qualitative sitting areas for people to come together. Whyte also specifically mentions the importance of a sitting area with sun and without sun so that people can choose, this is also possible in the spoorpark. But from my own experience I have seen that the arena sitting area really stands out in its accessibility and mobility. This area is particularly popular in the summer evenings when lots of youth gather here to relax and enjoy the last hours of sun. At these occasions the social arena theory by Whyte is truly impressive to see how during the evening groups start as separate and eventually end up

blending into each other. Eijkmans mentions that this cross pollination through **social interactions** is also what the spoorpark aims to facilitate, with the main aim for the local community to get interaction with new cultural influences (Eijkmans, personal communication, 18 april). This is done via projects such as the roadburn festival and the mout festival, whereas other events such as Spoorpark Live are significantly large that they gather thousands of people in the park. All of these events contribute to the brand awareness of the spoorzone, showing the liveliness of the area. In the report on the vitality of city centres by Evers et al.(2015), the writers dig into different types of cities and which functions could contribute to more vitality in different kinds of cities. In the concluding paragraph of the report Evers et al. advocate the importance of event in cities to battle the **shift in the pull factors to the city centre**. The rise of the internet has contributed to people visiting the cities for different reasons than just plain shopping, events is one of these factors (Evers et al., 2015). The main side note the report makes on the event functionality in the city centre is the **buzz** it can create, this is addressed by Eijkmans where she mentions the many informative meetings the organisation hosts with locals. These meetings and the facilitation for neighbours to join into some of the activities is the solution for the spoorpark to tackle the issue of nuisance (Eijkmans, personal communication, 18 april 2024).

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, Eijkmans stresses the fact that the Spoorpark is rooted in the local community and that they take effort in keeping it that way. Showcasing the theory of Jacobs in effect in underlining the importance of **mixed functionality and culture** in the vitality of the urban area. The theories of Gehl and Whyte on the importance of the **design of urban space** is also covered by Eijkmans, even acknowledging the employing of a landscape architect to make sure the design of the park was done correctly. The implementation of the theories in the designing of the Spoorpark shows the influence the thinkers still have in the current paradigm of spatial planning.

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### 4.1.3 Interview Erik Meijer

For the interview on the actor Nederlandse Spoorwegen (NS) contact had been made with the regional communications director who provided the email of Erik Meijer. Erik Meijer works at the department “NS stations”, the department which is responsible for the overall experience on the railway stations. NS stations is not only active in the maintenance of these railway stations but also in the exploitation of the area, and urban planning in and around them (NS Stations, 2020). NS stations is a fairly new department of the NS which is formed after the merge of different departments. Meijer was working for the NS Vastgoed department which was one of the divisions which got taken into the merge. The merge caused a shift in the workfield for Meijer whereas at NS vastgoed he was really involved in as land-owner and developer, the current tasks of NS Stations are less active (Meijer, personal communication, 24 april 2024). Meijer is also not unknown in Tilburg because he worked on a project in Tilburg starting in the 1990s till the year 2000. This project focussed on improving the accessibility and connection from the railway station to the city centre. Meijer highlights the fact that during this period of time the NS still worked as active project developer, meaning he had the freedom to actively think about the redevelopment which could help Tilburg in this transformation. In the period between 2005 and 2010 Meijer was involved in the renovation and restructuring of the main building of the railway station of Tilburg, this is when he first heard of plans of the municipality for re-engineering the area around the railway station. Meijer annotates that he has not been involved in the steps which lead up to the spoorzone transition, but he was involved in the so called “inter-wijk verbinding”. This was the idea to use the central hall of the railway station as an open crossing point under the railway, improving the **accessibility** from both ends of the city. This passage is vital in the current accessibility of the spoorzone, whereas it does not only connect the railway station to the area, but also the rest of the city.

#### **Social Security**

Meijer is asked about the changes that have come from the transition of the spoorzone, a few topics he highlights are the **social security, accessibility, greenery** and reallocation of the van gend & loos area. Starting off with the **social security**, Meijer indicates the fact that the railway station of Tilburg is adjacent to the spoorlaan which used to be a great deal more busy with cars etc. The intervention the municipality has done in the traffic of the spoorlaan has improved the situation for the social security, Meijer especially names the cross-ability of the spoorlaan. The idea for the spoorlaan which was incorporated in the vision document for the spoorzone, with the main goals for the traffic by car on the spoorlaan to become a “guest” in the area, meaning that the traffic has to be arranged in a way that **pedestrian and bicycle mobility** are enhanced and the usage of the car in the inner city is reduced (Bogdan & van Broek, z.d.). Meijer indicates that the change in the traffic on the spoorlaan, by making it only one direction, and providing enough spaces to cross the road, really have affected the **social security** in the area. The downscaling of car traffic in the spoorzone is in line with the work by Gehl. By focussing on the pedestrian side of traffic, providing enough safe passage ways and

pedestrian favoured traffic situations, Meijer specifically mentions strongholds from the theory of Gehl. Highlighting the fact that the implementation of the **human scale** can be found in the design of the area. Another specific aspect of the human scale which Meijer mentions is the disability friendly bus station, where special drive-ins and enough wheelchair accessible sidewalks are realised. This also coheres with the theory of Gehl in which he specifically mentions the importance of accessibility by all users.

Another change Meijer highlights in his interview is the make up of the southern part of the railwaystation next to the spoorlaan: *“voordien had je eigenlijk maar één kant van het station waar je binnenkwam aan een drukke straat die die je wel kon oversteken, maar ook nog met parkeerplaatsen pal voor het station en het busstation wordt een beetje verstoep lag”* (Meijer, personal communication, 24 april 2024). Whereas the parking spaces in front of the spoorlaan are no longer there and changed to a more kiss and ride / taxi style roadside, the bus station has transformed significantly. The bus station has been controversial in its design using durable steel components and highlighting inclusiveness with eye for, for instance, wheelchairs.

### **Design**

The **design of the bus station** is also modern and fits in with the urban area, all of this made the station being mentioned in the national steel prize (Nationale staalprijs, z.d.). This mention is in line with the observation of Meijer: *“Het is een een optelsom van allerlei dingen die op zichzelf niet direct met elkaar te maken hebben. Misschien, maar wel Samen hebben we voor hebben gezorgd dat het stationsgebied echt een enorme boost gekregen heeft in kwaliteit.”* (Meijer, personal communication, 24 april 2024). Meijer states that the transition the spoorzone has undergone has really improved the **quality of the area**, not only on the social security aspect but also in amenities. As he specifically mentions the reallocation of the van gend & loos terrain to the spoorpark and the Lochal as “fantastic pearls”, with this he implies that the municipality has made (in his experience) wise choices in the reallocation of the areas. He mentions the services which can be found in the area close to the railway station, and that these **amenities** also have effect on the experience of the area stressing that the abundance of them is positive. The presence of sufficient **amenities** is also key in the attractiveness of an urban area, because these amenities contribute to the enhancement of **quality of life and appeal of the urban area** (Garretsen & Marlet, 2016).

### **Quality of life**

The enhancement of quality of life is what Meijer does recognise in the project, stating that Tilburg previously had never really had a very attractive and appealing character to him. The spoorzone project has indeed changed his view on the city for a small part, especially highlighting the new projects which have changed the city in the last years. Meijer states that the former character of Tilburg in comparison to the other cities in Noord Brabant would be more like the ugly brother, but with the implementation of the new identity it has shifted to being more attractive. Meijer specifically points out the Spoorpark as one of the main pull

factors for visitors, he states that the developments in the city are widely acknowledged and that the city can be proud of the steps they have made. To link the conceptions of Meijer to the literature, it especially points towards the **human scale** by Gehl. Also given that the predominantly mentioned improvement which Meijer has noticed is the spoorpark, which houses several aspects of the theory by Gehl. The functions which reside in the spoorpark are public space and events, with different partners in the park providing additional possibilities for sports and even neighbourhood supporting functionalities such as daycare. The **identity** which is held intact via the restoration and reallocation of old buildings in the Spoorzone is also of positive effect according to Meijer. This is in line with the work by Jacobs on maintaining continuity for the neighbourhood, which is particularly involved in the project.

### **Personal lens**

Meijer mentions that the NS did not have a seat at the table in the plans of the restructuring of the spoorzone, but some points which could affect the railway station were discussed with the NS. Even though the NS did not have any big influence in the transition, the expertise of Meijer and his views from the NS oriented lens are more than usable in the research, this is why Meijer and his personal views are also incorporated in the interview. Meijer indicates that Tilburg as a city has many faces and has formally not really been known as a beautiful city, but looking at the recent developments he acknowledges that the city has made steps. Again, he mentions the spoorpark and the public spaces which have been created in the cityring. When Meijer was asked if he could point to one aspect of the spoorzone which could really function as a crowd-puller he mentions the spoorpark and its event function.

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#### 4.1.4 Interview Niek Lintermans

Niek Lintermans is a fourth year spatial planning student at the Avans hogeschool. During his education he has completed several internships, with one of the internships at the municipality of Tilburg. At this internship he specifically worked on projects in the spoorzone, linking the knowledge taught at his study of spatial planning into the matters in the spoorzone, giving Lintermans a modern and analytical view on the transformation in the spoorzone (Lintermans, personal communication, 2 may). Lintermans has also grown up in Tilburg and still resides there, this means that Lintermans also has a lot of experience in Tilburg. His experiences can also be of value for the research and therefore they are included in the interview as well.

#### **Lintermans' connection to the Spoorzone project**

During his internship Lintermans was mainly deployed in a facilitating function, notulating meetings, keeping track of documents and making work planning (ibid.). Meaning Lintermans

was not involved in the decision making of parts of the project, but he was interconnected in the process around it. These experiences have given Lintermans some insight in the way of working in the spoorzone project. After his internship Lintermans got the ability to stick around at the municipality on a part time contract. During this contract he was involved in the organising of the “day of the spoorzone”, a day which they organised in 2023 for the 10 year anniversary of the spoorzone. During this event the local entrepreneurs in the spoorzone, in collaboration with the municipality, got the ability to showcase the steps the area has made to an interested public (Tilburg.com, 2023). The interconnectivity between the municipality and the entrepreneurs in this initiative to attract inhabitants to the spoorzone is what really separates this project from other projects in the city. The number of activities in the spoorzone are high, with frequent exhibitions and other events, inviting different kinds of audiences to the area. This shows the way the municipality is engaged in the marketing of the spoorzone, not only by organising events on their own, but also by facilitating, and stimulating other partners to do so. Lintermans starts off his interview by mentioning his contribution in and around the spoorzone, the project on which he had the most influence is the dag of the spoorzone. This project is designed to start interactions between locals and the businesses and amenities which are present in the spoorzone. This event can be seen as a trigger for the implementation of the **mixed use development** by Jacobs, starting conversations between residents and entrepreneurs in the area, closing the gap between residents and the **amenities** present in the spoorzone. The interaction which occurs from this experience can spark the cross pollination between the residential and commercial parts of the spoorzone, improving the effect of mixed use development. The economic synergies which the mix of housing and amenities have on each other and vice versa ensure the vitality of the spoorzone in both ends. With the people living in the spoorzone and close areas supporting the local **amenities** by visiting and utilising them, and the amenities on its terms make the area more vibrant and attractive (Jacobs, 1981).

### **Human Scale and Historical Identity approach in the Spoorzone**

Lintermans states that the goals of the spoorzone are improving the connection with the inner city and while developing a new modern part of the inner city keeping the old values and **characteristics** intact. Lintermans mentions the importance of public space in the first goal, with the development of new pedestrian routes towards the city centre. Lintermans also mentions the aspect of the **human scale** by specifically naming the importance of low-traffic, pedestrian friendly and green environment in the urban area. These aspect are vital in the experience of passengers, which on its term has effect on the attractiveness of the area. An example Lintermans gives on the importance of the **design and identity** in the spoorzone which was not previously mentioned is the Zwijsen garage. The Zwijsen garage is a very large parking spot for cars with a distinct industrial appearance. Lintermans explains that the garage is built up of rusty metal plates which are in line with the industrial appearance of the spoorzone. Its location on the beginning of the burgemeester broxlaan is also well planned out because this is the major route for cars into this side of the spoorzone. By placing the

garage in the beginning and making the rest of this part of the spoorzone less attractive for parking, the Zwijsen garage is a key factor in making the spoorzone more low-traffic (ibid.). The Zwijsen garage therefore is a perfect example for both the goals Lintermans stated about the spoorzone, by creating better connectivity by assisting in the pedestrian friendliness of the area and the **identity** it still carries out. The improved connectivity from the north and south of the railway are according to Lintermans also characterised by modern aspects such as being low-traffic and implemented with a lot of greenery. These aspects can be traced back to the theory by Gehl on the **human scale**, with Gehl explicitly mentioning the importance of low traffic and green space in urban areas. The example Lintermans gives for the depletion of traffic in the spoorzone is the Zwijsen Garage, which is built to provide parking for vehicles so that the rest of the spoorzone can be for pedestrians. By mentioning the garage as a key factor for the spoorzone, Lintermans indicates that the aspect of low traffic is indeed of great importance to the success of the rest of the area. During the example Lintermans does not only unknowingly mention the theory of Gehl but also the theory of Jacobs, by focussing on the design of the garage. Lintermans stresses the fact that the design of the garage is in the same style as the rusty and raw identity of the spoorzone, by doing so he backs up the theory of Jacobs on the importance of in the continuity of the feeling in the area.

### **Lintermans on the transformation of the Spoorzone**

When asked about which part of the spoorzone has been transformed the most successfully in his opinion, Lintermans answered the educational part of the spoorzone, indicating the area around the Lochal/mindlabs. With a small sidenote that this part of the spoorzone already has been developed to a way that it is already operational in a way that the public has fully embraced the area. Whereas other areas are still in development such as the ketelhuis or the clarissentoren. But to look at it in the present usage, the lochal is one of the most successful projects according to Lintermans. He points out that the Lochal really embodies the **vision** which the municipality had for the spoorzone, with the possibility to meet but also with the **design** (ibid.). Mindlabs on the otherhand showcases the steps Tilburg wants to make as an innovative creative city, this project is also marked as one of the more successful projects in the spoorzone till now by Lintermans. The spoorpark is also mentioned positively, according to Lintermans the spoorpark creates a very large surface area of green in which people can recreate. He mentions that this is the only part in the city centre where this is possible, indicating the impulse of **quality** it has given to the city centre. The spoorpark is also very capable of housing large events such as festivals because of the floorplan, the grass field and lack of trees make it ideal for such events (ibid.). Project leader of the spoorzone Joep Frenken mentioned the spoorzone as one of the highlights of the spoorzone in its usage and appearance, Lintermans mentions the Lochal as not only one of the more successful projects. He even states that the Lochal is not only a part of the spoorzone but the success of it also lies in the vision it represents. The lochal represents the spoorzone in its vision, with the identity and history of the area kept intact but reallocated into new functions. This vision on the spoorzone is embodied in the Lochal and the way the Lochal has been accepted by the

community has worked as a verification for the municipality, showing that the vision they had for the area works and can be used in the rest of the area (ibid.).

The parts of the spoorzone which have had the most effect on the attractiveness of Tilburg are the educational projects like mindlabs. The area has not fulfilled its full potential yet this is also because the spoorzone has not totally been realised yet (ibid.). The area towards the wagenmakerij is also highlighted as one of the areas which has had the most effect on the attractiveness by Lintermans, he specifically mentions the **events** function which is present there (club smederij etc.). Lintermans states that the event function has the most effect on the attractiveness of the area. According to Lintermans these events encourage people to visit the spoorzone and in this way let people discover the transformations that have been created. When asked about his opinion on the most successful part of the transformation of the spoorzone Lintermans mentions the educational part of the spoorzone. This is according to Lintermans because the Lochal is a representation of the ideology which the municipality wanted to do with the area. Combining modern and futuristic aspects in an old and raw environment, showcasing the **identity** of what Tilburg used to be in combination with what it is aiming to be in the future. He also mentions the Spoorpark, pointing out that the large green space which it has created was something the city centre missed. By naming the **green space** something that the inner city had not really had, Lintermans proves the theory of Jacobs. Whereas residential and commercial areas are common in the city centre, the space to recreate and relax is what is absent, not fully implementing the **mixed use development** which Jacobs advocates for in her work. With the creation of the Spoorpark the spoorzone has truly transformed to a mixed use development area, with all the benefits it brings to the area. Lintermans even goes as far to label the spoorpark as one of the frontrunners for the spoorzone, together with the Lochal. According to Lintermans these two sub projects are currently the main attractive actors of the spoorzone, but he does not hesitate to mention a future project which in his eyes will have a large impact on attractivity of the area too.

As a resident of Tilburg Lintermans also has personal experiences in the spoorzone, during his current internship Lintermans is stationed in Eindhoven. When Lintermans has the opportunity to work at home he tends to travel to the Lochal to work from there, indicating the functionality of the area.

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#### 4.1.5 Street interview 1

The first street interview conducted took place in the spoorpark. On the 6th of June it was quite good weather, providing a lot of people on the streets in the spoorzone. The search for respondents started in the Spoorpark where a polling station was opened for the elections for the European parliament. When I was at the polling station I took some time to vote and

after the voting I started to approach several different visitors of the spoorpark but most of them were not keen on an interview due to the lack of time in their schedule. The main green grassfield in the centre of the spoorpark was screened off by fences due to an upcoming event which they were already taking precautions for. When walking past the fences to see if there would be any other respondents in the park my eyes fall on a woman sitting in the sun on the stairs of the sitting arena. She clearly is enjoying the sun listening to music and looks like she would have some time for an interview. The respondent is born in Portugal and has lived in the Netherlands for quite some time now. She has been living in Tilburg for 4 years now, close to the spoorzone, and has seen the developments in the area from up close.

The respondent visits the spoorpark on a weekly base, she highlights the fact that the spoorpark is very open and easily accessible. She visits the park together with her son who likes to play there, and she sometimes visits the park to have a moment for herself and relax in a green area in the city centre. She highlights the fact that the spoorpark has direct sunlight unlike other parks in the city, she uses the wandelbos as an example.

Another aspect which she points out is the historical identity which the spoorzone carries out, she specifically mentions the fact that the spoorzone is a place where **the modern new city and the old historical railway and textile identity come together**, showcasing the two faces of Tilburg in interaction with each other.

When asked about which part of the spoorzone the respondent finds the most appealing to her she mentions the spoorpark, she especially mentions the **social security** aspects of the spoorpark and the spoorzone in this choice. The spoorzone is characterised by the walkability and the lack of cars, this is what the respondent likes about the area. She states that this enhances her feeling of safety, not only for her but also for her child. She notes that using a bicycle in the area is very safe and therefore it motivates use a bicycle. The respondent mentions the safety aspect to be the most important on several occasions, she does not only mention the safety without traffic but also the feeling of safety in the park. She states that the park is not overcrowded by one type of nuisance visitor but the visitors are of diverse audiences. She analyses that this is caused by the different **amenities** present in the park, mentioning the sitting arena being more for youth and for instance the pump track for kids. The respondent compares the spoorzone to the historical city centre of Breda, which is according to her being considered as more beautiful than the city centre of Tilburg. She continues to tell that she has lived in Breda before she moved to Tilburg but that she prefers Tilburg. This is because the modern and inclusive **design** of the city, especially in the spoorzone, really makes the city of Tilburg more practical and pleasing to live in.

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#### 4.1.6 Street Interview 2

For the second street interview, I wanted to switch the location where I selected the respondent. This change of scenery might change the view from the respondent on the spoorzone, potentially giving a new perspective on the area. By leaving the spoorpark and walking towards the Burgemeester Stekelenburgplein the scenery switches from green and

open to a more urban area. The Burgemeester Stekelenburgplein is adjacent to the central station and therefore has a lot of commotion and people wandering through. The selection of a respondent proved to be difficult again, because many of the passersby had to catch their train or were on the go towards something. The selection process proved to be so hard that I moved on towards the binnentuin, which is an area with some hospitality industry. This is where I encountered a young man who was willing to participate in an interview.

The respondent is from the Reeshof which is a neighbourhood in Tilburg which is not particularly close to the city centre (approximately 7 km), he mentions that he does not really often visit the spoorzone because of the distance. The only times he visits the spoorzone is when **events** are hosted there; he particularly mentions the spoorpark and club Smederij as examples. When asked about the transformation of the spoorzone and which part he thinks is the most appealing to him he mentions the spoorpark. Even though he only visits it a few times in the summer, he states that it really has a big influence in the city dynamics. According to the respondent the spoorpark can be really busy on a summer day, providing **space** for the whole city to **recreate** in a **green** area in the city centre. The respondent proceeds to continue to mention the **identity** of the spoorzone, which he finds exquisite. According to the respondent the incorporation of **historical artefacts** in the design of the spoorzone makes it stand out. When asked what he thinks is the biggest eye catcher in the spoorzone he immediately suggests the Lochal, substantiating this claim with the fact that it facilitates space for studying in the city centre whereas the university of Tilburg is not located in the city centre. He specifically names the target group students for the lochal, also mentioning that Tilburg has a very large number of students living in the city centre.

When asked about his personal favorite places to visit in the spoorzone he mentions the spoorpark to have a drink with friends and relax, and club smederij to go to parties in the weekend. These answers highlight the importance of events and recreation space to him, functions that were previously not that abundant in the city centre.

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#### 4.1.7 Conclusion of the street interviews

Both the respondents were fairly positive about the spoorzone, with both of them especially positive about the spoorpark and its functionality. The respondents both highlight the spoorpark as a place which is pleasant to visit, the impact of the **planning** of the spoorpark can be found in the experiences of the respondents. Respondent 1 mentions the lack of cars which according to her has significant influence on the feeling of **safety**. The decrease of traffic can directly be tracked back to the theory of Gehl (2010), in which he advocates for the reduction of car traffic which on its term leaves more space for pedestrian traffic. Respondent 1 also mentions the different **amenities** which cohere and bring in different kinds of visitors to the spoorpark. This attraction of diverse audiences is also what makes the experience of the spoorpark more pleasant for respondent 1. The effects these amenities have are described by Jacobs in her work the death and life of great american cities, and can still be seen relevant 60 years later.

Respondent 1 also mentions the floor plan of the spoorpark, in which she splits the park into a few areas. One which she mentions is at the water, which is at the eastern entrance of the spoorpark. Another one which she mentions is the area of the sitting arena which we were present at during the interview. She mentioned that the sitting area was different from the rest of the spoorpark because it provides an easy and accessible sitting area for large groups. This is something respondent 2 also mentioned, because when he visited the spoorpark this is where he would hang out and meet his friends. This **planning of the sitting area** can be traced back to the work of William Whyte (1980) in which he stresses the **importance of design of public space to facilitate social interactions**. The concept of the facilitation of public space can be seen in the design of the sitting area, and it is noticeable in the responses of both the respondents. Both of the respondents mention the sitting area as one of the busiest places of the park, especially in the summer evenings. This corresponds with the statement by Eijkmans (2024), in which she not only mentions the popularity of the arena but also the idea of the landscape artist.

Respondent 1 also mentions the aspect of inclusivity in the design of the spoorzone, she especially mentions the accessibility for less mobile people. This is in line with the theory of Gehl (2010) in which he also advocates for inclusive design, especially for wheelchairs etc. Respondent 1 also mentions the fast bike lanes which run through the city and also connect the spoorzone to the rest of the city.

## 4.2 Personal Experiences

During the extensive period I have worked on my bachelor thesis, I invested much time to visit the spoorzone on different occasions. These occasions consist of using the Lochal to work on my thesis, visiting the spoorpark on a sunny day to stroll around and observe, visiting events in the spoorpark which were hosted at the time, visiting the hospitality amenities in the “binnentuin” and just walking through the spoorzone to take pictures and really analyse and look at the details in the planning of the area. These visits to the spoorzone have not only given me new insights on the utilisation of the spoorzone and the results which I personally not had expected before the research.

For the personal analysis I have split up the spoorzone in a few areas; “binnentuin”, “Lochal area”, “stekelenburgplein area” and “spoorpark”. This tour through the spoorzone

highlighting some aspects of the transformation and identity should give an idea of how I experienced the area and takes the reader through the thought process leading to the conclusion.

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#### 4.2.1 Binnentuin

The first area on the route is the Binnentuin, the binnentuin is labelled an area for the hospitality industry by Frenken (2024). When visiting this area it is clearly visible that the businesses present are indeed destined as hospitality services. The **identity** of the spoorzone is evident in the binnentuin, the area has a very raw appearance incorporating the raw rusty colours of the railwaytracks. But this raw interior is countered with vibrant colours and art everywhere, making this area a very appealing and unique part of the spoorzone. The **incorporation of old buildings** and restoration of them is completely in line with the theory of Jacobs (1961). Jacobs states that the incorporation of the historical building gives an unique feeling, contributing to the diversity and dynamics of the urban environment. She also states that the preservation and reuse of the buildings leads to economic benefits, because the demolition of the area would cost more than the restoration. The lower costs lead, according to Jacobs (1961), to lower rent which on its term leads to smaller businesses and local entrepreneurs to set foot in the area. The binnentuin is indeed full with small local businesses, for instance the LOC Brewery a beer brewery which makes "Tilburgs Craftbeer". Next to the LOC Brewery is the Draaierij, an initiative by Amarant, which is a place for people who have difficulty fitting into society to have activities to spend the day. These activities are for instance bartending, gardening and beauty services. This initiative helps people with integration in a safe and pleasant environment, showcasing the societal commitment which also is part of the spoorzone **identity**. During the day and evenings the binnentuin is perfect for sitting down and relaxing in an alternative area to the mainstream terrace which is present in the city centre of Tilburg. During the weekends Club Smederij is the main attractor of visitors in the binnentuin, the club is locally known for its festival like events. During my visit of one of these events I started understanding why it is such a crowd puller in the local community. The interior of the club is very basic and industrial, giving it a sort of Berlin vibe. During the visit it gave the feeling that I was not even in Tilburg, the unique raw **identity** of the spoorzone can also be seen coming back in this aspect. The club can be mentioned as an alternative to the korte heuvel, which is the busiest nightlife street of Tilburg. To conclude, the binnentuin is the part of the spoorzone which is mostly dedicated to the hospitality services, but the raw identity you encounter when visiting it gives off a feeling as if you are in a different city. This incorporation of the **historical identity** of the area with the vibrant colours and arts gives the binnentuin a true own vibe, which is positively appealing to me.

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#### 4.2.2 LocHal Area

The LocHal Area is a very mixed area, housing all of the aspects of the **mixed use development** method by Jacobs. Not only the operators of the area are mixed but also the architecture is very mixed, unlike the binnentuin which is mainly designed in the old raw style. The LocHal area has some very modern buildings present, such as mindlabs. The mindlabs building matches the modern look of the railway station, but stands out next to the LocHal and binnentuin. The modern design of Mindlabs is in line with the identity of the projects which occur there, housing modern projects and cooperating with businesses and educational bodies such as Fontys. This area also houses two other large buildings, the Plan-T building which houses work spaces for businesses and the Brabander which has a residential function. Both these enormous buildings have impact on the skyline of Tilburg, contributing to the “hoogstedelijke” identity which Tilburg wanted to create (Frenken et al., 2023). The "hoogstedelijk" identity which is mentioned frequently in the work by Frenken is directed towards the full scale design of the area, which is focussed on the implementation of high and modern buildings, showcasing the modern city capabilities which Tilburg houses. Even though these high buildings affect the look of the area, the **ground level** theory by Gehl (2010) has been kept in mind. Both the buildings have service amenities on the ground level to help integrate the buildings into the area, and provide **amenities** for the pedestrian passerby-s. These service amenities also contribute to the **active frontages** which Gehl advocates for in his theory, helping the large buildings to integrate into the area. The residential and services in combination with the workplaces and space for entrepreneurs complete the requirements for Jacobs' **mixed use development**, and it is undeniable that the mix of these functions does contribute to the dynamics in the area.

The LocHal was labelled as the main eye catcher of the spoorzone by several respondents of the interviews, and it is clear to see why. I have visited the LocHal several times a week for the last months and the impact it has on the local society is clearly visible. The visitors are of diverse audiences and all come together here. The lower floor of the LocHal is reserved for the library and the Stadscafe which both attract a lot of visitors from very young to elderly people, when moving up the steps of the LocHal you get to the workplaces which are predominantly used by students. Especially in the period in which exams were taken, the workplaces in the LocHal were sought after. The conference halls which are present on the first floor facilitate for large numbers of visitors too, this is clearly visible in the break when all of the different conferences come together on the first floor for a massive provided lunch. This lunch gives space for interactions with other visitors too, this can be seen as designed for **social interactions**. Whyte (1980) advocates that the **design of public space** is vital for the social interactions which can take place there, this can be seen in the main meeting in the lunch break, facilitating for the possibility of cross pollination. Another aspect of the lunch is that the lunch is provided by the company Smeer'm, which is located in the binnentuin. This aspect already shows the cross pollination of the spoorzone and its entrepreneurs. The workplaces and library are not the only attractive factors in the LocHal, whereas the LocHal organises exhibitions too. The exhibition which I have visited is the triceratops exhibition,

showcasing a huge triceratops skeleton on the ground floor. The number of visitors who take time to go and look at the skeleton is enormous, especially little kids with their parents and school classes. The Lochal itself also attracts visitors because of its design, the interior of the Lochal is very raw and industrial, once again showcasing the identity of the spoorzone. According to Evers et al. (2015) the **historical cultural identity** of the area is vital in the experience of the area, this is evident in the Lochal with people not only visiting for its amenities but also for the design.

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#### 4.2.3 Stekelenburgplein area

The stekelenburgplein is mainly used for providing open space next to the railway station, the square is adjacent to the railway station and designed as a passageway connecting different parts of the spoorzone to each other and to the railway station. The railway station is also renovated to work as a passageway from the south side to the north side of the railway (Meijer, personal communication, 2024). The concept of the ground level is also interpreted in this redesign with amenities present in the open part of the railwaystation. The stekelenburgplein area houses mainly restaurant type amenities, with the gourmet market being the one which stands out the most. This building is once again a totally renovated historical building with a reallocated purpose, the gourmet market. The gourmet market is kind of the same concept as the Markthal in Rotterdam, having several different stalls with different kinds of food concepts such as sushi, seafood and mexican food. The mix of different kitchens and the possibility to order all of them at the same table creates a concept which is not present in the city centre of Tilburg, making the spoorzone once again standing out from the city centre and attracting different kinds of public to the area. On the other side of the Burgemeester Broxlaan is the restaurant “de wagon”, which in my opinion has one of the sharpest reallocations of the entire spoorzone. De wagon is Dutch for train car, the restaurant literally is a train which is placed on a rail and you can eat inside it. This initiative once again shows the creativity in the reallocation of the historical identity of the spoorzone. Next to the gourmet market the Zwijsengarage is located, a very large building with the raw rusty style of the spoorzone once again present. According to Lintermans this garage is located at this place at the edge of the spoorzone to provide parking for cars and by doing this reducing car traffic in the rest of the spoorzone which coheres with the theory by Gehl (2010) on the human scale and improved safety by doing this.

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#### 4.2.4 Spoorpark

The spoorpark is the part of the spoorzone which has had the most influence on the results of the research. The implementation of the idea of a large green area in the city centre is something which has significantly impacted the city of Tilburg. The vast and extensive surface area of the spoorpark has impressed me, with several different areas to recreate. When visiting the spoorpark one of the first things I noticed was the surrounding buildings which for

the most are very large apartment buildings with no gardens etc, proving the claims by Eijkmans and Frenken that the green space in the city centre could be of great positive qualitative influence for the inhabitants of this area. During the street interviews a lot of the people I approached for a small interview told me they did not have time for an interview because they were having a walk in their break. This showcases the connection the spoorpark has with the local businesses, facilitating people to escape the urban area in their break. Especially after work time on warmer days the visitation numbers of the spoorpark sky rocket, with predominantly youth hanging out in the park picnicking and relaxing. The spoorpark also hosts events, which attract large groups of visitors too. Two open events which were held in the spoorpark during the time I had been working on my research were the Roadburn camping and the TREK festival which I both visited. The Roadburn camping proved to be a very exceptional festival, attracting visitors which I normally never see as much in daily life. This eccentric culture which I have never really encountered before not really appealed to me. The TREK festival on the other hand ceased to amaze me, the TREK festival is a concept which takes place in different green areas all over the country such as the Vondelpark and the Hunnerpark. This festival really showed the potential of the spoorpark as an event location, it was very busy and pleasant. The largest event the spoorpark hosts is Spoorpark LIVE, this event has a large entry fee this is why I will not be visiting it, but I took some pictures of the build up, these pictures can be seen in the appendix. The event function of the spoorpark was mentioned by several respondents in the interview and the sheer public it attracts does live up to the expectations by the respondents. Even though the park already attracts plenty of people, the events do help in the city marketing of Tilburg, making it a large influence in the effects of the transition of the spoorzone.

## H5 Conclusion

### 5.1 Conclusion

In the concluding part of the research the research questions will be answered to see what the effect of the transition have had. The main research question is:

Has the transformation of the spoorzone impacted positively on the attractiveness of Tilburg, and if so, which factors have been instrumental in this change?

The subquestions which were set up to split up the main question and help to answer the main question as complete and correct as possible, are:

- Has the Spoorzone subsequently transformed in such a way that realisation of new projects can actually have true impact compared to the old situation?
- Which areas of the spoorzone have had the largest attractivity of the area?
- Which functions do these most impactful areas within the spoorzone have and what makes them so influential on the attractiveness?

To start off at the first subquestion, has the spoorzone subsequently transformed as much so that the realisation of new projects have true impact compared to the old situation? Yes, the spoorzone has transformed evidently compared to the situation before the project. The spoorzone used to be a vacant area of land and the transformation of it has ensured that the area has become part of the city centre, which has significantly impacted the city.

This brings us to the second subquestion on which areas of the spoorzone have had the largest impact on the attractivity of the area. According to several respondents which participated in the interviews, the LocHal and the Spoorpark can be seen as the instrumental parts of the spoorzone in the field of **attractivity**. Most of the respondents named the LocHal, not only for its **amenities** and possibilities but also because it is seen by most respondents as the posterboy of the spoorzone. The impressive reallocated building embodies the **identity** which the municipality wanted the spoorzone to represent, and with the LocHal's success the rest of the spoorzone is put into a spotlight too. The spoorpark is especially mentioned for its convenience and the absence of a **green** space before the realisation. Most respondents highlighted that the realisation of the Spoorpark has had significant influence on the entire city centre. Providing space for inhabitants to recreate and facilitate **social interactions** in a green environment.

The next step is seeing which functions reside in these most impactful areas and what makes them influential on attractiveness, the third subquestion.

The LocHal does not have one specific function, and this is what makes the LocHal that influential, its multifunctionality. The LocHal is a central place for people to meet, to work, to study and to recreate. The facilitating function which the building carries is what attracts the diverse audiences and therefore keeps the building lively and pleasant to visit. The **mixed use development** area in which the LocHal is located, in between the Brabander, Mindlabs and Plan-T also enhances this **buzz** which ensures the liveliness of the area. The function of the spoorpark is **public space**, giving space for people to recreate, and it also has the event function pulling large crowds to the area. The mix of these two functions is what makes the spoorpark so successful in the attraction of visitors and the pleasantness of experiencing the park.

To answer the main question, the interviews clearly show that the transformation of the spoorzone has affected the attractiveness of Tilburg in a positive sense. The factors which are key in the improvement of the attractiveness are the usage of **mixed use development, design** and the implementation of the **human scale**. These three factors, which are directly retrieved from the literature, in combination with the theory by Evers et al. (2015) on the change of city centres in the Netherlands have shaped the Spoorzone to become an appreciated part of the city centre of Tilburg. The strength of the spoorzone lies in the modernity of the **design** and interpretation of the needs of a city. Evers et al. (2015) stated in their work that the city centres of the 21st century have changed in their functionality, implying that city centres have changed from being essential for shopping and groceries because of the internet. The switch the city centres have to make to ensure **vitality** is to other aspects which meets the needs of the modern citizens. This is where the true strength of the spoorzone lies, the spoorzone has brought aspects to the city centre of Tilburg outside of the **amenities** which were already present. The raw design and **historical identity** have not only contributed to the continuity of the area, a factor that Jacobs (1961) described in her work as being key to successful urban renewal projects. The raw interior has also brought a new vibe to the city, with for instance the 'binnentuin' providing hospitality services in a whole different way than already present in the city centre, giving citizens the opportunity to switch up and stay entertained. The LocHal is another example of **redefining** the **needs** of the city, with a central place in the city centre for the large population of students in Tilburg to study, and in the same time revitalising the library making it appealing to the public again. Once again the **identity** and the design of the LocHal are essential in the success, really creating a pleasant and durable place to visit. The influence of the spoorpark by giving the city a green heart to recreate has also impacted the effects of the transformation. The fact that a city this large did not have a place like the spoorpark seems weird afterwards, the spoorpark has merged into society almost instantly. All of the respondents mentioned the spoorpark as extremely influential and vital in the success of the transformation of the spoorzone. It not only facilitates space to recreate but also to host large events in a **green** area in the city centre, proving to be appealing to the public. This also attracts the public to see what Tilburg has to offer, adjusting the image Tilburg used to have towards a more lively city to visit. As well as it provides more amenities for the inhabitants of the city, improving the quality of life in the city centre.

## 5.2 Advice

The research on the Spoorzone has pointed out that city redevelopment can be successful in different ways. The key factors in successful redevelopment are not easily pointed out, but have to be thoroughly investigated for the city they have to have influence on. Cities tend to differ and so will the key factors for each different city, implying the different approaches that

have to be used in different cases. An example, the Tilburg Spoorzone case shows that the modernity of cities is what has significant influence on the experience of them. Modern cities have changed in the role they play in society, whereas Dutch cities used to be mainly shopping orientated, the needs for space to live and meet have changed the societal role of the Dutch city in the 21st century. The redevelopment has to fit the needs the society in the city has, the mixed use development which is implied in the Spoorzone matches the needs for space to recreate and live in the city centre. The role of the human scale in the spoorzone case indicates that even though people like living in the city for the buzz and liveliness, they also need the city to be designed towards their needs. The responses from the interviews indicated that the lack of traffic and the design of pedestrian friendly environments in the city centre obviously impact the experience visitors have. Public space is also one of the main factors in the research, indicating that people need to have green spaces to recreate in the city centre. The spoorzone case showed that the implementation of a green initiative such as the spoorpark into the spoorzone, which is part of the city centre, has significantly impacted the recreational space in the city. During summer evenings or even during lunchtime breaks, people from all over the city centre tend to visit the spoorpark to escape the urban city environment and relax in a lush and green environment. This green space is vital for the liveability for the city itself, given these areas are places which people use to meet, ensuring the maintenance of city vitality. What really separates the spoorzone case from other parts of the city is its industrial identity. This raw industrial identity, in line with the historical culture of the area and the city is what sets the spoorzone apart from the other parts of the city centre. The last aspect which has to be held in mind is the mixed use development, the mix of residential, commercial and recreational impacts the area by providing positive commotion. The liveliness of the area is ensured because of the constant stream of people passing by, going to recreate, going to work etc. This together with the pedestrian friendly design makes the city liveability and experience far superior.

The needs in city centres have shifted over the years forcing the city planning to change with them. Every city has different strengths and weaknesses, this is why the analysis of a city has to be done before a large project can be started. But the Spoorzone project has shown that the implementations of city redevelopment prove to be successful and therefore can be used in different cities.

## Appendix 1: Literature

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