

PASSAGES
&
POROSITIES

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Mentors: Paul Vermeulen, Aurélie Hachez,
Jelke Fokkinga, Leeke Reinders, Bieke Cattoor

Faculty of Architecture
Technical University of Delft

Master of Architecture, Urbanism and Building Sciences
Julianalaan 134, 2628 BL Delft

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PASSAGES & POROSITIES

An interface for the creative
community of Nijmegen

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Research booklet

INTRODUCTION

Nijmegen is an unusual city in the Netherlands, not only due to its hilly topography, but also due to its partial destruction during WW2 and the subsequent change of attitude towards its heritage. The catholic past of the city was intentionally circumscribed with the destruction of most of the churches that dominated its skyline. This inconsequent parting from tradition symbolizes the state of the city as a battleground between traditional and modernist schools of thought after the war.

Housing corporations in the Netherlands were privatized in 1994 and subventions were cut, the authorities can no longer afford to add new social housing, let alone drive urban regeneration. A tax initiated in 2013 on the assets of the housing corporations will result in higher rents for lower-income tenants.

The resulting financial problems of the city in the 1990s coincided with the global liberalisation of the economy and thus the "Centrum 2000" development was launched. In cooperation with private investors, large-scale retail-focused developments were undertaken. As described by its architect Sjoerd Soeters, a new axis was cut into the urban fabric to create a "shopping loop" that increases revenues and thereby finance a new cultural center with many amenities.

These trends are visible in Nijmegen as its former Alderman Piet Timermans criticized the low percentage (approx. 20%) of affordable housing in a "green" neighbourhood on the other bank of the Waal. The master plans by the city tackle the current Dutch housing crisis and ecological questions, but could also cause segregation among classes.

Another redevelopment proposal by the municipality deals with the replacement of the centrally located Molenpoort Shopping complex by middle-income households and generic shopping streets. [01](#) The scheme further extends the dominance of retail shopping, started by "centrum 2000" and thus threatens the community of local boutiques of Van Welderenstraat and Vlamsegas to the south, with its coffeeshops and gay night clubs.

The alternative does not complement the existing retail offer, instead Nijmegen could become a "leisure-ghetto", which Henry Lefevbre cites as a primary indicator for the death of the authentic historic city. [02](#)

Another hub for this community of creatives, called Honigcomplex, is a disaffected industrial site that was lent by the city to entrepreneurs and creatives. The success of the site exceeded all expectations, which will not stop its destruction, as the city already signed agreements with developing companies. Even though private capital is an opportunity to kickstart an economy, the example of Nijmegen reveals its potential threats.

The aim of the project is to oppose the master plan for Molenpoort and to formulate an alternative proposal, that transplants the creative community of Honigcomplex to Molenpoort, while integrating seamlessly into its surroundings. The development of Molenpoort and its strategic location is THE opportunity for Nijmegen to fully commit to its status as European Green Capital in 2018 and play its self-proclaimed role as an avant-gardist city of the 21st century. [03](#)

PROLOGUE: GENTRIFICATION, A NUANCED CHARACTERIZATION

Gentrification is commonly attributed to sociologist Ruth Glass, who in a statement in 1964 described gentrification as a discrete process of working class quarters of London being taken over by the middle class. [09](#)

Jeroen Boegaard divides gentrification into three phases, the first phase is defined by young alternatives who want to distance themselves from the suburbs and their exclusion processes, status competition and the preponderance of traditional family housing. The city provides them with openness when it comes to sexual orientation, single life and mix of ethnicities. [09](#)

Stefan Metaal emphasises the “quasi-anonymity” and low social capital they seek. High social capital communities in the suburbs are more invasive, develop weaker ties with newcomers, while providing advantages to insiders. Alternatives flee this “close the gates” mentality and accept the loss of security and stability for personal freedom. The successful liberation of the first phase gentrifiers is often disregarded when criticizing gentrification. [10](#)

Their ability to connect to their environment and neighbours is debatable. Klaske Havik describes a group of squatters and artists in Amsterdam that migrate from quarter to quarter along the IJ without really interacting with other social groups. [11](#)

Nonetheless, the alternatives are not an intrusive force and rather occupy the leftover spaces of the city such as former industrial structures or other cheap or free accommodations. These marginal spaces do not yet attract wealthier individuals.

The presence of a historical urban tissue as well as the presence of universities can be a catalyst for these movements into the city. Universities are a source of well-educated pioneers with low financial capabilities with an advantage for universities offering socio-cultural studies against financial-administrative studies. But the most important factor for the attraction of these creatives

is the cultural offer.

“Gentrification primarily takes place in ‘fun’ cities, and not exclusively in ‘rich’ cities.” (Metaal). [12](#),

“Abundant high-quality experiences” (Florida) such as nightlife culture, festivals, gay communities, high density hospitality venues are preferred to the one-sided industrious city and cities with a high density of offices. [13](#)

The rejection of theme park-like districts tailored to tourism or entertainment of visitors underlines the high sensibility of the creative class in search for the three “Ts”, technology, talent and tolerance, introduced by Richard Florida. Even though this group of people is perhaps specific for American technology hubs, it is nonetheless important to note the importance of tolerance, for gays and foreigners, as well as talent, defined by the educational degree. [13](#)

In cities such as Berlin and Amsterdam, the “Clubszene” (Clubbing community) moves to another place every time first signs of further gentrification appear. They settle in unlikely places not suited for habitation and set up amenities such as restaurants and theaters. [11](#)

The situation pivots towards its second phase when traditional galleries get added into the mix. Their presence reveals that estate prices are low enough for beginning galleries to exhibit not yet established artists, but with a good enough reputation to be “hip” instead of being “alternative”. Jeroen Boegaard calls this the first symptom of the “process that will radically transform the area over the next ten years”. [10](#)

The second phase sees the arrival of new individuals: the socially and culturally conscious middle class, less radical than squatters and artists, but still users of cultural facilities and devoted to charities. Terms often used for this position are new middle class, cultural elite, creative class and cultural middle class.

This group often comes to the city for aesthetic reasons such as an avant-garde status, which is not based on income, but education and culture. Stefan Metaal speaks of “maximum distinction for a minimum of cost” (Metaal, 2007), while Sharon Zukin qualifies it as “thrift shop chic”. Zukin (2010, p. 226).

Like in the first phase, this creative class rarely follows the traditional family model or even marriage, instead opting for more freedom and therefore requiring more amenities and shopping possibilities. [12](#)

As in the first phase, they do not merge with “original” residents and their position as small entrepreneurs or general interests do not coincide. [10](#)

Unlike the gentrifiers of the first phase, they are also interested in taking the first step on the housing ladder. The newcomers have enough purchase power to sustain a network of shops and restaurants.

In the third stage finally, wealthy residents interested in the high status of the neighbourhood start to take over and are less seduced by the mixed character. The quarter becomes too expensive for alternative uses of the first phases and the boutiques, restaurants and cafés linked to them slowly disappear. The original inhabitants are slowly but surely confronted with rising rents, caused by the ongoing renovations of apartments and wealthier speculators harassing them to empty apartments and selling them with profit. Even though the middle class citizens are sympathetic to them, the original inhabitants start resisting and become more and more vulnerable. [12](#)

It is also important to point out that gentrification is not a smooth and homogeneous process and in some cases stops at its second stage. While the third stage seems clearly to be detrimental to social life and low income communities, the second stage deserves a more nuanced discussion. It is of course true that “original” residents are confronted with rising rents, but on the other hand one could argue that quality of life is increased and job opportunities are created.

Appropriate supportive measures will be discussed in further chapters.

Popular topics such as the “Green Shift” are used as a tool to sell new developments as is the case of Lent on the other side of the Waal. The project, including the remodeling of the Waalshores, puts forward its ecological intentions, while hiding the already mentioned lack of affordable housing. This strategy could be referred to as the fourth wave of gentrification.

For instance, in a regeneration manifesto in 1999, the British government targeted “brownfield” sites as parcels for developments with the premise of limiting suburban sprawl. Neil Smith criticizes this attempt at recolonizing the city with white middle class and regaining hold of politically decisive boroughs, under the premise of sustainability. [15](#)

In an opinion published by researchers of the PNAS, overall “green” interventions are on one hand praised for their lower operating costs, security against storms or floods, economic growth, property value, improvements in health, recreation and potential social benefits. On the other hand, the researchers warn of negative social impacts such as displacement or segregation of low-income populations for the benefit of middle and upper classes. Construction of extensive green infrastructures, for instance in Boston with its waterline against rising sea levels, could lead authorities to ignore the needs of vulnerable communities, becoming a lower priority.

The opinion therefore appeals to combat exclusionary results and advocates for the incorporation of financing schemes that include the protection of social housing stock and affordable housing. [16](#)

CHRONOLOGY OF URBANISM IN NIJMEGEN // A MIRROR OF URBAN DESIGN IN THE NETHERLANDS SINCE WWII?

Nijmegen is a particular case in the Netherlands for multiple reasons. Obviously for being in proximity to the German border and its uneven terrain and slopes. This effect is striking towards the river, as stairs and elevation literally cut the city into the higher city and the lower city "Benedenstad".

Like New York under Robert Moses, postwar Nijmegen was marked by radical changes and large destructive efforts. A striking example are the fate of the churches in the center and the construction of Plein 1944: Mostly intact churches were willingly destroyed and reconstructed outside of the city and a rectangular square amidst the rubble was erected.

The Benedenstad area on the other hand was neglected and heavily deteriorated. Due to its state it remained unattractive to developers and was ultimately bought by the city. Many empty spaces in between ancient buildings were consequently used as parking spaces for the new department stores in the city centre. In the 1980s, an extensive social housing project replaced the area.

The Netherlands used to be a country famed for its tradition in quality social housing that evaded stigmatization by providing shelter to both uneducated working and middle class.

As a result of global liberal politics, a Policy Paper on Social Housing was published in 1989, initiating the retrenchment of the state to its core tasks, ensuring decent affordable housing for those who were financially unable to find it on the free market.

The sale of social housing units ensued, subsidies were phased out and home ownership was promoted. Housing corporations were privatized and made responsible for the housing of targeted population groups.

Some corporations chose to invest into more expensive units, ensuring profits that were reinjected into affordable dwelling.

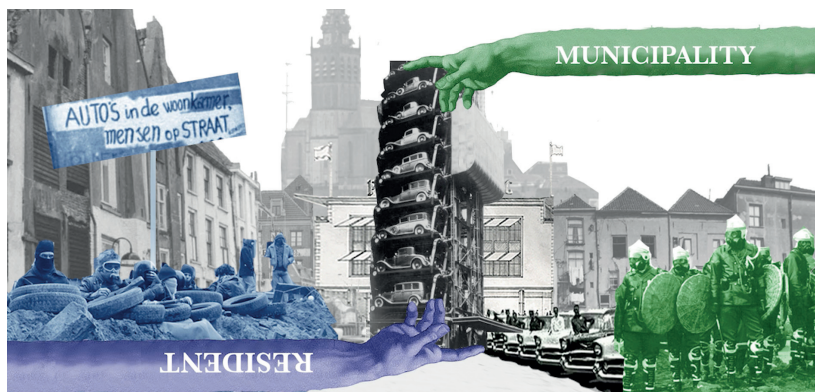


Figure 01 // Excerpts of Shortmovie *Learning from Lange Hezelstraat* prepared for the P1 presentation.

Cities like Amsterdam on the other hand purchased thousands of private rental homes that continued to serve as social housing managed by corporations.

The Benedenstad project nowadays enables rents at reasonable prices in a central location. The Policy Paper on Urban Revitalization of 1997 further increases the proportion of owner-occupied homes in different price brackets.

An Example for these evolutions is the fate of the highrise blocks of the Bijlmermeer polder in Amsterdam constructed in 1968. The scheme was unsuccessful, being one third empty amidst a housing shortage in 1985. A large-scale regeneration plan from 1992 condemned $\frac{1}{4}$ of the housing blocks and was replaced by another plan that targeted $\frac{2}{3}$ of the substance. More than half of the highrise blocks have been replaced by single-family houses and medium-rise apartment blocks. The revitalization Policy so far has cost two billion euros. [04](#)

A tax on the assets of the housing corporation initiated in 2013 will result in even higher rents for low-income tenants and is an additional burden on the viability of social housing. [05](#)

It is important to note that the demolishments prior to the construction of the new Benedenstad were met with intense protests by students and other residents and it can be speculated that the area was in the first phase of gentrification. If the subsequent bankruptcy of the city is considered, it could be argued that small investments would have been better and would have mobilized bottom-up initiatives. Even though the development is a success in terms of social housing, it is still a monoculture and lacks integrated gastronomy and retail. With the exhaustion of financial reserves, later developments, such as the Marienburg project and Plein 1944, were financed by private investors.

A large scale strategy typical to the liberal movements of the 1990s was launched: centrum 2000. The shift from public to private would become evident after the government buildings (and few apartment complexes) would be destroyed and replaced by an extensive shopping street, that nonetheless financed public facilities such as an archive, a cinema and a



Figure 02 // Illustration of Shopping Loop in the center of Nijmegen

library. This investment was badly needed, as explained by former Alderman Piet Timmermans in an interview, who underlined the mediocre state of the city centre prior to the Marienburg intervention. Sjoerd Soeters was chosen for his sensibilities with the traditional dutch city. In an interview with him he explained the quality of Dutch city, defined by its tight streets and its balance between unity and individuality. As an urban planner, he created a shortcut to create a commercially more viable shopping loop that was requested by the developers. The project was ultimately successful in its quest to attract visitors, but unsuccessful in the initial plan to support small-scale shops, which were mostly substituted by chain stores. Plein 1944 on the other hand seems to be a monoculture based on retail and generic gastronomy as is Molenstraat and most of the shopping loop (Figure 12).

Nowadays, gentrification has evolved towards its third wave starting in the 90s and characterized by its generalization and intertwining with wider processes of urban and economic restructuring. The liberalisation of the economy in the 1980s and the subsequent disappearance of state subsidies resulted in the intensification of partnerships with the private sector as a source of capital. The main result is expensive, symbolic megadevelopments such as Barcelona's waterfront and the Potsdamer Platz in Berlin. Urban development at a local level became dependent on global capital and the subsequent economic trends, aimed at increasing profits for developers and tax receipts for municipalities. [15](#)

As a vehicle for corporation-induced gentrification the term "Urban regeneration" was adopted as a "Trojan horse". (Aalders) New urban complexes have adapted to the model of gentrified neighbourhoods and include amenities appreciated by the creative community such as shopping, restaurants, cultural facilities and open spaces. "Urban regeneration" has become a central piece to the productive economy of the city, a source of profit "planned and financed on an unprecedented scale". (Aalders)

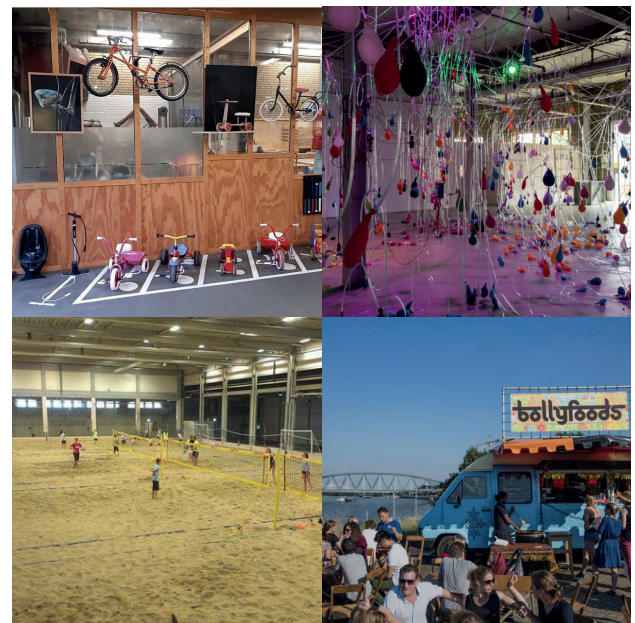


Figure 03: Urban Proposal for the Vlaamse Kwartier
Figure 04: Photography of Waalfront development.
Figure 05: Brochure *Nijmegen European Green Capital 2018*
Figure 06-09: Variety of activities inside Honigcomplex.

NIJMEGEN MISSING OUT ON AN OPPORTUNITY

The replacement for Molenpoort suggested by the municipality would extend this monotony with the construction of generic shopping streets and middle-income households. Its position at the intersection between the retail-oriented shopping streets in the center and the alternative neighbourhood of Vlaamse Gas symbolizes the turn the city is taking. The author argues in favour of an authentic and complementary extension of the shopping loop that widens the retail and leisure offer, with the involvement of the surrounding community. Furthermore, the boutiques and restaurants and lack of premium living in Tweede Walstraat hint at an early second stage of gentrification. The development of Molenpoort and its crucial position inside the historical boundaries of the city marks a turning point for 21st century Nijmegen.

As the Waalfront project has shown, the impact of developers has increased in Nijmegen and could condemn communities in the center. As in Nijmegen, cities have more and more become junior partners to developers as showcased when the NYSE threatened the city of New York to leave for New Jersey. In response to this empty threat it got tax cuts and subventions amounting to 1 Billion dollars. [15](#)

BPD, developers of the Waalfront in cooperation with the city, did not reconsider the destruction of the successful Honigcomplex, which is now set for the 1st of January of 2022. The replacement is well advertised and referred to as a landmark taking inspiration from its industrial past by both newspapers and BPD themselves. The concerned newspaper DeGelderlander have their quarters inside the new neighbourhood and therefore contribute to the image sold by the developers. Referring to it as the new calling card of the city and an architectural jewel. [17](#)

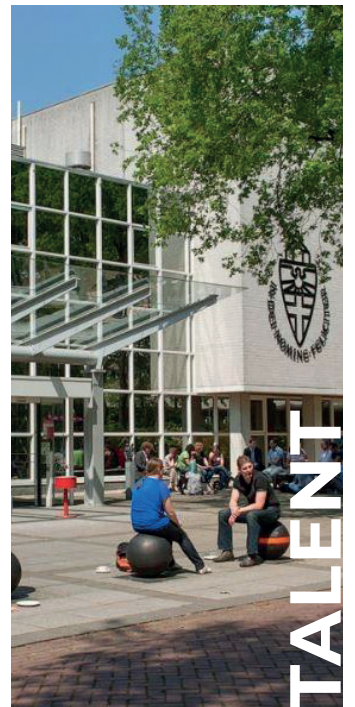


Figure 10: Aerial view of Nijmegen with positioning of Honigcomplex and Molenpoort

Figure 11: Picture of Van Wolderenstraat with small-scale shops and gastronomy

Figure 12: Picture of Coffeeshop in Vlaamse Gas

Figure 13: Picture of Rainbow-Flag at the entrance of a gay night club in the Vlaamse Gas.

Figure 14: Picture of Radboud University

Furthermore, the struggle for the preservation of the Honigcomplex is not mentioned once, rather presenting renderings of the transformation of Honigcomplex and the unrealised ambitions of one of the entrepreneurs to construct a hotel inside the silo. [18](#)

For the Molenpoort on the other hand, the municipality has to set strategies to defend the authentic community around Tweede Walstraat and Vlamse Gas, instead of losing the grip on valuable land. The ideal is not only unattractive to creatives, but would even displace those already present. How authenticity can work in favour of both lower and higher income residents, can be seen in the neighborhoods Nieuwmarkt, De Pijp and Oud-West in Amsterdam. Those neighborhoods never fully reached the third phase of gentrification owe their success to the inclusion of artists and the culture sector. Without the help of authorities, they would be driven out by the market, resulting in a dull quarter reserved to high income residents, as both Manuel Aalbers and Jeroen Boegaard argue. [10](#)

According to the teachings by Richard Florida, these positive effects could even be extended onto the whole city. He argues that highly educated people or the "creative class" is one of the primary assets of the economically most prosperous cities in the United States. These people are apparently attracted by inclusiveness and diversity as well as the presence of an already present community. Even though Nijmegen is not known as a hub for technology, the exploding costs in cities such as Amsterdam could encourage skilled workforce to opt for Nijmegen. With its strategic position in reach of Amsterdam and next to the most urbanized region of Germany, it can become a hub in itself.

Concerning Richard Floridas three "Ts", the presence of technology and talent can be expected in Nijmegen, thanks to Radboud University. Gay communities inside of Nijmegen, particularly around Molenpoort, not only showcase its tolerance,

but are even the most correlated factor for economic growth in many American cities, according to Florida. [13](#)

The author believes that Nijmegen has the assets to further attract the creative community and should play them out even more. In return, the immigration of skilled workforce would increase the attractiveness of the city for companies and ultimately result in economic growth and tax revenues.

Apart from providing financial growth or urban quality in exchange for financing or subventions, it is necessary to look at models that could increase the autonomy of the project from profit-oriented companies. [13](#)

WHAT SOLUTIONS FOR MOLENPOORT?

As fully state-led developments such as the Benedenstad are far from the political reality of today, urbanists in Nijmegen and elsewhere have to find different approaches in order to ensure inclusiveness and the resulting authenticity.

“Baugruppen”, are famous for cutting costs by eliminating intermediary developers. These bottom-up “typological” experiments started in the 1990s in Berlin and are based on a community of tenants that acquire a land cession by the city for a limited amount of time. [20](#)

The community is always supported by a technical team of architects and engineers that mainly co-design a common infrastructure. The voids of private space are then filled by each user who has variable and joinable volumes at hand. A crucial advantage is the affiliation to the residence created in this process.

Shared spaces are generous and provide a “ruralisation” of living, an ecological approach that prioritizes greened outside spaces and circulation with the same qualities

Even with a large share of common spaces (28% for the Baugruppen cooperative near the Spreefeld in Berlin) and generous amenities, the costs often remain low. The “R50” cohousing, in Berlin finished in 2013, costs 2.150 €/ m² while the cost for similar traditional dwelling at an average purchase is about 2.950 €/ m². [20](#)

The possibility to reduce cost by increasing personal involvement is also showcased by the almost identical “Klusflat” principle from the Netherlands. Klusflat means “do-it-yourself”-flat in Dutch. Inhabitants buy a space and are contractually obligated to finish

THEORY OF SUPPORTS.
J. HABRAKEN.



INTEGRAL ECOLOGY



FREE-CAR BAUGRUPPEN
Access by bicycle or by walking

URBAN CONNOTATION



CREATIVE COLLECTIVITIES
PATCHWORK FACADE



PUBLIC GARDENS
Transition between thresholds

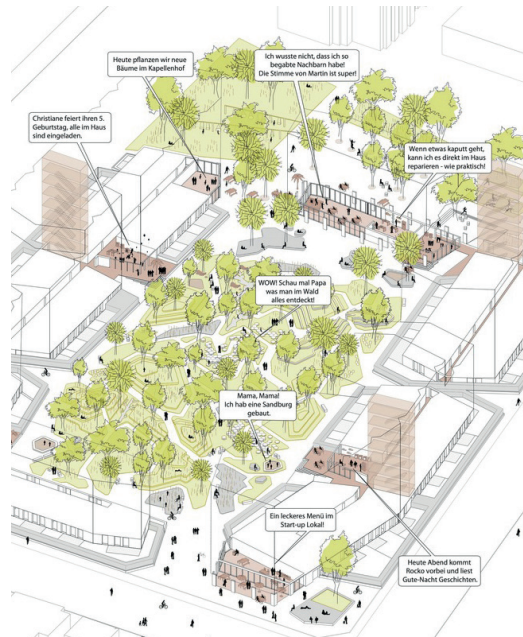


Figure 15: Diagram of structural and administrative organization of Baugruppen
 Figure 16: Planning of common courtyard in Vienna
 Figure 17: Addition of facade elements for 530 dwellings by Lacaton & Vassal
 Figure 18: Wallisblock, Rotterdam. by Hulshof Architecten

them, according to their own preferences and using a catalogue of predefined and prefabricated elements. The interior layout is then reflected by “personal facades” that are counterbalanced by the overall homogeneous appearance of the dwelling. The refurbishment of one of the housing blocks in Bijlmer, mentioned earlier, by NL architects even won the European Architecture Prize in 2017 for this concept. [21](#)

Another Dutch example are the collective private investments (CPO) in which the municipality plays the role of a financial supporter of bottom-up initiatives by inhabitants improving the neighbourhood. Ksiazek refers to this technique as “gentripuncture”, only changing a specific block inside a neighbourhood can lead to social and commercial activation, while preserving its identity and demographic makeup. The new inhabitants are called “spekkopers” and motivated by the belief in a positive process of activation and therefore the rise of estate value. The reconstruction and affiliation to a piece of land owned by the new residents creates strong social bonds. Like in the Baugruppen, capital from private tenants and direct or indirect subventions by authorities are used as financial basis, while pre-existing buildings are used to cut costs. This is the case for the Klusflat Klarenstraat in Rotterdam, where structural elements were kept and slightly altered to then accommodate up-to-date apartment typologies. [21](#)

Also laureates of the European Architecture Prize, Lacaton & Vassal architects are pioneers in the practice of reusing modernist concrete housing blocks. Their mantra is ‘never demolish, always add, transform and reuse’. Low costs for higher living standards are achieved through the extension of existing housing stock. The addition of prefabricated, self-carrying facade elements as a new envelope onto a modernist building block in Bordeaux had a significant impact. The architects were able to increase floor spaces, reduced energy consumption by 60% and improved light conditions with large bay windows. All of this while cutting the cost in two when compared to reconstruction and including the

improvement of common infrastructures. Gentrification has also been avoided, residents have not been displaced and rents have remained stable. [22](#)

Even though singular apartments have been improved significantly, Lacaton & Vassal's design does not include amenities and does not answer problems such as stigmatization (parts of the building got vandalized).

In Vienna, the Gemeindewohnungen (council flats) are a defining feature of the city. Under the standard of promoting acceptable living conditions for everyone, the capital of Austria rejected neoliberal urban development strategies for the benefit of housing entirely financed by the municipality.

Unlike many other European cities, Vienna had the economic capabilities to finance such an endeavour with the economic upsurge following the lifting of the Iron Curtain in 1989. But thanks to these investments, city-owned housing in Vienna is not confronted with the usual social stigma and instead is home to lower and middle classes. In order to diversify its offer, Gemeinnützige Bauvereinigungen (partly city-owned non-profit housing associations) were created, terrains for Baugruppen (building groups) were provided and Wohnbauförderung (housing subsidies) for private developers were injected. In return, private developers have to commit to strict conditions on quality set by the city. The fact that residents of all classes are in big parts renters and not homeowners underlines the efficiency of the system and the trust municipal housing is met with.

Other than being viable, housing in Vienna is also a synonym for high quality. Developers competitions force them to collaborate with architects and urban planners and submit proposals as entries to public competitions, whereas financial and planning efforts are put into every public development.

Housing programs are often inspired by the mixed-use courtyard typologies of the "Red Vienna" in between world wars, provide a set of amenities and emphasize the importance of the community. Common infrastructures include bicycle parking, communal heating and electricity production, meeting rooms for people of all ages and even saunas workshops or fitness studios for small fees. The strength of these communities is evidenced by 60% of inhabitants volunteering in the exemplary "Autofreie Mustersiedlung". The status of Vienna as one of the most liveable cities in the world attests the success of the model. 19

The example of Vienna does not teach that high investments are needed for the well-being of dwellers, but rather monitoring and establishing of quality standards by the city with financial support.

The concept of concurring in Vienna entries could also be used as a method to increase quality and reduce prices, but an opportunity to present different options and multiply ideas. 17

How important those shared spaces are in a community is evidenced by Robert Chaskins research on "positive" gentrification: joint ventures between the State, private developers and non-profit organizations with the goal to integrate low-income residents.

The study presents three Chicagoan case studies and criticizes the privatization of common spaces and the lack of accessible public spaces and the inconsistent enforcement of restrictions imposed mainly by higher income residents.

In fact, high-income residents have more power, as they are able to threaten corporations to move out, and thereby get more saying. On the other hand, they give stability to the neighbourhood, being invested in maintaining a good reputation for the market value of their estates. The restrictions posed by them lead to informal reclaiming and therefore to even more friction in between income groups.

Chaskin points out that the case studies did not bridge income inequalities as expected. In order to achieve these goals he proposes multiple solutions: Public spaces within the neighbourhood that are accessible to everyone, forums and associations that provide leverage in decision making to residents across income and finally “neutral grounds”. [23](#)

The “neutral ground” are spaces with recreational values such as schools, stores and coffee shops and urban facilities that are strongly connected to the community, but as the name suggests, are clearly distinguishable from the residences. This reliance on such spaces is confirmed by the overall successful examples in Vienna and the Baugruppen in Berlin. But the results have to be nuanced: Both cases rely on extensive funding. The Baugruppen apartments in Berlin are often vast in dimension and are closer to third stage gentrification than to the first one. Their occupation of empty patches of land handed by the city nonetheless does not cause the direct displacement of “original” residents.

The proposal would need the support of the city, which as a first step would buy the Shopping Mall and lend its roof to a community of inhabitants interested in shared and affordable living with the “Baugruppen” as a model. With the help of the finances provided by “spekkopers” a system of modular elements would then serve as the structural basis of “Klusflats” that would also improve the energetic efficiency of the whole complex. The bigger share of costs would be carried by residents with higher income, in exchange for the access to the roof of low-income residents for example. The idea is to create a symbiosis: High income residents provide finance and stability, while the presence of affordable housing increases the quality of their living.

PASSAGES & POROSITIES // **AN INTERFACE FOR THE CREATIVE** **COMMUNITY OF NIJMEGEN**

The Honigcomplex in Nijmegen is a great example for the combination of production and retail and its attractive potential. By concentrating gastronomy, ateliers, sitting options and showrooms in two spaces, these ultimately become places. In contrast, the backside of the complex is unable to develop this notion. Its spaces are too exposed and the industrial scale of its detailing makes the space unrelatable and out of proportions for human interaction.

But perhaps the most characteristic feature is the Honigcomplexes ability to create connections between the public and production. Not all ateliers are accessible for the public, but the former factory offers enough spaces for showrooms and most importantly face-to-face interaction between craftsmen and the public and craftsmen with each other. These ateliers or workshops are each a "Wunderkammer". Instead of hosting curiosities, these Wunderkammers display the skills of entrepreneurs and craftsmen. The perceived authenticity of the Honigcomplex finds its root in the Wunderkammer the creatives inhabit and create themselves.

Sharon Zukin underlines the importance of cafés and bars for creative communities. Creative workers are often freelancers that collaborate on single projects, are dependent on interconnected networks of workers and therefore benefit from clustering in special districts. [14](#)

Creative neighbourhoods could thereby be described as villages with a strongly interconnected community at their core. The same is true for the Passage, which also concentrates a multitude of functions such as production, retail, gastronomy and housing. A tight network of smaller shops with the focus on creation or "nouveau-tés" as it was called in the 19th century have been core features of the Passage.

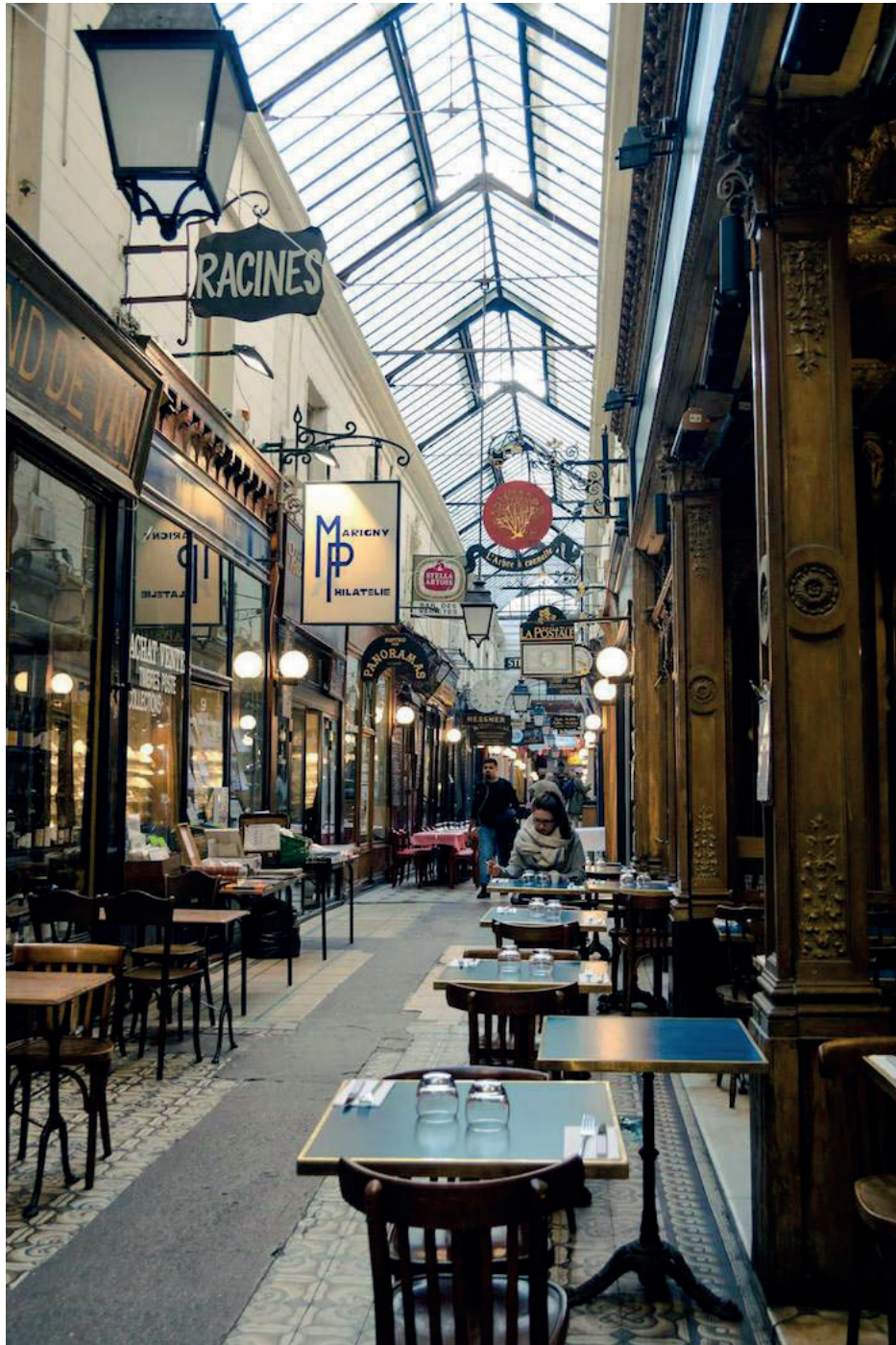


Figure 19: Image of the Passage des Panoramas in Paris

The position as a distinct space that acts as a sort of parasite in the urban tissue has been its main flaw.

It shares these characteristics with the Molenpoort. Introversion and distinctness makes both spaces highly dependent on a certain way of living and fashion. For instance, the Passages in Paris once formed a network in contrast with pre-Haussmann Parisian streets, by providing a sort of public living room for the glamorous lifestyle of the newly emancipated parisian bourgeoisie.

The boulevard and "grand magasins" later became the defining feature of the city, while also providing the glamour and cleanliness to its pedestrians, making the Passages obsolete. In its relatively short existence, the Molenpoort has also witnessed a paradigm shift in the center of Nijmegen. The shopping center copies the layout of an American Mall, defined by its access through parking and its complex spatial sequence. As an anachronistic remainder of the dominance of the car, the Molenpoort hosts a vast parking lot on its roof, resulting in a vast concrete slab in the middle of the city. [25](#)

The city was not only pedestrianized ever since, but has even opened a new axis with the creation of the Marienburg area in 2000. In consequence, the Molenpoort now not only faces the Molenstraat, one of the main arteries of the center, but also opens onto the Moenenstraat Passage that leads to the highly used Marikenstraat. The current denial of this condition has been the Mall's main flaw, but the changes in Nijmegen also represent an incredible opportunity.

While the Passage typology failed, it nonetheless is a great indicator for viability, as only the Passages with certain criterias have survived. The most connected Passages are the most viable. As William White would confirm: continuity is key to the urban realm and perhaps even more important than distance. [07](#)

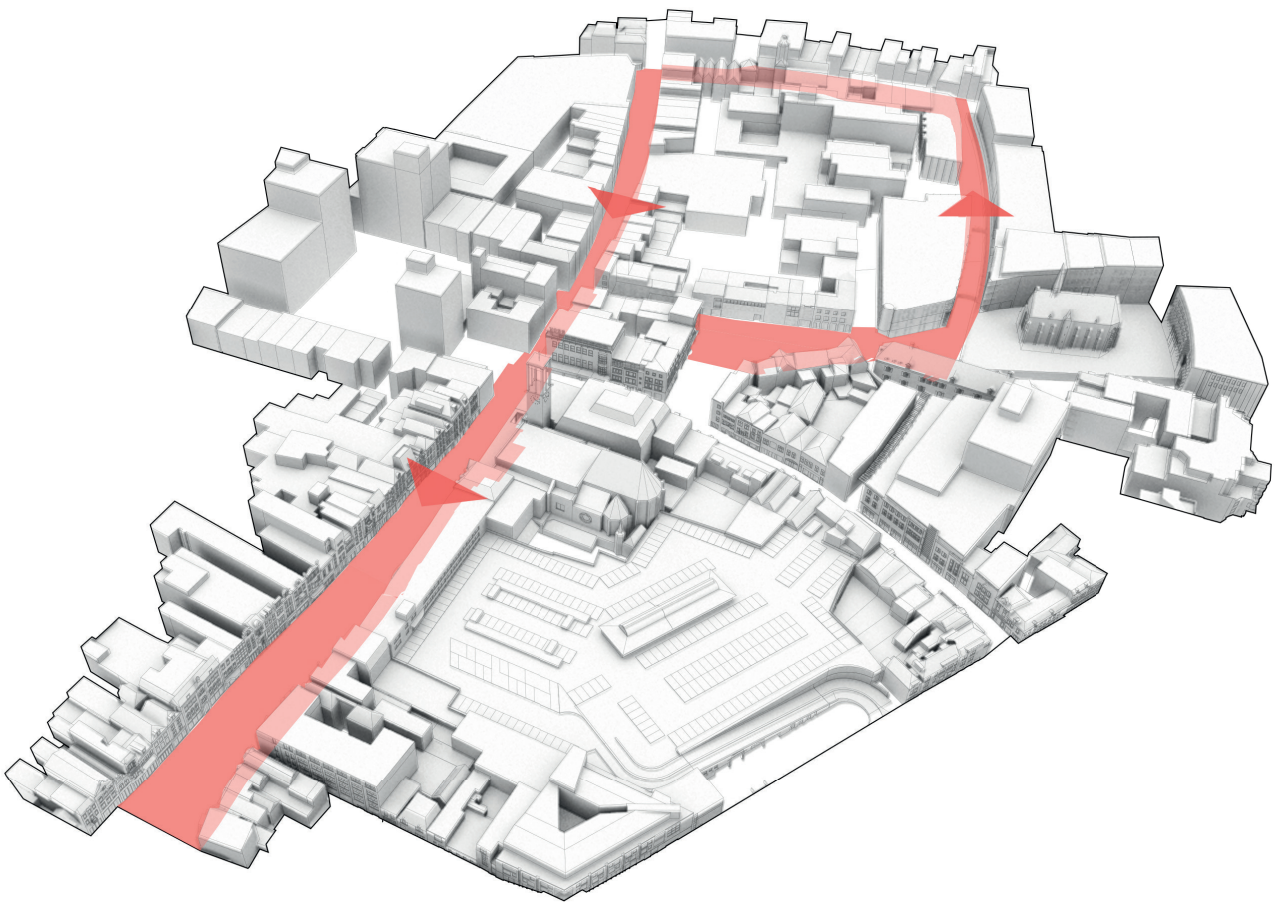


Figure 20: Predominating Shopping streets of Nijmegen

By this logic, The Molenpoort has to work as an addition to the existing street network, has to stop denying its position inside the traditional urban tissue, become part of the shopping loop that irrigates the center and open up to the sky, reflecting the "café culture" both emphasized by Gehl and Whyte. Both authors claim that outdoor activities lately have increased, even in colder climates. In reaction to this, the church garden has to be activated in order to create an attractive outdoor space.

The difficulty is to still maintain a well defined space, following the archetype of the shopping street. The Passage is once again an interesting example, as it creates a sense of place through narrowness and eroded boundaries between vendors and clients in a physical and social sense.

Proximity is by both Jan Gehl and William Whyte as they increase eye contact, proximity to goods and the overall sensorial experience. The size of shops impacts the sequence of visual inputs a pedestrian experiences on a shopping street. Jan Gehl claims the pedestrian should be able to experience 15-20 buildings per 100 m in order to see something new every 5 seconds. Thanks to this rhythm, the walk becomes more stimulating and distances seem reduced. [07 24](#)

The particular Passage that illustrates this variety best is the Passage des Panoramas, whose shops transgress its boundaries by stepping into the streetspace.

But unlike the Molenpoort, the Passage des Panoramas, as many other Passages, is defined by its order and coherence. Originating in a phase of social restructuring after the french revolution, Passages were a combined financial effort by a multitude of shopkeepers that decided to cooperate in order to create a coherent space that lacked at that time.

The contrast of Coherence and individual expression perhaps explains the suggestiv and stimulating nature of the Passage in an aesthetical sense.

The incoherence of the Molenpoort, with its multiple branches and several storeys has caused the isolation and vacancy of many shops and ultimately unviability.

But unlike the Passage typology, the Molenpoort has a certain depth at hand with the presence of anchor stores such as Coop and Xenos. The Mall shares a multitude of positive traits with the Honigcomplex. The most important traits are generosity and complexity.

In fact, the complexity of the Honigcomplex, generated by its organic growth seems to enhance the identification of the creatives with their ateliers, hinting at a sense of place and uniqueness.

The goal of the design will have to be to exploit the generosity and complexities offered by the Molenpoort. In fact, the existing slab is not only a roof, but can also be seen as a base for housing blocks on top and an elevated street. Many storeys on top might not be possible, but according to Jan Gehl, few storeys is a virtue. Even with their rigid street grid and repetitive structure Copenhagen's „potato rows“ show that frugal architecture can be a fertile ground for later appropriation and thereby living quality, as long as the human scale is respected. [24](#)

But even more important is the porosity of domestic spaces. The main flaw of the Passage is perhaps its non-porosity and thereby its inability to change, being restricted by a one-dimensional aesthetic. Therefore, the design needs to exploit and preserve the vastness of Molenpoort and result in a porous Passage.

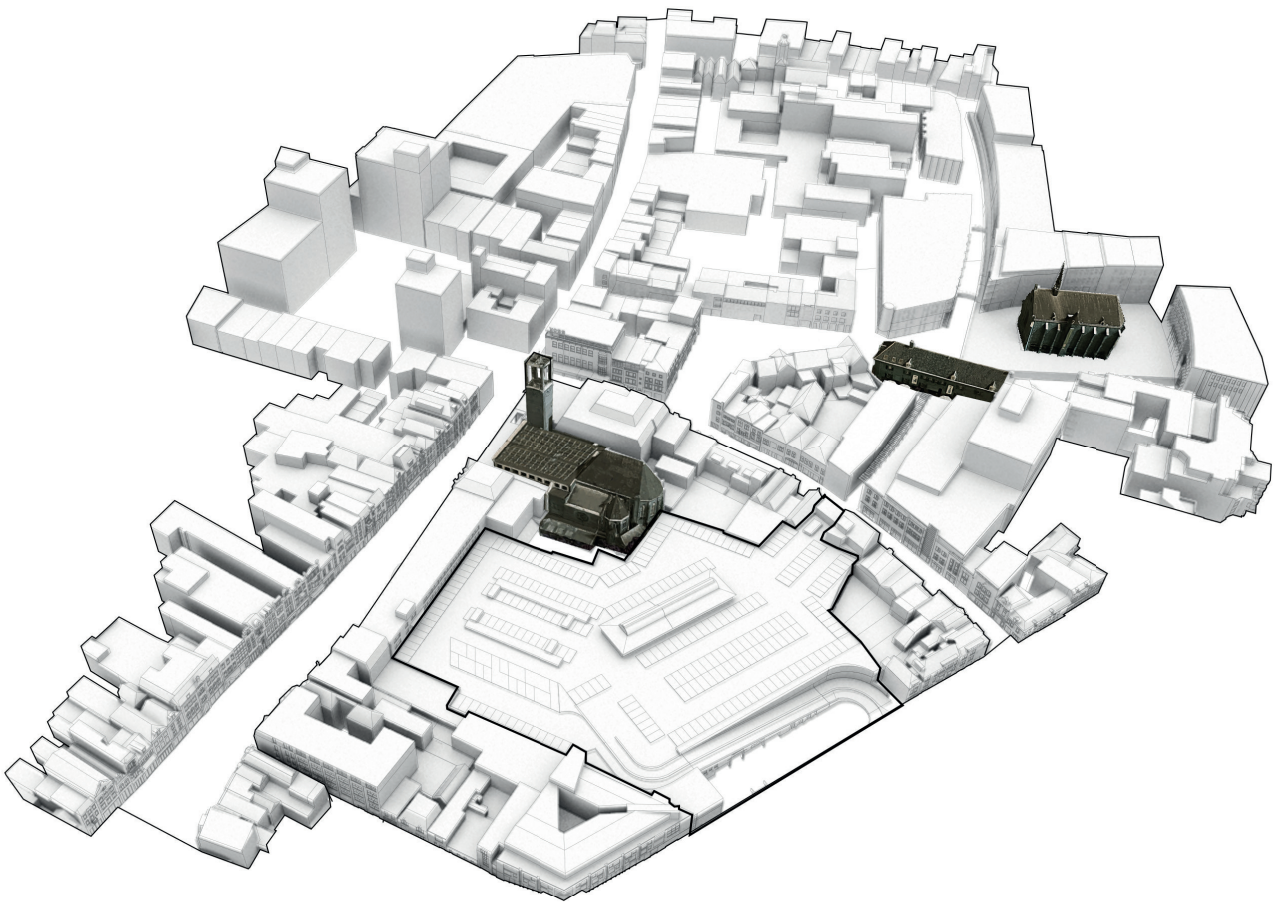
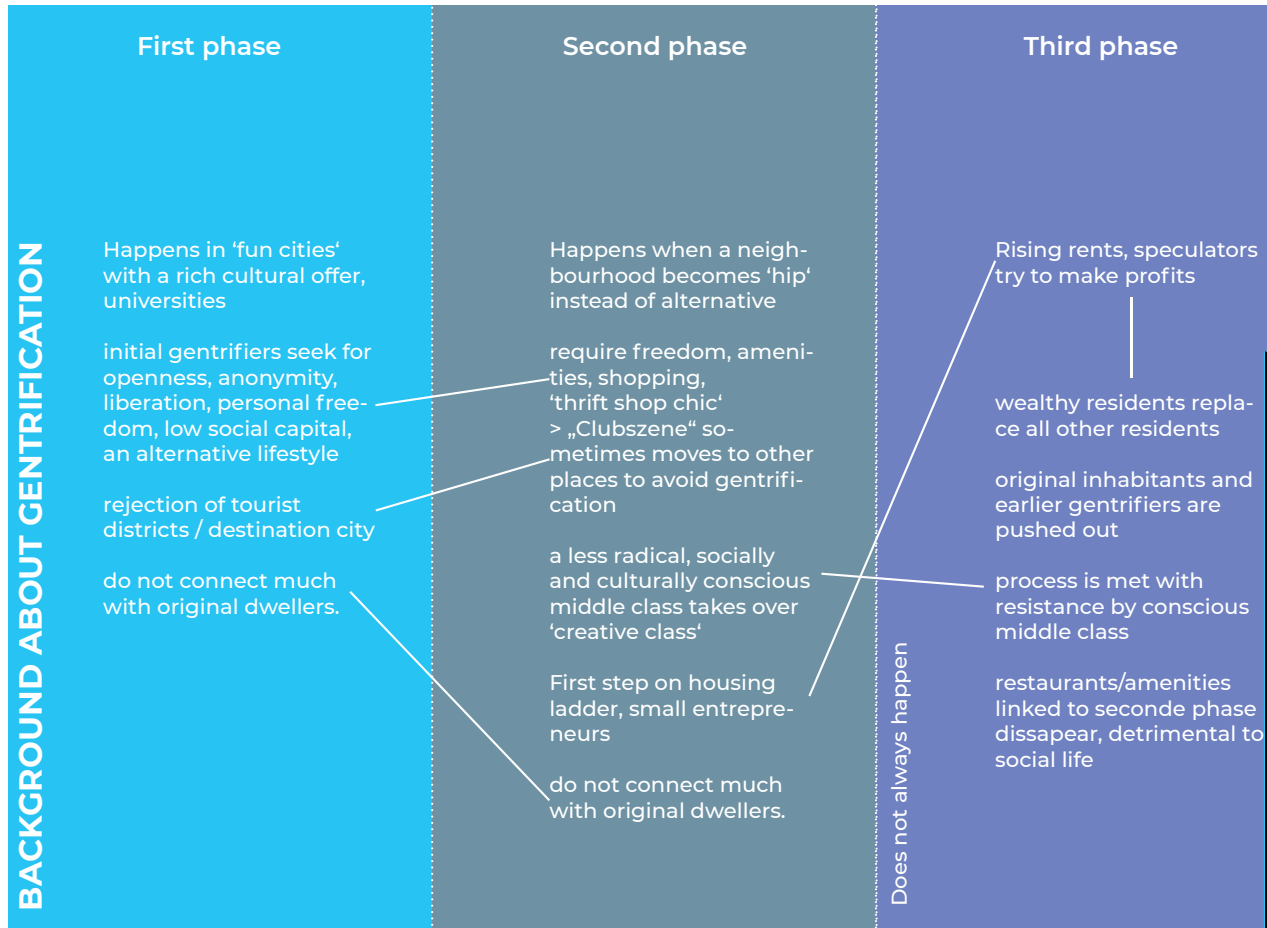


Figure 22: Surrounding landmarks that could be reconnected



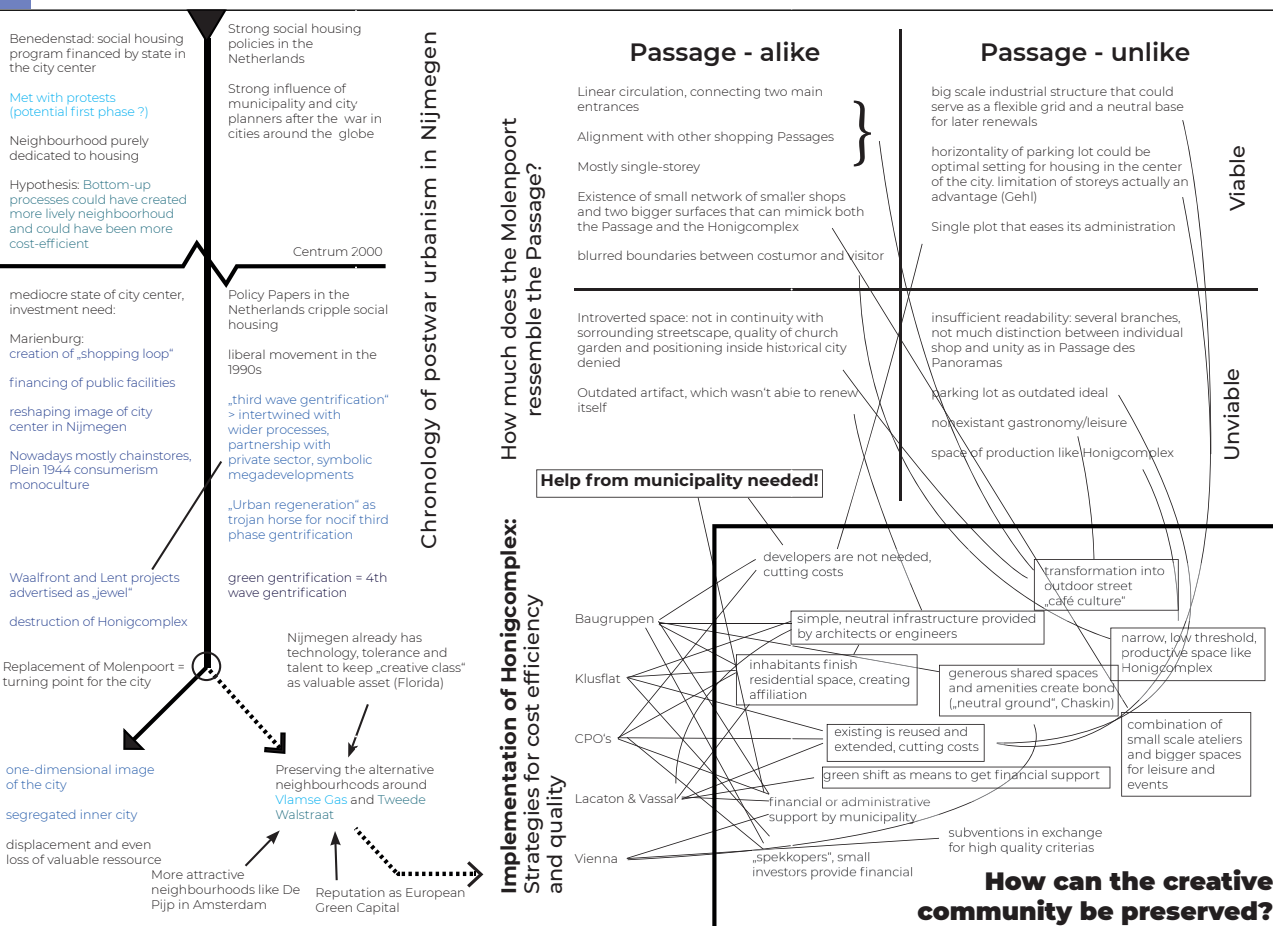


Figure 24: Summarizing Diagram of the Research. Synthesis of the criterias that the design will have to incorporate (inside bottom right rectangel).

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Figure 05: Brochure Nijmegen European Green Capital 2018

Figure 06: Retrieved from <https://www.beachfabriek.nl/>

Figure 07: Retrieved from <https://www.galeriebart.nl/ex-po-bart/>

Figure 08: Retrieved from <https://thecityateyelevel.com/stories/the-refreshing-wit-of-the-honig-complex/> Photograph: Roy Soetekouw

Figure 09: Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/busybike1>

Figure 10: Aerial view of Nijmegen with positioning of Honig-complex and Molenpoort

Figure 11: Picture of Van Welderenstraat with small-scale shops and gastronomy

Figure 12: Picture of Coffeeshop in Vlaamse Gas

Figure 13: Picture of Rainbow-Flag at the entrance of a gay night club in the Vlaamse Gas.

Figure 14: Picture of Radboud University retrieved from <https://www.ru.nl/english/education/study-radboud/why-radboud-university/>

Figure 15: Diagram of structural and administrative organization of Baugruppen by De Jorge-Huertas, from Baugruppen. Innovation through collaborative infrastructures.

Figure 16: Planning of common courtyard by AllesWirdGut Architektur + feld72 Retrieved from: <https://www.archdaily.com/948710/kap-nil-kapellenhof-residential-complex-alleswirdgut-architektur-plus-feld72/5f73940e63c017bc-c900059b-kap-nil-kapellenhof-residential-complex-alleswirdgut-architektur-plus-feld72-axonometric-diagram>

Figure 17: Transformation of 530 dwellings, block G, H, I, Bordeaux, by Lacaton & Vassal (<https://www.metalocus.es/en/news/transformation-530-dwellingsblock-g-h-i-lacaton-vassal-frederic-druot-and-christophe-hutin#>) Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.

Figure 18: Wallisblok, Rotterdam. From "Hulshof Architecten", By Hulshof Architecten, 2007 (<https://www.hulshof-architecten.nl/portfolio/wallisblok>)

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