MASTER

The Parkstad dormitory
a new impulse for Parkstad through the adaptive reuse of a former Carmelite monastery

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THE PARKSTAD DORMITORY

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reuse of a former Carmelite monastery
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THE PARKSTAD DORMITORY
graduation report

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Counteracting the problems of an ageing and shrinking region by establishing a lively creative student district in the Luciushof, a former Carmelite monastery, and its environs.

THE PARKSTAD DORMITORY

a new impulse for Parkstad through the adaptive reuse of a former Carmelite monastery
This thesis is a part of the IBA 2020 Parkstad graduation studio and represents a study of the difficulties the Parkstad region is currently struggling with. It offers a possible solution in the form of student housing: a dormitory for students from the RWTH Aachen University.

Participating in IBA Parkstad 2020 with the Bicycle Highway Plus, the M3 part of this project, made it possible to understand and read many of the different layers of Parkstad; from its thriving mining history, cultural and creative initiatives to the current problems the shrinking region has to face. This dissertation is a composition of all these layers that resulted in this design.

The first time I saw the city of Heerlen it was difficult to recognize its potential; it seemed like an ugly, uninteresting city with far too great expectations of the future. But meeting the inhabitants of the region changed my view. These people showed the hidden ‘diamonds in the rough’ and all their ideas worked as a catalyst for shaping this project.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>005</td>
<td>prologue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>011</td>
<td>summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>012</td>
<td>preface</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>017</td>
<td>CHAPTER 1: DILEMMAS OF A TROUBLED COMMUNITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a brief history of the Heerlen region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>an ageing, shrinking, impoverished region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>strategies and opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>034</td>
<td>CHAPTER 2: FORTHCOMING PERSPECTIVES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cultural ambitions and initiatives in Parkstad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the creative sector in Parkstad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>students in Parkstad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>combining approaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>047</td>
<td>CHAPTER 3: AMBITIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>an inspiring location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the five squares concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a new cultural &amp; creative axis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>061</td>
<td>CHAPTER 4: THE PARKSTAD DORMITORY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a brief history of the Luciushof</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>design strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>routing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111</td>
<td>expression of gratitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112</td>
<td>literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>114</td>
<td>figures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This graduation project took place in the ‘2020 IBA Parkstad’ graduation studio which focused on finding a contemporary architectural design strategy for regional development. The project concentrates on the redevelopment of a former Carmelite monastery to a vivid student quarter in the city centre of Heerlen.

Through a historical, morphological and demographic analysis the region has been analysed thoroughly. This analysis showed the commencement of the current regional difficulties (shrinkage, ageing, high vacancy and unemployment rates and the leaving of high-potentials), and concludes with an examination of the set of strategies the combined Parkstad municipalities desire to implement in the region. These strategies are build on three themes: cross-border collaborations, improving culture and promoting tourism. Parkstad is the fastest growing touristic region of the Netherlands which shows the potential of the latter approach. A first step is investing in infrastructure; an example is the construction of a new outer ring road to connect all cities and attractions. The previously mentioned approaches are top-down driven, however a recent strategy for improving Parkstad is a bottom-up approach: IBA Parkstad 2020. This innovative planning tool collected and merged ideas that could enhance the region. A selection of these ideas will be implemented in the near future.

This project is established on three pillars: the creative sector, cultural initiatives and student life in Parkstad. These pillars follow from the regional strategic strategies and form the framework of the design. This design includes certain ambitions: it aims to aid in the creation of a new cultural axis in Heerlen over five squares in the East part of the city centre. Besides this it clusters, facilitates and exposes the creative sector of the region and brings in students from the RWTH Aachen University.

The location for the plan is the Luciushof, a former Carmelite monastery situated on the border of the city centre of Heerlen. For the previously described IBA studio Parkstad proposed a bicycle highway connecting Aachen and Heerlen. This highway starts and ends at the Luciushof where cyclists can park their bikes upon entering the city. By providing this bicycle parking an influx of visitors is guaranteed. These visitors will be gradually persuaded to follow the new cultural axis that also starts in the Luciushof.

The plan for the redesign of the Luciushof includes student housing, (work)shops, an auditorium, a bar and restaurant, exposition possibilities and a large multipurpose foyer. The main design strategy for the design is the addition of two large components (a new stairway and a slope that leads to the bicycle parking) through the analysis of routing, functionality and materialization.
With nearly 250,000 inhabitants the Parkstad Limburg region is the fifth largest ‘city’ of the Netherlands.¹ This former eastern mining area, with Heerlen as its city center, has had a flourishing period with the highlight in 1955 when the mining industry was at its peak. After the announcement of the closing of the mines in 1965 the whole region got trapped in a downward spiral. The Heerlen region currently faces an ageing population, high retail vacancy rates, the leaving of young educated people, a high unemployment rate and a negative demographic growth.

Parkstad is on a tipping point: either recover from the situation by reviving the region or perish due to the shortfall of a decisive consistent strategy for managing a shrinking region. However, there are many initiatives that are (successfully) attempting to bring Parkstad back on the right track. Culture, tourism, the creative sector and heritage are becoming important strategic areas of interest for the municipalities in the transformation process. Previous impulses include the upgrading of cultural / monumental buildings such as the ‘Glaspaleis’, the mining museum, the ‘Nieuwe Nor’ music venue and the improvement of the central Pancratius square. Other important cultural impulses in the Parkstad region are Megaland, Mondo Verde, Snowworld and the GaiaZoo.² Although the effects of large-scale retail and housing projects such as the ‘Maankwartier’ and the ‘Schinkelkwartier’ are difficult to predict the ideas behind these projects show a progressive vision from the municipality of Heerlen. The previous examples are all top-down approaches, initiated by the local governments.

On the contrary IBA Parkstad 2020 combines both bottom-up and top-down approaches and acts as a flywheel that collected projects, concepts and ideas for the Parkstad region through an open call in December 2014.³ The IBA as an innovative planning strategy has historically been applied successfully in Germany for over a century, with many successful implementations in shrinking and
post-industrial regions. The aim of the first non-German IBA in Limburg is to provide the Parkstad region a long-term economic, social and cultural impulse. This impulse will be generated by stimulating collaborations between civilians, entrepreneurs, architects, urban planners, governments, companies, schools, universities, students and associations to contribute to reshaping the region.

In addition to the touristic, cultural and economic movements in the Parkstad region another important actor to consider is the creative class. Momentarily C-mill (offering working spaces to start-up companies in the creative sector) and the Creative Corridor (providing inexpensive co-working spaces) are examples of the upcoming creative class in Heerlen. The creative sector, and the start-ups in particular are important for Parkstad: the creation of new firms contributes to regional economic vitality. A difficulty is that Parkstad does not have universities and only one higher professional education institute: Hogeschool Zuyd in Heerlen. This situation results in a low amount of students in Parkstad and the out-migration of high potentials.

IBA Emscher park: redesign of the Zeche Zollverein

A working space in C-mill

1 http://www.parkstad-limburg.nl/index.cfm/parkstad-limburg/over-ons/parkstad-in-cijfers
2 Gottschalk, E. (2012)
3 http://www.iba-parkstad.nl
5 Marlet, G. et al. (2004)
This project focuses on improving the attractiveness of the centre of Heerlen for students by creating a new student district that also acts as a starting point for the cultural five squares route. The Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule (RWTH) in Aachen, Germany struggles with a shortage on rooms for students, approximately 3.000 in 2015.\(^1\) A solution could be found in Heerlen: a shrinking city with a high vacancy rate in both retail and housing. These empty spaces could easily be filled up with (international) students. Although the students have to travel for 30 minutes to get to Aachen the prices of student rooms in Heerlen are very attractive. The distance between Heerlen and Aachen might be the biggest obstacle for students to move to Heerlen. Therefore it is important that these students have plenty of possibilities to reach Aachen fast and throughout the day. A potential solution is a bicycle highway connecting Heerlen and Aachen; this 15 kilometre long route will be established in the near future. The development of this bicycle highway was send in by (our) graduation Studio Parkstad for the IBA open call and received the IBA attention status.\(^2\)

A lively and pleasant city centre is another important feature for attracting both students and creative workers. Although the city centre of Heerlen has many pubs, cafés, restaurants and various cultural institutions a student neighbourhood is absent.

This project is about creating this missing student district. It is located in the Luciushof, a former Carmelite monastery. This monastery is situated on the Southern border of the city centre of Heerlen; connecting it to the proposed bicycle highway. It also forms the start (or end) of the new cultural axis ‘de vijf pleintjes’. Its location, this new cultural axis, a large bicycle parking for the bicycle highway and the student atmosphere generate activity and thus liveliness.

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\(^1\) [http://www.studioparkstad.com](http://www.studioparkstad.com)
\(^2\) Marlet, G. et al. (2004)
CHAPTER 1

DILEMMAS OF A TROUBLED COMMUNITY

a brief history of the Heerlen region
an ageing, shrinking, impoverished region
strategies and opportunities
The South-Limburgian landscape was formed approximately 2000 years ago with the emergence of the Ardennes in the Ice Age. Large parts of the land were covered with löss creating a fertile landscape. Besides this the position of the Heerlen region between two streams increased the fertility of the region.¹

The morphological development of the Heerlen region starts with the arrival of the Romans, somewhere around 50 b.C. when Julius Caesar had conquered Gaul and marched towards the Rhine river. After a long battle with the Eburones in South-Limburg of late the Roman government granted permission for new people to establish themselves in this region. Shortly after the Roman occupation of this region a new settlement commenced: Coriovallum (according to current notions this name is a spelling error, the name should have been Cortovallum instead).²

The location of this settlement was not coincidental, it commenced on the intersection of two important roads. The East-West road led from Cologne to Boulogne (via Belgica), the North-South road led from Xanten to Aachen (Via Traiana). In the immediate vicinity of Coriovallum numerous villas were placed and at most 5,000 persons lived here.

At its height Coriovallum was an important part of the ‘feeding belt’ of the Roman empire to support the legions in the North of the empire. After the Pax Romana many settlements and villas were destroyed by Teutons and Franks, and also Coriovallum was demolished.³

¹ De bosatlas van de geschiedenis van Nederland (2011)
² Braad, R. (2009)
³ Braad, R. (2009)
Coriovallum - a roman settlement where Heerlen is situated now

Based on Verhagen P. (2012)

Via Belgica (East-West) and Via Traiana (North-South)
Between the Roman period and the 11th century the Heerlen region was practically abandoned. Official documents address the villages Heerlen, Welten and Voerendaal in 1049, although these villages were rather isolated until the beginning of the 20th century. The main means of existence was agriculture at this time; good roads were absent. The nearest railway stations were in Simpelveld (opened in 1853) and Sittard (opened in 1865). Only in 1896 the railway line Sittard – Herzogenrath was constructed which

*Morphology of the Heerlen region in 1842*

*http://www.watwaswaar.nl*
With the arrival of railway lines in the Heerlen region the mining industry grew rapidly, causing a large influx of workers. To avoid a large variety of small mines the Dutch Association of State Mines was founded in 1900. The production of these mines greatly increased making the region one of the largest mining areas of Europe. In 1928 Limburg had 12 mines were almost 38,000 people found a job. New mining colonies were constructed near the quarries, artificial lakes were dug and hills were erected with mining waste; in this way the mining industry still has a large impact on the morphology of the Parkstad region today. Examples of this are the mining waste mountain (Wilhelminaberg) near Kerkrade and all the mining colonies (the current neighbourhoods Molenberg, Meezenbroek, Eikenderveld, Nieuw-Einde, Versiliënbose, Beersdal en Husken).

1 Braad, R. (2006)

Morphology of the Heerlen region in 1925

http://www.watwaswaar.nl
The Heerlen region developed in a 60 year period from a rural society in 1900 to a blooming community in 1960, mainly because of the coal mining industry. Heerlen had at this time the largest ‘fur coat density’ and large department stores like Schunck, Hollenkamp and Kapé attracted many people from the whole province to the city centre of Heerlen.1 Characteristic is the large diversity in nationalities of the labour force: Slovenes, Poles, Greeks, Italians and Spaniards. The region became a ‘melting pot’ of national and international migrant workers that all brought their different beliefs; resulting in a large diversity of churches and a high density of local associations.2 Limburg formed one of the most industrialized areas of Europe; together with Genk, Sittard-Geleen, Aachen and Liege it formed the cradle of the European Union.3 In 1955 the four largest municipalities of Parkstad stood in the top 25 municipalities with the highest average income; merely twenty years later they took the four bottom places (out of 570).
In 1958 the coal crisis started decreasing the demand for coal sharply because of cheap import prices of coal, natural gas and oil. Because of the low demand for coal the Dutch Prime minister announced the closure of all the Dutch mines in 1965, and in 1974 the last coal was mined. At the time of this announcement approximately 45,000 people worked in the mines; but almost 60,000 people (including supplying small businesses) risked losing their jobs. Many higher educated people moved away from the Eastern mining region between 1960 and 1970.4

Also spatially few things that reminded of the once thriving mining industry remained. Because of the ‘from black to green’ strategy almost all traces of this industry were demolished.5 This caused a trauma to the region according to many people. From 1978 to 1990 the perspective policies South-Limburg (PNL) tried to eliminate the high unemployment rate in the region. During this period South-Limburg was divided into four parts: the Eastern Mining region (focusing on imperial services and infrastructure), the Western Mining region (focusing on large-scale industry such as automotive and chemistery), the Heuvelland (focusing on tourism) and Maastricht (focusing on knowledge institutes).6

Great progress was achieved: the State University of Limburg and the Academic Hospital in Maastricht were founded and Heerlen became the choice of location for the Open University of the Netherlands. These policies, and the corresponding funding, ended in 1990 when the unemployment rate in South-Limburg equalled the national rate. However, the Eastern mining region was lagging behind the other three regions in terms of unemployment rate.

The perspective policies from the late 1970’s to the 1990’s focused primarily on economic recovery; social aspects were rarely considered because they were deemed subservient. In the 2000’s Heerlen suffered from serious social issues; it was declared the most unsafe city of the Netherlands due to the large amount of hard drug users and street prostitutes. Operation Heartbeat was a policy that successfully ensured the decrease of criminality in Heerlen (by using CCTV and day and night care).7

1 Pijnenburg, M. et al. (2011)
2 Langeweg, S. (2011)
3 http://www.betahuis.eu/toen/
4 Kasper, J. et al. (2013)
5 The black to green strategy involved the demolishing of most of the physical remains of the mining industry. The thought behind this was that the recent mining history interfered with a new approach for the region.
6 Kasper, J. et al. (2013)
7 Tops, P. et al. (2009)
AN AGEING, SHRINKING, IMPOVERISHED REGION

demographics

Heerlen 0-19 20-64 65+
The Netherlands 0-19 20-64 65+

unemployment rate

Heerlen 2012 2013 2014
The Netherlands 2012 2013 2014

vacancy rate

Heerlen retail office
The Netherlands retail office

Morphology of the Heerlen region in 2014 >
Momentarily the Parkstad region (Parkstad is the new name for the Eastern mining area since 1998) suffers from various issues. Transition is necessary: challenges for the region are strengthening the economy, balancing the supply and demand on the labour market and adjusting the facilities to the changing population. The region is shrinking, higher educated people are moving away and the population is ageing. This contributes to a difficult mixture of problems that is not easily solved. The diagrams on the previous page show a far higher vacancy rate for retail in Heerlen compared to the situation in the Netherlands (13.7% against 6.4%) and a higher unemployment rate (9.9% against 8.6%).

Brainport 2020 is a program focusing on making the South-East part of the Netherlands a leader in the international knowledge-based economy. Centre of attraction is the Eindhoven, Leuven, Aachen triangle. Limburg scores high on the investing in research & development index, with companies such as DSM and Sabic.
The labour market participation, however, is lagging behind in the region. Limburg has a higher unemployment rate than the national average, and both the level of education and the average income are lower than the national average.

The demand for knowledge workers is growing and large companies are calling for ‘brains for brainport’. South-Limburg is one of the fastest ageing regions in the Netherlands. Healthcare is thus a large growth market that needs more and more employees. The leisure industry is a branch that could also benefit from an ageing population for the group of people in the retirement age is an important target group; they have time on their hands and money to spend. In ten years a large deficiency on the labour market is expected. Concluding: the Parkstad region needs more workers.\(^3\)

Sittard and Maastricht have found a new flywheel for the economy; respectively the Chelot campus and the Maastricht Health campus. The distinguishing position of Parkstad in Brainport remains less obvious. Parkstad focuses on new energy, with geothermal and solar energy. Other favourable sources for prosperity are sustainability, new urbanism, retail, leisure, culture and the creative industry. Reindustrialisation is not a likely option.\(^4\)

Economic regression, ageing, the leaving of young people and demographic changes ask for new forms of spatial and urban planning. Models that are not based on growth, but on shrinkage. Adaptive reuse of buildings, sustainability and new forms of urbanism should be developed for Parkstad. Art, culture, architecture and the creative industry play an important part in this necessary transition.

South-Limburg experiences the challenge to bridge the gap between the feeling of being left behind\(^5\), and the chances of a shrinking population. An attractive region that stimulates progress and innovation should be strived for. The next part of this thesis describes and explains various approaches (and combinations between them) that could improve the Heerlen region.

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1 CBS (2014)
2 Gottschalk, E. (2012)
3 Gottschalk, E. (2012)
4 Kasper, J. et al. (2013)
5 The people of South-Limburg sometimes have the feeling of being treated inferior to the people that live in the Randstad.
STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Parkstad Limburg is a region in transition. It has been half a century since the ‘golden ages of prosperity’ when Heerlen was one of the wealthiest cities of the Netherlands thanks to the mining industry. The region has been struggling ever since and is searching for a new image and new ways for improving its economy. The municipalities of Parkstad focus on a number of approaches for reaching this goal: cross-border collaborations, investing in culture and promoting the touristic image of Parkstad.

Cross-border collaborations are inseparably connected to Parkstad Limburg. Examples of these collaborations are the brainport area and Avantis, the first Dutch-German industrial site. These international concepts strive for utilizing the strategic location of Parkstad. Because when the European Community commenced South-Limburg was not situated in a corner of the Netherlands anymore but in the centre of the Meuse-Rhine Euregio that has great economic significance. Increasing, promoting and utilizing cross-border partnerships is a strategy for reviving Parkstad.1

A second strategy is improving and promoting the tourism sector of South-Limburg and Parkstad in particular. Although the neighbouring city Maastricht is a well-known touristic hotspot the Parkstad region is the fastest growing touristic region of the Netherlands. With various large attractions such as Megaland, Mondo Verde, Snow World and the GaiaZoo improving and advertising the touristic sector is one of the core policies of the different municipalities.

Another interesting approach is making use of the rich cultural and social history of Parkstad and the strong network of recreational zones to promote and advertise the region. Culture can be connected to the economic, spatial and social ambitions of Parkstad. Temporary event as Cultura Nova and ‘the year of the mines’ contribute to the (touristic) attractiveness of the region. The recent attention for culture in Parkstad, the so-called ‘cultural spring’ began with upgrading several cultural institutions in the 2000’s (Schunck, Mining Museum, Parkstad theatre, Nieuwe Nor) and continues with the Schrittmacher festival, i-Beta festival, Signe centre for arts and Zwart Goud.2

Important for the region is a good working infrastructural system with fast connections to Germany, Belgium and the rest of the Netherlands. Improving the physical connection with for instance Aachen and Hasselt brings them closer instinctively. First developments are the creation of a rail connection between Heerlen and Aachen and a new outer ring road through Parkstad to interconnect all the cities and attractions. A network of fast bicycle infrastructure has been
suggested by Studio Parkstad and will be described further on in this thesis. Borders will cease to exist; it will be possible to reach Paris in two hours and London in three and a half hours in the near future.

The most recent bottom-up approach is IBA Parkstad 2020. An International Building Exhibition (IBA) is an innovative planning tool that has been applied in Germany for over a century. This social, cultural and economic instrument is used when other, more common, planning strategies are considered hopeless. IBA Parkstad, with Jo Coenen as its director, started with an open call in December 2014; everybody could send in all sort of ideas that improve the region. A selection of these submissions will be implemented in the near future.

1. Pijnenburg, M. et al. (2011)
Social cohesion is important for Parkstad to create a new identity. Where once stood large anonymous flats allotments have been build, activities are organised in consultation with the inhabitants of the region, vacant buildings are offered to serve as for example a community centre and the few still remaining artefacts of the mining history are not being demolished but re purposed. The people of Limburg are not in the habit of offering congratulations but such bottom-up successes should be advertised. Don’t isolate the flourishing ambitions and initiatives in Parkstad but enable a powerful continuation.

Parkstad, the new outer ring road and attractions  

based on http://iba-parkstad.nl
CHAPTER 2

FORTHCOMING PERSPECTIVES

cultural ambitions and initiatives in Parkstad
the creative sector in Parkstad
students in Parkstad
combining approaches
CULTURAL AMBITIONS AND INITIATIVES IN PARKSTAD

Parkstad has a comprehensive network of cultural institutions and an almost complete cultural supply. Parkstad could profit greatly from an image as ‘culture city’, although some interventions are necessary before this image can be achieved. Momentarily the region misses structure and an evident physical position; a cluster of cultural institutions is desired.¹

Parkstad has a number of locations where concerts, theatre, festivals and other (music) events can be organised: examples are the Parkstad theatre (capacity of 1,350 people), the Rodahal (capacity of 60 – 4,500 people) and the Nieuwe Nor (capacity of 350 people). The Pancratius square offers bars and restaurants while the Parkstad theatre square houses the yearly fairground and weekly market.

¹ Gottschalk, E. (2012)

Cultural institutions in the centre of Heerlen > and the Peutz triangle
Pancratius church
Peutz triangle
Glaspaleis (SCHUNK)
Royal theatre
Parkstad theatre
Roman bathhouse museum
Betahuis
Nieuwe Nor (music venue)
Savelberg monastery museum
Swing-inn dance school
Cinema
But at the moment Heerlen lacks an atmospheric quarter, or street, that bundles culture and can be visited and experienced on a daily basis. Cultural institutions are shattered throughout the region. The municipality focuses on a ‘Peutz triangle’ in various notes but this triangle (between the Glaspareis, Royal theatre and Parkstad theatre) cannot be physically experienced due to blocked sight lines and routes.

Parkstad could put more emphasis on its architecture; it has an interesting spatial structure around small cores, congregations and mining colonies. Besides this the region has international oriented modern architecture. These architectural highlights (for instance the former retraitehuis in Heerlen, mining colonies throughout Parkstad, Schimmert water tower) should be made accessible for they are the eye-catchers of the region. Unfortunately a lot of the industrial mining heritage was lost because of the ‘from black to green’ strategy.

The Heerlen region has various events that draw visitors towards the region. The Pinkpop festival attracts 60,000 visitors per day, and also festivals such as the Notorious IBE, ParkCity Live, Heerlen Jazzt and Booch attract many visitors to a vibrant Parkstad. Other large-scale (cultural) events as Cultura Nova, Mijnen2015, IBA 2020 and Serious Request 2015 can (and should) be used as ‘flywheels’ to promote Parkstad and strengthen the ‘Parkstad culture city’ image.

A problem is that Parkstad does not have an interesting program across the year. Another problem is that in Parkstad the various museums and theatres do not offer terraces, distinguishing shops and places of interest to spend an entire day in the region.

1 Gottschalk, E. (2012)
2 Eindrapport strategische visie toerisme (2008)
3 Cultuurmonitor Heerlen (2012)
Water tower Schimmert by Jos Wielders

Retraitehuis by Fritz Peutz
Parkstad, with its centre Heerlen in particular, starts to show an active creative sector. Heerlen Creatives charts this creative industry of Heerlen. This is an organisation formed by a group of creative entrepreneurs from Heerlen that want to encourage co-creation and promote the creative sector of Heerlen. The map shows a great amount of creative clusters: the Betahuis (01), C-mill (02), Carbon 6 (03) and the Creative corridor (04) all offer workspaces, exposure and the possibility to work together with other creative people.

Parkstad is transforming and has a large need for innovation. It can profit from the revived interest in the 'maker culture' (examples are the 3D printing shop in the city centre of Heerlen and the designs with reused materials from the CityLiv event). Talents should be developed, and a key factor for this is a living and working environment suited for the creative sector. This means low-cost housing and work spaces in or near the city centre, catering that stimulates encounters and the commence of a creative district, neighbourhood or street.

1 [http://www.heerlencreatives.nl](http://www.heerlencreatives.nl)
2 [http://www.slideshare.net/rja045/creatieve-industrie-heerlen-viste-cocreatie](http://www.slideshare.net/rja045/creatieve-industrie-heerlen-viste-cocreatie)
The ‘creative class’ is important for the atmosphere and image of a city, the development of talent and new jobs. In his book ‘the rise of the creative class’ Richard Florida suggests that a group called ‘the creative class’ is the engine of the modern economy. The people that form this creative class are not per definition highly educated, but are innovative and creative. They add more than average workers do to the economy by thinking more and doing less. Writers, fashion and graphic designers, musicians, actors, composers, painters, architects, medical specialists, teachers and even managers are a part of this group, according to Florida.\(^1\) Approximately 17 percent of the Dutch population fall under this category.\(^2\) Although not all scholars agree with Florida that the presence of a large creative class in a city leads to a larger labour market, however the cities that can attract and retain creative-sector workers tend to have vibrant and diverse cultures, are robust economically and experience population growth.\(^3\)

Concluding, the creative sector of Parkstad gives opportunity to be clustered, facilitated, exposed, developed and connected. This cluster should offer housing, working and a location near the city centre (of Heerlen).

\(^1\) Florida, R. (2002)  
\(^2\) Marlet, G. (2004)  
\(^3\) Florida, R. (2002)
Students in Parkstad

Parkstad Limburg could profit from housing (high educated) students in the region by connecting these students to the regional economy and labour market after their studies. Also vacancy is compensated by providing empty apartments and houses, or former industrial, religious or office buildings, to these students. Besides this the knowledge-based economy in the region gets a (necessary) boost. Parkstad has one university of applied sciences: Hogeschool Zuyd. This academy has 5,580 students, but this number is expected to decrease in the 2013 - 2021 period to 5,310 students.

Momentarily the cities Kerkrade and Heerlen are successfully experimenting with cross-border student accommodation through a partnership of Parkstad Limburg, housing corporation HEEMWonen and the Limburg province. The German city of Aachen has a greatly increased influx of students (due to the disappearance of compulsory military service and the removal of tuition fees in Nordrein Westfalen) and the student housing shortage is increasing every year. Approximately 3,000 extra student rooms are required in 2015 to provide housing to all the students.¹

2. RWTH (2015)
3. Strategisches Immobilienmanagement gemeente Aken (2014)
Right now fourteen apartments are rented to students in Kerkrade (and 79 are planned for September 2015) and from September 1st 2014 54 student rooms are made available in ‘t Koopmanshuys in Heerlen. Beneficial for Parkstad is the good price/quality ratio compared to Aachen. A disadvantage is the travel distance; today it takes 30 minutes with a bus to get to the university in Aachen. The coming four years Parkstad offers a ‘Studierenden-Ticket’ to students so they can travel for free between Parkstad and Aachen. Also the Dutch students studying in Aachen profit from this.2 Offering student housing in Parkstad serves a regional interest. The region has suffered from a ‘brain drain’ after the closing of the mines and still lacks a vivid student community. The location of Parkstad near the Dutch-German border should promote an international movement of students and other high educated people and invite them to work and live in Parkstad. A first effort for this has been made with the ‘Avantis site’, as described previously.

1 Notermans, P. (2015)
2 HEEMwonen (2015)
COMBINING APPROACHES

This chapter provides us with three approaches that breathe new life into Parkstad. These approaches are:

1) Creating the ‘Parkstad culture city’ vision by offering visitors and inhabitants an interesting program that inspires them to stay a whole day in the region throughout the year.

2) Clustering, facilitating, exposing, developing and connecting the creative sector of Heerlen by creating a space where they can work and live near the city centre of Heerlen.

3) Attracting students to Parkstad by offering inexpensive accommodations from where Aachen and its university can be reached fast.

The implementation of the three suggested interventions could shift the regions perspective and make it become a new place of interest. The combination of these interventions amplifies the impact because they strengthen each other. A cultural city needs a strong creative sector; the creative sector benefits from and consists of a large group of participating students. To use a frequently used expression: the whole is greater than the simple sum of its parts.

The ambition for the project is thus combining these three approaches in one design. The next step is the implementation of these ambitions into a location.
CHAPTER 3

AMBITIONS

an inspiring location
the five squares concept
a new cultural & creative axis
AN INSPIRING LOCATION

The creative, cultural and student ambitions of Parkstad require a focal point with specific characteristics. This location is the Luciushof, a former Carmelite monastery located on the South-East border of the city centre of Heerlen. Recently housing association Weller acquired the ownership of the building, and started a renovation. The Luciushof currently houses various small-scale businesses in the health care sector, a small social restaurant and a number of offices and multipurpose spaces. This project considers a different future for the building, namely as a new creative student hotspot for Parkstad.

The Luciushof has many cultural and creative institutes in its close proximity, and various public transport options are nearby (so Aachen can be reached fast).

Location of the Luciushof in the centre of Heerlen
These photographs present the Luciushof in its current state. The front facade has not changed over the years since it was built in 1935.¹ The only difference is the main entrance, shown on the second picture. This entrance has changed various times over the years because of a shift in functions of the building. The history of the Luciushof will be described briefly in the last chapter of this thesis. The last photo shows a typical corridor in the building with the characteristic arches that continue throughout the building.

¹ Reijckheyt archive
For IBA Parkstad 2020 (*The IBA concept is described previously in this thesis*) Studio Parkstad proposed a bicycle highway connecting Heerlen and Aachen to eventually create an international network of fast bicycle infrastructure.\(^1\) Such a fast and free system of connections would stimulate a constant moving of people throughout the region and over its borders. The first branch of this network between Heerlen and Aachen could be constructed in the near future. This branch is planned to end at the crossing between the Akerstraat and Putgraaf, a roundabout alongside the Luciushof. The entire highway can be found on the next page.

The cyclists that use the bicycle highway to visit Heerlen should be offered a hospitable and safe place to stall their bikes and enter the city; the Luciushof. This interplay has great benefits for both the highway and the Luciushof. The bicycle highway ends at an atmospheric location right in the city centre of Heerlen (*and does not stop at a roundabout*) and the Luciushof attracts visitors for the various functions in the building and the cultural axis over the five squares (*this concept will be explained further on*).

\(^1\) See Bicycle Highway Plus - (up)Cycling the city by TU/e Studio Parkstad for the entire plan

*The extension of the Bicycle Highway enables a hospitable bicycle parking in the Luciushof*
The proposed Bicycle Highway connecting the cities Heerlen and Aachen based on Aachen Radschnellweg Antrag (Stadteregion Aachen)
The Luciushof is situated near the city centre and has many cultural, commercial and creative buildings in its surroundings. The maps on these pages show these functions and the density of cultural and creative sector institutions in the centre of Heerlen.
1) The Luciushof

This courtyard is the start, or end, of the five squares route. The peaceful atmosphere, historical setting and privacy create a characteristic oasis of serenity.\(^2\)

2) Morenhoek

This former graveyard is an intimate square that housed a discotheque in the 1980’s is now a unique stage for ‘open-air’ dance events such as the notorious IBE breakdance festival. From the Morenhoek the Pancratiusstreet can be reached via the ‘Creative Corridor’ that has co-working spaces for creative entrepreneurs.

3) Schelmenhofje

This small park was only discovered in 2001 after the demolishing of the building situated at the Pancratiusstreet 43-45. It offers a great view at the Pancratius church and the Schelmen tower and serves as a meeting and lunch place.

4) Betaplein

The ‘Betahuis’ and Toon Hermanshuis are both established at the Betaplein. The Betahuis is a multipurpose creative sector building which offers an architecture firm and diverse creative sector companies. Besides this the Betahuis offers ‘The Arena’ and ‘The Tribune’; both co-working and presentation spaces. The Betasquare is unfortunately obstructed by a steel gate that gives it an image of secrecy.

5) Wilhelminaplein

The Wilhelmina square is the largest one of the five. This former cattle market was seen as the vibrant bar street of Heerlen with cafés, restaurants and terraces by the municipality but it has not yet been able to fulfil this ambition. However, this square has the potential to become an important part of the centre of Heerlen. Its spatial setting allows for all types of events and cultural activities to take place here.

The next page shows the sequence of this route from the North Wilhelmina square to the Luciushof

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1 Heerlen mijn stad (2014)
2 The redesign of this courtyard will be described and imaged further on in this thesis

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Five squares route with all the entrances > of the adjacent buildings
Wilhelminaplein
Betaplein
Schelmenhofje
Morenhoek
Luciushof

01 Luciushof
02 Morenhoek
03 Schelmenhofje
04 Betaplein
05 Wilhelminaplein
A NEW CULTURAL & CREATIVE AXIS

The five squares form a new route from the Luciushof to the Wilhelmina square and continue towards the city centre of Heerlen. The idea behind the connection of these five (small) squares is to form a new cultural axis; something Heerlen is missing at the moment. This new cultural axis is where the Luciushof is introduced. The former monastery will function as an important basis for the axis. As described previously the courtyard of the Luciushof is momentarily a characteristic oasis of serenity, however the image, function and layout of this garden should be changed to enhance the (cultural) qualities of the five squares route. This redesign will be imaged and described thoroughly later on in this thesis; the ambitions, plans and future of the five squares route will be discussed in this part.

The Pancratius street has the potential to become a vital part of the city centre of Heerlen. The Nieuwe Nor music venue aims to expand its territory with two adjacent (vacant) buildings (Studio 54 and art center v. Wersch) in the near future. These buildings will add various new functions to the already existing stage and bar; a (vinyl) music store and rehearsal and office spaces for music related companies. This will create a so called music boulevard in Heerlen. The Betahuis and Creative Corridor offer various co-working spaces, a coffee bar for flex workers and meeting and presentation rooms for the creative sector of Parkstad. The Savelbergklooster has been redesigned by Jo Coenen in 2009 and has a museum, a presentation chapel (for diverse cultural activities such as concerts and lectures) and an exposition space. These four locations are a good start for the new cultural axis, however a certain cohesion between the buildings and squares is missing.

To create a recognizable cultural axis this cohesion is essential; visitors should be able to notice the route and thus be persuaded to follow it. Graduation Studio Parkstad proposes a more extensive use of the PPAG elements that are already placed on the squares and increasing the number of elements to create a visual guide and link between the spaces.

1  http://www.iba-parkstad.nl/nl/projecten/kegelpaleis-muziekboulevard-music-x-perience
2  Bergevoet, T. et al. (2013)
3  http://www.savelbergklooster.nl
4  A more extensive research on this topic can be found in the Bicycle Highway Plus report
PPAG Enzi urban elements in Vienna where they create a vivid (museum) square

In Heerlen the urban elements should be used more extensively

One of the urban elements is used on the Morenhoek for the notorious IBE festival
CHAPTER 4
THE PARKSTAD DORMITORY

a brief history of the Luciushof
design strategy
functions
routing
materials
atmosphere
A brief history of the Luciushof

The Carmelite order (formed in the 12th century in Israel) established themselves in Parkstad in Merkelbeek in 1923. In 1930 the first Carmelite nuns moved to Heerlen, in a building in the Gasthuis street. Due to the absence of monastery corridors (which are used for the procession) and the size of the building the nuns soon wished to move; plans for a new building were developed. In 1935/1936 this building was constructed in the Putgraaf, the present Luciushof.¹

After the congregation of ‘De Kleine Zusters’ left the building it was renovated and opened for the public. For a long time the Luciushof is used by all sorts of social institutions.²

¹ [http://www.landvanherle.nl/2015/03/uit-de-werkgroep-boeiende-lezing-over-de-karmelieten/](http://www.landvanherle.nl/2015/03/uit-de-werkgroep-boeiende-lezing-over-de-karmelieten/)
² Elteren, N. van (2014)
Carmelite nuns in the courtyard of the Luciushof (Het land van Herle)

Picture of the Luciushof in 1950 (Rijckheyt, Heerlen)
DESIGN STRATEGY

The Luciushof is a former Carmelite monastery and should therefore be treated carefully and respectfully. Membership in the churches is on a decline in the Netherlands, which results in a great amount of vacant former religious buildings. There are many complications when redesigning these buildings: financial, religious, organisational, politic and legal aspects should be considered.¹

However, in the Netherlands is a generally pragmatic attitude towards reusing heritage because of a combination between a high population density and housing shortage and the economic spirit of the Dutch. This results in the tendency that practical economic considerations have a higher priority than other considerations.²

For the redesign of the Luciushof both pragmatic, functional and aesthetic values were considered; this resulted in the following approach. The new stairway and slope for the Bicycle highway were the largest and main interventions. The slope made movement between the ground floor and the second floor possible for people with bicycles. The stairway creates a new main entrance that invites visitors inside the building.

Interventions on a smaller scale are adding openings to the building to bring in natural light and offer a view to the users. The large windows have been used to display the activity in the building.

In several floors incisions have been made to show motion and liveliness over several levels.

¹ Raats, K. (2012)
² Velthuis, K. et al. (2007)
Exploded view of the new design for the Luciushof showing the main external interventions.
The previous chapters described the potential and dangers for Parkstad, and concluded with a three-way strategy for reviving the region. These three parts of a possible answer to the problems are establishing a new cultural axis, attracting students and clustering the creative sector. This notion is reflected by the functional design strategy:

creating a vivid student quarter that encourages creation, presentation and interaction and connects to the ‘five squares’ cultural axis.

To achieve this vision many visitors are required to generate the desired liveliness. These visitors will find the Luciushof from two directions. The first one is the Bicycle Highway that ends in the bicycle parking in the Luciushof. The second one is the city centre / cultural axis that attracts people by using the PPAG elements to form a route that ends at the courtyard of the building.

The Luciushof has an advantageous location in Parkstad; right on the border of the city centre and near the natural Aambos area. In its proximity are three squares; the inner courtyard, the Morenhoek and the parking area of the Savelberg monastery on the Eastern side of the Luciushof. These three squares play an important role in the design for they have three different atmospheres, qualities and surroundings.

1  http://www.enzis.at/
The courtyard is now a tranquil, green space with an enclosed, ‘panoptic’ character. This panoptic nature comes from all the (small) windows overlooking the square. A unilateral relation exists between the people in the courtyard and the people in the building: the latter can view the people in the courtyard but can’t be seen. This will change with the new design; the walls will be opened and all the activity in the building will be shown in the courtyard. This square will function as a multifunctional space for all types of events, favourably in combination with the other four squares of the cultural axis.

The Morenhoek is a small, enclosed square that is mostly used for loitering by the youth of Heerlen. In the future the primary entrance of the Luciushof is located here and a large stairway will draw the visitors in. Because of the larger flow of people this ‘urban square’ will be animated and offers small-scale events (for instance dance shows by the Swing-Inn dance school).

The new sports square is located on the Eastern side of the Luciushof. This former monastery garden will be turned into a green space that provides all kind of sports. These three squares are connected by a path made of concrete tiles that forms a route and brings cohesion.

1 Discipline and Punish- Michel Foucault (1975)
A creative student and cultural cluster needs various functions to attract visitors, promote interaction and generate liveliness. The primary functions of the building are student housing (28 rooms), bicycle parking (300+ bicycles), a workshop (250 m²), an auditorium (54 seats + standing places), a restaurant (115 m²), co-working spaces (300 m²), shops (135 m²) and a large multipurpose entrance space with a (coffee) bar, seating and exposition possibilities.

These functions can be divided into public, semi-public and private and are situated in the building according to this classification. Certain functions, such as the workshop, restaurant, shops and the entrance space are alluring and attract visitors; these functions are placed near the entrance area. The student housing (and additional shared kitchens and living rooms) is a more private affair so they live on the first and second floor of the building. The bicycle parking can be reached with a slope and is located under the roofs of the former monastery on the second floor. Co-working spaces can be found in the Western part of the building on the ground, first and second floor.
01 Entrance
02 Auditorium
03 reception
04 workshop (floor below)
05 bar
06 slope to bicycle parking
07 shops
08 restaurant
09 co-working spaces
10 exposition
11 meeting room
12 coffee corner
13 toilets
14 chapel
Floor plan floor -1 scale 1:500

01 storage
02 dressing room
03 stage
04 auditorium
05 bar
06 foyer
07 workshop
01 shop
02 bar
03 reception
04 auditorium
05 coffee corner
06 meeting room
07 co-working space
08 restaurant

Floor plan _ground floor_ scale 1:500
Floor plan_floor 1_scale 1:500

01 bicycle repair
02 washing space
03 shared kitchen
04 student room
05 shared living room
06 co-working space
07 shared terrace
FLOOR PLAN_FLOOR 2_SCALE 1:500

01 bicycle parking
02 co-working space
03 shared kitchen
04 student room
Roof plan_scale 1:500
The new design for the Luciushof has a new main entrance, located on the Northern side of the building. This shift in location is a necessary result of the design approach to create a new entry to the city centre and bring cohesion to the five squares route. The former main entrance remains open for people arriving from the Southern part of Heerlen, however the design focuses on people arriving by bike from the South or by foot from the city centre or cultural axis in the North.

An important difficulty in the layout of the existing building is the height difference between the North and South side of the building. Because of the sloped landscape of Heerlen the new Northern entrance is a floor (2.7 meter) below the former main entrance on the South side. The height difference can be seen in the section drawings on the following pages.

For interaction and liveliness (and thus routing) are important factors in the design the height difference problem has been solved by creating a new stairway that connects the new main access to the entrance space and courtyard. These stairs welcome the visitors and brings them to an important intersection in the building where both the squares and the corridor can be seen and reached. The entrance hence gradually invites visitors inside through large windows and pivot doors.

The cyclists that parked their bikes descend the stairs and enter at the Southern side of the building. They can choose between the fastest way to the centre of Heerlen over the courtyard or walk through the corridors to explore the building.

An important aspect of the routing through the building is the visual connection between the different spaces and functions. People walking through the corridors are triggered to explore the building by framing certain views and by the creation of voids that offer a view to the activities a floor below.
Diagram of the expected routing through the building
Sequence of entering the Luciushof through the new main entrance on the North side of the building
SECTION CC' _SCALE 1:200
MATERIALS

Three materials are important for this project: concrete, steel and brickwork. When entering the courtyard of the Luciushof the facade of the adjacent car parking garage stands out immediately. This brutalist architecture forms a great contrast with the rest of the Luciushof. The concrete of the facade returns in the tiles forming the connection between the three squares of the project, eventually leading visitors to the exposition space that uses the concrete facade as a background.

The main material of the Luciushof is brickwork. The building has been constructed in 1935 with five stones thick walls without insulation. In the new design the bricks form a screen in front of specific window sills in the courtyard. By using the Brazilian brickwork bond (leaving some space between the stones) movement can still be seen behind the windows but privacy is guaranteed.

A new material that is added in the design is dark steel. Steel is used in the new window sills, the bicycle parking slope and small details such as railings. The inside of the building is finished with white plaster.
SOUTH FACADE_SCALE 1:200
NORTH FACADE_SCALE 1:200
SOUTH FACADE
EAST FACADE
NORTH FACADE
ATMOSPHERE
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LITERATURE


Wat Was Waar: http://www.watwaswaar.nl

(Betahuis: http://www.betahuis.eu

Savelbergklooster: http://www.savelbergklooster.nl


Heerlen Creatives/MAP. Retrieved from Heerlen Creatives: http://www.heerlencreative.nl


FIGURES

All figures are own work, except for:

p. 012-01   01 Mondo Verde
            02 Snow World

p. 013-01   01 www.zollverein.de
            02 www.thermoflor.com

p. 034      01 AGS architects

p. 037-01   01 Jack Mobers
            02 Ton van Mastrigt

p. 045-01   01 Bart Notermans
            02 Wiel Vogt

p. 059-01   01 PPAG architects
            03 Notorious IBE festival

p. 062      01 Rijckheyt

p. 063-01   01 Het Land van Herle
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