

**ACTIVE CENTERS – INTERACTIVE EDGES**

by

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to those who had and have faith in me.

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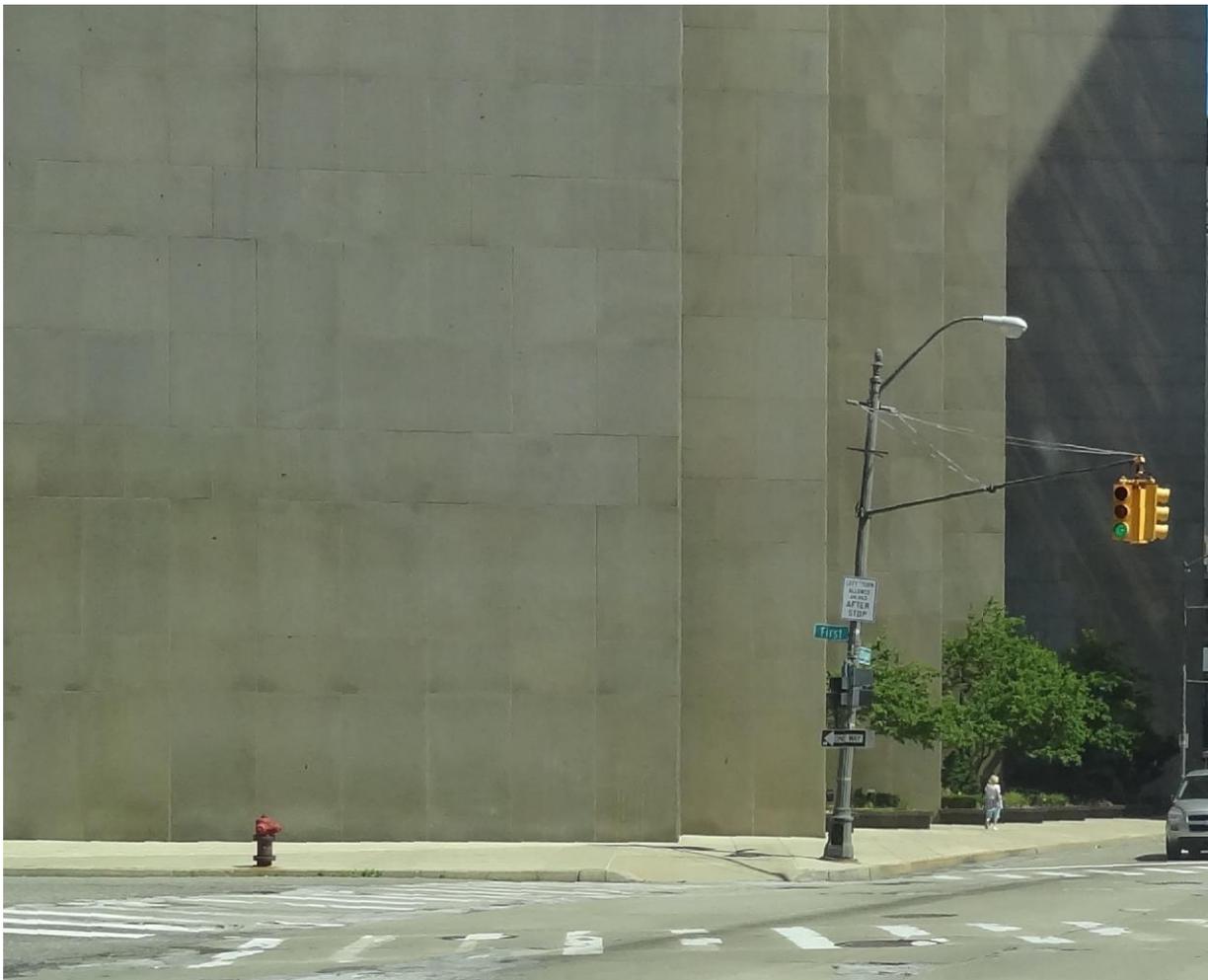
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## PREFACE

As we walk through our most central streets, we are engulfed in a plethora of intense experiences. People pass by while chatting, holding hands or exchanging glimpses, smiles and frowns. Traffic buzzes past, church bells ring and the occasional pet comes up to greet you. Grand buildings inspire respect and reflection, small ones instill comfort. Restaurants hum with excitement and merchants vie for your attention with sights, sounds and smells.



**Figure 1. Inactivity – a still life with fire hydrant, saplings and passerby. Detroit, 2014.**

Yet sometimes we turn a corner to find we are alone. It's as if our experiential rush has come to a halt, as we are surrounded by inhumanly blank walls, parking lots and ramps. We have seemingly reached the backstage of a Potemkin village, where human interaction has made way for the ineffective efficiency of concrete, steel and waste. Over the past century, this landscape of inactivity has invaded our urban cores, with blank buildings playing a key role. Architects will flatly deny any wrongdoing and urban planners will refuse to acknowledge their accompliceship. Developers will point at both, or to the favorite scapegoat of postmodern urbanism: the traffic engineer. Cities fight back with reams of policies to battle the deactivation of downtown architecture and the subsequent numbing of the urban core experience. Some mandate a minimum amount of operable entrances per building, others incentivize ground floor retail or residences, wrapping necessary evils such as parking garages with humanly scaled architecture. Yet more often than not, their intentions fall flat as retailers stay away from new developments, residents barricade their newly enforced ground floor windows and the general public agrees by voting with their feet.

If society consistently prefers humanly scaled environments with buildings that interact with passersby and public space, why are downtowns unable to provide them? And how can efforts to reactivate downtown architecture be successful without knowing what they are fighting against? By finding out *how* and *why* vast portions of urban cores and their building stock have deactivated, we can formulate a strategy for interactive architecture that goes beyond fighting symptoms. This dissertation delves into the process of the deactivation of urban core architecture at eye level, in an effort to generate recommendations for improving the relationship between architecture and public space.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation explores the deteriorating relationship between architecture and public space plaguing many Western urban cores as a result of economic, cultural, political and social forces. It investigates the question of how and why ground floor frontages have been transformed, by comparing the urban cores of The Hague (Netherlands) and Detroit (United States) over the past century. Frontage interactivity is defined as the combination of physical transparency, functional permeability and perceptual hospitality, and is mapped in both urban cores over the span of a century in 10 to 25 year intervals. Interactivity is categorized into four tiers, based on fourteen functional frontage types, ranging from highly interactive retail businesses to dwellings and less interactive offices, parking structures and warehouses. Patterns of physical and functional fringe belt formation and urban erosion are found in the maps and statistical analyses. These analyses demonstrate a pattern of fringe interactivity decline, amplified by an acceleration of decline at the level of the street segment – pointing to the contagion of vacancy and inactive land uses. This interactivity erosion is usually followed and amplified by a rapid morphological change, often fueled by large-scale urban renewal interventions – a pattern that is surprisingly similar in both cities. The forces behind frontage transformation are illustrated by separate histories of The Hague and Detroit. The demonstrated forces and patterns of change are integrated into a set of conclusions, finding significant similarities between both case studies. From an economic, social and cultural perspective both cities have faced and still face similar challenges, albeit amplified in Detroit. The relationship between buildings and public space has deteriorated significantly in downtown Detroit as a result of socio-economic decline, amplified by a culture favoring progress over sustaining a collective memory. The Hague’s inner city has benefited from a somewhat finer balance between progress and permanence, often due to fierce public and political debates. The conclusions are followed by a set of recommendations for how to counter frontage deactivation,

focusing on the role of economics, diversity, curbing fear and auto-mobility, and critical mass in reshaping the architecture of public life.

# CHAPTER 1.

## INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Historically, urban cores in the Western Hemisphere have claimed a central role in serving local residents and attracting visitors with shopping, culture, leisure and civic facilities in attractive settings. Through an illustrious history of trade and ceremonial centers, city centers have claimed a stake as the ever-changing quintessential cultural product of mankind.<sup>1</sup> Cities are not just a product of culture, they produce cultural progress, mainly in their public realm. Central public spaces are often described as the last vestiges of serendipitous or intentional interaction – crossing divides in rapidly fragmenting cities and societies.<sup>2</sup> It is exactly this interaction which progresses society, culture and politics. However, the significance of urban cores and their public realm is under increasing pressure in Western society due to a range of challenges they face ranging from perceived socio-economic decline and troublesome automobile accessibility to an inability to efficiently and affordably accommodate the space-intensive functions of modernizing society. While charming in character, a range of scholars and professionals continue to perceive downtowns as hopelessly outdated – a burden to progress. In many ways they have been proven right, as a large amount of traditional downtown functions are moved to newer, more peripheral locations, or are under threat to be so. This dissertation hopes to become a part of the revitalization of the vitality and viability of downtowns by focusing on a key element in its experiential quality: the architecture of public life.

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<sup>1</sup> L. Mumford, *The Culture of Cities*(New York: Harcourt, Brace and company, 1938); *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects*, vol. 67(Mariner Books, 1961).

<sup>2</sup> Bernard J. Frieden and Lynne B. Sagalyn, *Downtown, Inc. : How America Rebuilds Cities*(Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989); J. Gehl, *Life between Buildings : Using Public Space*(New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1987); Maarten A. Hajer and Arnold Reijndorp, *In Search of New Public Domain : Analysis and Strategy*(Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2001); M. Sorkin, *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*(New York: Hill and Wang, 1992).

This research aim is based on the premise that downtowns have been and should be perceived as meaningful places that deserve to be preserved and enhanced. The layered history of urban cores can help connect people with a collective memory at a time of rapid homogenization and time-space compression in a globalized world. As metropolitan landscapes increasingly lose their uniqueness in search of commodification and quick Return on Investment, the centers of most Western cities continue to convey a sense of permanence and identity, enabling them offer a more meaningful and therewith superior 'experiential quality' to their users.<sup>3</sup> In their strong role as places of collective memory, downtowns can represent the embodiment of a search for permanence in an accelerating world. A sense of place is becoming more important by the day, as the world is rapidly becoming smaller and quicker. As geographer David Harvey describes in his 1989 book *Conditions of postmodernity*, the increasingly mechanized and automated world of the late 20th century would come to experience a radical compression of time and space. Harvey argues that "*The elaboration of place-bound identities has become more rather than less important in a world of diminishing spatial barriers to exchange, movement and communication*".<sup>4</sup> Certainly, Harvey's reasoning is corroborated in the United States by urban observers, many from the neo-traditionalist end of the design spectrum. Designers Gratz and Mintz argue that "*The more mobile we Americans have become as a society, the more rooted we want to be.*"<sup>5</sup>

Beyond establishing permanence, central city spaces are often regarded as the few remaining places of serendipitous encounter in the increasingly compartmentalizing and risk-averse Western society. The public realm of downtown communicates cultural, personal and political messages to a broad audience and enables public life to take place in

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<sup>3</sup> E. C. Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, Research in Planning and Design (London: Pion, 1976).

<sup>4</sup> D. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*(Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1989).

<sup>5</sup> Roberta Brandes Gratz and Norman Mintz, *Cities Back from the Edge : New Life for Downtown* ([Washington, D.C.]; New York: Preservation Press ; J. Wiley, 1998), 249.

a diverse setting, at a time when class and racial divides are increasing throughout the Western Hemisphere.<sup>6</sup> Diversity and serendipity are not only social mechanisms; they have significant economic advantages as well. The unique diversity and density of central urban environments creates the agglomeration economy that enables corporations and startup businesses alike to communicate with each other as well as consumers. As the most central streets of the city are lined with tempting displays of merchandise by the world's leading brands, the innovation and cultural production of the New Economy and the Creative Class takes place in the downtown fringe, surrounding dense and globally connected clusters of globalizing corporations.<sup>7</sup> A highly-skilled and highly mobile workforce has rediscovered the diversity and convenience of urban life and is moving back into central cities.<sup>8</sup> The urban core manages to attract the rich, the poor, the corporate suit and the creative jeans, the nostalgic and the progressive.

But the diversity and authenticity of urban cores has often been eroded by their increasing homogenization due to the influx of global branding and capital,<sup>9</sup> with the so highly sought-after uniqueness or *couleur locale* increasingly pushed out. Innovation, emancipation and cultural production has been pushed to the fringe of urban cores.<sup>10</sup> While many European city centers have retained their function as a nexus of urban life, with most public functions still concentrated at the core of metropolitan areas,<sup>11</sup> the very relevance of

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<sup>6</sup> E. Anderson, "The Cosmopolitan Canopy," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 595, no. 1 (2004); *The Cosmopolitan Canopy: Race and Civility in Everyday Life* (WW Norton & Company, 2011); Hajer and Reijndorp, *In Search of New Public Domain: Analysis and Strategy*.

<sup>7</sup> T.A. Hutton, "The New Economy of the Inner City," *Cities* 21, no. 2 (2004); "Spatiality, Built Form, and Creative Industry Development in the Inner City," *Environment and Planning A* 38, no. 10 (2006); S. Sassen, "Cities in a World Economy," *Thousand Oaks* (1994); *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton Univ Pr, 2001).

<sup>8</sup> R.L. Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* (Basic Civitas Books, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> M. Christine Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994); New Economics Foundation, "Clone Town Britain: The Loss of Local Identity on the Nation's High Streets," (New Economics Foundation, 2004); S. Zukin, *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World* (Univ of California Pr, 1993).

<sup>10</sup> Hutton, "The New Economy of the Inner City."; "Spatiality, Built Form, and Creative Industry Development in the Inner City."

<sup>11</sup> Aart Jan van Duren, *De Dynamiek Van Het Constante: Over De Flexibiliteit Van De Amsterdamse Binnenstad Als Economische Plaats* (Utrecht: J. van Arkel, 1995); J. Gehl, *Cities for People* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2010).

many North American downtowns has been at stake due to an exodus of historically centralized functions such as stores and offices.<sup>12</sup> With the emigration of these traditional core functions, downtowns have often been caught in a downward spiral in which its relevance seems to have eroded as fast as its urban tissue.

At first sight, American downtowns are therefore in much worse shape than their European “inner city”<sup>13</sup> counterparts. The difference in outcome can be seen as the result of cultural and political differences, as continental European society and its leaders have traditionally been highly protective of the role and fabric of urban cores, while American society and policy has been more focused on expansion and suburbanization, losing sight of their downtowns in the process. While these differences have increased the divergence between the United States and Europe, the structural challenges that urban cores face on both continents have been and still are remarkably similar. Economic and technological progress continues to threaten the diversity and density of urban environments by globalization, upscaling and homogenization of production and consumption, among other things leading to a continued focus on accessibility over destination value. The traditional American Dream of a suburban house with a car and an easily accessible job, shopping mall and sports club has increasingly globalized, as it firmly settled on European shores during the postwar prosperity boom.<sup>14</sup> It can be questioned whether the Old Continent’s policies can continue to counterbalance this pervasive image, especially in the light of the liberalization of planning governance over the past decades. Instead of focusing on protecting urban cores through restrictive policy measures, this dissertation will focus on bolstering cores though focusing on their unique selling point: the superior experiential quality of dense, diverse and serendipitous environments which are almost the sole territory of the heart of cities.

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<sup>12</sup> Robert M. Fogelson, *Downtown : Its Rise and Fall, 1880-1950*(New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); Alison Isenberg, *Downtown America : A History of the Place and the People Who Made It*(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

<sup>13</sup> While in the United States, inner city generally refers to the older urban areas regardless of whether they are in the downtown, in Western Europe they traditionally refer to the city within the fortifications, as demonstrated by the German word “Innenstadt” and the Dutch “binnenstad”.

<sup>14</sup> H. Cammen and L. De Klerk, *Ruimtelijke Ordening: Van Grachtengordel Tot Vinexwijk*(Utrecht: Het Spectrum, 2003).

Most of this experiential quality is focused on the pedestrian as the main user of urban cores. Once the car or bike is parked or the exit fare is paid for the train, streetcar or bus, downtown is experienced on foot. Research has demonstrated that a positive pedestrian experience in an urban environment is strongly linked to a humanly scaled, diverse and active environment.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, a major focus of any downtown improvement effort should be environments that cater to the needs and positive experiences of pedestrians. Over the past decades, a significant amount of research has been conducted on walkability in urban environments, and for good reasons. Walkable environments are healthy, sustainable and socially inclusive, and are generally preferred environments by citizens in the United States and abroad to live and visit.<sup>16</sup> Walkability research in an urban context has mainly focused on why people walk and which environments are conducive to walking. A wide range of criteria for walkable environments have been drafted by traffic engineers, landscape architects, environmental psychologists and urban planners.<sup>17</sup> An often mentioned but rarely elaborated element of walkable environments is the role of the interface between buildings and public space. Active ground floor uses and transparent, inviting building frontages enliven the spaces they line. In other words: active and attractive edges make for active and attractive centers.

This mechanism can in part be described through environment-behavior studies. Psychological research has demonstrated an innate human need for visually complex and stimulating environments, as long as they also offer a balance of coherence, legibility and a

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<sup>15</sup> M.A. Alfonzo, "To Walk or Not to Walk? The Hierarchy of Walking Needs," *Environment and Behavior* 37, no. 6 (2005); Gehl, *Life between Buildings : Using Public Space*; C. C. Kickert et al., "Naar Een Levendige Binnenstad - Loopstromen Van De Rotterdamse Hoogbouwbeuwer," (Rotterdam: Veldacademie, 2011); S.C. Van der spek, C. C. Kickert, and T.M. Van Langelaar, "Measure, Understand and Improve Cities Using Gps Technology," *Proceedings of the ICE - Urban Design and Planning* 166, no. 4 (2013); S. C. Van der Spek and F.G. Van der Hoeven, *Street Level Desires*. (Delft: TU Delft Press, 2009).

<sup>16</sup> Christopher B. Leinberger, *The Option of Urbanism : Investing in a New American Dream*(Washington, DC: Island Press, 2008); C.B. Leinberger and M. Alfonzo, "Walk This Way: The Economic Promise of Walkable Places in Metropolitan Washington, D.C.," ed. Metropolitan Policy Program(Brookings Institution, 2012); R. Methorst, "Assessing Pedestrians' Needs.," in *Walk21*(The Hague, Netherlands2009).

<sup>17</sup> Alfonzo, "To Walk or Not to Walk? The Hierarchy of Walking Needs.,"; R. Ewing and S. Handy, "Measuring the Unmeasurable: Urban Design Qualities Related to Walkability," *Journal of Urban Design* 14, no. 1 (2009); C. C. Kickert, "The Urban Shopping Arcade" (TU Delft, 2007); Methorst, "Assessing Pedestrians' Needs.."

sense of mystery or discovery.<sup>18</sup> A walk becomes much more interesting if the pedestrian is surrounded by sensoral complexity and activity, and a significant portion of this activity in public space comes from the buildings that line it. A space becomes more exciting if people can look at building fronts, doors and into windows, otherwise known as *interactive frontages*. They are a powerful medium of excitement and visual communication,<sup>19</sup> and while they can manifest inequality,<sup>20</sup> they are often regarded as a signifier of transparency, accessibility and human scale. On the other hand, interactive frontages have been under threat in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The symbiosis between active sidewalks and public spaces and interactive frontages of businesses, civic building and dwellings as vividly described in many Western cities has often given way to downtowns filled with blank walls that are “utterly without humor”.<sup>21</sup> Contrary to the opinion of many scholars and professionals, the demise of street life and street level frontages in central cities has not merely been the result of its invasion and erosion by cars.<sup>22</sup> Admittedly, the automobile has marked the destruction of a continuous and intricate urban tissue and the functional diversity it supports. But many jointly operating internal and external pressures and responses –often operating in tandem – have radically transformed the downtown streetscape. For example, the growth of building footprints due to capital accumulation and economies of scale resulted in ever larger buildings that increasingly fail to address the street.<sup>23</sup> A growing social divide between rich and poor and a downward spiral of distrust in public space has often resulted in a focus on security in design,<sup>24</sup> with buildings internalizing functions into ‘analogous cities’, leaving the real city out in the cold.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> S. Kaplan, "Aesthetics, Affect and Cognition: Environmental Preference from an Evolutionary Perspective," *Environment and Behavior* 19, no. 1 (1987); J.L. Nasar, "The Evaluative Image of the City," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 56, no. 1 (1990).

<sup>19</sup> Leonard S. Marcus, *The American Store Window*(New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1978).

<sup>20</sup> Charles Baudelaire, *Le Spleen De Paris - Petits Poemes En Prose*(Paris: Editions Nelsson, 1869); Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air : The Experience of Modernity*(New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982).

<sup>21</sup> W.H. Whyte, *City : Rediscovering the Center*, 1st ed.(New York: Doubleday, 1988), 226.

<sup>22</sup> Scholarly criticisms of car invasion include Gehl, *Life between Buildings : Using Public Space*; J.H. Kunstler, *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Man-Made Landscape*(Free Press, 1994). An example of public policy aimed at curbing car use can be found in Gemeente Groningen, "Doelstellingen Nota Binnenstad Groningen," ed. Groningen municipality(1972).

<sup>23</sup> R. MacCormac, "Fitting in Offices," *The architectural review* 181, no. 1083 (1987).

<sup>24</sup> Nan Ellin, *Postmodern Urbanism*(Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1996); Nan Ellin and Edward J. Blakely, *Architecture of Fear*(New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997).

<sup>25</sup> Trevor Boddy, "Underground and Overhead: Building the Analogous City," in *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*, ed. Michael Sorkin(New York: Hill and Wang, 1992).

Internalized architecture has turned itself away from the street and a lack of commercial and social interest in street life has closed down existing active businesses.<sup>26</sup> While this process has decimated storefronts in most American downtowns, even in many European cities, retail activity has clustered into a limited set of central streets, with most of the surrounding urban core usurped by service structures, infrastructure and office buildings.<sup>27</sup> While the patterns of deactivation differ, both sides of the Atlantic have observed a rapid transformation and erosion of their street level architecture over the past century.

An emerging pattern of deactivated frontages has been highly detrimental to the public life and allure of urban cores. Conversely, research has shown that an interactive interface between public space and buildings at the street level is highly beneficial to public life. Shop windows, articulated facades and otherwise interactive building frontages stimulate pedestrian activity, both in number of passersby and number of people that stay in public spaces.<sup>28</sup> These conclusions in and of themselves are hardly surprising; one may even call them a truism. Of course active ground floor uses generate street activity, shops would be out of business without passersby and residents wouldn't leave their house. Form and function are hard to separate in the circular argument that underlies many of these studies, as the function of street level buildings and the form of interactive frontages work in tandem to activate streets. Yet form and function are also often in contrast with one another, obstructing the flourishing of interactive ground floor uses when a building does not support it, or conversely by facing streets with permeable but empty ground floors.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ellin, *Postmodern Urbanism*; J. Gehl, "Close Encounters with Buildings," *Urban Design International* 11(2006).

<sup>27</sup> C. C. Kickert, "Spuimarkt the Hague" (TU Delft, 2007); C. C. Kickert and R. Evans, "Vital and Viable Towns," in *Placemaking*, ed. J. O'Rourke(London: RUDI, 2008).

<sup>28</sup> J. Gehl, "Soft Edges in Residential Streets.," *Housing, theory and society* 3, no. 2 (1986); "Close Encounters with Buildings.,"; T. G. Lopez, "Influence of the Public-Private Border Configuration on Pedestrian Behaviour. The Case of the City of Madrid." (La Escuela Tecnica Superior de Arquitectura de Madrid, 2003).

<sup>29</sup> Duren, *De Dynamiek Van Het Constante : Over De Flexibiliteit Van De Amsterdamse Binnenstad Als Economische Plaats*.

The main omission from most existing behavioral and psychological studies of interactive frontages is the oversight that environments do not only shape the evaluation and behavior of their users, but human agency also shapes environments. Space is a social construct, and in turn constructs societies.<sup>30</sup> While the effects of frontages on society have been sufficiently studied, the effects of society on interactive frontages are currently unknown. Urban policy makers already realize the importance of street level activity as they increasingly mandate transparency levels, building scales and ground floor activity for new development plans and district designs,<sup>31</sup> and designers increasingly attempt to address the street in designs for large urban buildings such as parking garages and hospitals. Yet as William Whyte has observed, inactive frontages are hard to battle because “...no one is for them. There are no civic debates whether to have them or not.”<sup>32</sup> The real issue lies not in the acknowledgement that interactive frontages are good for public life, but the lack of knowledge of why street level architecture becomes deactivated. If city and design professionals are unaware of the forces they are fighting against, how will they achieve success in their battle for active street level architecture? What are the forces behind the ever-increasing deactivation of street level architecture?

The necessity of policy and design intervention to ensure interactive frontages should be regarded as the sign of a growing incongruence between the buildings society builds and the ones it desires. More specifically, a division seems to be growing between the changing aspirations and tools of the stakeholders that shape cities and the age-old innate desire for humanly scaled, vital urban environments by the people that use them in their everyday lives. In fact, this dichotomy is described and lamented by many normative and empirical theorists alike.<sup>33</sup> It is ultimately this growing dichotomy between innate psychological

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<sup>30</sup> Hillier and A. Leaman, "The Man-Environment Paradigm and Its Paradoxes," *Architectural Design* 78, no. 8 (1973); Hillier and J. Hanson, *The Social Logic of Space*(Cambridge [Cambridgeshire] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Henri Lefebvre, *The Survival of Capitalism : Reproduction of the Relations of Production*(New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976); *The Production of Space*, Production De L'espace.English (Oxford, OX, UK ; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1991).

<sup>31</sup> A. Lehnerer, *Grand Urban Rules*(010 Publishers, 2009).

<sup>32</sup> Whyte, *City : Rediscovering the Center*, 228.

<sup>33</sup> Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck, *Suburban Nation : The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream*(New York: North Point Press, 2000); Rob Krier, *Urban Space (Stadtraum)*, Stadtraum

needs and changing societal forces that is at the base of this dissertation. *Why is contemporary society unable to shape the humanly scaled "architecture of public life" it desires?* The knowledge gap embedded in this question mainly lies in the study of and reasoning behind the deactivation of street level architecture, as the innate desires of humans for diverse and exciting urban environments have been more than sufficiently propagated and corroborated by a range of aforementioned existing research and design theories. Only the knowledge of *how* and especially *why* street level architecture has changed can inform a substantiated rebuttal to the ongoing process of street deactivation. Yet this question is hardly addressed by existing research.

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in Theorie Und Praxis.English (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1979); Whyte, *City : Rediscovering the Center*.

## **CHAPTER 2.**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter provides an overview of the relevant literature which pertains to the relationship between buildings and public space. The study of this literature helps to form an informed view of current knowledge on the topic, but also to delineate the direction for further research as well as the theoretical framework it will operate in.

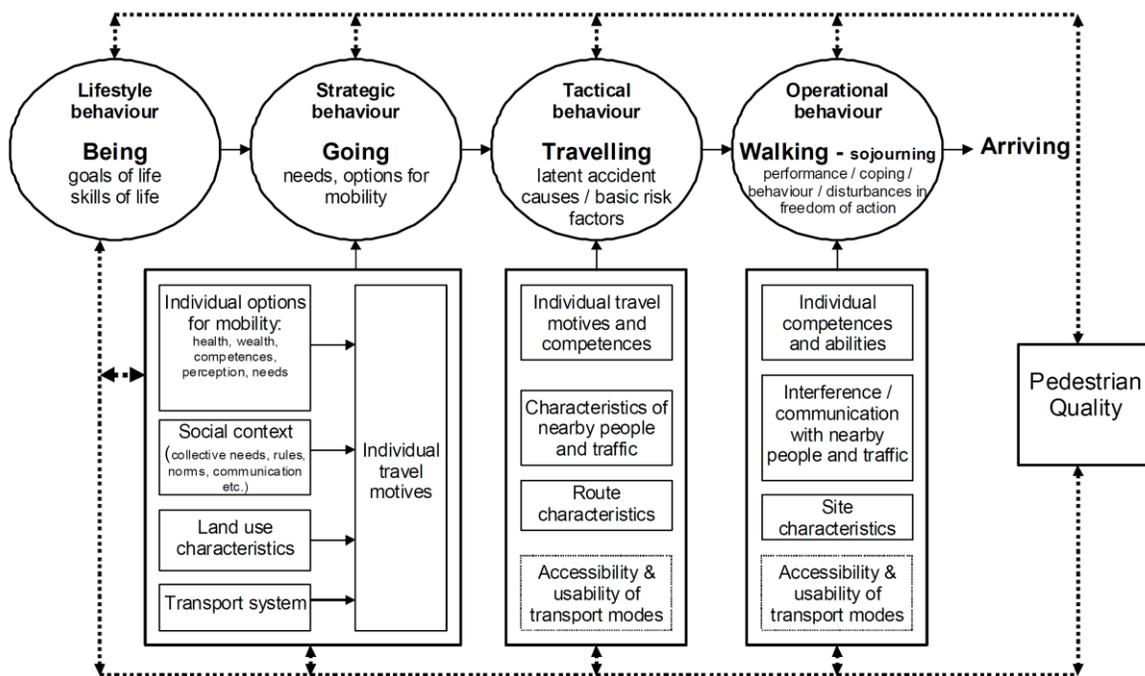
As an inherently interdisciplinary topic, scholars from different fields have studied this relationship from various perspectives. Therefore, this literature review will approach the study of interactive frontages from the perspectives of behavioral and design studies (2.1), economy (2.2), place study (2.3) and history (2.4 at the urban scale, 2.5 at the architectural scale). It will conclude with a theoretical framework for further inquiry.

## 2.1 INTERACTIVE FRONTAGES AND ATTRACTIVE PUBLIC SPACES

An abundance of research on how to improve the experience of urban downtowns suggests that accommodating the needs and desires of the pedestrian is central to this effort. People may arrive or traverse through city centers by other transport modalities, but ultimately they will interact, parade, compare and enjoy the intricacies of the urban core on foot. Walkability has been studied at length by a range of different academic and professional disciplines, each emphasizing a different aspect of the pedestrian experience. In a report for the European Pedestrian Quality Needs Project, researchers take an integrated and holistic approach to walkability, focusing on urban function and form. They find that walkability is influenced by a wide range of factors that can be categorized in a hierarchic systems approach. Lifestyle is an important first element for deciding whether people decide to walk or not, furthermore they should have a destination to walk to at the strategic level. When walking, they look for the characteristics of each route to pick their way through an urban area, and at the operational level do pedestrians appreciate their physical surroundings. In other words: walking is influenced by urban form at several levels, ranging from land use distribution of destinations to street safety and comfort and ultimately the esthetic and psychological quality of the urban environment.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Methorst, "Assessing Pedestrians' Needs.."



**Figure 2. The basic conceptual framework of walkability for the Pedestrian Quality Needs study by Methorst et al in 2009 distinguishes between different levels of decision making for the pedestrian and the role of the environment in these decisions.**

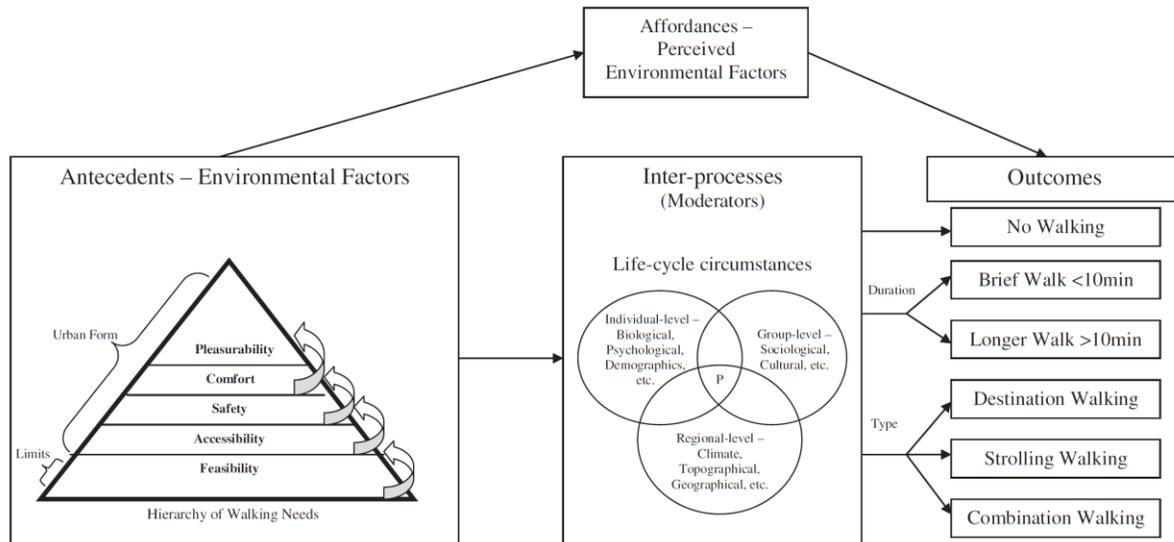
A similar hierarchical approach is taken by walkability researcher Alfonzo, as she focuses on the combination of environmental affordances and life-cycle circumstances in people's decision to walk.<sup>35</sup> In a joint research study with real estate scholar and developer Christopher Leinberger, Alfonzo concludes that environmental variables compiled into a comprehensive walkability index significantly correlates with the economic success of new and existing urban neighborhoods,<sup>36</sup> corroborating earlier economic research.<sup>37</sup> Walkability increasingly enters the professional, institutional and academic spotlight, as it

<sup>35</sup> Alfonzo, "To Walk or Not to Walk? The Hierarchy of Walking Needs."

<sup>36</sup> Leinberger and Alfonzo, "Walk This Way: The Economic Promise of Walkable Places in Metropolitan Washington, D.C.."

<sup>37</sup> G. Pivo and J.D. Fisher, "The Walkability Premium in Commercial Real Estate Investments," *Real Estate Economics* 39, no. 2 (2011).

benefits the bottom line of urban development, has positive health and environmental effects and can promote urban liveliness and social interaction.<sup>38</sup>



**Figure 3. Alfonzo (2005) recognizes a hierarchy of walking needs, with human agency and the physical environment working in tandem to facilitate walking trips.**

As shapers of the built environment, urban designers have increasingly taken up the topic of walkability to promote good urban form. Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, designers as varied as Camillo Sitte,<sup>39</sup> Ebenezer Howard,<sup>40</sup> Hendrik Berlage,<sup>41</sup> Rob Krier<sup>42</sup> and Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk<sup>43</sup> have expressed their vision of an walkable urban future<sup>44</sup>

<sup>38</sup> M. Southworth, "Designing the Walkable City," *Journal of urban planning and development* 131(2005).

<sup>39</sup> Camillo Sitte, *Der Städte-Bau Nach Seinen Künstlerischen Grundsätzen : Ein Beitrag Zur Lösung Modernster Fragen Der Architektur Und Monumentalen Plastik Unter Besonderer Beziehung Auf Wien*, 2e. Aufl. ed.(Wien: C. Graeser & Co., 1889).

<sup>40</sup> Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of to-Morrow*, (Being the second edition of "To-morrow: a peaceful path to real reform") ed.(London,: S. Sonnenschein & co., ltd., 1902).

<sup>41</sup> Hendrik Petrus Berlage, *Studies over Bouwkunst, Stijl En Samenleving*(Rotterdam: W.L. & Brusse, 1910).

<sup>42</sup> Rob Krier, *Stadtraum in Theorie Und Praxis*(Stuttgart: Krämer, 1975).

<sup>43</sup> Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck, *Suburban Nation : The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream*.

<sup>44</sup> Robert Fishman, *Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century : Ebenezer Howard, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Le Corbusier*(New York: Basic Books, 1977).

(with a hiatus during High Modernism), and scholars such as Jacobs,<sup>45</sup> Alexander<sup>46</sup> and Lynch<sup>47</sup> have written extensively about a range of normative elements that make up good cities. Each author in his/her own way has addressed the human body as the essential element of urbanism, promoting walkability through design, technology or sociability. Yet only recently have urban design scholars conducted more empirical studies on the physical, social and connotative elements that currently shape lively and positive urban environments.<sup>48</sup> While some designers and researchers have relied on reviewing existing literature on shaping vital cities,<sup>49</sup> others have conducted empirical research to determine the elements of urban environments that promote walkability<sup>50</sup> and urban vitality.<sup>51</sup> The resulting research conclusions and recommendations can read as a check-list, with a wide range of elements that together contribute to vital cities and street life. This dissertation will focus on the interface between buildings and public space as this underexposed yet key element of urban quality.

As discussed in the introduction, a significant contribution to the vitality of urban public spaces comes from the buildings that line it. The street can be considered a 'transactional space' that connects buildings and their activities, absorbing the vitality that spring from the land uses within them.<sup>52</sup> Design scholar Christopher Alexander puts the 'edge' of public spaces at the center of its activity: "...If the edge fails, then the space never

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<sup>45</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*(New York: Random House, 1961).

<sup>46</sup> Christopher Alexander, Sara Ishikawa, and Murray Silverstein, *A Pattern Language : Towns, Buildings, Construction*(New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

<sup>47</sup> K. Lynch, *Good City Form*(The MIT Press, 1984).

<sup>48</sup> Gehl, *Life between Buildings : Using Public Space*; K. Lynch, *The Image of the City*, Publications of the Joint Center for Urban Studies (Cambridge [Mass.]: Technology Press, 1960); W.H. Whyte, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*(Washington, D.C.: Conservation Foundation, 1980).

<sup>49</sup> J. Montgomery, "Making a City: Urbanity, Vitality and Urban Design," *Journal of Urban Design* 3, no. 1 (1998); Jeff Speck, *Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America, One Step at a Time*(New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012).

<sup>50</sup> Alfonzo, "To Walk or Not to Walk? The Hierarchy of Walking Needs.;" K. Day et al., "The Irvine–Minnesota Inventory to Measure Built Environments: Development," *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 30, no. 2 (2006); Ewing and Handy, "Measuring the Unmeasurable: Urban Design Qualities Related to Walkability."

<sup>51</sup> Hajer and Reijndorp, *In Search of New Public Domain : Analysis and Strategy*; A.B. Jacobs, *Great Streets*(MIT press Cambridge, MA, 1993); Kickert, "The Urban Shopping Arcade.;" Kickert and Evans, "Vital and Viable Towns.;" V. Mehta, "Look Closely and You Will See, Listen Carefully and You Will Hear: Urban Design and Social Interaction on Streets," *Journal of Urban Design* 14, no. 1 (2009).

<sup>52</sup> S. Anderson, ed. *On Streets*(Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1978); D. Appleyard, M.S. Gerson, and M. Lintell, *Livable Streets*(Univ of California Pr, 1982); R. MacCormac, "Urban Reform: Maccormac's Manifesto," *Architects Journal* 15(1983).

becomes lively ... the space becomes a place to walk through, not a place to stop."<sup>53</sup> Yet the influence of street-level architecture on walkability is often ignored or taken for granted in empirical walkability studies. Either ground floor built form is taken as a small portion of a comprehensive index,<sup>54</sup> or studies focus mainly on traffic safety and road design, forgoing architecture altogether.<sup>55</sup> Only a few empirical studies have deliberately focused on the effects of frontages on street life, with studies by Spanish architect Gil Lopez<sup>56</sup>, Danish architect Gehl<sup>57</sup> and urban planner Gleye<sup>58</sup> as notable examples.

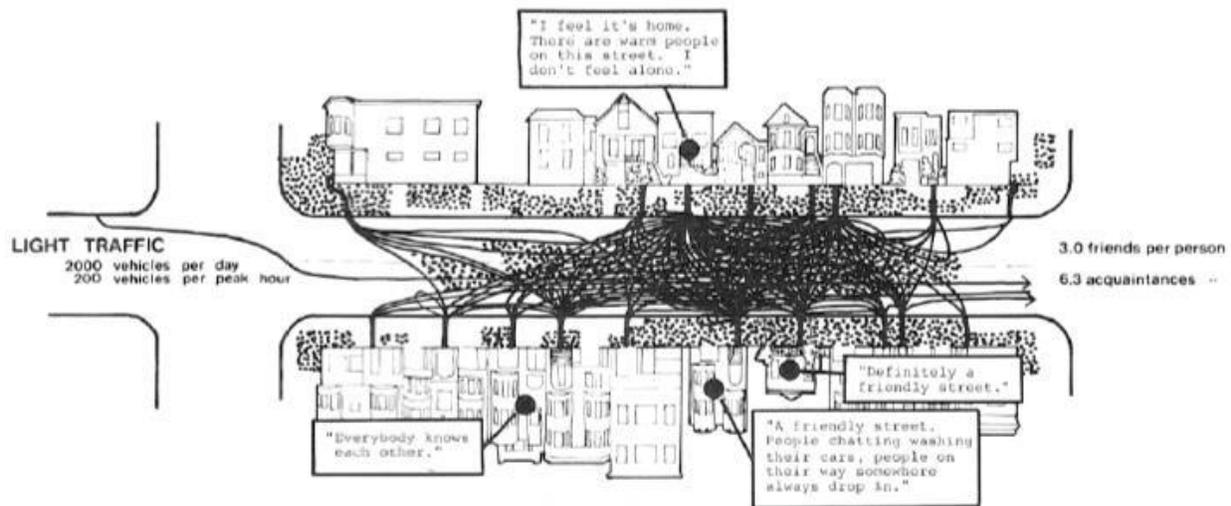


Figure 4. Livable streets promote interaction between their edges.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Alexander, Ishikawa, and Silverstein, *A Pattern Language : Towns, Buildings, Construction*, 753.

<sup>54</sup> K.J. Clifton, A.D. Livi Smith, and D. Rodriguez, "The Development and Testing of an Audit for the Pedestrian Environment," *Landscape and Urban Planning* 80, no. 1 (2007); Day et al., "The Irvine–Minnesota Inventory to Measure Built Environments: Development."; Ewing and Handy, "Measuring the Unmeasurable: Urban Design Qualities Related to Walkability."; J. Heeling, H. Meyer, and J. Westrik, *Het Ontwerp Van De Stadsplattegrond*, vol. 1(Sun, 2002); Jacobs, *Great Streets*.

<sup>55</sup> D. Sauter, M. Wedderburn, and C. Buchanan, "Measuring Walking: Towards Internationally Standardised Monitoring Methods of Walking and Public Space" (2008).

<sup>56</sup> Lopez, "Influence of the Public-Private Border Configuration on Pedestrian Behaviour. The Case of the City of Madrid.."

<sup>57</sup> Gehl, "Soft Edges in Residential Streets.."; "Close Encounters with Buildings."

<sup>58</sup> Paul Gleye, "Santa Fe without Adobe - Lessons for the Identity of Place " *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 11, no. 3 (1994).

<sup>59</sup> Image from Appleyard, Gerson, and Lintell, *Livable Streets*.

In a rare comprehensive paper on the role of architecture in generating urban vitality, Danish urbanist Jan Gehl illustrates the importance of humanly scaled, transparent, permeable and detailed ground floors.<sup>60</sup> As the field of view of human beings is far more horizontal than vertical, humans only pay close attention to the first two floors of buildings in their regular travels through urban environments.<sup>61</sup> Studying the effect of ground floor facades in Copenhagen, Gehl finds that interactive frontages contribute significantly to the time spent and activity in the public spaces that line them.<sup>62</sup> These findings corroborate earlier research on the value of semi-public spaces such as porches and front yards in residential settings in Canada, Australia and Denmark by the same author. Similarly, Spanish architect Gil Lopez has studied the effects of façade transparency, articulation and permeability in two urban streets in Madrid, finding that interactive frontages prompt a more intense public life.<sup>63</sup> While the observations of Gehl and Lopez indeed demonstrate that interactive frontages aid street life, this seems a rather circular argument. Interactive frontages support street life not just in a formal way (as stressed by Gehl), but as a land use, attracting passersby at the tactical and operational level according to the aforementioned Pedestrian Quality Needs model created by Methorst et al.<sup>64</sup> If land use is considered congruent with the needs of urban dwellers, of course active ground floor entrances and businesses would attract people and promote urban vitality, and of course the liveliest streets attract would land uses that can benefit from this such as active ground floor retail businesses. If however active ground floor businesses would fail to attract customers, they would soon go bankrupt. In other words: form and function interact to shape interactive frontages. Space and society are in constant interaction. In order to study the relation between frontage interactivity, behavior and preference, therefore one needs to delve deeper.

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<sup>60</sup> Gehl, "Close Encounters with Buildings."

<sup>61</sup> *Life between Buildings : Using Public Space.*

<sup>62</sup> "Close Encounters with Buildings," 9.

<sup>63</sup> Lopez, "Influence of the Public-Private Border Configuration on Pedestrian Behaviour. The Case of the City of Madrid.."

<sup>64</sup> Methorst, "Assessing Pedestrians' Needs.."

## FACADE EVALUATION SCALE

CATEGORY A		<p><i>Small units, many doors (15-20 per 100 m)</i>  <i>Large variation in function</i>  <i>No blind and few passive units</i>  <i>Lots of character in façade relief – primarily vertical</i>  <i>façade articulation</i>  <i>Good details and materials</i></p>
CATEGORY B		<p><i>Relatively small units (10-14 doors per 100 m)</i>  <i>Some variation in function</i>  <i>Few blind or passive units</i>  <i>Façade relief</i>  <i>Many details</i></p>
CATEGORY C		<p><i>Mix of large and small units (6-8 doors per 100 m)</i>  <i>Modest variation in function</i>  <i>Some blind and passive units</i>  <i>Modest façade relief</i>  <i>Few details</i></p>
CATEGORY D		<p><i>Large units</i>  <i>Almost no variation in function (2-5 doors per 100 m)</i>  <i>Many blind or uninteresting units</i>  <i>No façade relief</i>  <i>Few or no details</i></p>
CATEGORY E		<p><i>Large units, few or no doors (0-2 doors per 100 m)</i>  <i>No visible variation in function</i>  <i>Blind or passive units</i>  <i>Uniform facades with no relief</i>  <i>No details, nothing to look at</i></p>

**Figure 5. The categorization of facades by combined form and function demonstrates a clear demarcation of urban quality but make further study difficult.<sup>65</sup>**

<sup>65</sup> Image from Gehl, "Close Encounters with Buildings."

Within the academic field of Space Syntax research, interactive frontages and most notably the physical connection between buildings and public spaces have been referred to as the 'constitutedness' of streets.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, interface maps can be made of patterns and relations between entrances of buildings.<sup>67</sup> Yet most studies focus on residential environments, with a strong focus on preventing crime through design,<sup>68</sup> omitting other land uses or social processes. The interface between residential buildings and public space has also been studied from a morphological perspective, focusing on categorization of interfaces by form and territoriality.<sup>69</sup> Most of these publications focus on the building and the urban block as elements of study, linking form to design, psychology and culture, but again they mainly focus on residential design.

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<sup>66</sup> Hillier and Hanson, *The Social Logic of Space*; Hillier, *Space Is the Machine: A Configurational Theory of Architecture* (Cambridge ; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1996); S. Shu and J. Huang, "Spatial Configuration and Vulnerability of Residential Burglary: A Case Study of a City in Taiwan" (paper presented at the Proceedings of 4th International Space Syntax Symposium. London, 2003); A. Van Nes and M.J.J. López, "Micro Scale Spatial Relationships in Urban Studies: The Relationship between Private and Public Space and Its Impact on Street Life" (2007).

<sup>67</sup> L. Amorim, M. Normando Barros Filho, and D. Cruz, "Urban Texture and Space Configuration" (paper presented at the 7th International Space Syntax Symposium, Stockholm, Sweden, 2009); J. Hanson and R. Zako, "Communities of Co-Presence and Surveillance: How Public Open Space Shapes Awareness and Behaviour in Residential Developments," (2007); G. Palaiologou and L. Vaughan, "Urban Rhythms: Historic Housing Evolution and Socio-Spatial Boundaries," (2012); Philip Steadman, *Architectural Morphology : An Introduction to the Geometry of Building Plans* (London: Pion, 1983).

<sup>68</sup> Inspired by the studies of defensible design by Oscar Newman: Oscar Newman, *Defensible Space; Crime Prevention through Urban Design* (New York: Macmillan, 1972).

<sup>69</sup> Milos Bobic, *Between the Edges : Street-Building Transition as Urbanity Interface* (Bussum [Netherlands]: Thoth Publishers, 2004); René Boomkens, *Een Drempeelwereld : Moderne Ervaring En Stedelijke Openbaarheid* (Rotterdam: NAI, 1998); Susanne Komossa, *The Dutch Urban Block and the Public Realm: Models, Rules, Ideals*, Architecture Series (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2010).



**Figure 6. Left: the morphological categorization of blocks by the relation between interior and exterior. Right: the study of the public-private permeability of the Haarlemmerstraat in Amsterdam over time, with public space denoted in black.<sup>70</sup>**

The field of environment-behavior research offers more insights into the mechanisms behind human behavior and evaluation of frontage interactivity. Humans are found to value environments with a certain level of complexity, as a certain amount of stimuli make their environment challenging and appealing.<sup>71</sup> Visual and conceptual complexity has long been shown to be a human need that influences our performance in everyday tasks.<sup>72</sup> On their ground floors, many central urban environments across the globe have offered fine-grained environments with a multitude of details such as windows, doors and displayed goods and advertisements, with a surprisingly similar visual complexity of a window

<sup>70</sup> Left image from *The Dutch Urban Block and the Public Realm: Models, Rules, Ideals*. Right image from Bobic, *Between the Edges : Street-Building Transition as Urbanity Interface*.

<sup>71</sup> Gehl, "Close Encounters with Buildings."; Kaplan, "Aesthetics, Affect and Cognition: Environmental Preference from an Evolutionary Perspective."

<sup>72</sup> R. M. Yerkes, Dodson, J. D., "The Relation of Strength of Stimulus to Rapidity of Habit-Formation," *Journal of comparative neurology and psychology* 18(1908).

display or entrance every 15-30 feet.<sup>73</sup> The strong similarity between the levels of visual complexity between a wide range of urban environments across the globe over the past centuries demonstrates the congruence between complexity and human needs at the pedestrian level.<sup>74</sup> Unfortunately, the visual complexity of environments is increasingly designed for the passerby at high speed. Habraken describes this as the onset of a 'tertiary scale' of construction, in which "buildings and traffic ... enter into a new relation. The intense interaction on the pedestrian scale between private and public built space ... is now sheltered within the large building."<sup>75</sup> As a result, the intricate rhythm and attention to walking passersby that has defined many urban settings over the past centuries has given way to a "City of Spectacle", with billboards and destinations set in a shapeless field of infrastructure and background buildings.<sup>76</sup>

Yet visual complexity is not the only factor that influences the evaluation of environments, it is simply an element in a wider context of environmental preference. People have been shown to value a balance between complexity and coherence in urban environments and signscapes.<sup>77</sup> When evaluating the contextual compatibility of building additions, research subjects have demonstrated to prefer elements of visual complexity and coherence.<sup>78</sup> Certainly these findings are congruent with the traditionally esthetic aspirations of European urbanists to introduce order and "Einheitlichkeit" into seemingly chaotic urban environments.<sup>79</sup> While the penchant for visual complexity is derived from the innate human informational desire to learn about their environment, the desire to make sense of it leads to a preference for a certain level of coherence. This calls for a balance between

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<sup>73</sup> Gehl, "Close Encounters with Buildings."; A. Van Nes, *Road Building and Urban Change: The Effect of Ring Roads on the Dispersal of Shop and Retail in Western European Towns and Cities*(Agricultural University of Norway, Department of Land Use and Landscape Planning, 2002).

<sup>74</sup> Amos Rapoport, *History and Precedent in Environmental Design*(New York: Plenum Press, 1990).

<sup>75</sup> N. J. Habraken and Jonathan Teicher, *The Structure of the Ordinary : Form and Control in the Built Environment*(Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998), 121.

<sup>76</sup> Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory : Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments*.

<sup>77</sup> Nasar, "The Evaluative Image of the City."; J.L. Nasar and X. Hong, "Visual Preferences in Urban Signscapes," *Environment and Behavior* 31, no. 5 (1999).

<sup>78</sup> Linda N. Groat, "Meaning in Post-Modern Architecture: An Examination Using the Multiple Sorting Task," *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 2(1982).

<sup>79</sup> Cor Wagenaar, *Town Planning in the Netherlands since 1800 : Responses to Enlightenment Ideas and Geopolitical Realities*(Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2011).

variation and recognizable differences within bounds of a coherent framework. The human being as an informational processor maintain these preferences as they move through environments, as mysterious environments continue to offer its users with visual excitement while their legibility protects users from confusion.<sup>80</sup> Environments are not just experienced by the eye, but by all the senses. The combination of sight, sound, smell and touch is cleverly used to influence behavior in retail settings as 'atmospherics'.<sup>81</sup> While the controlled environment of shopping malls bombards its visitors with multisensory cues to boost sales, urban commercial streets can also raise their vitality by satisfying the senses.<sup>82</sup>

The biggest issue with studying the interface between buildings and public spaces is that the topic traverses several disciplines, each of which finds it hard to step outside their academic and professional territory. Traffic engineers and landscape architects are mostly occupied with the street itself and how to maintain safety and attractiveness;<sup>83</sup> architects mainly focus on the buildings that line it;<sup>84</sup> economists focus on ground floor land uses.<sup>85</sup> The growing field of urban design and urban morphology can cross over these boundaries and focus on an integrated study of the effects of ground floors on society, and vice versa.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Kaplan, "Aesthetics, Affect and Cognition: Environmental Preference from an Evolutionary Perspective."; Rachel Kaplan and Stephen Kaplan, *The Experience of Nature : A Psychological Perspective*(Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>81</sup> J Holck, "The Shops and the Living Cities. An Investigation of the Relational Complexity in Urban Shopping Environments." (University of Copenhagen, 2010); L.W. Turley and R.E. Milliman, "Atmospheric Effects on Shopping Behavior: A Review of the Experimental Evidence," *Journal of Business Research* 49, no. 2 (2000).

<sup>82</sup> Mehta, "Look Closely and You Will See, Listen Carefully and You Will Hear: Urban Design and Social Interaction on Streets."

<sup>83</sup> Methorst, "Assessing Pedestrians' Needs."; Sauter, Wedderburn, and Buchanan, "Measuring Walking: Towards Internationally Standardised Monitoring Methods of Walking and Public Space."

<sup>84</sup> Bobic, *Between the Edges : Street-Building Transition as Urbanity Interface*; Habraken and Teicher, *The Structure of the Ordinary : Form and Control in the Built Environment*.

<sup>85</sup> Duren, *De Dynamiek Van Het Constante : Over De Flexibiliteit Van De Amsterdamse Binnenstad Als Economische Plaats*; S. Brown, "Retail Location and Retail Change in Belfast City Centre" (The Queen's University of Belfast, 1984).

<sup>86</sup> A. V. Moudon, "Urban Morphology as an Emerging Interdisciplinary Field," *Urban Morphology* 1(1997).

## 2.2 FUNCTION - ECONOMIC THEORIES IN THE URBAN CORE

Frontage interactivity and permeability is as much reliant on function as it is on form. The role of the interface between a building and public spaces is highly reliant on the land use it attempts to connect, and its study lies mainly in the field of economic geography. As urban cores serve as the stage for commercial agglomeration and transformation, the economic systems that shape and operate within them are indispensable elements in the study of their evolution. Morphologically, the manifestation of economic processes can be illustrated by the relatively high density of urban cores. Due to the benefits of commercial agglomeration and interaction, urban cores are quickly becoming the only vertical elements in a rapidly dispersing metropolitan landscape fueled by undervalued energy, infrastructure and construction costs.<sup>87</sup> The benefits of this morphological manifestation are diverse and symbiotic, ranging from ease of local and global communication to knowledge spillovers within (Marshallian) and between (Jacobean) different fields of enterprise.<sup>88</sup> While the global economy is spreading its wings across continents in a search for efficiency and profitability, clusters of 'global cities' are emerging that provide corporations with environments that enable the symbiosis of knowledge, capital and labor agglomeration in dense urban cores.<sup>89</sup>

The increasing density prompted by the economies of agglomeration makes urban cores denser and more economically active, but they do not necessarily make their streets more vibrant. While the land values and urban density of American downtowns had risen to unprecedented levels by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, its functional diversity was severely hampered by the capital accumulation of the nascent Central Business District. Offices and retail stores increasingly pushed out lower-yielding land uses such as dwellings and manufacturers, resulting in entire districts that were only active during the daytime. Already in the 1870s, a Philadelphia guidebook warned visitors that downtown, "...*though*

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<sup>87</sup> L. Lerup, "Stim & Dross: Rethinking the Metropolis," *Assemblage*, no. 25 (1994).

<sup>88</sup> D. Giuliani, "Methods for Detecting Spatial Clustering of Economic Activities Using Micro-Geographic Data" (Universita degli Studi Di Roma "La Sapienza", 2010).

<sup>89</sup> Sassen, "Cities in a World Economy."; *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*.

*bustling and noisy during business hours, is a perfect desolation after six o'clock...*"<sup>90</sup> A similar complaint can be heard a century later in The Netherlands, as large scale office construction replacing the historic urban tissue in many Dutch inner cities sparked widespread opposition. Protesters proclaimed: "*The people in power in a city really want ... to make the [city] center a large hollow space with only trade and traffic.*"<sup>91</sup> While in contrast to North America, Dutch postwar "City" office development has mostly been halted as a result of public and political opposition, the victory can be regarded as rather Pyrrhic. Many Dutch and Western European inner cities may have been saved from overambitious office development, but the remaining historic shopping centers are resembling one another ever more closely due to the onset of chain stores, company mergers and global brands.<sup>92</sup> The street-level diversity that Jacobs proclaimed in the early 1960s has proven to be an ephemeral and often self-destructive state that many urban cores have struggled to maintain or regain during their rapid transformation over the past century.

Economic processes are a major element behind these morphological and functional changes. In their description of the evolution of Dutch inner cities, Smook<sup>93</sup>, Van Duren<sup>94</sup> and Wagenaar<sup>95</sup> at least partly ascribe the morphological consolidation of buildings, blocks and entire districts and the functional shift from dwellings and small businesses to large offices and chain stores to rising central land values and a quest for the 'highest and best' land use that can be traced to the Bid-Rent theory of the Chicago School of Burgess<sup>96</sup> and Hoyt.<sup>97</sup> These theories stipulate that the most central and well-connected areas in each city have the highest land value, and as a result attract the land use that values centrality and

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<sup>90</sup> Fogelson, *Downtown : Its Rise and Fall, 1880-1950*.

<sup>91</sup> Cammen and De Klerk, *Ruimtelijke Ordening: Van Grachtengordel Tot Vinexwijk*, 247.

<sup>92</sup> Duren, *De Dynamiek Van Het Constante : Over De Flexibiliteit Van De Amsterdamse Binnenstad Als Economische Plaats*; Foundation, "Clone Town Britain: The Loss of Local Identity on the Nation's High Streets."; "Clone Town Britain, the Survey Results on the Bland State of the Nation," (2005); Hans van der Meer and Cecily Layzell, *Nederland : Uit Voorraad Leverbaar = the Netherlands : Off the Shelf*(Edam; Edam: Paradox ; Y, 2012).

<sup>93</sup> R.A.F. Smook, *Binnensteden Veranderen: Atlas Van Het Ruimtelijk Veranderingsproces Van Nederlandse Binnensteden in De Laatste Anderhalve Eeuw*(De Walburg Pers, 1984).

<sup>94</sup> Duren, *De Dynamiek Van Het Constante : Over De Flexibiliteit Van De Amsterdamse Binnenstad Als Economische Plaats*.

<sup>95</sup> Wagenaar, *Town Planning in the Netherlands since 1800 : Responses to Enlightenment Ideas and Geopolitical Realities*.

<sup>96</sup> E. B. Burgess, "Concentric Zone Model of Urban Structure and Land Use," *Landmark Publication* 125(1925).

<sup>97</sup> Homer Hoyt, *One Hundred Years of Land Values in Chicago*(Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1933).

connectivity the most. Retail stores and offices have a strong demand for highly accessible locations in which they can cluster, and as a result they 'outbid' all other central land uses such as dwellings and manufacturers. Conversely, these land uses are usually not interested in dispersed and decentralized locations, and as such are unlikely to locate themselves outside a center, resulting in a steep 'bid-rent curve'. This mechanism is described in more detail in figure 6 and 7.

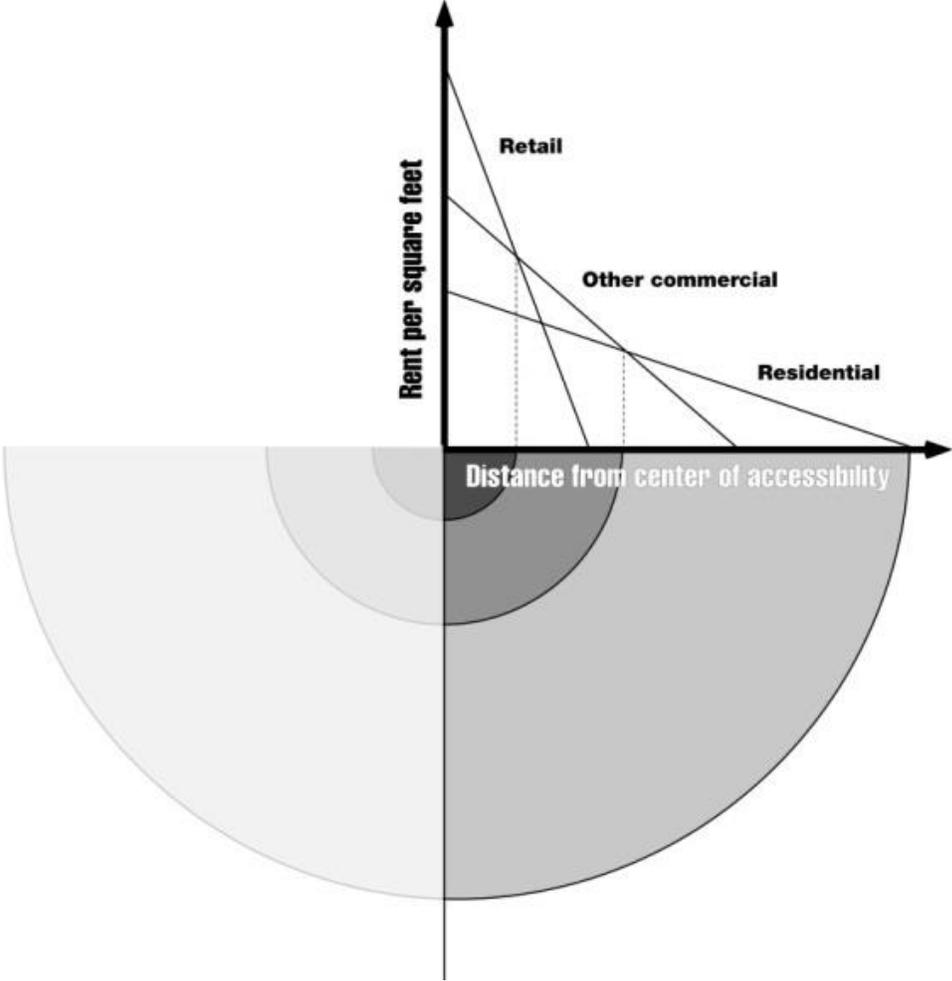
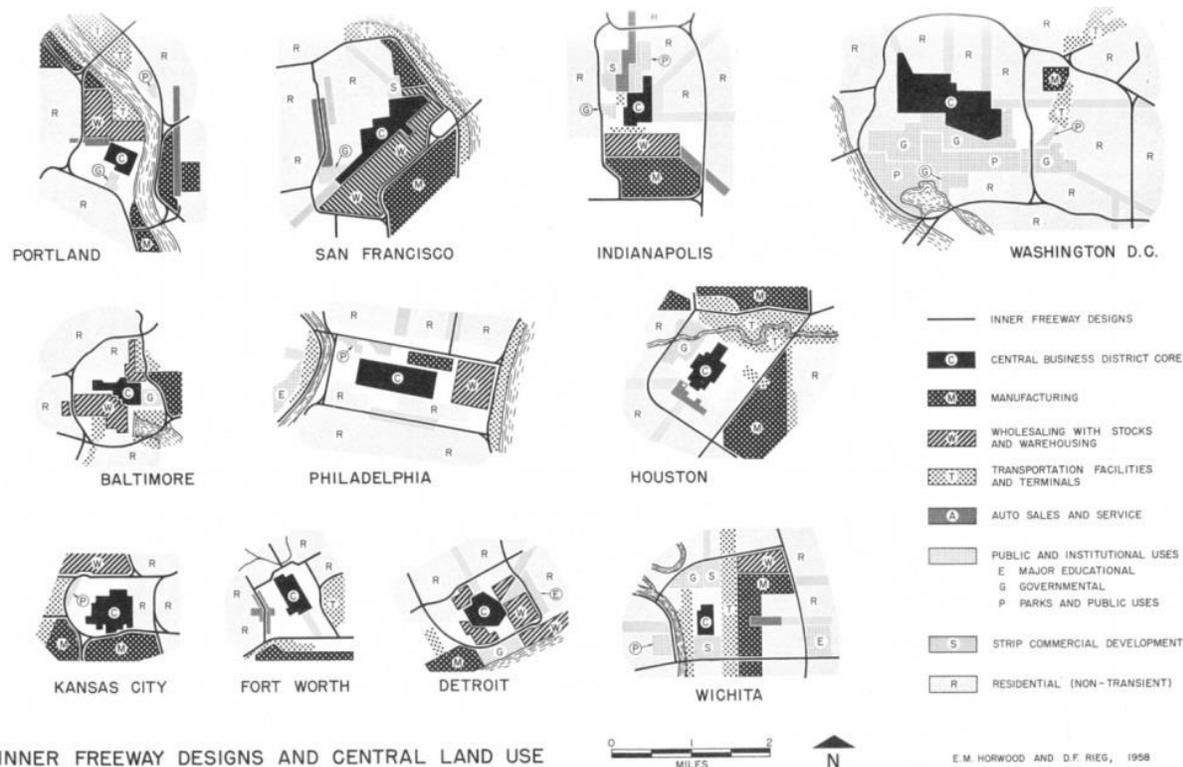


Figure 7. The Bid Rent curve illustrated, with land use and land rent (ie. Land value) related.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>98</sup> Image by author.



**Figure 8. A 1959 land use survey of American downtowns show the pattern of land use distribution according to the need for centrality.<sup>99</sup>**

The rise of chain stores and the resulting pattern of either homogenization or devastation of urban cores can be ascribed to another economic mechanism, namely the economy of scale. Large-scale retail corporations have blossomed in many Western countries because they can operate with significant efficiency benefits over independent retailers through integrated manufacturing, consolidated management and strong brand recognition.<sup>100</sup> As explained in the history of retail stores, these benefits have led to their success and ultimate usurping and displacement of many smaller retail operations in highly accessible central cities. In most European cities this has led to a rise of chain stores along main pedestrian arterials, as thoroughly documented by Van Duren in Amsterdam and the New

<sup>99</sup> Image from E.M. Horwood and R.R. Boyce, *Studies of the Central Business District and Urban Freeway Development*(University of Washington Press, 1959).

<sup>100</sup> Roger Miellet, *Honderd Jaar Grootwinkelbedrijf in Nederland*(Zwolle: Catena, 1992); R. Miellet and M. Voorn, "Winkelen in Weelde: Warenhuizen in West-Europa 1860-2000,"(Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2001).

Economics Foundation in the United Kingdom,<sup>101</sup> yet similar processes have led to the widespread decentralization of retail in North America, abandoning urban cores altogether.<sup>102</sup>

While the effects of bid-rent economics and economies of scale may have an important influence on the urban core and its land use distribution, theorists often fail to examine their street level manifestations. How does economic transformation affect public space in downtown, and frontages in specific? Many of the street level outcomes of economic mechanisms are through retail businesses, as they are generally considered to add to the vitality and economic viability of public spaces. As mentioned in the introduction, stores address passersby with interactive and permeable facades, all in an attempt to seduce passersby to become customers and generate sales. Stores need public space and vice versa.<sup>103</sup> As a land use, retail also has an internal economic structure that determines the distribution, clustering and diversity of stores across space. Several theorists have studied these elements of retail and have drafted explanatory models as a result.<sup>104</sup>

The aforementioned bid-rent curve has a significant effect on the distribution of retail types within central retail clusters. Many subcategories of retailers can be recognized under the umbrella field of retail, sorted by the dominant type of goods an establishment aims to sell. Sellers of luxury goods such as fashion, shoes and accessories are highly dependent on attracting the attention and sales of passersby. They attempt to locate in areas that have a high amount of pedestrian traffic, and have the matching funds to outbid all other land uses. Stores that sell durable goods such as hardware, cars or books are far less dependent on impulse purchases and as a result are often found on more

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<sup>101</sup> Foundation, "Clone Town Britain: The Loss of Local Identity on the Nation's High Streets."; "Clone Town Britain, the Survey Results on the Bland State of the Nation".

<sup>102</sup> Robert J. Gibbs, *Principles of Urban Retail Planning and Development* (Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons, 2012); Victor Gruen, *The Heart of Our Cities; the Urban Crisis: Diagnosis and Cure* (New York.: Simon and Schuster, 1964); *Centers for the Urban Environment; Survival of the Cities* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1973); Victor Gruen and Larry Smith, *Shopping Towns USA; the Planning of Shopping Centers*, Progressive Architecture Library (New York.: Reinhold Pub. Corp., 1960).

<sup>103</sup> D. Evers et al., *Winkelen in Megaland*, ed. Rijksplanbureau (NAi Uitgevers, 2005); David Kooijman D. C. Krabben Erwin van der Evers, *Planning Van Winkels En Winkelgebieden in Nederland* (Den Haag: Sdu Uitgevers, 2011); Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.

<sup>104</sup> S. Brown, "Retail Location: A Micro-Scale Perspective," (1992); "Retail Location Theory: Evolution and Evaluation," *International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research* 3, no. 2 (1993).

peripheral locations in urban cores. The same goes for stores that sell daily goods, such as supermarkets, drugstores and tobacconists. Current retail research in the Netherlands identifies how three main categories retail trade indeed distribute across urban cores according to their demand for accessibility and impulse trade. Luxury (Fun) goods retailers usually locate in the most centrally located and most expensive land; other non-daily durable goods (Destination) retailers locate close by in side streets and daily (Run) goods stores base most of their locational decisions on the appropriate nearby residential customer base.<sup>105</sup>

While the bid-rent theory offers the explanatory framework for this spatial distribution of different types of retail trades, their clustering is described by two other theories. Retailers realize that there is mutual benefit to multiple parties if they 'pull together' and create a cluster of similar and complementary stores. Retailer researcher William J. Reilly has quantified this benefit in his 'Law of Retail Gravitation' that stipulates that retail center attraction increases as its amount of goods on offer increases as well.<sup>106</sup> In a similar vein, the distribution of retail centers has been studied by geographers Christaller<sup>107</sup> and Lösch<sup>108</sup> and coined the Central Place Theory, stating that certain centers have goods 'thresholds', with higher tier centers offering a wider range of goods. Both theories show that clustering and maximization of the diversity and quantity of retailers is beneficial to the commercial viability of commercial cores, focusing on the rational consumer that aims to minimize their travel for acquiring goods in a setting that has no further externalities. Of course these premises can and have been disputed, most notably as they ignore the sense of place certain (historic) centers can offer as a Unique Selling Point<sup>109</sup> and the self-reinforcing cycle of center hierarchy these theories have created. As public and corporate strategists followed the theories, they validated themselves.<sup>110</sup> Yet the value of

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<sup>105</sup> Evers et al., *Winkelen in Megaland*; Evers, *Planning Van Winkels En Winkelgebieden in Nederland*.

<sup>106</sup> WJ Reilly, "Methods for the Study of Retail Relationships," *University of Texas bulletin (2944)* (1929); W.J. Reilly, *The Law of Retail Gravitation* (WJ Reilly, 1931).

<sup>107</sup> W. Christaller, "Die Zentralen Orte in Suddeutschland. Translated by Carlisle W. Baskin, 1966, as *Central Places in Southern Germany*," (Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1933).

<sup>108</sup> A. Lösch, "The Economics of Location," (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1940).

<sup>109</sup> D. Kooijman, "Het Recreatieve Einde Van Christaller," *Rooilijn* 3(2000).

<sup>110</sup> Brown, "Retail Location Theory: Evolution and Evaluation."; "Retail Location at the Micro-Scale: Inventory and Prospect," *Service Industries Journal* 14, no. 4 (1994).

agglomeration is also corroborated from another angle that stresses the benefit of agglomeration between retailers of similar merchandise as a risk minimization strategy. The benefit of retailers to locate as close as possible to comparable peers helps them as businesses to keep a close eye on the competition while enabling customers to compare a certain range of goods in one place; both are risk minimization strategies.<sup>111</sup> This theory has been expanded into retail compatibility tables in the late 1950s, illustrating which types of merchandise support or deter the sales of other types.<sup>112</sup>

In a landmark 1972 study of the urban core of Coventry, retail economist Ross Davies took a step beyond the centrifugal forces of retail type compartmentalization prescribed by the bid-rent model and added the clustering forces that Hotelling's Principle of Minimum Differentiation prescribed.<sup>113</sup> While retail uses filtered according to their retail type and need for centrality, they also clustered together with similar peers. Davies also identified a range of retail ribbons stretching out from Coventry's retail core, dependent upon accessibility from the city's periphery and often also specializing in a certain retail type. These three structuring principles have been combined into his 'Complex Model of City Centre Retailing'. This model has been corroborated to an extent by a historiographical research of retail change in central Belfast.<sup>114</sup>

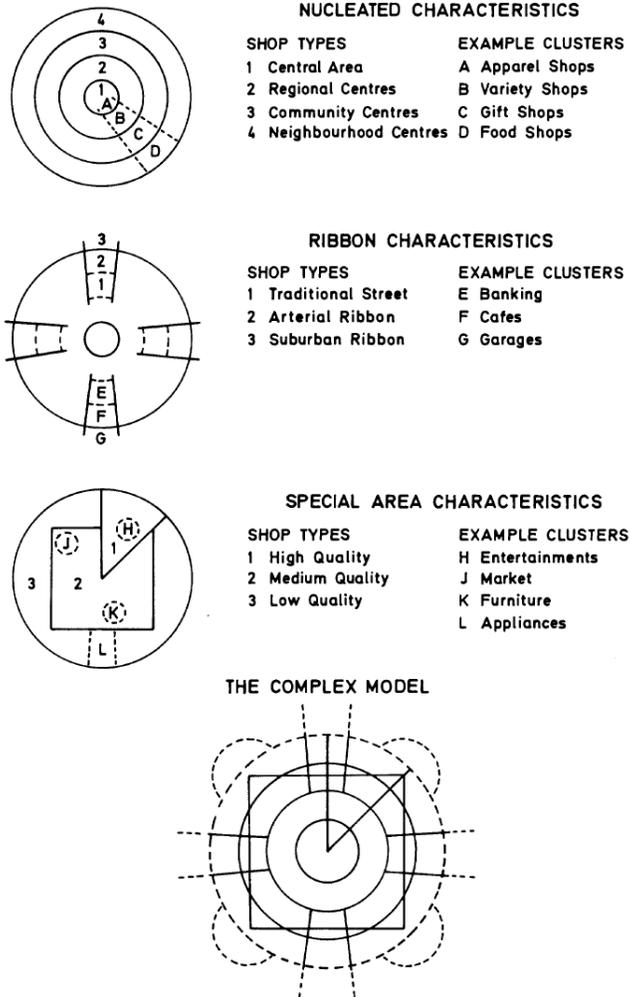
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<sup>111</sup> H. Hotelling, "Stability in Competition," *The economic journal* 39, no. 153 (1929); S. Brown, "Harold Hotelling and the Principle of Minimum Differentiation," *Progress in Human Geography* 13, no. 4 (1989).

<sup>112</sup> R.L. Nelson, *The Selection of Retail Locations* (FW Dodge Corporation New York, 1958).

<sup>113</sup> R.L. Davies, "Structural Models of Retail Distribution: Analogies with Settlement and Urban Land-Use Theories," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* (1972).

<sup>114</sup> Brown, "Retail Location and Retail Change in Belfast City Centre."; "The Complex Model of City Centre Retailing: An Historical Application," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* (1987).



**Figure 9. Davies' 'complex model' of city center retailing from Davies 1972, 1978.**

Most aforementioned economic theories have a limited validity in the fast-changing landscape of contemporary retail. Today, rational decision-making by retailers where to locate their establishment(s) is practically impossible due to market intransparency and government controls, and rational decision-making of consumers where to shop is not only decided by risk-minimization and travel distances but also by many other variables including the sense of place that central cities can provide. Nevertheless, the underlying mechanisms still govern the distribution, concentration and diversity of most present-day commercial clusters, and therefore deserve to be included as the theoretical basis for some

of the economic hypotheses that will be used in this dissertation. These hypotheses will be discussed in further detail in chapter three which covers the research design.

## 2.3 MEANING - FRONTAGES AS A REPRESENTATION OF SOCIETY

Many empirical studies of urban environments have ignored the effects of personal meaning in the evaluation of places.<sup>115</sup> The biggest risk in this omission lies in the fact that seemingly objective evaluation results are often culturally defined.<sup>116</sup> Furthermore, cognition without personal evaluation does not exist. Positive and walkable environments do not only represent a balance of visual elements, they also connect with a user's past experiences. As humans learn about their environment, they compile their salient features into schemata. These help the fast retrieval of information on the value of environmental cues and behavioral reactions. Often, the congruence of new objects and environments to existing schemata positively influences their evaluation.<sup>117</sup> More than just storing neutral information, the memory of humans is an evaluative device. Past experiences are imbued with denotative meaning based on identity and structure, but also on connotative meaning attaching evaluation and previous experiences to schemata.<sup>118</sup> The connection of meaning, physical form and the activities this form supports is described at length by psychologist David Canter, stressing the significance of environmental roles and place rules defining the notion of places. As this notion links with the past of the perceiver, studying connotation is an integral element of understanding place.<sup>119</sup>

The definition of place and the value of meaning in environments are important concepts to understand frontages and their improvement and connection to the experience of urban cores. While space is inherently a neutral term for the vastness that surrounds us, "*...a fact of life which, like time, produces the basic coordinates for human life*", place is a demarcated

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<sup>115</sup> For example, Kevin Lynch has avoided connotative meaning in his studies as expressed in S. Carr, *Public Space*(Cambridge Univ Pr, 1992), 158. Another example is the careful dissection of cultural meaning in the evaluation of environments in Nasar, "The Evaluative Image of the City."

<sup>116</sup> Amos Rapoport, "House Form and Culture," (1969).

<sup>117</sup> Matthew Carmona, *Public Places, Urban Spaces : The Dimensions of Urban Design*(Oxford; Boston: Architectural Press, 2003).

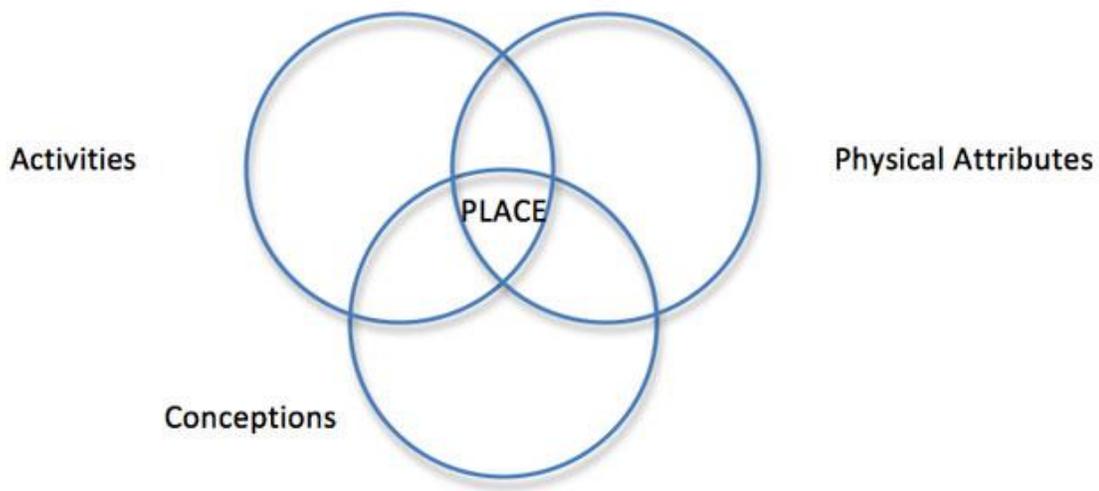
<sup>118</sup> Nasar, "The Evaluative Image of the City."

<sup>119</sup> David V. Canter, *The Psychology of Place*(London: Architectural Press, 1977); "Putting Situations in Their Place,," in *Social Behaviour in Context*, ed. A. Furnham(Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1983).

element of space, adding human experience and meaning. “When humans invest meaning in a portion of space and then become attached to it in some way ... it becomes a place.”<sup>120</sup>

Geographer Yi Fu Tuan names place “... a concretion of value”, which compared to space is “a calm center of established values.”<sup>121</sup> Space is therefore is not a counterpoint to place; it is one of its core components. Places need space around them, and spaces are defined by readily demarcated places that have a certain identity and uniqueness.<sup>122</sup>

In their respective definitions of the elements of place, Relph<sup>123</sup> and Canter<sup>124</sup> illustrate a remarkably similar categorization between *space*, *activities* and *meanings* or images as illustrated in figure 9. Inseparably these three elements of human experience, behavior and the environment make up our notion of places.



**Figure 10. The three elements of the psychology of place.**<sup>125</sup>

The strong sense of place is a crucial selling point for historic urban cores in an ever-homogenizing metropolitan setting. With the investment of human experience and meaning, spaces are able to obtain a ‘genius loci’ or sense of place as people become

<sup>120</sup> T. Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction*, vol. 3(Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), 10.

<sup>121</sup> Y.F. Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*(Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2001), 12, 54.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Relph, *Place and Placelessness*.

<sup>124</sup> Canter, *The Psychology of Place*.

<sup>125</sup> Image redrawn from *ibid*.

attached to locales beyond their immediate sensory experience.<sup>126</sup> Oftentimes, this meaning or 'sense of place' is ascribed to by the permanence of the built environment, "...its simple endurance over time giving it time-thickened qualities enhancing place identity."<sup>127</sup> In urban cores, a sense of place as opposed to neutral space is often achieved by collective memories, originally described as 'place memory' by philosophers Halbwachs<sup>128</sup>, Casey<sup>129</sup> and Lowenthal<sup>130</sup>. The permanence of the built environment in historic urban cores can help shape a collective past and identity for citizens and visitors.<sup>131</sup> As argued in the introduction, urban cores are arguably the nexus of collective memory in an increasingly placeless environment that focuses on commodified experience and quick return on investment. Placelessness is closely linked with the loss of meaningful and identifiable places by the "making of standardized landscapes."<sup>132</sup> The rise of global capitalism combined with the global style of "super modernism" has resulted in an ever-growing pressure to create generic spaces that appeal to all but are meaningful to few.<sup>133</sup> Historic urban cores are actually strongly resisting and even counteracting spatial equalization as they have become places where "...cultural identity, social history and urban design are intertwined."<sup>134</sup>

Place and connotation are also crucial elements in understanding the formation, transformation and evaluation of street level architecture. While frontages enable activity by their physical presence and act as more or less permeable interfaces, they also represent

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<sup>126</sup> John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*(New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 157.

<sup>127</sup> Carmona, *Public Places, Urban Spaces : The Dimensions of Urban Design*, 120.

<sup>128</sup> Maurice Halbwachs and Jeanne Alexandre, *La Mémoire Collective*(Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1950).

<sup>129</sup> Edward S. Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

<sup>130</sup> David Lowenthal, "Past Time, Present Place: Landscape and Memory," *Geographical Review* (1975).

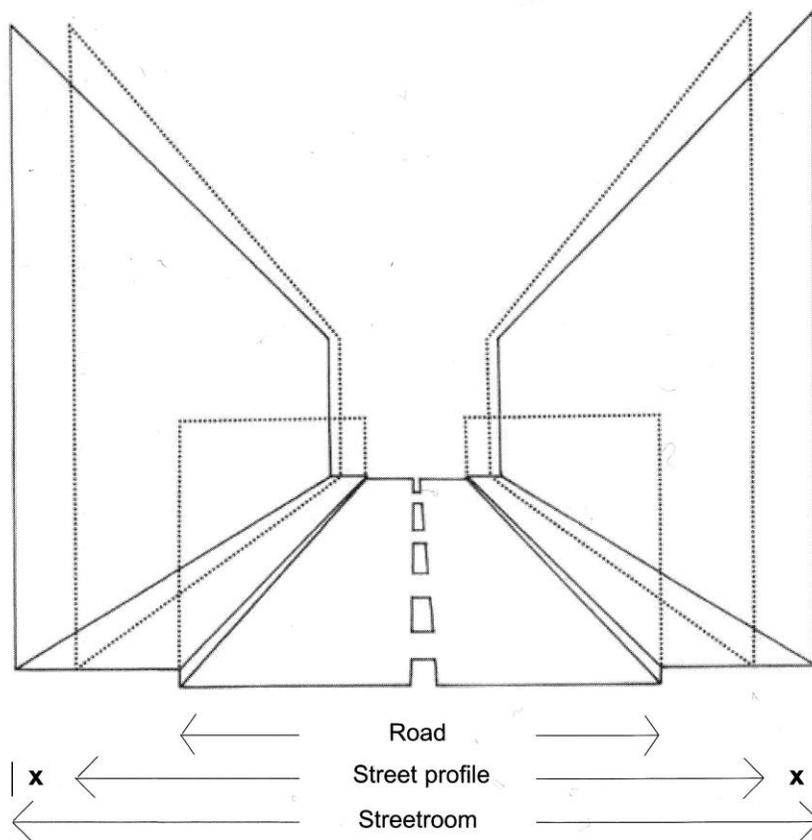
<sup>131</sup> Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory : Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments*; M. Hebbert, "The Street as Locus of Collective Memory," *Environment and Planning D* 23, no. 4 (2005); H. Meyer, L. Van den Burg, and H.C. Bekkering, eds., *Het Geheugen Van De Stad / the Memory of the City*(Amsterdam: SUN, 2006).

<sup>132</sup> Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, ii.

<sup>133</sup> Lefebvre in Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place : Urban Landscapes as Public History*(Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995), 21; Hans Ibelings, *Supermodernism : Architecture in the Age of Globalization*(Rotterdam: NAI, 1998).

<sup>134</sup> Hayden, *The Power of Place : Urban Landscapes as Public History*, 14.

the building's face to the general public, and as such are *the* communicative device of architecture. Frontages are the medium of individual, commercial, cultural and social expression that define 'urbanity' and the necessary negotiation of relations between private and public interests that shape civil society.<sup>135</sup> "[A frontage] is always shaped within a certain cultural context. [It] is more dependent on the social relationship between the public, collective and private domains than to any single building." As such, a frontage should not be regarded as a featureless object, but as a "...field of transition wherein the processes of interrelations occur. In the field of human experience, it always has a volume."<sup>136</sup> This effect is illustrated in figure 9.



**Figure 11.** The "Streetroom" as a function of land use, ownership and visual transformations. The interface zone is the difference between the Streetroom and the street profile. Image courtesy of Bobic (2004).

<sup>135</sup> Boomkens, *Een Drempelwereld : Moderne Ervaring En Stedelijke Openbaarheid*.

<sup>136</sup> Bobic, *Between the Edges : Street-Building Transition as Urbanity Interface*, 66, 84.

The demarcation between public and private space is also inherently an act of territoriality. In a recent dissertation on the configuration of the public-private interface in cities, researcher Kris Scheerlinck reviews the often conflicting opinions on how to regard and shape the relation between buildings and public space.<sup>137</sup> While some authors propose a strict and clear demarcation between public and private spaces in an attempt to promote social control and safety (often in protest against the Modernist doctrine at the time of writing)<sup>138</sup>, others make a case for a more gradual transition between territories to denote the various levels of privacy that a society requires.<sup>139</sup> The meaning of civility plays an important role in the negotiation between private and public spaces, and as such is a highly culturally defined element shaping ground floor architecture and the semi-public zones that surround it.



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<sup>137</sup> K. Scheerlinck, "Depth Configurations. Proximity, Permeability and Territorial Boundaries in Urban Projects." (URL Barcelona, 2012).

<sup>138</sup> E.g. Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*; Newman, *Defensible Space; Crime Prevention through Urban Design*.

<sup>139</sup> Habraken and Teicher, *The Structure of the Ordinary : Form and Control in the Built Environment*; Heeling, Meyer, and Westrik, *Het Ontwerp Van De Stadsplattegrond*, 1; Ali Madanipour, *Public and Private Spaces of the City*(London; New York: Routledge, 2003).

**Figure 12. A formerly open storefront has been barricaded in downtown Detroit, even while the store remains open.<sup>140</sup>**

In a residential setting, Habraken and Teicher study the configuration of territorial boundaries between dwellings and public space, finding that the relation between the street and the private dwelling is often indirect. Alcoves, yards, stoops and fences provide dwellings with a certain buffer zone between the fully public street and the privacy of the home. They refer to this indirect relation as one of increasing 'territorial depth', in which semi-public spaces need to be traversed before entering the house.<sup>141</sup> A typology of 'gates' is identified that negotiate public and private space and represent spatial appropriation by residents.<sup>142</sup> Scheerlinck identifies a range of subtle 'filters' such as physical colonnades, stoops, pavements and vegetation but also psychological indicators of appropriation such as the placement of private outdoor furniture on streets and the use of lighting, guards and CCTV.<sup>143</sup> Similarly, in his studies of the interface between buildings and streets, Bobic categorizes a range of transitions that defend the privacy of the home while maintaining a level of interaction with the street. He links the activity and the design of public space with how residents shape their homes: *"If the activities on the street are too aggressive [e.g. traffic noise and passersby], residents will introduce protective elements with the aim of preventing danger by reinforcing the boundary with the street."*<sup>144</sup> Bobic continues to present a typology of mechanisms that aim to balance privacy, security and interaction, both physically and psychologically. All these elements portray the connotation that dwellers have about public space, but also shape the connotation passersby will have with dwellings.

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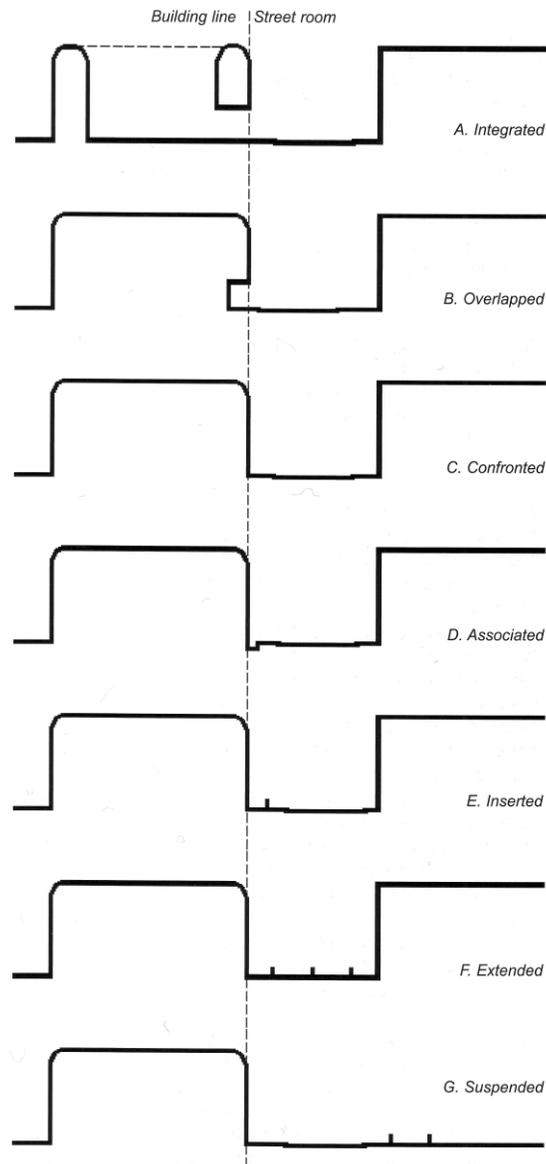
<sup>140</sup> Image by author, 2014.

<sup>141</sup> Habraken and Teicher, *The Structure of the Ordinary : Form and Control in the Built Environment*, 139.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid, 182

<sup>143</sup> Scheerlinck, "Depth Configurations. Proximity, Permeability and Territorial Boundaries in Urban Projects.," 119.

<sup>144</sup> Bobic, *Between the Edges : Street-Building Transition as Urbanity Interface*, 57.



**Figure 13. The morphological categorization of the interface between buildings and public space.<sup>145</sup>**

Retail businesses have very different motivations in their interaction with public spaces. Store frontages aim to draw in passersby by staging fantasy worlds of consumption, enabling passersby to compare and contrast their identity with brands and merchandise as lavish displays communicate the best sale, the hottest brands and the latest fashion and cultural trends to an urban audience.<sup>146</sup> They aim to diminish the ‘threshold resistance’ that

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Marcus, *The American Store Window*.

stands between a passing pedestrian and a loyal customer<sup>147</sup> in an delicately balanced architecture of seduction.<sup>148</sup> The brands and images that shops convey on the public are all about interaction, connotation and identification.<sup>149</sup> As a result, retail frontages are often as transparent and permeable as possible, to convey information about products and attract customers. But there are significant differences between retail frontages, varying on the goods sold and branding (more about this in the next chapter). The meaning conveyed by store fronts as individual theatrical settings and the meaning of urban cores is however certainly not always in balance. Yet some argue that the rise of chain stores have transformed retail facades into representational devices for global branding and increasing homogenization of the urban core.<sup>150</sup> The downtown street level becomes a stage for global economics, and the sense of place and uniqueness of places may suffer as a result.

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<sup>147</sup> A. Alfred Taubman, *Threshold Resistance : The Extraordinary Career of a Luxury Retailing Pioneer*(New York: Collins, 2007).

<sup>148</sup> Leontine de Wit and David Vernet, *Boutiques and Other Retail Spaces : The Architecture of Seduction*(New York; London: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>149</sup> S. Zukin, *Point of Purchase : How Shopping Changed American Culture*(New York: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>150</sup> Foundation, "Clone Town Britain: The Loss of Local Identity on the Nation's High Streets."

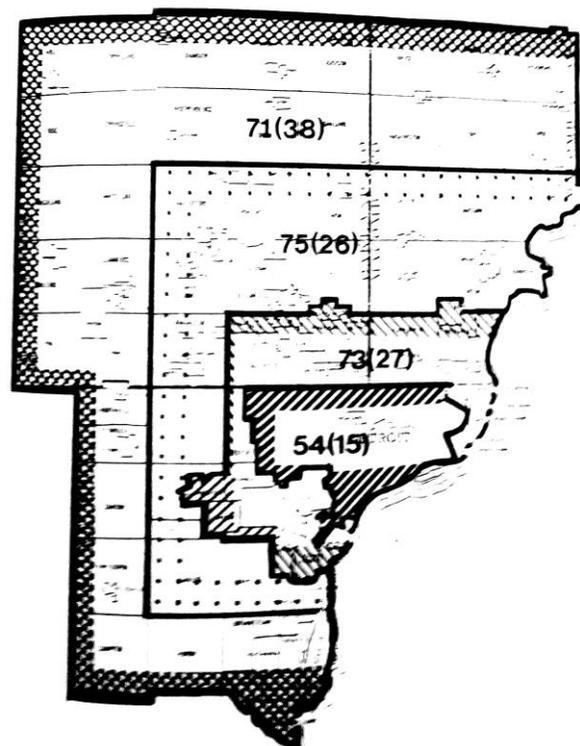


**Figure 14. Global branding has replaced the display of merchandise in a former display box in The Hague.<sup>151</sup>**

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<sup>151</sup> Image by author, 2012.

Furthermore, even commercial frontages are not immune to the cultural and social conditions in which they stand. This is illustrated by the example of connotation of the public realm with crime and violence that has strongly shaped street level architecture in many American central cities in the postwar era. The rise of urban violence in the 1960s and central city crime in the 1970s has resulted in architecture that is highly shielded from public space, often exacerbating the original or perceived causes. Many downtown shops that remain in business are shuttered with brick, steel and plywood “Post-Riot Renaissance” frontages that communicate a sense of fear.<sup>152</sup> Restoring an image of transparency and trust in public space can be seen as an important impetus behind downtown Detroit’s effort to open (up) retail establishments.<sup>153</sup>



**Figure 15. Diagram illustrating the percentage of residents within Detroit and its greater region that are afraid to go out in downtown Detroit during the day (between brackets) and night. These percentages have significantly influenced downtown architecture.<sup>154</sup>**

<sup>152</sup> Isenberg, *Downtown America : A History of the Place and the People Who Made It*.

<sup>153</sup> Efforts are both publicly conducted by the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation, amended by the private efforts of Daniel Gilbert’s purchase of many downtown properties to open new retail businesses.

<sup>154</sup> Michigan Citizens Research Council of, *Police Precinct One in Downtown Detroit: A Survey of Trends in Crime, Economic Activity, and Public Attitudes*, Its Report ;No. 258 (Detroit: the Council, 1979).

The issue of defensive architecture does not purely play out in Detroit. All over the United States, downtown buildings that house public functions have begun to internalize and filter shops, restaurants and offices at the cost of public space. Office buildings have replaced street level entrances with parking structures and covered concourses that allow their carefully filtered users to use cities without facing the urban outdoors with its associated negative connotations.<sup>155</sup> Over time, entire urban blocks and districts have been inverted from street level into raised or sunken ‘analogous cities’ of interior public space, often with the initial premise of weather protection.<sup>156</sup> This ‘architecture of fear’ has started a cyclical effect, as the original distrust in public life has materialized in defensive architecture, representing and further exacerbating a divide between private and public. The resulting blank walls are described as “*signs of distrust in the city... They proclaim the power of the institution, the in consequence of the individual, whom they are clearly meant to put down, if not intimidate.*”<sup>157</sup> Yet as this dissertation will aim to show, blank walls have many different causes, most of which have nothing to do with provocation or the proclamation of power.



**Figure 16. Commercial functions (left) are highly interactive and propel an image of low ‘threshold resistance’, while institutional buildings (middle) may aim for more exclusivity. Blank walls (right) completely shield public from private space.<sup>158</sup>**

<sup>155</sup> Ellin, *Postmodern Urbanism*; Isenberg, *Downtown America : A History of the Place and the People Who Made It*.

<sup>156</sup> Boddy, "Underground and Overhead: Building the Analogous City."

<sup>157</sup> Whyte, *City : Rediscovering the Center*, 222-26.

<sup>158</sup> Diagram by author, 2011.

As frontages are not just physical interfaces that allow for the permeation of activity and vision, this dissertation will also take the connotative meaning and representative values of frontages into account, especially when studying the effects of frontages on street life and urban evaluation. Frontages assert a representational image to passersby. The place rules and roles that are associated with them are therefore essential to understanding and improving street level architecture. Yet the relation between space, activity and image is also reciprocal, as human cognition, connotation and meaning also shape architecture.

To conclude, the way a city presents itself at street level is a sign of how it perceives the value of public life. If a city distrusts its public realm, architecture will follow suit and put up barricades. If a city embraces the vitality and diversity of its streets, its architecture will more likely encourage a seamless interaction between private and public spaces and promote frontage interactivity. In other words, underlying place rules influenced by the experiences and connotations of everyday urban users govern the form of street level architecture and in turn shape the meaning and connotation of public life. The value of place and its meaning is therefore crucial to understanding and improving the vitality of downtowns.

# URBAN QUALITY

- **Design:** visions of urban futures (a.o. Howard, 1902; Berlage, 1910; Le Corbusier, 1925; Wright, 1932; Krier, 1975; Duany et al., 2000)
- **Reflection:** normative theories of good urban form (a.o. J. Jacobs, 1961; Lynch, 1984; A. Jacobs, 1993; Montgomery, 1998)
- **Observation:** pioneers of empirical research (a.o. Lynch, 1961; Whyte, 1980; Gehl, 1987)
- **Synthesis:** walkability and urban form linked (a.o. Jacobs, 1993; Hajer and Reijndorp, 2001; Heeling et al., 2002; Alfonzo, 2005; Southworth, 2005; Day et al., 2006; Clifton et al., 2007; Kickert, 2007; Sauter et al., 2008; Ewing, 2009; Mehta, 2009; Methorst, 2009; Alfonzo and Leinberger, 2012)

CONSISTS OF MANY ELEMENTS INCLUDING

ACTIVE FRONTAGES

SAFETY, PERMEABILITY ETC.

AFFECTING

## HUMAN BEHAVIOR

- The street acts as **transactional space** that connects land uses through frontages. Active frontages therefore activate streets (Alexander et al. 1977; Anderson, 1978; Appleyard et al., 1982; MacCormac, 1983)
- Active retail and residential frontages support active **street life** (a.o. Gehl, 1986, 2006; Gil Lopez, 2003; Kickert, 2007)
- Active frontages make for 'constituted' streets that support **public life and reduce crime** (a.o. Newman, 1972; Steadman, 1983; Hillier and Hanson, 1984; Hillier, 1996; Shu and Huang, 2003; Hanson and Zako, 2007; Van Nes and Lopez, 2007; Amorim et al., 2009; Palaiologou and Vaughan, 2012)

AS A RESULT OF

## FORM

- Active frontages on streets fulfill a human need for **visual complexity** in their environments as a stimulation of the senses. Indeed many of the world's most enjoyed and permanent urban environments display a certain level of visual complexity (Yerkes and Dodson, 1908; Rapoport, 1990)
- Yet this complexity needs to be **balanced with coherence**, based on the notion that humans as information processors need to learn and make sense of their surroundings. Urban design often aims to create order or "Einheitlichkeit" in environments (Kaplan, 1987; Nasar, 1990; Nasar and Hong, 1999; Wagenaar, 2011)
- Complex and coherent environments also need to offer its visitors a sense of **legibility and mystery**: the promise of new information that is presented in an understandable manner (Kaplan, 1989; Kaplan et al. 1989)
- The experience of environments is inherently **multisensory**: successful retail environments excite all the senses (Turley and Milliman, 2000; Gladwell, 2004; Mehta, 2009; Holck, 2010;).

## FUNCTION

- Urban cores can be regarded as the stage for commercial interaction and agglomeration (Sassen, 1994, 2001; Giuliani, 2010). As such, **economic mechanisms** are very influential at shaping downtown at eye level (Brown, 1993).
- In many downtowns, commercial functions have long displaced residents and manufacturing plants to create the **Central Business District** (Smook, 1984; Fogelson, 2001, Cammen and De Klerk, 2003)
- The functions behind central urban frontages is not necessarily dependent on urban form and the buildings at hand; **form and function interact** in a mutual field of tension (Van Duren, 1995)
- Central land uses and retail uses in specific distribute themselves according to their **need for centrality and accessibility**, with the highest land values typically reserved for stores that depend on trade from a high number of passersby. This land use distribution follows the **Bid-Rent Curve** theory (Burgess, 1925; Hoyt, 1933; Brown, 1993, 1994)
- Retail stores also benefit from **clustering to create a more attractive center** with a larger merchandise offer and hinterland (Christaller, 1933; Losch, 1940) that allow customers to compare goods (Hotelling, 1929)

## MEANING

- Beyond their physical form and functional connectivity, frontages imbue **meaning** on surrounding public spaces as **places** (a.o. Relph, 1976; Canter, 1977; Tuan, 2001; Cresswell, 2004)
- Their role in urban cores can help perpetuate place memory and provide a **sense of place and permanence** (a.o. Halbwachs, 1950; Jackson, 1984; Casey, 1987; Boyer, 1994; Hayden, 1995; Hebbert, 2005; Meyer et al., 2006)
- Frontages serve as a territorial demarcation that **reflects the trust a society has in public space** (a.o. Boomkens, 1998; Habraken and Teicher, 1998; Madanipour, 2003; Bobic, 2004; Scheerlink, 2012).
- Active frontages may reflect **permeability and interactivity** (a.o. Marcus, 1978; Zukin, 2004; Taubman, 2007; Wit and Vernet, 2007) while inactive frontages may give passersby a **sense of fear and insignificance** (a.o. Whyte, 1988; Boddy, 1992; Ellin, 1996; Isenberg, 2004)
- Retail frontages aim to lure passersby with visual advertisement and branding, as such they convey an **image of consumption**. Globalization has led to the homogenization of many central retail streets (New Economics Foundation, 2004, 2005; Evers et al., 2011; Wagenaar, 2011).

## 2.4 HISTORY OF URBAN CORES ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

The transformation of frontage interactivity in central city areas cannot be seen as separated from the wider processes that shape them. The wide dichotomy in the form and function of downtown frontage patterns between The Netherlands and the United States serve as proof that urban form is ultimately a reflection of the society that creates and occupies it. As a wide range of urban scholars recognize that space is a social construct it is necessary for the study of the built environment to “...analyze a range of economic, political, and social variables, ... in order to comprehend the nature of changes both in the design and use of the built environment and in the values attributed to the built environment by different people.”<sup>159</sup> As urban morphologists focus on space as the materialization of urban processes, they often find themselves engaged in interdisciplinary research to explain the forces that shape cities. “[They] ask several basic questions: How did or does the built landscape come about? How did or does it function? How has it been adapted, or is it adapting, to changing needs and circumstances? As they seek explanations for the processes that affect urban form, urban morphologists turn to traditional social sciences, typically sociology, anthropology, psychology and economics.”<sup>160</sup> Morphology as the study of the built environment should focus on a “dialogue between a given built world and dynamic socioeconomic forces.”<sup>161</sup> Therefore, this section will focus on the historical background that has influenced frontage form over the past century.

Comparing the fate of Dutch and American urban cores yields some interesting similarities, both in the challenges they faced and the responses they brought to the table. In both countries, the urban core was regarded as a center for public gathering, economic transaction and the representation of strong identity from their onset. The Industrial Revolution brought the spatial sorting of land uses, with urban cores accommodating

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<sup>159</sup> S. Hay and R. Harle, "Bluetooth Tracking without Discoverability," *Location and Context Awareness* (2009).

<sup>160</sup> Moudon, "Urban Morphology as an Emerging Interdisciplinary Field."

<sup>161</sup> *Built for Change: Neighborhood Architecture in San Francisco* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1986), xix.

functions that benefited from agglomeration.<sup>162</sup> The gradual decline of downtown as a center for production and habitation occurred in both countries, albeit with the United States having a decades-long head start. The closely clustered shops in Dutch inner cities adhered to the same laws of gravitation and differentiation as their American counterparts.<sup>163</sup> As department stores pushed out residents and smaller businesses alike in Boston, New York and Chicago, Dutch cities experienced very similar phenomena.<sup>164</sup> The rise of communication technology and management evolution accounted for the growth of offices in American Central Business Districts as well as Dutch inner cities, albeit to different extents.<sup>165</sup> The rise of decentralization and automobility prompted 'death-by-resurrection' postwar policy of Modernizing the urban core through radical urban renewal on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>166</sup> Both the Netherlands and the United States drafted very similar national policies for the construction of fly-overs, tower flats, conference centers and anonymous office towers. The American highways propagated in the 1956 Interstate Act are not dissimilar from the limited access roads that resulted from the 1938 Rijkswegenplan in The Netherlands. The urban renewal resulting from Title 1 of the American 1949 Housing Act and its successors bears close resemblance to the 'sanitizing' of Dutch urban cores in the postwar era under various urban renewal acts.<sup>167</sup>

The similarity between the Dutch and American approaches to downtown renewal in the postwar era is not surprising, as both stemmed from the ideals of the same Modern discourse. As a significant amount of important European Modern architects fled to America during World War II, many designers stayed and rebuilt war-damaged cities, influencing the postwar debates on cities and architecture on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Fogelson, *Downtown : Its Rise and Fall, 1880-1950*; Smook, *Binnensteden Veranderen: Atlas Van Het Ruimtelijk Veranderingsproces Van Nederlandse Binnensteden in De Laatste Anderhalve Eeuw*.

<sup>163</sup> Brown, "Retail Location Theory: Evolution and Evaluation."; "Retail Location at the Micro-Scale: Inventory and Prospect."

<sup>164</sup> Miellet and Voorn, "Winkelen in Weelde: Warenhuizen in West-Europa 1860-2000."

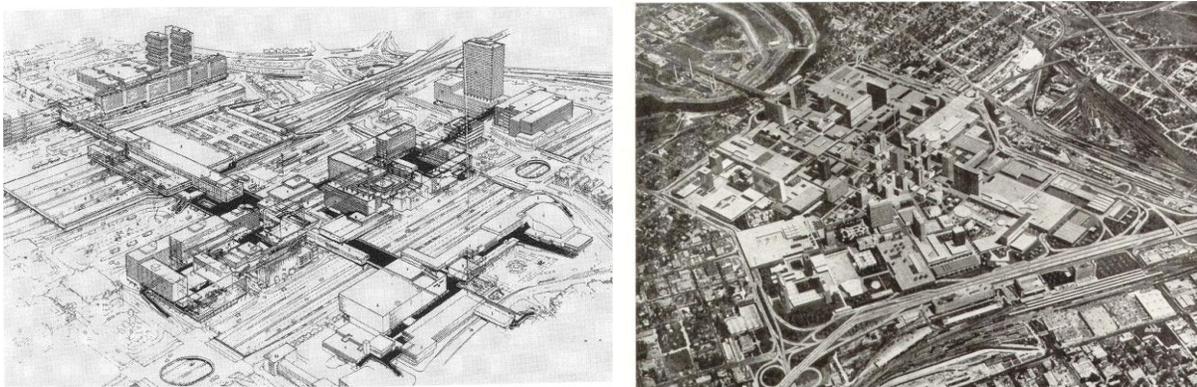
<sup>165</sup> Peter Cowan, *The Office; a Facet of Urban Growth*(New York: American Elsevier Pub. Co., 1969); Carol Willis, *Form Follows Finance : Skyscrapers and Skylines in New York and Chicago*(New York, N.Y.: Princeton Architectural Press, 1995).

<sup>166</sup> Isenberg, *Downtown America : A History of the Place and the People Who Made It*; Wagenaar, *Town Planning in the Netherlands since 1800 : Responses to Enlightenment Ideas and Geopolitical Realities*.

<sup>167</sup> Cammen and De Klerk, *Ruimtelijke Ordening: Van Grachtengordel Tot Vinexwijk*.

<sup>168</sup> Wagenaar, *Town Planning in the Netherlands since 1800 : Responses to Enlightenment Ideas and Geopolitical Realities*.

Although due to different reasons, urban renewal often moved at a glacial pace or failed altogether in both countries, and the *ragweed acres* in eastern Detroit must have closely resembled the *kaalslag* in eastern The Hague.<sup>169</sup> Similarly, the resistance against Modernism has been quite similar between countries. The popular uprisings against the displacement and inhumanity by African American minorities resembled the resistance against the dehumanization of Dutch urban cores by the counterculture movement.<sup>170</sup> They both resulted in a swing from technocratic planning to a 'sociocracy' of more community involvement and participation.<sup>171</sup> Rapid globalization, neo-liberalism and the rise of the Creative Class has spawned gentrification and the renaissance of downtowns and inner cities as centers for business, heritage and leisure, mainly from the 1980s onwards.



**Figure 17. Artist rendering for Hoog Catharijne shopping, conference and transit structure in Utrecht, designed by Vink, van Grinten, van Kasteel and Spruit and opened in 1973 (left), a striking similarity to the megastructures in the unbuilt Fort Worth plan by Victor Gruen in 1959 which envisaged downtown renewal by concentrating business, infrastructure and civic buildings.<sup>172</sup>**

Most of the divergence between Dutch and American urban cores in the 20<sup>th</sup> century can be explained to cultural and socio-economic differences. Whereas urban form in The Netherlands is often regarded as the outcome of collective aspirations, the United States

<sup>169</sup> Frieden and Sagalyn, *Downtown, Inc. : How America Rebuilds Cities*; Roger Montgomery, "Improving the Design Process in Urban Renewal," in *Urban Renewal: The Record and the Controversy*, ed. James Q. Wilson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1966); Smook, *Binnensteden Veranderen: Atlas Van Het Ruimtelijk Veranderingsproces Van Nederlandse Binnensteden in De Laatste Anderhalve Eeuw*.

<sup>170</sup> Cammen and De Klerk, *Ruimtelijke Ordening: Van Grachtengordel Tot Vinexwijk*.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

<sup>172</sup> Left image Wagenaar, *Town Planning in the Netherlands since 1800 : Responses to Enlightenment Ideas and Geopolitical Realities*, 455. Right image from Gruen and Smith, *Shopping Towns USA; the Planning of Shopping Centers*.

has shaped the image of its cities around entrepreneurship and speculation. With drastically fluctuating land values and a ruthlessly unregulated market in American cities resulting in skyscrapers neighboring open parking lots and taxpayers, strong government intervention on land ownership and esthetic controls aimed for an image of visual unity in Dutch urban cores. As the rise of the automobile already cut its first holes in the American downtown landscape in the 1920s and 1930s, almost no Dutch inner city has off-street parking lots today, and cars are increasingly stored underground or at the periphery of well-preserved city centers. The rise of the suburban shopping mall in the United States at the cost of downtown urban vitality has been prevented by a carrot-and-stick mix of investing in strongly centralized transit systems and drastic curbing of decentralization through national policy in most European countries, including The Netherlands.<sup>173</sup> Ironically, the dreaded Edge Cities that sprouted around American central cities, decentralizing a significant percentage of downtown offices, were implemented by Dutch governments to protect historic city centers from being absorbed by ever-consolidating office skyscrapers.<sup>174</sup> Their scale and distance from the urban cores was not too different, yet the Dutch decentralization of jobs was mostly paired with strong public transportation connectivity, enabling reverse commuting from inner cities. As a result, the average Dutch inner city now functions as the heart of metropolitan social and political life, with history, culture, consumption and leisure shaping the relevance of the urban core and production mostly located in peripheral sites.<sup>175</sup> American cities face a range of challenges to retain or obtain relevance in an ever-expanding metropolis, in a seemingly constant search for identity and significance.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Evers et al., *Winkelen in Megaland*; Evers, *Planning Van Winkels En Winkelgebieden in Nederland*.

<sup>174</sup> Cammen and De Klerk, *Ruimtelijke Ordening: Van Grachtengordel Tot Vinexwijk*; Whyte, *City : Rediscovering the Center*.

<sup>175</sup> Cammen and De Klerk, *Ruimtelijke Ordening: Van Grachtengordel Tot Vinexwijk*; Duren, *De Dynamiek Van Het Constante : Over De Flexibiliteit Van De Amsterdamse Binnenstad Als Economische Plaats*; Wagenaar, *Town Planning in the Netherlands since 1800 : Responses to Enlightenment Ideas and Geopolitical Realities*.

<sup>176</sup> Fogelson, *Downtown : Its Rise and Fall, 1880-1950*; Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier : The Suburbanization of America*(New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

## 2.5 THE ARCHITECTURE OF URBAN CORES

As mentioned in the previous section, downtowns have been shaped by a variety of external and internal forces, by the aspirations and strategies of the many people that own, control, live, work, visit or even avoid them. The evolution of a number of important typologies has resulted in the transformation of the urban core as a whole and has shaped its architecture at street level. These typologies are representative for most of the transformation and deactivation of ground floors in the case study sites, and are therefore worthy of further investigation. The Italian school of Urban Morphology considers the study of *edilizia*, buildings and their transformation as essential as the quantum elements of urban character.<sup>177</sup> The history and transformation of three significant building typologies that have shaped public life in Western urban cores will be discussed in this section, with more typologies to follow in the dissertation research.

### 2.4.1 Retail

The history of the retail building is relevant as stores take up a significant portion of the space and economic vitality of urban cores. Its story is one of rising scales, shake-outs, multiplication, expansion and homogenization. With an increasing professional separation between manufacturing and trade and the abolition of the guild system and the resulting transformation of production methods from craftsmanship to industrial mass manufacturing in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, retail stores increasingly became places for consumption rather than production. Along with the rise in manufacturing came a rise in expendable income for a growing middle class. Stores would cluster on central city streets, accessible on foot or increasingly by streetcar to a growing local and regional

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<sup>177</sup> A. V. Moudon, "Getting to Know the Built Landscape: Typomorphology," *Ordering space: types in architecture and design* (1994); S. Muratori, "Studi Per Una Operante Storia Urbana Di Venezia," *Palladio* 1959(1959).

clientele.<sup>178</sup> As a refuge from the crowded city streets, shopping arcades housed a range of luxury goods retailers under one roof, in a coherent and esthetically pleasing setting, with early examples constructed in Paris, London, Milan and Brussels.<sup>179</sup> Consumers could stroll along expanses of different businesses, comparing goods in a safe and comfortable setting. Yet arcades were soon to be surpassed by an even more integrated clustering of trade, the department store. Replacing the system of bargaining for fixed prices, purchases on credit by cash and carry and by increasingly controlling their own manufacturing process, department stores quickly rose in popularity after their onset as *magasins des nouveautés* in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Paris. Historian Dorothy Davis even proclaims the setting of fixed prices and drastic increase of store sizes as marking the “first retail revolution”.<sup>180</sup> Selling more goods with lower margins while offering customers a dazzling array of items for sale without pressure to purchase cemented the role of the department store as an anchor of urban trade, culture and vitality in the century to follow.<sup>181</sup> The centralizing role of railroad and streetcar technology allowed department stores to access a rapidly growing clientele, while building technology like steel frame construction, elevators and escalators enabled them to vastly outgrow their urban competition. Often, their stores would serve as architectural landmarks and symbols of progress in cities ranging from London and Paris to Boston and New York.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Peter Coleman, *Shopping Environments : Evolution, Planning and Design*(Amsterdam; Boston; London: Architectural Press, 2006).

<sup>179</sup> Johann Friedrich Geist, *Arcades, the History of a Building Type*(Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1983).

<sup>180</sup> Dorothy Davis, *A History of Shopping*(London; Toronto: Routledge & K. Paul; Toronto U.P., 1966).

<sup>181</sup> Miellet and Voorn, "Winkelen in Weelde: Warenhuizen in West-Europa 1860-2000."

<sup>182</sup> Coleman, *Shopping Environments : Evolution, Planning and Design*, 36-38; Dion Kooijman, *Machine En Theater : Ontwerpconcepten Van Winkelgebouwen*(Rotterdam: Uitgeverij 010, 1999).



**Figure 18. The central atrium of the Galeries Lafayette department store has provided Parisian and foreign visitors with a dazzling display of abundance and dignity since 1895. Department stores have become all-encompassing stage-sets of consumption.<sup>183</sup>**

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<sup>183</sup> Image by author, 2012.

While department stores grew in size and number and increasingly aimed to serve the higher echelons of society, other retailers were certainly not sitting still. Many achieved their economies of scale through multiplying as chain stores, often aiming at low prices and low margins. Many of these chains synchronized the look and feel of their outlets to provide customers with an image of dependability, efficiency and unity.<sup>184</sup> Furthermore, they aggressively undercut the prices of independent retailers, attracting the ire of business interest groups and governments on both sides of the Atlantic. During the 1930s, high unemployment prompted many to 'flee into retailing' as they started their own business, resulting in a flood of illegal and unprofitable stores. Both the Dutch and American governments intervened by setting laws for trade, protecting the interest of retailers and attempting to curb the rise of chain stores.<sup>185</sup> Ironically, these laws only boosted the growth of some chain and independent stores in lieu of others, ultimately strengthening chain store growth.<sup>186</sup> Along with the first supermarket constructed in 1916, chain stores increasingly began to rely on self-service to increase turnover with low staff overhead, marking the onset of the second retail revolution.<sup>187</sup> This model proved a huge success, as the quick rise of self-service retail would pressurize department stores to follow suit. Dutch retailers would stay in the loop on the latest marketing methods through travel and master classes by American retail specialists, introducing self-service retail methods to the Netherlands from the postwar era onwards.<sup>188</sup>

As American retailers increasingly followed the automobile middle class out of the city, the traditional hegemony of downtown retail districts became threatened by the rise of neighborhood retail clusters and decentralized chain stores from the 1920s onwards.<sup>189</sup> Yet the deciding blow of decentralization was struck with the opening of the first regional

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<sup>184</sup> Coleman, *Shopping Environments : Evolution, Planning and Design*, 39; Godfrey Montague Lebharr, *Chain Stores in America, 1859-1962*(New York: Chain Store Pub. Corp., 1963).

<sup>185</sup> A Dutch example of proposed measures to curb chain stores could be found in Municipality of The Hague, "Eenige Grondslagen Voor De Stedebouwkundige Ontwikkeling Van 'S-Gravenhage," ed. Gemeentebestuur(The Hague1947).

<sup>186</sup> Miellet and Voorn, "Winkelen in Weelde: Warenhuizen in West-Europa 1860-2000."

<sup>187</sup> Davis, *A History of Shopping*.

<sup>188</sup> Miellet and Voorn, "Winkelen in Weelde: Warenhuizen in West-Europa 1860-2000," 75.

<sup>189</sup> R. W. Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall : Architecture, the Automobile, and Retailing in Los Angeles, 1920-1950*(Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997).



Morphologically, retail stores have always strongly interacted with their surrounding public spaces. As the earliest stores were merely extensions of the merchant or craftsman dwelling and a certain amount of privacy needed to be guaranteed, the interface between the building and the abutting public space was mainly one of transaction. Yet the invention of plate glass in Europe and establishment of the dedicated store building in the United States in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century marked the rise of the building frontage as a place of display and seduction. Passersby were to become customers through the act of catching their attention, their fancy and ultimately their custom: “... *display is usually a form (if occasionally also an act) of seduction. A window display was always a tug at the impulsive side of a passersby’s nature.*”<sup>193</sup> Window displays introduce both the image and identity –the ‘brand’- of a store, and the goods that a store offers.<sup>194</sup> As such, window dressing became such an important act that it warranted a professional field of its own from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Innovations in fabrics, lighting and mannequin technology brought store windows to the forefront of cultural reproduction. Window displays would become the cultural nexus of small American cities, as many organized “window nights” to unveil the latest seasonal merchandise, attracting crowds from afar.<sup>195</sup> Contemporary design and fashion trends were displayed to passersby, in a theatre of suggestion.<sup>196</sup> It comes to no surprise that window dresser and designer Norman Bel Geddes and famed retail architect Victor Gruen would learn the trade in the theatre industry. Similarly, the power of suggestion was used by none other than Salvador Dali to mesmerize passersby on Sixth Avenue in New York.<sup>197</sup> Yet the storefront could also serve political functions, as proven by the patriotic displays found in American cities during World War II or after the terrorist attacks of 2001.

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<sup>193</sup> Marcus, *The American Store Window*, 33.

<sup>194</sup> S. Sen, L.G. Block, and S. Chandran, "Window Displays and Consumer Shopping Decisions," *Journal of Retailing and Consumer services* 9, no. 5 (2002).

<sup>195</sup> Zukin, *Point of Purchase : How Shopping Changed American Culture*, 117.

<sup>196</sup> Kooijman, *Machine En Theater : Ontwerpconcepten Van Winkelgebouwen*.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-32.



**Figure 20. A New Jersey storefront expresses a patriot commemoration to September 11, 2001 ten years after.<sup>198</sup>**

In the postwar era, several factors led to the demise of the storefront as a stage for seduction and a highly permeable interface between trade and public space. As the several aforementioned retail revolutions drastically increased the scale of retail buildings, settings for trade became increasingly internalized. Open, transparent shop facades that allowed passersby to inspect the interior of stores made way for shallower display boxes luring customers into an interior dream world of abundance. Department stores wanted the customer to enter as soon as possible and keep them inside, with fewer active entrances per block than the stores they replaced. Similarly, the second retail revolution would

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<sup>198</sup> Image by Lisa Massey, 2011, courtesy of Express-Times.

continue to internalize the retail model as self-service systems were built on limited access. An extreme case of store internalization was witnessed in many American downtowns, as the Riot Renaissance following the racial violence in many downtowns would result in boarded up, highly secured shop windows.<sup>199</sup> The rise of television in the postwar era brought other methods of communicating culture and advertisements, leading to a reduction of the hegemony of the storefront as a window to the world.<sup>200</sup> Instead, the rise of chain stores in most Western cities has led to a drastic shift of emphasis of the role of storefronts. The rise of off-site advertisement via printed and virtual media has replaced the store window as a local communicator of image and merchandise, transforming the storefront to an entrance with a branding style designed in a remote centralized office. Ultimately, the window itself is under threat of elimination altogether. With an aim of removing the 'threshold resistance' between the passerby and the merchandise on sale, many interior shopping malls had stores that completely opened to the central corridor as an extension of its 'public' space.<sup>201</sup> With the invention of air curtains to keep outside weather conditions from entering the store interior, an increasing number of street-facing stores have copied this model. In a sense, the store is turned 'inside out' as the entire interior now serves as a seamless extension of the street, only separated by magnetic security gates. Yet when closed at night, all that remains are shutters.

The third retail revolution –the rise of online retailing- is threatening the very existence of physical shops. As bookstores and electronics retailers are already rapidly becoming extinct, further branches of retail are likely to follow. The continued presence of retailers in physical settings will require a rethink of their reason for being, focusing on the retail transaction as an experience. Historical urban environments can provide the sense of place and identity that physical retailers will need to maintain their relevance.

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<sup>199</sup> Isenberg, *Downtown America : A History of the Place and the People Who Made It*, 245.

<sup>200</sup> Marcus, *The American Store Window*, 49; Miellet and Voorn, "Winkelen in Weelde: Warenhuizen in West-Europa 1860-2000," 81.

<sup>201</sup> Taubman, *Threshold Resistance : The Extraordinary Career of a Luxury Retailing Pioneer*.



Figure 21. Left: Albert Heijn supermarket in The Hague. Storefront branding stickers replace interactive merchandise display. Right: Abercrombie and Fitch façade inside shopping mall. The frontage is closed as passersby know the brand and the store presents teenagers with “...an oasis in a world of parents and teachers who don't understand what it means to have fun”<sup>202</sup>

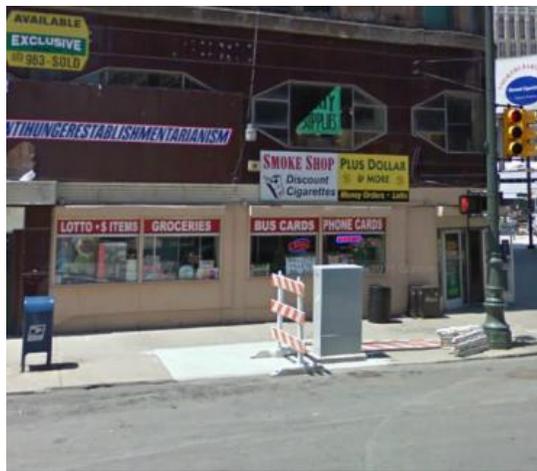


Figure 22. Left: Xenos home goods store with a completely open frontage. Right: Detroit convenience store, barricaded for security. Open or closed?<sup>203</sup>

<sup>202</sup> Left image by author, 2014. Right image and quote from Ochen Kaylan, "Design in the Wild," <http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/design/e1.html>.

<sup>203</sup> Left image by author, 2012. Right image courtesy of Google StreetView, 2012.

## 2.4.2 Offices

Office buildings are another important element in most downtowns, especially in the United States. Yet like many of the other central building typologies, they are the physical manifestation of a fairly recent socio-economic trend. Even London, considered by many the birthplace of worldwide trade and the vibrant business life that supports it, had no notable office buildings in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Banking and law institutions soon discovered the benefits of close contact for the conduct of their business, its effects later described by economists such as Marshall<sup>204</sup> and Jacobs<sup>205</sup>.

Besides the value of trade clustering, offices gained a significant presence in cities since the rise of industries and corresponding labor specialization in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. The need to control the complexity and communication within larger industrial complexes and between them prompted the rise of offices as specialized units. The invention of the long distance telephone and telegraph in the 19<sup>th</sup> century facilitated faster and cheaper long-distance management, enabling more companies to start offices separate from their manufacturing plants.<sup>206</sup> The urban core turned into a district mainly for these control functions and the conduct of trade, pushing residences out into peripheral neighborhoods. The increasing need for interaction between businesses pushed up land values to a level that dwellings were no longer the 'highest and best' land use.<sup>207</sup> The Business District and the "transactional society" were established.

Technology would continue to shape the relevance and form of office buildings. The invention and popularization of the elevator by Elisha Otis in 1852 and the steel frame as a supporting structure in 1889 would enable architects and developers to build ever taller

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<sup>204</sup> A. Marshall, "Principles of Economics," (London: MacMillan, 1890); A. Marshall and M.P. Marshall, *The Economics of Industry* (Macmillan and co., 1920).

<sup>205</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The Economy of Cities* (New York: Random House, 1969).

<sup>206</sup> Cowan, *The Office; a Facet of Urban Growth*, 27-29.

<sup>207</sup> Burgess, "Concentric Zone Model of Urban Structure and Land Use."

structures, in turn pushing up land values in American downtowns. Combined with elevator capacity calculations, even structures as tall as the Empire State Building would comply with a generalized formula for 'economic height' and construction. As described by historian Carol Willis, office form followed finance.<sup>208</sup> As land values rose and buildings needed to be taller to become profitable investments, their footprint rose. Land assembly for skyscraper construction could be likened to a military operation, as secrecy and tactics were key to obtaining land parcels at the right price for development. Zoning laws that cities would increasingly adopt in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century would often result in even larger building footprints. The 1916 New York Zoning Ordinance mandated building setbacks to secure light and air into streets. As building height became dependent on the size of their base, footprints increased as a result.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Willis, *Form Follows Finance : Skyscrapers and Skylines in New York and Chicago*.

<sup>209</sup> Lehnerer, *Grand Urban Rules*.

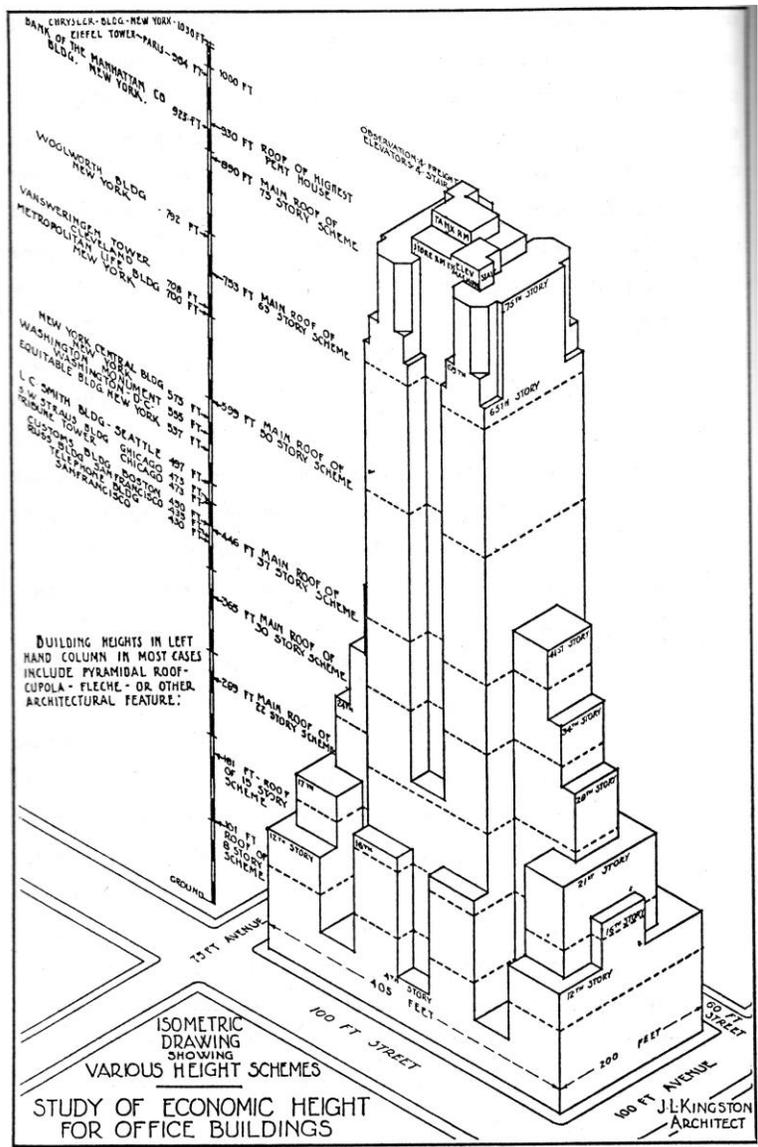


Figure 23. Skyscrapers in the pre-World War II era were mostly the result of economic calculation and zoning codes.<sup>210</sup>

Skyscrapers did not only function as a “machine that makes the land pay”<sup>211</sup> but increasingly they would become symbols of power for their developers and corporate owners.<sup>212</sup> Yet contrary to the popular notion of ‘corporate skyscrapers’ representing the capital accumulation of single entities, many office buildings were literal beehives of

<sup>210</sup> Image by J.L. Kingston, in W. C. Clark and John Lyndhurst Kingston, *The Skyscraper; a Study in the Economic Height of Modern Office Buildings*(New York; Cleveland: American Institute of Steel Construction, 1930).

<sup>211</sup> C. Gilbert, "The Financial Importance of Rapid Building," *Engineering Record* 41(1900).

<sup>212</sup> David Ward and Olivier Zunz, *The Landscape of Modernity : New York City, 1900-1940*(Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

smaller and larger businesses, with the namesake of the Woolworth Building only occupying a few floors and the Singer Building only one.<sup>213</sup> The study of speculative boom-and-bust cycles aids a significant understanding of downtown office construction. The rapid rise of office construction in the 1920s prompted a radical transformation of the streetscape. Offices would often face the street with lavish lobby entrances, but would also contain a significant amount of retail on their ground floor levels. As retail rents were generally five to six times that for office space, office construction needed these stores to support their bottom line.<sup>214</sup> Elaborate interior courts would often accommodate restaurants and small shops for employees, which were mostly accessible to the general public as well.<sup>215</sup>

As technology facilitated the rise of the office building in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and sent it skywards in the early 20<sup>th</sup>, it would again alter the shape of the downtown skyline in the postwar era. The rise of fluorescent lighting and air conditioning would enable office buildings to act independently from direct sunlight.<sup>216</sup> Furthermore, the adoption of advanced office machinery would skyrocket in the postwar era<sup>217</sup>, resulting in larger volumes of work and increasing organizational complexities, leading to larger office sizes. Furthermore, company mergers and a rapid growth of white-collar employment<sup>218</sup> would only accelerate the growth of office unit sizes and the built stock of offices. As a result, floor footprints grew dramatically –the slender towers built for offices that had access to direct sunlight were to be replaced by 145 to 175 foot square air-conditioned towers to maximize profit.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Willis, *Form Follows Finance : Skyscrapers and Skylines in New York and Chicago*, 146-49.

<sup>214</sup> The rental calculation is provided in Cecil Calvert Evers, *The Commercial Problem in Buildings; a Discussion of the Economic and Structural Essentials of Profitable Building, and the Basis for Valuation of Improved Real Estate*(New York: Record and Guide Co., 1914), 185.

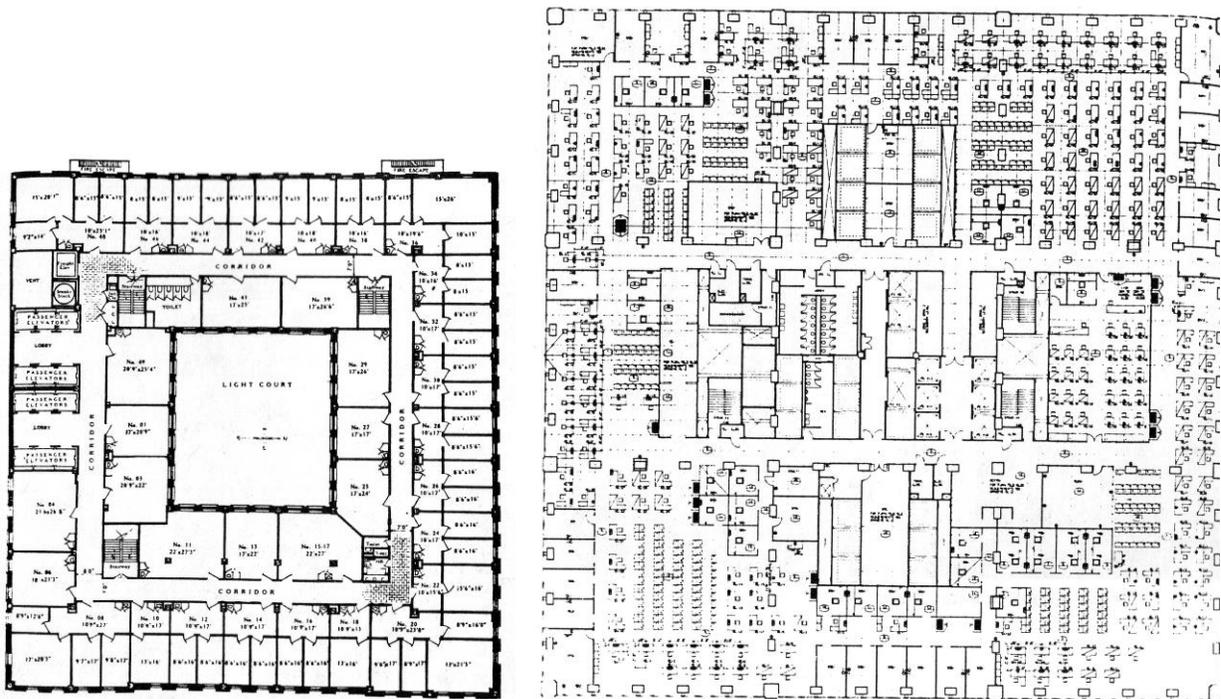
<sup>215</sup> Willis, *Form Follows Finance : Skyscrapers and Skylines in New York and Chicago*, 58-59.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>217</sup> Office machinery sales rose from \$270 million before World War II to \$1 billion in 1948. Cowan, *The Office; a Facet of Urban Growth*, 37.

<sup>218</sup> From 1940 to 1960, both white-collar employment numbers doubled Willis, *Form Follows Finance : Skyscrapers and Skylines in New York and Chicago*, 135.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.



**Figure 24. Two Chicago skyscraper floor plans to scale. The 1924 Straus Building (designed by Graham, Anderson, Probst & White) with central air and light shaft, compared with the 1974 Willis Tower, designed by Fazlur Khan and Bruce Graham.<sup>220</sup>**

At the street level, the International Style made its entrance. Whereas most buildings conformed to the 1916 Zoning Ordinance by building a gradually stepped back building on top of a fully occupied street-level base, the 1952 SOM-designed Lever House constructed an elevated podium, leaving most of the ground floor open for the general public, and built a 21 floor relatively narrow singular slab on top. Architect Mies van der Rohe would take the opening of the ground floor a step further by constructing his Seagram Building on an open plaza, effectively only taking up a small percentage of the purchased parcel. While the Seagram Building did contain a lavishly materialized lobby with a restaurant, the building effectively broke the continuity of the Park Avenue street wall to create a place of rest from the crowded sidewalks of Midtown Manhattan. The plaza proved so popular that the City of

<sup>220</sup> Images from *ibid.*, 134-35.

New York adopted a zoning amendment to encourage more developers to build such plazas.<sup>221</sup> The incentive was so beneficial to developers that most would construct these plazas, yet many would fail to replicate the urban vibrancy of Seagram Plaza. Urban scholar William Whyte concluded that accommodating visitors through a combination of physical efforts (such as constructing seating and more spaces for interaction) and planning for vitality by enabling food vendors and impromptu events to activate spaces would greatly enhance their potential. As a consequence of his observations, many of his recommendations have been integrated into subsequent New York zoning amendments.<sup>222</sup>



**Figure 25. Left: The 1952 Lever Building constructed on top of an elevated podium. Right: The 1958 Seagram building is set back, leaving room for Seagram Plaza.<sup>223</sup>**

While most office space remains downtown as an increasing amount of business depends on “rapid communication – they flourish upon the newest ideas, and must react instantly in

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<sup>221</sup> Lehnerer, *Grand Urban Rules*; Willis, *Form Follows Finance : Skyscrapers and Skylines in New York and Chicago*, 135-43.

<sup>222</sup> Whyte, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*; *City : Rediscovering the Center*.

<sup>223</sup> Left image from 1958 postcard, author unknown. Right image courtesy of Terry Glenn Phipps.

order to maintain their place in the system”<sup>224</sup>, offices have increasingly considered decentralizing. Slowly, the CBD has evolved to a ‘primus inter pares’, as many offices in metropolitan areas have reclustered in peripheral locations, up to the point where they create Edge Cities that replicate most functions the urban core used to have.<sup>225</sup> Whyte describes how these suburban office structures as “acts of withdrawal” often have a rather defensive design, a feature that according to some contemporary critics has made its way back into downtown.<sup>226</sup>

In most Dutch cities, inner city parcels are usually small and difficult to acquire and assemble, and governmental policies curbing land speculation coupled with mandatory esthetic controls did not support the speculative excesses seen in American downtowns. While many prestigious historic merchant homes have been converted to offices, dedicated office buildings for larger firms were often constructed in peripheral city locations, where land acquisition for the growing footprint of these buildings was easier than downtown. The postwar era of rapid growth in office numbers and floor space was soon followed by an increasing realization that offices could not be housed downtown without major demolitions, prompting the government to build their own Edge Cities – in an effort to save the historic integrity of city centers.<sup>227</sup> The resulting pattern has seen most inner cities relatively free from large-scale office development, except in downtown fringe locations that for example formerly housed rail yards and industrial plants.<sup>228</sup>

In an article on office buildings and their space in cities, British architect MacCormac criticizes the disengagement of most postwar office construction with its direct urban

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<sup>224</sup> Cowan, *The Office; a Facet of Urban Growth*.

<sup>225</sup> This process is described in e.g. Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias : The Rise and Fall of Suburbia*(New York: Basic Books, 1987); Joel Garreau, *Edge City : Life on the New Frontier*(New York: Doubleday, 1991).

<sup>226</sup> Ellin, *Postmodern Urbanism*; Ellin and Blakely, *Architecture of Fear*; Sorkin, *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*.

<sup>227</sup> Cammen and De Klerk, *Ruimtelijke Ordening: Van Grachtengordel Tot Vinexwijk*.

<sup>228</sup> Smook, *Binnensteden Veranderen: Atlas Van Het Ruimtelijk Veranderingsproces Van Nederlandse Binnensteden in De Laatste Anderhalve Eeuw*.

milieu. The office block and its frontage represent “*the discipline of work, its hermetic form safeguarding its productivity from the disorder of the world outside.*”<sup>229</sup> Office buildings have literally taken over significant portions of many Western urban cores, often to the detriment of street life due to their relatively closed facades that clearly regard the view of public space as a distraction. With diminishing retail rents, an increasing amount of office ground floors are dedicated to office tenants rather than publicly accessible commercial functions. This can be seen as a self-reinforcing cycle, as increasing office-led devitalization of streets will lead to the diminishing profitability of remaining retailers, that in turn may close and make way for more office construction. This pattern of street-level frontage deactivation will be a crucial element in the chosen case studies.

### **2.4.3 Parking**

Parking lots have been a key element in American downtowns since the 1920s, with over 50% of land in many contemporary American downtowns covered by parked cars, rising up to 80% when roads are counted. In Dutch cities, the number of off-street parking spaces in aboveground facilities is much lower. Conversely, the motor age has not been kind to many American downtowns, as parking lots have slowly but steadily transformed many urban cores to “be reduced to a simplistic formula – tall skyscraper buildings set in parking lot surrounds in total mockery of traditional urbanity.”<sup>230</sup> Yet as historians Jakle and Sculle argue, “Parking was fundamental to how modern cities functioned and how they were experienced” and they carry “history’s accumulated weight of affirmation.”<sup>231</sup> After all, parking lots became the entryway to the city – connecting “man and machine [and] both to the larger urban fabric.”<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> MacCormac, "Fitting in Offices," 64.

<sup>230</sup> John A. Jakle and Keith A. Sculle, *Lots of Parking : Land Use in a Car Culture*(Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004), 5.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, 14, 244.

<sup>232</sup> Shannon Sanders McDonald, *The Parking Garage : Design and Evolution of a Modern Urban Form*(Washington, D.C.: Urban Land Institute, 2007), 176.

And with up to 40% of all downtown traffic arriving by car already in the 1920s, city governments were soon faced with the first decisions on curbing car congestion. Banning cars from parking on the street was often the first step in fighting downtown congestion, with Indiana and Los Angeles taking measures in the early 1920s.<sup>233</sup> Yet the main source of parking in the early years of car dominance would come from commercial parking lots, often owned by garages and manufacturers. Parking lots were regarded as an ideal hold-over “highest and best” use of land, resulting in only minimal investment in lots themselves. Yet the drastic rise of downtown vacancies in the Depression unveiled the paradoxical economics of parking. A cyclical process of building replacement by parking affecting nearby land values and city taxes, inciting further downtown demolition would lead to a drastic increase of parking lots “in an epidemic of piecemeal clearance.”<sup>234</sup> As such, parking should be regarded as a land speculation device more than just a utilitarian storage facility for cars. The restricted land market in The Netherlands therefore rarely supported their construction.

Parking in many downtowns was of course not limited to open lots. In fact, most early off-street car parks are currently in garages, with the first building erected in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Their appearance was in line with surrounding land uses, with elaborate facades providing the vulnerable early generation of cars with shelter from inclement weather. Often, they would contain active land uses on the ground floor, such as retail and facilities for drivers. Only with the invention of more durable enamel for car protection in the 1930s would cars be able to park outside for longer periods of time without risk of damage. This invention had a marked effect on garage form: no longer did garages need an outside wall for protection, and soon enough the first open deck garage would open in Boston in 1933.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> Jakle and Sculle, *Lots of Parking : Land Use in a Car Culture*, 29.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, 114-34; McDonald, *The Parking Garage : Design and Evolution of a Modern Urban Form*, 41.

Cities increasingly realized that parking lots and garages were there to stay. They also realized that they were not sufficient to accommodate an increasing amount of cars downtown. Cities were ready to step in, as they increasingly realized that providing sufficient parking was crucial to maintaining and propping up the role of downtowns in the automobile era. While some cities opted to integrated parking facilities within their downtowns as much as possible, others aimed for peripheral parking and closer transit connections.<sup>236</sup> Another way for governments to raise the number of parking spots in downtowns was to mandate off-street parking for new building development, putting the responsibility for providing sufficient parking at the private developer. As car ownership increased, so did the number and size of parking lots and garages<sup>237</sup>. The open-deck garage would really take off in the postwar era, mainly because costs were up to one-third lower than conventional garages with facades.<sup>238</sup> The garage would increasingly become a commodity for the masses rather than a status symbol for the happy few, or even a symbol for progress and modernity. As a result of their growing number and rapid de-aestheticization, opposition to parking garages (and lots) would grow in the 1970s.

The removal of facades was but one effect that the popularization and optimization of the garage would have toward the street. As cities became increasingly car-oriented, street-level retail became less profitable and lower floors would be reserved for cars as well. Yet cities would increasingly mandate ground-floor activity and garage design would evolve - up to a third of new parking garages in the 1970s once again allowed for mixed uses on the ground floor – often retail uses.<sup>239</sup> Furthermore, an increasing amount of parking would be constructed below grade, restricting street level disruption to entrance ramps and curb

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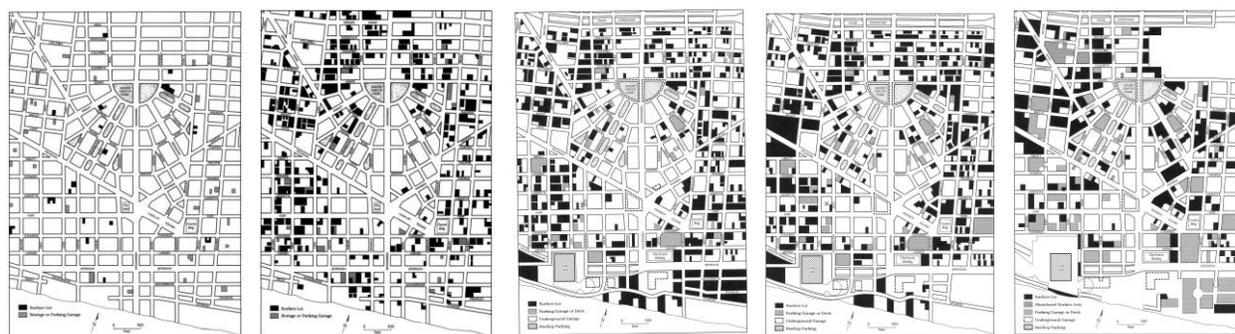
<sup>236</sup> *The Parking Garage : Design and Evolution of a Modern Urban Form.*

<sup>237</sup> McDonald argues that the garage has seen three major periods of expansion: between 1910 and 1930; between 1950 and 1960 and between 1990s and the present day. While most garages constructed in the 1960s had between 500 and 700 spaces, most current garages accommodate between 800 and 1000 cars. Between 1996 and 2000 newly constructed garages have grown 24% in size *ibid.*, 244..

<sup>238</sup> Jakle and Sculle, *Lots of Parking : Land Use in a Car Culture*, 143.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

cuts. In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, an increasing percentage of new construction would provide car parking underground, either publicly or privately accessible for building tenants and visitors. In most Dutch inner cities, underground parking garages would come to replace a sea of parked cars on many former medieval squares. Often, parking provision was integrated into comprehensive city center traffic schemes, routing cars into garages at the edge of the urban core, freeing the center from cars altogether.<sup>240</sup> Conversely, open parking lots and inactive parking garage facades dominate the street level in many American cities. Slowly nibbling away at the urban fabric, car parking would initiate a spiral of missing teeth and ragged street edges, depressing surrounding land values and killing off continuous street frontage. Currently, parking has been overbuilt in many cities, as Houston is said to have 30 spots built for each resident, but even New York condominium developments suffer from empty garages as developers use ample parking to attract tenants.<sup>241</sup> Some downtowns have emptied out completely due to their digestion by car parking, coined the Pensacola Parking Syndrome “in honor of one of its victims”, downtown Pensacola in Florida.<sup>242</sup>



**Figure 26. Parking erosion in Detroit: comparing parking lots and garages in 1922, 1936, 1965, 1975 and 1999.**<sup>243</sup>

<sup>240</sup> Municipal plans include Groningen, "Doelstellingen Nota Binnenstad Groningen."; Gemeente Den Haag, "Note De Kern Gezond," ed. DSO(The Hague1989).

<sup>241</sup> M. Kimmelman, "Paved, but Still Alive - Taking Parking Lots Seriously as Public Spaces," *New York Times*, January 6, 2012 2012.

<sup>242</sup> Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck, *Suburban Nation : The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream*, 162.

<sup>243</sup> Images from Jakle and Sculle, *Lots of Parking : Land Use in a Car Culture*.

Yet even the staunchest urban preservationist has to concede to the inevitability of the car in the modern American downtown landscape. In response to Sullivan's famous statements on Modernism, architect McDonald argues that today in many cities "design follows parking."<sup>244</sup> Cities have increasingly taken this statement to heart as many have adopted mitigating measures to house vehicles in structures that support street life rather than 'unbuild' it.<sup>245</sup> Developers either stack parking on top of an active ground floor, or hide garages behind 'liner buildings' that actively address the street such as dwellings, shops or offices. Rather than hiding them, parking garages can also be designed to function as true entrances to buildings and the city, with many architectural firms shaping parking structures as landmarks for downtowns.<sup>246</sup> Furthermore, urban scholars increasingly realize the potential of parking itself as an inherently social space that generates urban activity. From farmer's markets and parade gatherings to sports tailgating and RV camping at Walmart, parking lots have a life of their own.<sup>247</sup> Yet in the bustle of downtowns, parking lots are often the activity gaps that act detrimental to surrounding street life.

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<sup>244</sup> McDonald, *The Parking Garage : Design and Evolution of a Modern Urban Form*, 246.

<sup>245</sup> Gratz, Mintz and Lehnerer demonstrate street level retail requirements in many cities, including New York, San Francisco, Chicago and Seattle. Often these requirements are aimed at mitigating gaps by parking Gratz and Mintz, *Cities Back from the Edge : New Life for Downtown*, 246; Lehnerer, *Grand Urban Rules*, 27-28..

<sup>246</sup> The effect of such architectural masterwork to the passerby at street level is of course another matter.

<sup>247</sup> Eran Ben-Joseph, *Rethinking a Lot : The Design and Culture of Parking*(Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2012).

## 2.5 LITERATURE REVIEW CONCLUSION

Many normative<sup>248</sup> and empirical<sup>249</sup> studies have established that transparent and permeable street-level frontages are an important element in shaping active and attractive streets. These studies have approached the topic from various angles and disciplines, and yet few studies have crossed disciplinary boundaries to study frontages in an integrated and holistic manner. Exceptions are the research studies by Gehl and Gil Lopez that have demonstrated how interactive frontages spur street level activity, by studying the effects of frontages on the amount and behavior of people in public space.<sup>250</sup> The theoretical basis for these behavior-environment studies hinges on the cognitive processes that underlie the evaluative and behavioral effects of interactive frontages with a focus on a human need for visual excitement, balanced with coherence, legibility and mystery.<sup>251</sup> Furthermore, they convey the importance of the having ground-level functional interactivity that retailers can provide. Yet as addressed in the introduction of the literature review, this rather circular argument may sufficiently study how frontages affect behavior, they do not distinguish form from function or connotation. Most importantly, while such studies demonstrate how frontages shape the human experience, the study of how human beings have shaped these frontages, and why, has remained underdeveloped.

Similarly, the meaning of ground floor architecture within urban cores has not received much scholarly attention.<sup>252</sup> Frontages are neither purely functional nor static elements in cities; they also convey an image and represent a territorial demarcation between private

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<sup>248</sup> E.g. Alexander, Ishikawa, and Silverstein, *A Pattern Language : Towns, Buildings, Construction*; Gehl, "Close Encounters with Buildings."; MacCormac, "Urban Reform: Maccormac's Manifesto."

<sup>249</sup> E.g. Alfonzo, "To Walk or Not to Walk? The Hierarchy of Walking Needs."; Day et al., "The Irvine-Minnesota Inventory to Measure Built Environments: Development."; Mehta, "Look Closely and You Will See, Listen Carefully and You Will Hear: Urban Design and Social Interaction on Streets."; Southworth, "Designing the Walkable City."

<sup>250</sup> Gehl, "Soft Edges in Residential Streets.."; *Life between Buildings : Using Public Space*; "Close Encounters with Buildings."; Lopez, "Influence of the Public-Private Border Configuration on Pedestrian Behaviour. The Case of the City of Madrid.."

<sup>251</sup> Kaplan, "Aesthetics, Affect and Cognition: Environmental Preference from an Evolutionary Perspective."; Nasar, "The Evaluative Image of the City."

<sup>252</sup> Bobic, *Between the Edges : Street-Building Transition as Urbanity Interface*; Canter, *The Psychology of Place*; "Putting Situations in Their Place.."

and public realms.<sup>253</sup> On the one hand, active storefronts aim to lure passersby into a sale by branding and design; and residential buildings balance interaction and privacy with various filtering mechanisms; on the other hand imposing institutional facades and blank walls may imprint public space users with a sense of boredom at best, fear and oppression at worst.<sup>254</sup> These images are described and evaluated by various authors providing a useful framework on their meaning,<sup>255</sup> yet the authors have rarely corroborated their argumentations with empirical research.

Studying the mechanisms behind the deactivation of frontages by nature requires a retrospective approach – after all, only their history can provide the insights on why frontages have been shaped the way they are today. There are a number of extensive historical works on the transformation of urban cores and their foremost building types across the Atlantic, providing a detailed overview of the processes that have caused their change. Yet most of these works take a narrative approach focusing on mechanisms, neglecting the structural analysis of mapping and imaging the outcome – the resulting transformation of urban form and architecture.<sup>256</sup> Outcome-focused studies of how urban cores and their building stock have changed morphologically over the past century are few and far between, especially in the United States;<sup>257</sup> and historiographies of functional and typological change are similarly scarce.<sup>258</sup> Furthermore, while morphologists have focused

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<sup>253</sup> Anirban Adhya, "The Public Realm as a Place of Everyday Urbanism: Learning from Four College Towns" (University of Michigan, 2008); Bobic, *Between the Edges : Street-Building Transition as Urbanity Interface*; Habraken and Teicher, *The Structure of the Ordinary : Form and Control in the Built Environment*; Madanipour, *Public and Private Spaces of the City*; Scheerlinck, "Depth Configurations. Proximity, Permeability and Territorial Boundaries in Urban Projects.."

<sup>254</sup> Whyte, *City : Rediscovering the Center*.

<sup>255</sup> Ellin, *Postmodern Urbanism*; Ellin and Blakely, *Architecture of Fear*; Lerup, "Stim & Dross: Rethinking the Metropolis."; Sorkin, *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*.

<sup>256</sup> Cammen and De Klerk, *Ruimtelijke Ordening: Van Grachtengordel Tot Vinexwijk*; Fogelson, *Downtown : Its Rise and Fall, 1880-1950*; Isenberg, *Downtown America : A History of the Place and the People Who Made It*; Wagenaar, *Town Planning in the Netherlands since 1800 : Responses to Enlightenment Ideas and Geopolitical Realities*.

<sup>257</sup> M. R. G. Conzen and T. R. Slater, *The Built Form of Western Cities : Essays for M.R.G. Conzen on the Occasion of His 80th Birthday*(Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1990); Michael P. Conzen, *The Making of the American Landscape*(Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990); A. Siksna, "City Centre Blocks and Their Evolution: A Comparative Study of Eight American and Australian Cbds," *Journal of Urban Design* 3, no. 3 (1998).

<sup>258</sup> Brown, "Retail Location and Retail Change in Belfast City Centre."; "The Complex Model of City Centre Retailing: An Historical Application."; "Retail Location: A Micro-Scale Perspective."; "Retail Location at the Micro-Scale: Inventory and Prospect."; Duren, *De Dynamiek Van Het Constante : Over De Flexibiliteit Van De Amsterdamse Binnenstad Als Economische Plaats*.

on changes of block architecture<sup>259</sup>, building typology<sup>260</sup> and block form<sup>261</sup> they have not systematically delved into the transformation of frontage interactivity at the scale of individual buildings over the past century, and have also not focused on the mechanisms behind this transformation. Some of these mechanisms are found in theoretical works that examine frontages from an architectural and anthropological perspective<sup>262</sup>, but the resulting explanatory framework has thus far not been linked to historical processes. The body of work therefore remains scattered: narrative historical works focus on mechanism over outcome, morphological works focus on outcome over mechanism, and theoretical work focuses on mechanism without sufficient empirical backing.

Urban cores can be regarded as the outcomes not just of social, political and cultural forces, but also of the nexus of economic activity and visioning. Economic studies of downtown land uses often focus on the distribution of uses and land values at the scale of the city as a whole,<sup>263</sup> rarely focusing on the level of streets and blocks.<sup>264</sup> Furthermore, such studies mostly rely on aggregate statistics instead of focusing at the level of separate buildings. Similar knowledge gaps exist when taking downtown-specific land uses into account. For example, while retail is one of the key land uses in urban cores, its locational economic study at the individual building scale has been underdeveloped.<sup>265</sup> This is an important knowledge gap for the study of the relationship between buildings and public space on the ground floor level, especially since retail businesses shape the urban experience. Several theorists have created models of retail location, distribution and diversity.<sup>266</sup> Yet empirical

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<sup>259</sup> E.g. Komossa, *The Dutch Urban Block and the Public Realm: Models, Rules, Ideals*.

<sup>260</sup> E.g. Howard Davis, *Living over the Store: Architecture and Local Urban Life*, Architecture and Local Urban Life (Abingdon, Oxon [England] ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2012); Moudon, *Built for Change: Neighborhood Architecture in San Francisco*.

<sup>261</sup> B.D. Ryan, "The Restructuring of Detroit: City Block Form Change in a Shrinking City, 1900 - 2000," *Urban Design International* 13, no. 3 (2008).

<sup>262</sup> Bobic, *Between the Edges : Street-Building Transition as Urbanity Interface*; Madanipour, *Public and Private Spaces of the City*.

<sup>263</sup> Burgess, "Concentric Zone Model of Urban Structure and Land Use."

<sup>264</sup> Hoyt, *One Hundred Years of Land Values in Chicago*; R.M. Hurd, *Principles of Land Values*, The Record and Guide (New York 1903).

<sup>265</sup> Brown, "Retail Location: A Micro-Scale Perspective."; Marvin Kaye, *Masterpieces of Terror and the Unknown*, Guild America Books (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Books & Music Clubs, 1993).

<sup>266</sup> E.g. B.J.L. Berry, *Commercial Structure and Commercial Blight: Retail Patterns and Processes in the City of Chicago* (Dept. of Geography, University of Chicago, 1963); Brown, "Retail Location Theory: Evolution and Evaluation."; Christaller, "Die Zentralen Orte in Suddeutschland. Translated by Carlisle W. Baskin, 1966, as

studies are remarkably few and far between: snapshot studies of central city retail in connection to urban form are rare,<sup>267</sup> and diachronic studies are practically non-existent, either focusing on a limited set of streets<sup>268</sup> or relying on aggregate retail statistics irrespective of their location and distribution in a city center.<sup>269</sup> The diachronic distribution, clustering and diversity of retail establishments is crucial in explaining how and why frontages have changed across the Atlantic over the past century, and these models can provide an explanatory framework. This dissertation aims to contribute to the body of knowledge of retail geography by empirically investigating the location and distribution of retail at the micro scale in two urban cores over a period of a century, i.e. diachronically.

In summary, this dissertation aims to provide an interdisciplinary and holistic perspective on interactive frontages, a topic that has clearly fallen between disciplinary cracks thus far. This dissertation operates in the field of tension between society, human individual agency, urban and architectural form, and function. The diagram therefore consists of these four main elements that operate in relation to one another. The dichotomy between these elements is indicated by their grouping into society and human agency to the left hand and the morphological and functional manifestation of these two elements to the right hand in the diagram. Furthermore, within the clusters tensions exist between societal progress and innate and cultural human needs,<sup>270</sup> as well as between urban form and function.<sup>271</sup> The cognitive connection between space, activity and meaning is the domain of place studies as conducted by geographers, social psychologists, antropologists, sociologists and design scholars like Canter, Groat and Adhya.<sup>272</sup> Yet the dissertation also focuses on the reciprocal

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Central Places in Southern Germany."; Hotelling, "Stability in Competition."; Nelson, *The Selection of Retail Locations*; Reilly, "Methods for the Study of Retail Relationships."; Reilly, *The Law of Retail Gravitation*.

<sup>267</sup> Van Nes, *Road Building and Urban Change: The Effect of Ring Roads on the Dispersal of Shop and Retail in Western European Towns and Cities*; Kickert, "The Urban Shopping Arcade."

<sup>268</sup> Duren, *De Dynamiek Van Het Constante : Over De Flexibiliteit Van De Amsterdamse Binnenstad Als Economische Plaats*.

<sup>269</sup> Brown, "Retail Location and Retail Change in Belfast City Centre."; "The Complex Model of City Centre Retailing: An Historical Application."

<sup>270</sup> Gehl, *Life between Buildings : Using Public Space*; Rapoport, *History and Precedent in Environmental Design*.

<sup>271</sup> Duren, *De Dynamiek Van Het Constante : Over De Flexibiliteit Van De Amsterdamse Binnenstad Als Economische Plaats*.

<sup>272</sup> Canter, *The Psychology of Place*; "Putting Situations in Their Place."; Groat, "Meaning in Post-Modern Architecture: An Examination Using the Multiple Sorting Task."; *Giving Places Meaning*, Readings in Environmental Psychology (London ; San Diego, CA: Academic Press, 1995); Adhya, "The Public Realm as a Place of Everyday Urbanism: Learning from Four College Towns."

relation between unobservable social and individual agency and the built environment as discussed by Lawrence<sup>273</sup> and professed by the several schools of urban morphology and space syntax.<sup>274</sup> This dissertation aims to use these various overarching conceptual frameworks to allow for a comprehensive and integrated conclusion the relationship between buildings and public space.

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<sup>273</sup> Roderick J. Lawrence, "Structuralist Theories in Environment-Behavior Research," in *Advances in Environment, Behavior and Design.*, ed. E. Zube, Moore, G.T.(New York: Plenum Press, 1987).

<sup>274</sup> A.o. K. Kropf, "Aspects of Urban Form," *Urban Morphology* 13, no. 2 (2009); A. V. Moudon, "Urban Morphology as an Emerging Interdisciplinary Field," *ibid.*1(1997); Hillier and Hanson, *The Social Logic of Space*; Hillier, *Space Is the Machine: A Configurational Theory of Architecture.*

Figure 27. Literature overview on frontages and the forces which shape them.

## SOCIETY

**Industrialization and labor division** enabled the rise of specialized land uses from the 19th century onwards, resulting in zoning control of land uses from the early 20th century onwards (a.o. Cowan, 1966; Smook, 1984; Zukin, 1991; Isenberg, 2001)

The **increase of wealth and the reduction of working hours** across the Western Hemisphere allowed people to venture downtown and increasingly indulge in comparison shopping and leisure activities (a.o. Isenberg, 2001; Van der Cammen and De Klerk, 2003; Wagenaar, 2011)

Similarly, the **rise of the consumer society** in the United States from the 1930s onwards and in Europe from the postwar era increasingly propelled downtown as a center for consumption, but would ultimately pass it by (a.o. Zukin, 1991, 2004; Cohen, 1996)

Increasing **individualization and social inequality and compartmentalization** decreased the importance of the public sphere as a space for serendipitous encounter, cultural reproduction and democracy (a.o. Sennett, 1976, Hajer and Reijndorp, 2001)

Post-industrial **globalization** has led to the clustering of capital in many urban cores, but also the increasing compression of space and time, homogenization in many urban landscapes and the quest for rootedness and place (a.o. Sassen, 2001; Cresswell, 2004)

## ECONOMIC FORCES

Drastic **land value** fluctuations and capital accumulation in the urban core leading to clustering of 'highest and best land uses', including open parking lots (a.o. Hoyt, 1933; Harvey, 1989)

Rise and consolidation of **office space** in downtown clusters (US) or *cityvorming* (NL) pushing out residential and manufacturing land uses (a.o. Cowan, 1966; Smook, 1984; Willis, 1995; Isenberg, 2004; Wagenaar, 2011)

**Retail** consolidation and optimization in two 'revolutions', resulting in growth, replication (NL) or decentralization (US) (a.o. Brown, 1993; Miellet, 2001; Coleman, 2006)

**Commodification** and homogenization of downtown as 'late capitalist space' (a.o. Lefebvre, 1976; Boyer, 1994; New Economics Foundation, 2004, 2005)

Rise of the New Economy and the Creative Class has brought **production and innovation** back downtown (a.o. Jacobs, 1961, 1969; Florida, 2002; Hutton, 2004)

## TECHNOLOGICAL FORCES

Improvements in **communication technology** facilitated the clustering of control in offices, continuing with globalized digital communication today (a.o. Mumford, 1961; Cowan, 1966; Sassen, 1994, 2001)

Replacement of traditional **building materials** by the invention of steel and concrete frame construction, resulting in drastic increase in height (US) and footprint of buildings (a.o. Smook, 1984; Willis, 1996; Isenberg, 2004)

Invention of **elevator** by Otis in 1852 created a new formula for skyscraper construction (a.o. Willis, 1995)

The rise of **automobile ownership** challenged urban cores to accommodate their movement and storage, also prompting decentralization (a.o. Gruen, 1960, 1973; Smook, 1984; Gehl, 1987, 2010; Jakle and Sculle, 2004)

The rise of **digital communication** has both dispersed the public sphere, challenged existing retail models and clustered global corporations (a.o. Ellin, 1996; Sassen, 2001; Coleman, 2006)

## POLITICAL AND PUBLIC FORCES

**Zoning** was introduced in both countries in the early 20th century, often concentrating business in urban cores. In The Netherlands, the 1920s saw the rise of **esthetic review boards**, as well as strong **land value control** policy.

Roosevelt's 1934 **Modernization Credit Plan** changed the face of American Main Street during the Depression.

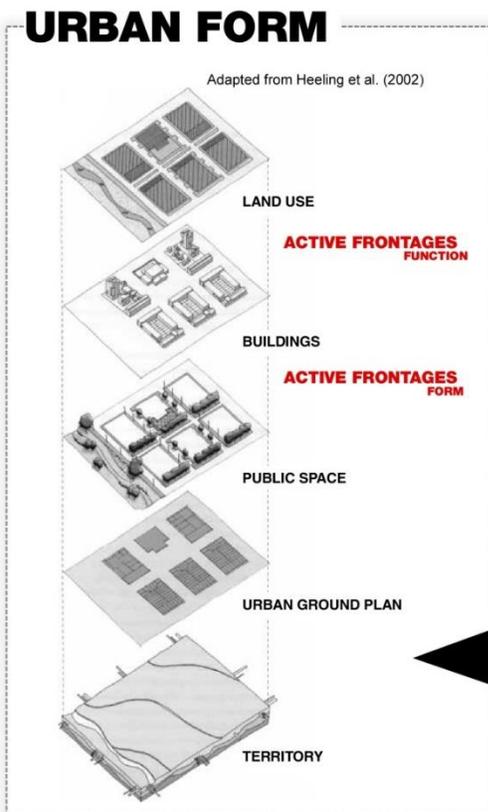
**Title 1 of the US 1949 Housing Act** appropriated federal grants and loans for urban renewal land acquisition, relying on developers to build new housing. Subsequent amendments allowed for more non-residential construction.

The **US Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956** provided federal funds for intercity and urban freeway construction, with strong support from downtown stakeholders to make the urban core more accessible, often at the cost of inner-city neighborhoods.

In The Netherlands, postwar reconstruction was initially controlled by a national agency. In the 1960s, significant **national funds** were reserved for urban renewal, with 80% funding for land acquisition and 50% for public works.

With the 1974 **Community Development Block Grant** (US) and the 1977 **ISR** and 1985 **WDSV Grants** (NL) both countries significantly altered the urban renewal subsidization structure in the 1970s and 1980s, with funding moving away from technocratic renewal into community-led efforts.

From the 1980s onwards, both countries have adopted **neo-liberal investment policies**, increasingly relying on Public Private Partnerships to transform the urban core. Government subsidies and other support is aimed at attracting private investors and global capital. Increasingly, the power of the urban core as a **place** is deployed in development strategies.



## PSYCHOLOGICAL FORCES

The sidewalk as a space for **interaction and serendipitous encounter** has made way for individualization and societal compartmentalization, with encounters taking place in semipublic space (a.o. Jacobs, 1961; Sennett, 1976; Crawford, 1992; Ellin, 1996)

Shop front as '**stage for seduction**' and communicator of culture and trends has made way for advertising and branding through other mediums, through globalization and technological progress (a.o. Marcus, 1976; Kooijman, 1999; Zukin, 2004)

The urban violence of the 1960s in the US and the rise of urban crime in the following decades has resulted in many ground floors **designed for security** rather than interaction, e.g. the Post Riot Renaissance in the US (a.o. Ellin, 1996; Isenberg, 2001)

The **search for rootedness and place** in an ever-accelerating world has led to the reevaluation and reconstruction of historic environments, sometimes at the cost of their uniqueness and authenticity (a.o. Boyer, 1994; Cresswell, 2004)

## ARCHITECTURAL FORCES

City as a Work of Art makes way for the City as Panorama, replacing holistic design of buildings and public spaces with 'rational' data-led renewal strategies of Modernism (a.o. Boyer, 1994; Wagenaar, 2011)

Postwar downtown urban renewal focused on the obsolescence of the status quo, resulting in wholesale renewal proposals often reliant on technology to shape societal improvements (environmental determinism) (a.o. Jacobs, 1961; Isenberg, 2001)

Increasing global instability prompted the rise of the Megastructure Movement in the 1960s, resulting in introverted, city-like structures and superblocks being introduced into American and Dutch urban cores (a.o. Banham, 1976; Whyte, 1988; Frieden, 1989; Sorkin, 1992; Ellin, 1997)

Postmodern architecture and urbanism focused on security, simulation, formalism and commercialism (a.o. Sorkin, 1992; Ellin, 1997)

## CHAPTER 3.

### RESEARCH DESIGN

This research aims to find answers to the problem statement outlined in the first chapter. As mentioned in this introductory chapter, the research takes a mainly retrospective approach to the study of the relation between buildings and public space. This is a conscious decision to arrive at useful conclusions based on historical trends, patterns and likely causes behind the increasing deactivation of ground floor architecture, rather than to redundantly prove the commonly accepted mantra that architecture should interact with public space. While contemporary defensive architecture described by urban scholar William Whyte as "The Deadly Dull" is almost unanimously disliked by professionals and the general public, hardly anyone knows what forces, patterns and trends they are fighting against.<sup>275</sup> This research aims to be action-oriented by providing conclusions on how this type of architecture has grown and how professionals and scholars can counter it. It does so by taking a diachronic and internationally comparative approach to discover *forces* behind frontage transformation, *patterns* within this transformation, *trends* of transformation and the *international differences and similarities* of these forces, patterns and trends.

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<sup>275</sup> Whyte, *City : Rediscovering the Center*.

### 3.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

#### **MAIN QUESTION**

*Why and how has the relation between buildings and public space in urban cores changed over the past century – a turbulent era for Western urban cores? What are the similarities and differences in this change between the United States and Europe?*

#### **1. DIACHRONIC COMPONENT**

*Why and how has the relation between buildings and public space in urban cores changed over the past century – a turbulent era for Western urban cores?*

- a. Why has the relation between buildings and public space changed? What **external forces** have led to the changing relation between buildings and public space?
- b. How has the relation between buildings and public space changed? What **internal patterns** can be discovered in the changing relation between buildings and public space?
- c. Can the discovered forces and patterns be considered unique, or are they likely to be **trends** that will continue in the future of urban cores?

#### **2. CROSS-CULTURAL COMPONENT**

*What are the similarities and differences in the changing relation between buildings and public space between the United States and The Netherlands?*

- a. Why has the relation between buildings and public spaces changed differently between both countries? What different and similar **external forces** have influenced their frontage transformation?
- b. How has the relation between buildings and public spaces changed differently or similarly between both countries? What different and similar **internal patterns** can be discovered in their frontage transformation?

- c. What conclusions can be drawn from these differences and similarities? Are conclusions from one case study **applicable** to the other, and **generalizable** more downtowns?

Although the main research question has been split into a diachronic and cross-cultural component, these components will be integrated as much as possible. Cross-comparisons will be drawn in each chapter, and the final synthesis will occur in the conclusion. This enables the synthesis between the two research perspectives and will ease the generation of action-oriented conclusions.

## 3.2 EPISTEMOLOGICAL BASIS – STRUCTURALISM IN URBAN FORM AND FUNCTION

The main theoretical framework of this dissertation will be based on the field of urban morphology and urban economics, both based on a structuralist research epistemology.<sup>276</sup> This section will delve deeper into this epistemological basis, the system of inquiry for the dissertation.

Structuralism is a relevant theoretical research basis for this dissertation as it is based on the conviction that “... scientific studies of human societies and culture cannot be restricted to observable phenomena.”<sup>277</sup> Instead of just focusing on observable objects, structuralists look for the “tacit ideas, processes or structures responsible for this material culture”, in other words the systematic nature of an object or event rather than its manifestation.<sup>278</sup> Originating in linguistic structuralism by the French scholar Saussure,<sup>279</sup> structuralists like Levi-Strauss<sup>280</sup> and Althusser<sup>281</sup> rebelled against the traditional post-positivist paradigm that truth can only be derived from observable and measurable objects, counteracting that unobservable forces are just as relevant as a study topic in shaping the world that surrounds us .

This process of transformation resonates with Anne Vernez Moudon’s commentary on the shift of focus in urban research from the Modernist infatuation with object-oriented interventions to improve the lives of citizens, to more subject-oriented research that focuses on the underlying structures and forces that shape cities by the actions and

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<sup>276</sup> Not to be confused with structuralism in (Dutch) architecture, as for example professed by Van Eyck and Hertzberger. For more information see Arnulf Lüchinger, *Structuralism in Architecture and Urban Planning*(Stuttgart: Karl Kramer, 1981); Wim J. van Heuvel, *Structuralism in Dutch Architecture*(Rotterdam: Uitgeverij 010 Publishers, 1992).

<sup>277</sup> Lawrence, "Structuralist Theories in Environment-Behavior Research," 38.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>279</sup> Ferdinand de Saussure et al., *Cours De Linguistique Générale*(Paris: Payot, 1916).

<sup>280</sup> Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Anthropologie Structurale*. Paris: Plon, 1958.

———. *Tristes Tropiques*. Terre Humaine. Paris: Plon, 1955.

<sup>281</sup> Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar, *Reading Capital*(New York: Pantheon Books, 1971).

mindset of citizens. In a sense, this view and its connection to structuralism in urban studies may be regarded to reflect a soul-searching step back after the failure of many postwar urban renewal plans.<sup>282</sup> Much of the structuralist research in the human-environment field focuses on explaining the *reciprocal* relation between physical environments and human agency, a good example of which are the theories and works of Bill Hillier.<sup>283</sup> Yet a difference exists between the two strands of cognitive and social structuralism. Whereas the first is mainly concerned with the human mind as a structuring element behind the physical manifestations of built environments, the latter delves deeper into socio-economic, historical and cultural patterns that form the underlying structure behind built form. This dissertation study aims to combine both approaches, and show bridges as well as disconnects between cognitive preferences and the social structure of frontages.

A useful strategy for this demonstration is provided by environmental scholar Roderick Lawrence, as he proposes a *dialectical structuralism* which studies both the cognitive and the social structuring of space but also studies the relation between them, with supporting physical evidence and through time.<sup>284</sup> This description of structuralism bears close resemblance to the study of urban form as the manifestation of tacit structures as professed by the small and interdisciplinary field of urban morphology.<sup>285</sup> This field of research can be classified as structuralist as it draws research conclusions from manifest observations of urban form only in connection with the unobservable structures that underlie their existence and transformation. In this sense, urban morphological research can provide guidelines for future urban design and planning interventions, as it lays a substantive basis for future decisions and ultimately, future interventions.<sup>286</sup> While different schools of urban morphology have different approaches to the study of urban form and architecture, most aim to go beyond a description of existing urban environments

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<sup>282</sup> A. V. Moudon, "A Catholic Approach to Organizing What Urban Designers Should Know," *Journal of Planning Literature* 6, no. 4 (1992): 443.

<sup>283</sup> Hillier and Leaman, "The Man-Environment Paradigm and Its Paradoxes."; Hillier and Hanson, *The Social Logic of Space*; Hillier, *Space Is the Machine: A Configurational Theory of Architecture*.

<sup>284</sup> Lawrence, "Structuralist Theories in Environment-Behavior Research."

<sup>285</sup> Moudon, "Getting to Know the Built Landscape: Typomorphology."; "Urban Morphology as an Emerging Interdisciplinary Field."

<sup>286</sup> "Proof of Goodness, a Substantive Basis for New Urbanism?," *Places* 13, no. 2 (2000).

to yield generative conclusions by exploring which patterns from the past can be extrapolated as trends into the future.<sup>287</sup> As such, the structures that are discovered by urban morphologists as underlying forces that govern the form of frontages can potentially yield valuable and transferable conclusions on the future improvement of street level architecture and city life in urban cores. One could regard the 'dialectical' structuralism of urban morphology as a container of cognitive and morphological structuralism, as cognitive forces are certainly among the forces that shape the built environment. In a sense, cognitive structuring of environments is *part* of a wider range of forces that shape architectural and urban space.

Two types of dialectical structuralism that will be used in more detail in this dissertation are the theories of Space Syntax and place psychology. As mentioned before, the former theory focuses on the reciprocal relationship between space and society, helping to structure the connections between frontage types and their location in the city. The computational models which have sprouted from Space Syntax theory are useful in finding why certain frontages have activated or deactivated in parts of the downtown based on their connectivity to their immediate context and the wider city.<sup>288</sup> The theories of place psychology as professed by David Canter structure environments in terms of their physical, functional and connotative characteristics.<sup>289</sup> These three elements are highly useful for framing the analysis of frontages, as they can be used for qualitative and quantitative descriptions of their transformation.

In addition to deploying the epistemological basis of the field of urban morphology, space syntax and place studies, the field of urban economy and retail location theory is also consulted for systems of inquiry and research methods. The interaction between buildings and public space is not only a factor of urban and architectural form, but also one of land

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<sup>287</sup> CE Pinzon Cortes, "Mapping Urban Form: Morphology Studies in the Contemporary Urban Landscape," (2009).

<sup>288</sup> The relationship between commercial land use and location has been explored in e.g. Van Nes, *Road Building and Urban Change: The Effect of Ring Roads on the Dispersal of Shop and Retail in Western European Towns and Cities*; Sophia Psarra, Conrad Kickert, and Amanda Pluviano, "Paradigm Lost: Industrial and Post-Industrial Detroit - an Analysis of the Street Network and Its Social and Economic Dimensions from 1796 to the Present," *Urban Design International* 18, no. 4 (2013).

<sup>289</sup> Canter, *The Psychology of Place*.

use and the economic forces that govern it through time and across cultures. As illustrated in the literature review, retail and economic location theories can offer a quantitative basis for the evaluation of internal patterns of frontage transformation. Theories that focus on the connection between land value and land use, business location and connectivity and diversity over time will underpin significant parts of this research.

By making the connection between current urban form, past forces and patterns and future trends, the structuralist field of urban morphology and urban economy will be used as a powerful set of tools to approach the study of frontages, enabling this study not only to generate retrospective conclusions but action-oriented lessons for relevant scholars and practitioners.

### **3.3 METHODS**

This dissertation research is based on a multiple case study design as a container for a mixed method research approach, each method tailored to answer the subquestions outlined in section 3.1. Table 1 covers each subquestion, the method deployed to answer it and the sources used for this method. In the rest of this section, the various methods will be further elaborated, along with hypotheses derived from the literature review chapter.

- 1. Why and how has the relation between buildings and public space in urban cores changed over the past century – a turbulent era for Western urban cores?*

a. Why has the relation between buildings and public space changed? What **external forces** have led to the changing relation between buildings and public space?

**METHOD:**

Historical-empirical research on The Hague and Detroit

**SOURCES:**

Primary sources (government documents, pamphlets, newspaper clippings, photographs), secondary sources (book and journal publications)

b. How has the relation between buildings and public space changed? What **internal patterns** can be discovered in the changing relation between buildings and public space?

**METHOD:**

Frontage mapping, statistical analysis

**SOURCES:**

Historical maps (municipal maps, Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, aerial photographs), historical photographs, business directories, cross-listing directories, government business registries

c. Can the discovered forces and patterns be considered unique, or are they likely to be **trends** that will continue in the future of urban cores?

**METHOD:**

Interviews, comparison between case studies, document analysis

**SOURCES:**

Stakeholders in both cities, previous analytical work, publications on frontage trends

**2. *What are the similarities and differences in the changing relation between buildings and public space between the United States and The Netherlands?***

a. Why has the relation between buildings and public spaces changed differently between both countries? What different and similar **external forces** have influenced their frontage transformation?

**METHOD:**

Comparative analysis

**SOURCES:**

Research conducted under question 1a.

b. How has the relation between buildings and public spaces changed differently or similarly between both countries? What different and

**METHOD:**

Comparative analysis; statistical analysis

similar **internal patterns** can be discovered in their frontage transformation?

**SOURCES:**

Research conducted under question 1b.

- c. What conclusions can be drawn from these differences and similarities? Are conclusions from one case study **applicable** to the other, and **generalizable** more downtowns?

**METHOD:**

Comparative analysis

**SOURCES:**

Research conducted under question 1a, 1b, 2a and 2b.

**Table 1. Diagram outlining research subquestions, methods for answering these questions and sources for these methods.**

### 3.3.1 Historical-empirical research

The study of external forces which have influenced frontage change over the past century will focus the comparative history of the struggling downtown of Detroit and the inner city of The Hague, winner of national awards on commercial and public vibrancy in The Netherlands. An overall outline of the forces which have affected frontage change in each city over the past century will be provided by use of primary archival sources such as government documents, photographs, mapping, economic surveys, pamphlets, newspaper and periodical articles. The availability of these primary sources widely varies between The Hague and Detroit, as their city archives have different priorities and mechanisms for storing and retrieving information. Detroit's Burton Historical Collection has a relatively extensive collection of primary sources on various topics in the local history collection, mainly containing newspaper and periodical clippings as well as important public government documents. Furthermore, newspaper indexes have been published from 1976 onwards which categorize articles by topic, and newspaper articles until 1923 are available and searchable online. The Hague's municipal archive only rarely has newspaper articles indexed, necessitating lengthy digital and analogue sourcing. Newspaper indexes are not available. However, government documents were far easier to access, as they are indexed in a user friendly electronic search engine. Furthermore, photographic material was easily accessed through the city's historic image repository, one of the country's oldest and most extensive. Digital historic images in Detroit were harder to find as two concurrent websites offer a far smaller selection of images compared to The Hague.

If available, secondary sources such as books and journal articles are used to provide direction for further study of primary materials. For example, the written history of the Grote Marktstraat in The Hague allows for in-depth research of the various buildings lining the street, as well as further study of relevant articles mentioned in the book.<sup>290</sup> The secondary source can of course also be used directly in the research. It also allows for reflection on primary sources, including triangulation of conflicting materials, including

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<sup>290</sup> Monique van Ambachtsheer H. F. Veen, *"Een Simpele Verkeersverbetering" : De Geschiedenis Van De Grote Marktstraat En Omgeving*(Den Haag: De Nieuwe Haagsche, 2005).

differing opinions and factual errors, which have been found especially in newspaper sources. If facts differ between sources, recourse is sought to the most primary source to verify the actual chain of events. If opinions differ between sources, the variation is laid out in the dissertation as an example of the process of shaping the city.

As found in the literature review, street frontage deactivation in both countries has occurred as a result of a *variety* of underlying forces, contrary to current paradigms and focuses in architectural and planning research. Forces include:

-planning interventions, especially postwar Modern planning and urban renewal

-infrastructural interventions to make way for large scale transit, car movement and car parking

-economic change and increase of scale (capital accumulation) in several fields such as retail (larger stores, chain stores, retail exodus to suburban locations), offices (larger offices, loss of interest in ground floor retail, exodus to Edge Cities), manufacturing (from small craftsmen to larger exurban complexes) and the government (increase of scale, increasing focus on security)

-cultural change in the approach to public space and territoriality. An increasing focus on complete experiences, controlled spaces, simulation and security has inverted architecture, away from the street.

These forces have been specific topics that have been studied in both cities, allowing for more efficient focusing on research topics.

### 3.3.2 Frontage mapping

While the previous method enables the study the forces behind the changing face of Detroit and The Hague at street level, this dissertation aims to delve deeper into the nature and extent of the change itself. This is done through mapping the change of frontages in The Hague and Detroit over the span of a century between 1911 and 2011, the year this study commenced. Yet studying frontage change over the span of a century brings a series of methodological challenges.

#### a. Definition

First and foremost, frontage interactivity needs to be defined. Frontage interactivity is different from frontage activity. The latter term mainly pertains to the functional role of frontages, for example in the case of frontages that accommodate functions that are highly dependent on public space such as markets or fashion stores. However, the form of frontages also matters in its interactivity, and the congruence between form and function cannot be assumed as seamless. Furthermore, frontages convey meaning through evoking connotative reactions to passersby.

While various authors have discussed frontage interactivity – as shown in the literature review chapter – each has a different approach to measuring interactivity in a structured manner, often focusing on only part of the experience of frontages at street level. For example, Jan Gehl takes a mixed approach to defining façade interactivity by defining categories by a combination of unit size, functional diversity number of doors, façade permeability and façade details and articulations. He therefore mixes *form* and function into five categories, mainly focusing on the former.<sup>291</sup> Space Syntax theorists have defined the permeability of frontages mainly as the number and pattern of entrances, not taking entrance functions or micro-scale design elements such as details and articulations into

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<sup>291</sup> Gehl, "Close Encounters with Buildings."

account.<sup>292</sup> On the other hand, economists often only focus on the *functions* lining streets, especially pertaining to retail.<sup>293</sup> Similarly, architect Richard MacCormac's research on the public-private interface has mainly focused on the 'transactional value' of land uses that occupy the ground floor as a determinant for frontage interactivity.<sup>294</sup> Other than William Whyte's comments on the negative connotations of blank facades, no study specifically stresses the *meaning* of frontage interactivity types.

This dissertation will use a mixture of form, function and meaning to define frontage interactivity. This mixture hinges on Place theory by David Canter, which defines experiences of place as consisting of physical attributes, activities and conceptions.<sup>295</sup> Frontages are considered a crucial element of the city's experience of place, and therefore require a definition of their physical attributes, as well as the activities and the conceptions they support and generate. However, the physical attributes and conceptions are difficult to determine for the past: photographic material and descriptions of buildings simply wouldn't cover the extent of all frontages in an urban core over the span of a century. Therefore, the definition of frontage interactivity will strongly hinge on the activities which take place in the building behind the frontage<sup>296</sup>, as this is the only data that can be completely and reliably derived from historical sources.

Focusing on ground floor function as a proxy indicator of interactivity is based on the assumption that a building's function has a significant influence on its form and meaning. Pilot studies conducted in The Hague during the summers of 2011 and 2012 and in Ann Arbor in the fall of 2011 demonstrate that this is indeed the case. Highly active frontage functions such as shops or restaurants will result in highly permeable frontages which

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<sup>292</sup> More information is provided in the literature review chapter. E.g. Hillier and Hanson, *The Social Logic of Space*; Hillier, *Space Is the Machine: A Configurational Theory of Architecture*.

<sup>293</sup> E.g. Duren, *De Dynamiek Van Het Constante : Over De Flexibiliteit Van De Amsterdamse Binnenstad Als Economische Plaats*.

<sup>294</sup> MacCormac, "Urban Reform: Maccormac's Manifesto."; Richard MacCormac, "The Dignity of Office," *The architectural review* 190, no. 1143 (1992).

<sup>295</sup> This theory is further explained and diagrammed in the literature review chapter. Canter, *The Psychology of Place*.

<sup>296</sup> As outlined in Canter's purposive model of place in "A Non-Reactive Study of Room Usage in Modern Japanese Apartments," in *Psychology and the Built Environment*, ed. David V. Canter and T. Lee (London: Architectural Press, 1974); "Putting Situations in Their Place.."

evoke a sense of a low threshold between public and private space. Conversely, highly inactive ground floor functions such as parking garages or factories face public space with blank or impenetrable frontages which evoke a sense of inactivity and impermeability. Also, function is a strong determinant of form and connotation even in existing buildings which have changed their ground floor use over time. In The Hague, many historic frontages have served a previous function. For example, many shops have been turned into offices, warehouse or dwellings. The interactivity of these frontages has changed as a result: transparent retail facades that used to draw in a crowd with large display windows are shuttered with blinds and curtains to protect their new tenants from the peeking eyes of passersby.



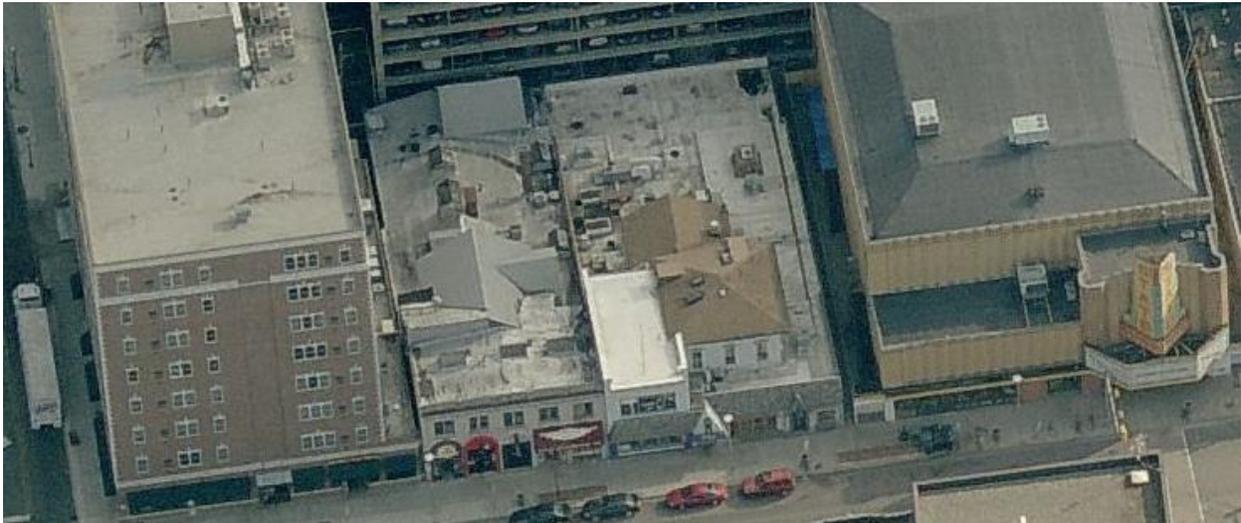
**Figure 28. Many former retail stores in The Hague now serve as offices (left) or dwellings (right) by decreasing its visual permeability.<sup>297</sup>**

The examples in Figure 28 show that frontage form (and its resulting connotation of interactivity) indeed follows its most current function. The shuttered retail façade by a resident or office tenant will transform into a proxy for a residential façade – finding a balance between engagement and privacy. In return, a retailer is unlikely to settle in a

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<sup>297</sup> Image by author, 2012.

relatively closed-off residential dwelling without major structural modifications to the building to enable the presentation of merchandise through a more transparent frontage. This has been witnessed by the conversion of many Dutch merchant houses into shops during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and for example by the conversion of several downtown Ann Arbor dwellings into commercial buildings over the past decades as shown in Figure 29.



**Figure 29. Two former residential buildings on State Street in Ann Arbor have been rigorously converted into retail units by extending them to the street with transparent frontages.<sup>298</sup>**

The strong relation between function, form and connotation allows us to view the latter two as an affordance of function<sup>299</sup>, as function seems to act as a sufficient guiding principle to interactivity to allow it to be used as a proxy indicator for historical studies. This allows us to devise a list of common ground floor functions, and determine its likely form and connotation. Subsequently, this list can be translated into assumed levels of **interactivity as judged by the combination of function, form and connotation**. For example a shop has a highly permeable function (aiming to draw in as many passersby as possible resulting in high through-frontage traffic), a highly permeable form (transparent windows, many doors) and a highly permeable connotation (passersby will not feel hindered to enter). A

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<sup>298</sup> Image courtesy of Bing Maps, 2009.

<sup>299</sup> Jon T. Lang, *Creating Architectural Theory : The Role of the Behavioral Sciences in Environmental Design*(New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1987).

parking garage has a highly impermeable function (allowing only cars in, with very limited pedestrian entrances and exits for security and efficiency reasons), a highly impermeable form (closed off completely to passersby or allowing very limited views of parked cars) and a highly impermeable connotation (passersby if not parked have no legitimate reason to enter).

### **b. Categorization**

A total of sixteen different ground floor frontage functions have been determined along lines of data availability, significance to frontage interactivity and statistical analyses of patterns which pertain to this interactivity. Functions have been harmonized between Detroit and The Netherlands, and inferring functions from their respective business and cross listing directories in a time-efficient manner allowed for the distinction between these functions. Within the function of 'shops', three categories of Fun, Run and Destination shopping are distinguished to enable a more detailed study of retail transformation patterns.<sup>300</sup> Their full description of function, connotation and form is provided in Appendix A, along with typological diagrams.

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<sup>300</sup> The rationale for the categorization and broad definition of retail types is provided in full in Appendix A. The definition of retail types by type of merchandise sold is provided in Appendix B.



Figure 30. Categorization of ground floor functions.

The next step is to connect the categorized ground floor functions to a system of frontage interactivity. This connection has been made through the study of ‘transactional values’ of different ground floor functions, inspired by the writings of British architect Richard MacCormac. In his 1986 study, he argues that certain land values are more prone to interact with public space than others. Although MacCormac’s argument mainly pertained to the difference between offices and shops, which as he argues conduct their transactions either globally (as in the case of offices), or locally (as in the case of shops), the argument can in principle be extended to other land uses.<sup>301</sup> Yet thus far, other structured studies on the link between land use and frontage interactivity have not been undertaken. Instead, we can look at the practical application of this link in city policy, as many policy frameworks rely on the tacitly agreed correlation between certain active land uses such as shops, bars and restaurants and certain service providers, and interactive frontages which add to walkability and vibrant street life. Many American cities are adopting zoning which includes requirements or incentives on the inclusion of these activating ground floor land uses such as Seattle<sup>302</sup>, Chicago<sup>303</sup>, New York<sup>304</sup> and San Francisco<sup>305</sup>. Most often, the zoning codes specifically mention commercial uses, and in some cases residential uses which directly and transparently face public space. Policies also specifically mention which ground floor land uses are not desirable. In most cases, parking and storage are specifically prevented, but for example New York also specifically limits ground floor banking as it deems their offices as closed toward public space.

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<sup>301</sup> MacCormac’s argumentation is explained in more detail in the literature review chapter and in the original paper: MacCormac, "Urban Reform: MacCormac’s Manifesto."

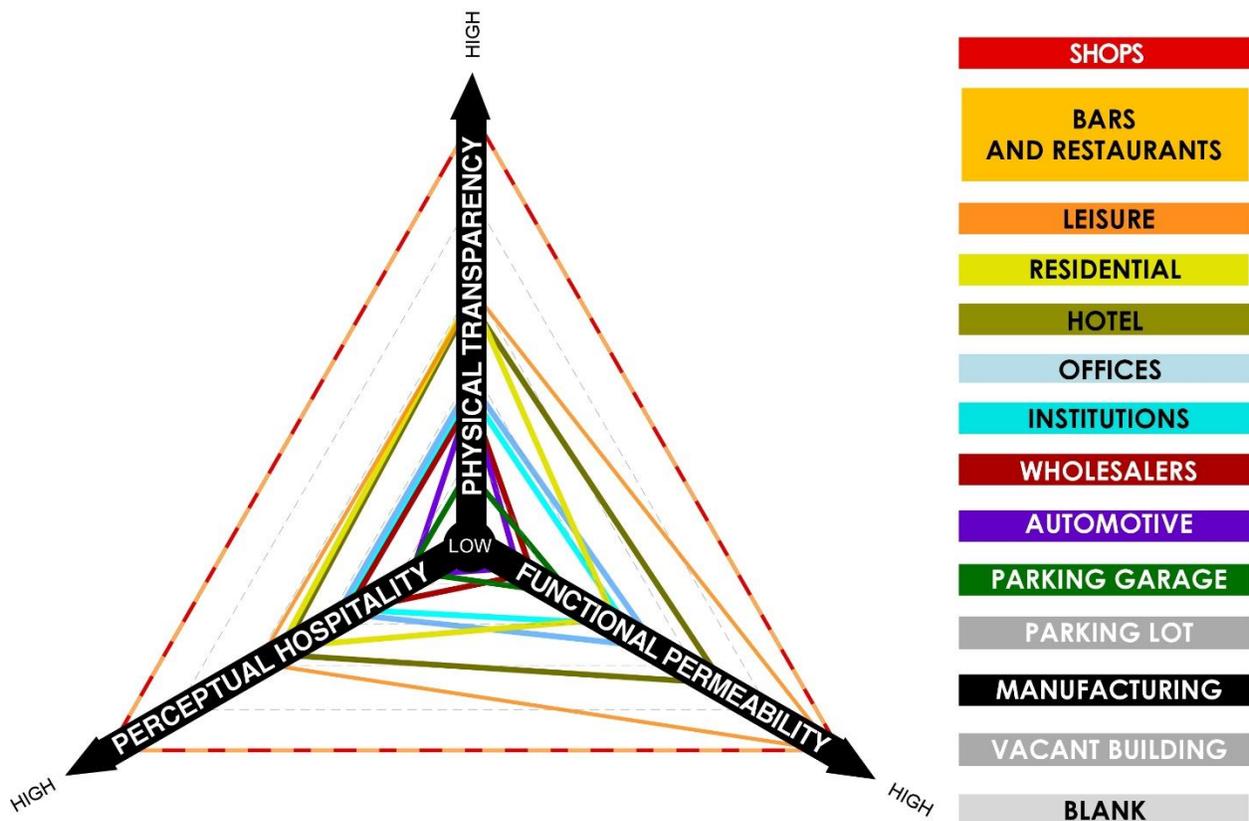
<sup>302</sup> The city’s Municipal Code and design guidelines have built-in requirements for active ground floor uses on certain types of streets (Class 1 and 2 pedestrian streets) and zones (Neighborhood Commercial and Seattle Mixed). Active ground floor uses can be incentivized in zoning.

<sup>303</sup> The city’s zoning ordinance as of March 5, 2014 requires ground floor retail in some zones, specifically in zoning designations 17-4-0103 (Downtown Mixed-Use District) and all other B1/B3/C1/C2 districts.

<sup>304</sup> The city has special districts which can restrict the presence of banks, residential and office lobbies, and require minimum percentages of ground floor retail, specifically in the Special Enhanced Commercial Districts (Resolution Chapter 132-00).

<sup>305</sup> San Francisco describes active uses on the ground floor as “any principal, conditional, or accessory use which by its nature does not require non-transparent walls facing a public street or involves the storage of goods or vehicles.” Planning Code Section 145.1 (b)(2). This can include residential uses if it meets transparency and entrance requirements. The city incentivizes these uses, and requires them in certain districts.

Yet MacCormac’s studies and the reviewed city policies forego the tripartite of frontage interactivity as a function of physical, functional and connotative dimensions as argued by Canter’s place psychology model illustrated in Figure 31. Taking this approach, ground floor functions can be categorized along the lines of physical transparency (the visual ability to see through a frontage), functional permeability (the functional traffic which passes through a frontage) and connotative hospitality (the perceived threshold between a frontage and public space), to arrive at a level of total interactivity.



**Figure 31. Categorization of ground floor land uses along the dimensions of physical transparency, functional permeability and perceptual hospitality. Parking lots, manufacturers, vacant buildings and blank walls are not shown in the diagram, as their values are zero on each axis.<sup>306</sup>**

<sup>306</sup> Note that physical transparency and perceptual hospitality varies between Detroit and The Netherlands between the same ground floor functions, and functional permeability is dependent on the size of the building that is accessed through the ground floor.

The area that each ground floor land use takes up in Figure 31 can be translated as an indicator of its total interactivity. For this research, four tiers of interactivity are distinguished, balancing detail with time-efficient mapping and statistical work. Fewer tiers would oversimplify the relationship between buildings and public space, but more tiers would provide a false sense of detail on perceived interactivity when cultural and temporal differences can actually cause certain land uses to occupy a bandwidth of interactivity. The results are shown in Figure 32.

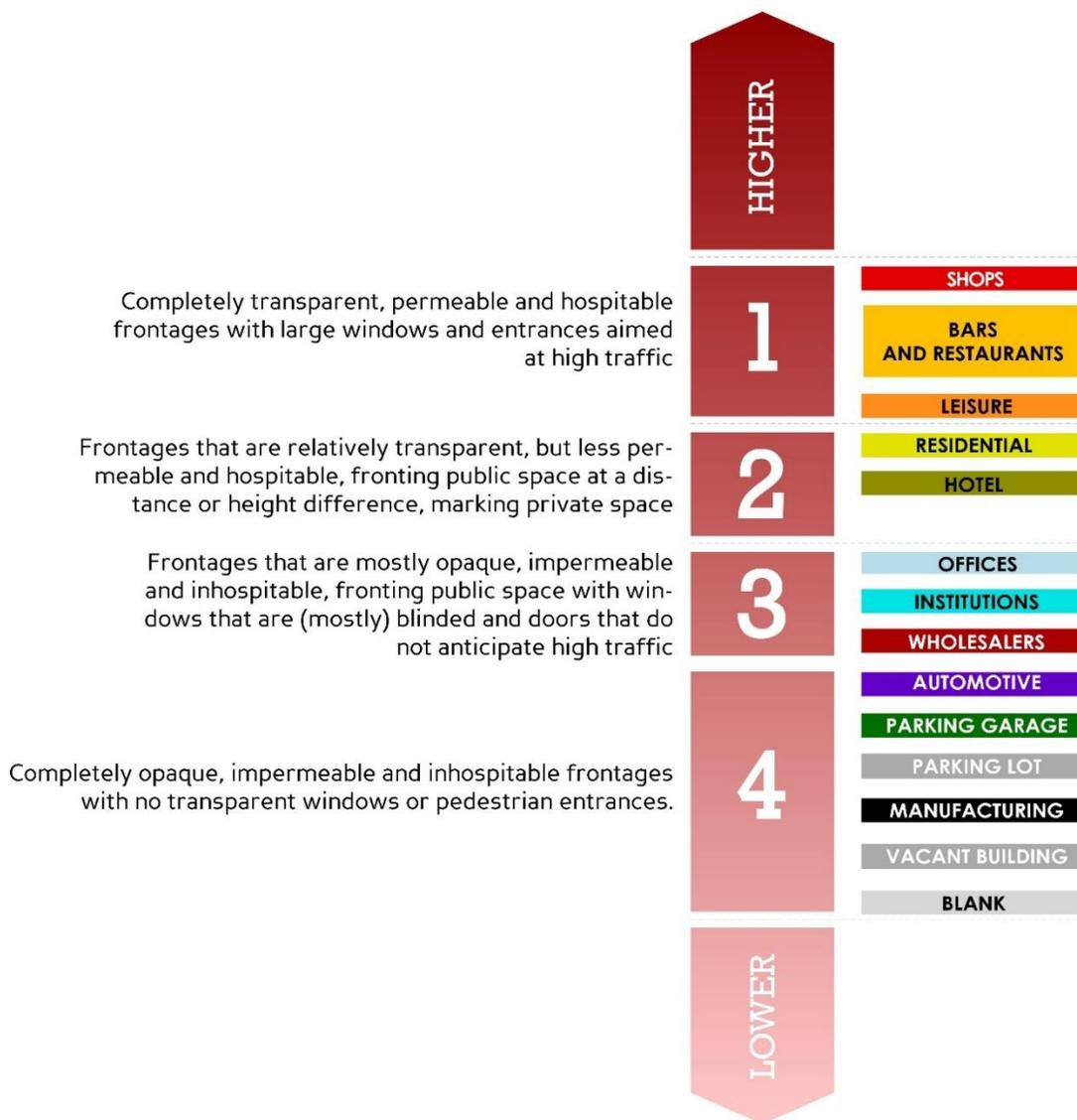


Figure 32. Categorization of land uses into four interactivity tiers.



Secondly, a function-based approach relies on a consistency of form and connotation with a ground floor function between the Netherlands and the United States. In other words: a shop is as permeable in The Hague as it is in Detroit. As frontage form is dependent on its function but also on the cultural context it is located in, this can bring up difficulties. Shops in The Hague are notably more permeable to passersby than in Detroit as a result of a greater confidence in the safety and security of public space. Similarly, dwellings are usually more transparent in The Hague than in Detroit as a result of a different cultural attitude toward privacy and security. However, in essence the aim of ground floor land uses in each context remains the same, albeit in different gradations of permeability.

Another concern with this approach is the supposed consistency of form and connotation with a ground floor function over the span of a century. In other words: a shop is as permeable now and perceived as such, as it was a century ago. For certain land uses this brings up difficulties. For example wholesaling was conducted in quite a different setting a century ago as opposed to today. Wholesalers used to resemble end-consumer retail shops, as they targeted their merchandise to business passersby, benefiting from prime city locations. Today, wholesaling mostly depends on off-site (often online) branding and name recognition and conducts business through loading docks in suburban locations. Similarly, the relation between offices and public space has transformed over the past century as well. Nevertheless the overall interactivity of all ground floor land uses has remained relatively consistent through time, albeit sometimes cast in a different frontage form.

The reliable historical study of frontage interactivity can only hinge on its most reliable source: the function of ground floors as indicated by directories and registries. Therefore, the availability of this data trumps the pitfalls mentioned in the previous paragraphs for the purpose of this research.

#### d. Mapping

In order to determine the location and use of the categorized ground floors, traditional morphological mapping techniques have been combined with an extra functional dimension. This allows for the diachronic comparison of ground floor functions, and the resulting ground floor interactivity in the urban cores of The Hague and Detroit.

The combination between morphological and functional mapping requires the acquisition and harmonization of sources that show the location of frontages as well as their use over the span of a century. The location of frontages was acquired by use of various historical maps, aerial photographs and supporting documents, which were far easier to obtain for Detroit than for The Hague. These maps have been combined with information on the function of each address within it using business directories, cross-listing directories, address books and government registries of businesses. Again, these were far easier to obtain for Detroit than for The Hague. The easy accessibility of mapping and functional data in Detroit has allowed for a greater number of study intervals in this city, but five intervals (1911, 1937, 1961, 1988 and 2011) have been studied for both cities. The time intervals and their mapping and functional sources are outlined in diagram XX.

YEAR	DETROIT		THE HAGUE	
	Mapping	Functional data	Mapping	Functional data
<b>1911</b>	Baist's Real Estate Atlas of Detroit, 1911	R.L. Polk & Co.'s Detroit City Directory, 1911	Gemeentekaarten 1916, 1920, 1923, 1926;  Cadastral maps 1905, 1914;  Gemeentekaart by Smulders, 1895; various technical maps for changed areas.	Adresboek 's-Gravenhage 1910-1911

<b>1921</b>	Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1951	R.L. Polk & Co.'s Detroit City Directory, 1921		
<b>1929</b>	Baist's Real Estate Atlas of Detroit, 1929;  Nathan Nirenstein Atlas, 1929	R.L. Polk & Co.'s Detroit City Directory, 1928-1929		
<b>1937</b>	Real Property Survey of Detroit, 1937;  Aerial photographs	R.L. Polk & Co.'s Detroit City Directory, 1937-1938	Gemeentekaarten 1936	Adresboek 's-Gravenhage 1937
<b>1951</b>	Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1951; Nathan Nirenstain Atlas, 1951	Bresser's cross-index Directory of Detroit, 1950 <sup>308</sup>		
<b>1961</b>	Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1961	Bresser's cross-index Directory of Detroit, 1960-1961	Gemeentekaarten 1961; Cadastral Map 1961.	Telefoongids en bedrijvengids 's-Gravenhage 1961
<b>1977</b>	Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1977	Bresser's cross-index Directory of Detroit, 1976-1977		
<b>1988</b>	Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1988 and CBD 1989	Bresser's cross-index Directory of Detroit, 1988	Gemeentekaarten 1989	Werkgelegenheidsregister (employment registry) The Hague, 1988
<b>2001</b>	Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1996; United States Geological Survey aerial photography, 2001	Bresser's cross-index Directory of Detroit, 2001		
<b>2011</b>	Current GIS mapping, aerial photography	Bresser's cross-index Directory of Detroit, 2011	Digital Cadastral 1:1000 maps	Werkgelegenheidsregister The Hague, 2011; GOAD-plans The Hague, 2011.

<sup>308</sup> A 1951 directory has not been printed.

**Figure 34. Mapping and functional sources for determining frontage interactivity in Detroit and The Hague between 1911 and 2011.**

To create a base map to work from, historical mapping is used to draw blocks, parcels and building footprints in GIS software. Parks, water bodies and significant infrastructural areas (rail yards and highways) are also drawn separately. After this, the interface between public and private space is drawn. This interface does not necessarily correlate with the parcel boundary, as for example significant interior public spaces are also drawn as public (in the case of the Passage in The Hague), unless they were closed to the public with doors and security (in the case of the Renaissance Center in Detroit). Privatized plazas are also drawn as public, such as the plaza in front of the Federal Building in Detroit. The boundary is separated by parcel, so each address receives its own polygon.<sup>309</sup>

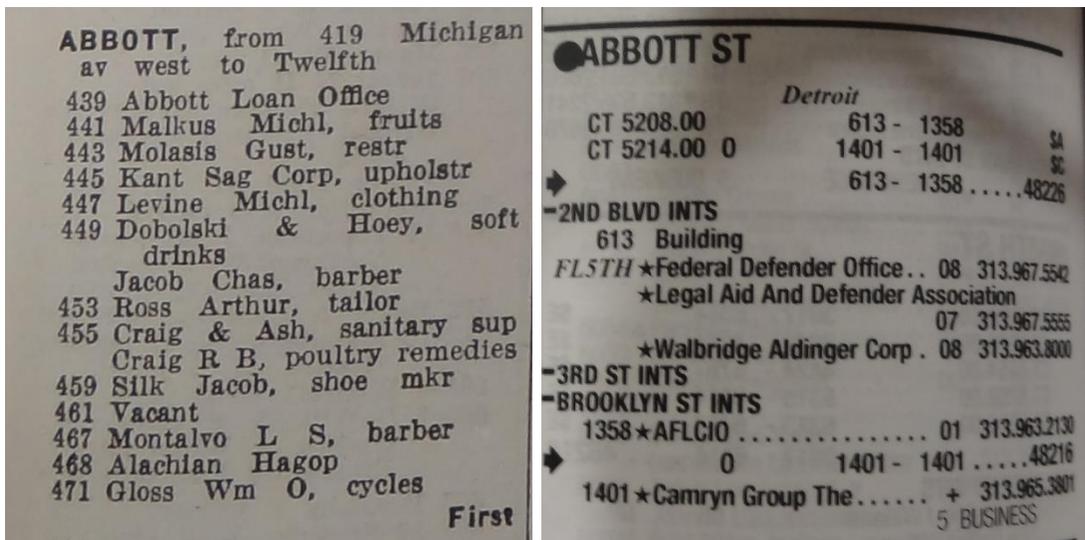


**Figure 35. Example from Sanborn Fire Insurance atlas of Detroit 1921, with building footprints and parcel boundaries drawn. The dashed parcel boundaries denote different addresses in one building.**

The function of each address is determined by external directories or registries, which are entered into an Excel database that denotes function by address. In the case of Detroit, this was a fairly easy task as both Bresser's and R.L. Polk & Co. have distributed cross-listing directories which describe the tenant of each address. This description is then categorized under the sixteen functional types elaborated in the previous section. This requires judgement of the type of tenant, which was difficult in some cases. Categorizing the retail

<sup>309</sup> Corner lots receive one polygon on each street for statistical purposes, in which polygons on side streets are marked as a corner to prevent double counting of one function.

type (Run, Fun and Destination) by the type of merchandise sold at a retailer rather than just categorizing an address as 'shop' was not always easy to determine and rather time consuming. Therefore, only in the comparative time intervals (1911, 1937, 1961, 1988 and 2011) this distinction has been made. In all other time intervals, only the definition as 'shop' is given to expedite the research process. Detroit's cross-listing directories also allowed for the notation of vacant frontages, enabling statistical analysis into the city's growing ground floor vacancy during the postwar era.



**Figure 36. Left: Photograph from 1921 Polk's directory of Detroit for Abbott Street, noting tenants by address. For each address, the type of tenant is categorized and entered into an Excel sheet. For example number 439 is entered as 'office', number 441 as 'shop', number 443 as 'bar and restaurant'. Right: Photograph from 2011 Bresser's cross-listing directory, noting tenants, intersecting streets and vacancies.**

In case of The Hague, finding the function of each address was considerably more difficult. Cross-listing directories which noted the tenant and function of each address, as in Detroit, were either missing or highly unreliable. The 1911 and 1937 directories provided a tenant for each address, but failed to note their profession or the address's function. The directories provided a list by profession that noted an address, but these were highly incomplete as they were opt-in only and in the case of 1937 did not count the significant

number of unregistered retailers in the inner city. Only the list by name included a full profession and address, which had to be translated to the reverse (profession by address) either manually (1911) or through Optical Character Recognition technology (1937). Similarly, the 1961 directory had to be translated from address by function to function by address using OCR technology with a manual check. The 1988 and 2011 functional data was provided using the digital employment registry of the city, amended with ground floor function mapping<sup>310</sup> for the retail core in 2011. Vacancies were poorly noted in most sources, obstructing the reliable administration of vacant frontages and lots over time.

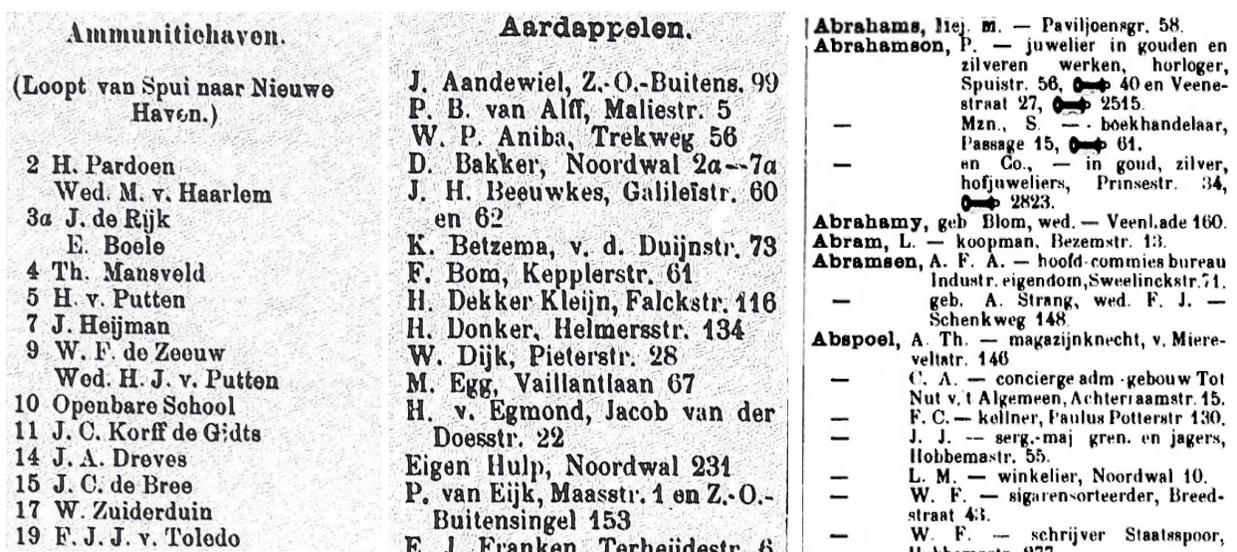


Figure 37. Photographs from the Adresboek (Address Book) of The Hague in 1911, displaying tenants by address, but by name only (left), providing an incomplete list of addresses by profession (middle), only providing a complete overview of profession by name (right). The manual combination of the three provided a complete overview of function (profession) by address.<sup>311</sup>

The resulting Excel files contain a field for each address and a related categorized function. For the combined phone books from The Hague from 1911, 1937 and 1961, multiple functions have often been found for each address. In this case, the most interactive function for each address has been entered into the GIS map, as it is assumed that this interactive function takes place on the ground floor frontage.

<sup>310</sup> Derived from "Goad" plans, named after its inventor Charles Goad (see appendix A.)

<sup>311</sup> Image by author.

zwarteweg	1	OFFICE
Zwarteweg	1	WHOLESALE
zwarteweg	4	WHOLESALE
zwarteweg	4	OFFICE
zwarteweg	4	WHOLESALE
zwarteweg	4	OFFICE
zwarteweg	4	OFFICE
Zwarteweg	5	BANK
Zwarteweg	5	BANK
zwarteweg	5	BANK

Figure 38. Example of Excel file noting functions per address. As many addresses have more than one function attributed to it, the highest function is entered into the GIS map, for example 'office' for Zwarteweg 1 and 4.

An example of the resulting color coded and attributed GIS map is provided in Figure 39.

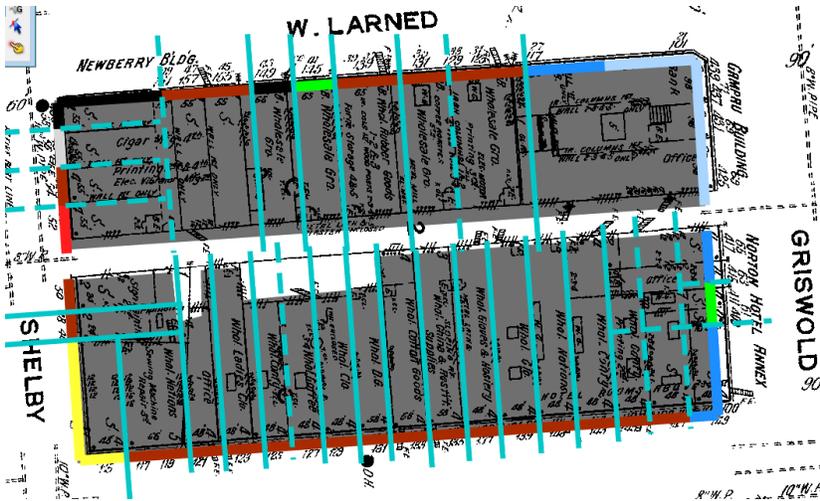


Figure 39. Color coded and GIS-attributed map of frontage functions on a block in Detroit, 1921.

Since the categorized land uses can be translated into frontage interactivity tiers, the map in Figure 39 can be translated to Figure 40. However, significant blank walls can cause an override of frontage activity in the translation, as for example in the case of megastructures like the Renaissance Center which contain parking or security curbs. Because side walls of corner shops could not efficiently be assessed for their interactivity, they are counted as interactive as their front wall. The resulting interactivity patterns are drawn for the entire

urban core and provided in Appendix C, as well as in the chapters on forces behind frontage change.

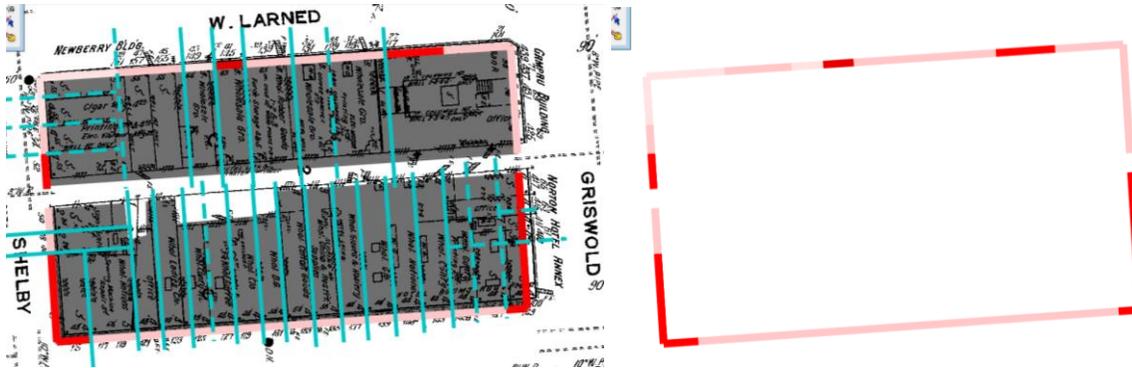


Figure 40. Translation of ground floor functions to frontage interactivity (left), with background left out (right).

### 3.3.3 Statistical analysis

The use category and frontage maps that result from the analysis method set out in the previous section can be analyzed in further detail. The maps themselves only depict a visual pattern of frontage change, which already illustrate a pattern of concentrated and accelerated decline at the scale of the urban core as a whole. Yet further analysis may reveal patterns and forces that underlay this clearly visible pattern. This analysis facilitates the verification of visual clues that have formed the following hypotheses:

- Frontage interactivity has declined drastically, both in Detroit and in The Hague;
- This decline is as much due to the decline of highly interactive functions such as retail, bars and restaurants as it is due to new, inactive construction;
- Frontages have become much wider, as new construction has drastically increased in scale;
- Frontage interactivity decline has been stronger in the periphery of urban cores than at their heart;

- Frontage interactivity decline (especially due to retail decline) has been stronger in poorly connected streets than in well-connected streets (as calculated by Choice value in Space Syntax software);
- Frontages interactivity decline occurred more in the prewar than postwar years due to the decline of street level businesses in both cities;
- Urban renewal has been highly detrimental to frontage interactivity, both within their project perimeters and right outside it;
- The diversity of frontages has declined, when looking at both the general function pattern, and the pattern of retailers only.

To corroborate these hypotheses, a range of further statistical analyses is undertaken on the GIS database which underlies the frontage mapping. This database allows for analysis of transformation patterns over time, between locations in the urban core, connectivity values of streets, proximity to other frontage types and so on. The statistical measures which are undertaken to answer various questions on frontage transformation are outlined in Figure 41.

## QUESTION

## METHOD

How has the interactivity of frontages changed in Detroit and The Hague?

- Average frontage interactivity over time;
- Average frontage interactivity mutation per year;
- Frontage change per interactivity tier.

How has the function of frontages changed in Detroit and The Hague?

- Total frontage length per function type over time.

How has the scale of frontages changed in Detroit and The Hague?

- Average frontage width over time;
- Frontage width mutation per year.

Have frontages changed differently in different locations in the urban core?

- Frontage transformation over time as a function of proximity to the center of activity;
- Frontage transformation over time as a function of through-movement potential of a street segment, using Space Syntax analysis;
- Frontage interactivity divergence over time, using Gini inequality analysis.

How does frontage interactivity decline?

- Decline acceleration analysis of frontage interactivity at the street segment level;
- Decline acceleration analysis of ground floor businesses at the street segment level;

Is frontage interactivity influenced by large scale urban renewal projects?

- Contagious decline analysis of frontage interactivity as a result of vacant frontages;
- Contagious decline analysis of frontage interactivity as a result of vacant lots and parking lots;
- Contagious decline analysis of business closure as a result of nearby business closures.

Does the diversity of frontages change over time?

- Frontage interactivity transformation comparison between urban renewal areas and non-urban renewal areas;
- Frontage interactivity transformation comparison between urban renewal-adjacent areas and non-urban renewal-adjacent areas.

- Diversity measurements of frontage function over time, using Simpsons Index of diversity;
- Diversity measurements of frontage retail over time, using Simpsons Index of diversity;
- Diversity measurements as a function of distance from the center of activity;
- Diversity measurements as a function of street segment choice value, using Space Syntax analysis.

**Figure 41. Statistical questions and answering methods.**

### 3.4 CASE STUDIES

This section will provide the rationale of the chosen case study approach and the introduction of both case studies. Comparison between a carefully chosen set of case studies allows for generalizable conclusions without compromising the complexity of real world situations. In fact, the depth enabled by the case study methodology allows for the careful study of each case, allowing for more detailed and valid conclusions, regardless of their generalizability.<sup>312</sup> In order to derive conclusions to achieve change in real urban cores, the situation of two real urban cores will be studied.

This research will study the downtown of Detroit, Michigan and the inner city of The Hague, Netherlands. The choice for multiple case studies has a few underlying reasons. Firstly, their location on both sides of the Atlantic in cultural contexts that show significant similarities as well as differences allow for comparison and contrast between case studies to discern the generalizable and the unique. The widening disparity between street level architecture in North American downtowns and European inner cities was an important inspiration for this research, and as a result the choice of case studies in each of these contexts seems obvious. Many downtown streets in North American downtowns are filled with blank walls, the declarations of “distrust of the city and its streets”,<sup>313</sup> whereas the hyperactivity of retail frontage in many European inner cities prompts business owners to close off doors to upper floors to allow for more ground floor rental income requires the study of a case on each continent.

Similarly, the discovery of significant similarities between two seemingly disparate cases suggests potential generalizability to other Western urban cores. For example, a pattern of polarization between an active commercial core and a surrounding ring of relatively inactive land uses can be found on both sides of the Atlantic. Comparing patterns in different countries can suggest answers to the question of why societies across the Atlantic have shaped their frontages in a divergent manner, but often with similar outcomes.

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<sup>312</sup> Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods*(Oxford university press, 2012).

<sup>313</sup> Whyte, *City : Rediscovering the Center*, 222.

Combining the generalizable similarities and complex differences between the two chosen case studies allows for a strengthening of conclusions on both.

The theoretical model in the previous chapter aims to provide an overview of the forces that shape urban cores in the United States and The Netherlands has been created by studying literature on the history of downtowns. The resulting explanatory framework is crucial as the basis of a comparative case-study approach before the research commences, as it “...needs to state the conditions under which a particular phenomenon is likely to be found (a literal replication [between case studies]) as well as the conditions when it is not likely to be found (a theoretical replication)”.<sup>314</sup> In the case of downtown frontages, the literature review has found similarities between urban cores across the Atlantic such as the rapid transformation of office and retail industries, modern urban renewal plans and place-based redevelopment strategies. The review has also found profound differences between the United States and The Netherlands, most of which are based on political, cultural and economic differences. The choice for multiple case studies lies in a *combination of* theoretical and literal replication.<sup>315</sup> The case studies have been chosen to show some similarities and some differences. If all case studies would be assumed to follow exactly the same path, a major oversight of local culture and society would result. Conversely, if all underlying factors for transformations were different, cross-cultural inferences would be impossible to draw. As expected from the theoretical model set out in the literature review, some overlaps are found between urban cores in the Netherlands and the United States, enabling a generalization of patterns between case studies and to other urban cores. Similarly, differences between both case studies have shown that each place has unique features that significantly influence the relation between buildings and public space.

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<sup>314</sup> R.K. Yin, "Case Study Research," *Design and methods* 5(1994): 48.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

### 3.4.1 Case study selection

Since the dissertation aims to study the transformation of the relation between buildings and public space as a result of internal patterns and external forces, cases were required to:

- a) have transformed sufficiently over the past century to enable meaningful study with significant results;
- b) have transformed consistently over the past century, without sudden transformations due to drastic externalities such as war damage or natural disasters.

Both criteria have significantly reduced the amount of eligible urban cores, especially in The Netherlands.<sup>316</sup> For example the well-preserved urban core of Amsterdam has hardly experienced any significant morphological changes over the past century, while the war-damaged urban core of Rotterdam has been completely rebuilt in a matter of years<sup>317</sup>. Both cities were therefore ineligible to be included as cases. Instead, the third largest city of The Netherlands, The Hague, is chosen as a case study. The Hague is the government seat of the Netherlands, the 'second capital' behind Amsterdam and the third largest city in the country with about 508,000 inhabitants and an agglomeration of just over 1 million people in 2014.<sup>318</sup> It is part of the Delta Metropolis,<sup>319</sup> a belt of interconnected cities in the west of The Netherlands containing the other largest agglomerations in the country such as Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Utrecht surrounding an agricultural, recreational and natural habitat known as the 'Green Heart'. The Delta Metropolis has twice the population size of the Detroit Metropolitan Area with only a fraction of its land cover.<sup>320</sup> The Hague is located

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<sup>316</sup> The choice to compare the United States with the Netherlands stems from the familiarity of the author with both countries' urban, social, cultural and linguistic contexts.

<sup>317</sup> Clé Lesger, *Het Winkellandschap Van Amsterdam. Stedelijke Structuur En Winkelbedrijf in De Vroegmoderne En Moderne Tijd, 1550-2000*(Uitgeverij Verloren, 2013); Duren, *De Dynamiek Van Het Constante : Over De Flexibiliteit Van De Amsterdamse Binnenstad Als Economische Plaats*; Wagenaar, *Town Planning in the Netherlands since 1800 : Responses to Enlightenment Ideas and Geopolitical Realities*.

<sup>318</sup> Statistics are 2014 estimations by Statistics Netherlands (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek).

<sup>319</sup> Also referred to as the Randstad or "Edge City".

<sup>320</sup> The Detroit Metropolitan Area has 4.3 million inhabitants (2013 US Census) and the Delta Metropolis has about 7 million inhabitants (Statistics Netherlands). Map by author.

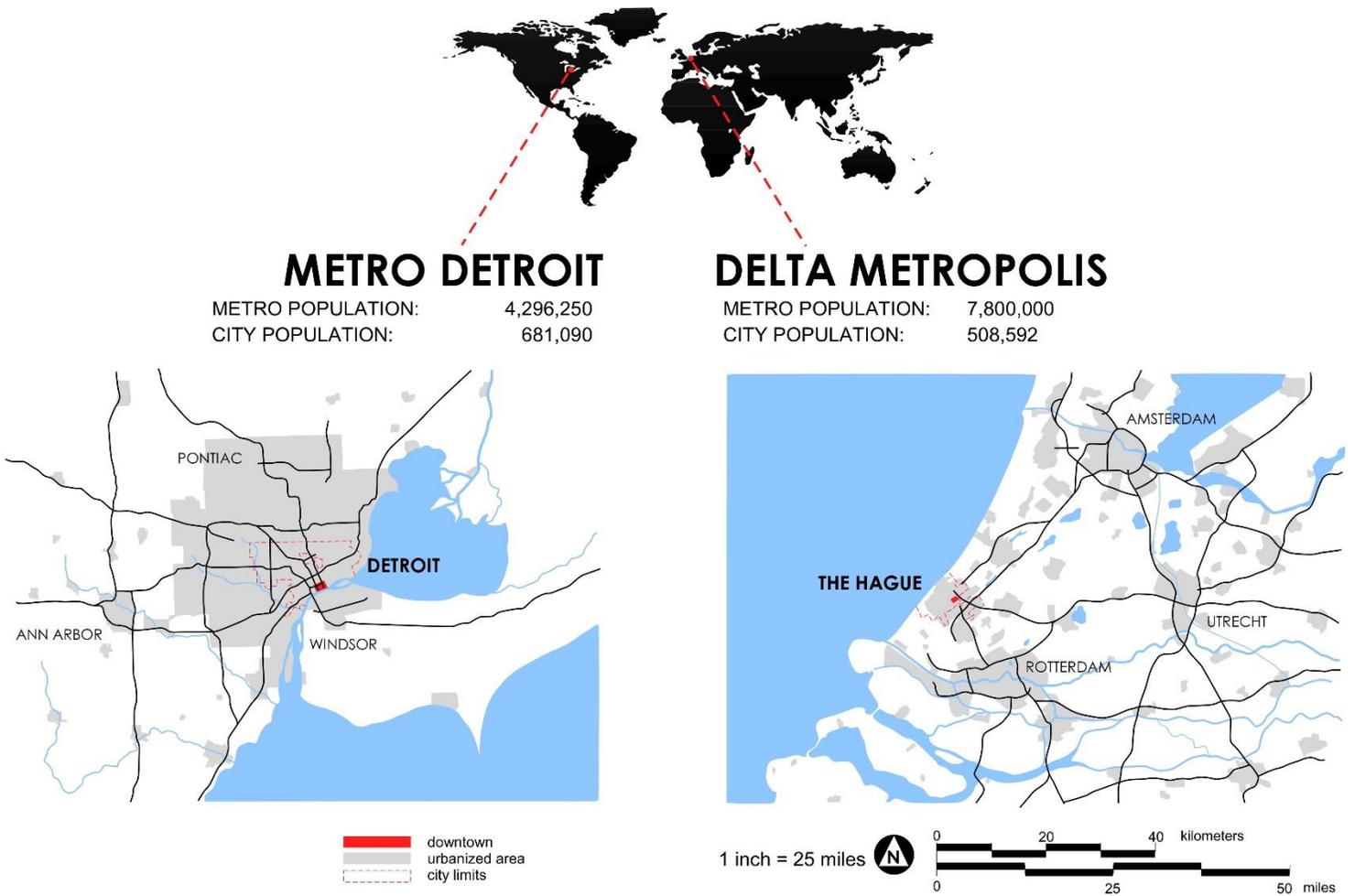
at the southwestern edge of this agglomeration, on the North Sea coast. The southern portion of the Delta Metropolis is also known as “South Wing”.<sup>321</sup>

In North America, most cities will fit with the two case study requirements. American downtowns have always been dynamic places with a significant transformation of their building stock. Furthermore, few American cities has suffered from drastic externalities during the past century.<sup>322</sup> While this keeps the pool of potential case studies very large, the decision has been made to study the city of Detroit, Michigan for its representative values of downtown transformation. While at the center of the Detroit Metropolitan area with a relatively prosperous economy and a stable population, the city itself has experienced significant population decline with just over 680,000 inhabitants remaining from a 1950s peak of almost two million. The city has a national and increasingly global reputation as a poster child for industrial decline, with socio-economic decline following closely in its wake.

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<sup>321</sup> The South Wing (Zuidvleugel) is the combined region of The Hague and Rotterdam.

<sup>322</sup> While many American cities have suffered fires and war damage during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, only few have been hit since. Natural disasters have struck a small percentage of cities during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



**Figure 42. Comparison between the Detroit and The Hague region.**

The following sections will provide a general overview of both case study cities. Instead of discussing the urban planning, design and architectural history of these cities (which will be featured in their respective chapters), the overview will focus on their social and economic history and current status.

### 3.4.2 The Hague

The Hague is known across the Netherlands and the world as a center of public and legal power. As the seat of the central government, the economic base of The Hague focuses on public agencies, the jobs they supply and services they require from supporting private enterprise such as the catering, security and publishing and printing industry. Also, the city has an increasing number of national and international Non-Governmental Organizations that are often dependent upon either the Dutch national government or anchor institutions like the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice. Both sectors combined account for about 26% of all jobs in the city.

Land locked between the sea, water basins and surrounding municipalities and almost built up to capacity, The Hague has not historically allocated much space for space-demanding land uses like manufacturing or peripheral office parks. As a result, the city is highly dependent on the national government for its economy. To a certain degree this phenomenon is relatively normal for most cities within the Delta Metropolis as they each assert their own economic identity: Rotterdam is mainly a large port and industrial city, Amsterdam is mainly a financial center and Utrecht is mainly a convention center because of its central location in the country's rail and road network.<sup>323</sup> Due to the close interconnections between cities in the Delta Metropolis many scholars view the region as one 'urban network' of different cities as 'districts', combined into a single diversified and resilient economic system, which in turn is part of an international urban network in northwestern Europe ranging from Greater London to Greater Paris and the Ruhrgebiet in Germany.<sup>324</sup>

As focused as The Hague may be on the public sector, the city does contain other significant industries. The city also contains headquarters for telecommunications corporations, insurance agencies and Royal Dutch Shell. Some of these corporations have

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<sup>323</sup> RC Kloosterman and H Priemus, "The Hague: A Dual City? Causes and Policy Responses: An Introduction," *Built Environment* 27, no. 3 (2001). For a historical perspective on the specialization of industries in The Netherlands, see Cammen and De Klerk, *Ruimtelijke Ordening: Van Grachtengordel Tot Vinexwijk*.

<sup>324</sup> C. C. Kickert, "Central City Planning in the Hague - a Perspective 1945-2011" (University of Michigan, 2011).

been spawned from the privatization of former state assets or are dependent on close ties with the national government. Commercial services account for about 18% of all jobs in the city. The Hague's beneficial location on the shores of the North Sea provides it with a significant tourism industry (about 20% of all jobs) and fishing industry (about 10% of all jobs combined with other manufacturing).<sup>325</sup>

## History

The Hague has grown as the residence of the Dutch aristocracy from 1248 onwards, but has never achieved the same status as surrounding cities. With a strongly decentralized structure of power, concentrated in the vibrant merchant cities in The Netherlands, The Hague was often seen as 'neutral ground' that could serve as the ideal seat of a relatively modest centralized government. As the power and governance structure of the country changed rapidly in the Medieval and Golden Era of The Netherlands in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the role of central government and therefore The Hague increased, leading to steady growth in the city. The most rapid growth in The Hague occurred during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as the city prospered as an administrative capital of the Dutch empire with colonies stretching across the globe, including the lucrative trade with Indonesia. Furthermore, the city had built up somewhat of a manufacturing base, albeit small compared to most other Dutch cities. This era also marked the first significant growth of the city beyond its historic canal ring that demarcates the current inner city.

This growth brought another chapter in the city's long history of class segregation: from the onset at its establishment in 1248, the aristocracy of the city settled on higher grounds in spacious castles, mansions and districts, with a village of staff and merchants supporting the elite growing in its shadows. Prosperous new developments were constructed between the city and the sea on sand grounds while the working class settled in speculative housing districts on lower peat grounds in the south and west quarter of the city. This development pattern can even be recognized today, as upper and middle class

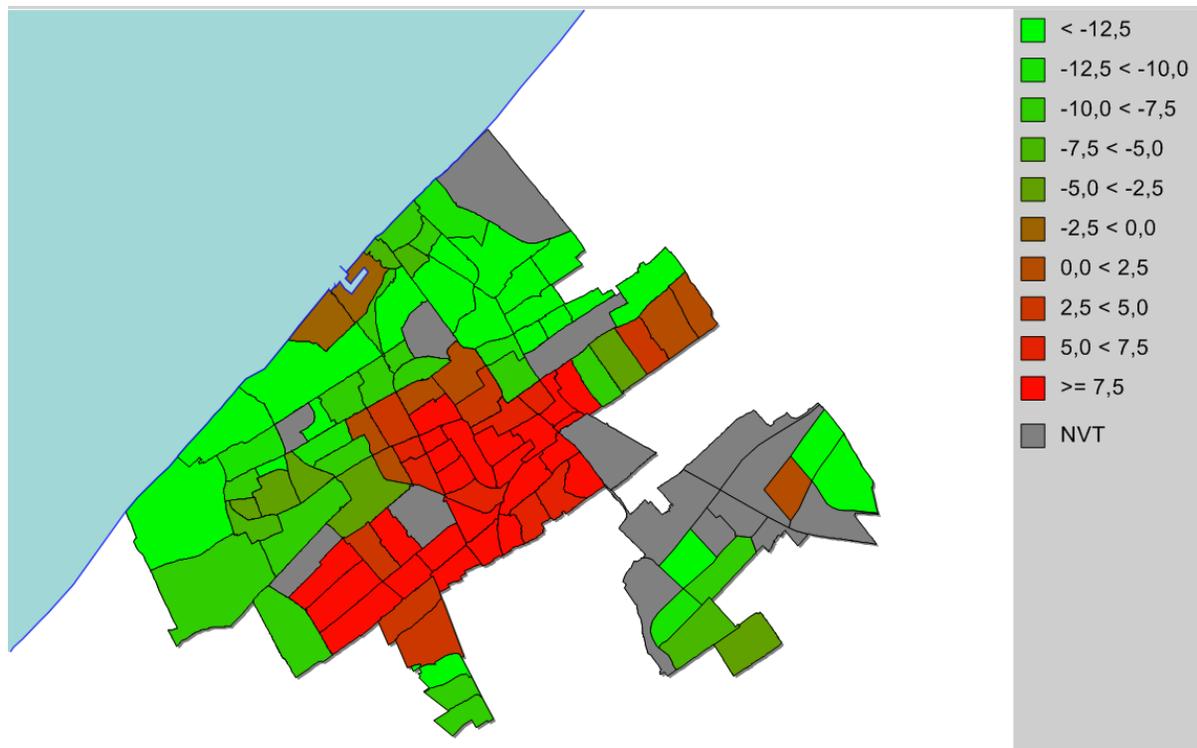
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<sup>325</sup> Dienst Stedelijke Ontwikkeling, "De Staat Van De Haagse Economie," ed. Dienst Stedelijke Ontwikkeling(The Hague2007).

citizens prefer higher districts and the working class and increasingly foreign-born population lives in the same lower districts as two centuries ago.



**Figure 43. Map showing the urban structure of The Hague overlaid on a soil pattern map, with sand banks in yellow. Most prosperous districts are located on higher banks. Original settlements in red.**



**Figure 44. Map of index of deprivation for neighborhoods within The Hague in 2010, higher scores mean more deprivation. Image courtesy of Den Haag in Cijfers.<sup>326</sup>**

Locked between the sea and dunes containing water basins to the north and surrounding municipalities to the east and south, the city continued to grow westward during most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The surrounding settlement of Loosduinen was annexed in the 1920s and large new neighborhoods were constructed on the newly expanded city limits. While this westward development increasingly decentralized the urban core, all neighborhoods were connected to the inner city by an extensive streetcar and bus network. The combination between a bustling inner city and extensive, leafy neighborhoods for the

<sup>326</sup> The index comprises five elements: percentage of minority population, personal income level, percentage of long-term unemployed inhabitants, average home value and percentage of population that moved within the past three years. This index can be compared with the British Index of Multiple Deprivation. The map clearly shows that deprived neighborhoods cluster around the south and west side of the city, whereas more prosperous areas are located closer to the sea. This index is measured annually and guides municipal subsidies for community development initiatives in each neighborhood.

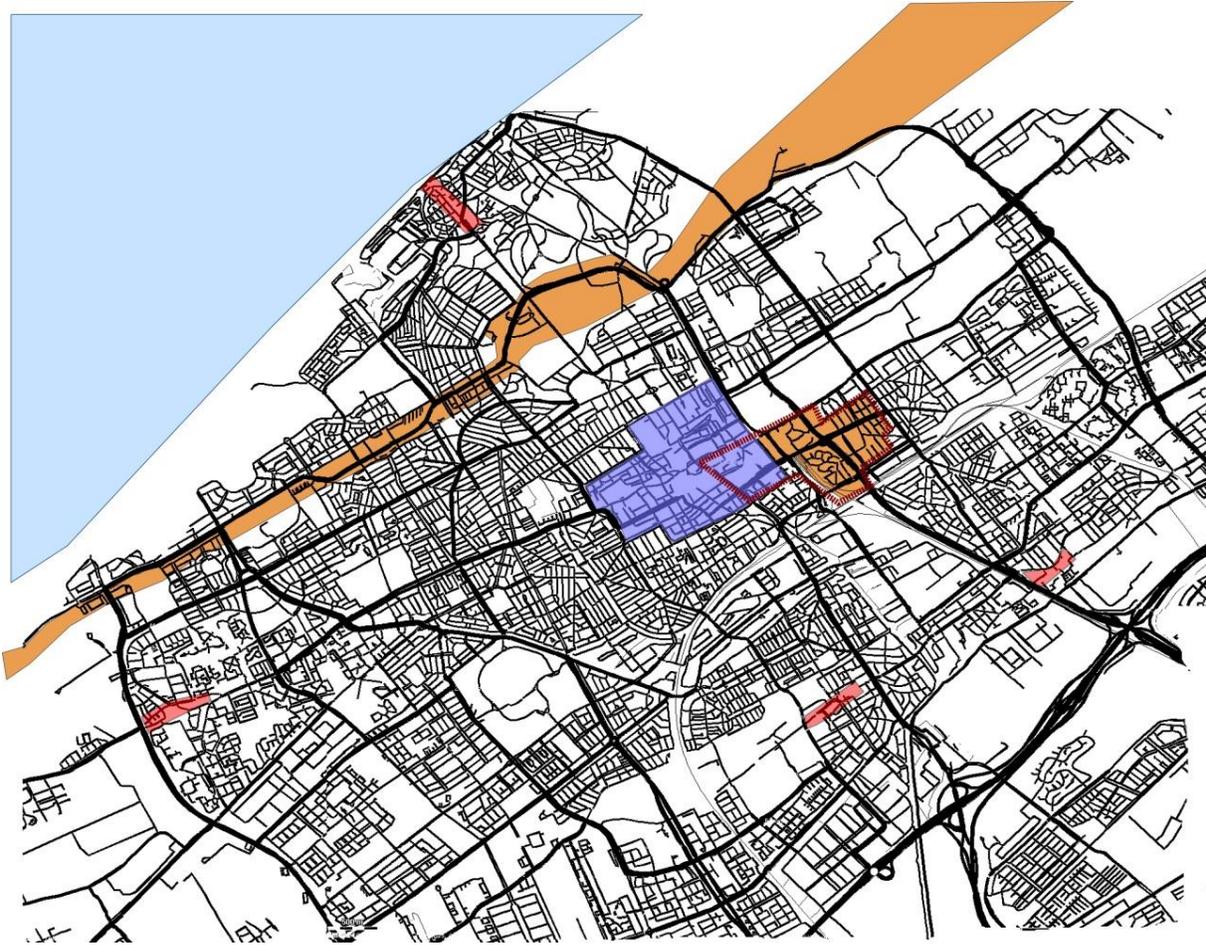
middle classes continued the city's reputation as a high quality residential environment during the interbellum.<sup>327</sup>

During World War II, The Hague suffered severe damages throughout the city. The strategic location of The Hague on the North Sea coast prompted German troops to evacuate all neighborhoods close to the sea and to cut an anti-tank defense system through them. Failed missile launches in scattered installations in the city frequently caused significant damage, some of which were in the inner city. Most devastatingly, toward the end of the war Allied troops mistakenly bombed a large area east of the inner city. Although the war damage surveyed in 1945 was less severe than in hard-hit cities such as Rotterdam, nevertheless The Hague lost over 8,000 homes, and numerous civic buildings, warehouses and shops.<sup>328</sup> Furthermore, no new housing had been constructed during the war years, leading to an imminent housing crisis directly after the war, exacerbated by a post-war baby boom. As a result, upon the end of the war the city immediately began to plan and implement housing expansions to the west and southwest and growth spilled over to neighboring communities.

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<sup>327</sup> Maarten van Doorn, *Het Leven Gaat Er Een Lichten Gang: Den Haag in De Jaren 1919-1940*(Waanders, 2002).

<sup>328</sup> F. van der Sluijs, *Haagse Stedebouw : Mijn Ervaringen in De Jaren 1946-1983*(Utrecht: Matrijs, 1989).



**Figure 45. Map showing war damaged areas after WW II in orange color, with the center of The Hague largely unharmed shown in blue and peripheral towns shown in red.**

Although The Hague has experienced a relatively continual economic base through its role as a government capital, it has not escaped the effects of national and global economic trends in the postwar era. After a prosperous economic recovery from the war damage inflicted during 1940-1945, the decline of manufacturing in what is often described as the Post-Fordist or post-industrial era caused a loss of manufacturing and small business jobs in The Hague from the 1960s onwards, a city already relatively underserved with space to accommodate industry. Unfortunately the local government of The Hague –arguably soothed by a steady flow of public jobs and related economic development- hardly had the diversification of its economic base on the radar. Only after the Municipal Council pushed the College of Mayor and Aldermen (both ends of the Dutch

dualist municipal governance structure) for clarification on the city's economy, a first report was published in 1968 concluding that indeed manufacturing jobs were on the decline as the city moved toward more jobs in the (government-related) service industry. Furthermore, people were beginning to follow jobs out of the city.<sup>329</sup>

The report's conclusions marked an early sign of two troublesome decades for the city, the 1970s and 1980s. The population decline was accelerating as middle-income households moved out to surrounding suburbs and households in the space-constrained city decreased in size. The decline in population was so drastic that it approached Detroit's relative decline during the same era. Interestingly, rather than try to stem the exodus the municipal and regional governments proceeded to invest in the New Town of Zoetermeer, roughly 10 miles east of the city. Unsurprisingly a significant number of former citizens moved out to the newly built dwellings, while mostly continuing to commute in for work. The homes left behind by emigrants were increasingly filled with low-skilled foreign migrants from the Mediterranean Countries and former colonies such as Surinam. The national government didn't help either: their policy to decentralize agencies and public services by the national government in the 1970s and 1980s only added fuel to the fire. Stringent cuts in governmental employment during the 1980s resulted in a further decline of the public jobs still located within the city, although arguably the number of private-sector jobs increased at a similar rate as a result of privatization of previously public services and jobs. The city experienced a decline of almost any type of job base from the 1970s to the 1990s, from manufacturing to service and business jobs.<sup>330</sup>

The result of the quartet of middle-class flight, working-class immigration, combined with a decline of both the government and manufacturing job base resulted in a set of significant challenges for The Hague during these two decades. The gravity of the situation prompted the city to create its first "Socio-economic policy paper" in 1981,<sup>331</sup> yet this step came rather late to turn the city's tides. The city's urban economy had already

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<sup>329</sup> Gemeenteraad van 's-Gravenhage, "Eerste Verkennende Nota Inzake De Economische Ontwikkeling Van Den Haag," ed. Gemeenteraad van 's-Gravenhage, Verzameling bij de Handelingen van de Gemeenteraad (The Hague 1968).

<sup>330</sup> Kloosterman and Priemus, "The Hague: A Dual City? Causes and Policy Responses: An Introduction."

<sup>331</sup> Gemeente 's-Gravenhage, "Sociaal-Economisch Beleid 'S-Gravenhage," (The Hague 1981).

suffered for a decade from the dual issues of a stagnant or even declining job and population base and a growing mismatch between labor market supply and demand due to its large low-skilled population base and high-skilled job base. The situation only worsened when surrounding suburbs not only began to compete for population and jobs, but also offered significant service and retail concentrations easily accessible by car to a regional audience, causing significant damage to the role of downtown The Hague as a center for shopping, leisure and tourism.<sup>332</sup>

In the late 1990s, the recentralization of government agencies and private office construction resulted in a recovery of high-skilled jobs in the inner city. This overall positive trend caused a new set of challenges for the city: the demand for high-skilled employees in the newly resettled government and semi-private agencies could not be met by citizens of The Hague because many highly-skilled middle class workers had left the city leaving mostly a relatively large supply of low-skilled workers remaining within the city limits. This made The Hague a strong commuter city, with highly skilled government employees traveling from surrounding suburbs to work in its downtown each day. This situation bears a remarkable resemblance to Washington D.C., albeit the latter city has less tax-base sharing mechanisms in place to recoup lost tax revenue due to out-of-city employees using city services. Nevertheless, The Hague suffered a significant loss of tax income in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and went into receivership in 1995, only to emerge after a \$0.5b financial stimulus from the national government in 1998.<sup>333</sup>

At the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the municipality of The Hague realized that it needed an urban renaissance. One of the first items on the list to regain financial health was to annex several new urban developments that had taken place outside the city during the late 1990s and early 2000s to recover some of the loss of middle-class population and tax

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<sup>332</sup> While this process started during the 1960s with the construction of suburban malls and office parks in Rijswijk and Leidschendam, decentralization has intensified during the following decades.

<sup>333</sup> Ironically, a significant culprit for the bankruptcy of The Hague was the rigorous spending on community redevelopment of impoverished districts in the city in an effort to improve housing conditions for The Hague's working-class population, initiated by the center-left government that gained power in the early 1980s. Contrary to efforts in the 1970s, the redevelopment of mainly 19<sup>th</sup> century neighborhoods went almost too fast as the large task at hand caused problematic budget overruns. See also: M. van Doorn and T. de Nijs, "In De Schaduw Van Den Haag. Politiek En Bestuur in De 19e En 20e Eeuw.," in *Den Haag: Geschiedenis Van De Stad*, ed. J.G. Smit(Zwolle: Waanders, 2004); T. de Nijs, "Economie," *ibid*.

base in the preceding decades. Although surrounding municipalities were highly displeased with this process, inter-municipal cooperation intensified in the 1990s and materialized as an official public agency overseeing The Hague Region (Stadsgebewest Haaglanden). This agency coordinates policies on transport, economic development, spatial development and the environment.



**Figure 46. The Hague’s skyline in 2011, with historic Plein leisure district in the foreground and new ministry tower construction in the background.<sup>334</sup>**

The onset of the 21<sup>st</sup> century brought renewed spirit to The Hague, as the city focused on strengthening the assets that has made it an attractive environment for living and working during its 750 year history. With a strong presence of both the Dutch national government but also in increasing influx of international organizations such as the United Nations and the International Criminal Court, the city has branded itself a “City of Peace

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<sup>334</sup> Image courtesy of Neil Nathan, 2011.

and Justice”, providing it with a strong selling point and identity in the global arena.<sup>335</sup> Furthermore, the city focused on strengthening its position as an attractive place to live due to its extensive supply of parks and open spaces and its proximity to the North Sea. After all, these assets were the major drivers behind Count Floris’ decision to move and establish the city 750 years earlier. As segregated as the city remains, the city’s focus on quality residential environments is beginning to bear fruit as districts formerly considered blighted are slowly being occupied by a growing number of young professionals that are rediscovering the city. Also, the city has focused on expansive new office construction in an effort to attract a growing number of private companies into the city and strengthen its service economic base. The global recession of 2009 has resulted in a significant vacancy rate of office spaces, as private companies enter bankruptcy and the central government’s fiscal austerity has resulted in a shrinking public job base.<sup>336</sup>

Many of the economic redevelopment efforts in the city are based in and around the downtown. The efforts focus on the revitalization of the identity and amenities for the city as a whole, as the offering of a strong identifying urban core has provided the city with a unique selling point in the increasingly competitive landscape of the western Netherlands. Similar to Detroit, The Hague is setting its sights to the urban core to drive citywide growth from both a socio-economic and cultural perspective.<sup>337</sup> Over the past few years this focus has borne fruit, as the inner city has received various awards, including “Best Inner City 2013-2015” in The Netherlands.

### **Why The Hague?**

The choice for the inner city of The Hague is due to the city’s representation of a wide range of urban interventions that have occurred in many Dutch cities over the past century.

Therefore, The Hague has been selected as a *stereotype* of typical downtown

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<sup>335</sup> Bureau Citymarketing, "City Marketing Vision 2011-2015," ed. Gemeente Den Haag(The Hague2011).

<sup>336</sup> Stadsgewest Haaglanden, "Monitor Kantorenmarkt,"(The Hague2012).

<sup>337</sup> Municipality of The Hague, "Binnenstadsplan 2000 - 2010," ed. Dienst Stedelijke Ontwikkeling(The Hague2000).

transformation in the Netherlands.<sup>338</sup> The Hague's inner city has undergone a range of typical planning interventions and economic transformations, such as the restructuring of the urban core to accommodate automobile traffic (1900s to 1920s) and worker's housing (1910s to 1930s), the rise of the department stores (1920s to 1960s) and the fall of the corner store (1910s to 1970s), war damage reconstruction – albeit limited (1940s and 1950s), postwar 'city-formation' through infrastructural and office construction (1950s to 1980s), a popular and public pushback to bring dwellings back to the inner city (1980s and 1990s), place-based redevelopment (1980s to present) and an increasing focus on leisure as a downtown use (1990s to present). These forces have shaped the inner city of Hague as a laboratory of urban transformation, resulting in an urban environment with many "layers of history".<sup>339</sup>

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<sup>338</sup> The designation of The Hague's inner city as stereotype follows the classification of case studies as either prototype ("the first case of a given development that is soon to become more generalized"), archetype ("a unique or exceptional case or an extreme case of a more general development") and stereotype ("a typical case of a more general development") by Neil Brenner, "Stereotypes, Archetypes, and Prototypes: Three Uses of Superlatives in Contemporary Urban Studies," *City & Community* 2, no. 3 (2003); Robert A Beauregard, "City of Superlatives," *ibid.*

<sup>339</sup> J. G. Smit and E. Beukers, *Den Haag : Geschiedenis Van De Stad* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2004). The importance of layered history for urban places is explored in Moudon, *Built for Change: Neighborhood Architecture in San Francisco*.

### 3.4.3 Detroit

At first sight, there could hardly be any greater contrast between The Hague and Detroit. The former a prosperous if stuffy government capital, the latter a down-at-heels shadow of an industrial city which has only recently been forced into the humiliation of bankruptcy. Indeed, Detroit suffers from all the red flags of urban decline: a declining job base followed by the continuous hemorrhaging of inhabitants, urban vitality, safety and tax revenue. As a result, the city suffers from a poor reputation across the globe, although green shoots are starting to appear.

Like The Hague's reputation as a government city, Detroit's reputation as an industrial city does not hold anymore. Currently, only 11.9% of the city's labor force works in manufacturing, compared to well over a quarter (26.6%) of the population employed in educational services, health care and social assistance. Partly, the scarcity of manufacturing jobs in Detroit can be ascribed to the fact that factories have moved across the region, which is corroborated by the slightly higher percentage of the metropolitan population which works in manufacturing (17.4%). Yet even in the region, education, medical and social services are the top industries.<sup>340</sup> This is a far cry from numbers in the 1940s and 1950s, when Detroit was known as the 'arsenal of democracy', a title earned by the feverish construction of war planes, tanks and other rolling stock in the city's many plants. Compared to the wartime construction peak of 1947, the number of manufacturing jobs in Detroit have decreased by 93%,<sup>341</sup> as automation, outsourcing and a general decline in American car consumption have decimated the jobs at the city's plants. Over the past years, this decline has only accelerated with the financial woes of the Big Three car manufacturers (Ford, General Motors and Chrysler) and the slowing American economy overall. Although this trend will likely continue to harm the overall economic condition of the city and its surrounding region, the downtown area may actually benefit from Detroit's increased focus on economic diversification. Currently, the city actively aims to gain more jobs in the

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<sup>340</sup> Numbers from American Community Survey by United State Census Bureau.

<sup>341</sup> Comparison of 2012 American Community Survey 5-year estimate from the United States Census Bureau with 1947 labor statistics from City of Detroit, "City of Detroit 2011-2012 Executive Summary," (Detroit2012).

advanced manufacturing as well as the service sector and creative industries, with a specific focus on the urban core.<sup>342</sup>

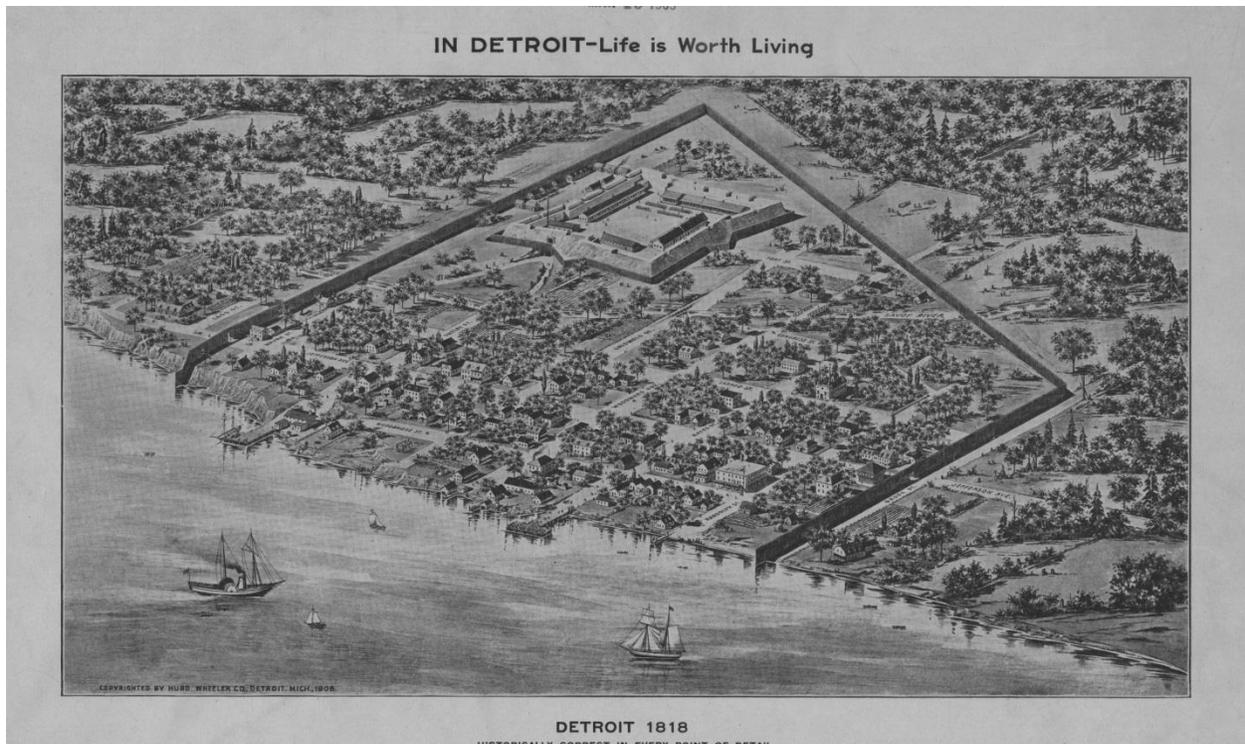
If anything, Detroit could be classified as a boom-and-bust city. From its earliest days as a French settlement in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the city was looking for rapid growth and prosperity. The Fort Pontchartrain du Détroit mainly sought this prosperity from fur trade, aiming to control the transfer of furs across the continent. Only a few decades afterwards, the city had fallen under British rule and expanded rapidly due to its strategic location on the waterway which connected most of the Great Lakes. Yet in 1805, a devastating fire destroyed most of the settlement, leaving only some brick structures standing. However, Detroit quickly arose from its ashes,<sup>343</sup> and an ambitious rebuilding plan was created by Judge Augustus B. Woodward and Governor Hull, following the French-inspired design of Charles L'Enfant for Washington D.C. In a sense, the plan brought Detroit back to its roots, as described by urban chronicler Silas Farmer in 1884: *Our old French city thus features in its plan which perpetuate remembrances of the capitals of its earliest and its latest Government.*<sup>344</sup> This design will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4 on Detroit. The city continued to prosper as a trading post and manufacturing center for wood imported from the Michigan hinterland.

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<sup>342</sup> More information can be found in the Detroit Future City Strategic Framework (2013), and the Mission Statement of the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation (accessed via [www.degc.org](http://www.degc.org) August 10, 2014).

<sup>343</sup> As remembered in its official motto: “speramus meliora; resurget cineribus”(Latin: We Hope For Better Things; It Shall Rise From the Ashes)

<sup>344</sup> Silas Farmer, *The History of Detroit and Michigan or, the Metropolis Illustrated ; a Chronological Cyclopedea of the Past and Present, Including a Full Record of Territorial Days in Michigan, and the Annals of Wayne County*(Detroit: S. Farmer & Co., 1884), 29.



**Figure 47. Depiction of Detroit in 1818, with its fort at the top corner.<sup>345</sup>**

Again, it was Detroit's strategic location that brought its unique advantages in trade, and increasingly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, manufacturing. Besides the wooded hinterland, the proximity of iron ore and coal enabled the city to flourish as a manufacturing center for a range of goods including carriages, stoves and ships. It was in this climate of innovation and building that Henry Ford built his first automobile in 1896, marking the start of a new era for the city. While Ford's creations weren't an instant success, they would soon change the face of the city's economy and increasingly the city's morphology. Numerous other car and parts manufacturers followed in the wake of Ford's innovations, generating feverish growth of the city in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. An 1889 Calvert Lithography Company depiction of Detroit is all-telling in this regard. If Oxford is the city of spires, Chicago the city of skyscrapers, Detroit must surely have been known as the city of chimneys. While at first glance the factories seem fairly randomly scattered throughout the

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<sup>345</sup> From a comparison by the Hurd-Wheeler Company in 1907, "What Detroit has accomplished in the past." Image courtesy of Clark Map Library, University of Michigan.

city, they did cluster along the riverfront and a band of railways that was being constructed around the city. A 1961 *Time Magazine* article provides a good summary of Detroit's portrayal in this panoramic image, an identification the city has been proud of:

*If ever a city stood as a symbol of the dynamic U.S. economy, it was Detroit. It was not pretty. It was, in fact, a combination of the grey and the garish (...). But Detroit cared less about how it looked than about what it did—and it did plenty.*<sup>346</sup>



**Figure 48. Bird's eye view of Detroit in 1889.**<sup>347</sup>

While the decentralized location of factories made sense from the perspective of land values, transportation accessibility and the prevention of noise and pollution for citizens,

<sup>346</sup> "Decline in Detroit," *TIME magazine*, October 27 1961.

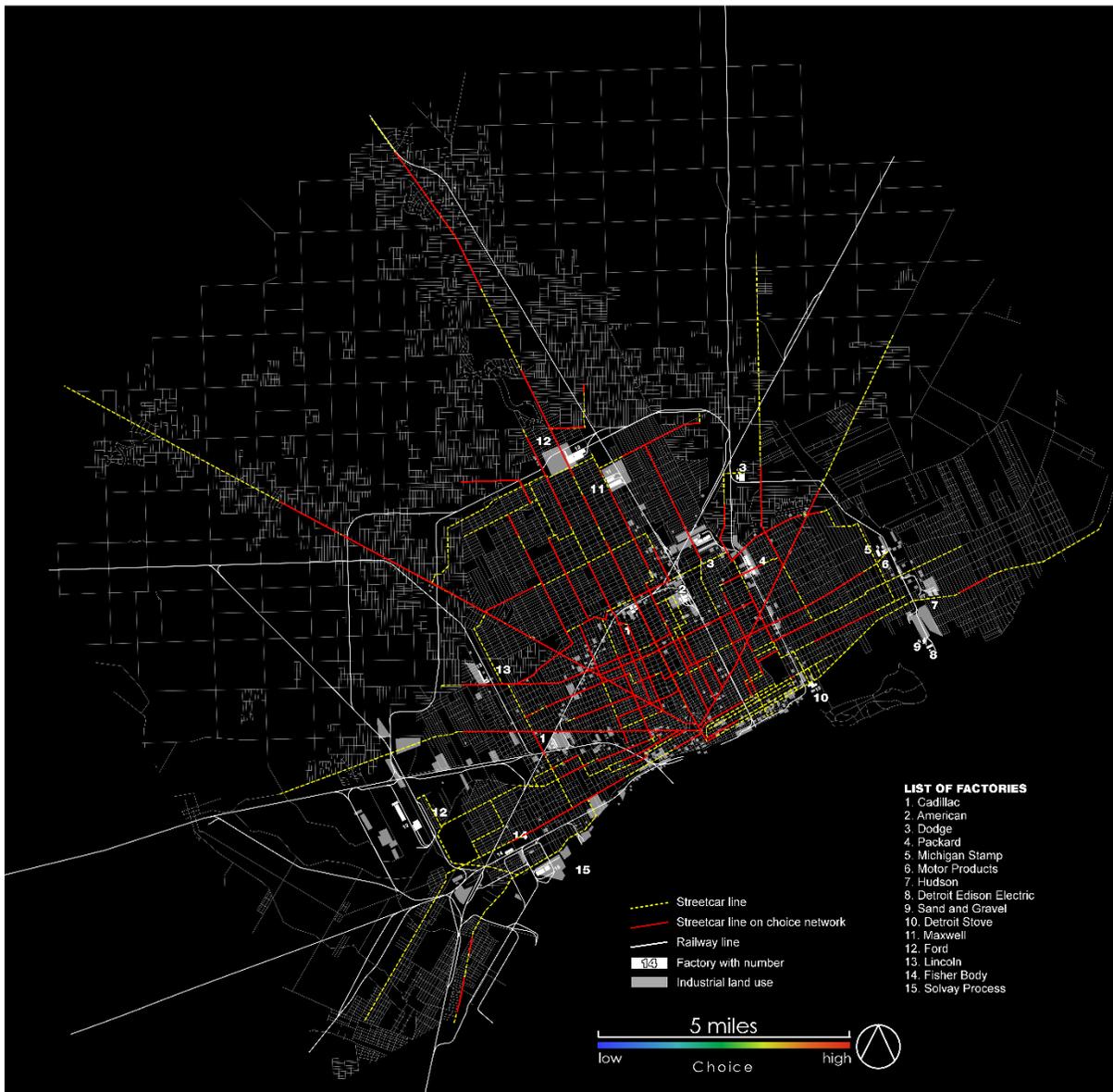
<sup>347</sup> Image by Calvert Lithography Company, courtesy of the Library of Congress image library.

the scattering of Detroit's job base was at the root of Detroit's problems as the city continued to grow. In 1921, most of the city's factories were located far outside the urban core, focused around large railway corridors and worker settlements that had sprouted across the Michigan plain: *"factories, shops and neighborhoods blended together indistinguishably enmeshed in a relentless grid of streets and a complex web of train lines."*<sup>348</sup> Car manufacturers had no clear economic or emotional ties to the city of Detroit or its core, as General Motors had located its headquarters miles away in a New Center and Ford had relocated its plants outside the city altogether by the 1920s. Nevertheless, center and periphery were in a relative state of balance as the morphology and economy of the city still concentrated most forces downtown. Numerous streetcar lines were built on the radial avenues of the Woodward Plan for Detroit, which brought workers from all over the city downtown to spend their weekend to shop, relax and sojourn.<sup>349</sup> Only these sheer forces enabled Hudson's department store to become the second largest in the country. The urban core was teeming with life during the 1920s, its streets filled with people, and its sky filled with construction cranes.

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<sup>348</sup> Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis : Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*(Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 18.

<sup>349</sup> Psarra, Kickert, and Pluviano, "Paradigm Lost: Industrial and Post-Industrial Detroit - an Analysis of the Street Network and Its Social and Economic Dimensions from 1796 to the Present."



**Figure 49. Detroit in 1921, with the location of streetcar lines overlaid on main arteries in the city, along with the location of manufacturing plants.<sup>350</sup>**

Yet the very product of the Motor City was in direct opposition to its survival. Cars were rapidly dispersing population across the region, weakening ties between Detroit and its prosperity. As early as the 1910s, newspapers reported of the departure of well-off citizens to greener pastures, enabled by the automobile. The stately mansions of Brush and Cass

<sup>350</sup> Image from *ibid.*

Park were vacated by their original tenants and turned into rooming houses for the inner city workforce, or torn down for commercial expansion. Meanwhile, communities around Detroit such as Royal Oak and Birmingham were growing as the new frontier for the automobile middle and upper classes. From the 1920s onwards, the popularization of cars opened the floodgates of suburbanization to almost any employed citizen. As suburbs prospered, the city and its core was left as a place to work, shop and park the car. Rapid transit never really had a chance as successive governments consistently prioritized car transportation.<sup>351</sup> Government housing, transportation and tax policies from the 1930s onwards only exacerbated this cycle, incentivizing shops and jobs to follow the well-off from the 1950s onwards. Hudson's department store was the first anchor tenant in a suburban shopping mall with the completion of Northland Mall in 1954, initiating a spiral of decline for the downtown as a center of commerce.



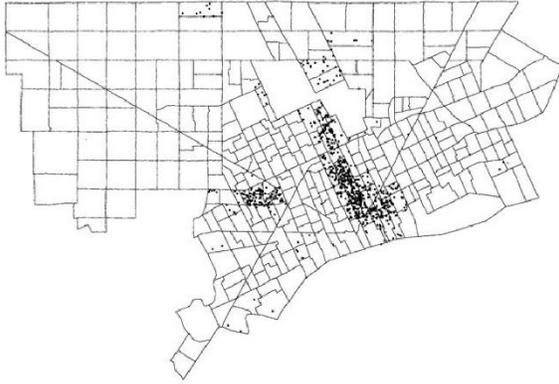
**Figure 50. Northland Mall in Southfield, Michigan with Eight Mile Road and the Detroit urban grid in the background. Note the surrounding office towers to the right, establishing Southfield as an Edge City.**<sup>352</sup>

<sup>351</sup> Charles K. Hyde, "Planning a Transportation System for Metropolitan Detroit in the Age of the Automobile: The Triumph of the Expressway," *Michigan Historical Review* 32, no. 1 (2006).

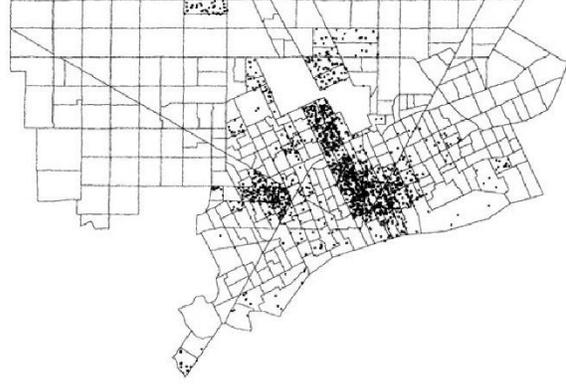
<sup>352</sup> Image courtesy of Detroit Free Press. Edge Cities are a term for decentralized employment clusters coined in Garreau, *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier*.

Meanwhile, Detroit's urban society was rapidly becoming more destabilized. Even as the city was teeming with life and wealth during the prosperous decade of World War 2, the seeds of its demise were firmly planted. Wartime construction jobs enabled massive employment growth, with many African American workers moving to Detroit from the rural South. Racism proliferated in the city, as race-based riots erupted in the city as early as 1943. African American citizens were forced to live in the city's most dilapidated districts and were often the first to be laid off in the city's notoriously unstable labor market. Furthermore, local and national government policy on housing, social services and transportation often worsened their conditions by promoting racial segregation in housing (from the 1930s onwards), their displacement through urban renewal projects (from the 1940s onwards) and highway construction (from the 1950s onwards). The dual disadvantage of suburbanized prosperity and decreased urban opportunities marked a downward spiral for Detroit and its citizens from the 1950s onwards. An almost inevitable low point in the city's history came with the 1967 civil disturbances which left dozens dead, many more injured and a city scarred with burnt rubble and a shattered reputation. The following decade marked the most rapid population decline in the city thus far, with the city again losing a majority of its well-off residents. Downtown reflected the city's freefall as many of its stores, offices and theaters were vacated in the mid-1980s.

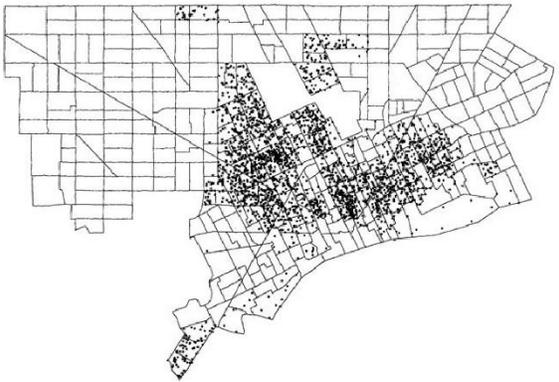
1940



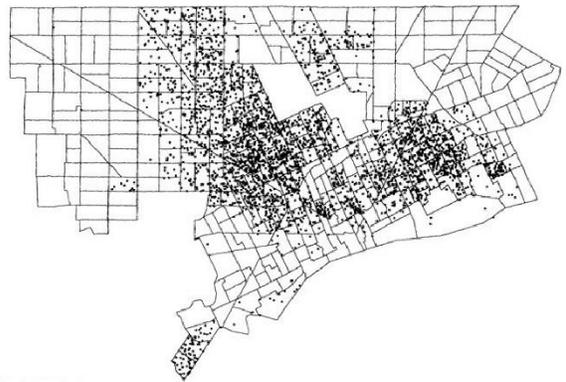
1950



1960



1970



One dot represents 200 African Americans.

**Figure 51. African American population distribution in Detroit from segregated communities to citywide dispersal.<sup>353</sup>**

As suburbanization continued, racial segregation took a new form. The remaining middle and upper class left the city in droves, with the mostly African American working class left behind in a process named as 'white flight'. Instead of marking neighborhoods for African American inhabitation, almost the entire city of Detroit and a growing number of its suburbs are now mostly inhabited by African Americans. The lack of opportunities for these Detroiters left behind caused crime rates to soar. To make matters worse, manufacturing jobs declined as the auto industry lost momentum after World War 2. Unemployment soared as the city's undiversified economy had no recourse to other industries to provide jobs. The city's economic, social and fiscal conditions drastically

<sup>353</sup> Images from Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis : Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*, 184-88.

deteriorated as a result, reinforcing the cycle of decline into the recent bankruptcy of Detroit in 2013. The state has appointed an Emergency Manager in the same year, which oversees the city's return to fiscal sustainability. The task won't be easy - from its peak in the 1950s, Detroit has lost almost two thirds of its population and an even higher percentage of its job and tax base, and the numbers aren't stabilizing. Despite a bevy of local and national public and private interventions,<sup>354</sup> decline has left its mark on the urban landscape of the city, with many districts scarred by vacant buildings and lots, and a significant percentage of the city's infrastructure in disrepair. Downtown is a curious mixture of vacant storefronts, parking lots and blank walls left by suburban-inspired megastructures, scattered with few odd signs of life. Attempts to lure residents back were only partly successful. Further afield, new housing subdivisions, shopping malls and office parks are sprouting in the Michigan plains, replacing the city's remaining building stock and job base in a continuous 'disassembly line'.<sup>355</sup>



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<sup>354</sup> Interventions at the regional scale have been notably absent. More information in June Manning Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit*, Creating the North American Landscape (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

<sup>355</sup> George C. Galster, *Driving Detroit : The Quest for Respect in the Motor City*(Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

**Figure 52. Aerial view of downtown Detroit in 2011.**<sup>356</sup>

Yet the city is not taking the decline without a fight. Over the past few years, a foundation-funded new planning framework has been drafted for the city, focusing on a balance of sustainable growth and controlled decline. Not uncontroversially, the “Detroit Future City” framework aims to stabilize certain districts in the city by reconcentrating citizens and amenities, allowing other parts of the city to return to agricultural, recreational or natural landscapes.<sup>357</sup> Furthermore, the framework aims to diversify the city’s job base by focusing on the city’s reputation for innovation, not only in manufacturing but also in the creative industries. The document aims for economic growth within attainable means, acknowledging limited state and national support will be provided to achieve its goals. While an implementation team has been set up to further the framework’s progress and funding has been provided by various large national and regional foundations, the political success of the framework during the city’s current turbulent climate has yet to be proven.<sup>358</sup>

Regardless of the framework’s adaptation, the process of economic growth in certain nodes of the city is already underway. Around the Wayne State University campus in Midtown Detroit, a non-profit organization started in 1976 has successfully reinvigorated the district with life. Formerly vacant properties are renovated to accommodate the influx of relatively well-educated new residents and innovative businesses in various sizes, benefiting from the proximity of nearby institutions such as the university, the Detroit Medical Center and the various cultural amenities in the district. Vacancies have almost been eradicated and various new housing and office developments have sprouted in the district, most of which have been oversubscribed by a regional and increasingly national clientele looking for the benefits of Detroit’s urban lifestyle and infrastructure. In downtown Detroit, public and private investments have intensified, leading to a renewed interest in the redevelopment of its many formerly vacant properties. A small number of large private investors like pizza

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<sup>356</sup> Image courtesy of Barbara Eckstein, 2011.

<sup>357</sup> Committee Detroit Works Project Long-Term Planning Steering, *Detroit Future City: Detroit Strategic Framework Plan, December 2012*, Detroit Strategic Framework Plan, December 2012 ([Detroit, Mich.: s.n.], 2012).

<sup>358</sup> Amruthra Siv Akumar, "Detroit Future City: A 50-Year Experiment in Urban Planning," *The Michigan daily*, March 16 2014.

and sports magnate Michael Ilitch, mortgage tycoon Daniel Gilbert and various companies such as Detroit Edison and General Motors are rapidly buying up properties to realize their visions of a revitalized urban core, albeit divergently. As a result, property prices, rents and the number of jobs in the downtown are rapidly increasing.<sup>359</sup> With the place-based revitalization of Campus Martius and the riverfront, the first traces of public life on its streets are returning.

### **Why Detroit?**

In the North American context, Detroit and its downtown can be seen as an *archetype* of what awaits North American post-industrial cities that have suffered economic and physical decline. Detroit's downtown has virtually lost all interaction between buildings and public space in the downtown area, but the city's patterns of frontage deactivation can be seen as well in many other American downtowns. Many smaller American cities face the same challenge of a derelict downtown fringe eating away at the viability of a shrinking core of retail and leisure blocks; and larger cities are coping with similar pressures to their central business district that were discovered as early as the 1950s.<sup>360</sup> Downtown Detroit's pattern of decline may seem amplified compared to other American downtowns; it is also representative of their present condition and potential future predicaments.

Similar to The Hague, downtown Detroit can also be seen as a stereotype of American downtowns, in that many planning strategies aimed at stemming its decline have been implemented in many other cities. Early parking regulations (1910s and 1930s), infrastructural interventions that range from City Beautiful to postwar expressways (1910s to 1960s), civic districts (1920s to 1950s), urban renewal (1930s to 1960s), a conference center (1950s to 1980s), pedestrian and transit malls (1970s and 1980s), megastructures

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<sup>359</sup> The extent of the economic revitalization of the Midtown and Downtown districts is outlined in The Hudson-Webber Foundation et al., *7.2 Sq Mi - a Report on Greater Downtown Detroit* (Detroit 2013).

<sup>360</sup> Horwood and Boyce, *Studies of the Central Business District and Urban Freeway Development*; Raymond E Murphy and James E Vance, "Delimiting the Cbd," *Economic Geography* (1954); Raymond E Murphy, James E Vance, and Bart J Epstein, "Internal Structure of the Cbd," *ibid.* (1955); Raymond E Murphy, "Central Business District Research" (paper presented at the The IGU Symposium in Urban Geography CWK Gleerup Publishers, Lund, 1960).

(1970s), a People Mover (1980s), sports stadiums (1990s to present) and casino's (1990s to present) and place-based redevelopment (1990s to present) have been implemented in Detroit not unlike any other city of its size. Disinvestment and reinvestment efforts in the modern and postmodern era and their social, cultural and political background are therefore highly representative of other American cities.<sup>361</sup>

Economically, Detroit's eligibility as a stereotypical case study is more complex. After all, the strong external force of Detroit's economic downturn has significantly affected the success of the aforementioned planning interventions and architectural designs. Yet within the context of overall economic decline and metropolitan decentralization, the micro-scale effects of these interventions can be measured. Furthermore, Detroit has experienced a stereotypical economic growth and decline from 1911 to 1961, as the city experienced a speculation-fueled building boom from the 1910s to the 1920s with a pronounced effect on architecture and its relation to public space. The decline of its downtown fringe from the 1920s onwards and decentralization of typical downtown functions in the 1930s to the 1960s represents similar patterns occurring in many other American cities. After the 1960s the effects of downtown decline can admittedly be regarded as an amplification of American downtowns at the macro level of the downtown as a whole, but at the level of buildings, street segments and streets the decline is typical of most downtowns.<sup>362</sup>

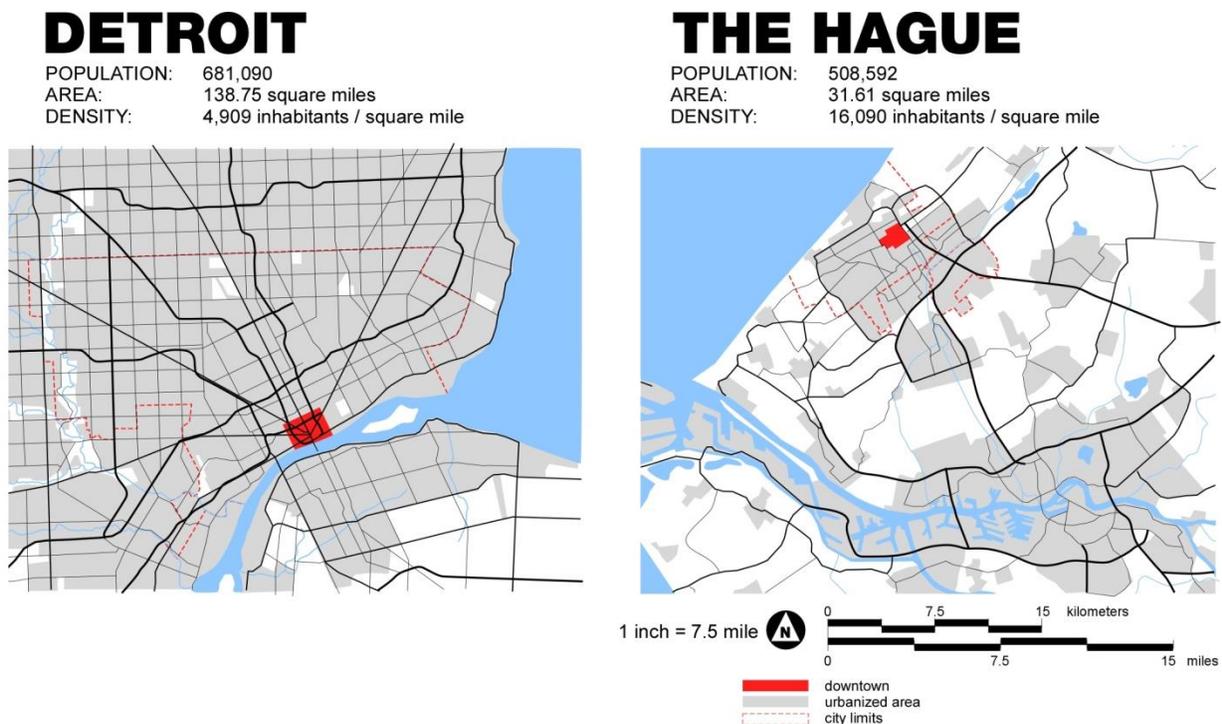
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<sup>361</sup> B.J. Frieden and L.B. Sagalyn, *Downtown, Inc.: How America Rebuilds Cities*(The MIT Press, 1991).

<sup>362</sup> This stereotypicality will be further illustrated in the section that covers internal patterns of transformation.

### 3.4.4 Case study comparison

At first sight, Detroit and The Hague are difficult to compare in any way. Detroit is besieged by a mixture of population and job base decline, class and racial segregation, and has been forced to declare bankruptcy in 2013. The city only contains about fifteen percent of the metropolitan population, the city's unemployment rate is far above the national average and the per capita income is far below average.<sup>363</sup> On the other hand, The Hague is a strong center of its metropolitan area containing over 65% of its inhabitants, but its unemployment rate is also significantly above the national average and per capita income is slightly below average.<sup>364</sup> As figure 52 demonstrates, not only the population but also the population density differs significantly between both cities.



**Figure 53. Detroit compared with The Hague at the same scale within their regional context. The Hague is shown in the context of the South Wing, with Rotterdam to the south. Rotterdam is statistically not part of The Hague's metropolitan area.**

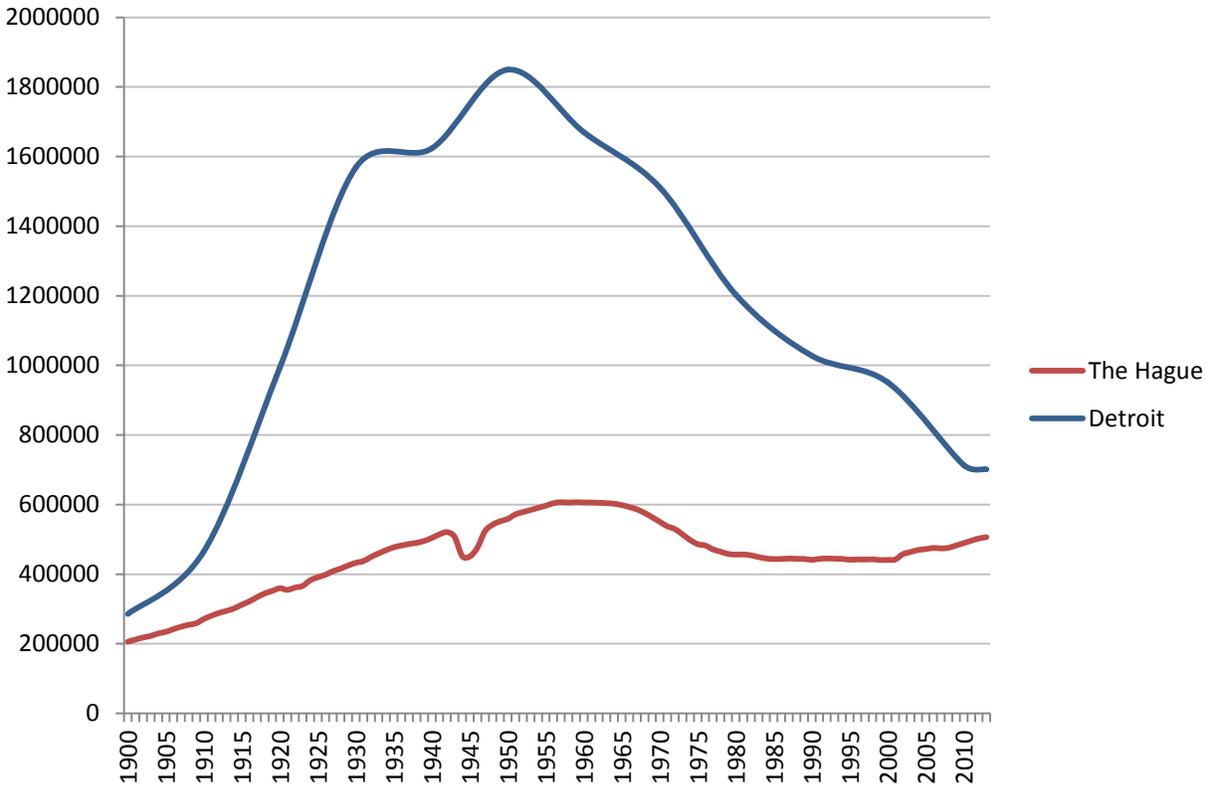
<sup>363</sup> Statistics are 2013 estimates from the United States Census Bureau.

<sup>364</sup> Statistics are 2014 estimates (population and unemployment) and 2006 statistics (income) from Statistics Netherlands.

While the unique attributes of The Hague and Detroit and their urban cores are easily apparent, both cities also contain significant physical, social and economic similarities. Firstly, both Detroit and The Hague can be criticized for their lack of economic diversity. While Detroit's economy increasingly hinged on the automotive industry, a significant part of The Hague's economy hinges on the national government, an 'industry' which has certainly not proven to be a reliable partner over the past decades. The outsourcing of Detroit's industrial jobs to other regions and countries has proven in many ways as devastating as the decentralization of The Hague's governmental agencies in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>365</sup> During these two decades, many ministries and important central government agencies were relocated to peripheral parts of the country to spur economic growth in these regions. The effects for The Hague were highly detrimental: on top of halted projects, office vacancies and a downtown retail crisis, The Hague experienced a 25% decline of its total urban population between 1960 and 1980, close to the roughly 30% decline of Detroit's population. Nevertheless Figure 54 proves that much more than The Hague, Detroit is a "boom-and-bust" city, having grown and declined far more rapidly over the past century.

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<sup>365</sup> De Nijs, T. in Smit and Beukers, *Den Haag : Geschiedenis Van De Stad*.



**Figure 54. Graph of citywide population change in The Hague and Detroit between 1900 and 2010.<sup>366</sup>**

When looking at the downtown statistics in Figure 55, the similarities between both cities become even more apparent. Firstly, the population of the inner city of The Hague has decreased steadily over the past century, with the greatest drop in the 1930s. The population decreases until it reaches a bottom in the 1980s, to rise again as a result of specific municipal policies to bring residents back downtown. Unfortunately, Census statistics for Detroit at a sufficient resolution to determine downtown population decline only starts in 1935, but a similar pattern can be recognized, including a recovery of downtown population as a result of municipal policy to bring residents back downtown. In

<sup>366</sup> For The Hague, the graph shows a population peak in 1959 at over 607,000 inhabitants to a bottom at just over 440,000 in 2000. The subsequent rise can be accounted to annexation of residential areas surrounding the city in 2002. The dip between 1940 and 1945 can be accounted to urban evacuation during the years of World War 2. For Detroit, the population peak lies at the 1950 Census at 1.85 million inhabitants to the current (SEMCOG estimated) low of 681,090 inhabitants. Sources The Hague: Den Haag in Cijfers; Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek; Dienst Publiekszaken Gemeente Den Haag. Sources Detroit: United States Census Bureau.

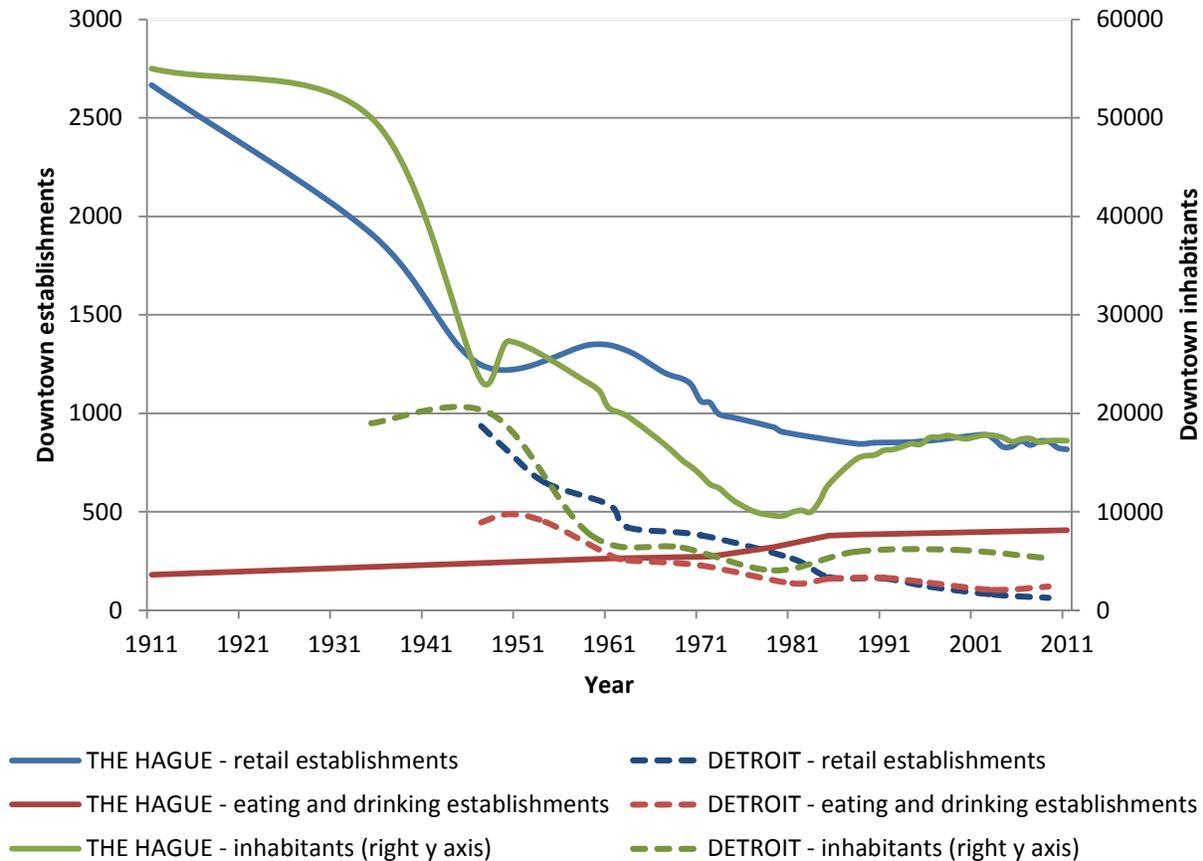
both cities, the drop in population in the urban core can be accounted to a mix of economic forces that push out residents due to rising land values<sup>367</sup> and land uses that are incompatible with residents, and urban renewal projects that removed housing in favor of mostly business land uses.

A similar significant drop in the number of retail outlets can be recognized from the statistics. As a result of the changing nature of retail business toward economies of scale<sup>368</sup> and the decentralization of retail as it followed the population exodus from urban cores, the number of retail businesses fell about 70% in the inner city of The Hague and at least 94% in downtown Detroit. This vital element in a vital relation between architecture and public space has therefore declined significantly in both cities. Moreover, the relative importance of the leisure industry grew in both cities as the number of eating and drinking establishments in both cities remained relatively constant (The Hague) or experienced an upswing (Detroit) in recent years.

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<sup>367</sup> A pattern which follows the economic Bid/Rent theory as noted by W. Alonso, "Location and Land Use. Toward a General Theory of Land Rent," *Location and land use. Toward a general theory of land rent.* (1964).

<sup>368</sup> Davis, *A History of Shopping*; Miellel, *Honderd Jaar Grootwinkelbedrijf in Nederland*; Miellel and Voorn, "Winkelen in Weelde: Warenhuizen in West-Europa 1860-2000."



**Figure 55. Population, retail and eating and drinking establishment statistics for the inner city of The Hague and downtown Detroit.<sup>369</sup>**

<sup>369</sup> Recent statistics from Gemeente Den Haag, "Den Haag in Cijfers," [www.denhaag.buurtmonitor.nl](http://www.denhaag.buurtmonitor.nl), derived from local and national counts. Historical retail statistics from Afdeling Economische Zaken, "Nota Inzake De Positie Van De Haagse Detailhandel: De Ontwikkeling Van De Haagse Detailhandel," (The Hague 1976); Dienst Stadsontwikkeling, "Winkelen in De Haagse Kern," ed. Afdeling Economische Zaken (The Hague 1988); Afdeling Economische Zaken, "Detailhandelsnota Den Haag," ed. Afdeling Economische Zaken (The Hague 2009); P. Bakker Schut, "Rapport Betreffende Winkeltelling 1935," ed. Dienst der Stadsontwikkeling en Volkshuisvesting (The Hague 1936); Gemeentebestuur, "Enige Grondslagen Voor De Stedebouwkundige Ontwikkeling Van 'S-Gravenhage," (The Hague: Hega, 1948); Gemeentelijk Bureau voor Statistiek, "Statistisch Jaarboek Van 'S-Gravenhage," ed. Gemeentelijk Bureau voor Statistiek (The Hague: Drukkerij Trio, 1960); "Statistisch Jaarboek Van 'S-Gravenhage," ed. Gemeentelijk Bureau voor Statistiek (The Hague: Drukkerij Trio, 1980); Dirk Dubbeling, "Horeca- En Cultuuraanbod in De Haagse Binnenstad," ed. Gemeentelijke Dienst Stadsontwikkeling - Grondzaken (The Hague 1987). It is important to note that counting methods and definitions of retail have changed over the years, leading to a small error margin in the presented data. As much as possible, data has been derived from municipal on-the-ground surveys, as Chamber of Commerce records are considered inaccurate before World War 2 due to reluctance of business owners to register. Business data before 1935 includes illegal retail outlets. Business establishments in 1947 may have dipped as counting methods were inaccurate. Historical population statistics from national and local census reports and R Kok, "Nieuwe Gezichtspunten Omtrent De Ontvolking Van De Haagse Binnenstad," *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 46, no. 10 (1955).

Statistics for Detroit are derived from the United States Census Bureau and extrapolated before Census counts started using counts from this dissertation. Detroit statistics cover a narrow definition of the CBD,

While it is tempting to transpose lessons learned in one cultural context to another, the cultural context of sites needs to be taken into account. Applying the place-based redevelopment strategies of central The Hague to Detroit without taking the national and local centralizing policies into account is bound to lead to failure. Only careful triangulation and cross-checking of similar contextual frameworks can yield trans-Atlantic models and conclusions for the description, explanation and potentially a prescription of the building-public space interface. The clear distinction between similarities and differences in the case study sites will inform these models. The reasoning behind the choice for case study sites has been the demonstration of differences as much as similarities. The choice to pick multiple case studies is not simply an increase in sample size. Each case study has its own cultural context, and the lessons learned from each site only have a limited applicability in other cultural contexts. Therefore, literal replications should be approached with caution. Hence no attempt has been made to find the 'American counterpart' to The Hague (which would most likely lead us to Washington D.C. as the equivalent government capital of the United States) since comparing its transformation over the past century as a reflection of similar processes would only lead to oversights of culture and context. While it is tempting to transpose lessons learned in one cultural context to another, the cultural context of sites needs to be taken into account. Applying the place-based redevelopment strategies of central The Hague to Detroit without taking the national and local centralizing policies into account is bound to lead to failure. Only careful triangulation and cross-checking of similar contextual frameworks can yield trans-Atlantic models and conclusions for the description, explanation and potentially a prescription of the building-public space interface. The clear distinction between similarities and differences in the case study sites will inform these models.

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namely that of the area bound by the highway horseshoe ring of the Lodge Freeway, Interstate 75 and Interstate 375. Detroit data extrapolation before 1948 has been based on dividing the retail number of the first Census count by the number of establishments found in this research, and using this ratio to approximate the number of establishments at earlier time intervals. The research-derived match date number differs from the Census count because the research area is larger than the Census definition of the CBD, and because the research only counts establishments that face the street, excluding underground, above ground and interior establishments.

### 3.4.5 Case study framing

As this research focuses on the urban core of Detroit and The Hague, the study area demarcations hinge on the definition of what the urban core entails. For The Hague the definition of the urban core was relatively easy as it follows the municipal and popular definition of the *inner city*: the district that lies within a ring of canals that was constructed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This ring proved quite spacious as urban development didn't completely fill it until well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As a result, the inner city of The Hague contains buildings with a wide range of original construction dates, even before urban renewal and building renovations are considered. The transition from central business land uses such as offices, retail outlets, cultural venues and civic buildings to peripheral land uses such as residential neighborhoods and industrial locations is fully present within the spacious canal ring. Even a secondary retail center northeast of the main urban core lies within the inner city, the Denneweg area. The full range of uses within the canal ring is highly beneficial to this research as it enables the study of the core and periphery of the inner city, areas that have been found to have a very different dynamic from a morphological and economic perspective.<sup>370</sup>

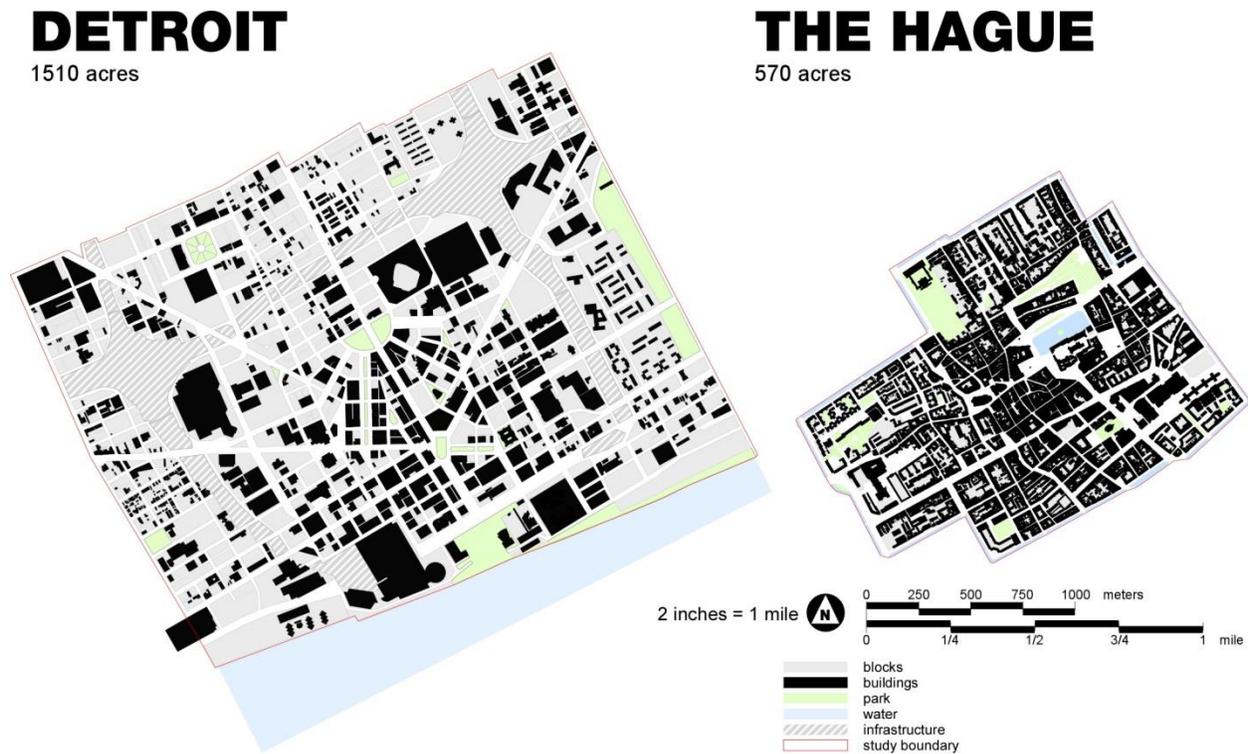
The definition of the urban core of Detroit proved more difficult. Over time, the statistical definition of the Central Business District has changed as business development spread outward and the horseshoe ring of highways was constructed around the downtown.<sup>371</sup> Following the current definition of the downtown as encompassed by this highway ring is hard to uphold for the preceding era in which this definition did not exist. Furthermore, in order to encompass the same range of central and peripheral land uses found in the inner city of The Hague, a wider definition of the downtown needed to be sought as the area within the highway ring almost exclusively contains central business land uses. A

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<sup>370</sup> The periphery of the urban core was described as early as 1933 by economist Homer Hoyt as the "Zone in Transition" in Hoyt, *One Hundred Years of Land Values in Chicago*. Urban morphologists describe this periphery as a dynamic 'fringe belt', as outlined in JWR Whitehand, "Urban Fringe Belts: Development of an Idea," *Planning perspectives* 3, no. 1 (1988). In later studies economists have referred to the area as the downtown 'frame', for example in Murphy and Vance, "Delimiting the Cbd."

<sup>371</sup> The definition of the Central Business District between the 1948 and 1958 Census of Business changed as a result of highway construction and business expansion.

compromise has been sought by defining a roughly 30 by 30 block area that contains the downtown core and periphery, and a secondary retail center with the Eastern Market.



**Figure 56. Size comparison and illustration of downtown Detroit (left) and inner city The Hague (right).**

Including the downtown periphery into the study boundary also enables a detailed study of the effects of urban renewal on urban cores, as these were often located in a ring around the urban core. As outlined in the literature review, postwar urban renewal projects left a significant impression on downtown peripheries and in later stages also in the downtown core. The effect of these large scale projects are of great interest to the study of the relation between buildings and public space, and are therefore included in this study. Comparing downtown Detroit with inner city The Hague demonstrates that the ratio between core and frame is roughly 20% to 80% within both study area demarcations.<sup>372</sup> Also, a majority of

<sup>372</sup> This is an approximation as the core has various definitions by statisticians, governmental documents and morphologists. In the Netherlands, a distinction is made between *inner city* (binnenstad) and *core shopping*

the land area in the downtown frame in both cities has contained one or more urban renewal projects over the past century.

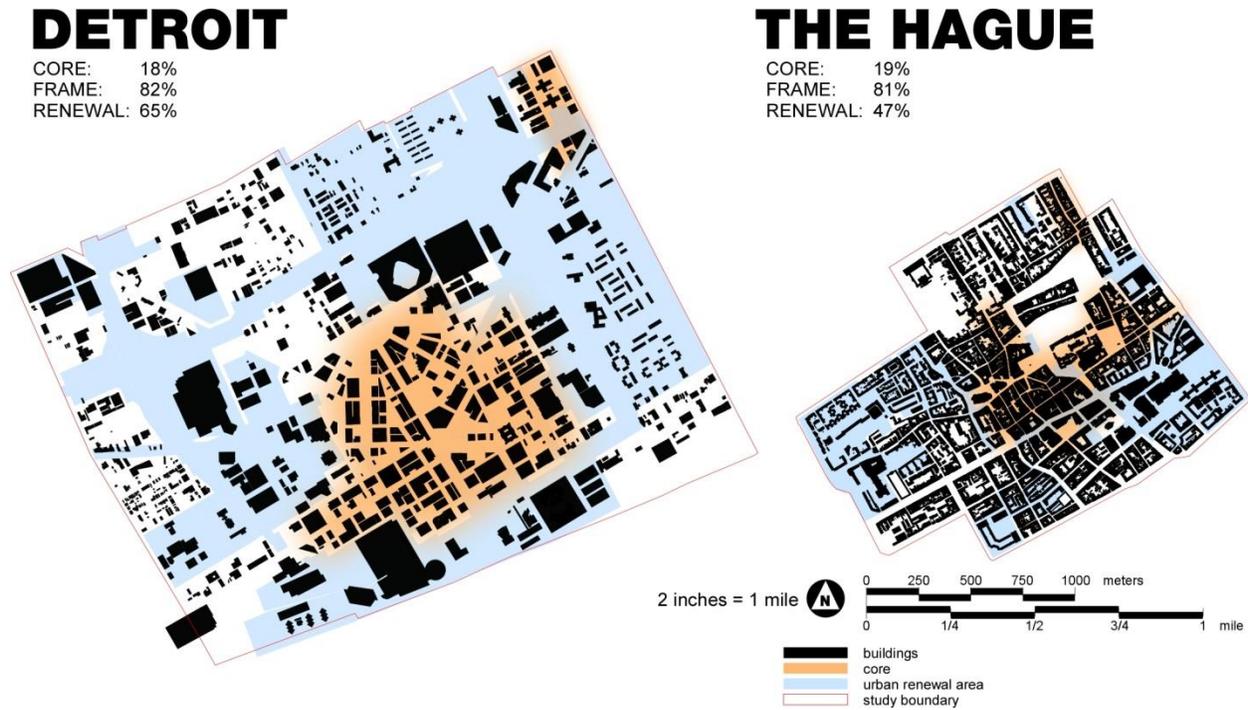


Figure 57. Core, frame and urban renewal projects in Detroit (left) and The Hague (right).<sup>373</sup>

area (kernwinkelgebied). In the United States, the urban core is currently undefined, but historical definitions can be found in Horwood and Boyce, *Studies of the Central Business District and Urban Freeway Development*. For further information on defining downtown cores see Mark Thurstain-Goodwin and David Unwin, "Defining and Delineating the Central Areas of Towns for Statistical Monitoring Using Continuous Surface Representations," *CASA Working Papers*, no. 18 (2000); Murphy and Vance, "Delimiting the Cbd."

<sup>373</sup> The definition of core and frame in both cases is based on various city documents that often provide varying delimitations of both areas. Therefore, a gradual boundary is drawn.

## **CHAPTER 4.**

### **DETROIT: EXTERNAL FORCES**

This chapter will discuss the external forces that have influenced the relationship between buildings and public space in downtown Detroit over the past century. It attempts to find answers to *why* frontages changed, taking a retrospective approach. Of course in matters past, causality is nearly impossible to define. Therefore, the chapter will be structured as a narrative on the most important changes in downtown Detroit and their repercussions for interactive frontages. The time periods will correspond to the mapping points set out in the previous chapters, with roughly ten to fifteen years between intervals, depending on mapping availability. The study of external forces focuses on the list generated in the literature review, most specifically on economic, social, cultural, political and professional perspectives. The narrative is deliberately not solely written from the perspective of the professional planner, architect, developer or retailer, as the experience of the city inherently needs to include the view of the end user as well. This experience is found using a large set of newspaper articles, expressing the views of Detroiters and its visitors. Furthermore, significant buildings which have either changed the paradigm of the relationship between buildings and public space, or represent the paradigm of the era, are studied in further detail. Combined, the chapter will show how downtown Detroit has gone through an extensive economic, social, cultural and physical transformation, with a significant part of this transformation incurred by the various planners and designers which have shaped the urban core. In its quest for progress, the city has often forgotten about its past, regarding its building stock as an investment rather than a part of its collective memory. Even so, the core was unable to adapt to the rapidly changing challenges of the city as a whole, ultimately succumbing under the pressure of automobile erosion, functional decentralization and social distrust.

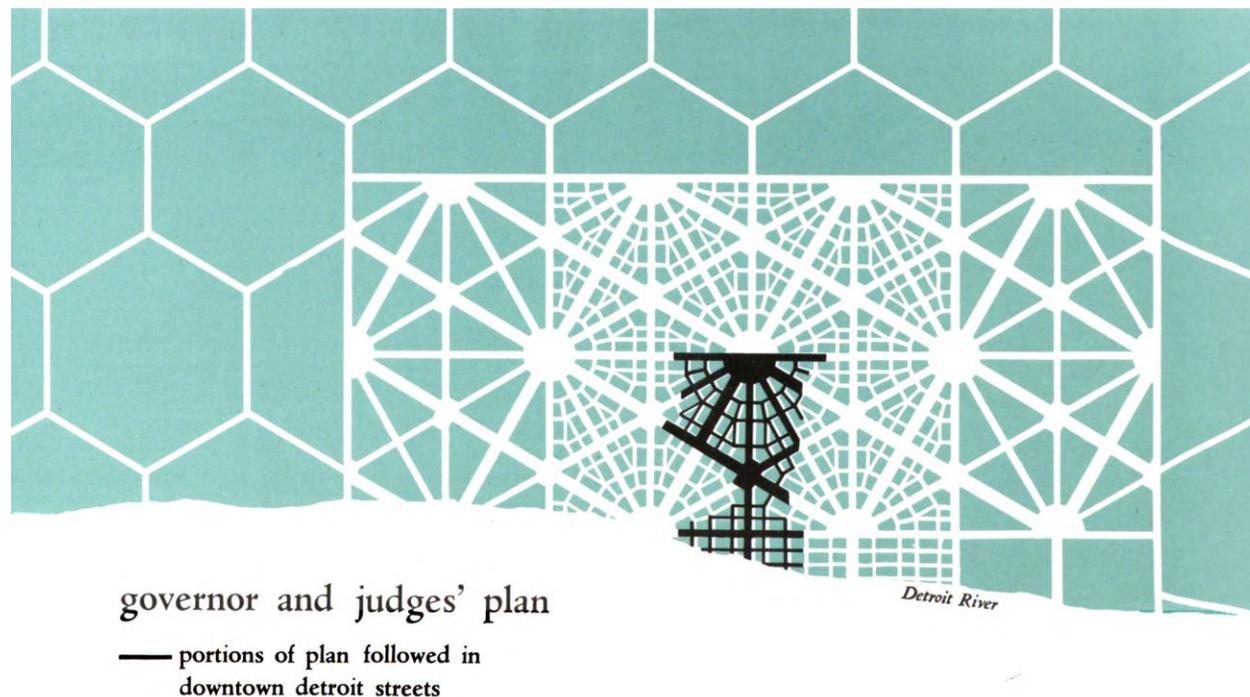
It is important to describe downtown Detroit as it had grown before the measurements in this dissertation have started in 1911. Settled as Fort Pontchartrain du Détroit in 1701 by French general Antoine Cadillac, the current form of downtown Detroit was mostly influenced by a tragic fire in 1805 which burned down most of the original settlement. Learning from the rushed rebuilding of London after its 17<sup>th</sup> century Great Fire that forewent the plans of Sir Christopher Wren and instead built the city almost identically to its original layout, newly arrived judge Augustus Woodward asked Michigan Governor Hull for time to draw up a plan for rebuilding. Inspired by L'Enfant's baroque plan for Washington D.C., Woodward and Hull drew up a radial plan for the city consisting of hexagonals centered on circles, with their perimeters meeting at six-way intersections. The plan was based on a complex land trade scheme, in which land owners received the same land area they had before the 1805 fire, but in a new location in the radial plan. Woodward and Hull's plan was authorized by U.S Congress in 1806.<sup>374</sup> The irregular layout allowed for the creation of small parks throughout the downtown, which were often linked to civic buildings such as Detroit's City Hall, the Wayne County Building and Michigan's first State Capitol.

Yet like in London, the growth of Detroit eventually caught up with the plan and only a small portion of it was completed before the city absorbed it into its usual grid that followed the narrow French farm plots which were laid out perpendicular to the Detroit River from 1812 onwards. The power of existing landowners and the rapid pace of Detroit's growth superseded the idealism behind Woodward and Hull's plan: only half of the envisioned circular Grand Circus was created as a park and the role of Campus Martius, the envisioned meeting place of the city's avenues, was much diminished as the alignment of Detroit's avenues instead followed ancient Native American trails and nearby obstacles. Nevertheless, the importance of these radial avenues increased when Governor Cass improved them as military roads in 1830 to connect to the rapidly growing cities elsewhere

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<sup>374</sup> David Lee Poremba, *Detroit in Its World Setting : A Three Hundred Year Chronology, 1701-2001*, Great Lakes Books (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001), 90.

in the state and beyond, such as Chicago to the west, Lansing and Grand Rapids to the northwest, Pontiac and Flint to the north and Port Huron to the northeast.<sup>375</sup>



**Figure 58. Woodward and Hull's plan for Detroit from 1807, with realized streets in black.**<sup>376</sup>

While Woodward's Plan allowed for striking radials, terminated vistas and a range of small parks in the core of the city, it did create an irregular street pattern in an otherwise mostly gridded city, a "*curiously shapeless ramification of public open spaces*" as noted by landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted Junior upon his visit to Detroit almost a century later in 1905. Furthermore, the past century hadn't brought the city much satisfactory development, as the irregular blocks were "*occupied in large measure by very second-rate buildings*".<sup>377</sup> Olmsted may have been overly harsh on the city, as the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had brought great progress to Detroit's industry and population, with the

<sup>375</sup> L.E. McMahon and Alice I. Bourquin, "Detroit's Evolution of an Expressway System," *Landscape Architecture* 44, no. 1 (1953).

<sup>376</sup> Image is an abstraction of the original plan by Merle Henrickson, William Kessler, and Frederic Pryor, "Trafficways for 3 Million People," ed. Detroit City Plan Commission(Detroit1954), 13.

<sup>377</sup> Olmsted commented specifically on the area of Cadillac Square, for which he was asked to suggest improvements. Junior Frederick Law Olmsted and Charles Mulford Robinson, "Improvement of the City of Detroit," ed. Detroit Board of Commerce(Detroit1905), 38.

downtown reflecting the city's growth by hosting new developments such as the original thirteen story Penobscot Building in 1905, soon followed by the popular ten story Pontchartrain Hotel at the corner of Woodward Avenue and Cadillac Square in 1907 and the twenty-three story Ford Building in 1909. Furthermore, the central business district was growing outward at a rapid pace, cheered on by the press.<sup>378</sup> Slowly, Detroit was claiming a stake on the world map.



Figure 59. Campus Martius in 1910.<sup>379</sup>

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<sup>378</sup> An article on the growth of the central business district specifically applauds the replacement of “old shacks of unsavory reputation” by a “fine business block”. In: “Business Is Reaching Out,” *Detroit Free Press*, December 23 1906. Similarly, the replacement of rooming houses by new commercial buildings is praised in “Old Residence and Rooming House Section of the City Where Wonderful Transformation Has Been Worked,” *Detroit Free Press*, October 28 1906.

<sup>379</sup> Image courtesy of Burton Historical Collection.

## 4.1 1911-1921

In 1911, the city had an estimated population of over 550,000 inhabitants, almost doubling over the past decade.<sup>380</sup> Only a three years after the first Ford Model T was produced and only a year after the first Model T came off the conveyor belts at the newly constructed Highland Park plant –then the largest building under one roof in the state-, Detroit contained 278 establishments that either built or maintained cars, employing about 40,000 people and producing over \$250 million worth of goods annually. Furthermore, the city boasted a longer tradition of manufacturing, besting others in the processing of wood and the production of stoves, ship building, furnaces and many other products. The Detroit River had grown to become North America’s busiest inland waterway with over \$771 million worth of goods transported during 1911.<sup>381</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> The April 1900 U.S. Census sets the Detroit population at 285,704.

<sup>381</sup> R.L. Polk & Company, "Detroit City Directory," ed. R.L. Polk & Company(Detroit1911), introduction, pp. 6-10.

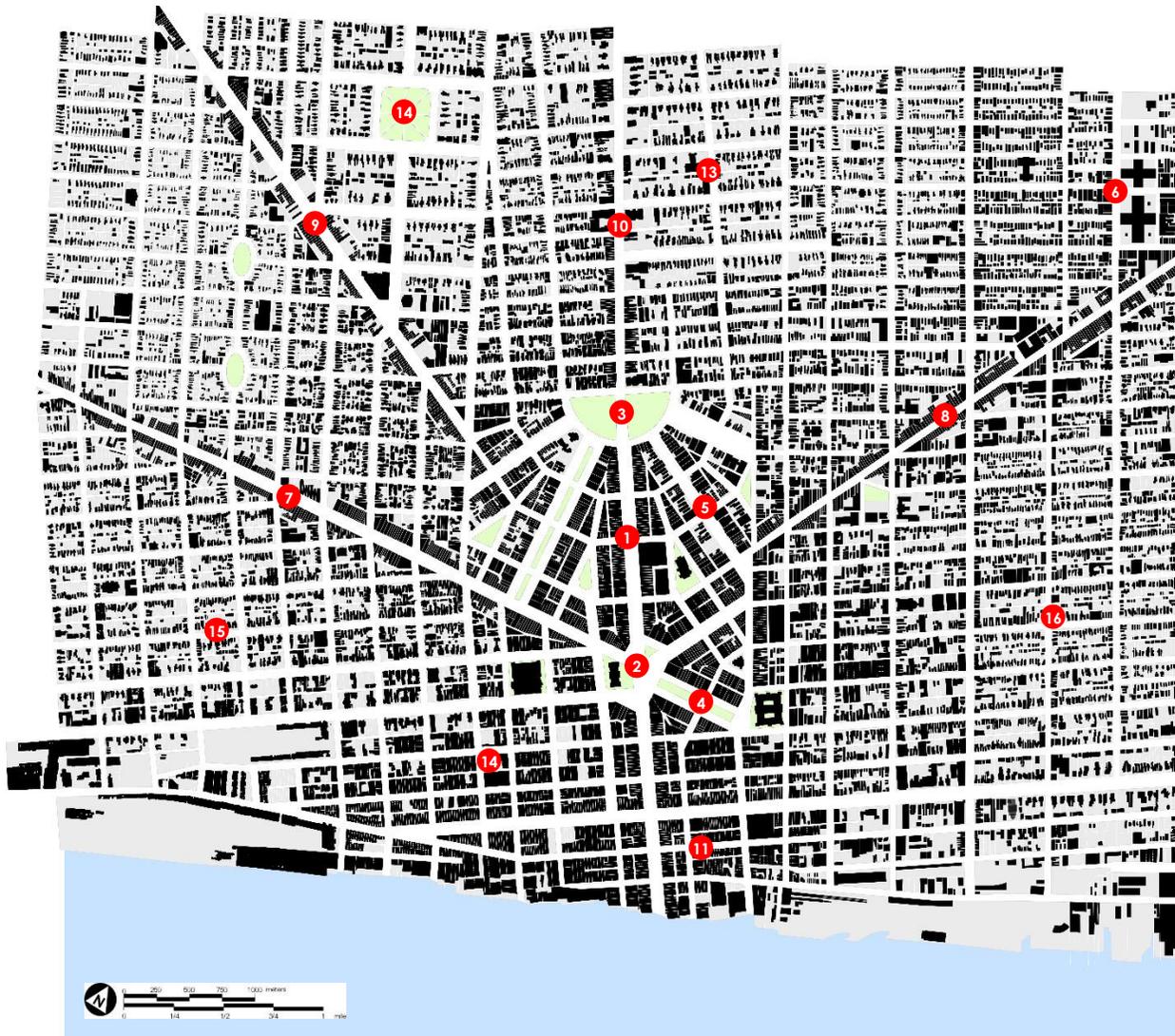


Figure 60. Downtown Detroit's blocks, buildings, parcels, open spaces, parks and rivers in 1911.



**Figure 61. Downtown Detroit's frontage interactivity in 1911.**

Due to this rapid growth, the downtown itself was clearly in a state of transition. The 1911 maps demonstrate how the most densely built up portion of downtown focused around the central north-south artery of Woodward Avenue (1), especially between Campus Martius (2) and Grand Circus Park (3). This is the commercial core of the city, in which most retail trade was taking place. In this district streets were lined with interactive frontages of shops, bars and restaurants catering to a fast-growing urban and regional clientele. Most stores sold comparison goods, but food retailing was also still centralized in downtown, especially around Cadillac Square (4) until in 1912 a competing market was opened on Broadway (5), which prominently presented its wares to passersby behind a total of 1834

feet of counters.<sup>382</sup> Another major hub for food retailing and wholesale was the Eastern Market in the northeast corner of downtown (6), which was quickly becoming the major destination for farmers to sell their produce and other goods.<sup>383</sup> Commerce extended along some radial avenues such as Michigan Avenue (7) and Gratiot Avenue (8), while others like Grand River Avenue (9) and Woodward Avenue (10) lagged behind.<sup>384</sup> The latter avenues were lined with a rather spotty mix of stores, wholesalers and even vacant lots – far from a continuous commercial frontage.

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<sup>382</sup> Director of the new Broadway Market boasted of these numbers that “nothing in the west will in any way compare with Detroit’s new Broadway Market”, after visiting counterparts on the Pacific Coast. "Detroit's New Market Structure to Excel Any Other in the West," *Detroit Free Press*, May 19 1922.

<sup>383</sup> Randall Fogelman and Lisa E. Rush, *Detroit's Eastern Market*, Images of America (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2013).

<sup>384</sup> Business was growing rapidly along these radials, “fast outgrowing the boundary lines of its business district of a decade ago”. In: "Brushaber's New Store to Be Forerunner of Business Extension of Michigan Avenue," *Detroit Free Press*, May 13 1910.



Figure 62. Broadway Market stall displaying goods to passersby.<sup>385</sup>

South of Campus Martius the city contained a warehouse and manufacturing district which focused on trade from the Detroit River while also benefiting from rail access via terminals that were located adjacent to the river (11). This district percolated into surrounding residential areas as well, harming their relation between buildings and public space. In other words, an interactivity 'transect' was never present in Detroit; instead a 'zone of transition' with vacant lots and factories has severed the link between the commercial core of downtown and its residential periphery from when measurements began in 1911

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<sup>385</sup> Image by Detroit Publishing Company, taken between 1905 and 1915. Image courtesy of Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

onwards. The southwest corner of downtown was also in a state of flux, containing an ephemeral mixture of older homes and newly constructed office buildings in what would become the city's financial district (12). The peripheral residential neighborhoods each catered to a different class of citizen, with the distinguished Brush Park (13) and Cass Park (14) districts located to the north of the downtown, and the more modest working class districts of Corktown (15) and Black Bottom (16) to the west and east of the urban core, closer to the manufacturing district along the Detroit River. In these residential districts, retail would mostly consist of the odd corner store and most of the frontage was purely residential. This is a strong contrast with the strong mix of frontage uses in The Hague's inner city residential districts.

Visiting the city in 1915, architectural commentator Aymar Embury II observed "*Detroit is essentially a city in the transition stage, and the processes through which its transformation is being wrought are very plainly visible. (...) The older structures are gradually being superseded by modern office and business buildings. (...) One feels that as far as the town itself goes, the things one would like to speak of are isolated from and not part of a definite whole.*"<sup>386</sup> The city's growth accelerated significantly between 1911 and 1921. More new skyscrapers were constructed within the core blocks around Woodward Avenue and a Financial District was born around the Federal Building in the southwest portion of downtown, just one block west of City Hall. In this district, the Dime Bank Building and the new Penobscot Building vied for the title of tallest structure, with 23 stories each upon their almost simultaneous completion in 1913. Another high-rise district emerged around Grand Circus Park with the construction of the Kales Building, Statler hotel, David Whitney Building and Fyfe Building, all built between 1914 and 1919. An out of town observer noted that "*there is not another city in the United States so far as I know and I doubt if there is in the world, where building operations are being conducted on such a proportionate scale as they are here.*"<sup>387</sup>

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<sup>386</sup> Aymar Embury II, "Impressions of Three Cities," *Architecture* 31, no. 3 (1915).

<sup>387</sup> "Is Detroit Prosperous?," *Detroit Free Press*, October 12 1913.



**Figure 63. Dime Building under construction behind old City Hall in 1912.<sup>388</sup>**

At street level, all these buildings strived to combine their stature as offices, hotels and places of residence with shops, bars and restaurants to cater to passersby and residents alike. The retail ground floor was often the most profitable floor of any building.<sup>389</sup> An excellent example of the importance of street level presence during this era was the construction of the Book Building on Washington Boulevard, aptly named by and after J. Burgess Book Junior. At a time when most of Washington Boulevard was lined by residential buildings (as can be seen in the 1911 map), resident Book recognized the

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<sup>388</sup> Image courtesy of Detroit Publishing Company via Shorpy.

<sup>389</sup> Willis, *Form Follows Finance : Skyscrapers and Skylines in New York and Chicago*.

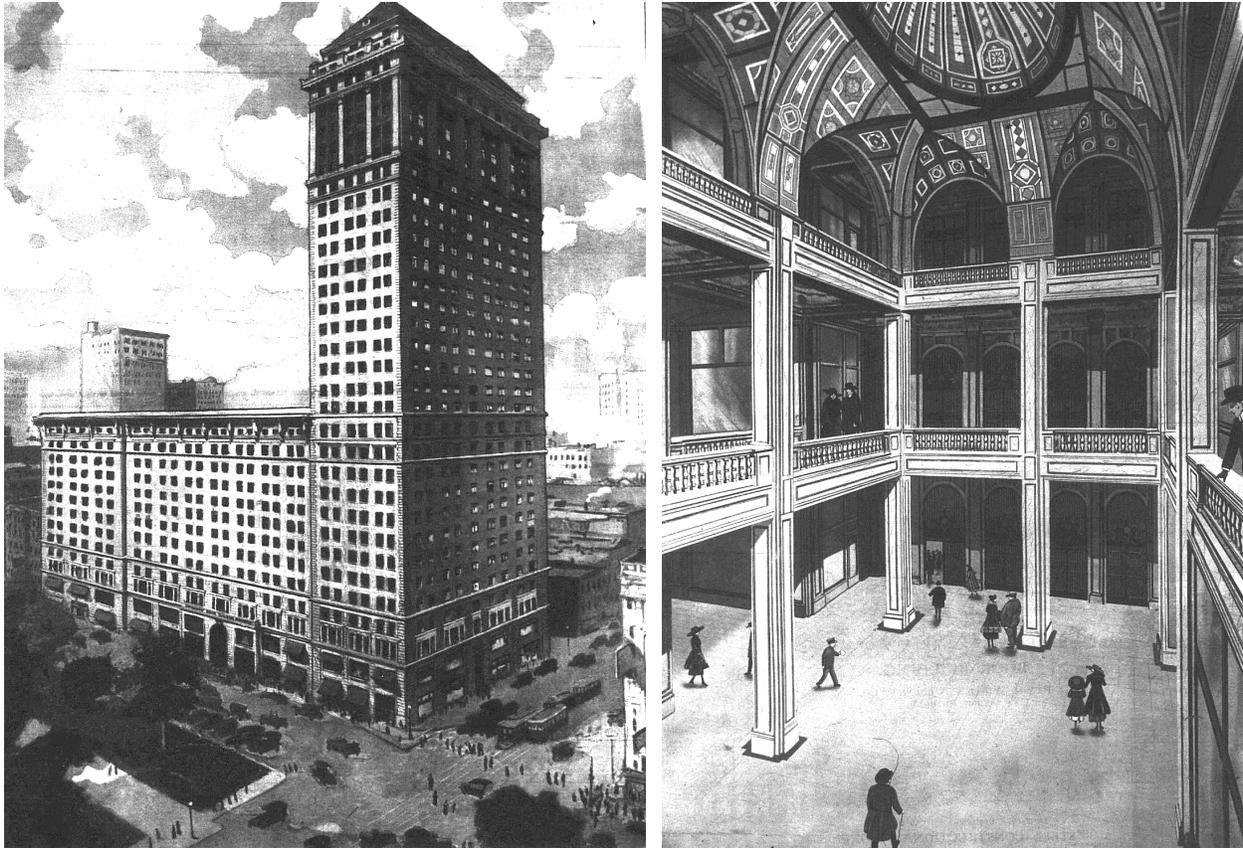
strategic location of his street as a connection between the growing business districts on Michigan and Woodward Avenue.<sup>390</sup> At a time when much of Detroit's construction was halted due to the onset of World War I, and at a time when Washington Boulevard was still mostly devoid of commercial development, Book decided to construct the first Book Building in 1917. The Louis Kamper designed Italian Renaissance building specifically focused on combining shops and offices, "[housing] a group of the finest shops to be found on this continent: its upper floors will furnish office room for great corporations as well as for single individuals." The shops in the building were located over three floors, drawing people in via extensive windows to the boulevard and a central rotunda from which upper floor uses could be accessed. The aim was unapologetically grandiose: "... it will make Washington Boulevard one of the famous retail shopping streets of the world. What Fifth Avenue is to the great city of New York, Washington Boulevard seems destined to be to Detroit." With his retail-focused development, Book wanted to extend the retail district from Woodward Avenue and spur other developments along the Boulevard.<sup>391</sup> Woodward Avenue solidified its role as the main retail street in the city by the construction and renovation of several large department stores for illustrious tenants like Kresge's department store, Heyn's department store, the F.W. Woolworth Company and the anchor of the street, the J.L Hudson Company. Buildings vied for the attention of passersby by the construction of large display windows in richly decorated tall structures, with several arcades constructed to draw customers into several floors of independent retailers.<sup>392</sup> Beyond their function as retail stores, the buildings on Woodward would also house community events and exhibits, fashion shows, banks and repair services, serving as the cultural hub of the city. Around Campus Martius and Monroe Street, entertainment was offered in various theater venues.

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<sup>390</sup> "Boulevard's Growth Is the Result of a Farsighted Program," *Detroit Saturday Night*, April 21 1923.

<sup>391</sup> A special section of the *Detroit Saturday Night* weekly was dedicated to the Book family and their vision for Washington Boulevard. "Book Building," *Detroit Saturday Night*, December 30 1916. Most of the visions did not materialize, although the Book Cadillac Hotel was constructed in 1924 and the Book Tower was constructed in 1926.

<sup>392</sup> "Lower Woodward Avenue Historic District Final Report," ed. City of Detroit(Detroit1999).



**Figure 64. Left image: Book building on the left of the image, with the later addition of the Book Tower to the right. Right image: Book building rotunda, through which shops could be accessed. Both buildings designed by Kamper.<sup>393</sup>**

Yet the rapid development of downtown Detroit also brought significant growing pains. As surrounding residential districts were absorbed into the commercial core of the city, a curious ‘fringe’ of transitional streets started to appear. Many grand mansions of old Detroit families made way for commercial development, causing remaining residents -often unamused by the rise of the smells and sounds of the center city- to seek their refuge elsewhere. Many decided to leave for greener pastures in Detroit’s growing suburbs, either close by in Indian Village or further away in the Grosse Pointes. The homes they left, if not absorbed by commercial development, often became the locale of rooming houses, occupied by “people whose names will never adorn the pages of a blue book”.<sup>394</sup> This new type of transient resident came with the territory of a growing downtown, as they were

<sup>393</sup> Images from Detroit Saturday Night, December 30 1916.

<sup>394</sup> The Blue Book refers to the directory of notable citizens of Detroit, a sign of high status in the city.

often workers in downtown industries or traveling businessmen. Furthermore, the near east side began to house a rapidly growing number of African Americans from the South that came to Detroit to work in factories that were eager to hire due to automotive and wartime orders.<sup>395</sup> The growth of the (often illegally operated) rooming houses and scattered businesses initiated a cycle of decline by depressing the value of surrounding remaining single family homes, and its obstruction was a “fight against unequal odds, a lost cause from the very outset. Detroit was destined to grow”. What was left were a “score of massive houses in varying stages of unkemptness.”<sup>396</sup> The rooming houses were a source of social problems for the city as well, with early reports of prostitution and drug use emanating from houses on the near east and west side.<sup>397</sup> With no official zoning policy in place, the city aimed to restrict some elements of downtown intrusion on residential districts by use of individual jurisprudence, citing the importance of *“an orderly segregation of the different activities of urban life as essential to the stability of property values and the health and wellbeing of the inhabitants.”*<sup>398</sup>

Another problem the city faced was the growth of car traffic, most of which was caused by the city’s own fledgling automobile industry. Even mere years after the popularization of the car, its negative effects on the city were already felt by many. A 1911 Detroit Free Press article mentions the issue of Woodward’s original radial plan with avenues that *“converge to a common center and draw the entire traffic of the city into a vortex”* and advises the immediate widening of downtown streets, allowing for downtown growth and the further increase of real estate values.<sup>399</sup> Detroit’s dedication to the future over its past was soon demonstrated: a first unfortunate step to make room for more cars was to turn Campus

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<sup>395</sup> Kevin Boyle, *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age*(Macmillan, 2007), 105-15.

<sup>396</sup> This description comes from the observation of the transformation of Fort Street, conveniently located between a major railway station and the downtown: "Passing of Fort Street West," *Detroit Free Press*, November 9 1913. A similar decline was documented for Jefferson Avenue in: "Jefferson Avenue Has Lost Its Glory," *Detroit Saturday Night*, April 27 1918.

<sup>397</sup> Reports of prostitution note that rooming houses themselves were clear of any issues as prostitutes would not want to draw attention to them; instead their stomping grounds were a few blocks in downtown: "Heart of City Swarms with Street Women," *Detroit Free Press*, September 7 1913.

<sup>398</sup> The article specifically mentions the verdict of Detroit Judge Jayne to block parking garages to be constructed on a residential street. It questions whether the judgment will hold as it will block the “inroads of business”: "Residential Oases," *Detroit Free Press*, June 29 1919.

<sup>399</sup> "Relieve the Central Congestion," *Detroit Free Press*, October 28 1911.

Martius from a public square into a traffic intersection and streetcar hub, removing the Soldiers Monument commemorating those lost during the Civil War.<sup>400</sup> Restriction of on-street parking would soon follow, as would proposals to introduce multilevel streets.<sup>401</sup> Yet it was soon agreed palliative measures did not suffice, nor did infeasible proposals improve matters. A 1915 City Beautiful plan to extend Woodward's radial avenues throughout the city to relieve congestion from the existing avenues by Chicago architect Edward H. Bennett was never implemented, even though it was commissioned by the City Plan and Improvement Commission.<sup>402</sup> This early commission only had an advisory role in the city, and its labor was later derided as the "picture plan stage" of Detroit urban planning, leading to pretty plans with little value.<sup>403</sup>

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<sup>400</sup> "Has Plans for Relief of Traffic," *Detroit Free Press*, June 6 1912.

<sup>401</sup> "Proposed Plan to Transform Washington Boulevard," *Detroit News Tribune*, March 10 1912.

<sup>402</sup> Edward H. Bennett and Cass Gilbert, "Preliminary Plan of Detroit," ed. City Plan and Improvement Commission(Detroit1915). The City Plan and Improvement Commission was created in 1909 by ordinance.

<sup>403</sup> City Plan Commission, "Annual Report,"(Detroit1927), 3.

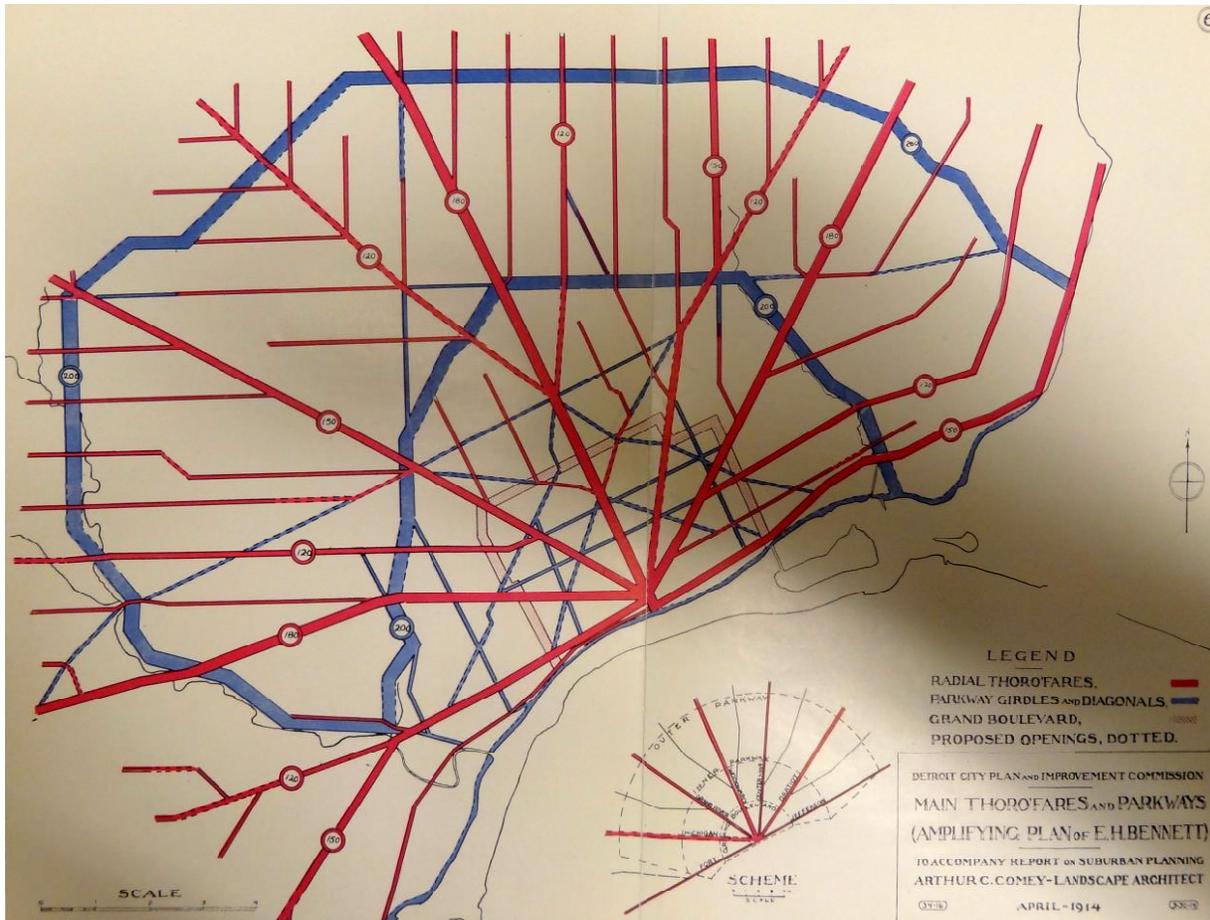


Figure 65. Bennett's radial plan for Detroit (drawn in red) was combined with early tangential and ring road planning (in blue).<sup>404</sup>

Instead, the real power to tackle downtown fringe decline, intrusion of undesirable uses into residential districts and the ever-growing traffic problem truly started with the adoption of a new city charter in 1919 which propelled the newly named City Plan Commission to a more powerful part of the city government, further propelled by state legislation in 1921.<sup>405</sup> The new commission immediately set to task by proposing a Building Zone Plan for Detroit, citing the importance of “insuring a more stable and hence more desirable form of development”, proposed by petition from residents surrounding

<sup>404</sup> Image from suburban plan for Detroit by the City Plan and Improvement Commission by Arthur Comey, which had already drawn on Bennett's plan that would be published a year later.

<sup>405</sup> Walter H. Blucher, "City Planning in Detroit," *City Planning* 3, no. 2 (1927); Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit*, 37.

downtown.<sup>406</sup> Not only were business and residential sections separated in this plan, also the intrusion of multi-family dwellings was controlled out of a fear for high density living, as well as the intrusion of industrial buildings into residential neighborhoods.<sup>407</sup> The plan was not well received by the downtown business community, as it regarded the document as restricting development and suppressing land values by its proposed height limits, and was subsequently not accepted by the City Council.<sup>408</sup>

The issue of traffic was more fruitfully tackled, mostly because the public agreed something needed to be done. Acting commissioner of Detroit Public Works Porter J. Murphy named Detroit "*the most poverty-stricken city in the country with respect to thoro arteries of travel*".<sup>409</sup> After a small street widening project in downtown Detroit, the first large proposal to alleviate traffic was by the City Plan Commission to connect and widen existing streets into what was technocratically named the Dix-High-Waterloo plan, after the streets it encompassed. The creation of an 80 foot wide, 12 mile long east-west bypass just north of the downtown aimed to alleviate congestion as it allowed increasing east-west traffic to pass without entering the urban core. The city took it upon itself to condemn \$3 million worth of properties lining the street, selling the remainder of these lots back upon completion. Part of the condemnation and construction would be paid by levying a special assessment fee on the properties along the new thoroughfare, assuming their property would increase in value due to the street's improved connectivity. Some owners agreed with the city and wanted the widening to occur as soon as possible, others vigorously protested the condemnation of their property. After some political handwringing, the widening started in the early 1920s for the new "Vernor Highway".<sup>410</sup> Cars would trump

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<sup>406</sup> "Commission Plans Zoning of Detroit," *Detroit Free Press*, June 29 1919; "City to Mark Business Zone," *Detroit Free Press*, June 24 1919.

<sup>407</sup> Five districts were distinguished: First Residence, Second Residence (allowing multifamily dwellings), Commercial, Industrial and Unrestricted districts. Zoning regulations of Los Angeles in 1909 and New York in 1916 were specifically cited. City Plan Commission, "A Building Zone Plan for Detroit," (Detroit 1919).

<sup>408</sup> Martin S. Hayden, "Detroit's Master Plan," ed. The Detroit News (Detroit 1947). It would take over two decades to finally draft an accepted zoning plan.

<sup>409</sup> "Cross-Town Thorofares for Auto Traffic Pressing Need, Head of D.P.W. Points Out," *Detroit News*, August 28 1918.

<sup>410</sup> The highway was named in honor of prominent citizen James Vernor. The plan was already superseded before even finishing: when all properties were acquired, the City Plan Commission voted to increase the width of the new street by 50%. Blucher, "City Planning in Detroit." More information in: Marilyn Florek, "West Vernor Highway Historic District," ed. National Register of Historic Places multiple property

public transportation from then on. Although several proposals and reports were drafted by the Board of Street Railway Commissioners during the 1910s to improve streetcar transportation and to construct rapid transit systems such as subways, voters and political leaders consistently deemed them too costly, with street widening seen as a cheaper alternative which could also be more easily phased.<sup>411</sup>

At the dawn of the 1920s, Detroit's downtown was in a state of rapid growth but also in one of chronic congestion and slum formation just around its perimeter. The wide open plains of the city allowed for generous placement of railroad lines and boulevards outside the urban core without having to condemn or face conflicting business and resident interests. In this climate the president of the newly conglomerated General Motors had announced in 1919 that he would locate his new headquarters roughly three miles north of downtown near the confluence of the Milwaukee Junction railroad and the Grand Boulevard ring around the city. This location was geographically in the "New Center" of the rapidly westward-expanding city, and away from any downtown congestion.<sup>412</sup> Detroit's New Center was born arguably as the nation's first Edge City, demonstrating to downtown businesses that the historical location of the urban core did not guarantee an eternal hegemony of central functions.<sup>413</sup> General Motors wasn't the only defector of downtown: in 1913 the grand new Michigan Central Station would bring passengers from the entire nation into Detroit – two miles west of downtown. Downtown's future became less shaped by what happened inside its perimeters, but what happened around it – a sign of times to come.

Despite this slow change of fate, downtown Detroit was booming in 1921, reflecting the city's role as the production capital of the United States. With the population doubled over the past decade from over 550,000 to over 1.1 million, the city absorbed new auto workers,

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documentation form(2002); "Commission Plans East, West Street," *Detroit Free Press*, September 28 1919; "Couzens Again Flays Council on Veto Action," *Detroit Free Press*, July 24 1921.

<sup>411</sup> Hyde, "Planning a Transportation System for Metropolitan Detroit in the Age of the Automobile: The Triumph of the Expressway."

<sup>412</sup> Another reason for this locational decision was that president Durant was unable to assemble a large enough parcel of land for his envisioned head office downtown. "Durant Tells Gigantic Aims of Expansion," *Detroit Free Press*, April 4 1919; "G.M.C. Occupies New Building," *Detroit Free Press*, November 25 1920; Randall Fogelman, *Detroit's New Center*(Arcadia Publishing, 2004).

<sup>413</sup> Garreau, *Edge City : Life on the New Frontier*.

foremen, clerks and civil servants at a rate that even megacities in developing countries would find hard to keep up with. The newcomers had plenty of reason to move to Detroit, as automotive and other industrial production capacity skyrocketed in the many plants that were popping up all over the city, outputting a total of \$1.5 billion of goods in 1920. From cars and trucks to stoves, spectacles, ice cream or pickled vegetables – Detroit was the top manufacturing center in the nation. Although apartment construction did increase in the downtown area, most new residents would settle in the rapidly growing plots outside the urban core, allowing them to have their own single family home and –with average worker wages increasing- their own motor vehicle to drive to work. Motor vehicle registrations increased from about 38,000 in 1917 to over 100,000 in 1920, skyrocketing to over 350,000 in 1926 – almost one car per three Detroiters, an average small family size at that time.<sup>414</sup> This made the downtown corner of Woodward and Michigan Avenue the busiest intersection in the nation in 1920.<sup>415</sup>

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<sup>414</sup> R.L. Polk & Company, "Detroit City Directory," ed. R.L. Polk & Company (Detroit 1921); R.L. Duffus, "Our Changing Cities: Dynamic Detroit," *New York Times*, April 10 1927.

<sup>415</sup> Over a ten-hour period, 18,424 cars passed this intersection. In: "Lower Woodward Avenue Historic District Final Report."



Figure 66. Downtown Detroit's blocks, buildings, parcels, open spaces, parks and rivers in 1921.



**Figure 67. Downtown Detroit's frontage interactivity in 1921.**

The boom between 1911 and 1921 is clearly visible in Figure 66 and Figure 67. The downtown experienced a marked increase in building density. This is mostly the result of commercial development: most new residents were settling in suburban areas and they were followed by displaced downtown residents. The previously residential Washington Boulevard (1) and Broadway (2) radials within the Woodward plan have been almost completely replaced by commercial buildings, and the mansions of Woodward (3) and Jefferson Avenues (4) were quickly undergoing the same process. These new buildings were adding interactive business frontages to the central business district, expanding its retail core. Yet at the same time, a few small gaps (5) began to appear in closeby blocks, indicating a holding pattern for more construction or the introduction of the off-street

parking lot in Detroit. As automobile use continued to increase and on-street parking was increasingly restricted to permit the steady flow of cars, off-street lots became a viable land use in the urban core.<sup>416</sup> The building gaps are also combined with a decreasing interactivity between buildings and public space in this inner ring – an inactive gap is starting to appear between the commercial core and its surrounding residential districts. The severance between the core and periphery of downtown was on the rise, with decreasing fringe frontage interactivity a canary in the coal mine.

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<sup>416</sup> Jakle and Sculle, *Lots of Parking : Land Use in a Car Culture*.

## 4.2 1921-1929

The 1920s marked another decade of unprecedented growth for the city. The downtown retail sector continued to grow with the addition and renovation of the retail palaces on Woodward Avenue around the ever-growing store of J.L. Hudson, which was rapidly swallowing neighboring buildings in its path to growth, including the purchase and demolition of neighboring department store Newcomb-Endicott, whose building was only eight years old. The consolidation of buildings for Hudson literally reached its peak in the late 1920s as the newly formed building mass formed the tallest department store in the world at 25 floors. However, the breakneck speed in which surrounding shops were renovating and constructing new premises during the 1910s was slowing as competitors seemed to be reaching their capacity for growth. Conversely, the Book Brothers' bet on Washington Boulevard was starting to pay off as the Book-Cadillac Hotel was completed in 1924 as the tallest hotel structure in the world and the Book Tower was added to their existing Book Building in 1927, with grand plans to add even six more to the boulevard.<sup>417</sup> The former "cow pasture of Detroit's pioneer days now boasts [the] brightest lights of any city in [the] world."<sup>418</sup> The downtown also welcomed a number of new theater buildings during the 1920s, focused on bringing the new world of cinema to the city. Popular cultural venues clustered and an entertainment district started to grow around Woodward Avenue north of Grand Circus Park.<sup>419</sup> Despite the Prohibition of alcohol instated in 1920, night life in the city was thriving as freshly smuggled Canadian booze flowed freely in gang-controlled establishments.<sup>420</sup> To counter any obstructions to continued downtown retail growth, Hudson's department store would host the first meeting of the Central Business District

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<sup>417</sup> "Plans to Build 6 More Skyscrapers on Boulevard," *Detroit News*, June 15 1924.

<sup>418</sup> This statement refers to the new lighting system installed on the street, initiated by one of the Book brothers: an early example of building owners taking ownership of public space (albeit in this case through general city funds). "Turning Night into Day on Washington Boulevard," *Detroit Free Press*, June 8 1928.

<sup>419</sup> Michael Hauser and Marianne Weldon, *Detroit's Downtown Movie Palaces*, Images of America (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Pub., 2006).

<sup>420</sup> The 1921 Polk directory saw an interesting increase in downtown establishments selling soft drinks. Details in: Poremba, *Detroit in Its World Setting : A Three Hundred Year Chronology, 1701-2001*.

Association in 1922, an organization that would promote the interests of downtown business owners.<sup>421</sup>

Building activity in the Financial District reached fever pitch in the late 1920s with the completion of the Greater Penobscot Building in 1928, containing an ornate lobby and a number of shops on the ground floor facing the street or the lobby, as well as five floors of banking floor space. For almost five decades this building would be the tallest in the city, while maintaining an intimate relation to the street through its small-scaled storefronts. An interesting break from the Penobscot's strong relationship between architecture and public space was taken right across the street with the subsequent completion of the Union Trust Building in 1929. Instead of facing the street with a range of smaller storefronts punctuated by a grand lobby entrance, the Union Trust Co. commissioned Wirt C. Rowland of the Detroit architecture powerhouse of Smith, Hinchman and Grylls - the same architect as the newly completed Penobscot Building across the street and the nearby Buhl building - to design a large banking hall on a raised and soundproofed first floor which had no direct visual contact with the street through windows or doorways. The only few small stores that were contained in the building were accessed from the lower lobby that subsequently opened to the street. The richly decorated interior provides a lavish but controlled experience of a 'cathedral of finance', specifically following the wishes of the Union Trust director Frank Blair to reflect the Trust's concept of warmth, accessibility and personal care combined with strength, security and dependability.<sup>422</sup> This image proved rather untrue, as the Union Trust's bankruptcy played a major role in the 1929 stock market crash, with the building now known as the Guardian Building named after the Guardian Detroit Union Group which would emerge from the Union Trust's ashes.

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<sup>421</sup> On the agenda during the first years: lowering taxes, a proposal for rapid transit and plans for a collective parking garage. Central Business District Association, "Annual Development Report," (Detroit 1992).

<sup>422</sup> James W. Tottis, *The Guardian Building : Cathedral of Finance* (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 2008), 23.



**Figure 68. Greater Penobscot Building with two street level stores (top) and Guardian building with closed street level façade (bottom), both designed by architect Rowland.<sup>423</sup>**

The feverish growth of Detroit during the 1920s is aptly described in a 1927 New York Times article on the city as *“Detroit the Dynamic”*, inhabited by *“the most prosperous slice of average humanity that now exists or ever has existed”* due to generous factory wages. While it mentions downtown Woodward Avenue as *“a highly sophisticated shopping and hotel*

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<sup>423</sup> Images by author, 2014.

*district*”, the housing conditions in the downtown fringe are criticized along with the lack of effort to properly house African Americans. The article is also critical of the city’s lack of centrality and curious layout: *“The city has been, one might say, assembled rather than manufactured.(...) When Detroit goes to work in the morning the effect is as if some one had poked a stick into an ant hill and had temporarily lost their sense of direction. There is no general stampede toward a centralized workshop district. The traffic flows all ways at once”*, often toward the suburbs which are described as *“a rather curious hodgepodge of the humble and the ostentatious.”* The suburban boom in Detroit can be ascribed to the rapid rise of the motor vehicle, allowing citizens to travel in all directions and expanding the city beyond recognition: *“The city has expanded as a city on wheels must.”*<sup>424</sup>

While the New York Times article provided an overwhelmingly positive outlook on the city’s future, it also uncovers the seeds of the city’s demise in its era of most rapid growth: the explosive mixture of decentralization of residences and jobs and dependency on the automobile. A 1924 news article makes a direct link between the widening and construction of new roads to the migration of Detroiters to the suburbs,<sup>425</sup> but the hegemony of downtown was not yet questioned by the local press. The consensus seemed to be that even though newcomers settled outside the urban core and often even beyond the city limits, *“every additional resident in Detroit adds to the prosperity of the city and indirectly is responsible for the phenomenal growth of the downtown section.”*<sup>426</sup> Yet the red flags raised by the New York Times were starting to become clearly visible in the urban core in the 1920s. While downtown growth may have seemed daunting to some, it significantly lagged behind larger cities like Chicago and New York, with per capita office

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<sup>424</sup> The article was part of a series of articles on the transformation of American cities. Duffus, "Our Changing Cities: Dynamic Detroit." A similar description of the city’s growth was given in the Detroit News: *“The wide streets have become trim; the business district has continued to rebuild itself, more and more in the character of the newborn civic spirit; the residential districts, aided by swift transportation, have spread and acquired more breathing space. The city, so to speak, “fills in”.*” In: "The City -- What Lies Behind Veil That Conceals Its Future?," *Detroit News* 1927.

<sup>425</sup> Citing statistical research, the article states “Detroit will follow Chicago, New York, Boston and Philadelphia in that for the first time in its history, there will be a remarkable development of its suburbs”: "New Development Era Looms for Woodward," *Detroit Free Press*, March 23 1924.

<sup>426</sup> "From Battleground to Shopping Center, Boulevard's History," *Detroit Saturday Night*, April 21 1923.

construction ranking last among larger cities.<sup>427</sup> Similarly, the residential population of the downtown was steadily decreasing due to the displacement by higher land uses such as retail stores and offices, as well as due to deterring land uses such as a rapidly growing arsenal of parking lots and garages combined with increasing industrial encroachment from the riverfront. The downtown fringe was starting to solidify into a *zone of transition*; at best an area that served the parking, wholesale and logistical needs of a more demanding downtown and at worst a blighting holding pattern for a downtown that was unlikely to grow.<sup>428</sup> Housing conditions in this fringe zone also continued to worsen, with the City Plan Commission warning in 1928 that "housing conditions in some sections of our own city are almost intolerable."<sup>429</sup> As housing and zoning proposals continued to be obstructed by downtown business interests and subsequently shot down by voters and politicians, and as the City Plan Commission's limited budget was mostly spent on coping with growth, this pattern could continue relatively unobstructed.<sup>430</sup> Furthermore, urban designs to tackle fringe decline went unheeded.<sup>431</sup>

The other issue clearly identified by the New York Times was the rapid growth of automobile traffic, with an increasing number of Detroiters depending on their car to commute and visit the downtown area. The traffic congestion found in 1911 had sweltered to unprecedented proportions in the 1920s with the number of cars on Detroit's streets doubling every three years.<sup>432</sup> In the meantime, the streetcar and bus trips per person decreased 17 percent between 1916 and 1925, a loss of about 90 million trips in total.<sup>433</sup> Yet it was out of the purchase of the Detroit United Railway streetcar company by the city

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<sup>427</sup> John R. Fugard, "What Is Happening to Our Central Business Districts?," *American planning and civic annual* (1940).

<sup>428</sup> The term was coined by economist Hoyt, *One Hundred Years of Land Values in Chicago*.

<sup>429</sup> City Plan Commission, "Annual Report," (Detroit 1928), 14.

<sup>430</sup> Hayden, "Detroit's Master Plan."; Commission, "Annual Report."; "Annual Report."; "An Outsider's View of Zoning in Detroit," *Detroit Saturday Night*, July 23 1927.

<sup>431</sup> A good example of the lack of determination to tackle fringe decay at an urban scale were the several unheeded proposals to clean up the city's industrial riverfront and provide the city with a proper gateway or civic center, including those by architect Eliel Saarinen: "How Father, Son Changed Detroit Dream," *Detroit Times*, July 17 1959. Other plans: "The City -- What Lies Behind Veil That Conceals Its Future?."; "Detroit's 1928 Riverfront Dream," *Detroit News*, May 22 1973.

<sup>432</sup> Department of Street Railways, "How Are We Going to Thread the Traffic Needle?," (Detroit 1924).

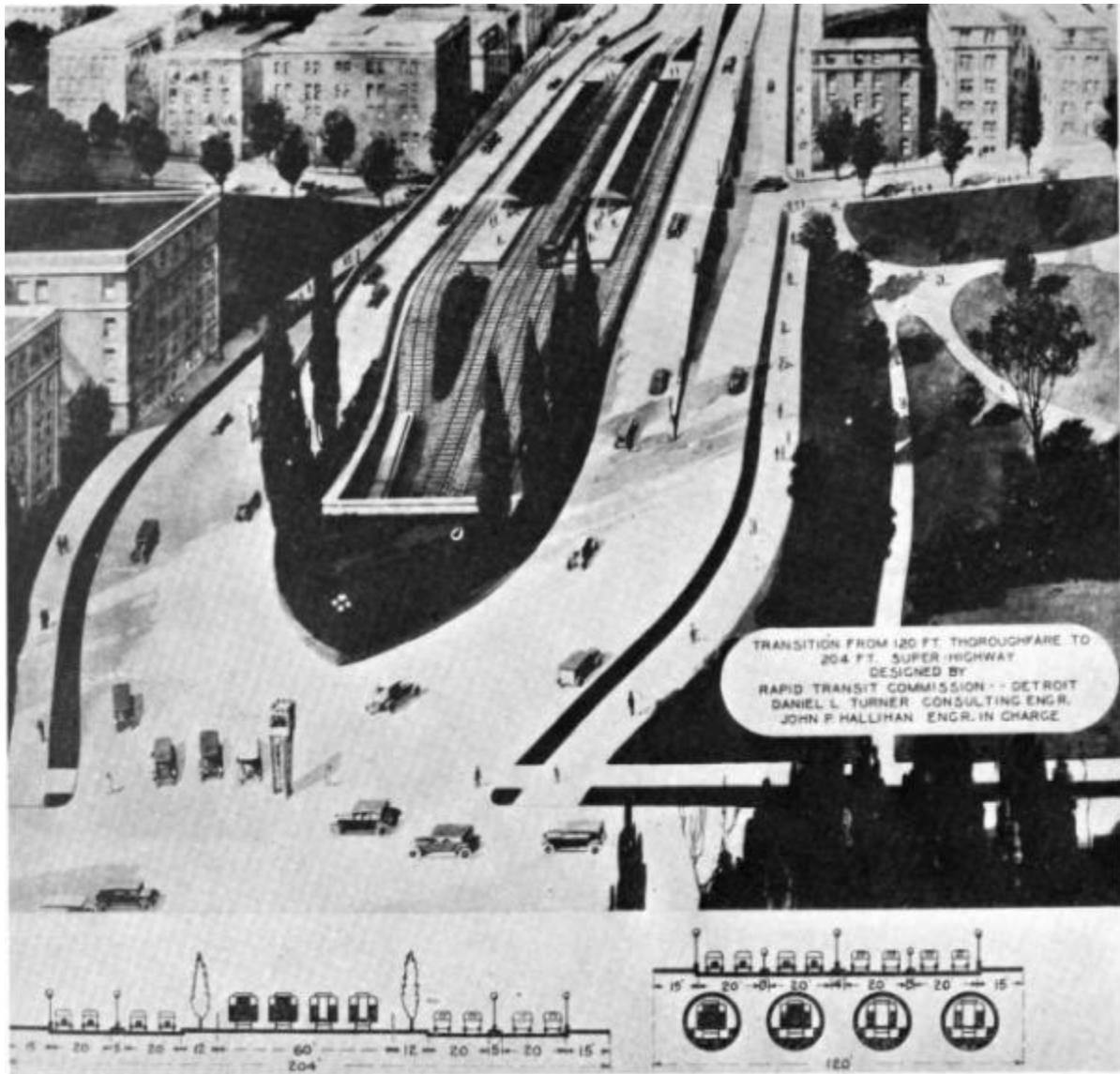
<sup>433</sup> Sidney D. Waldon, "Superhighways and Regional Planning," in *Planning problems of town, city and region* (Washington, D.C.: William F. Fell, 1927).

of Detroit that the Detroit Rapid Transit Commission was created in 1922, which oversaw a big piece of alleviating traffic in the city, both for streetcars and for automobiles.<sup>434</sup> Together with the City Plan Commission a system of 204 foot wide suburban “super-highways” was proposed: an innovative system of grade-separated highways that contained a center median of rapid transit lines, surrounded by several lanes of fast car traffic – an apparent symbiosis of individual and mass transportation. The separation of local and express car traffic and transit was ahead of its time, closely resembling the expressway systems of Europe in the 1930s and the Interstate system of the United States in the 1950s.<sup>435</sup>

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<sup>434</sup> Hyde, "Planning a Transportation System for Metropolitan Detroit in the Age of the Automobile: The Triumph of the Expressway," 63.

<sup>435</sup> Rapid Transit Commission, "Proposed Super-Highway Plan for Greater Detroit," (Detroit 1924). Rights-of-way were indeed acquired, with significant help from Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties.



**Figure 69. Proposed super-highway with rapid transit in highway median, with section below. Inner city section below to the right.** <sup>436</sup>

Within the inner city, thoroughfares were to be constructed at 120 foot wide, equal to the width of most boulevards in the original Woodward Plan more than a century ago, which was considered an act of “vision and courage”.<sup>437</sup> This width would not only be able to carry an increased car traffic load, but also allow for local and express underground rapid transit tracks to be constructed. Akin to the widening of Vernor Highway - which was still ongoing during the 1920s - existing streets were to be widened by condemning property

<sup>436</sup> "The Relation of Individual to Collective Transportation," (Heitman-Garand Co., 1928).

<sup>437</sup> "Proposed Super-Highway Plan for Greater Detroit," 22.

on one side, setting back the build-to line and selling the smaller plots at a later stage. While much of the cost of widening was paid by city funds, half of the cost was borne by the property owners along the widened street under the assumption their property would increase in value as a result of the better connectivity of the street. Quite differently from the Vernor Highway, the choice was made to widen the existing radial avenues that led into downtown Detroit, containing some of the highest priced land in the city as they were occupied by retail businesses. Woodward, Michigan and Gratiot Avenues were slated to be widened at an estimated total of over \$40 million in 1925, of which \$27 million was to be assessed locally. Furthermore, a “traffic belt” of widened roads was proposed around the downtown, running right through the Black Bottom neighborhood. The location of the belt was close enough to downtown to relieve through traffic, while the cost of land acquisition in this declining area was deemed low enough to be feasible.<sup>438</sup> The combined road widening schemes combined into Detroit’s first Master Plan of Thoroughfares, adopted in 1925.<sup>439</sup>

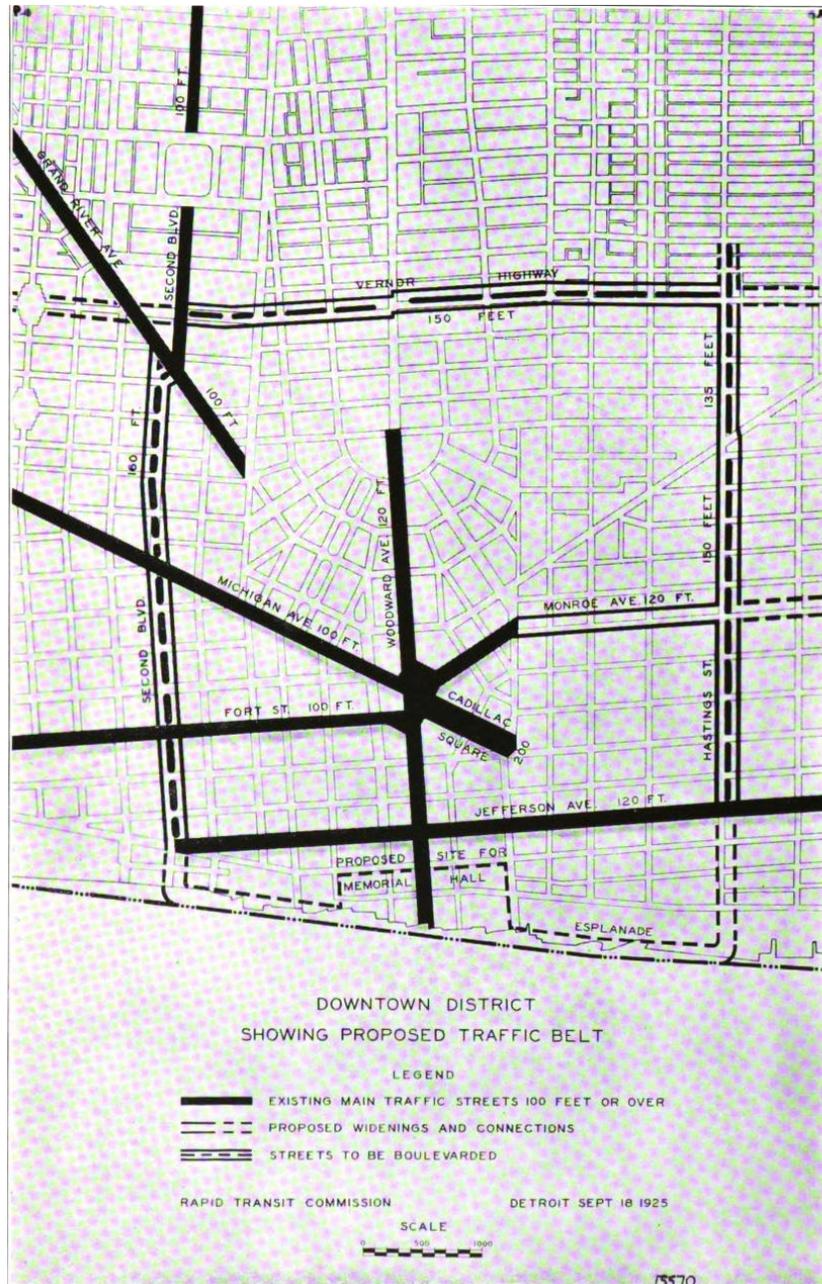
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<sup>438</sup> A report mentioned that the downtown ring road could be widened to more than 120 foot, as land acquisition costs in Black Bottom were lower than average. "Vehicular Traffic in 1928,"(Detroit1929), 64, footnote 2.

<sup>439</sup> Detroit . Common Council. Advisory Committee, *Carrying out the Master Plan*(The Council, 1925); City Plan Commission and Rapid Transit Commission, "Master Plan,"(Detroit1925).



Figure 70. Master Plan of super-highways and major thoroughfares for Detroit and environs, January 1925. Superhighways shown in thick black lines, thoroughfares in thin black lines.



**Figure 71. Proposed downtown traffic belt in 1925, curiously missing the Woodward and Gratiot Avenue widening schemes. The belt was proposed to be 150 feet wide.**

The cost and effort of these widenings was unprecedented in the city, and therefore the construction projects needed to be sold to the public. The rhetoric of road widening hinged on three concepts. The first two arguments went hand in hand: the rapid, seemingly endless growth of the city and its traffic needed to be tackled before the rapidly growing land values along the major avenues to be widened would become too costly for public

purchase. For road widenings it was claimed, it was now or never: "... opportunity [knocks], hand in hand with necessity."<sup>440</sup> The third argument is vital for the relation between buildings and public space in that it argues that widened, more connected streets are more conducive to business and therefore interactive retail frontage. A letter from the president of the Rapid Transit Commission makes this all too clear: "*The degree to which business development proceeds (...) is regulated almost entirely by its environment and its accessibility to all of the people*".<sup>441</sup> A propaganda leaflet to vote for the widening of Woodward Avenue sums up the rhetoric of widening proponents in Detroit, with a image of the development boom that would occur on the new, wider boulevard.

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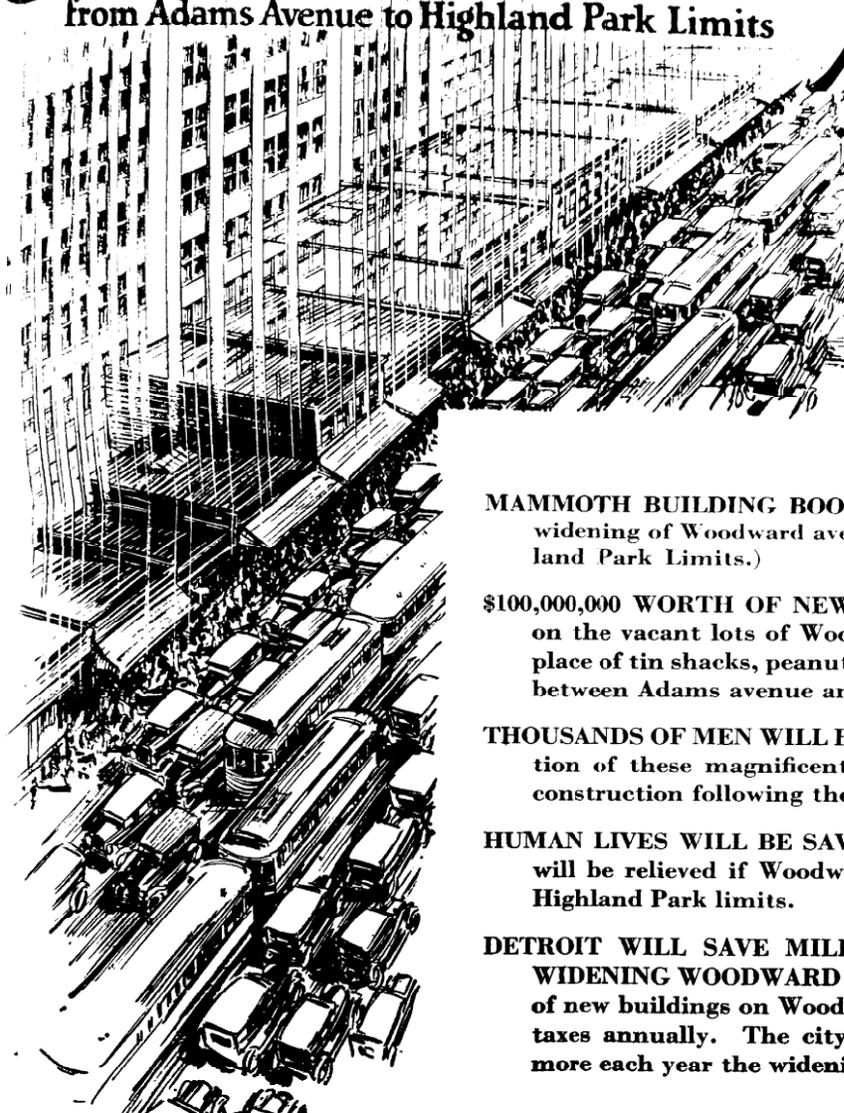
<sup>440</sup> Commission, "Proposed Super-Highway Plan for Greater Detroit," 22.

<sup>441</sup> The letter was aimed at the Woodward Improvement Association, urging them to agree with widening their avenue: "Urge Widening of Woodward," *Detroit News*, November 16 1924.

# *A Wider Woodward* from Adams Avenue to Highland Park Limits

# *Now!*

*will save  
Detroit  
Millions of  
Dollars  
in the near  
future*



**MAMMOTH BUILDING BOOM,** will be started by the widening of Woodward avenue (Adams Ave. to Highland Park Limits.)

**\$100,000,000 WORTH OF NEW SKYSCRAPERS** will rise on the vacant lots of Woodward avenue to take the place of tin shacks, peanut stands, used car lots, etc., between Adams avenue and Highland Park limits.

**THOUSANDS OF MEN WILL BE EMPLOYED** in the erection of these magnificent buildings that will start construction following the widening.

**HUMAN LIVES WILL BE SAVED** and traffic congestion will be relieved if Woodward is widened out to the Highland Park limits.

**DETROIT WILL SAVE MILLIONS OF DOLLARS BY WIDENING WOODWARD** because \$100,000,000 worth of new buildings on Woodward will pay \$2,000,000 in taxes annually. The city is losing this much and more each year the widening is put off.

Figure 72. Leaflet promoting the widening of Woodward Avenue through a ballot proposal, ca. 1920s.

While most widenings were overwhelmingly approved by voters and local stakeholders, the purported benefits would not materialize. Soon after the first widenings were completed, business owners began to realize that widened streets actually hurt their property values, arguing that "...many persons hesitate to cross the widened street with its

speeded traffic and that the business zone is thus cut in two.”<sup>442</sup> Furthermore, widened street didn’t battle congestion as bottlenecks persisted. This is mostly the result of the failing of one end of the Rapid Transit Commission’s bargain: rapid transit was consistently deemed too expensive, and voted down in lieu of car lanes. Any proposal for urban growth through investment in public transportation went unheeded, as the city had fully embraced its own offspring. As a result of the “false premises” of the widening schemes,<sup>443</sup> businesses were hit double: they had to pay increased taxes while the public space they lined was less conducive to foot traffic and resulting patronage. In 1929, a third complication was added: the parcels of cleared land that remained from widenings would not be purchased, others were filled with pedestrian-unfriendly uses such as gas stations, drive-ins, car shops and parking lots. The critical mass of business on downtown Detroit’s peripheral arteries was thus broken, continuing the divide between a stable downtown core and a declining fringe. Yet beyond the arteries cars were eroding downtown throughout: in 1929 over a million square feet of land was already dedicated to car parking. Little did planners know that these underutilized lots weren’t just an “in-fill” pattern<sup>444</sup> until a developer would come along, but that the Depression and the subsequent downturn of Detroit’s downtown and city economy had created the first permanent holes in the Motor City’s urban tissue.

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<sup>442</sup> "One More Widening Complication," *Detroit Saturday Night*, July 23 1927.

<sup>443</sup> Hayden, "Detroit's Master Plan," 17.

<sup>444</sup> Lee C. Richardson, "Parking Lots Provide New Use for Land," *The Detroit Realtor*, April 1929.



Figure 73. Downtown Detroit's blocks, buildings, parcels, open spaces, parks and rivers in 1929.



**Figure 74. Downtown Detroit's frontage interactivity in 1929.**

The growing disparities between downtown and its fringe are becoming quite visible on the 1929 maps of the city. While the downtown district has grown considerable over the past decade, a curious pattern of emptying blocks (1) is starting to appear in the ring that directly surrounds it. These blocks are usurped by parking lots, housing the thousands of cars that flow into the city looking for space that is close enough to the newly built retail palaces and office skyscrapers to walk comfortably, but distant enough to warrant the demolition of previous structures for parking. This almost paradoxical tension between proximity and distance results in a transitional pattern of older structures in poor condition and newly constructed commercial buildings, interspersed with the realm of the automobile: parking lots, single-story gasoline stations and car workshops. The continuity

of frontage interactivity between the downtown and its surrounding neighborhoods is seriously harmed as a result. The devastating effects of the widening of Woodward (2) and Gratiot Avenue (3) only added to a pattern in which a small cluster of highly interactive retail frontages is increasingly surrounded by inactive land uses, vacant lots and a sea of cars – none of which interact with public space. At the height of downtown Detroit's building boom in 1929, its downward spiral had already started.

### 4.3 1929-1937

The stock market crash of Black Thursday in October 1929 would announce a decade of deep economic depression for Detroit, perhaps more than any other major city in the country. Auto production plummeted almost 40% between 1929 and 1930, and the resulting layoffs were brutal. Unemployment skyrocketed, with Detroit's African American population hardest hit. The large number of new homeowners that thrived on their relatively high pre-depression wages were unable to pay their mortgages nor taxes, and tax delinquencies were widespread in the city. As a result, Detroit cut heavily in its staff and wages, decimating among others the City Plan Commission as early as 1932. The city was defaulting on its debt the following year, having to write 'scrip' to promise payment of its city workers. Nevertheless, city projects such as the aforementioned road widenings continued, albeit at a slower pace, with the state and the county increasingly picking up the tab. Dreams for rapid transit continued to dwindle.<sup>445</sup>

The crash was also felt strongly in Detroit's retail core. The fast-growing Hudson's department store and its surrounding retail palaces saw increasingly started bargain basements which offered more moderately priced goods to cash-strapped customers, in response to the rapid rise of Sam's "cut-rate" store. Yet the Hudson's traditional Thanksgiving Parade continued unobstructed by the economic downturn,<sup>446</sup> even though sales almost halved during the 1930s.<sup>447</sup> In 1935 a government-sponsored initiative to Modernize Main Street transformed the frontages on many American retail streets, including Woodward Avenue. The program assumed the decline in the number of customers was influenced by the dated look of many downtown buildings. Facades deemed "obsolete" would be clad in aluminum and glass to lure customers back to the central business district, as "*uncluttered surfaces, legible signs, good color selections, intelligent*

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<sup>445</sup> Much of the funding for road widening came from the Horton Act of 1932, which allocated the majority of Michigan's gasoline tax revenue to counties and cities based on the number of registered vehicles, greatly benefiting car-flushed Detroit. Rapid transit was hard hit in 1938 when a state amendment allocated gasoline tax funding solely to road and highway projects. In: Hyde, "Planning a Transportation System for Metropolitan Detroit in the Age of the Automobile: The Triumph of the Expressway," 87.

<sup>446</sup> Jean Maddern Pitrone, *Hudson's: Hub of America's Heartland*(Altwerger and Mandel Pub. Co., 1991), 86-96.

<sup>447</sup> Fogelson, *Downtown : Its Rise and Fall, 1880-1950*, 219.

*window display and lighting are all undeniable attractions for the exterior.*" Architectural Record illustrated how a Woodward Avenue fashion store was renovated in this style.<sup>448</sup> Despite these efforts, the amount of stores in the downtown declined by more than 25% as found in the quantitative frontage survey. Pedestrian traffic measurements in 1936 showed a marked decline in footfall on Woodward Avenue compared to 1925, with other downtown streets even less traveled by pedestrians.<sup>449</sup> Along with footfall, business was slowly retreating from peripheral streets, concentrating around the Woodward Avenue anchors to stay alive.

The office market fared no better. Real estate appraisers argued that the city had simply overbuilt during the previous decades, and a correction was taking place. Book's vision for a line of skyscrapers along Washington Boulevard was among the first to be wiped off the table in 1929.<sup>450</sup> Many other projects would follow. As office vacancy soared to 35 to 40 percent, the consistently high taxation of now empty buildings prompted many owners to cut their losses and demolish their premises. As shown in figure 17, downtown building demolitions sharply rose during the Depression, exacerbated by the federal Works Progress Administration aid to remove "obsolete and unsafe" buildings.<sup>451</sup> For the first time in Detroit's history, the highest and best use of much of downtown's land was not the next tallest skyscraper, biggest theater or most elaborate retail palace but the mere parking lot, gas station or car workshop. Although at first paradoxical, this rather unassuming land use made business sense in a climate of declining building occupancy. With building tenants leaving in droves, parked cars remained the only viable source of income for many downtown land owners: while the total number of downtown commuters had declined

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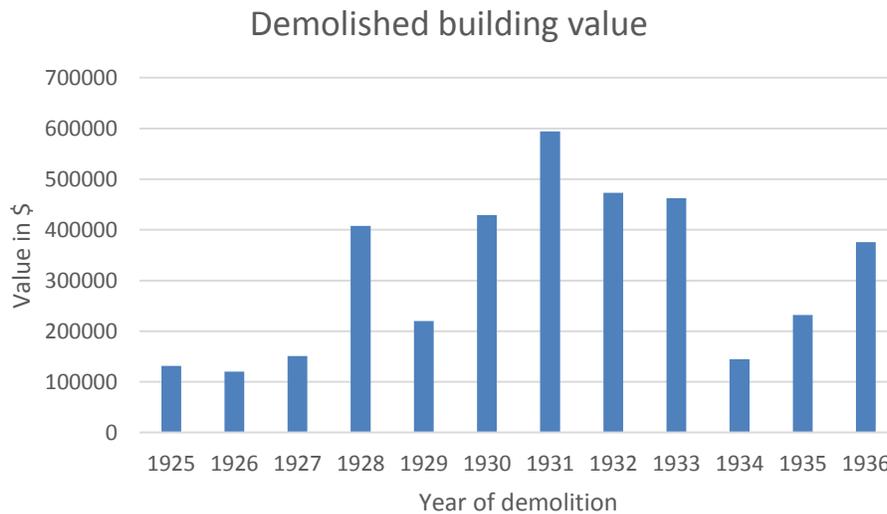
<sup>448</sup> Frederic Arden Pawley, "The Retail Store," *Architectural Record* 80(1935): 52.

<sup>449</sup> In 1925, an estimated 1,233,025 people traversed the corner of State Street and Woodward Avenue, which was considered Detroit's 100% corner. In 1936, 41,883 people walked on the west side of Woodward Avenue between Grand River and State Street. Comparison between 1936 and 1925 is obscured by the fact that the 1925 measurement was conducted over a 16 hour day versus the 7 hour measurement of 1936. Furthermore, the 1936 measurement was for one street sidewalk, versus an entire intersection in 1925. Even when maximally compensating for these incompatibilities, pedestrian volumes are still 3 times higher in 1925. Sources: Michigan State Highway Department, "Street Traffic, City of Detroit 1936-1937," (Lansing, MI1937), 138; "Lower Woodward Avenue Historic District Final Report," 7.

<sup>450</sup> Poremba, *Detroit in Its World Setting : A Three Hundred Year Chronology, 1701-2001*, 255.

<sup>451</sup> Orin. F. Nolting and Paul Opperman, "The Parking Problem in Central Business Districts," ed. Public Administration Service(Chicago, IL: R. R. Donneley & Sons Company, 1939), 3.

sharply between 1928 and 1935, the amount of commuters by car actually increased.<sup>452</sup> Although Detroit had seen the demolition of old residences in previous decades as an assumed holding pattern for improvements, the demolition of more recent and far more valuable commercial buildings for parking lots was an unfortunate novelty.<sup>453</sup>



**Figure 75. Value of buildings demolished in downtown Detroit for each year between 1925 and 1936. Based on data from the City Plan Commission, August 10, 1936.<sup>454</sup>**

Downtown decline wasn't homogeneous, but exacerbated the divide between core and fringe. City valuation records show how land values sharply decreased in the downtown as a whole, but especially plummeted in districts that were right outside the business core. Office tenants were flush with choice of where to locate, so increasingly retrenched to central business blocks, leaving the downtown fringe to decline. These were the areas where large "bald spots" of parking would start to appear.<sup>455</sup> Downtown was beginning to shrink. The effects of shrinkage could soon be felt: in the hard-hit blocks northwest of Grand Circus Park frontage foot values would decline by more than two thirds between

<sup>452</sup> Derived from outbound cordon count between 5pm and 6pm, a good measure of commuter traffic. From Detroit department of transportation, "Detroit Central Business District Cordon Count 1966-1974," (Detroit1974).

<sup>453</sup> Fogelson, *Downtown : Its Rise and Fall, 1880-1950*, 218.

<sup>454</sup> Redrawn from: Nolting and Opperman, "The Parking Problem in Central Business Districts," 3.

<sup>455</sup> "Traffic Jams Business Out," *Architectural Forum* 72(1940).

1929 and 1938, while values on the main corner of Woodward Avenue and State Street would decline at about half that rate.<sup>456</sup> Fueled by declining land values and rising vacancy, peripheral building owners were scrambling for office tenants which were in short supply and increasingly in need of parking space. Many owners would give up and demolish their premises. One building's loss could mean another's gain, as demolished buildings' open lots helped provide parking for holdouts. For frontage interactivity the battle was a lost cause from the start: as the continuity of a street frontage was lost due to the rise of parking lots, ground floor retail became less viable for all remaining buildings, causing them to close as well, as shown in the previous chapter. A stranglehold pattern resulted, as described in a LIFE magazine article: "*...Detroit probably has more parking lots than any other big city in the world. Even in the downtown section, there is a parking lot on almost every block and the sun glistens on the tops of mile upon mile of parked cars ... But Detroit was not designed for the motor age.*"<sup>457</sup>

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<sup>456</sup> Board of Assessors, "Land Valuation Maps,"(Detroit1929); "Land Valuation Maps,"(Detroit1938).

<sup>457</sup> "Detroit: It Changed the World's Pattern of Life and Is Now the Fourth City in the Land," (New York1939), 62. A state document stated that this pattern was only temporary, and the post-Depression upswing would quickly fill vacant lots (causing a renewed parking shortage): Department, "Street Traffic, City of Detroit 1936-1937," 164.



Figure 76. Pattern of interspersed buildings and attended parking lots, 1939.<sup>458</sup>

Besides observing the rise of parking downtown, the LIFE article identifies a main underlying force behind the caustic cycle of increased car traffic and decreased downtown

<sup>458</sup> Image courtesy of LIFE magazine.

demand: decentralization. The magazine states: *"Instead of having one business center, the city now has half a dozen, well out from the downtown area."*<sup>459</sup> The underlying element was transportation: the cars that Detroit spawned were starting to radically alter the city's configuration, as downtown land was no longer limited by short walking radii or streetcar systems. Real estate appraiser Walter Kuehne noted in nearby Chicago: *"These changes [in transportation] are increasing our supply of land ... within a reasonable time limit of the center of the city, of the horse-and-buggy days to an almost unlimited supply in this age of rapid transportation."*<sup>460</sup> Admittedly, Detroit's job base was already scattered throughout the region as factories located around railway transportation and easily assembled peripheral land. Yet following the large plants which were located outside the urban core, factory settlements created their own centers for retail and small business. According to engineer and economist James Steep in the late 1930s, small businesses that were traditionally located in the urban core were moving out toward these areas, finding it "more convenient to take over old residences or store rooms in the less-congested areas [outside the urban core]".<sup>461</sup> Steep warned for further sharp declines in downtown property values and tax revenue if this pattern would continue, and suggested significant infrastructure and parking improvements.

Although public budgets had been decimated during the 1930s, the city and county tried to continue their efforts to plan for growth in the region. The preliminary 1925 proposal for a traffic belt of widened boulevards cutting through the downtown fringe matured into a full-blown super-highway proposal. The 1930 report by the Board of Wayne County Road Commissioners proposed to extend the super-highway plan from the previous decade into the city itself, "... entering the very heart of Detroit or as nearly so as possible, practically and economically." Although it would take another decade for planning and another two for implementation, the proposal proved an interestingly accurate prophesy of the traffic structure which surrounds downtown Detroit today.<sup>462</sup> The proposal would be picked up

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<sup>459</sup> "Detroit: It Changed the World's Pattern of Life and Is Now the Fourth City in the Land," 56.

<sup>460</sup> Walter R. Kuehne, "Central Business District Paradox," *Journal of the American Institute of Real Estate Appraisers* 4(1935): 139.

<sup>461</sup> James B. Steep, "Traffic Troubles Pare Property Values, Expert Declares," *Detroit News*, October 8 1939, 18.

<sup>462</sup> Board of Wayne County road commissioners, "Proposed County Superhighways," *ATS Review* 9, no. 9 (1930).

nationally by a call from the Federal Emergency Housing Corporation to clear Hastings Street for a superhighway in 1934, even though the street had grown to become the main street for Detroit's African American population.<sup>463</sup>

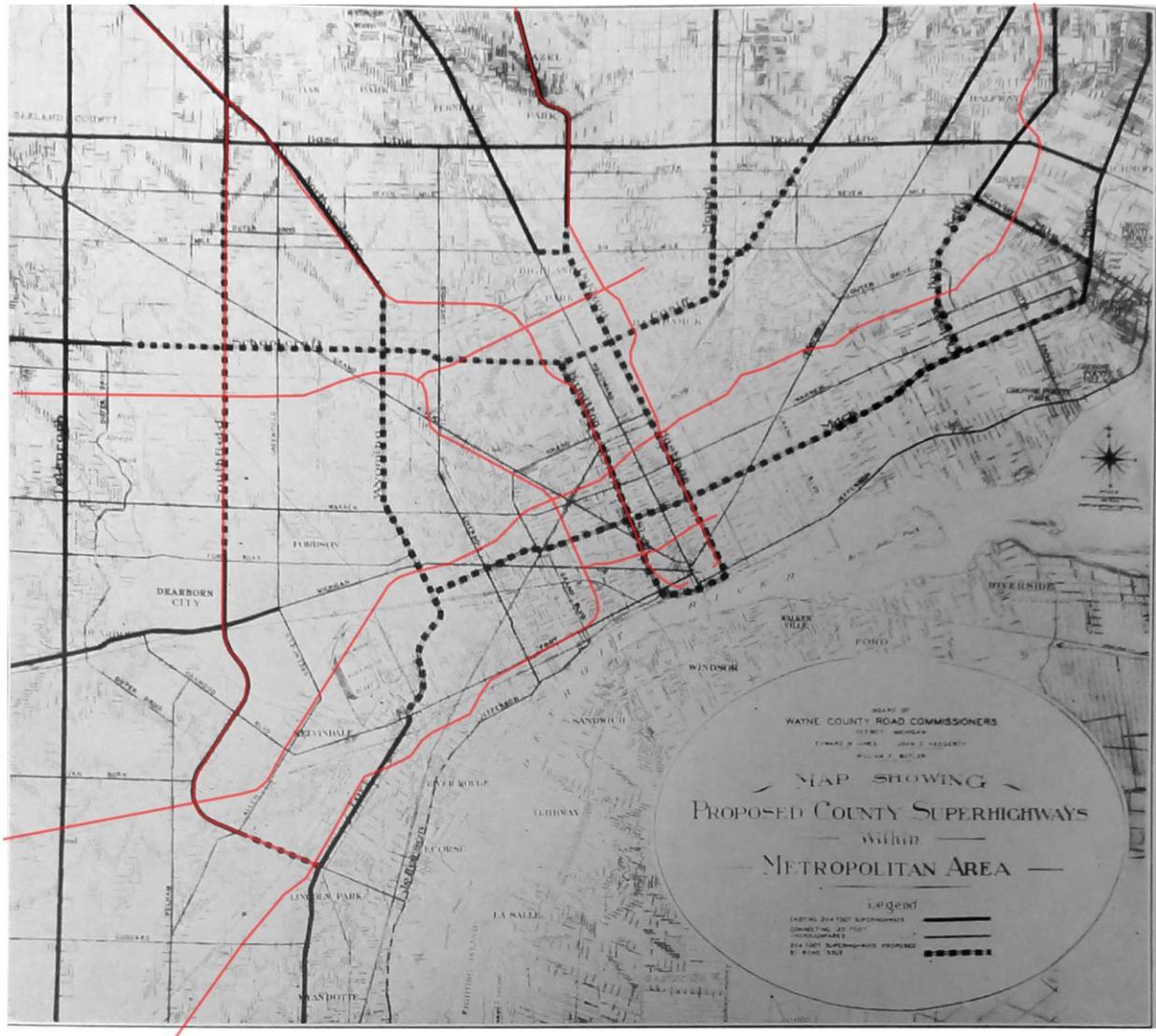


Figure 77. Map showing proposed superhighways within Detroit as dashed lines, 1930. The current freeway system is overlaid in red.<sup>464</sup>

<sup>463</sup> "Fehc Demands Wide Hastings," *Detroit News*, September 14 1934. On Hastings Street's role as an African American main street: Boyle, *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age*.

<sup>464</sup> commissioners, "Proposed County Superhighways," 6.

The reason for the call to transform Hastings Street wasn't just to build new infrastructure – it was to alleviate the worsening housing condition in the Black Bottom and Paradise Valley neighborhoods. The clamour over poor housing conditions and the growth of slums in the city was growing during the 1930s, and the city attempted to respond within their means. With the help of volunteer architects and planners, the City Plan Commission tried its best to survey the conditions of innercity slums, proposing the nation's first public housing project in 1933, the Brewster Homes, which was supported by the Federal Government.<sup>465</sup> Federal funds for slum clearance were also deployed to form the Detroit Housing Commission that same year.

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<sup>465</sup> City Plan Commission, "Annual Report,"(Detroit 1932); "Annual Report,"(Detroit 1933); "Annual Report,"(Detroit 1934).



Figure 78. Downtown Detroit's blocks, buildings, parcels, open spaces, parks and rivers in 1937.



**Figure 79. Downtown Detroit's frontage interactivity in 1937.**

During the Depression, the landscape of downtown Detroit had altered significantly. In Figure 78 and Figure 79, three distinct rings can be recognized which materialized over the past decades. In the center are a few solid blocks of commercial development, containing the city's financial district (1), civic buildings (2) and retail core (3). This center had suffered during the Depression, but emerged victoriously in the years that followed, but without any significant construction activity for a decade. Nevertheless, the frontage interactivity has remained more or less intact. This isn't the case for the ring of emptying blocks that directly surround it (4). As discussed previously, the growth of parking lots have deteriorated many of the blocks in this ring to a point where some blocks hardly had any buildings left, leaving a "twilight" zone that is neither residential nor commercial, but

blights both – a “*creeping paralysis that gradually is encircling the downtown business district*”.<sup>466</sup> The interaction between buildings and public space in this ring is seriously harmed as a result. The third ring of residential districts is in increasingly poor condition, with vacant lots and frontage inactivity spreading (5). The end result of a stable core surrounded by decline is aptly described by a Detroitier in the early 1940s, to whom downtown was a “... *desert island in a swamp of blighted areas*.”<sup>467</sup>

This dichotomy could be clearly experienced at street level, as the continuity of interactive frontages between downtown and surrounding residential districts was completely broken at the end of the Depression. The major street widening projects that were completed have removed the majority of downtown Detroit’s peripheral businesses and the ring of parking lots surrounding the downtown have severed the retail continuity of all other access streets. Walking from home to downtown was no longer a viable option, let alone an exciting experience. Furthermore, the deteriorating business climate had caused significant store front vacancies, especially outside the main retail core on Woodward Avenue. A planning document observed the peripheral retail business decline: “... *block after block of store frontage deteriorated because no prospective shoppers live nearby and no space is available to park the cars of those who might stop and shop as they passed*.”<sup>468</sup> This observation got to the root of downtown’s problem at the dawn of the 1940s: continued decentralization.

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<sup>466</sup> Mentioned as one of Detroit’s ills by ULI special representative Carl S. Wells in “Downtown Detroit Plan Published,” *Detroit Free Press*, June 28 1942. Second quote by James Steep in Steep, “Traffic Troubles Pare Property Values, Expert Declares.”

<sup>467</sup> Originally quoted by the observations of British planner Sir Ernest Simon in Detroit City Plan Commission, “Funds Needed for Postwar Program,” *The planner*, no. July (1943): 5-6. In response, the City Plan Commission was “reluctant to claim for Detroit a distinction which may well belong to some other city”.

<sup>468</sup> Hayden, “Detroit’s Master Plan,” 8.

## 4.4 1937-1951

Detroit only slowly emerged from a turbulent decade of economic depression. The city's population had only grown 3.5% between 1930 and 1940 as a result of the crisis in the automotive industry. The breakneck speed of physical growth in the city and its suburbs had almost trickled to a halt, and Detroit's attitudes toward growth were changing. Although the city as a whole seemed to have stagnated its growth during the previous decade, population had shifted internally. A significant outmigration of middle and upper class families that lived near downtown resulted in vacancies or their replacement with people that had little choice of where to live, often African Americans. Between 1930 and 1940, while suburbs grew the downtown population had declined 4.8% and the ring surrounding downtown fared even worse with a 7-8% population decline.<sup>469</sup> Those who had moved out clogged the downtown's streets with moving and parked cars on their way to work or shop, with no end in sight for the alleviation of automotive congestion. These middle and upper class émigrés were the described 'prospective shoppers' downtown retail businesses desperately needed, yet the number of people visiting downtown Detroit decreased 16% between 1925 and 1940.<sup>470</sup> Many former residents no longer had a need to: in the early 1940s more than twenty major outlying shopping centers had already been scattered throughout the city.<sup>471</sup> While decentralization of the wealthy was acknowledged, the declining role of the downtown as a result was downplayed by the press. As long as plans would be implemented to cater to those that had left downtown Detroit as a place of residence, they would at least continue to visit and some could even be lured back to stay: *"Downtown may have been overbuilt in the halcyon days of the twenties, but it is not by any means on the way out."*<sup>472</sup>

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<sup>469</sup> Carl S. Wells, "Proposals for Downtown Detroit," ed. Urban Land Institute(Washington, D.C. 1942), 14.

<sup>470</sup> The amount of people leaving downtown between 5pm and 6pm (a good indicator of daytime commuter population) decreased from 80,867 in 1925 to an estimated 67,000 in 1940. In *ibid.*, 10.

<sup>471</sup> These major centers were supplemented by countless minor shopping centers. The further away centers were located from downtown, the more likely they were to increase in size. Centers in the suburbs were not yet counted. *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>472</sup> Countering decentralization was covered in a series of articles in the *Detroit News* by real estate editor E.A. Baumgarth: E. A. Baumgarth, "Decentralization Trend Discounted by Los Angeles Realtor," *Detroit News*, November 12 1939; "Decentralization Problem Is Tackled by Real Estate Boards," *Detroit News*, February 11

Although that statement may have resonated with readers at the twilight of the Depression, the 1940s would prove to be tumultuous for downtown Detroit. The onset of the new decade brought feverish growth to the city due to wartime construction jobs for World War 2, attracting a second wave of mostly southern African Americans eager to find work.<sup>473</sup> These newcomers arrived in an unwelcoming city and were forced to move into racially restricted areas surrounding the downtown, inhabiting vast swaths of overcrowded and under-maintained dwellings, resulting in significant social and hygienic distress, including race riots in 1943.<sup>474</sup> The extent of the poor housing conditions surrounding downtown was unveiled by Detroit's Real Property Survey which was sponsored by the Federal Works Projects Administration in the late 1930s to document physical, socio-economic and hygienic conditions of housing in the entire city. The results were disturbing if not unsurprising: directly east and west of the downtown, vast slum districts had formed that contained the city's oldest and most dilapidated structures, housing the poorest and most socially distressed residents.<sup>475</sup>

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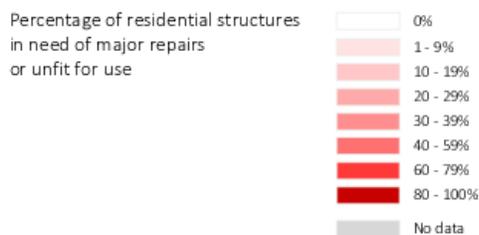
1940; "Stable Future for Central Business Areas Predicted," *Detroit News*, September 1 1940; "Hopes Brighten for Solving Decentralization Problem," *Detroit News*, July 21 1940.

<sup>473</sup> The urban population of Detroit would grow 14% between 1940 and 1950, and the suburban population would grow at almost 20%.

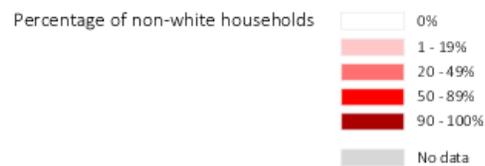
<sup>474</sup> Race riots had occurred before in the 1863, and tensions had mounted significantly since the first large Southern migration wave in World War 1. George C. Galster, *Driving Detroit: The Quest for Respect in Motown*, Metropolitan Portraits (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 183-84.

<sup>475</sup> Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research, "Real Property Survey," ed. Works Projects Administration(Detroit1939). These surveys were conducted in many other American cities as well. A strong correlation existed between unfit housing conditions and non-white population on the near East side, but was absent on the near West side.

Condition of residential structures



Race of household



**Figure 80. Condition of residential structures and race of household for the downtown area, adapted by author from the 1938 Real Property Survey. Note that the racial makeup of the west side is completely different from the east side.**

Learning from this detailed survey, the City Plan commission alarmingly concluded in the early 1940s that one third of Detroit was “blighted”, a condition that hinged as much on the condition of homes and residents as on the perceived burden these areas placed on the city’s tax revenue.<sup>476</sup> Almost 25% of Detroiters lived in blighted areas, characterized by “*old dilapidated buildings crowded together on narrow lots, lacking adequate light, air and sunshine... marked by unusually high rates of disease, crime and delinquency.*”<sup>477</sup> Blight seemed to concentrate around downtown: a vast majority of the area within the Grand Boulevard ring directly surrounding the urban core was considered blighted (see Figure 81). Furthermore, planners feared that blight would spread to “invade and destroy every neighborhood in the community.”<sup>478</sup> This stark reality, the improvement of the climate and

<sup>476</sup> The definition of blight was not quite clear, as it could pertain to the early 20th century definition of an area with falling land values, or the later popularized definition that also counted blighted areas that had turned into slums which contained dilapidated or otherwise obsolete buildings, often combined with socio-economic ills. For a more detailed definition of blight please see the literature review chapter and Fogelson, *Downtown : Its Rise and Fall, 1880-1950*. Chapter 7: “inventing blight”.

<sup>477</sup> “Toward a Greater Detroit,” ed. City Plan Commission(Detroit1945), 5.

<sup>478</sup> Ibid.

funding for planning and the emergence of the city from the Depression would help pave the way for three decades of large scale masterplanning.

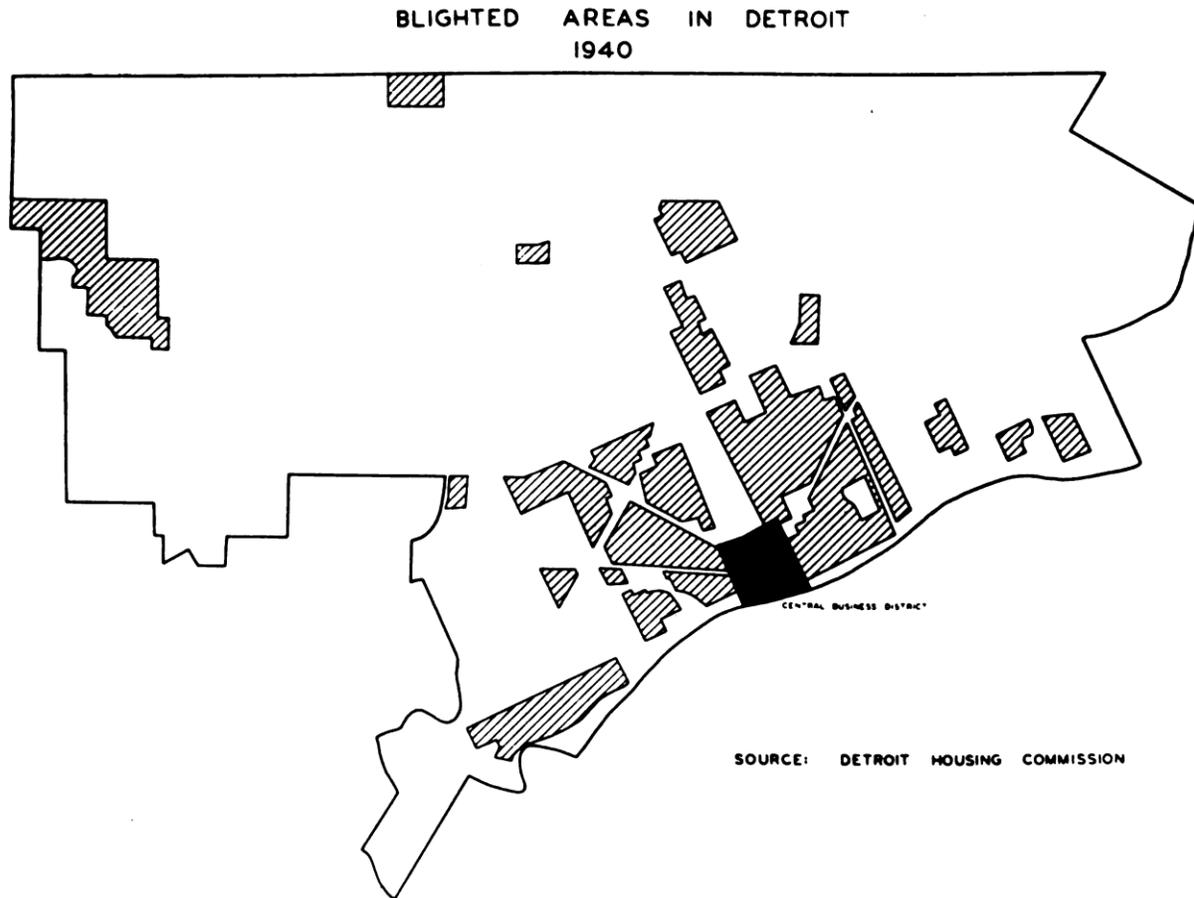


Figure 81. Map of Detroit's blighted areas in 1940.<sup>479</sup>

The lack of proper zoning was blamed for the encroachment of incompatible land uses such as manufacturing plants, car garages and multifamily dwellings into otherwise stable residential neighborhoods, decreasing their land values and therewith increasing their chance to become blighted. As blight grew around downtown, central business interests started to change their mind about zoning compared to the previous decades. The main reason for this change was the realization that downtown wasn't going to grow any further,

<sup>479</sup> Wells, "Proposals for Downtown Detroit," 16.

and therefore that zoning was no longer perceived as a threat to growth.<sup>480</sup> Instead, central business owners focused on the beneficial effects of zoning to stabilize and improve their blighted surroundings.<sup>481</sup> Furthermore, the heavily disinvested City Plan Commission finally received sufficient staff to draft a proper ordinance due to federal sponsorship of planning efforts and a bolstered budget by the newly elected Mayor Jeffries.<sup>482</sup> Capitalizing on his “honeymoon” popularity, Jeffries finally implemented a zoning ordinance in 1940 to at least stabilize the current condition of the city.<sup>483</sup> At street level, this ordinance would significantly diminish the encroachment of land uses such as factories and garages into residential districts which broke the continuous relation between buildings and public space, but it would prove less powerful within the central business itself which still suffered from parking-led erosion.

Jeffries’ next steps were farther reaching and would lay the groundwork for most of present-day urban form downtown, following a clearly Modernist doctrine. Acknowledging the importance of countering blight, Jeffries convened a “blight committee” within the first year of his tenure that consisted of downtown business interests and civic leaders. Besides surveying blight, the committee recommended the development of a master plan, and focused on legal frameworks for the implementation of countering urban blight.<sup>484</sup> The goal was clearly to attract higher income groups back to the central city by wholesale demolition and replacement of the blighted districts surrounding downtown, bolstering the income of downtown retail stores and the hegemony of downtown offices as a workplace. Redevelopment was to mostly be financed by private investors: “... *private capital should do its part towards meeting the blight problem of cities as a matter of self-preservation and*

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<sup>480</sup> National Urban Land Institute director Charles T. Stewart admitted, “There is nothing to lead us to believe that we shall need [the blighted ring around downtown] for commercial or industrial purposes. Charles T. Stewart, “Our Disease - Disintegration: For Healthy Land Values the Remedy Is Reintegration,” *Real Estate* (1941); Fogelson, *Downtown : Its Rise and Fall, 1880-1950*, 344.

<sup>481</sup> Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit*, 37. On the lack of

<sup>482</sup> The budget for the City Plan Commission rose from \$26,595 in 1940 to \$214,744 in 1951.

<sup>483</sup> Hayden, “Detroit’s Master Plan,” 6. The implementation of the ordinance was so important that the document stated that “... there was no Detroit planning prior to 1940.” Ibid, 19.

<sup>484</sup> All recommendations were implemented. Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit*, 38.

*enlightened self-interest as well as sound investment.*"<sup>485</sup> Other funds would come from the expected increase in property tax revenue after low-rent slums would be converted into higher class areas. Financially, the city hardly had an option, as federal subsidization was still in its early stages and city coffers were running low.<sup>486</sup> Politically, city officials hardly sympathized with the often African American slum dwellers, who faced displacement as a result of these redevelopment projects. The election of Mayor Cobo in 1949 only worsened this situation.<sup>487</sup>

After a brief detour on the west side of the city,<sup>488</sup> a "slum territory" right east of downtown Detroit was chosen as a representative pilot site to test the proposed approach of the Mayor and the Blight Committee to redevelop the inner city and published as the Detroit Plan, "a program for Blight Elimination".<sup>489</sup> The chosen area was at the heart of African American Black Bottom; the neighborhood lamented in earlier decades as being in poor condition had further deteriorated during the 1940s. The area was mainly chosen to stabilize the land value and development potential of downtown against perceived negative social and racial influences from its surroundings, with the rehousing of existing residents being only a secondary consideration.<sup>490</sup> The Detroit Plan was mainly concerned with attracting higher income residents to protect downtown, as "...surrounding the central commercial district with an increasing number of [low-income] inhabitants of subsidized housing would not be conducive to the maintenance of that district."<sup>491</sup> The condemnation of land would commence the year after the plan was published, but progressed slowly. After a few legal quibbles, actual land clearance would start during the late 1940s for the

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<sup>485</sup> Detroit City Plan Commission, "An Urban Redevelopment Project in Detroit: Rebuilding Deteriorated Areas of the City," (Detroit 1942), 3.

<sup>486</sup> The city had spent a considerable amount of money on the road widening projects of the 1920s and was still paying off bonds from this era. Outside subsidies were hard to come by: the 1937 Housing Act would provide some subsidy to the redevelopment of slums but the focus of this act was on providing low-income housing, not to bring back higher income residents downtown like Detroit wanted.

<sup>487</sup> Galster, *Driving Detroit: The Quest for Respect in Motown*, 176.

<sup>488</sup> In 1942, an area bound by Myrtle, Trumbull, Henry and 14<sup>th</sup> Street was chosen as a pilot site for redevelopment. However, the site remains untouched today. In: Commission, "An Urban Redevelopment Project in Detroit: Rebuilding Deteriorated Areas of the City."

<sup>489</sup> The plan was drafted by the newly created Housing Commission: Detroit Housing Commission, "The Detroit Plan - a Program for Blight Elimination," (Detroit 1946).

<sup>490</sup> Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit*, 46-51.

<sup>491</sup> Commission, "The Detroit Plan - a Program for Blight Elimination."

Gratiot renewal project, later to be named Lafayette Park. Furthermore, the 1938 Brewster Homes were to be expanded with the Douglass Homes soon after.

The second frontier to bolster downtown was the ever-chronic congestion of downtown, even during the fuel-strapped wartime years. The rapid growth of the urban population during World War 2 and the streetcar strike of 1943 exacerbated the inability of downtown to accommodate moving and parked cars. Although several plans had been published to alleviate the worst parking problems, a shortage of spaces persisted downtown and Hudson's chose to take matters into its own hands by constructing a parking deck a few blocks from its downtown store.<sup>492</sup> City officials acknowledged the dearth of parking downtown and drafted reports to alleviate the situation, mostly by proposing a ring of parking lots surrounding the "business heart" around Woodward Avenue, which itself would be protected from the harmful effects of parking lot erosion on continuous retail frontage. Stabilization of this central area was key to ensuring it remains a *"compact and closely arranged group of similar activities ... where a greater variety of merchandise and services will be relatively convenient to all residents of the metropolitan area"*.<sup>493</sup> Although this parking ring never materialized as part of a public effort, the blocks directly surrounding the retail core did indeed continue to erode into further parking lots. The city instated a Municipal Parking Authority in 1949 to start planning for more centrally located facilities to bring visitors back downtown.<sup>494</sup>

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<sup>492</sup> The three level, 270 bay "Shopper's Parking Deck" was one of the first in its kind: "Parking Deck: Shopper's Parking Deck, Detroit, Mich. Smith, Hinchman & Grylls, Inc., Architects," *Architectural Record* 90(1941).

<sup>493</sup> E.A. Baumgarth, "New Type of Zoning Suggested by Emery," *Detroit News*, March 22 1942; Lloyd B. Reid, "Detroit's Parking Needs - Central Business District," ed. Traffic Engineering Bureau(Detroit1946).

<sup>494</sup> Jakle and Sculle, *Lots of Parking : Land Use in a Car Culture*.

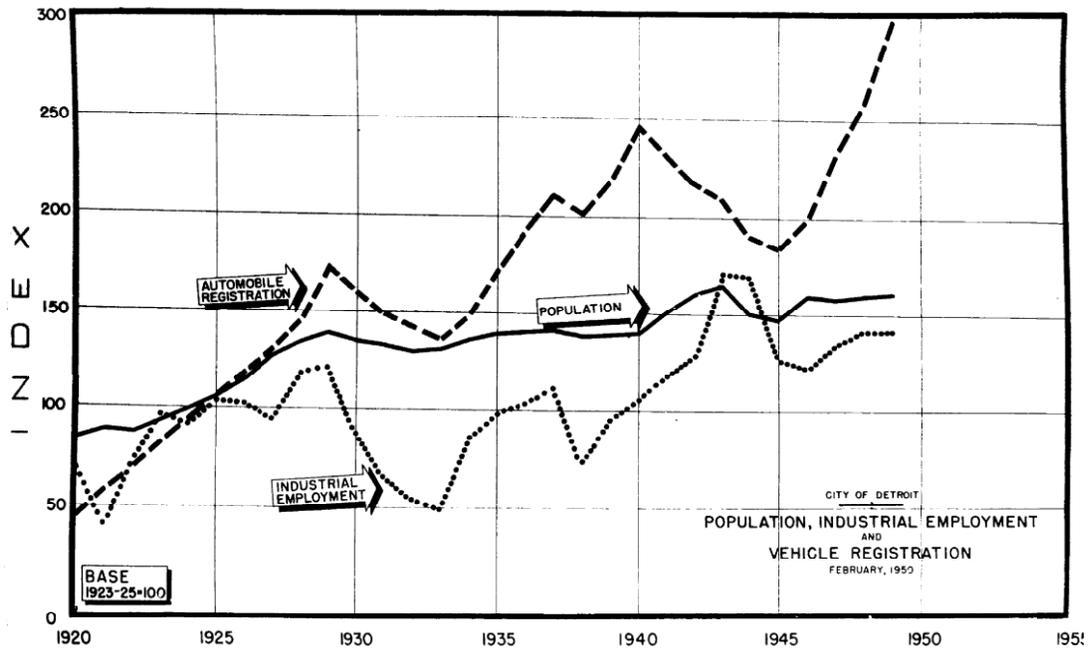


Figure 82. Population, vehicle registration and industrial employment indexed to 1923 values.<sup>495</sup>

The access roads toward downtown were also chronically congested. The widening schemes implemented during the past decades had proven unable to cope with the growing and increasingly car-dependent population of the city and region. Post-war traffic volumes were anticipated to be higher than ever, especially as rapid transit proposals withered due to lack of political backing and funding.<sup>496</sup> A more radical approach to handling car traffic was needed: the limited access highway. Detroit had already gained experience in highway design in their 1925 Master Plan, and highway construction had been successfully implemented for the city's outlying bomber plants during World War 2. Mayor Jeffries appointed a Street Improvement Committee which advised the construction of an extensive "expressway" system in 1943, approved by the Common Council the same year and published in a report in 1945. This network proposed almost the same highway ring around the downtown that was drawn two decades ago, with spurs into the entire region.

<sup>495</sup> "Detroit's Critical Transportation Needs," ed. City of Detroit (Detroit 1950).

<sup>496</sup> Hyde, "Planning a Transportation System for Metropolitan Detroit in the Age of the Automobile: The Triumph of the Expressway."

Highway routes consciously avoided “blasting through an established neighborhood” and instead ran through struggling Corktown and Black Bottom, considered “belts of depressed property.” The plan clearly proposed to combine expressway planning with “genuine, large scale slum clearance”, which in the case of the Hastings Expressway through Black Bottom would “invite and justify private development of wide scope along it.” Expressways aimed to “stabilize” residential areas by buffering them from other land uses such as commercial and industrial areas, further legitimizing their construction between the central business district and its surrounding neighborhoods. They were proposed to be sunken to minimize their presence in the city.<sup>497</sup> Rapid transit lines were proposed in conjunction, including a subway network that would meet at Cadillac Square, yet its difficult financing put transit at a great disadvantage to the automobile expressways outlined in the same document.<sup>498</sup> Similar to past plans, the master plan’s car infrastructure would be realized and the transit portion left behind. The outcomes would prove drastic for downtown, as the expressways cut the urban core off from its surroundings and demolished thriving business districts such as Hastings Street in the process. Construction of the John C. Lodge and Edsel Ford Expressway were to start first in 1947 after the federal government, state, county and city agreed to jointly finance them, even before large-scale federal money became available. Detroit deemed its traffic crisis to be of such urgency that they would pay for the early construction out of pocket, with bond issues following to speed up construction.<sup>499</sup> Ominously, Mayor Jeffries would state in a U.S. House Committee hearing that he wasn’t sure whether the expressway plans would help Detroit by bringing people back downtown or ultimately ruin the city by allowing even more residents to move to the suburbs, aided by fast links to downtown.<sup>500</sup>

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<sup>497</sup> W. Earle Andrews, "Detroit Expressway and Transit System," ed. Detroit transportation board(Detroit1945).

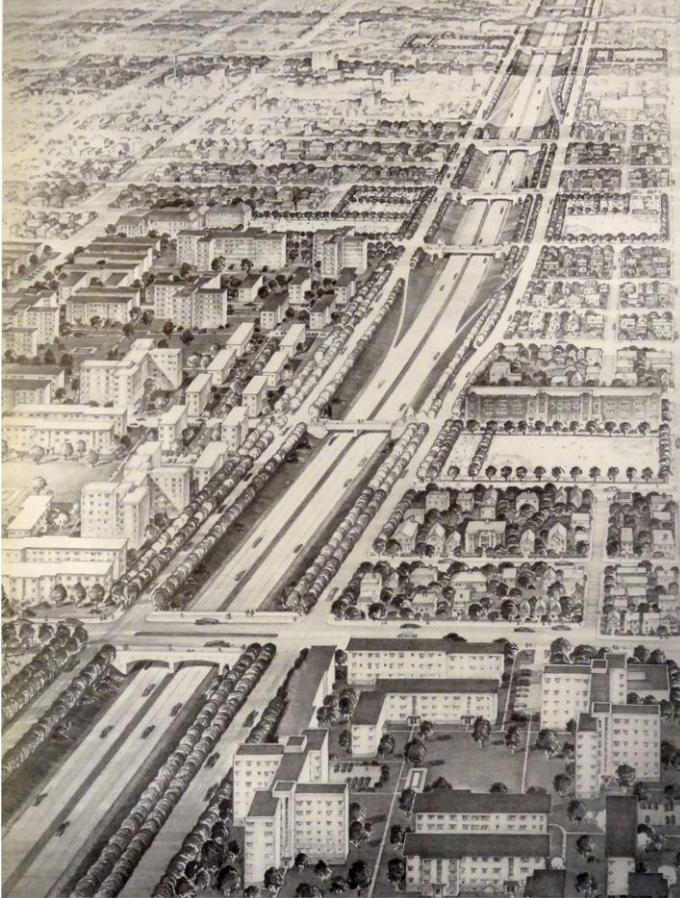
<sup>498</sup> Hyde, "Planning a Transportation System for Metropolitan Detroit in the Age of the Automobile: The Triumph of the Expressway."

<sup>499</sup> The early history of these two highways was discussed in a pamphlet celebrating their dedication in October 1955: "Dedication - Detroit Expressways Interchange," ed. Michigan State Highway Department, et al.(Detroit1955).

<sup>500</sup> At least Jeffries thought that constructing the freeway system was a good way to employ the thousands of wartime workers after World War 2 would end. "Federal Aid for Post-War Highway Construction," ed. U.S. House committee on Roads(Washington, D.C.: U.S. government printing office, 1944), 764-68.



**Figure 83. Detroit expressway plan, 1945.**



**Figure 84. The vision for a Modern Detroit as expressed by sunken expressways, modern housing and recreational areas.<sup>501</sup>**

The zoning amendment, plans for slum clearance and expressway construction returned a few years later in the city's first comprehensive Master Plan, completed in 1951. The document combined these efforts with the need for more educational, recreational and public service amenities, providing a "...basic pattern for the guidance of normal change and growth within the city's legal and financial capacity" for the following twenty-five years. Dividing the city into small neighborhood units, the plan provided guidance for land use, recreation, 'trafficways', redevelopment and public housing as well as more detailed plans for a riverfront civic center, cultural center and further riverfront development. Through these guidelines, the plan powerfully shaped the form of downtown, as it provided guidance on redevelopment sites around the urban core, combined with infrastructure improvements and the creation of publicly funded housing projects and the rebirth of the

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<sup>501</sup> Andrews, "Detroit Expressway and Transit System," 16.

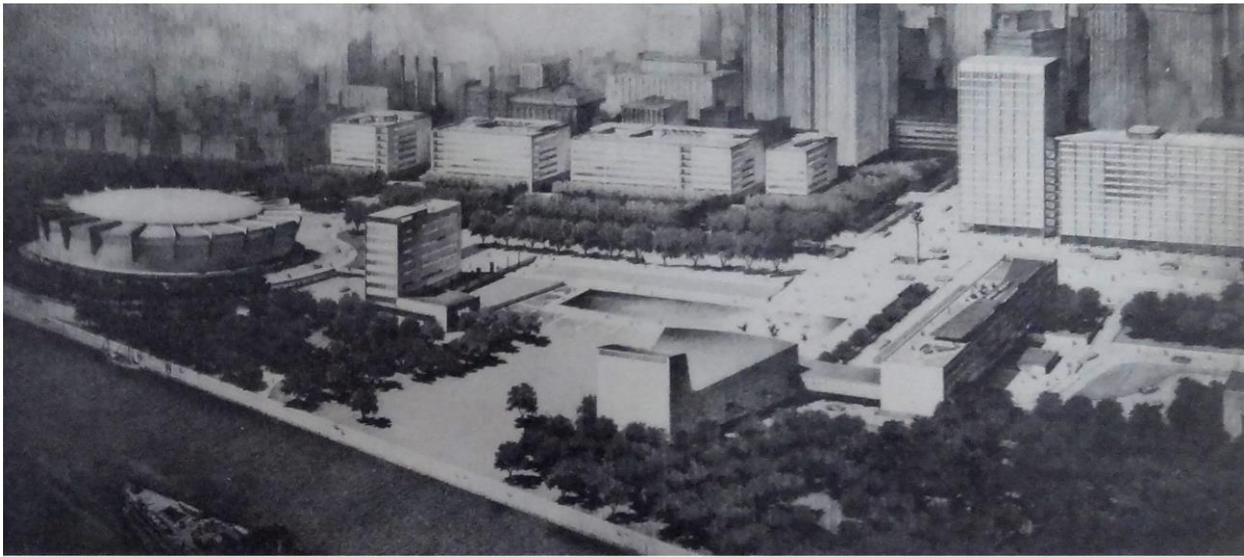
civic center on the downtown riverfront, “symbolic of [Detroit’s] social and political democracy.” The ring around downtown was to be freed of any dwellings, as the fringe and Corktown were designated as light industrial areas. Only northern Brush Park and eastern Black Bottom remained as residential districts.



Figure 85. Land use plan accompanying the 1951 Master Plan.

The Modern vision for Detroit had crystallized in this Master Plan document, shaping the city as a coherent settlement, categorized into neatly separated land uses, furnished by public amenities, accessed by an extensive network of highways and most importantly free of the dirt, congestion and blight that had characterized the city thus far. The design for Detroit’s renewed downtown riverfront was a microcosm of this vision, clearing the former grimy riverfront warehouse district for a campus-like setting of “harmony and a high degree of architectural excellence” with a mixture of cultural, civic and government

buildings grouped around a central plaza dedicated to the veterans of both World Wars. Recommended by the Detroit chapter of the American Institute of Architects, Eero Saarinen followed in his father's footsteps of more than two decades ago to design this Gesamtkunstwerk of architecture, urban design, traffic engineering and landscape architecture, instilling the city with a much-needed dose of civic pride.<sup>502</sup> In 1947, the Veterans Memorial Hall (middle left mid-rise in Figure 86) was constructed as the first building of this ensemble.



**Figure 86. Eero Saarinen's rendering for the Civic Center on Detroit's riverfront.**

In hindsight, the era between the Depression and Detroit's first comprehensive master plan would mainly shape the downtown by its planning and architectural visions, as the decade was not characterized by feverish building activity. The focus of the city on wartime manufacturing and coping with growth outside the urban area continued the near standstill of downtown construction activity from the previous decade. Ironically, wartime did have a positive effect on downtown, as fuel shortages prompted Detroiters to visit the retail palaces on Woodward Avenue rather than drive to their suburban counterparts and war wages were eagerly spent in downtown stores. Retailers weren't standing still in the

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<sup>502</sup> City Plan Commission, "Detroit Master Plan," (Detroit 1951). Civic pride was in high demand: Detroiters were accused by the Free Press of having no "community pride", obstructing civic efforts such as urban planning: Charles Weber, "City Motto Is Hope, but Officials Mope," *Detroit Free Press*, January 18 1947; "Planners Stymied in 'No-Man's Land'," *Detroit Free Press*, January 19 1947.

face of stalled construction either, as they modernized and expanded their premises to attract more customers. At street level, facades increasingly reflected the cleaner lines and more expansive window displays of the Modern era.<sup>503</sup> In the sky, Hudson's added yet another few floors to parts of its building. War victories were celebrated downtown, and the bicentennial and upcoming 250<sup>th</sup> birthday of the city were lavishly celebrated in downtown store fronts.<sup>504</sup> Yet only a few blocks away, the erosion of downtown by parking lots as witnessed during the previous decade continued unabated, as would the deterioration of slums beyond the parking belt. While big plans for their elimination were being drafted and discussed in the 1940s, they would only come to full realization in the following decades.

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<sup>503</sup> E.A. Baumgarth, "'1500 Block' of Woodward Avenue Reveals the 'New Look'," *Detroit News*, November 5 1948.

<sup>504</sup> Pitrone, *Hudson's: Hub of America's Heartland*, 97-109.



Figure 87. Downtown Detroit's blocks, buildings, parcels, open spaces, parks and rivers in 1951.



**Figure 88. Downtown Detroit's frontage interactivity in 1951.**

Figure 87 and Figure 88 demonstrate the onset of the postwar urban renewal period for Detroit. With plans hatching over the previous decade, the first signs of large-scale clearance are visible on the 1951 map. To the west of downtown, the first land clearance for the John C. Lodge expressway is visible as a strip of scattered vacancies (1). Furthermore, the land clearance for the Jeffries (2) and Douglass (3) homes has been almost completed in the northwest and northeast portion of downtown. Interestingly, land clearance for the Lafayette Park development was only slowly progressing, as scattered buildings and a single block were the only signs of this development (4). In downtown, the first building of the Civic Center, the Veterans Memorial Hall (5) was finished and the land for the next project, the City-County Building was cleared (6). The severance of frontage

interactivity between the stable downtown core and surrounding deactivated parking and clearance sites has only increased. Yet frontages also began to deactivate in residential areas, as dwelling vacancies were on the rise, followed by a significant increase in the vacancy of peripheral retailers. Especially on Hastings Street, the main retail strip of African American Black Bottom, the consequences of planners' blight are becoming visible as businesses left the area in droves (7).

## 4.5 1951-1961

At first sight, 1951 was a proud year for Detroit. As the Motor City celebrated its 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary from its foundation by Antoine Cadillac, it would grow to its largest population at just under two million.<sup>505</sup> President Truman and Secretary of State Acheson would join Detroiters in their celebration, stating that Detroit was a symbol for industrial prowess. Almost a million eager visitors flocked downtown to witness about 20,000 parade participants re-enacting important episodes of the city's history, with Hudson's unfurling America's largest flag on its Woodward façade. Factory jobs were on the rise, as the close of World War 2 had spawned vastly increased consumption and the Korean War provided yet more military orders. In a 1951 article, the *New York Times* cheered: "... never in its history has Detroit been busier." Yet like three decades before, the *Times* didn't hesitate to put a finger on the flipside of Detroit's recent boom. While the population had indeed grown considerably over the past decade, white Detroiters continued to move out of the city as they had in the previous decades but at an accelerating pace. Industrial jobs were booming, but factories were starting to leave the city, as Ford, General Motors and Chrysler were moving their operations to larger suburban plants. As the metropolitan population and manufacturing job count continued to increase, Detroit was losing ground in the region. While the city still provided the identity to the region, "Almost half of Detroit lives outside Detroit."<sup>506</sup> With expressway construction still only in its early stages, the congested city threatened to become "a classic instance of the American community whose least accessible point is its own center."<sup>507</sup>

Little would Detroit know that 1951 would instead be a turning point in the city's history, as it embarked on a decades-long downward spiral of decline. Downtown was a clear frontrunner, as it had started to feel the pressure of decentralization, slum formation and congestion decades ago. Yet its decline was beginning to accelerate. The total assessed valuation of downtown properties had dropped by around \$200 million over the past

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<sup>505</sup> The 1950 census establishes Detroit at 1,849,569 residents.

<sup>506</sup> Sam Boal, "Detroit at 250: Lusty and Young," *New York Times*, July 29 1951.

<sup>507</sup> William Harlan Hale, "Detroit: How to Save a Great City from Itself," *The Reporter*, October 31 1957, 28.

decade as a result of a drop in land value and continued building demolitions. For over two decades, no noteworthy new construction had taken place in the downtown area, and buildings were starting to show wear. Chief of Sam's cut-rate department store complained that his customer base was moving out further than ever, "and our center has been allowed to rot."<sup>508</sup> Like in 1919, a major element that shaped downtown's demise was taking place outside its perimeter. Caving in to pressures from a major suburban competitor, Hudson's department store ventured to build one of America's first suburban mall anchors in Southfield, just outside Detroit's city limits and about twelve miles away from their downtown flagship store. Detroit's middle and upper class was increasingly moving to the northwest of the city, and Hudson's felt forced to follow their disposable income. The result was Northland Mall, a fully designed environment that provided the –often female- suburban consumer with a safe, comfortable and most importantly convenient shopping experience, "... a model of enlightened planning and of social co-operation between merchants, architects, sculptors, artists and civic minded citizens and it is entirely the creation of private enterprise."<sup>509</sup> Northland's designer Victor Gruen warned Detroit that it would need to come up with a similarly strong and integrated plan for its downtown were it to be able to compete with his new center.<sup>510</sup>

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<sup>508</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>509</sup> "Commercialism Takes - and Wears- a New Look," *Ladies' Homes Journal* 71(1954): 11. In: R. W. Longstreth, *The American Department Store Transformed, 1920-1960*(New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 2010).

<sup>510</sup> Frank Beckman, "Caution Asked in Rebuilding City's 'Heart'," *Detroit Free Press*, September 13 1953.



**Figure 89. The leisurely but ordered commercial landscape of Victor Gruen's Northland mall – a vast contrast with downtown Detroit's urban heterogeneity.<sup>511</sup>**

His warning would soon be heeded. Perhaps the most important force in shaping downtown in the postwar era was planner and architect Charles Blessing, hired in 1952 as director of the City Plan Commission. Arriving in a drained city, Blessing wasn't fond of the

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<sup>511</sup> Image courtesy of Virtual Motor City collection, from Detroit News October 20, 1954.

layered history of Detroit nor of its impoverished inner city residents. “We may now consider downtown Detroit as almost raw land”<sup>512</sup>, as he found the urban core to be held back by the “inertia of the horse and buggy pattern”, a thoroughly Modernist viewpoint that reflected the theories of the CIAM movement. In the eyes of Blessing, downtown streets were unsafe due to heavy traffic, parks were absent and housing conditions unsanitary. Instead, he wanted to propel the city into the automobile age, using the skills of architects, urban designers but also learning from the fast-paced creativity of Detroit’s automotive designers. “The modern, automobile city would be in the blueprint stage now, not a distant hope, if we had use of just a small part of these [automotive design] brains and skills over the last 50 years.” Within the ring of Grand Boulevard, Blessing wanted nothing short of a “New City”, almost completely rebuilt according to Modern design standards of separated land uses in green settings, connected by expressways.<sup>513</sup> While Blessing’s visions were radical at the time, his linking of urban and automotive design would prove far less symbiotic than imagined.<sup>514</sup>

The new approach for revitalizing Detroit’s urban core was to bring suburban design concepts to the downtown. The “freedom from noise, dirt, confusion and blight” was assumed to have taken the middle class out of the city, and Detroit was set to bring them back.<sup>515</sup> Planning for downtown Detroit would specifically take cues from the newly constructed suburban shopping malls that were starting to surround the city and drain significant sales.<sup>516</sup> Blessing greatly respected and envied the Northland Center, calling it “the finest prototype of a shopping center in the world” in a 1956 Detroit News interview.<sup>517</sup> He was especially enamored by the separation of pedestrians and car traffic in

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<sup>512</sup> Hale, "Detroit: How to Save a Great City from Itself," 29.

<sup>513</sup> John M. Carlisle, "Billion Dollar Boom Downtown," *Detroit News*, April 1 1957.

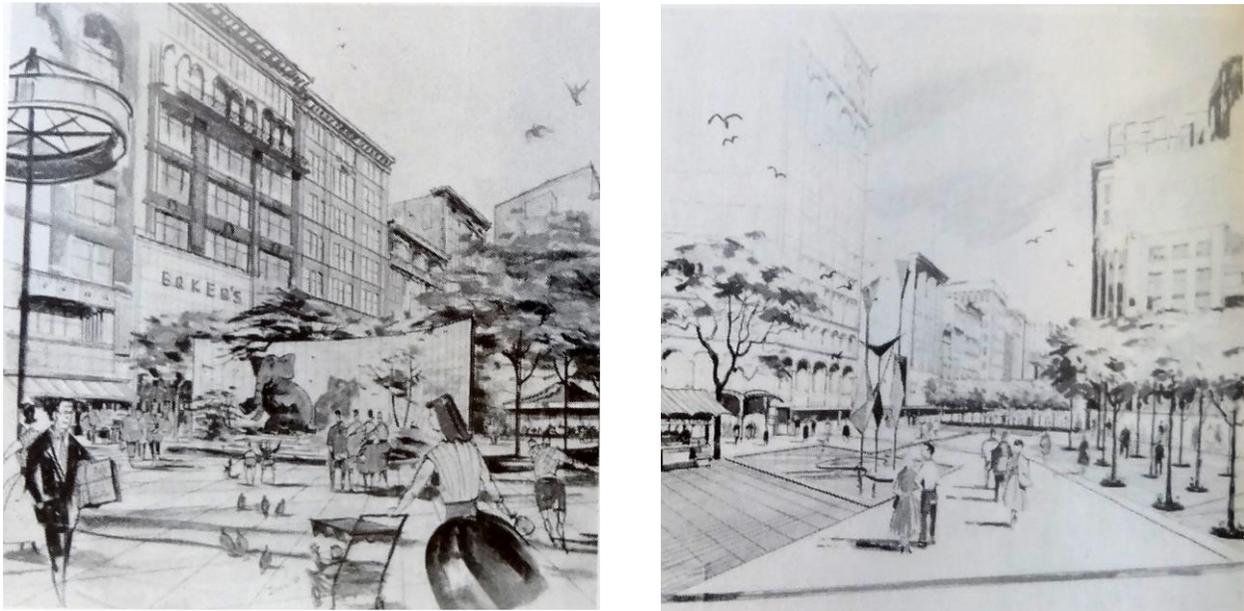
<sup>514</sup> Robert L. Wells, "Dream City on Horizon," *ibid.*, June 6 1956. In his quest to liken urban design to automotive design, Blessing was also looking for sponsorship from automobile manufacturers to set up a design laboratory, to no avail. June Manning Thomas, "Seeking a Finer Detroit," in *Planning the Twentieth-Century American City*, ed. Mary Corbin Sies and Christopher Silver (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

<sup>515</sup> Citation by economist Fred Kramer in May-June monthly report of the Detroit Housing Commission, in: Rob Goodspeed, "Urban Renewal in Postwar Detroit" (University of Michigan, 2004), 21.

<sup>516</sup> The percentage of downtown sales in the metropolitan area dropped from 15.5% to 9.9% between 1948 and 1955, one of the lowest percentage in any American city surveyed by the US Census of Business.

<sup>517</sup> Wells, "Dream City on Horizon."

Northland, as well as the intricate arrangement of parking and servicing for the mall's many tenants and visitors in a superblock setting. His plans for the downtown would take these elements from this center's design and implement them in and beyond Detroit's downtown, as he aimed to make the entire city as "safe, humanized, efficient and beautiful" as any suburban community.<sup>518</sup>



**Figure 90. Woodward pedestrian mall renderings, showing public art and greenery amidst downtown buildings.<sup>519</sup>**

In his 1956 plan to revitalize the urban core, Blessing divided the downtown into distinct areas, each of which warranted a different approach.<sup>520</sup> Firstly, he recognized a healthy downtown core: an "... area of tall buildings, intensified uses" that consisted of Detroit's retail, entertainment, institutional and financial district, which was to be strengthened by a mixture of public interventions such as the growing civic center on the riverfront, but also by plans for a pedestrian mall on Woodward Avenue, connecting the city's main retailers. The Central Business District Association was narrowly in favor of this project and asked

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<sup>518</sup> Robert Cantwell, "Detroit Is Taming Its Traffic," *Architectural Forum* 108(1958).

<sup>519</sup> Detroit Tomorrow Committee, "Detroit Tomorrow Committee Report and Review," (Detroit1958).

<sup>520</sup> City Plan Commission, "Central Business District Study: Land Use, Trafficways and Transit," Master Plan Technical Report (Detroit1956).

the Mayor for a test run, yet several larger retailers opposed the idea for fear of losing customers, and traffic concerns stalled the proposal for the time being.<sup>521</sup> Other plans in the downtown core included a new wave of road widenings, combining beautification, traffic engineering and catalyzing private investment. Lower Woodward would be widened to make an “attractive approach to the [Civic Center] Plaza Area”. Like the widening projects from the 1920s, the lower Woodward widening would displace yet another cohort of small downtown business, but contrary to the 1920s large new office construction was lined up to take their places. A medley of 19<sup>th</sup> century storefronts would make way for the recessed glass lobbies of the National Bank and Michigan Consolidated Gas buildings, leaving their counterparts on the other side of the street to fend for themselves among a growing mass of corporate high-rises. Similarly, Washington Boulevard was extended to the riverfront.

Immediately surrounding the core was the Intermediate Area, consisting of “parking areas and other uses serving the core.” In this area, the Municipal Parking authority was gathering steam in the mid-1950s by constructing a significant amount of underground and aboveground garages. Their efforts were very successful as parking continued to be in high demand.<sup>522</sup> Devastatingly to street level interactivity, legal issues prevented the parking authority from building any street level retail in their garages, which led to even more discontinuity of retail frontage right outside the urban core.<sup>523</sup> Furthermore, private stakeholders would continue to raze peripheral buildings to construct parking lots or garages at a rapid pace, furthering the deterioration of this ring. A 1954 report stated that more than half of the lots in some blocks surrounding the downtown core were in use as parking lots, and no end was in sight as the demand for parking seemed insatiable.<sup>524</sup> As he

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<sup>521</sup> The debate was especially inspired by a presentation from architect Yamasaki who would take Blessing’s original concept a step further by proposing a fully enclosed and air conditioned four-block mall between Campus Martius and Grand Circus Park, inspired by the Milanese Galleria Vittorio Emmanuel. Robert L. Wells, “Shoppers’ Fairyland Designed for Detroit,” *Detroit News*, August 30 1959.

<sup>522</sup> Joseph N. Hartmann, “City Finds Gold Underground in Grand Circus Park Garage,” *ibid.*, December 5 1960.

<sup>523</sup> J.D. McGillis, “Detroit That Makes Many Motorcars Must Also Park Them,” *Traffic Quarterly* 10, no. 3 (1956): 313.

<sup>524</sup> Benjamin J. Tobin, “Data on Parking Facilities of the Central Business District,” ed. Office of the Auditor General(Detroit1954).

considered most buildings in this ring obsolete, Blessing ultimately planned to raze most of them and construct an inner ring “distributor loop” to ease access to parking lots.<sup>525</sup>

Directly surrounding the ring of parking was the Fringe, an area of “... blighted and obsolete structures, inadequate transportation facilities, and poor layout.” Not only did the physical condition of the downtown fringe not fit into Blessing’s vision of a modern downtown, its weak social conditions were becoming an increasing threat to central business.

Furthermore, the economic activities in the fringe were marginal in character compared to business downtown. The City Plan Commission squarely blamed a significant part of the decline of downtown on its context as “... the CBD has felt the repercussions of the blight in the fringe.”<sup>526</sup> It should come to no surprise that a significant portion of the city’s effort to stabilize downtown would be through fringe clearance and redevelopment. Beyond the expedited construction of the freeway ring around downtown, a complete ring of redevelopment areas was projected to be redeveloped around the central business district. With the war chest filling with federal funds from the increasingly flexible Housing Act of 1949 and 1954, a full-wage assault on blight in the downtown fringe would commence in the 1950s.<sup>527</sup>

The first wave of fringe redevelopment came through residential renewal. Lafayette Park was a beachhead in this wave, as it had already started in the previous decade. Yet progress was frustratingly slow. While the clearing of land in the first urban renewal project of Lafayette Park was completed in 1952, no developer bid on the site. In 1953, a bid was placed but the bidders clashed with the demands of the City and federal regulations and withdrew their bid in 1954. Under the effort of labor union leader Walter Reuther, a Citizen’s Redevelopment Committee was formed in the following months, which appointed Modernist architects Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Ludwig Hilberseimer, to design a neighborhood that provided middle class professionals “good city living close to their work”. High-rise structures and low-rise townhouses were integrated into a green

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<sup>525</sup> This plan was never realized. Commission, “Central Business District Study: Land Use, Trafficways and Transit.”

<sup>526</sup> “Economic Analysis of the Central Business District Fringe,” (Detroit 1957).

<sup>527</sup> Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit*, 70.

environment which separated pedestrian and car traffic and centered on a central park with amenities for families. The design of Van der Rohe and Hilberseimer materialized modern Detroit's dream of a total break with the past, introducing "an element of refinement in the lives of people."<sup>528</sup> Albeit much less than desired, low-income housing would be integrated into the design of the park, allowing residents with a range of incomes to live in close proximity. Nevertheless, the target group for Lafayette Park was deliberately the well-off professional, as "their purchasing power will refinance the area". Most non-whites were simply priced out,<sup>529</sup> with downtown public housing constructed elsewhere. In the northern fringe of downtown, the two sites previously cleared for the public Edward Jeffries Homes and Douglass Homes were completed in the mid-1950s. All three developments followed the Modern vision of urban renewal next to newly created highway projects as illustrated in Figure 84, consisting of a mixture of low-rise townhomes and high-rise towers in a park-like setting, a big departure from the more traditional designs for the Brewster homes of less than two decades past. Their federal mandate to house only the poor, combined with underfunded maintenance and barren tower-in-the-park designs, soon turned these new public housing sites into socially problematic "concentrated foci of poverty."<sup>530</sup> Neighborhood redevelopment efforts would however continue at full steam, with the survey of slum conditions professionalizing significantly during the 1950s by more detailed classification mechanisms and early digital technology.<sup>531</sup>

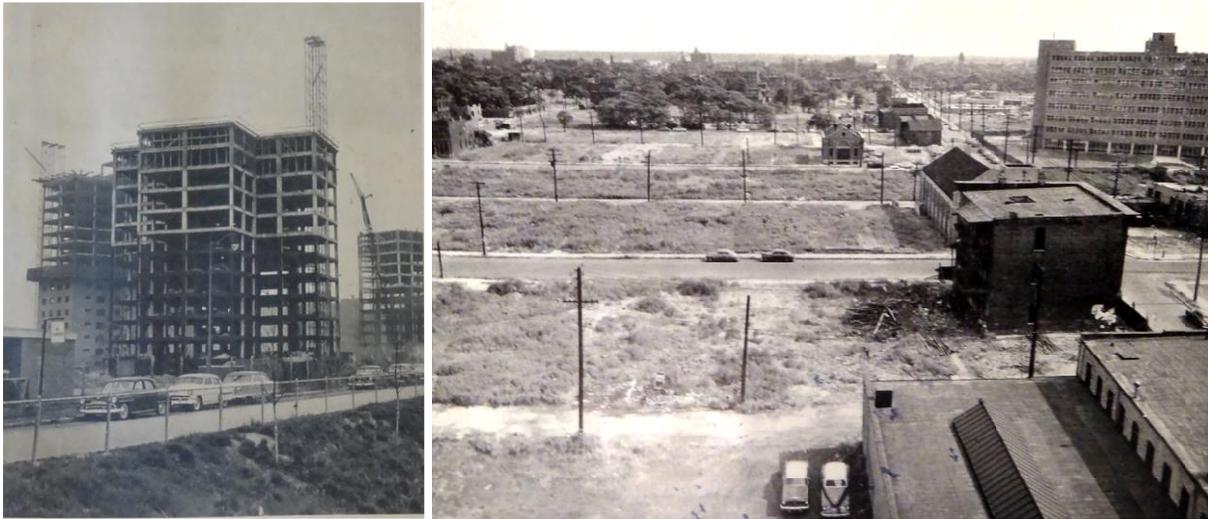
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<sup>528</sup> Lilian Jackson Braun, "Living Could Be Beautiful," *Detroit Free Press*, October 27 1957.

<sup>529</sup> Hale, "Detroit: How to Save a Great City from Itself," 29. The Urban Land Institute strongly recommended this approach: "Improve the close-in areas for living by stepping them upward, no downward."

<sup>530</sup> Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit*, 26.

<sup>531</sup> City of Detroit, "Detroit's Workable Program - a Plan for the Improvement of Our City," (Detroit1955).



**Figure 91. Construction of the Douglass Homes (left) and vacant land in Lafayette Park with early construction (right).<sup>532</sup>**

Next up were commercial redevelopment sites, enabled by the Housing Act of 1954 which allowed for the funding of more non-residential urban renewal projects. On the west side of downtown, Detroit's Skid Row had grown around Michigan Avenue over the past decades. The area was regarded as "conducive to poor health and morals besides being a financial burden on the city." Disease rates were many times higher than the city average, as were the incarceration, crime and death rates.<sup>533</sup> While Skid Row inhabitants were perceived as alcoholics and transients, the district in fact housed many day labourers and seasonal workers, arguably the lubricant in Detroit's eb-and-flow industrial machine.<sup>534</sup> Furthermore, Detroit's Chinatown was located in the middle of this area.<sup>535</sup> Nevertheless, the city was worried about the poor first impression that visitors entering downtown from the new John C. Lodge Expressway would get by driving past an eclectic collection of dog-eared retail establishments such as pawn shops, liquor shops and bars. The City Plan Commission therefore opted to raze the 94 acre district and redevelop it as a corporate

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<sup>532</sup> Left image source: Robert L. Wells, "Downtown Detroit Takes on a New Look," *Detroit News Pictorial Magazine*, May 16 1954. Right image source: Detroit Housing Commission, "Housing and Community Development in Detroit: Annual Report," (Detroit 1955).

<sup>533</sup> "Evidence of Blight Mich R-3 + Mich R4," (Detroit 1955). The author of this report is unknown, and the date is estimated from the contents. From Labadie Special Collection, University of Michigan.

<sup>534</sup> Citizens' committee on Skid Row, "Tentative Draft of Findings and Recommendations of the Citizens' Committee on Skid Row," (Detroit 1958).

<sup>535</sup> John Gill, "Chinatown Fears 'Heart' Will Go with Buildings," *Detroit News*, May 28 1961.

campus and location for utilities serving downtown.<sup>536</sup> The efforts were clearly supported by the downtown business interests: “The Central Business District Association is pleased to learn that the City of Detroit is submitting an application for Federal Assistance to redevelop the so-called “Skid Row” area... We pledge our support in cooperation in this worthwhile civic project.”<sup>537</sup> Similarly, a small strip to the direct east of downtown was planned to become a campus extension for Wayne State University, and was cleared. The area northeast of downtown wasn’t directly slated for redevelopment but was considered in urgent need of intervention.



Figure 92. Detroit's Skid Row: a mixture of dilapidated buildings, urban poor and alcohol.<sup>538</sup>

<sup>536</sup> The northern portion of Skid Row disappeared from the plans in the late 1950s and was therefore not redeveloped.

<sup>537</sup> This view was expressed by CBDA Executive Director Hitt in a letter sent to the Detroit Housing Commission: Commission, "Housing and Community Development in Detroit: Annual Report," 13.

<sup>538</sup> Images courtesy of Virtual Motor City, from Detroit News August 18, 1953.



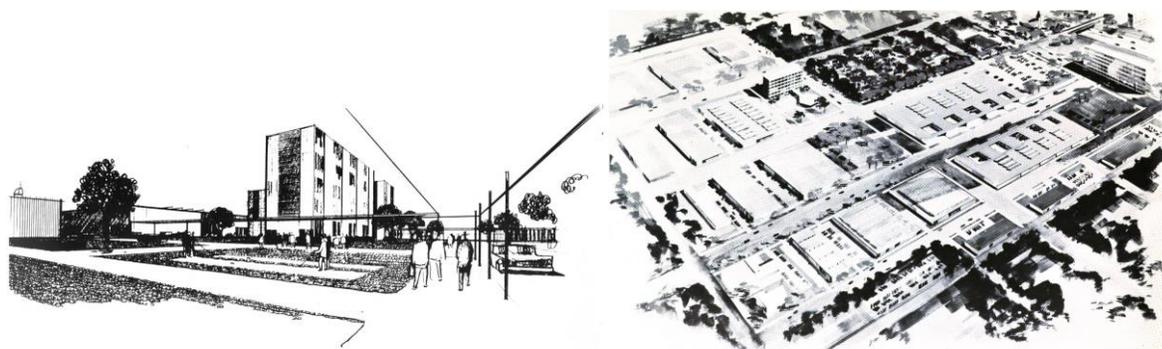
**Figure 93. Proposed redeveloped Michigan Avenue in the Skid Row area.<sup>539</sup>**

Further west, redevelopment was taking an entirely different form. In an effort to retain industrial jobs in the city and to relocate some of the wholesalers and small manufacturers from the Civic Center redevelopment area, the City Plan Commission opted to clear a large part of Corktown for the “West Side Industrial District”, fitting into its vision for industrial corridors running throughout the city. Corktown was characterized as one of Detroit’s oldest and most blighted areas whose land could much better suit the needs for industrial and wholesale land uses as the success of their operation “...is based in part on the proximity of the whole group to each other and to a central location within the city.” With the construction of the Lodge Freeway and the proximity of the rail lines to Chicago and Toronto, Corktown became a sought-after location for trade: “The very factors which make it unfit for homes, ... make it an excellent location for small industries, warehousing and related activities.” Streamlined renderings of a pedestrian friendly yet logistically efficient low-rise district conveyed a sense of order and cleanliness that stood in great contrast to

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<sup>539</sup> Committee, “Detroit Tomorrow Committee Report and Review.”

the existing conditions of Corktown.<sup>540</sup> After condemning and razing the buildings on the site, parcels were consolidated to be sold to manufacturers and wholesalers. Closest to downtown, an office building and hotel were planned.



**Figure 94. Corktown industrial area street-level rendering (left) and birds' eye view rendering with downtown to the top right (right).**<sup>541</sup>

Meanwhile, expressway construction was continuing at a rapid pace. With the John C. Lodge Freeway finished in the mid-1950s, the construction of the Chrysler Expressway over Hastings Street would soon follow. Hundreds of businesses were cleared as the heart of African American Detroit was ripped out. Yet Hastings Street's vitality had already waned for decades as surrounding residents left and racial integration prompted remaining neighbors to take their custom elsewhere. Right before demolition, many businesses on the street lay vacant.<sup>542</sup> Residents and businesses would be displaced all over the city, but a renewed business district would form northwest of downtown along 12<sup>th</sup> Street. Ironically, Blessing proposed to use the excavated soil and demolition rubble from the freeway construction to form hill-shaped parks around downtown, breaking up "the monotony of our plains."<sup>543</sup> Conversely to the blossoming of automobile infrastructure, transit withered. The proposed rail medians in the expressway plans of the 1940s never materialized due to financing concerns, and instead the Department of Street Railways would run its last streetcar in 1956. Their argument that streetcars were simply not a viable mode of transportation in the Motor City held true for downtown: ridership had

<sup>540</sup> Detroit City Plan Commission, "Industrial Development; West Side Industrial District," (Detroit 1958).

<sup>541</sup> Both images from *ibid.*

<sup>542</sup> John Frederick Cohassey, "Down on Hastings Street: A Study of Social and Cultural Changes in a Detroit Community 1941-1955" (Wayne State University, 1993).

<sup>543</sup> Robert L. Wells, "Here's Cure for City's 'Flat Look'," *Detroit News*, June 10 1959.

dropped about 90% between 1946 and 1956, and for the first time, more people entered downtown by car than by all transit combined between 1950 and 1952.<sup>544</sup>

All urban renewal projects were combined into one of the country's first three-dimensional urban designs for a complete central city, akin to Edmund Bacon's ambitious plans for central Philadelphia. Renderings and later models depicted a completely new city within the Grand Boulevard, with barely any existing structures left standing. Federal money provided significant support for starting these redevelopment efforts by funding condemnation and land clearance, but the actual construction of anything but infrastructure still had to be funded by private parties. While the long-drawn construction of Lafayette Park due to lacking private interest had already raised red flags, Detroit still strongly believed in the ability of the free market to redevelop the central business district with minimal government intervention. In a few aspects, this belief held true. Private donations helped pay for many of the buildings in Detroit's Civic Center on the waterfront and its cultural center north of downtown. Planning efforts received outside support as well, as the Detroit Tomorrow Committee in conjunction with J.L. Hudson sponsored a massive model of Blessing's vision for downtown, which was displayed in Hudson's department store for their 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1956.<sup>545</sup> A reporter would describe it as "team work" between the city and the wealthy.<sup>546</sup> The news media were also doing their part in suggesting downtown improvements, with the Detroit News inviting an Urban Land Institute panel for a week-long visit to suggest downtown improvements, providing extensive news coverage along the way.<sup>547</sup>

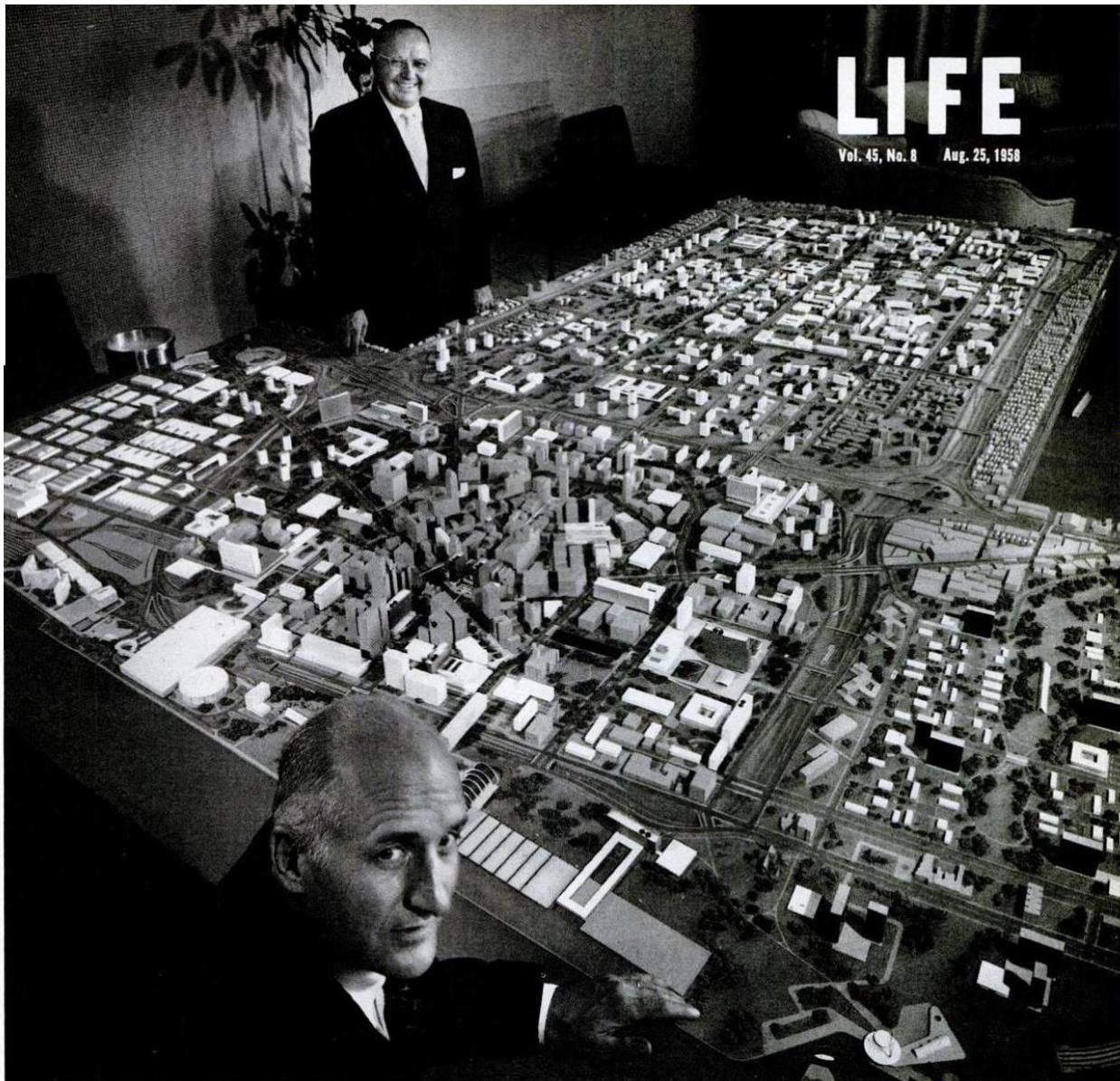
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<sup>544</sup> Department of Transportation, "Detroit Central Business District Cordon Count 1966-1974," (Detroit 1974).

<sup>545</sup> Committee, "Detroit Tomorrow Committee Report and Review."

<sup>546</sup> Paul Veblen, "Writer Sees Your City as Beautiful, Dynamic," *Detroit Free Press*, January 13 1957.

<sup>547</sup> John M. Carlisle, "Experts Survey Downtown Blight," *Detroit News*, February 14 1955.



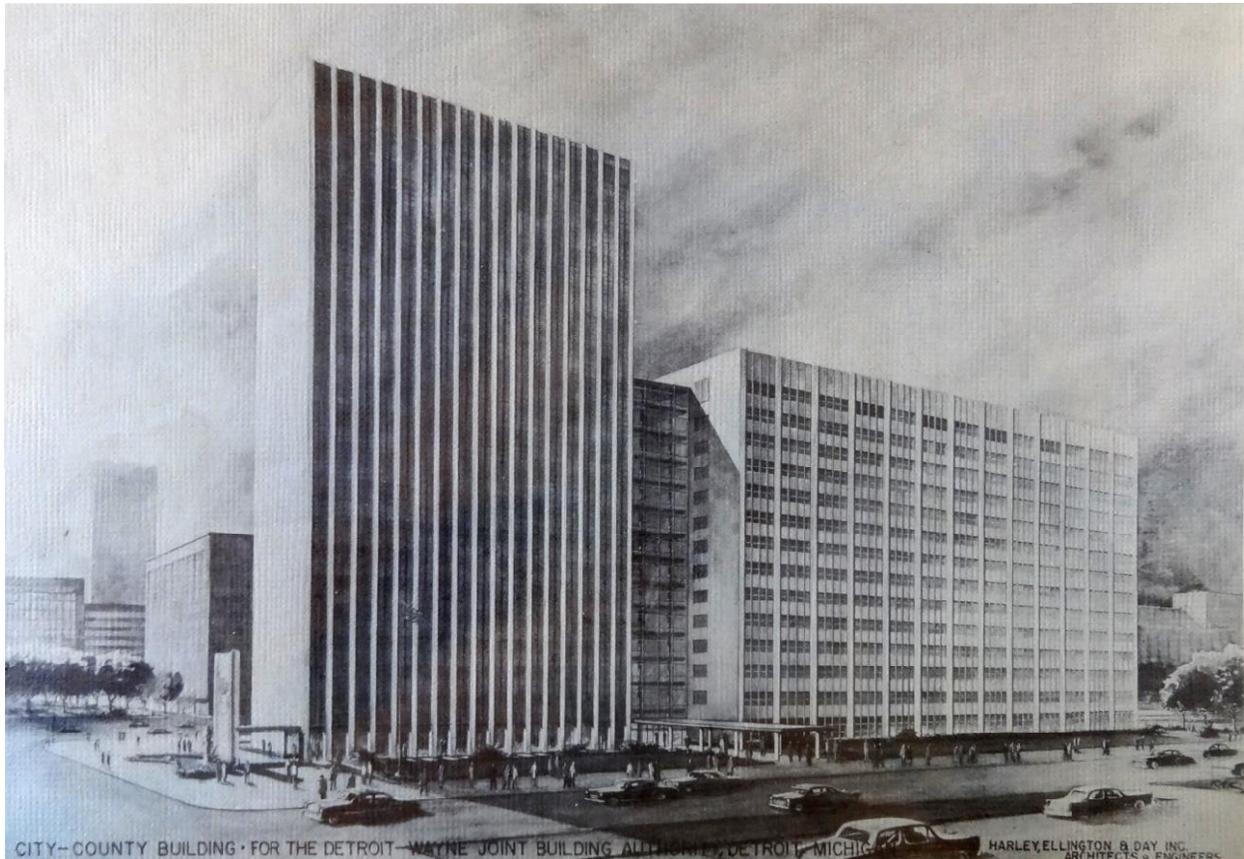
**Figure 95. Detroit Mayor Miriani (background) and planner Charles Blessing (foreground) next to the three dimensional model of downtown Detroit, with existing buildings in gray and new buildings in white.<sup>548</sup>**

The extensive planning interventions did lead to a true 'building boom' in certain areas of the downtown, such as around the Civic Center, the lower Woodward Corridor and the block around Campus Martius. However, the relationship between buildings and public space would only deteriorate as a result. Most new construction consisted of large office

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<sup>548</sup> Image from LIFE magazine feature on postwar building boom in American downtowns: "Dramatic Rise for Big Construction: A Strong Sign of Recovery," *LIFE*, August 25 1958.

structures that scarcely interacted with the street, welcoming passersby only through secured lobbies and no longer including ground floor retail. For example, the newly designed City County Building greeted visitors on Woodward Avenue with an entrance hidden behind a sculpture, and dozens of street level retailers were displaced by its construction. In an architects' rendering, older buildings with interactive frontages on the avenue have ominously been replaced by trees.



**Figure 96. Detroit City-County Building, with Woodward Avenue with omitted retail buildings to the left of the image. Rendering by Harley, Ellington and Day Architects.**

Another example of Modern architecture's problematic interaction with the street was the Convention Center named after Detroit Mayor Cobo, aimed at attracting major trade shows and their spinoff business to Detroit. Spectacularly built over the new John C. Lodge Expressway, Cobo Hall was seen as an exemplar of an "arena for the auto age." Visitors were able to arrive by car, park on the roof deck of the center and enter their exhibit

without ever setting foot on a downtown Detroit street. While praising the auto-oriented architecture of this 17 acre megastructure, *Architectural Forum* was less pleased with its poor integration with the surrounding Civic Center, which felt to the editor of *Architectural Forum* like “furniture dropped into a room at random.” The rather desolate rear of the convention center built to be viewed from the highway at speed was deemed more successful than the marble-clad but blank front that faced passersby on Washington Boulevard. This observation would closely resemble Jan Gehl’s criticism of high-speed architecture that forgoes the needs of pedestrians of more than twenty years later.<sup>549</sup> The building would also cut off Jefferson Avenue, one of Detroit’s oldest streets – yet another erasure of the city’s past.

The tone was set and Detroit’s architecture would look to the future, with new automobile showrooms and motels drastically increasing the amount of frontages that catered to cars instead of pedestrians. It was this architecture of automobile convenience, “clean lines and functional approach” that Detroit was projecting toward visitors from outside the city and potential suburban remigrants, starting a downward spiral of frontage deactivation through new construction.<sup>550</sup>

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<sup>549</sup> "Arena for the Auto Age," *Architectural Forum* 113(1960). Gehl, *Life between Buildings : Using Public Space*.

<sup>550</sup> Report and Information Committee, "Detroit, the Newest Convention City,"(Detroit1959 (estimate)).



**Figure 97. Rendering depicting Cobo Hall with John C. Lodge Expressway in foreground, parking ramp to roof deck to the right and convention arena in the background. Note that no surrounding buildings other than the Modern Veterans’ Memorial Hall were included in this rendering, most likely by architects Giffels and Rosetti.<sup>551</sup>**

More peripheral sites hardly benefited from the downtown building boom. The redevelopment of Corktown went slower than expected, with many downtown wholesalers moving to other locations in the meantime. Land values were too high for space-hungry industrial uses and discussions flared to invest public money into moving the project forward. Yet the Federal government was not eager to step in, leading to long delays.<sup>552</sup> Similarly in the Skid Row redevelopment project, a private investor proposed to construct an “International Village” with various commercial establishments reflecting cultures

<sup>551</sup> Image from promotional brochure: *ibid.*

<sup>552</sup> Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit*, 75-78.

across the globe, designed by Sasaki Architects. A lack of financing delayed and ultimately killed this proposal, while the site lay vacant. The press was growing weary whether the desired public-private partnerships in urban renewal were working as well as advertised. The private financial base of Detroit's redevelopment efforts was weaker than anticipated, a problem that plagued many other American cities.<sup>553</sup> Furthermore, growing opposition from increasingly organized community groups were disrupting the blank-slate proposals that Blessing and his team were proposing for most of the inner city of Detroit.<sup>554</sup> Blessing's "dream city" was slowly awakening to the stark reality of lacking support on all sides.

Beyond the weak support for urban renewal, its effects for bolstering the urban core were increasingly questioned. The decline of downtown's retail base hadn't stopped as store closures accelerated between 1951 and 1961, with Kern's notable department store closing its doors on Campus Martius in 1959, taking many smaller retailers in its wake. The amount of people entering the downtown area continued its decline between 1950 and 1960, with no end in sight.<sup>555</sup> At the outskirts of Detroit, suburban shopping malls multiplied and grew significantly in size, increasingly followed by office developments that would bleed jobs from downtown. The hegemony of downtown was clearly at stake.

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<sup>553</sup> Fogelson, *Downtown : Its Rise and Fall, 1880-1950*; Isenberg, *Downtown America : A History of the Place and the People Who Made It*.

<sup>554</sup> Thomas, "Seeking a Finer Detroit."

<sup>555</sup> Transportation, "Detroit Central Business District Cordon Count 1966-1974."



Figure 98. Downtown Detroit's blocks, buildings, parcels, open spaces, parks and rivers in 1961.



**Figure 99. Downtown Detroit's frontage interactivity in 1961.**

As shown in Figure 98 and Figure 99, Detroit was once again in a state of transition in 1961. To the west of downtown, the Lodge Freeway had been finished (1), as had the first phase of Lafayette Park to the east (2) and most of the Civic Center on the riverfront (3). However, most other Modern public interventions were only in the early stages. The path for Chrysler Freeway is most clearly visible, with most buildings on Hastings Street to the east of downtown removed (4). Furthermore, land clearance in Corktown (5) and the various downtown redevelopment sites are beginning to carve vacant lots and blocks (6). Almost unanimously, these renewal projects resulted in a decline in the relationship between buildings and public space, as small-scaled historical buildings were replaced by highways, large structures and parking. The developments solidified the ongoing

separation of downtown Detroit into a solid core of retail buildings and offices, surrounded by a ring of parking, infrastructure, public buildings and an increasing amount of vacant lots and buildings. The already weak urban transect of 1911 can be considered finally void by 1961, as the downtown has been separated from the rest of the city by a publicly rebuilt 'zone in transition'.

Despite the siege of grand plans with little outcomes, public renewal unmatched by private construction, the suffocation of downtown by a surrounding sea of cars and blight, the seizure of streetcar transit and the growing distrust among Detroiters, the heart of the city was still beating in the late 1950s. People of different walks of life still rubbed shoulders on Woodward Avenue, eating their lunch, meeting friends or hoping to make new ones, staring at Hudson's lavish window displays - or perhaps at one another. Others weren't doing anything at all. *"In the vast shuffle of feet, rattle of shopping bags, humming of under-the-breath tunes, squeaking of bus brakes, clank of air drills, thousands of conversations, there are people who don't seem to have any particular errands to do. They just want to be there, swimming lazily in a sea of people."*<sup>556</sup>



**Figure 100. Christmas shopping on Woodward Avenue in 1959.**<sup>557</sup>

<sup>556</sup> Louis Cook, "A Many-Ring Show -- That's Downtown Woodward Ave.," *Detroit Free Press*, October 23 1957.

<sup>557</sup> Image courtesy of Virtual Motor City, from *Detroit News*, December 9, 1959.

## 4.6 1961-1977

The 1960s dawned as the high point of Detroit's downtown renewal, as Modernism's nearly blind faith in the future would be able to flourish amidst a flurry of large scale urban renewal projects. In a 1961 Ford promotional video on Detroit, the city was praised for its innovation, not least in reinventing itself. "The old gives way to the new, yet all that is good is cherished and contributes to the dream of the future for Detroit. The city of contrasts looks toward tomorrow, confident that its great goals will be gained through the vision, cooperation and energy of all its people."<sup>558</sup> This statement would only partly run true: while Detroit was indeed looking toward its future, it was quickly erasing its past and its confidence in civic energy and cooperation would prove misplaced over the next decades. The years between 1961 and 1977 can be distinguished into two periods, separated by the disastrous civil disorders of 1967.

This event looked near impossible in the early 1960s, when the urban core was still undergoing massive renewal efforts, and more plans were on the horizon. Blessing and his team were expanding their vision from the 1950s to "very possibly the most extensive center city redesign assignment currently under study in the nation."<sup>559</sup> At first sight, the efforts were paying off: tax revenue in renewal areas rose significantly and federal money generously supported further expansion. The feverish building activity in the downtown core was noted as "the biggest building boom since the '20s."<sup>560</sup> In Lafayette Park, one single redeveloped building generated more taxes than the entire cleared area the district replaced.<sup>561</sup> While its construction had been embarrassingly slow, the "little bit of suburbia in the city" was praised by residents, architects and planners alike when construction was completed in the mid-1960s.<sup>562</sup> Postwar urban design and planning in Detroit was

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<sup>558</sup> Ford Motor Company, "Portrait of a City: Detroit," (Detroit 1961). The city's optimism about its future as a result of Modern master planning and architecture was even more strongly pronounced in a 1965 promotional video in a bid for the 1968 Olympics: City of Detroit, "Detroit: City on the Move," (Detroit 1965).

<sup>559</sup> Charles Blessing 1965 letter of recommendation citation in Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit*.

<sup>560</sup> Frank Beckman, "Detroit - Biggest Boom since '20s," *Detroit Free Press Sunday Magazine*, February 17 1963.

<sup>561</sup> Housing Commission, *Urban Renewal and Tax Revenue: Detroit's Success Story* (Detroit 1960).

<sup>562</sup> Jerry Sullivan, "It's a Little Bit of Suburbia in the City," *Detroit News*, May 20 1962. Similarly,

generally respected in the field and Blessing received numerous accolades, including an American Institute of Planners Honors Award in 1964.<sup>563</sup> Yet behind the scenes, urban renewal was under fire as popular and political support for radical clearance and redevelopment was waning, and non-governmental interests such as business leaders and growth coalitions were slow to step up.<sup>564</sup>

One of the issues with this type of urban renewal was finding private financing, especially for peripheral sites. Instead of the grand plans for renewal, many of the renewal areas only sprouted tumble weeds.<sup>565</sup> Furthermore, the fear of becoming part of an urban renewal area caused owners to stop investing in their properties around downtown, commencing a cycle of decline.<sup>566</sup> The International Village proposal for the former Skid Row site only needed less than a million private dollars to match the much greater public investment, but the money could not be found and the project was subsequently killed.<sup>567</sup> Instead, the General Services Administration purchased most of the land in the former Skid Row district to construct federal office buildings, with the Detroit News and Michigan Bell buying much of the remaining land. Development was embarrassingly slow, with many lots used for parking cars in the meantime. Furthermore, Skid Row problems only moved northward toward Cass Park, as many had warned.<sup>568</sup> Later, financing became an issue even in the heart of downtown. The closure of Kern's department store near Campus Martius prompted the publicly funded clearance of the site to make way for privately funded redevelopment. While initial developer interest was very high, proposals for its construction stalled due to lack of financing and legal issues, leaving the "city's most expensive vacant lot" untouched for decades to come.<sup>569</sup> Across the street, old City Hall was demolished for Kennedy Square, a parking garage with a plaza on top, answering to "... the

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<sup>563</sup> Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit*, 103-04.

<sup>564</sup> *Ibid.*, 122-24.

<sup>565</sup> John Gill, "Wild 'Shrubs' Landscape Empty Lots," *Detroit News* 1963.

<sup>566</sup> Jerome Aumente, "A New Blueprint for Change," *ibid.*, August 14 1966, 42.

<sup>567</sup> Louis G. Redstone, *The New Downtowns: Rebuilding Business Districts* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976).

<sup>568</sup> Aumente, "A New Blueprint for Change."; Jr. Harry Golden, "Skid Row Hasn't Gone," *Detroit Free Press Sunday Magazine*, August 11 1963; Anthony Ripley, "Skid Row Crisis Defies Wreckers, Moves Elsewhere," *Detroit News*, December 18 1961.

<sup>569</sup> Ladd Neuman, "Kern Block Plans Jolted," *Detroit Free Press*, May 22 1969.

demands of progress."<sup>570</sup> Yet the plaza was poorly designed and built, resulting in an "irrelevant and unused" black hole in the downtown.<sup>571</sup>



**Figure 101. Aerial view of Kern's block ('Kern's Common', bottom right) and former City Hall ('Kennedy Square', top left).<sup>572</sup>**

Unlike private developments, the large public components of urban renewal were more prone to finalize during the 1960s, but they often were highly detrimental to the relation between buildings and public space and the general walkability of downtown. During the decade, the final parts of the expressway loop around downtown were constructed, including the northern Fisher Freeway, part of the interstate system that connected northern Michigan with the rest of the nation. During route planning, substantial buildings

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<sup>570</sup> Carl Konzelman, "Detroit Deeply Committed to Meeting the Challenge of Decay," *Detroit News*, October 12 1962.

<sup>571</sup> "Downtown Outlook - Can the People of the Motor City Learn to Walk Again?," *ibid.*, July 26 1990.

<sup>572</sup> Image courtesy of Virtual Motor City, from "New Patterns for Downtown," *Detroit News*, August 15 1967.

were avoided to lower costs of land acquisition, and the Freeway was sunken to enable most downtown streets to cross northwards.<sup>573</sup> Nevertheless, another barrier between downtown and Cass and Brush Park was introduced and blocks on either side of the new freeway deteriorated significantly as a result. Similarly, public office buildings and private headquarters started to fill the urban renewal sites on the west and east side of downtown, which often had very poor connections to public space, often due to a mixture of high parking requirements and security concerns.<sup>574</sup> Certainly, they didn't fit in with Blessing's grand vision of a pedestrianized precinct of corporate and federal headquarters.<sup>575</sup> The ring around downtown was at best turning into a curiously suburban office park, "a sort of garden of new buildings."<sup>576</sup> At worst, the downtown was quickly turning into an unwalkable wasteland of parking garages, vacant lots and blighted buildings. The urban core was turning into "a huge parking lot", yet still wasn't able to provide parking at the level of suburban office and retail parks.<sup>577</sup> Furthermore, the continuing socio-economic decline of the downtown increased the feelings of unsafety for suburban visitors, as well as losses due to store theft for retailers.<sup>578</sup>

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<sup>573</sup> Wayne County Road Commission, "Fisher Freeway - Route Location Study," (Detroit 1961).

<sup>574</sup> Carl Konzelman, "Downtown Detroit Rebuilding Slowly but Surely," *Detroit News*, July 25 1969; "Downtown Outlook - Can the People of the Motor City Learn to Walk Again?," *ibid.*, July 26 1990.

<sup>575</sup> Jr. Harry Golden, "Charley Blessing's Detroit - a Monumental Mall, New 'Cities', a Grand Core," *Detroit Free Press*, August 14 1966.

<sup>576</sup> A quote from Robert Roselle, head of Detroit's Community Redevelopment Commission in Michael Maidenberg, "Downtown-West Comes Alive," *ibid.*, December 31 1972.

<sup>577</sup> John A. Woerpel, "Detroit Wasting Space Downtown, Says Gruen," *ibid.*, October 19 1963; Tom Delisle, "City Parking a Headache - and Costly," *ibid.* 1970.

<sup>578</sup> Pitrone, *Hudson's: Hub of America's Heartland*.



**Figure 102. Clearance for the Chrysler Freeway (left) and the Supremes posing in a downtown Detroit parking lot (right).<sup>579</sup>**

Furthermore, the downtown core was still suffering from decreased economic activity despite all the public and private efforts to stem its decline. While office vacancy was still relatively low during the late 1960s, the amount of downtown office space compared to the total metropolitan population was lowest in Detroit compared to any other major city in the Midwest, and this trend was projected to worsen with the growth of edge cities. As over the past decades, retail establishments continued to close in the downtown at an accelerated pace during the 1960s, spurred by expanding suburban shopping malls.<sup>580</sup> Between 1954 (the first Census measurement after the opening of Northland Mall) and 1963 the percentage of metropolitan retail sales that took place in the downtown almost halved to less than 16%, with no end of this trend in sight. Between 1954 and 1966, the floor space of downtown department stores decreased 20% while space in suburban branches quadrupled. Yet downtown remained the largest single retailing area with the best selection of goods during the 1960s and several downtown retailers renovated or even

<sup>579</sup> Left image courtesy of Virtual Motor City, from Detroit Free Press, February 4 1964. Right image from olddetroit.tumblr.com.

<sup>580</sup> City plan commission, "An Analysis of the Development Potential of Downtown Detroit," Detroit central business district study (Detroit1969).

expanded their premises.<sup>581</sup> However, the arterial streets that led into downtown were quickly amassing store vacancies, as residents left and stores consolidated, producing a “crisis along Detroit’s business streets,” blighting nearby residential property.<sup>582</sup> Greektown was teetering on the brink of extinction, but the Central Business District Association significantly aided its recovery into a retail and entertainment destination.<sup>583</sup>

Perhaps even more importantly, the redevelopment of blighted areas did little to ameliorate the living conditions of their often African American original tenants, many of which were displaced to similar or worse areas to make way for higher class citizens.<sup>584</sup> Community opposition to the displacement of residents for Lafayette Park and the various other renewal areas around downtown was growing and the city was slow to concede. An intermediate approach was to save certain neighborhoods from the wrecking ball by ‘conservation’, following a detailed survey of physical, economic and social conditions.<sup>585</sup> The program failed to meet its aims to preserve neighborhood tenants and bolster participation and civic pride, and it also did not alleviate growing racial tension. Citizen protest against urban renewal became more organized, with the City Plan Commission’s elaborate design schemes as tangible targets for opposition. Many protests had a significant racial component as planning proposals were often viewed as the imposition of White upper class visions on African American neighborhoods.

Despite these red flags, Blessing initially continued unabated. In his view, “there is no room for defeatism in our fight against the gray areas, our fight against the pessimists, the forces of decay, the despoilers, the men of little vision.”<sup>586</sup> Sponsored by the Detroit Edison Company, Greek architect and urban designer Constantinos Doxiadis was commissioned in 1965 to prepare a comprehensive study of Detroit and its region and propose improvements. His three-volume work reflected and amplified many of Blessing’s Modern

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<sup>581</sup> Larry Smith & Company., "Development Opportunities in Downtown Detroit - Cbd #5," ed. Central Business District Association(Detroit1965).

<sup>582</sup> Don Ball, "5,000 Ghost Buildings Haunt Detroit Streets," *Detroit News*, April 1 1970.

<sup>583</sup> Central Business District Association, "Annual Development Report,"(Detroit1997).

<sup>584</sup> Michael Maidenberg, "10 Painful Years of 'Urban Renewal': What It Means When You Live There," *Detroit Free Press*, March 1 1970.

<sup>585</sup> About 20% of Detroit’s neighborhoods were eligible for a conservation approach. Mayor’s committee for community renewal, "Method of Selecting Priorities for Urban Renewal," Technical Report (Detroit1966).

<sup>586</sup> Robert L. Wells, "How Long since You Really Looked at Detroit?," *Detroit News*, May 20 1962.

urban design principles for downtown, such as the strict separation of automobiles and pedestrians, the creation of urban superblocks and the focus on public transit. Furthermore, Doxiadis proposed a transit loop to access a ring of parking facilities that would allow visitors to park in any downtown location and easily access other amenities in the urban core.<sup>587</sup> In many ways, Doxiadis' proposals can be seen as the last breath of Modern urban planning and design in downtown Detroit. In a survey of the postwar revitalization efforts for downtown Detroit, architect and urban scholar Christo Genkov dismisses Doxiadis' study and Blessing's underlying vision for the city as overly technocratic and physically determinist: "The problems of the urban environment are not to be considered as a direct effect of the physical pattern of the metropolitan area, but as problems of the present social and political structure of the American society." This vision increasingly became shared by Detroit's politicians.<sup>588</sup> It was this realization that ultimately marked the end of radical urban renewal in the city.

The real awakening to the social and economic decline of the city would come in the form of mass civil disorders in the summer of 1967. Instigated by police brutality, a group of mainly African-American Detroiters decided to fight back and would start to burn and loot the district to the northwest of downtown. They would be joined by many others throughout the city in the days that would follow, as many among Detroit's African-American population were frustrated by their plight of poverty, poor housing conditions, a lack of jobs and continuing socio-economic decline.<sup>589</sup> It would take the National Guard days to restore the peace in the city. Over the span of only a few days, the disorders had left 47 deceased, hundreds wounded and acres of burnt rubble. The damage made it all too clear that the deeply segregated racial and social structure of Detroit could not be changed by physical interventions alone – if anything, urban planning had played a direct role in worsening the situation of Detroit's African Americans. A direct response to the disorder

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<sup>587</sup> Kōnstantinos Apostolou Doxiadēs, *Emergence and Growth of an Urban Region: The Developing Urban Detroit Area*, Developing Urban Detroit Area Research Project (Detroit: Detroit Edison Co., 1966). The work initially would comprise ten volumes, yet only three were ultimately published.

<sup>588</sup> Christo Genkov, "Revitalization of the Detroit Central Business District," (Detroit: Center for urban studies - Wayne State University, 1971). Detroit councilmember and former planner Mel Ravitz made very similar statements as cited in Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit*, 143.

<sup>589</sup> Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis : Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*.

was a sharp increase in white flight from the city, with many marginalized African Americans left behind. The crime rate in the city soared in the following years, including in the downtown area. Even though downtown wasn't a direct scene of the disorders, downtown retail sales fell off a cliff as suburban customers became afraid to enter Detroit entirely. At the same time the city was running out of funds to stem its decline, at least through physical interventions. Federal funding for urban renewal instead focused on community improvements and public participation, and funds were drastically cut in the 1970s. The final blow to traditional Modern urban planning and design was dealt with the restructuring of the Planning Commission in 1974 into three sub-departments, which lost a significant portion of their efficacy and funding over time, especially during the Mayor Coleman Young's administration.<sup>590</sup> Charles Blessing left his position soon after.



Figure 103. Civil disorder on the corner of 12<sup>th</sup> and Clairmount Streets, 1967.<sup>591</sup>

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<sup>590</sup> Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit*, 145-47.

<sup>591</sup> Image courtesy of Detroit Free Press, July 23, 1967.

The era of large public master planning for Detroit had come to an end. The forces shaping downtown after 1967 were generally less grandiose in scale, and more often privately funded. In 1970, city business leaders and the Ford Motor Company formed Detroit Renaissance as they felt Detroit's problems were so vast as to be practically "insoluble".<sup>592</sup> The new committee's focus was on downtown physical improvements to generate a more positive image and economic improvements for the urban core and the city that surrounds it. A similar but smaller organization was founded by Joseph Hudson, called New Detroit.<sup>593</sup> While Detroit Renaissance rarely acted as a direct developer or financier of its proposals, advertisement campaigns and smaller tactical interventions such as murals and the renovation of Eastern Market sheds and storefronts were indeed carried out by the committee itself. More importantly for urban form, the committee sponsored planning reports on Detroit's riverfront development opportunities, including a stadium and mixed use development west of Cobo Hall. The committee's recommendations, combined with a belief in giving back to the city that spawned his company prompted Henry Ford II in 1972 to invest in the city's riverfront by constructing the Renaissance Center, a massive office, hotel and retail complex on the downtown riverfront.<sup>594</sup> The center promised to revitalize the physical condition but also the image of downtown Detroit, marred by the negative press coverage from the previous decade. Despite the Renaissance Center's noble aims, its construction would also mark the dawn of what urban scholar Nan Ellin describes as "postmodern urbanism", in which an increased focus on security, control and privatization would only deteriorate the relation between buildings and public space, and increase the divide between white-collar downtown workers and the decaying city that surrounds them.<sup>595</sup>

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<sup>592</sup> Detroit Renaissance, *Take Another Look at Detroit*(Detroit1972).

<sup>593</sup>Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit*, 154.

<sup>594</sup> Renaissance, *Take Another Look at Detroit*.

<sup>595</sup> Ellin, *Postmodern Urbanism*.



**Figure 104. Artist rendering for Renaissance Center with downtown in the background, designed by Portman. Only the middle complex was developed.<sup>596</sup>**

Ford commissioned John Portman to design the complex to function as a “city-within-a-city”, complete with the world’s tallest hotel structure at 70 stories, four 39 story office towers, a multistory shopping mall and later phases which included residential towers and parking. It was a blatantly private and exclusive building in a city used to large public renewal projects, as architect Portman agreed with Ford’s approach, believing that “private enterprise presents the best basis for rebuilding America’s cities, because it gives the greatest creative freedom.” While the project was intended to “preserve the central city”, its sheer size caused significant problems from the onset.<sup>597</sup> Firstly, Ford spent considerable

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<sup>596</sup> From: Americal Development Corporation, "Traugott Schmidt & Sons, a Melieu of Entertainment Experiences!," (Detroit 1974).

<sup>597</sup> "'An Unashamed Capitalist'," *Detroit Monitor* 1972.

effort and time to finance the \$500 million project, only finding a mixture of financiers and tenants for his complex after years of negotiations.<sup>598</sup> Secondly, the sheer size of the Renaissance Center, its introversion and its poor orientation to its surroundings created a building that removed rather than added street life and interactivity to downtown Detroit. The decision to shield the complex from the street by a 25-foot berm containing HVAC systems was highly controversial and generated much criticism from citizens and architects alike.<sup>599</sup> Yet this introversion was but an outcome of Portman' design concept of a shelter of luxury in a decaying city: "Without putting on your topcoat, [you can] enjoy a complete and total life style." Security was key: "We are creating a safe, secure environment. Convention people can be here and women can walk alone at any hour."<sup>600</sup> Furthermore, many of the direct spinoff projects from the Renaissance Center such as parking garages, defensively constructed offices and street widening projects to accommodate for increased traffic were a further detriment to walkability. Besides taking away street-level activity in its direct vicinity, the Renaissance Center was also actively recruiting tenants from many of the other struggling buildings in the downtown area in a hunger to fill its 2.4 million square feet of office space, hundreds of shops and 1400 hotel rooms.<sup>601</sup>

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<sup>598</sup> Robert W. Irvin, "Henry Ford Admits It's a Struggle to Get Renaissance Center Funds," *Detroit News*, January 17 1975; "How's Downtown? Looking up, Thanks," *Signature*, June 1976.

<sup>599</sup> Maryanne Conheim, "Riverfront Center to Be Shielded by 25-Foot Wall," *Detroit Free Press*, October 23 1973; June Hicks, "Grim Wall Is a Challenge," *Detroit News*, December 10 1976.

<sup>600</sup> "How 50 Firms Are Reviving Detroit," *U.S. News and World Report*, December 10 1973; John Woolley, "Ren Cen's Creator Visits His Growing Baby," *Detroit Free Press*, July 25 1976.

<sup>601</sup> Peter Gavrilovich, "Marketing a Renaissance - Problem: Take 39 Floors X 4 and Fill..." *Ibid.*, August 22.



Figure 105. Architect's rendering of the interior environment of the Renaissance Center.<sup>602</sup>

<sup>602</sup> From "Renaissance Center: How a Team of Businessmen Put It All Together," *Detroit News*, June 24 1973.

Beyond its physical effects, the introverted concept of the Renaissance Center would set a bad precedent for the downtown area, which was struggling with rapidly rising crime rates and decreased ground floor business viability. Following the Renaissance Center's vision for internalizing public space and inspired by the Minneapolis system of raised pedestrian walks, Detroit started to plan their own downtown 'skyway' system in the mid-1970s. Major office buildings would be linked on the second floor by air conditioned walkways, taking pedestrians off the street. While officially touting its benefits in protecting pedestrians from weather influences and traffic, the system was undoubtedly influenced by the defensive concept of the Renaissance Center and the vast increase in downtown crime, "...any of the other indignities heaped on pedestrians in big cities."<sup>603</sup> While many of the skyways were constructed over time, the real second floor transportation system of the city would become the raised People Mover proposed in 1976.

To battle the ever-growing dependence of downtown Detroit on cars and the resulting erosion of the city by parking lots, the automated transit system looping around downtown would connect major buildings, parking facilities and a potential future rapid transit system in the downtown in an effort to spur business activity and development.<sup>604</sup> Yet even in the early proposal stage criticism was fierce. The loop would only shave minutes off most downtown walking routes, while taking the precious few people that remained on Detroit's downtown streets into yet another private, controlled environment, "not the sort of thing to encourage the random strolling that lies at the heart of the dynamics of urban street life. The best people movers are attractive sidewalks."<sup>605</sup>

With limited resources, the city was investing in drawing people back downtown, but efforts were scattered and lacked an overall vision. Washington Boulevard was re-landscaped to include more pedestrian space, parks, plazas and a trolley line to connect the struggling area to the convention crowd at Cobo Hall and at a later stage the tenants of the

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<sup>603</sup> Gerald Storch, "What's up for Detroit? It Could Be Pedestrians," *ibid.*, December 28 1975. Earlier proposals included Blessing's vision for the separation of pedestrians and traffic, as outlined in John F. Nehman, "Elevated Woodward Mall Eyed," *ibid.*, March 25 1965.

<sup>604</sup> Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority, "Proposal: Downtown People Mover Detroit, Michigan," (Detroit 1976). The rapid transit component never materialized: Southeast Michigan Transportation Authority, "Rapid Transit Along Woodward," (Detroit 1971).

<sup>605</sup> Jay Carr, "Rencen, Don't Turn Your Back on Old Detroit," *Detroit News*, March 20 1977.

Renaissance Center.<sup>606</sup> A similar but more extensive improvement was proposed for Woodward Avenue, but not implemented.<sup>607</sup> To the south end of Washington Boulevard, the Pontchartrain Hotel focused on the same riverfront clientele. In 1971, a riverfront plaza finally created a proper foot to Woodward Avenue, with a privately donated fountain designed by Japanese Architect Nogushi.<sup>608</sup> Unfortunately, the plaza was rather undefined by surrounding buildings, only drawing crowds during major events. To the east of downtown in the Greektown area, an existing warehouse and alleyway were eyed for redevelopment as a “melieu of entertainment experiences”, containing about 50 restaurants, shops and nighttime venues. The concept was inspired by the ‘festival marketplaces’ that were being constructed in other cities such as San Francisco and Atlanta, in which existing historic buildings would be used as assets to create an exciting and secure environment for the suburban and downtown consumer, as well as for conference and tourist visitors.<sup>609</sup> This project would be one of the first to recognize downtown as an entertainment destination, rather than a place to shop, work or live, as well as one of the first to recognize the value of historic structures in creating a positive environment.

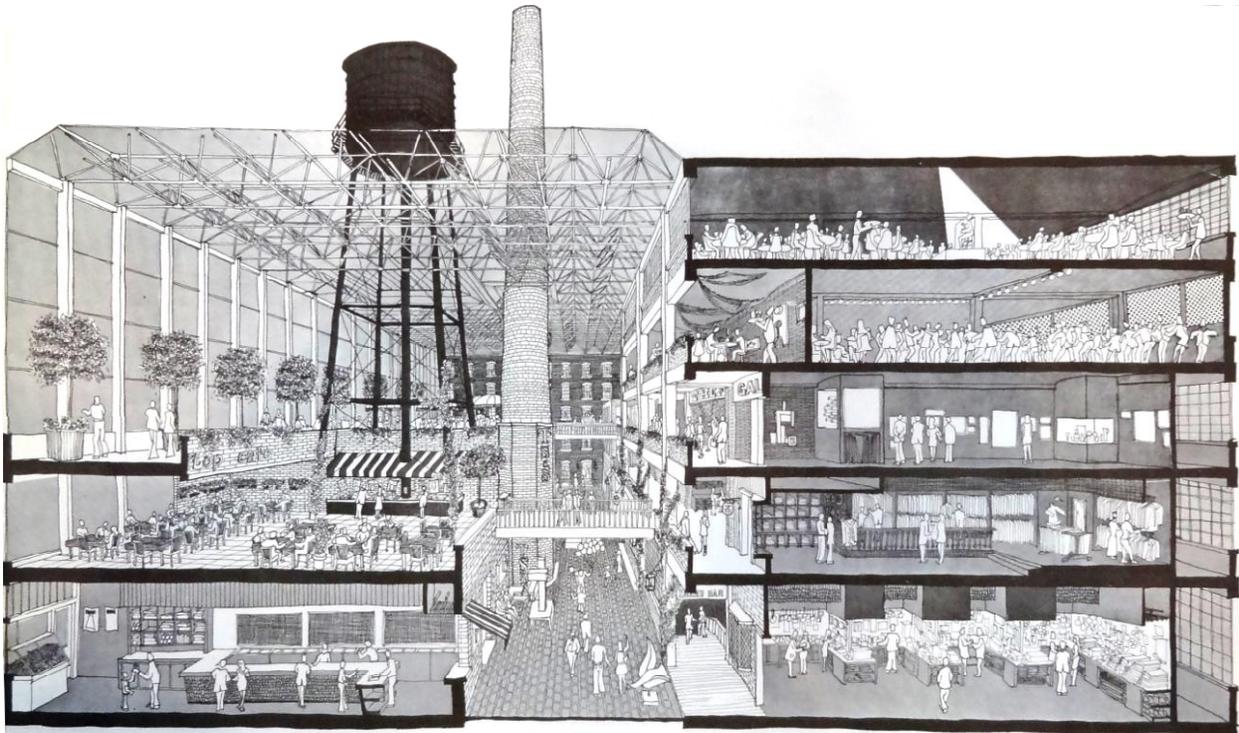
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<sup>606</sup> Betty Frankel, "City's Digging to Get More People," *Detroit Free Press*, August 20 1976.

<sup>607</sup> Rossetti/Sims Joint Venture, "Woodward Avenue Improvement Program Report," ed. Community and Economic Development Department(Detroit1976).

<sup>608</sup> Renaissance, *Take Another Look at Detroit*, 11.

<sup>609</sup> The inner city consumer has deliberately been left out of the business proposal. Corporation, "Traugott Schmidt & Sons, a Melieu of Entertainment Experiences!."



**Figure 106. Section of the Traugott, Schmidt and Sons development, depicting an internalized entertainment center. Architect(s) unknown<sup>610</sup>**

Despite these investments, the 1970s were a devastating decade for downtown retailers. Hudson's downtown sales were plummeting and theft became a major issue, prompting the store to slowly retract from its downtown building by shutting down sales floors and cutting staff.<sup>611</sup> Other department stores were teetering and the number of retailers in the downtown halved between 1961 and 1977. For the first time, even the 'solid' retail core of Detroit's downtown started to show gaps of vacant storefronts, parking lots or even vacant lots. The long-beleaguered peripheral streets were losing even more business frontage during the 1960s and 1970s. They were dealt yet another blow by the decision of the City Plan Commission to consolidate gas stations, car workshops and drive-thru's to locate on the radial avenues outside downtown, saving smaller commercial streets in neighborhoods from these businesses that disrupted their already threatened continuity of interactive frontages. Furthermore, the Commission relaxed zoning restrictions on these avenues to

<sup>610</sup> From *ibid.*

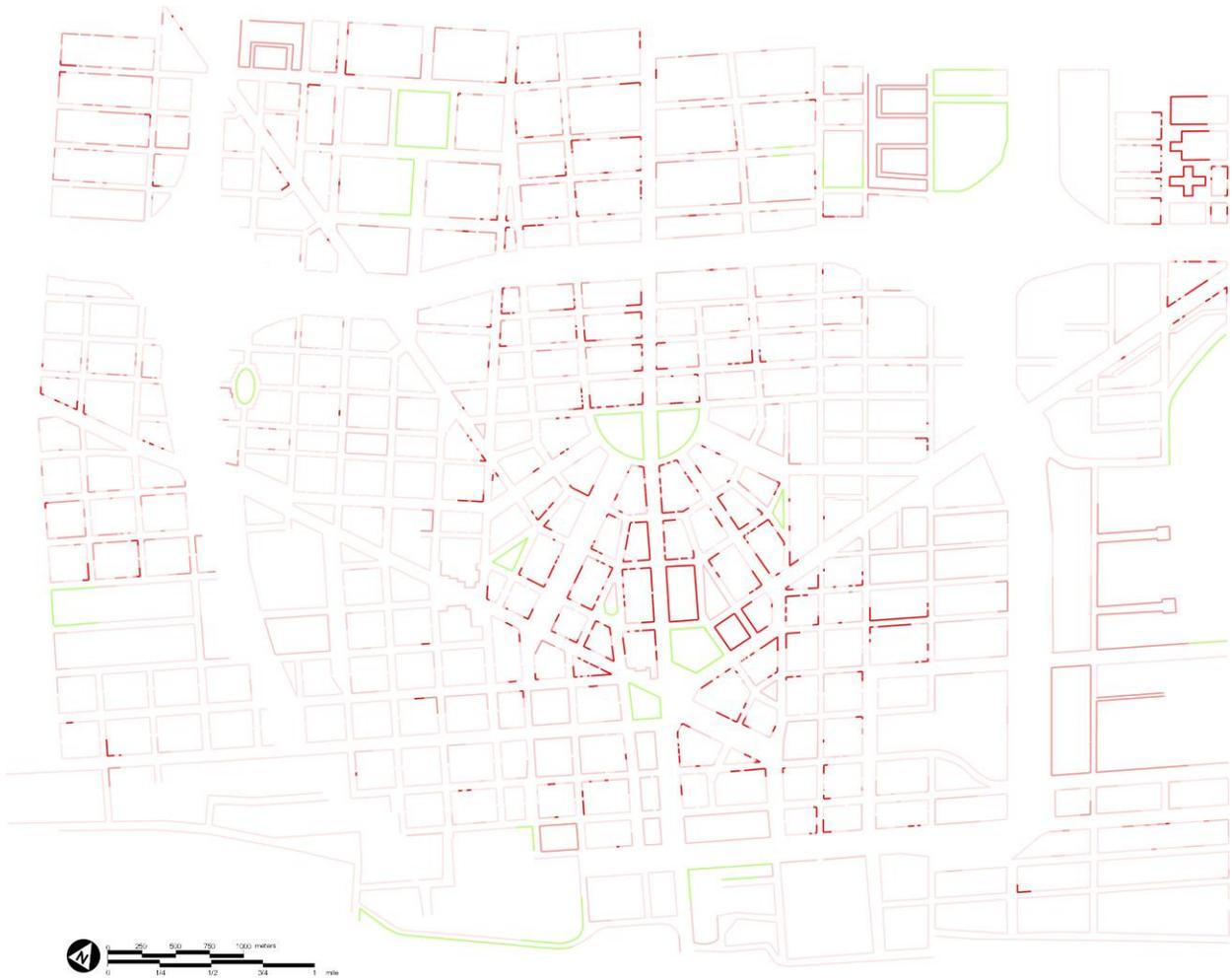
<sup>611</sup> Pitrone, *Hudson's: Hub of America's Heartland*, 155-69.

allow for light manufacturing and wholesaling, to counter the increased vacancy of their retail structures. This 1970 decisions significantly increased the deterioration of the former downtown walk-up streets of Woodward, Grand River, Michigan, Jefferson and Gratiot Avenues as they slid into a muddle of asphalt, neon, warehouses and ragweeds.<sup>612</sup>



Figure 107. Downtown Detroit's blocks, buildings, parcels, open spaces, parks and rivers in 1977.

<sup>612</sup> Don Ball, "Big Victory against Detroit Blight," *Detroit News*, May 12 1970.



**Figure 108. Downtown Detroit's frontage interactivity in 1977.**

As shown in Figure 107 and Figure 108, downtown Detroit underwent significant change in its form between 1961 and 1977. All public urban renewal projects had finished, including the highway ring around downtown (1), the land clearance for the central Kern Block (2) and old City Hall (3) (marked as a parks) and all peripheral sites. The Eastern Market would increasingly turn into a wholesale center, with large warehousing constructed between the market sheds and the Chrysler Freeway, showing as clearance on the map (4).<sup>613</sup> Furthermore, the Renaissance Center (5) is completed as well, and the riverfront

<sup>613</sup> Paul Gainor, "The Eastern Market Getting a New Look," *ibid.*, September 12 1976.

plaza is under construction (6). All of these projects have drastically harmed the relationship between buildings and public space within their perimeters. As a result, the pattern of a strong urban core surrounded by inactive land uses such as parking, vacant lots and blank walls can be considered completed in 1977. All radial avenues have been gutted from most retail stores, and peripheral residential areas were in a freefall of building and parcel vacancy. Yet when looking at the interactivity pattern it becomes apparent that even the most central part of Woodward Avenue no longer had a solid pattern of retail shops. Even in Detroit's coveted core, stores were shutting down – a highly corrosive pattern that would continue during the next decades. In other words, the peripheral rot of ground floor business interactivity had finally reached downtown, and was about to topple its critical mass as a retail and leisure destination.

## 4.7 1977-1988

The dedication of the Renaissance Center in 1977 brought renewed spirits to the city. The complex was an initial success: the hotel was fully booked, the offices were already 75% leased, convention business was at a record level, and retailers were swarmed with the suburban clientele they were looking for.<sup>614</sup> At the ceremony, Henry Ford proudly proclaimed, "If we all co-operate together and do things together, we can once again make this the great city it was during World War II."<sup>615</sup> Capitalizing on the positive energy from the opening of the Center, the Community and Economic Development Department sponsored the publication of a Detroit Free Press special issue on all the projects that were "rebuilding" Detroit, as "the Detroit development picture is growing so fast and in so many different ways that describing it is an extraordinary task." The issue listed over seventy downtown projects that were either built, under construction or planned to break ground soon. "Downtown Detroit's spectacular rebirth is happening right now."<sup>616</sup>

This would unfortunately prove to be an overly rosy view on downtown matters. Only three days before the Renaissance Center dedication, Hudson's department store had decided to close off half of its 65 display windows to cut costs and curb crime.<sup>617</sup> As Hudson's sales had plummeted 65% between 1953 and 1977 and losses due to theft were escalating, the department store continued to retrench.<sup>618</sup> Three months later, neighbor Crowley's sprawling 2-block department store closed due to declining sales.<sup>619</sup> North on Woodward Avenue, 115-year old jewelry firm Wright Kay & Co. decided to close its downtown store and seek its further fortunes in the suburbs. Struggling with declining sales and rapidly rising crime rates, the owner decided to "deploy our resources to where

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<sup>614</sup> Renaissance Center Partnership, "Renaissance Center Dedication Signals Cities' Revitalization," news release, 1977; Alex Taylor, "World of (\$) Success at Rencen Shops," *Detroit Free Press*, October 22 1978.

<sup>615</sup> Susan Watson and Peter C. Gavrilovich, "Detroit Hails City Renaissance," *ibid.*, April 16 1977.

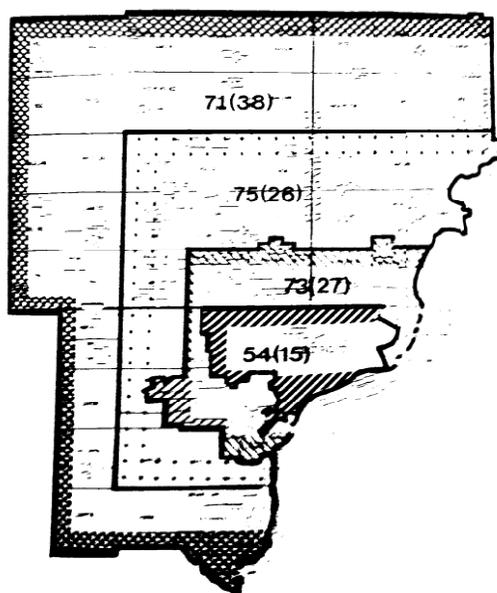
<sup>616</sup> Community and Economic Development Department, "Detroit: Rebuilding a Great City," *ibid.*, December 18.

<sup>617</sup> Howard Warren, "Downtown Hudson's Closes Off Half of Its 65 Display Windows," *Detroit News*, April 13 1977.

<sup>618</sup> Pitrone, *Hudson's: Hub of America's Heartland*.

<sup>619</sup> As a last day visitor commented: "Detroit is losing one more landmark." James Kenyon, "Crowley's Closing Ends a Detroit Era," *Detroit News*, July 3 1977.

we can do the best job.”<sup>620</sup> Hudson’s downward spiral and the closure of its peers was exemplary for downtown, with sales almost halved between 1963 and 1977 to an insignificant 2.1% of the metropolitan area total.<sup>621</sup> The last downtown cordon count of 1974 showed that visitors to downtown decreased by a third since 1960, and the trend was clearly further downward.<sup>622</sup> At the same time, the Renaissance Center continued to lure business tenants out of older buildings all over downtown, resulting in a rapidly rising office and retail vacancy rate. Almost 40% of Center office tenants were from other downtown buildings, demonstrating the dangerous zero-sum game that was being played.<sup>623</sup> An out of town journalist commented: “At 6.30pm downtown Detroit is a desolate wasteland. The Loop in Chicago has more activity at 4 a.m. than Woodward Avenue, Detroit’s main drag, has at 4 p.m.”<sup>624</sup>



**Figure 109. Percentage of respondents fearful of being out alone at night in downtown Detroit (during the day in parentheses)**<sup>625</sup>

<sup>620</sup> Jim Neubacher, "Downtown Jeweler Will Close," *Detroit Free Press*, January 21 1977.

<sup>621</sup> Sourced from US Census of Business 1963 and 1977.

<sup>622</sup> Furthermore, 73% of 1974 visitors arrived by car. Transportation, "Detroit Central Business District Cordon Count 1966-1974."

<sup>623</sup> Jeffrey Hadden and Christopher Willcox, "Older Buildings Feel Effect of Tenant Shift to Ren Gen," *Detroit News*, June 22 1977.

<sup>624</sup> Lou Gordon, "The Beautiful and the Ugly," *ibid.*, March 20.

<sup>625</sup> Citizens Research Council of, *Police Precinct One in Downtown Detroit: A Survey of Trends in Crime, Economic Activity, and Public Attitudes*, 63.

The observation reflected the difficulty of downtown to remain viable in a declining city, no matter how many new projects were constructed. Mayor Coleman Young faced a city that was rapidly losing its most affluent population, while unemployment, drug use and crime were almost constantly on the rise. From 1974 onwards, the city had the highest per capita murder rate of any large American city, and both the direct effects and reputation were haunting the city and its downtown.<sup>626</sup> Furthermore, Young had to combat the downward spiral with a constantly decreasing city budget, and federal funding streams were drying up as well. A seemingly impossible mix of spiraling problems and a fiscal crisis was mounting for Detroit. As a “Messiah Mayor”, Young focused on high-visibility projects to show Detroiters and the world at large that his city was still an entity to be reckoned with. Fortunately for the downtown, most eyes were aimed at the urban core and as a result central projects were a high priority.<sup>627</sup> A first success for Young was the arduous but ultimately successful construction of the Joe Louis Arena on the riverfront next to Cobo Hall, retaining the Pistons and Red Wings sports teams in Detroit.<sup>628</sup> Furthermore, Woodward Avenue and Washington Boulevard both proceeded with public space improvements, the former turned into a landscaped transit mall, the latter into a landscaped mall with a trolley connecting to Cobo Hall and the Renaissance center. To benefit the further downtown revitalization, a Downtown Development Authority was created in 1976, mainly funded by tax increment financing in which future increased tax revenues and special assessment taxes could be used to finance public investments up front.<sup>629</sup>

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<sup>626</sup> Ze'ev Chafets, "The Tragedy of Detroit," *New York Times*, July 29 1990; Citizens Research Council of, *Police Precinct One in Downtown Detroit: A Survey of Trends in Crime, Economic Activity, and Public Attitudes*; Barbara Young, "Young Asks Grosse Pointers to Enjoy Downtown Detroit," *Detroit News*, May 2 1977.

<sup>627</sup> The term “Messiah Mayor” is coined by urban historian Jon C. Teaford to describe successful urban leaders during fiscal crises. From Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit*, 150-51.

<sup>628</sup> *Ibid.*, 157-58.

<sup>629</sup> David A. Markiewicz, "\$80 Million Ok'd for City Projects," *Detroit News*, August 13 1986; Downtown Development Authority, "Tax Increment Financing Plan and Development Plan for Development Area Number 1," (Detroit 1978).



**Figure 110. Rebuilt Washington Boulevard by Rossetti Architects.<sup>630</sup>**

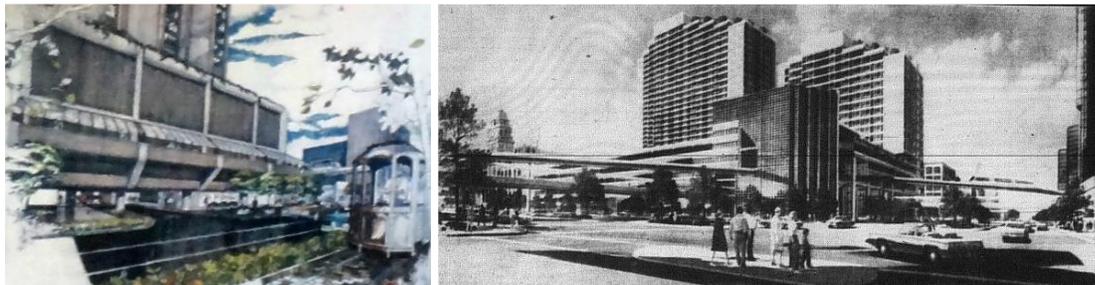
This authority proposed four major projects to revitalize downtown and benefit from existing riverfront development, along with several streetscape improvements. Several of these projects focused on boosting the downtown residential population to support any further commercial improvements, but they often failed to improve the relationship between buildings and public space.<sup>631</sup> The first project was a downtown residential tower on Washington Boulevard, transforming the street that once housed downtown's upscale retailers into a residential district. Land was assembled for a high-rise apartment building

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<sup>630</sup> "New Imagery and Planning Bring Back a Traditional Shopping Street: Washington Boulevard in Detroit," *Architectural Record* 168(1980).

<sup>631</sup> Christopher Willcox, "Detroit Gets a Downtown Revival Plan," *Detroit News*, February 23 1978.

on top of a parking garage, with at least some retail units on the ground floor fronting the Boulevard.<sup>632</sup> While the new 'Trolley Plaza' was quite successful in attracting tenants, it mostly turned away from public space, as besides the dark, recessed lobby "the building's main connection to the street is the black hole of automobile entrances and exits."<sup>633</sup> Meanwhile, the renovated boulevard itself did not quite experience the promised revitalization as retailers stayed away. The second major downtown residential project was a mixed apartment block, retail center and hotel across the street from the Renaissance Center. The city would finance a 2,000 bay parking garage, with private developers building the "Millender Center" on top in the mid-1980s. The center contained a considerable amount of new apartments and hotel rooms as well as a few ground floor retail establishments, but mostly presented itself to the street via parking ramps, converting a block of Larned Street into a car tunnel.<sup>634</sup> Furthermore, the center's focus on the People Mover and skywalks ensured that residents would not have to walk on the street.<sup>635</sup> Nevertheless, both projects brought a "new breed" of highly educated professionals back to live downtown.<sup>636</sup>



**Figure 111. Trolley Plaza's recessed entrance (left) and Millender Center amid a sea of cars, the overhead People Mover and pedestrian walkways (right).<sup>637</sup>**

<sup>632</sup> Thomas C. Fox, "The Hope: 2500 Midtown Apartments - the Reality: A Small, Costly Block," *Detroit Free Press*, October 30 1977.

<sup>633</sup> "Downtown Outlook - Can the People of the Motor City Learn to Walk Again?."

<sup>634</sup> John Spelich, "Detroit's Leading Citizens Sow Seeds of Redevelopment," *Detroit Free Press*, August 17 1986; "Downtown 'Sky Mall' Passes Its First Test," *Detroit News*, April 13 1978.

<sup>635</sup> "Downtown Outlook - Can the People of the Motor City Learn to Walk Again?."

<sup>636</sup> Dinah Eng, "New Breed of Detroiter Works, Lives Downtown," *ibid.*, June 2 1985.

<sup>637</sup> Robert Benson, "Millender: New Solution for City's Old Problems," *ibid.*, February 7 1984; Department, "Detroit: Rebuilding a Great City."

The city's third project was the elevated People Mover that was proposed during the 1970s to revitalize downtown by connecting its main destinations through a "faster, safer and more convenient" mode of transit.<sup>638</sup> The Central Business District Association vigorously campaigned the city, state and federal government to implement the system, as it could be the last straw for downtown retailers.<sup>639</sup> Yet the economic benefits of the system were vastly overestimated, as many downtown development projects were accredited to the People Mover that would have been constructed regardless.<sup>640</sup> When the loop finally opened in 1987, it hardly had any locations left to connect to, and it would mainly serve as a parking distributor for large events. As a result, ridership was far below the original expectations.<sup>641</sup> A light rail line running up Woodward Avenue was supposed to link this circular distributor to the city's main job centers in downtown, midtown and the New Center, but funding was never granted for this extension.<sup>642</sup>

The final project was to be the centerpiece of the proposed commercial revitalization of Detroit, but never materialized. Together with retail developer Alfred Taubman, Hudson's department store had decided it would not go down without a fight in the 1970s, and unveiled plans for a multistory downtown mall to replace its aging and oversized establishment in 1977. The modern self-contained "Cadillac Center" mall would also take up the complete blocks from Kern's and Crowley's department stores and a historic retail block on Monroe Street to spur "...the renaissance of retailing of downtown Detroit."<sup>643</sup> The plan failed partly because federal funding was never fully secured and surrounding retailers were wary of being excluded from the introverted mall concept,<sup>644</sup> but mostly because private interest never truly materialized. Besides Hudson's, the mall needed two

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<sup>638</sup> Downtown Development Authority, "Tax Increment Financing Plan and Development Plan for Development Area Number 1 - Updated to 1992," (Detroit 1992), 56.

<sup>639</sup> Association, "Annual Development Report," 32-33.

<sup>640</sup> Louis Mieczko, "The People Mover - Downtown Merchants Say It's Nice, but Not Crucial for Them," *Detroit News*, May 27 1984.

<sup>641</sup> R.R. Tadi and U. Dutta, "Detroit Downtown People Mover: Ten Years After," in *6th International Conference on Automated People Movers* (Las Vegas, NV 1997).

<sup>642</sup> Don Tschirhart, "Light Rail Asked for Woodward Area," *Detroit News*, April 5 1984.

<sup>643</sup> Charles W. Theisen and Clark Hallas, "Hudson's Plan for Detroit: Mammoth Downtown Mall," *ibid.*, December 9 1977; Louis Cook, "Downtown Woodward Gets Malled," *Detroit Free Press*, May 11 1977. The historic Monroe retail block was unfortunately considered a roadblock for progress: Thomas C. Fox, "Old Buildings Imperil City Plans," *ibid.*, August 15.

<sup>644</sup> Martha Hindes, "Downtown 'Dream' Is Not Shared by All Merchants," *Detroit News*, May 11 1980.

other major anchors to succeed. Although several retail chains initially mentioned they were in negotiation, they ultimately didn't warm to the idea of opening a business in an area with declining income density and high crime rates.<sup>645</sup> Commenting on the slow progress of the development, Alfred Taubman warned the city that more downtown housing should be constructed to create a viable market for the mall's retailers.<sup>646</sup> More importantly, Hudson's warned that if the mall wouldn't be built by 1982, it would withdraw and close its downtown store.<sup>647</sup> But in 1980 it would already be too late, as Mayor Young quietly conceded that the plan was off the table due to the economic recession and further cuts in federal spending.<sup>648</sup> The dilapidated historic block of retail buildings on Monroe Street, originally envisioned as part of the Center, was left to decay even further and was ultimately partly demolished – a classic case of planner's blight.<sup>649</sup>



**Figure 112. Decay on Monroe Street, promising “historic restoration”.**<sup>650</sup>

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<sup>645</sup> Alex Taylor, "Downtown Project Lacks Commitment of Store Chains," *Detroit Free Press*, March 10 1979; Stephen Cain, "Penney, Sears Join Hudson in Downtown Mall," *Detroit News*, September 23 1978.

<sup>646</sup> Thomas C. Fox, "City Could Purchase Hudson's Downtown," *Detroit Free Press*, January 18 1978.

<sup>647</sup> "Hudson's Gives City Ultimatum," *Detroit News*, July 11 1978.

<sup>648</sup> Robert E. Roach, "Kern Block Project Shelved," *ibid.*, September 14 1982; Ken Fireman, "Kern Block Mall Plan Dead," *Detroit Free Press*, May 7 1980.

<sup>649</sup> Betsey Hansell and Rick Ratliff, "Detroit's Downtown Dilemma - Who Is in Charge? Where Is It Going?," *ibid.*, December 11 1983; Robert E. Roach, "Monroe Block 'Blight' Assailed," *Detroit News*, July 14 1981.

<sup>650</sup> Hansell and Ratliff, "Detroit's Downtown Dilemma - Who Is in Charge? Where Is It Going?."

Beyond the reach of the Downtown Development Authority, street level frontage interactivity in the downtown periphery fared even more poorly. The General Services Administration commissioned a large prison facility west of downtown, and Wayne County built a similar prison north of Greektown.<sup>651</sup> While struggling to find financing, three riverfront apartment towers were ultimately constructed west of the new Joe Louis Arena, facing Jefferson Avenue with a hostile five story parking garage.<sup>652</sup> Similarly, Detroit Edison continued its construction of a corporate plaza and parking on downtown's northwest side, consolidating more than 50 acres of land but filling it mostly with parking structures and blank office walls.<sup>653</sup> A grand grassroots plan to revitalize the struggling area north of Grand Circus Park never materialized, but a private owner was holding on to the nearby Fox theater with the intention of creating an entertainment district.<sup>654</sup> Struggling Brush Park and Corktown were designated historic districts, but their decline continued unabated.<sup>655</sup> Neighboring Cass Park had deteriorated from a Skid Row outpost into one of the highest crime areas in the city. Meanwhile, parking attrition continued unabated, as one Detroiter commented: "It seems like the whole downtown area is becoming a parking lot for the Renaissance Center."<sup>656</sup>

Just as most DDA projects were slowly gathering steam, the economic recession of the 1980s would make the climate for downtown development in Detroit even tougher. The automobile industry slumped, unemployment and interest rates skyrocketed, Detroit's population continued to decline, but the federal government under the Reagan

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<sup>651</sup> Christopher Willcox, "Millions to Save Downtown Ok'd," *Detroit News*, May 18 1978; "Compromise Site for New County Jail," *Detroit Monitor*, February 15 1978.

<sup>652</sup> Spelich, "Detroit's Leading Citizens Sow Seeds of Redevelopment."; Robert Brenson, "Riverfront: Detroit's Stuck with Mediocrity Once Again," *Detroit News*, November 29 1983.

<sup>653</sup> Raymond Curtis Miller, *The Force of Energy: A Business History of the Detroit Edison Company* ([East Lansing, Mich.]: Michigan State University Press, 1971).

<sup>654</sup> "Grand Circus Park Area Revitalization Plan Announced," *Detroit Monitor*, November 8 1979; Rick Ratliff, "An Old Area, a New Dream," *Detroit Free Press*, April 12 1984.

<sup>655</sup> Chauncey Bailey, "Preserving History," *Detroit News*, February 10 1983.

<sup>656</sup> A major issue was that parking would take over-assessed vacant downtown buildings off the tax rolls, making their demolition as attractive as during the Depression. Thomas C. Fox, "Parking Woes Grow Along with Rencen," *Detroit Free Press*, September 25 1978; "Need for Parking Gobbling Dozens of City's Buildings," *Detroit Free Press*, January 29 1978.

administration was reluctant to step in.<sup>657</sup> The recession brought yet another wave of downtown store closures. Many downtown redevelopment plans were put on hold, some temporarily like Fisher's riverfront apartments and the Millender Center, some indefinitely like the Cadillac Center.<sup>658</sup> The poor climate for development was worsened by the lack of a master plan with clear political backing, leaving developers with little security whether their investment tied into a bigger vision.<sup>659</sup> Political support for the creation of such a plan for the downtown was sorely lacking, especially from Mayor Young who still remembered the divisive effects of postwar urban renewal and its planning, distrusting master plans for fueling land speculation and curbing the city's ability to make deals with private investors and the federal government on the high-visibility projects he sought.<sup>660</sup> Due to developer and Council pressure, a draft downtown master plan was finally unveiled in 1985. The overly vague plan was widely criticized, and it would take years before a final plan was adopted.<sup>661</sup> In frustration, downtown business leaders would start working on their own strategic plan for revitalization.<sup>662</sup>

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<sup>657</sup> Federal funding for urban revitalization dropped from \$50 million in 1980-1981 to \$33 million in 1991-1992. In: John McCarthy, "Entertainment-Led Regeneration: The Case of Detroit," *Cities* 19, no. 2 (2002).

<sup>658</sup> Robert E. Roach, "Downtown Rebirth Sputters," *Detroit News*, September 6 1981.

<sup>659</sup> Hansell and Ratliff, "Detroit's Downtown Dilemma - Who Is in Charge? Where Is It Going?"; *ibid.*

<sup>660</sup> Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit*, 187.

<sup>661</sup> Don Tschirhart, "Downtown 'Blueprint' Unveiled," *Detroit News*, December 15 1983; Rick Ratliff, "Without Wide Support, Plan Only Blueprint of a Dream," *Detroit Free Press*, June 22 1985.

<sup>662</sup> Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit*, 189-93.



**Figure 113. The last days of Hudson's department store: a mostly vacant shadow of its former glory, presenting itself to the virtually empty downtown with shuttered windows.<sup>663</sup>**

January 18, 1983 was a devastating milestone for downtown. This was the day that Hudson's department store would close its doors, right after last year's holiday season. Downtown's last department store simply couldn't deal with the declining sales and rising losses, even with only three of the original seventeen sales floors remaining.<sup>664</sup> With the closure of Hudson's, a third of downtown's sales were immediately wiped out. The ripple effect of losing Hudson's "stabilizing force" could be felt all throughout downtown, as store closures accelerated after 1983.<sup>665</sup> Although crime was commonly cited by merchants as a culprit, the sheltered Renaissance Center shops did not fare any better: while initially popular, over a third of the Center's retail space was vacant in 1983, more than the already

<sup>663</sup> Left image courtesy of Virtual Motor City, from Detroit News July 13 1982. Right image from Warren, "Downtown Hudson's Closes Off Half of Its 65 Display Windows."

<sup>664</sup> Pitrone, *Hudson's: Hub of America's Heartland*, 178-79. Downtown sales had dropped 85% between 1953 and 1982: Bob Luke, "Hudson Gives up Downtown," *Detroit News*, July 14 1982.

<sup>665</sup> August Gribbin, Chester Bulgier, and Rebecca Powers, "Hudson's Downtown Store Closes," *ibid.*, January 18 1983; Don Tschirhart, "More Stores Follow Hudson's Closing," *ibid.*, May 1.

high downtown average.<sup>666</sup> The disconnection from downtown and its confusing layout would scare off customers and business tenants to the point where the center had to be sold in 1982, narrowly avoiding bankruptcy.<sup>667</sup> The retail segment was drastically downsized and remodeled less than ten years after opening.<sup>668</sup> The festival marketplace concept also wasn't able to survive the general downtown slump. Even after a 1983 reboot, the Trappers Alley retail complex experienced poor retail sales, while also suffering a significant turnover of tenants.<sup>669</sup> Small projects to spruce up storefronts on Broadway or increase security in shops relieved merchants' short-term concerns but did little to stem the tide in the long run.<sup>670</sup> Furthermore, city policy for retail revitalization was scattered at best. While the city unsuccessfully pushed for more rapid transit, the decline in downtown retail was curiously mostly blamed on a lack of free car parking. Only a few years after Woodward closed to traffic, the resulting transit mall was considered a failure and reopened to cars in 1982.<sup>671</sup> As the last remaining ground-floor merchants were struggling to survive on Detroit's emptying streets, white collar office workers increasingly traversed downtown above street level in publicly subsidized yet privately secured skywalks or the People Mover.<sup>672</sup>

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<sup>666</sup> Betsey Hansell, "Retail Scene Looking up in Other Major Cities," *Detroit Free Press*, December 14 1983.

<sup>667</sup> Ken Fireman, Luther Jackson, and Dorothy Weddell, "Rencen Sold at Loss to Investor Group," *ibid.*, April 29 1982.

<sup>668</sup> Beverly Hall Lawrence, "Retailing Has Shed Its Glitz," April 12 1987; Patricia Montemurri, "Rencen at 10 - All over Downtown, It Has Made Its Mark," *Detroit Free Press*, April 12 1987.

<sup>669</sup> Trappers Alley, "History of Trappers Alley," (Detroit1994).

<sup>670</sup> John Spellch, "Downtown's Future Bright, Merchant Feels," *Detroit News*, February 8 1985.

<sup>671</sup> Monroe Walker, "Council Votes 7-1 to Scrap Mall Idea," *ibid.*, November 19 1982.

<sup>672</sup> Robert E. Roach, "A Lift for Pedestrians," *ibid.*, May 20 1980.



Figure 114. Downtown Detroit's blocks, buildings, parcels, open spaces, parks and rivers in 1988.



**Figure 115. Downtown Detroit's frontage interactivity in 1988.**

More than twenty years after the civil disorders of 1967, downtown Detroit had never fully recovered. Young's focus on high-profile projects to attract investment to the urban core was ultimately unsuccessful, as they had to swim against a tide of overall urban decline and increasingly organized suburban competition.<sup>673</sup> Circled by a practically empty People Mover, downtown Detroit's streets were lined with vacant storefronts and office lobbies; Young's grand visions without a grand plan often had little spinoff beyond their own perimeter.<sup>674</sup> The 1988 maps show that the pattern of peripheral rot had continued to make its way into the retail core, with the continuity of built form or interactive frontages

<sup>673</sup> John McCarthy, "Revitalization of the Core City: The Case of Detroit," *Cities* 14, no. 1 (1997): 4-5.

<sup>674</sup> Robert H. Giles, "Detroit: A 20-Year Search for Renaissance," *Detroit News*, June 28 1987.

no longer present anywhere downtown. Even the former main retail strip on Woodward Avenue was now mostly deserted. Planning director Gilb, retail developer Taubman and retailer Hudson commented resignedly that the collapse of downtown Detroit was its destiny from the onset. Flat land, high wages and a decentralized industry had created a city that never lent itself to downtown density in the first place. Furthermore, hopes of revitalization were slim: "The downtown many want for Detroit is a downtown that never was."<sup>675</sup>

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<sup>675</sup> Betsey Hansell and Rick Ratliff, "A History of Sprawl, an Eclipsed Downtown," *Detroit Free Press*, December 11 1983.

## 4.8 1988-2001

In 1990, the New York Times' observations of downtown Detroit were far more sobering than the similar articles of four or seven decades ago. "Detroit today is a genuinely fearsome-looking place... Worst of all is the downtown. Several of the landmarks on Woodward Avenue remain, and in the last few years, there have been several grandiose building projects, but they can't obscure the fact that downtown Detroit is now pretty much empty. Entire skyscrapers – hotels, office buildings and apartment houses – are vacant and decaying; you can walk a downtown block during business hours without passing a living soul."<sup>676</sup> The Times' street-level observations matched more official counts, as 46 buildings with 7.2 million square feet of space lay vacant in Detroit that same year, with Hudson's former department store as the biggest physical and psychological scar in the heart of the city. Downtown had shed yet another 18,500 jobs in the 1980s, and the end was not in sight.<sup>677</sup> New office construction would only take away tenants from older buildings.<sup>678</sup> High tax valuations, high demolition costs, the loss of federal subsidies and tax breaks for renovations and Detroit's ongoing fiscal and economic downturn had created a stalemate. Renovating downtown buildings was too pricey, but so was demolition, leaving only neglect. Historic Hotel Fort Shelby's owner explained, "I pay my taxes and I sit and wait."<sup>679</sup>

The finally accepted 1992 Master Plan for Detroit didn't improve matters for downtown either. If anything, it represented the political legacy of outgoing Mayor Coleman Young, who fought to keep the plan as flexible as possible to enable his typical governance style of revitalization through piecemeal deals.<sup>680</sup> Yet this style had only resulted in disconnected nodes of activity, struggling and scattered in a downtown landscape of parking, blank walls and deterioration. In a four-page special, the Detroit News lamented the combination of

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<sup>676</sup> Chafets, "The Tragedy of Detroit."

<sup>677</sup> David Barkholz, "Downtown Lost 18,500 Jobs in '80s: Semcog," *Crain's Detroit Business*, July 23 1990.

<sup>678</sup> David A. Markiewicz, "A Scramble for Tenants - Downtown Firms Play 'Musical Buildings'," *Detroit News*, March 6 1989.

<sup>679</sup> David Barkholz, "Empty Hulks Scar Detroit," *Crain's Detroit Business*, May 21-27 1990.

<sup>680</sup> More detailed proposals included People Mover spurs to Detroit Edison's office buildings, the aim to "re-establish Woodward Avenue as a major shopping street in the city", and an electric cable car to Windsor. City of Detroit, "Master Plan of Policies," (Detroit1992).

defensive architecture, car dependence and laissez-faire planning that had resulted in an unexciting, unwalkable and downright unsafe downtown streetscape. Philadelphia postwar urban designer Edmund Bacon stressed the importance of continuity of street-level activity that was sorely lacking in downtown: "Things just aren't tied in together in Detroit. The Renaissance Center is in isolation. Hart Plaza is in isolation. Trappers Alley and Greektown are great, but they don't relate synergistically with anything else. The rest of downtown is only a blur."<sup>681</sup> The lack of a critical mass of interconnected destinations was obstructing a viable revitalization of downtown retail, as Detroit clearly lagged behind the renaissance of many American central cities.<sup>682</sup>



**Figure 116. Demolition of the vacant Tuller Hotel in downtown Detroit, 1991.<sup>683</sup>**

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<sup>681</sup> "Downtown Outlook - Can the People of the Motor City Learn to Walk Again?."

<sup>682</sup> Denise L. Smith, "Surviving Downtown," *ibid.*, July 10 1989.

<sup>683</sup> April 16, 1991 image from Detroit Free Press archives via [www.historicdetroit.org](http://www.historicdetroit.org).

Yet in the torrent of bad news green shoots were starting to appear, which would refocus downtown Detroit as an entertainment destination over the next decade. This process had started in 1987, when pizza magnate and Detroit Red Wings owner Michael Ilitch purchased the ailing Fox and Palms Theatres on northern Woodward Avenue, renovated the buildings and moved in his corporate headquarters.<sup>684</sup> Yet Ilitch's vision went far beyond, as he planned to transform the entire area into an entertainment district in which a mainly suburban target clientele could enjoy Detroit in security and comfort, "a sizable amount [of which] haven't ventured into the city since we had our problems in the late 1960s."<sup>685</sup> Desperate for downtown development, the city supported Ilitch with subsidies and tax breaks.<sup>686</sup> For the first time in downtown Detroit's history, a single private entity was able to control an entire downtown district. While his initial plans to close off a downtown street for a secured shopping and entertainment mall did not materialize,<sup>687</sup> Ilitch holdings in the area did grow to become Foxtown, a distinct restaurant, bar and entertainment district in the city.

Yet Ilitch's real tour de force would play out across Woodward Avenue from the Fox Theatre. After purchasing the Detroit Tigers in 1992, Ilitch studied moving them from their original ballpark northwest of downtown right into the heart of the city. Furthermore, Detroit Lions owner William Clay Ford proposed a downtown stadium for his team as well. The city and county supported the proposals with significant amounts of tax revenues, bonds and their power of eminent domain to purchase almost the entire downtown area between Grand Circus Park and the Fisher Freeway. Subsidizing the plans of a multimillionaire with tax money was strongly criticized as 'corporate welfare.' Yet other points of contention would prove even more relevant to the relationship between buildings and public space. While Ilitch and Ford spared no expense to build a high quality stadium that resonated more than the bland Joe Louis Arena,<sup>688</sup> they were allowed to internalize all

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<sup>684</sup> David A. Markiewicz and Bruce Alpert, "Little Ceasars' Ilitch to Buy the Fox Theatre," *Detroit News*, July 8 1987.

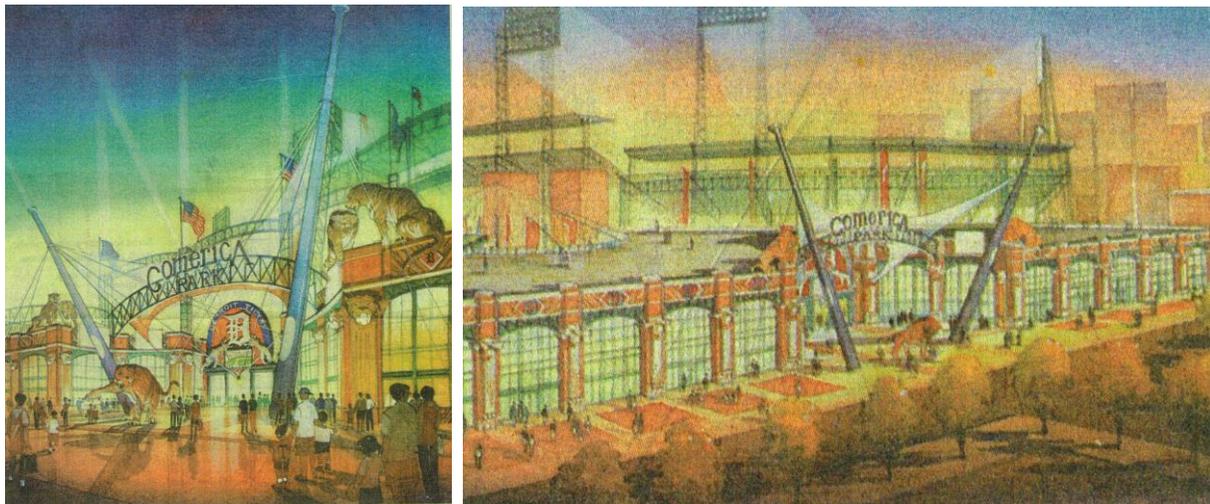
<sup>685</sup> Bruce Alpert, "Ilitch Plans Parking, Restaurants near Fox - Security Is Priority of Theater Project," *ibid.*, July 9.

<sup>686</sup> David A. Markiewicz and N. Scott Vance, "Fox Deal Worth Cost, Moten Says," *ibid.*, July 20.

<sup>687</sup> David A. Markiewicz and David Sedgwick, "Ilitch Plans Mall near Fox Theatre," *ibid.*, February 23 1988.

<sup>688</sup> Over 50% of respondents had "no feeling" about the arena's exterior appearance in a 1982 Detroit News poll: Gerry Storch, "There, Doesn't This Look Better?," *ibid.*, May 21 1982.

entertainment, bar and restaurant concessions, creating a self-sufficient “entertainment destination.”<sup>689</sup> Comerica Park built an atrium and Ford Field used a former Hudson’s warehouse to integrate its full range of dining and entertainment facilities.<sup>690</sup> Spinoff was further minimized by the vast amounts of surface parking that was provided by the demolition of surrounding structures or the condemnation of previous lots, especially blighting the area west of Woodward Avenue.<sup>691</sup> The newly named Comerica Park fronted Woodward Avenue with a block-long parking lot, followed by a secured atrium with concessions. As a result, northern downtown Detroit turned into a car-oriented leisure district, from which downtown Detroit would only serve as a backdrop during sports games.<sup>692</sup>



**Figure 117. Artist renderings of Comerica Park, with city in background (right).<sup>693</sup>**

In the late 1980s, Mayor Young began to look at casino gambling to help turn the tide for downtown Detroit, relieve unemployment and fill city coffers.<sup>694</sup> Downtown was always a

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<sup>689</sup> Patricia Montemurri, "Ilitch Chips in \$35 Million as Stadium Loan Deal Closes," *Detroit Free Press*, August 26 1998; R.J. King, "Lions Are Fired up over Role in Rebuilding City's Hub, Image," *Detroit News*, November 17 1999.

<sup>690</sup> Matt Fiorito, "Levy Vows Variety, Quality at All Levels," *Detroit Free Press*, August 11 2002.

<sup>691</sup> Curt Guyette, "Render Unto Caesar," *Metro Times* 1997.

<sup>692</sup> Mark Puls, "What a View! Tigers Offer First Glimpse inside Park," *Detroit News*, March 19 1999.

<sup>693</sup> Patricia Montemurri, "Ballpark Figure: \$66 Million," *Detroit Free Press*, December 22 1998.

<sup>694</sup> David Silverman, "Casino Ban Cleared by Attorneys," *Detroit News*, July 8 1987.

focal point for casinos, as it would draw the highest patronage and visibility.<sup>695</sup> Citizens were initially resistant to gambling, but the promise to use casino revenues to stem the tide of rising city taxes and the competition of a casino across the river in Windsor finally swayed them in 1994.<sup>696</sup> In 1996, three casinos were proposed for the city, which were promised to bring 3000-4000 jobs and contribute to a fund to renovate or demolish blighted homes and downtown buildings,<sup>697</sup> yet state legislation issues and quarrels about a desired riverfront clustering would delay their opening. As riverfront land speculation prevented the consolidation of a sufficiently sized area of land, the casinos were to be 'temporarily' scattered around downtown.<sup>698</sup> The MGM casino would be the first to start out in a temporary facility in a former federal building on Michigan Avenue, with land clearance starting on the blocks to its north. The Motor City Casino opened soon after, ultimately transforming a former bread bakery on the northwest side of downtown to a 100,000 square foot casino, with a 400 room hotel, dining and entertainment spaces and a spa resorts attached into a self-contained complex totaling over four city blocks.<sup>699</sup> The Greektown casino was the last to open in place of the Trappers Alley complex, taking its name from its ethnic neighborhood.<sup>700</sup> Detroit's struggling festival marketplace had finally succumbed to downtown's retail slump in 1995 as the owners declared bankruptcy,<sup>701</sup> leaving a prime downtown spot in one of the city's last remaining vibrant entertainment areas. While the casinos did generate significant tax income for the city, they increased income division and poverty, and were by nature detrimental to the relation between buildings and public space. Casino patrons were retained as long as possible in a completely controlled environment of sights, sounds and smells, wrapped into buildings

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<sup>695</sup> N. Scott Vance and David A. Markiewicz, "Blighted Woodward Area Called Best Bet for Casinos," *ibid.*, April 12 1988.

<sup>696</sup> Heidi Mac Bratt and Melinda Wilson, "Engler Won't Rush Casino Decision," *ibid.*, August 19 1994.

<sup>697</sup> McCarthy, "Entertainment-Led Regeneration: The Case of Detroit."

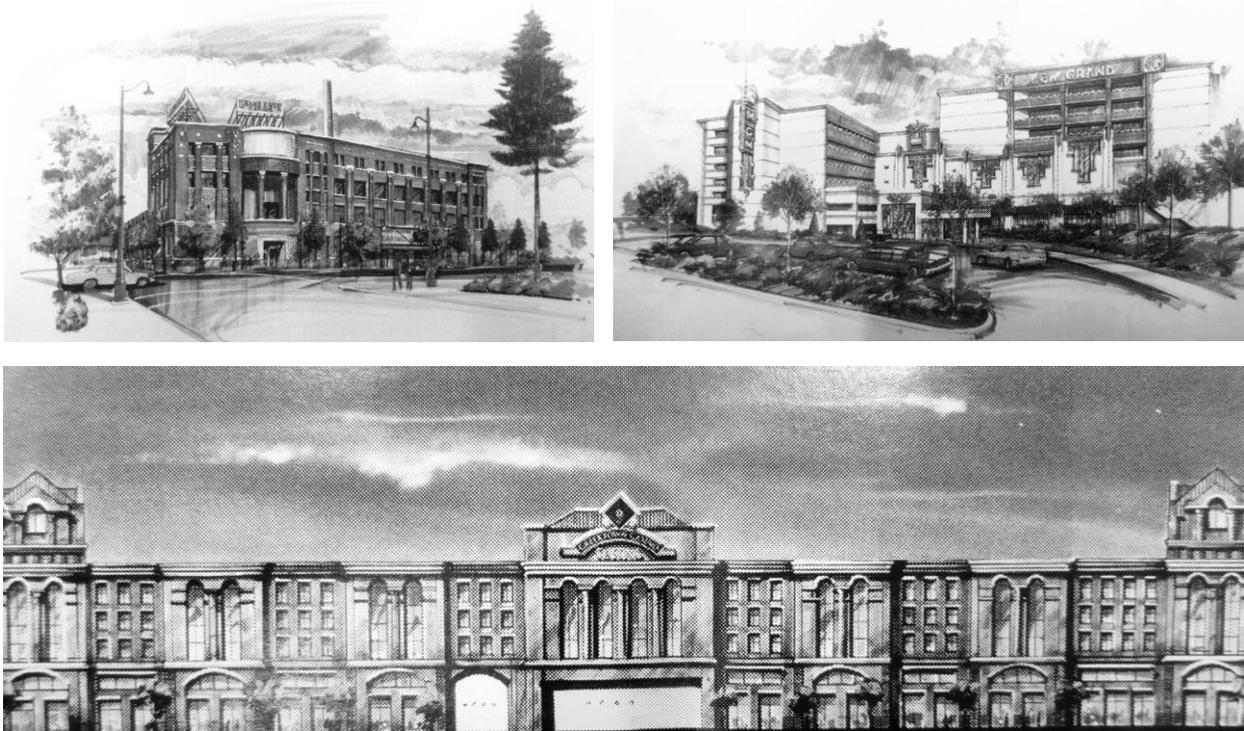
<sup>698</sup> City Planning Commission, "1996-1998 Biennial Report," (Detroit 1998).

<sup>699</sup> Tina Lam, "Gamblers Are Lining up at Motorcity - High Hopes Surround Opening of the Second Casino in Detroit," *Detroit Free Press*, December 15 1999.

<sup>700</sup> "Greektown Aglow for Opening - 3,000 on Hand as 3rd Detroit Casino Finally Springs to Life," *Detroit Free Press*, November 11 2000.

<sup>701</sup> Melinda Wilson, "Trappers: A Rough Go for Retailers," *Crain's Detroit Business*, February 19 1990; Matt Roush, "Trappers Alley Advice: Consider It for Offices," *ibid.*, September 11 1995.

that served more as icons for passing motorists than as an interactive part of the city fabric, a Las Vegas Strip trait that fits poorly in a downtown Detroit context.



**Figure 118. Artist renderings of Motor City Casino (top left), MGM Grand Casino (top right) and Greektown Casino (bottom).<sup>702</sup>**

Yet downtown development didn't only hinge on entertainment-led redevelopment. The former retail core of Detroit, centered on Woodward Avenue and bookended by Grand Circus Park and Campus Martius, would be transformed drastically in the late 1990s. A group of downtown business leaders was convened by Mayor Archer to revitalize this core by drafting a plan for action, and soon the new Greater Downtown Partnership would start to quietly buy up vacant properties in the area to prevent land speculation.<sup>703</sup> Urban planner Ken Greenberg was hired to draft a vision for the urban core, guiding building acquisition and redevelopment. Greenberg defined the remaining loose nodes of activity in the downtown core as "urban villages", and focused on their interconnection into a

<sup>702</sup> Renderings from Commission, "1996-1998 Biennial Report," 10.

<sup>703</sup> Jon Pepper, "Power Elite Designing a New Downtown," *Detroit News and Free Press*, March 10 1996.

coherent yet diverse urban environment, renaming the former Woodward Avenue retail core as the “necklace district”, named after the ring of blocks surrounding Grand Circus Park.<sup>704</sup> Yet the area still had a long way to go, as most businesses and people had left over the past decades, and vacancy was only on the rise.<sup>705</sup> Chilean-born photographer Camilo Vergara smugly made the “immodest proposal” to turn the former retail core of the city into a ruin park, a vertical “American Acropolis.”<sup>706</sup> Commenting on plans to simply repave Woodward Avenue to jumpstart its business activity, Wayne State urban scholar Elaine Driker reminded Detroiters of its sore lack of existing street-level activity: “Until [business and people] come back, all the physical improvements aren’t going to mean much.”<sup>707</sup> Architectural critic John Gallagher went a step farther and openly wondered whether yet another physical plan could revert the mainly socio-economically fueled decline of downtown Detroit in any case.<sup>708</sup>

The fate of Hudson’s empty but central hulk on Woodward Avenue was highly uncertain, as the Greater Downtown Partnership had privately mentioned demolition, echoing the recommendations of developer Taubman from several years back.<sup>709</sup> The city government was slowly abandoning proposals for renovation, despite vigorous opposition from preservationists and journalists that questioned the transparency of the decision making process.<sup>710</sup> As fights continued, the building continued to deteriorate, vandalized by parasitic owners and scrappers. In 1996 the building’s fate was sealed as the Partnership gained control of the block, and ordered it demolished to make way for a large multi-block commercial development. Unlike two decades past, it followed through: in 1998 the department store was imploded to make way for an underground parking garage as part of

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<sup>704</sup> Project description from [www.greenbergconsultants.com](http://www.greenbergconsultants.com).

<sup>705</sup> A 1993 survey found 92 vacant buildings of the roughly 500 buildings in the CBD. John E. Mogk and Central Business District Association, *Revitalizing Detroit's Central Business District: A Report and Five Year Strategic Plan to Eliminate Vacant and Deteriorated Commercial Building Conditions*(Detroit1993).

<sup>706</sup> C Vergara, "Downtown Detroit: American Acropolis or Vacant Land?," *Metropolis* (1995).

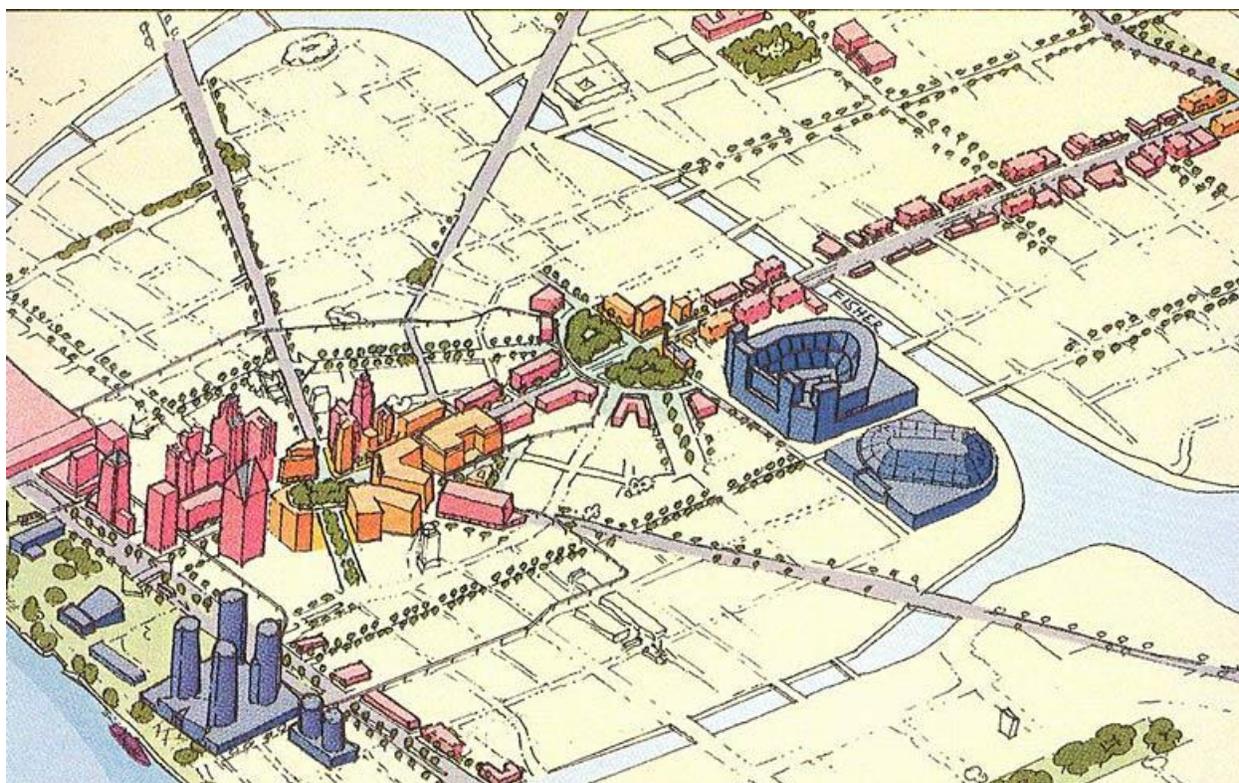
<sup>707</sup> Lynn Waldsmith, "Facelift Urged for Woodward," *Detroit News*, November 11 1994.

<sup>708</sup> Greenberg’s plan was criticized for a “built-in bias toward building our way out of trouble.” John Gallagher, "Planner Envisions (Just One) Downtown - Greenberg Enjoys Support Unseen since the '60s," *Metro Times*, June 10 1997.

<sup>709</sup> "Raze Old Building, Taubman Says," *Detroit News*, September 28 1990.

<sup>710</sup> Pitrone, *Hudson's: Hub of America's Heartland*; Curt Guyette, "The Partnership Puzzle - the Methods of Shaping Detroit Are Largely Secret," *Metro Times*, June 10 1997.

Mayor Archer's proposed "Campus Martius" development.<sup>711</sup> While Compuware announced the construction of their headquarters as the centerpiece of Campus Martius, interest for the surroundings blocks (including the former Hudson's site) was not very strong.<sup>712</sup> However, the stadium developments had started to generate a certain amount of spinoff activity as vacant office buildings and retail stores nearby were being transformed into loft apartments.<sup>713</sup> These developments were supplemented by hotels and night clubs, as downtown Detroit was repositioning itself as a leisure destination.<sup>714</sup>



**Figure 119. Urban designer Greenberg's vision of a reconnected downtown, with the seeds of the Campus Martius development proposals outlined in orange.<sup>715</sup>**

<sup>711</sup> Michael Hauser and Marianne Weldon, *Hudson's: Detroit's Legendary Department Store*, Images of America (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2004), 126.

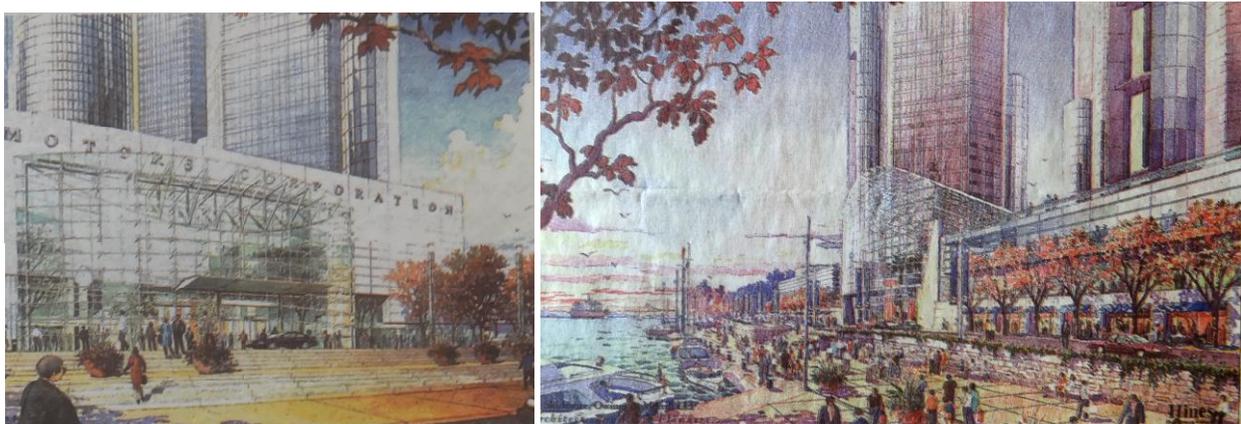
<sup>712</sup> Daniel G. Fricker, "Office Optimism," *Detroit Free Press*, May 15 1998; "Campus Martius Still Lacks Tenants - Confidence Remains High Despite Development's Slow Start," *Detroit Free Press*, April 13 2000.

<sup>713</sup> R.J. King, "New Developments Bring Lower Woodward to Life," *Detroit News*, January 4 2000.

<sup>714</sup> John Gallagher, "Hopes Blossom on Downtown's Woodward Ave.," *Detroit Free Press*, January 5 2000.

<sup>715</sup> Note that the building outline for Hudson's differed from its current form. From project description on [www.greenbergconsultants.com](http://www.greenbergconsultants.com).

South of downtown, the struggling Renaissance Center was bought up by General Motors in 1996 for less than a quarter of its original construction value, and subsequently drastically renovated under the supervision of SOM architects.<sup>716</sup> All offices were refurbished and the struggling retail spaces were drastically downsized, with significant portions now repurposed as GM exhibition space. Most importantly, the building would finally receive a proper unbarricaded front entrance to Jefferson Avenue, and would face the Detroit River with a newly built Winter Garden. Developers Hines and Taubman were hired to redevelop the respective office and retail portion of the complex.<sup>717</sup> While the Renaissance Center would indeed open more toward the city, the vast majority of its perimeter was still covered by blank walls or parking garages.



**Figure 120. Renaissance Center front entrance on Jefferson Avenue (left) and Winter Garden (right), designed by SOM.<sup>718</sup>**

The downtown periphery would also undergo a significant transformation during the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but results were mixed. Mayor Dennis Archer's 1994 election victory strongly hinged on the promise of bringing in a new type of competitive federal

<sup>716</sup> Judy Rose and Deborah Solomon, "Gm Purchase of Rencen Startles Some," *Detroit Free Press*, May 16 1996.

<sup>717</sup> R.J. King, "Rencen Upgrade to Glitter," *Detroit News*, December 21 1997.

<sup>718</sup> Both images are artist renderings by SOM architects. Robert Alan Glover, "Reshaping the Renaissance Center," *ibid.*, June 21 2000; R.J. King, "Rencen Upgrade to Glitter," *ibid.*, December 21 1997.

subsidy for urban redevelopment in struggling cities, the Empowerment Zone. As one of only a few American cities, Detroit won the bid and invested most of the money into the area immediately surrounding downtown.<sup>719</sup> Brush Park was one of the recipients, and the struggling district would finally receive a renovation plan after years of inaction.<sup>720</sup> A mixture of townhomes, apartments and condominiums would rise on the blocks directly north of the Fisher Freeway. For the first time in urban renewal history, the newly designed homes directly addressed the street through various configurations, strengthening the relation between buildings and public space. Across the street, Cass Park received increasing attention from commercial developers looking to benefit from the nearby theater district and sports stadiums,<sup>721</sup> but as plans never materialized the area only deteriorated further from land speculation and rampant crime. Meanwhile west of downtown, the Corktown district was taking a grassroots approach to its revitalization, hiring University of Michigan students for a community redevelopment plan.<sup>722</sup>

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<sup>719</sup> The Empowerment Zone officially precluded the downtown core, yet McCarthy argues some money did flow toward stadium redevelopment.

<sup>720</sup> Between 1983 and 1990, no less than four plans were made for the Brush Park Area. Judy Rose, "Locked out of the Mansions," *Detroit Free Press*, October 21 1990.

<sup>721</sup> Arthur Bridgeforth Jr. and Robert Ankeny, "Developer Cruises Woodward for Retail Land," *Crain's Detroit Business*, September 13 1999; Robert Ankeny, "More Development in the Works for Comerica Park Area," *ibid.*, May 15 2000.

<sup>722</sup> Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit*, 195.



Figure 121. Downtown Detroit's blocks, buildings, parcels, open spaces, parks and rivers in 2001.



**Figure 122. Downtown Detroit's frontage interactivity in 2001.**

As the twentieth century came to an end, downtown Detroit had reinvented itself once again. Having largely shed its role as a place of residence, industry or commerce, the urban core was now becoming a place of leisure. New developments such as Foxtown (1), sports stadiums (2) and casinos (3) were making their large mark on the brittle urban fabric of downtown, ignoring any rules on the humanly scaled and interactive relationship between buildings and public space. As with most projects of the previous decades, these newcomers had a rather distant relationship to public space, presenting themselves through mostly inactive frontages. They also failed to jumpstart any significant revitalization of the existing shuttered businesses that surrounded them, with Hudson's vacant block (4) reminding visitors of Detroit's long road ahead. As a result, downtown's

sidewalks became lined by a curious medley of existing dereliction and new disaffection. Blessing's postwar vision of suburbanizing downtown was coming true, yet not quite as he expected. Between the vacant remnants of Detroit past and the gaudy hulks of its future, Greenberg's grand vision for an interconnected and walkable downtown was less tangible than ever.

## 4.9 2001-2011

At the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Detroit was celebrating its 300<sup>th</sup> birthday. While the overall numbers for the city were far from rosy, downtown Detroit seemed past its lowest point and things were slowly starting to look up. A non-profit corporation chaired by Ford gathered funds from various businesses to renovate and maintain Detroit's central Campus Martius from a traffic junction into a high-quality public park, as their 'legacy' for revitalizing the city. The park's surroundings were still far from lively, but people were starting to notice the street's untapped potential and development activity was slowly on the rise, with many of the vacant retail palaces on the avenue redeveloped as lofts on 'Merchant's Row'.<sup>723</sup> Following the Compuware's headquarters opening the previous year, the grand opening of Campus Martius park in 2004 would bring street life back downtown for the first time in decades, acting as a "primary catalyst of downtown."<sup>724</sup> Indeed, other buildings in the vicinity would be constructed or renovated, including a number of retail outlets and entertainment venues, and a rather modest office structure on the old City Hall site.<sup>725</sup> The renovations of Washington Boulevard and Woodward Avenue from the 1970s were restored to a more traditional street layout, as they had fail to spur business development.<sup>726</sup> With significant public funding, the Book-Cadillac Hotel was restored to its former glory and opened in 2008, followed by reopening of the nearby Fort Shelby hotel the same year.<sup>727</sup> Both buildings addressed the street with vibrant new restaurants and restored lobbies. Furthermore, the downtown would see a revival of its festivals, with the long-running Thanksgiving Parade now augmented by various ethnic and music festivals.

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<sup>723</sup> Daniel G. Fricker, "Woodward Stretch Could Be Renewed as Merchant's Row Partnership Proposes 163 Loft Apartments," *Detroit Free Press*, September 11 2001; "Woodward's Voices Tell of Hard Work, Wild Ideas - Bowling Alley, Orchestra Hll, Flower Shop Survive, Thrive," *ibid.*, July 10.

<sup>724</sup> Judy Lin, "Urban Park Draws High Hopes - Many See the New Downtown Square, with Its Ice Rink and Cafe, as the Key to City Revival," *Detroit News*, November 18 2004.

<sup>725</sup> R.J. King, "Another Downtown Detroit Building Gets Makeover," *ibid.*, August 8; "Ernst to Move 400 to New Detroit Office Towner - Accounting Firm, Visteon Corp. Will Be Main Tenants at \$54 Million One Kennedy Square," *Detroit News*, May 15 2005.

<sup>726</sup> "Historic Trolleys Are History," *Detroit News*, October 24 2003.

<sup>727</sup> Louis Aguilar, "Restored Fort Shelby Hotel Opens," *ibid.*, December 16 2008; Louis Aguilar, Susan Whitall, and Maureen Feighan, "Restored Book Cadillac Hotel Reopens with Glitz, Glamour and Memories," *ibid.*, October 26.



**Figure 123. Campus Martius in downtown Detroit.**<sup>728</sup>

While Detroit's downtown core was showing the first signs of a more walkable streetscape with interactive frontages, its periphery was mostly headed in the opposite direction. The riverfront location originally envisioned for Detroit's casinos was left as parking lots, while the Greektown and MotorCity casino were allowed to expand their existing premises and the MGM Grand would receive a massive consolidated land parcel between Michigan Avenue and the Lodge and Fisher Freeways for their permanent establishment.<sup>729</sup> The new designs for the sprawling MGM Grand casino encompassed no less than thirteen blocks in the struggling northwest portion of Detroit's downtown. Any signs of the former Northern

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<sup>728</sup> Image by author, 2014.

<sup>729</sup> Tina Lam, "Detroit Wins Big with Casino Deal - City Will Keep Riverfront Land, Get Windfall of \$102 Million," *Detroit Free Press*, Mar 27 2002; City Planning Commission, "2000-2002 Biennial Report," (Detroit2002), 18.

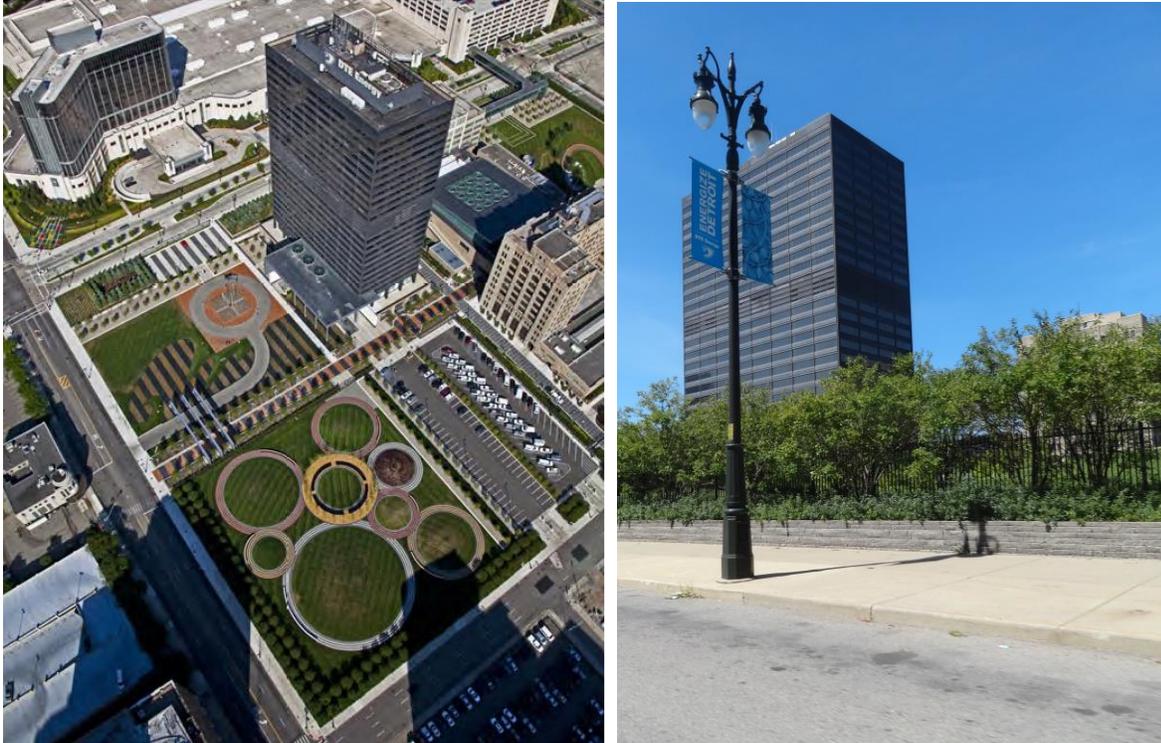
Skid Row were erased by 100,000 square feet of gaming, 30,000 square feet of meeting and entertainment space, eight stories of parking and 401 hotel rooms in a sixteen story tower visible from the Lodge Freeway exit, wrapped in a mixture of lawns, driveways, neon and blank walls. The casino would mark a new era of architecture for Detroit, in which automobile accessibility and garish iconography trumped human scale and interaction. The periphery of downtown Detroit had finally succumbed to its suburban parasite, as it had become one.

A similar process was taking place across the street from the new casino on Detroit Edison's new corporate campus. Over the past decades, the energy company had slowly expanded its land holdings in the northwest portion of downtown to form a coherent and mixed use corporate district. Yet their original 1970s plans for a true Electric City had never materialized, mostly due to the slump in Detroit's downtown office market.<sup>730</sup> As a result, their central headquarters were a "grab bag of buildings" surrounded by an unfinished sea of parking lots, utilities and vacant buildings. In 2009, the company was able to pull together several blocks of downtown into a coherent and secured "dream campus", with several landscaped plazas and integrated parking.<sup>731</sup> Yet for the passerby the permeability of the district had drastically declined: except for the front lawn the campus was surrounded by fences, hedgerows and blank walls, with Edison workers passing to their parking garage through a secured overhead walkway. Similar to the MGM Grand Casino, a suburban focus on automobile accessibility and security prevailed in Detroit's urban setting, as large-scale land consolidation allowed for the implementation of this multi-block project.

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<sup>730</sup> Miller, *The Force of Energy: A Business History of the Detroit Edison Company*; Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit*, 186.

<sup>731</sup> Mary E. Kremposky, "Making the Desert Bloom - Enchanting Changes at Dte Energy's Downtown Campus," *CAM Magaine* Fall(2009).



**Figure 124. Fly-over image (left) with Detroit Edison's corporate campus displayed in the foreground with the MGM Grand Casino complex in the background, fenced from the street (right).<sup>732</sup>**

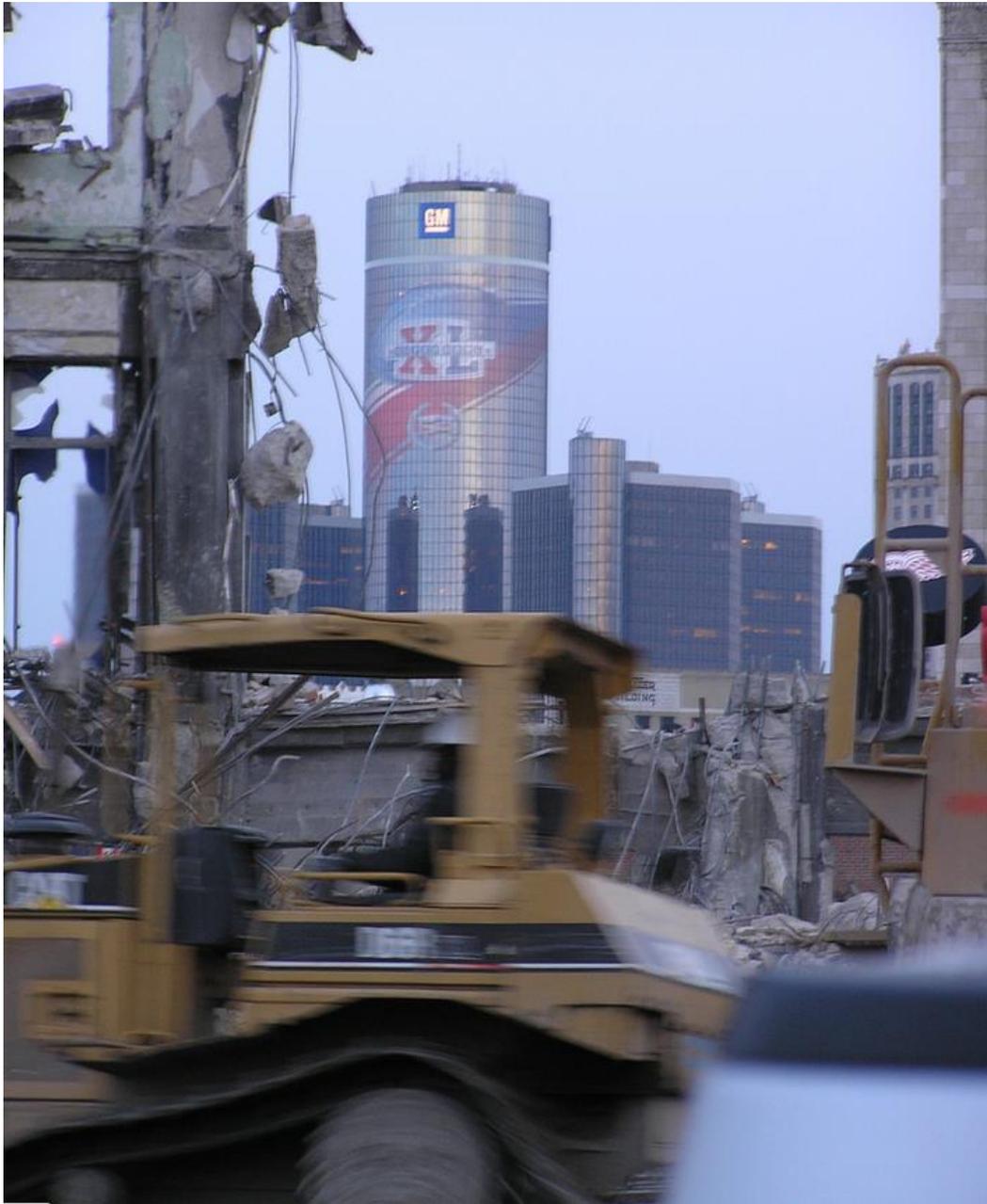
The city would be able to present its fledgling downtown rebirth to the nation at the 2006 Super Bowl, held at Ford Field. The massive football event brought thousands of visitors to the city, and millions more caught a glimpse of downtown on TV. The city was therefore keen to show itself in the best way possible, but it knew that many of its downtown buildings were far from presentable. A “cleanup fund” was created by the hosting committee, focusing on at least cosmetically sprucing up key corridors in the urban core.<sup>733</sup> Some still vacant downtown buildings were cleaned, given a fresh coat of paint or a new awning, giving passersby the impression of occupancy. Others were draped in with signs. Many were unfortunately demolished to make way for event parking, most notably the former Motown Music headquarters which made way for only 50 parking spots. Clearly, history hadn't changed Detroit's disregard for it. Nevertheless, the event did instill the city

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<sup>732</sup> Image from *ibid.*, 78. Right image by author, 2014.

<sup>733</sup> R.J. King, "Super Bowl Spruce-Up: \$100m," *Detroit News*, April 4 2002.

with a sense of pride and jumpstarted the opening of various restaurants and shops.<sup>734</sup> Yet the 2007 recession brought further revitalization to a virtual standstill.



**Figure 125. The announcement for the Superbowl XL on the Renaissance Center, viewed through the rubble of the former Motown headquarters.<sup>735</sup>**

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<sup>734</sup> Micheline Maynard, "Detroit Polishes, and Demolishes, for the Super Bowl," *New York Times*, January 22 2006.

<sup>735</sup> Image from [www.snweb.org](http://www.snweb.org).

As 2011 neared, a new downtown tenant has the potential to significantly shape its future. Mortgage banker and owner of Quicken Loans Dan Gilbert had brought thousands of his employees to the Compuware building in downtown in 2010, in search of the coveted Creative Class employee and its habitat: “Kids coming out of college want that urban core excitement, more and more.” As a result, downtown’s housing and retail market have significantly improved over the past years. Yet Gilbert’s visions to improve downtown didn’t stop with this move, as he would start buying up strategic downtown properties in an effort to revitalize the entire district that surrounds his headquarters.<sup>736</sup> Gilbert was one of the main sponsors for a new light-rail line running along Woodward Avenue, connecting downtown Detroit with the New Center. <sup>737</sup>His efforts would synthesize in 2013, when in cooperation with several public agencies including the Downtown Detroit Partnership, Gilbert would announce a comprehensive ‘placemaking’ plan, focusing on recreating vibrant downtown streetscapes lined with interactive business frontages.<sup>738</sup> While the plan has close similarities with Ken Greenberg’s vision for downtown of two decades past, the real difference lies in its implementation. Similar to Detroit Edison’s corporate campus, Ilitch’s entertainment district, the sports arenas and the various casinos that scatter downtown Detroit, Gilbert has been able to consolidate a sufficiently sized area in the city to realize his vision without risking any major obstruction from land owners, funding bodies or government agencies. While the private redevelopment of the public focus of Detroit raises eyebrows, it does have the potential to create a critical mass of interactive frontages to reinvigorate street life. As Gilbert plans to launch his downtown “Detroit 2.0” over the next few years, the evolution of downtown Detroit continues.<sup>739</sup>

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<sup>736</sup> David Segal, "A Missionary's Quest to Remake Motor City," *New York Times*, April 13 2013.

<sup>737</sup> Daniel Duggan, "Dan Gilbert: There's No Reason to Go Off the Rails on M1," *Crain's Detroit Business*, December 14 2011.

<sup>738</sup> Opportunity Detroit, "A Placemaking Vision for Downtown Detroit," (Detroit2013).

<sup>739</sup> “Detroit 2.0” was a term coined in Gilbert’s board rooms as the outcome of his revitalization efforts. Segal, "A Missionary's Quest to Remake Motor City."



Figure 126. Downtown Detroit's blocks, buildings, parcels, open spaces, parks and rivers in 2011.



**Figure 127. Downtown Detroit's frontage interactivity in 2011.**

As a study of a century of downtown Detroit comes to an end, the ever-growing forces that have shaped the urban core have become clearly visible. Armed with powers of condemnation and fueled by fire sale prices for dilapidated downtown buildings, massively scaled renewal projects have transformed the periphery of downtown Detroit into a landscape geared to the automobile and its hopefully affluent owner. Vast casino (1), sports (2), convention (3) and office (4) 'groundscrapers' and their seemingly insatiable hunger for parking have surrounded downtown's core with vast swaths of blank walls, infrastructure, car parking and suburban landscaping, aimed at convenience and security. Nevertheless, the former retail core of the city shows signs of strengthening with the construction of office buildings around Campus Martius (5) and the renovation or

reopening of various buildings on newly paved streets. For the first time since 1929, downtown Detroit has shown an increase in street-level interactivity, with small pockets of retail and leisure businesses opening in various locations throughout the downtown. This pattern may continue if the grand visions of downtown Detroit's real estate moguls are a success.

## 4.10 CONCLUSION

A few common threads that have run throughout the history of downtown Detroit have made the deterioration of its street level experience over the past century all but inevitable. Some of them are cultural, some economical, some social, and some are technological. Yet all of them combined have shaped the district and the architecture within it. Knowing that the interactivity between buildings and public space has deteriorated significantly over time, what forces have shaped this decline?

The most basic and devastating force that has severed the link between buildings and public space in Detroit precedes economics, society or design. It is the cultural conviction of the city to look to its future, while forgetting its past. Detroit is known as a boom-and-bust town, and its downtown is no different. As the city's population and industry exploded during the onset of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the somewhat sleepy yet distinguished residential character of downtown was rapidly shaken by high rise construction, streetcars and the bustle of commercial life. Dissenters existed, but the transformation of downtown Detroit was commonly seen as the inevitable path to progress. Yet even the very nature of downtown as the traditional center of power and commerce was under question during the period of rapid growth, as major auto companies didn't hesitate to move their business to other parts of the city or region. When cars arrived downtown, struggling peripheral buildings were viewed as obsolete liabilities and were torn down for their 'highest and best' use as parking lots, demolishing the physical and historical continuity of the urban fabric. Modernism in the postwar era brought unprecedented levels of amnesia to the city, as even Detroit's old City Hall succumbed to the forces of progress – only to leave an empty space for decades to come. As generations of Detroiters would leave and forget the Motor City from the 1950s onwards, it was working hard to erase its own past. And when downtown came down on its heels, any part of history that would obstruct an increasingly desperate grand vision for revitalization was ruthlessly erased, with the vast majority of downtown that was not on the public radar simply demolished by neglect. When one of the last remaining historic blocks of retail in the heart of Detroit was about to be demolished

for a plan that never materialized, a preservationist lamented: "Where can one go, or even be, for that matter, if one doesn't know one's past?"<sup>740</sup>

Another detrimental cultural force was the quintessentially American sense of individualism, breeding disregard for the collective needs and benefits of a vital downtown. It was the quest for individual gain that drove the seemingly endless competition for the title of tallest, largest and most elaborate building in Detroit's booming downtown of the 1910s and 1920s. Although interactive ground floor businesses had seemingly realized their mutual benefits of clustering along the city's busiest thoroughfares, this continuum proved short-lived when downtown's tides were turning with the rise of the automobile. Pressured by high taxation and low occupancy from the Depression onwards, it was the same quest for individual gain that prompted building owners to sever the continuity of active commercial streets by transforming their buildings to parking lots, disproportionately hurting the collective benefit of street-level continuity of interactive business frontages.

It was the unbridled belief in individual betterment that allowed for the accumulation of capital that built downtown's tallest skyscrapers during its boom years, yet it was the same accumulation that would prove highly detrimental to the urban core when it was past its prime. Retail giants like Hudson's and Kern's had outgrown their market by the time Detroit's tide turned, leaving unsalvageable hulks in their wake. Similarly, the deterioration of vast tracts of peripheral downtown land has allowed for massive single-owner developments that span multiple blocks with office complexes, sports stadiums and casinos that divide people either into revenue generators to be internalized, or poor passersby that need to be kept at bay. Through the same process, individual capital accumulation has created massive vacant shells in the urban core, and introverted compounds in its periphery.

Surely, the next-largest force that has altered downtown's eye-level experience beyond repair was the city's volatile economy. While downtown Detroit's streets were teeming with commercial life and the city's peripheral factories were spitting out products at

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<sup>740</sup> Fox, "Old Buildings Imperil City Plans."

unprecedented levels in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the street-level economy in the downtown periphery was already on the decline. Corner shops closed due to retail consolidation and the influx of impoverished residents, and detrimental land uses such as factories and car yards would often take their place, commencing a cycle of further decline. Furthermore, the amplitude of change in Detroit's economy resulted in a lack of trust among investors to solidify their capital into the vast office and apartment house districts that were going up in other American cities during the roaring '20s. Instead, Detroit's housing and commercial stock was often rapidly and rather poorly built for short-term profit. The downtown was essentially past its economic prime from the 1930s onwards and even when Detroit's population was still growing and wartime production reached fever pitch in the 1940s, the city's core building stock was shrinking and shriveling. When Detroit's tide turned from the 1950s onward, the downtown street level economy could only reflect the decreased buying power of its increasingly impoverished clientele. No matter how many public projects were implemented to stem the tide of downtown's decline, retail sales and businesses declined every year since measurements began in 1948 until downtown had become an empty wasteland of cars, concrete and provisional barricading. Even with the downtown rebounding in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the vast economic disparities between Detroiters and the continuing economic decline of the surrounding city will burden revitalization – a symptom seen in many other legacy cities across the United States.

Even more volatile than Detroit's economy has been its society. Already in its boomtown phase during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Detroit was experiencing growing pains. The seemingly endless demand for low-skilled labor brought waves of workers from all parts of the country and abroad, with the city's oldest housing stock surrounding downtown as a low-cost point of entry for many newcomers. As areas like Black Bottom and Cass Park were deteriorating into overcrowded slums, racial tensions mounted. Intolerance between classes and races mounted over time, with downtown often serving as an involuntary backdrop to violence and protests. The bulk of the devastating 1967 civil disorders may not have taken place downtown, but in many ways the urban core was its worst victim in the long term. Not only did white flight accelerate the decline of street-level business activity, the last remaining trust in the safety of public space would disappear during the 1970s.

Architecture from this era onwards reflected a deep-rooted fear of crime and disorder, with most buildings presenting themselves to the street through secured lobbies, parking ramps and blank walls. The coveted white-collar office workers that remained in downtown would be siphoned off the street into overhead walkways and the People Mover system. Most street-level business activity would be internalized into controlled environments like the Renaissance Center and Trappers Alley. The remaining struggling street-level retailers ensured the security of their business by barricading shop windows and minimizing the number of entrances. Fear and built form have become a self-fulfilling prophecy, in which an ever-decreasing percentage of interactive street frontages address an ever-decreasing percentage of interested passersby. Furthermore, downtown Detroit's defensive architecture only treats the symptom of a deeply segregated urban society, killing any potential revitalization of street life by failing to address public space in an open and positive manner.

Burdened with a culture of forgetfulness, individualism and socio-economic volatility, Detroit was practically defenseless against its own technological creation – the private automobile. The inability to cope with the massive morphological, economic and social changes that cars would bring to the very city that put the nation on wheels were magnified in its urban core. Ever since measurements began in 1911, downtown would face a double threat from growing car dependence. Firstly, Detroit's location on the wide plains of Michigan enabled companies and residents to locate themselves anywhere in the region, with downtown eclipsed from the onset by New Center and new centers. Secondly, in its attempts to remain relevant to its motorized citizens, downtown Detroit faced rapid erosion by parked and moving cars, spiraling downward to a point where its sheer value as a destination was in peril. Downtown's experiential and commercial selling point was at stake as its unique street-level continuity of interactivity was obliterated by a tide of cars. Most worryingly, much of this obliteration was fueled by government policy, combining the welcoming of cars with the riddance of historical 'obsolescence', significantly harming the interactive frontages that were often found in older building stock. Only when even the downtown parking lots remained vacant during the 1970s, would it dawn to Detroiters that this cycle was highly self-destructive. Yet the damage had already been done.

Presently, full circle has been reached as much of downtown Detroit's periphery looks as car-dependent and inactive as the very suburbs it was replaced by.

How could one even expect architects, urban designers and planners to be able to counter these massive forces? By the time Detroit's planners realized the magnitude of the combined perfect storm that was unleashed, it would already be too late. Downtown had suffered from a weak culture of planning during its most formative years before World War 2, as the city's first 1925 Master Plan was essentially a road widening scheme which was highly detrimental to street-level interactivity. An almost totally absent control on core erosion and peripheral deterioration had left downtown defenseless by the time the 1940 Zoning was introduced and postwar planners would arrive in full force. The Modern Dream City of highways, urban clearance, and land use and traffic separation would only magnify what had been established decades before: a struggling core surrounded by a ring of street-level inactivity. Yet Detroit can't be faulted for adopting a laissez-faire approach, as it had unleashed almost the full gamut of American urban renewal interventions on the downtown, from the expressway loop around downtown and Lafayette Park's urban renewal to the massive Renaissance Center project, the Trappers Alley festival marketplace, the partial pedestrianization of Woodward Avenue and Washington Boulevard and the more recent entertainment-led regeneration efforts. Perhaps what set the city apart from others is that these interventions struggled as solitary government-funded islands in a sea of overall downtown disinvestment, while many other cities experienced an economic renaissance from the 1980s onwards. In Detroit, Blessing's, Young's and Archer's monuments simply could not pull together the center city's sinking urban fabric.

In the end, it would be arrogant to state that the planning and design profession could have stemmed downtown's tide. Professionals had made their fair share of mistakes, yet they simply didn't have the tools nor the means to counter the cultural, social, economic and technological threats to vital street life in downtown Detroit. Even with the best intentions and interventions, the streets and its lining buildings in the heart of Detroit could only reflect the downward spiral the entire city was in. This practically unbreakable bond between public space, architecture and society is demonstrated by an exuberance of downtown vitality during the city's boom years of the 1910s and 1920s and the dangerous

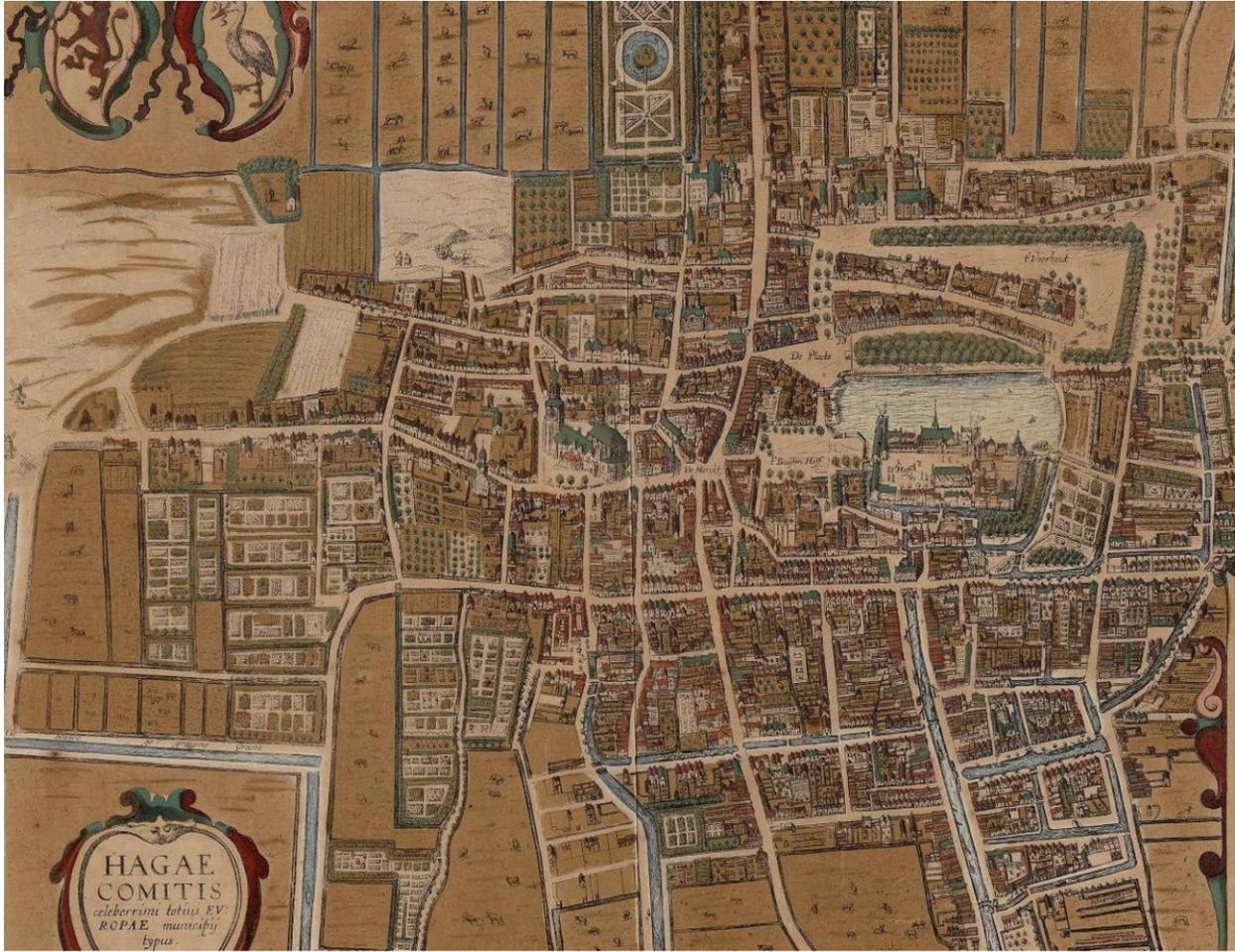
lack of downtown street life during Detroit's downfall of the 1970s and 1980s, with most professional interventions only serving as backdrops.

Yet it would be defeatist to state that no interventions could have prevented the downfall of street life in the downtown. The biggest lack in the vision for downtown revitalization was at the level between the individual building and the urban core as a whole. It was at the level of the building ensemble where the collective benefits of continuously interactive frontages would be found during the first decades of the twentieth century, and it was at this level where downtown would first show its peripheral cracks in the 1930s, only to fully collapse during the 1970s. It is at this scale that the last remaining pockets of activity are found in downtown's Greektown, Campus Martius and the financial district. As downtown Detroit's individual projects haven't survived and grand plans with little budgets haven't launched, any effort to revitalize downtown in an era of continuous economic hardship should realize the value of critical mass, and focus inevitably limited means and energy toward the achievable scale of the building ensemble, allowing for future spin-off success.

## **CHAPTER 5.**

### **THE HAGUE: EXTERNAL FORCES**

The inner city of The Hague has grown around the Hofvijver (Court Pond) from its inception in 1229 AD. South of this pond, count Floris VI decided to build a recreational mansion next to the pond's feeder brook. The wealth and power of the count attracted others to settle themselves around his mansion, serving the court with goods and services. Most of these early settlers located to the west of the count's mansion on the higher sand ridge that now forms the urban core of The Hague. The Dutch aristocracy was also keen to settle in close proximity to the center of power, and located themselves to the north of the count's mansion which materialized as the Inner and Outer Court, still the center of Dutch power today. With the dispersed settlement of servants and aristocrats, the long-standing duality of the city between the governing and governed had started. Several years later, around 1250 AD, count Willem II decided to transform his predecessor's mansion into a larger palace, and from 1248 onwards he became the self-crowned ruler of the Netherlands. At this time, The Hague as the seat of central government didn't pose much of a threat to the more powerful Dutch trade cities that surrounded it, preventing a competition for the title of capital city. Partly to keep The Hague as a neutral ground and prevent it from becoming a strong entity of its own, the inner city was not fortified by any canal or wall system for centuries.



**Figure 128. The Hague in 1617, with the Court Pond in the center right, directly north of the Inner Court complex, which to the right of the Outer Court square. The first parts of the ring canal are shown in the bottom left.**

This decision had a strong effect on the urban form of the inner city. Due to the lack of the limitations that a defense boundary would bring, the layout of the inner city was rather green and spacious, especially in the aristocratic section. The quarters of the Netherlands' upper class and ambassadors of surrounding regions were located along wide boulevards and spacious gardens. The court's servants were housed on lower grounds, along irrigation canals and harbors. The street pattern of the working part of The Hague was mainly based on water based transportation, with ship yards along main canals and residential streets running perpendicular to waterways. After a devastating occupation by Spanish troops during the Eighty Years' War at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the smoldering remains of the

city would be reconstructed into a newer and larger capital of a strengthening Dutch empire. This time, the city was allowed to build a defense canal system in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, which was ultimately finished in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. During these two centuries, other canals such as the Herengracht (1) and Prinsegracht (2) were also constructed, mainly from the utilitarian motive to ensure supply of fresh goods from the city's hinterland, but also to promote urban development. Yet The Hague's anticipated growth would not materialize until well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, leaving many of these canals devoid of lining buildings.

The pattern of growth until the 19<sup>th</sup> century is demonstrated by a cadastral map from 1823 (Figure 129). At this time, large portions of the city within the over-dimensioned ring canal were still unbuilt. Instead, most development had clustered around the main access routes to the north (Noordeinde, 3), west (Westeinde, 4), east (Lange Poten and Korte Poten, 5), and south (Spui, 6 and Wagenstraat, 7). The pre-canal structure of the city is also visible, as goods were formerly brought into the city along winding medieval streets into the central Green Market (Groenmarkt, 8). The construction of access canals had resulted in a new centrality surrounding the Grand Market (Grote Markt, 9) and the fledgling industrial district on the southern edge of the city around the Spui canal which linked The Hague with the rest of the country. The structure of higher sandy soils can be recognized in the urban tissue as most monuments have been constructed on the main east-west ridge: the Grand Church (Grote Kerk, 10), the count's Outer and Inner Court (Buitenhof, 11 and Binnenhof, 12) as well as most aristocratic quarters in the city such as the Lange Voorhout (14).<sup>741</sup>

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<sup>741</sup> Most information on the initial growth of The Hague is derived from Smook, *Binnensteden Veranderen: Atlas Van Het Ruimtelijk Veranderingsproces Van Nederlandse Binnensteden in De Laatste Anderhalve Eeuw*. Also, the morphological and economic history of the city is described in various chapters in Smit and Beukers, *Den Haag : Geschiedenis Van De Stad*.



Figure 129. The Hague's inner city in 1823, with the most important street names numbered.<sup>742</sup>

The Hague would experience its first drastic growth only during the Industrial Revolution which would arrive in the Netherlands around 1850. The strengthening role of The Hague as the administrative center of a growing country and colonial empire brought scores of newcomers, many from the Dutch countryside. Between 1850 and 1900, the city's population would almost triple from 71,000 to more than 206,000.<sup>743</sup> The inner city reflected this rapid growth by building outwards and inwards at the same time. From 1870 onwards, the city growth would finally exceed its canal ring, partly also because their role as a defense system had been decommissioned due to the relative safety on the European

<sup>742</sup> Map modified from Smook, *Binnensteden Veranderen: Atlas Van Het Ruimtelijk Veranderingsproces Van Nederlandse Binnensteden in De Laatste Anderhalve Eeuw*.

<sup>743</sup> P. R. D. Stokvis, *De Wording Van Modern Den Haag : De Stad En Haar Bevolking Van De Franse Tijd Tot De Eerste Wereldoorlog*(Zwolle: Waanders, 1987), 146.

continent. Furthermore, the city's two main railway stations would be constructed right outside the canals, with Hollands Spoor constructed in 1843 south of the city, and Rhijnspoor (now Central Station) in 1870. Both stations would spur the construction of new districts to surround them, and would stretch the commercial core of the city to their doorsteps. However, many poorer newcomers would also find a place in increasingly cramped quarters within the canal ring, often in highly unhygienic and unsafe slums that were constructed in courtyards within the urban blocks of The Hague's inner city. While the esthetics and conditions of buildings were conditioned by law from 1841 onwards, enforcement only occurred at street level, leaving inner courtyard buildings to the wits of speculators.<sup>744</sup> The instatement of a Department of City Works which produced some early city plans would hardly improve matters, as urban development was mainly considered a private affair.<sup>745</sup>

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<sup>744</sup> Cees Boekraad and Joos Aerts, "Berlage En De Lotgevallen Van De 'Schone Stad' - Den Haag in De Jaren 1900-1934," in *Het Veranderend Stadsbeeld Van Den Haag*, ed. Victor Freijser (Zwolle: Waanders, 1991), 17; Auke van der Woud, *Koninkrijk Vol Sloppen : Achterbuurten En Vuil in De Negentiende Eeuw* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2010).

<sup>745</sup> Michelle Provoost, "De Grenzen Van De Metropool - Den Haag in De Jaren 1950-1970," in *Het Veranderend Stadsbeeld Van Den Haag*, ed. Victor Freijser (Zwolle: Waanders, 1991), 36-37.



**Figure 130. Courtyard slum behind the Spui in 1900.<sup>746</sup>**

The population growth and outward expansion would bring unprecedented levels of traffic to the city, leading to the first traffic ‘breakthroughs’ in which new streets would be cut through the existing urban traffic to enable the efficient passage of a growing number of streetcars and goods carts.<sup>747</sup> Furthermore, an increasing number of canals would be filled to make way for traffic and to alleviate hygienic concerns, drastically transforming the economy and appearance of the southern portion of the inner city. While public spaces were traditionally seen as a place for citizens to stroll, to see and be seen, this leisurely function was increasingly crowded out by the more functional demands for transportation

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<sup>746</sup> Etch by M. Kramer, courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.

<sup>747</sup> Monique van Veen and Henk Ambachtsheer, *"Een Simpele Verkeersverbetering" : De Geschiedenis Van De Grote Marktstraat En Omgeving*(Den Haag: Gemeente Den Haag, dienst Stedelijke Ontwikkeling, 2005), 30-34.

and accessibility. The Passage shopping arcade was constructed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as a haven of tranquility but above all gentility in a city that was slowly becoming too crowded for The Hague's growing bourgeoisie.<sup>748</sup> The arcade was followed by countless retail palaces that transformed the retail core of the city into one of the country's most cosmopolitan places to shop, mingle, see and be seen. During these times, the growing number of shops and their increasingly elaborate and interactive ground floor display windows would become a part of the city's mass media culture, bringing trends and cultural shifts to a wide audience.<sup>749</sup> Toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, urban chronicler Johan Gram described the inner city as divided but diverse. The Hague had already undergone a self-organized division of its land uses by creating a strong retail core: "The "City" of The Hague is the Groenmarkt with the adjoining Hoogstraat, Venestraat and Spuistraat. There is the heart of the flaneur-world, there are the large department stores of fashion and luxury articles."<sup>750</sup> The Hague was on the rise as a city of the ruling class, and its downtown reflected the accompanying grandeur, at least for those who could afford it.

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<sup>748</sup> Coos Vereniging Passage Belangen Versteeg, *Passage 100 Jaar* (Den Haag: Vereniging Passage Belangen, 1985); Rolf de Booij, *De Haagse Passage : Geschiedenis Van Een Nieuw Winkelfenomeen* ('s-Hertogenbosch: Wolfaert, 2011).

<sup>749</sup> Jan Hein Furnée, "Om Te Winkelen, Zoo Als Het in De Residentie Heet'. Consumptiecultuur En Stedelijke Ruimte in Den Haag, 1850-1890'," *Jaarboek voor Vrouwengeschiedenis* (2002).

<sup>750</sup> The term "city" specifically refers to the City of London, in which residential uses had been displaced by commerce in their need for centrality and accessibility. J. Gram, *'S Gravenhage in Onzen Tijd* (Beijers, 1893), 26.



**Figure 131. Recently widened Gravenstraat with streetcar, as seen from the Outer Court around 1907, with the Passage to the left and the Grand Church steeple in the background. <sup>751</sup>**

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<sup>751</sup> Image from a post card by Speelman, courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.

## 5.1 1911 - 1937

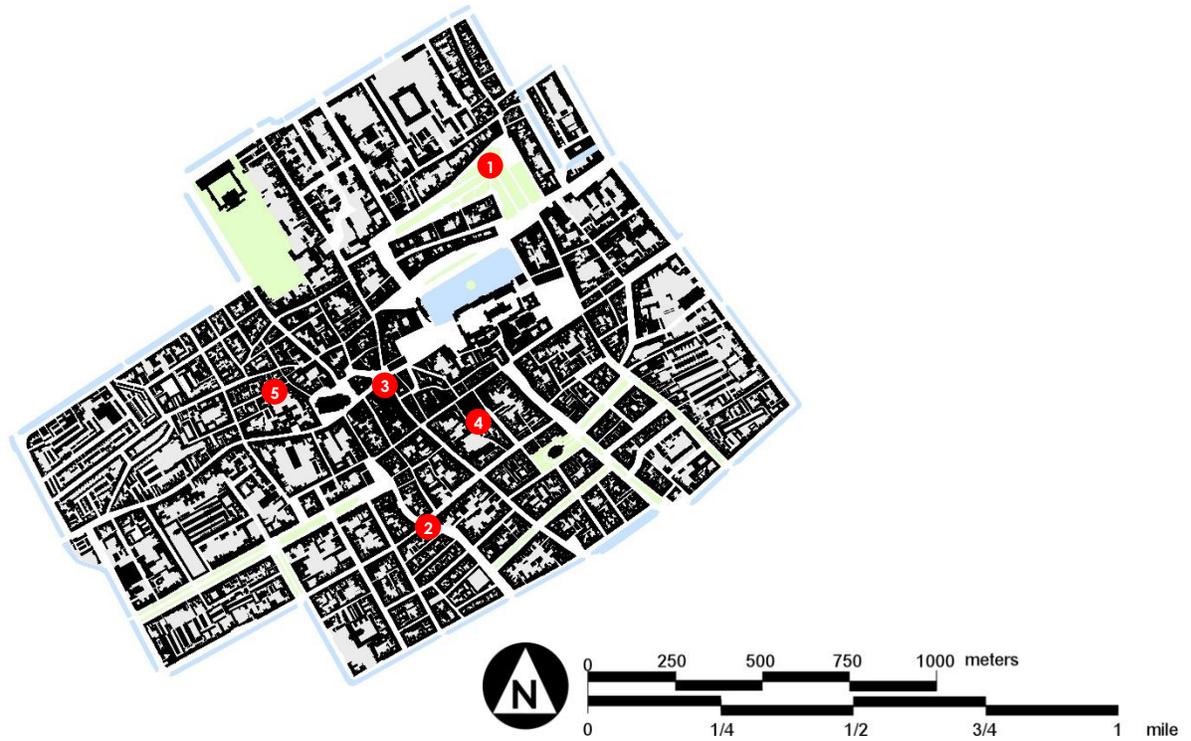


Figure 132. The Hague's inner city blocks, buildings, parcels, open spaces, parks and rivers in 1911.



Figure 133. The Hague's inner city interactivity in 1911.

Like Detroit, The Hague was a city in rapid transition in 1911. The ring canal was filled with an eclectic mixture of stately mansions and parks to the north (1), and increasingly overcrowded slum dwellings to the south (2), meeting in a rapidly modernizing and congesting retail core (3). Urban growth had brought the city's population to over 280,000 in 1911 and growth showing little sign of slowing. The city's economy was starting to hinge on the strengthening central government, but it was highly diversified with other administrative headquarters, as well as a thriving and diverse industry. At the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, only a small percentage of The Hague therefore directly worked for the government.<sup>752</sup> The inner city was teeming with life, its streets filled with visitors, newcomers and natives from all walks of life. The busiest city streets were filled with a wide variety of stores, offering an "unrivaled overview of all sorts of tasteful shop windows in all sorts of styles and fantasies, [and] of coquetting appearances behind high mirror windows, in other words, the most curious attempts to draw the attention from the public."<sup>753</sup> Consumer culture was pervasive in The Hague's society, with the retail core serving as a space for leisurely strolling perhaps even more than for targeted purchases. Ground floor shops were a crucial part of the excitement and experience of the inner city: "even if beautifully laid out, a street or canal without shops only have a short [span of] attractiveness."<sup>754</sup> While stores on different streets clearly catered to different audiences, their intermingling often led to class, gender and moral friction.<sup>755</sup> Despite the increasing resistance between the inner city of the aristocracy and the working class, the urban core was considered to have an "air of solid comfort and quiet opulence ... wholly different from the commercial prosperity associated with the chief cities of other European countries."<sup>756</sup>

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<sup>752</sup> Boekraad and Aerts, "Berlage En De Lotgevallen Van De 'Schone Stad' - Den Haag in De Jaren 1900-1934," 32.

<sup>753</sup> Johan Gram, *'S-Gravenhage Voorheen En Thans* ('s-Gravenhage: Couvée, 1905), 84.

<sup>754</sup> C.M.M. van den Berg, "Etalagewedstrijd Boekhorststraat," *De handeldrijvende middenstand* 5, no. 17 (1910).

<sup>755</sup> Johan Gram complains: "When someone has the impression that the society of higher classes in our royal city exerts their influence on the lower classes, then he should be invited to take a look at a Sunday evening on the corner of the Spuistraat and Passage." In the same work, Gram cites a pensioner, "I will leave it to crooks to go out on a Sunday. That day it is so darned mixed on the streets and everywhere, that I don't want to mingle among that mess!" Gram, *'S-Gravenhage Voorheen En Thans*, 20-21 and 68.

<sup>756</sup> *Guide to the Hague*, (Zeist: Meindert Boogaardt Jr., 1911).

The retail streets were quite spread out throughout the urban cores, especially because the railway stations –one of the main access points to the city- were located right outside the core. These peripheral streets housed a wide variety of store types, many of which were more transient than in the established retail core.

Despite The Hague's reputation as an upscale residence, slum conditions were worsening in the periphery of the inner city.<sup>757</sup> One of the worst areas was the notoriously unsafe and unsanitary Jewish district of the city (4), south of the retail core. Housing conditions were appalling and a significant number of residents lived in overcrowded dwellings, often without proper plumbing. Furthermore, crime and prostitution prospered.<sup>758</sup> However, the district was also home to many small craftsmen, wholesalers and retail businesses, a functional remnant of its location along the city's former canals. While housing conditions deteriorated, commerce prospered and the area had a highly interactive street-level architecture.<sup>759</sup> A similar slum had formed to the west of the retail core (5), "...an old mess of crooked homes and small shacks and narrow courts and curvy thoroughfares ... [accommodating] a special sort of inhabitants, that had their own little society there."<sup>760</sup> Homes were literally falling apart, with collapsed buildings intermixed with their still standing neighbors. While in both neighborhoods retail and craft trade was closely intermingled with other land uses, businesses were often marginal and were above all considered morally unfit: "Everywhere, something was for sale... one would sell to the other and that's how they survived." The street in question offered second hand goods, old furniture, dog grooming, writing services, birds, horse meat, chimney sweeping, working clothes, and various food items.<sup>761</sup> The national 1901 Housing Act was aimed to alleviate the slum conditions that plagued most Dutch inner cities, but its stipulations only applied

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<sup>757</sup> A vivid description of slum housing conditions was presented in "Hoe Arm Den Haag Woont," *De Stedelijke Courant*, November 24 1908.

<sup>758</sup> Veen and Ambachtsheer, *"Een Simpele Verkeersverbetering" : De Geschiedenis Van De Grote Marktstraat En Omgeving*, 44-46.

<sup>759</sup> I. B. van Creveld, *De Verdwenen Buurt : Drie Eeuwen Centrum Van Joods Den Haag('s-Gravenhage: De Walburg Pers, 1989).*

<sup>760</sup> "Nieuwe Verkeerswegen in Den Haag - Prinsegracht - Noordwal," *Haagsche Schouw*, March 20 1925.

<sup>761</sup> Ibid.

to new urban extensions. As a result, slum clearance in the older parts of the city was slow to start. The act did force the city to draft its first citywide master plan in 1903, but the plan mainly focused on providing infrastructure for private development in urban extensions, reserving a purposely modest role for the city government.<sup>762</sup>



**Figure 134. Courtyard slum around the Voldersgracht, around 1910 (left) and residents of the Vleerstraat around 1900 (right).<sup>763</sup>**

Instead of focusing on housing conditions, the city was mostly occupied with its rapid increase in traffic, which became a serious issue for the medieval streets of the inner city. During rush hours, certain inner city intersections became practically impossible to pass. Especially the busiest intersection between the east-west Spuistraat and north-south

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<sup>762</sup> I. A. Lindo, *De Openbare Werken Van 'S-Gravenhage, 1890-1918 : Uitgegeven Ter Gelegenheid Van Het Aftreden Van Den Heer I.A. Lindo Als Directeur Der Gemeentewerken Op 1 Juli 1918*(The Hague: Mouton, 1918); Christiaan Vaillant, "De Haagse Architectuur En Stedebouw in De Periode 1900-1940," in *Gids Van De Moderne Architectuur in Den Haag - Guide to Modern Architecture in the Hague*, ed. Cees van Boven, Victor Freijser, and Christiaan Vaillant(The Hague: Ulysses, 1997).

<sup>763</sup> Images courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.

Wagenstraat had become a notorious source of congestion and accidents.<sup>764</sup> The construction of new urban districts and two train stations beyond walking distance from the inner city had rapidly increased the adoption of streetcars and horse carts for traversing the urban core. Furthermore, the adoption of the automobile was more rapid than anyone could have anticipated.<sup>765</sup> The jumble of horse carts, street cars and automobiles were threatening the urban core with a “traffic infarct” at its most crucial points. Various proposals for alleviating traffic were presented by architects, planners and engineers to City Council between 1860 and 1900, but concerns about cost and a lack of an overall vision had mostly prevented their adoption.<sup>766</sup>



**Figure 135. Traffic around the Vlamingsstraat, around 1900.<sup>767</sup>**

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<sup>764</sup> G. L. van Exel, *Na De Hoofdstad De Hofstad; Ervaringen Van Een Haags Politieaan* ('s-Gravenhage: D.A. Daamen, 1951), 89; Gram, *'S-Gravenhage Voorheen En Thans*.

<sup>765</sup> While automobile ownership was far below the levels of Detroit during the first counts in the 1920s, so was the available space to accommodate cars. Gemeentebestuur, "Enige Grondslagen Voor De Stedebouwkundige Ontwikkeling Van 'S-Gravenhage." image 89

<sup>766</sup> Veer and Ambachtsheer, *"Een Simpele Verkeersverbetering" : De Geschiedenis Van De Grote Marktstraat En Omgeving*, 60.

<sup>767</sup> From post card, image courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.

The city would finally take action when local pressure to counter mounting traffic issues was combined with a national pressure to alleviate the notorious slum conditions in the city. The perceived cure for both were “traffic breakthroughs”, the construction of new streets in the city while clearing substandard housing on its path, killing two birds with one stone. In contrast to Detroit, The Hague preferred constructing new, wider streets over widening existing business streets to accommodate traffic. Partly, this was based on a fear of the high cost of land acquisition and clearance of some of the city’s most expensive property on its main commercial arterials, but mostly this was driven by a vision to retain the character of the existing inner city. The Hague’s urban planning director Lindo would comment that “it would be a shame to sacrifice this ‘cozy’ [business] section of the city and replace it with nasty modern streets with their parvenu appearance.”<sup>768</sup> While Lindo had drawn several plans for inner city traffic alleviation during his tenure, they were mostly rather timid. Instead, architect Berlage was commissioned by the city in 1907 to design a master plan for extending the city and alleviating its core congestion. The following year, he presented three main traffic projects for the urban core: an east-west artery that would alleviate traffic from the Vlamingstraat and Spuistraat, and a north-south artery that would connect the inner city with the growing outer districts toward the sea. A third project would open up the historic inner and outer courts to the city and form another major north-south axis. Other, smaller projects aimed to widen streets in peripheral slum districts. Berlage proposed a close connection between these new streets and the monumental architecture that would line them. After lengthy deliberations, the proposals were finally adopted by City Council in 1915.<sup>769</sup>

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<sup>768</sup> "Archief Stadsbestuur 1851-1936," (The Hague 1907).

<sup>769</sup> Berlage was in many cases not the first designer of these projects, as many had been proposed over the years by engineers and planners.

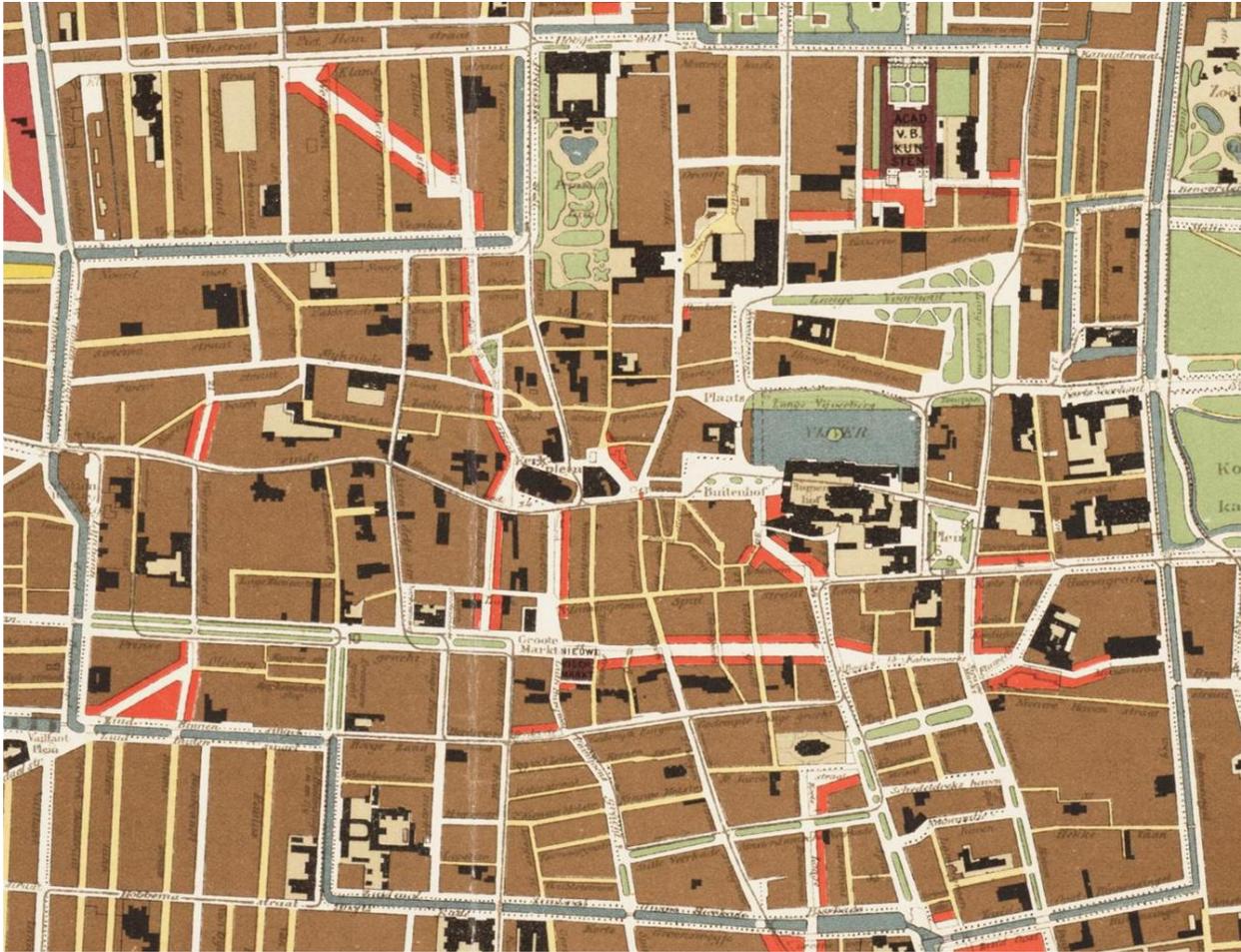


Figure 136. Berlage's traffic breakthroughs in his 1909 plans for the inner city, indicated in red.<sup>770</sup>

To save money and to expedite the purchase and condemnation of land for these new streets, the city would build them at 60 feet wide and only reserved small strips of land on either side, intending to sell the land after the streets were constructed to recoup some of the cost.<sup>771</sup> The plans clearly prioritized the alleviation of traffic over spurring inner city development. Instead of recognizing the commercial boulevard it would become, the new Grote Marktstraat was seen as 'a simple traffic improvement.' Nevertheless, the city's ambitions were grandiose, as the end goal of these traffic plans was nothing less than a

<sup>770</sup> Insert from Berlage's city plan of 1909, published by Smulders. Image courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.

<sup>771</sup> Veen and Ambachtsheer, *"Een Simpele Verkeersverbetering": De Geschiedenis Van De Grote Marktstraat En Omgeving*, 71-77.

complete overhaul of the city and its image, as “time, which never stands still... demanded the breakthroughs, the breakthroughs with their reshaping of the old inner city in a completely new form... a modern city, ready for all traffic. Time has demanded its growth and our city council has encouraged it.”<sup>772</sup> The inner city was to transform itself to accommodate the central functions for a rapidly expanding city, “the needs of the growing organism.”<sup>773</sup> Despite the optimism by some, discussions on the effects of these new streets cutting through some of the most historic parts of the city flared, leading to significant delays on the breakthrough for the new north-south road next to the Court Pond.<sup>774</sup> Land acquisition for the other new streets was also painfully slow, and the streets were only completed well into the 1920s. The further professionalization of urban planning and design by the instatement of the new Department of City Development and Public Housing in 1918 would not significantly accelerate this lengthy process.<sup>775</sup>

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<sup>772</sup> Herman Poot, "De Doorbraken in De Binnenstad: Hoe Uit De Oude Stad Een Moderne Groeit," *'s-Gravenhage in beeld*, April 26 1929.

<sup>773</sup> Lindo, *De Openbare Werken Van 's-Gravenhage, 1890-1918 : Uitgegeven Ter Gelegenheid Van Het Aftreden Van Den Heer I.A. Lindo Als Directeur Der Gemeentewerken Op 1 Juli 1918*, 40.

<sup>774</sup> Boekraad and Aerts, "Berlage En De Lotgevallen Van De 'Schone Stad' - Den Haag in De Jaren 1900-1934," 83-84.

<sup>775</sup> K. G. Valentijn Dick Rouwenhorst, *'s-Gravenhage 1840-1940 : "100 Jaar Haagse Stadsontwikkeling"* ('s-Gravenhage: Gemeente 's-Gravenhage, Afd. Verkeer en Vervoer, Openbare Werken en Monumentenzorg (VOM), 1988), 25.



**Figure 137. Construction of the Grote Marktstraat, around 1920.<sup>776</sup>**

The new streets would indeed accommodate the growth of motorized traffic in the city, but perhaps their most important contribution to the inner city's progress came from their lining parcels. Even though they were often awkwardly shaped and rather small, the newly created centrality of these parcels would bring a new era of inner city development, marked by a significant jump in scale and style. At street level, most of the large new buildings that would start to line the streets were occupied by retail businesses that were a significant size up from their inner city peers, marking a trend toward retail consolidation in which larger retailers increasingly replaced small businesses. A good example was the new Bijenkorf department store on the Grote Marktstraat, the first branch of a successful establishment from Amsterdam. The new building, designed by Amsterdam School architect Piet Kramer opened in 1926, was praised for bringing an unprecedented

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<sup>776</sup> Image courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.

“fairytale palace” of commerce to The Hague luring “the shopping pedestrian by its exterior appearance, walking past its endless range of window displays.”<sup>777</sup> The building would be the largest department store in the country at the time of its opening, while simultaneously introducing the Netherlands’ first escalator. Yet the refined Bijenkorf was also criticized for hurting retail business activity elsewhere in The Hague’s inner city, as the store was considered “in fact, nothing different than a combination of a large number of shops under a central supervision ... [which will] make the already difficult struggle for survival for many shop owners much harder.”<sup>778</sup> Whether or not the Bijenkorf was a direct culprit, the number of inner city retailers was indeed steadily declining during the era of its opening.



**Figure 138. Bijenkorf around 1930. Note the vacant lots on the Grote Marktstraat to the left of the image.**<sup>779</sup>

<sup>777</sup> Comments by Dr. P.H. Ritter and H. Th Wijdeveld, *De Bijenkorf 'S-Gravenhage* (Amsterdam: Vereenigde bureaux voor de uitgave van speciale werken, 1926), 18-19.

<sup>778</sup> Chief urban planner P. Bakker Schut in *ibid.*, 13.

<sup>779</sup> Image courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.

The Bijenkorf was accompanied by various other retailers, offices and residences that were constructed along the new boulevards in an architectural scale, monumentality and modernity that was mostly new to the city. The Haagsche Courant newspaper would construct its block-long headquarters right next to the Bijenkorf, topped with a domed planetarium and lined by display windows that offered passersby a glimpse of the ever-moving printing presses, later accompanied by the city's first news ticker tape.<sup>780</sup> Buildings for the Volharding cooperative and several department stores would soon follow, and the new traffic layout would spur office construction throughout the inner city, especially around the Inner and Outer Court government center. Yet a consolidated office district would not materialize, as many large offices would also be constructed outside the urban core.<sup>781</sup> On the Torenstraat, a multistory parking garage constructed in 1930 would introduce a new building type to The Netherlands. The Torengarage was the temple for a new age of growing automobile use, especially among the elite. The parking garage would cater to all needs of the modern car owner, with parking, servicing and sales combined into the "house for your automobile."<sup>782</sup> On the ground floor, the garage faced the street with a transparent frontage for a car dealership. Behind the garage, some of the city's worst slum housing was slowly cleared and redeveloped, mostly on a case-by-case basis and initiated by private enterprise.<sup>783</sup>

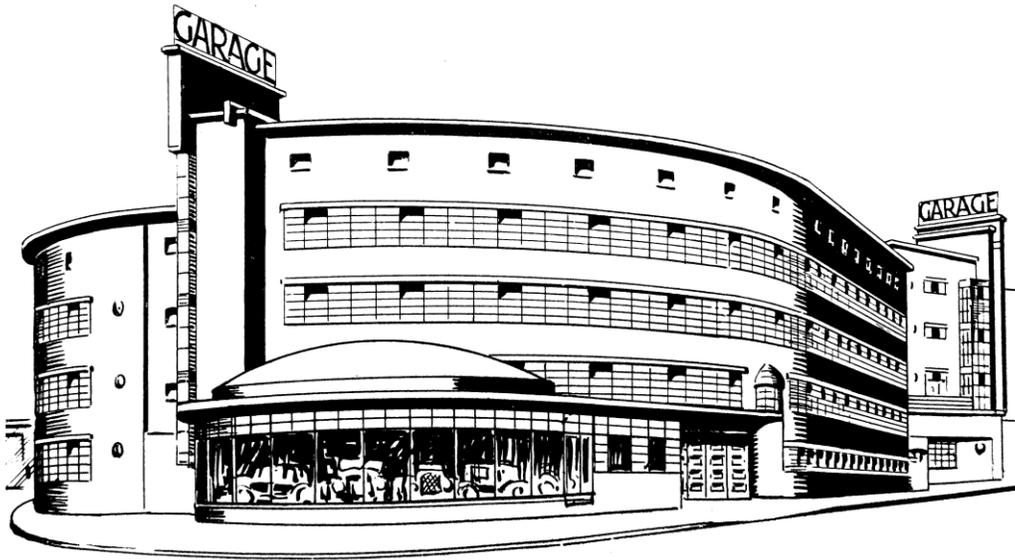
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<sup>780</sup> Veen and Ambachtsheer, *"Een Simpele Verkeersverbetering" : De Geschiedenis Van De Grote Marktstraat En Omgeving*, 85-86.

<sup>781</sup> Vaillant, "De Haagse Architectuur En Stedebouw in De Periode 1900-1940."

<sup>782</sup> "Iets Nieuws Onder De Zon Is De Torengarage," (The Hague: S. Viskoper, 1930).

<sup>783</sup> "Onderzoek Naar Woningtoestanden," *Het Vaderland*, August 20 1930.



**Figure 139. Rendering of the Torengarage with its automobile dealership in the foreground.<sup>784</sup>**

Yet many other parcels lining the new streets would take much longer to materialize, as developers were hesitant to build and most of the remaining parcels were poorly sized and irregularly shaped.<sup>785</sup> As a result, the streets were lined with vacant lots and fences for years, waiting for developers to take their chances. The press would complain: "From an airplane some parts of the old inner city give the impression of a war ruin."<sup>786</sup> A proposal to construct a new city hall on the corner of the new Grote Marktstraat and the Spui was launched, but land condemnations progressed slowly and political support was waning. Ultimately, the plan failed and the council voted to move their city hall just north of the inner city in 1934.<sup>787</sup> Many parcels would only start development in the mid-1930s, and buildings often had a short life span. Nevertheless, the boulevards did accommodate the

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<sup>784</sup> "Iets Nieuws Onder De Zon Is De Torengarage."

<sup>785</sup> Veen and Ambachtsheer, *"Een Simpele Verkeersverbetering" : De Geschiedenis Van De Grote Marktstraat En Omgeving*, 75.

<sup>786</sup> Herman Poot, "De Verruiming Der Binnenstad," *'s-Gravenhage in beeld*, April 12 1929.

<sup>787</sup> Veen and Ambachtsheer, *"Een Simpele Verkeersverbetering" : De Geschiedenis Van De Grote Marktstraat En Omgeving*, 92-93; F. J. W. Wegerif Ahazuerus Hendikus Rooker, *Plan Tot Verbetering Van Het Stads gedeelte Tusschen Spui En Zwarteweg* ('s-Gravenhage 1941).

process of 'city formation': the growth of a significant concentration of business activities in the inner city, with residents pushed out toward the rapidly expanding periphery of the city.

While the new streets had succeeded in routing traffic away from most of the city's older and narrower streets, they were at risk of becoming obsolete mere decades after their painstaking creation. Car traffic continued to mount, partly due to their newly found success as commercial destinations but mostly as a result of the rapid increase in cars in the city. The number of vehicles that were counted on some of the city's most central streets had increased ten to twentyfold between 1912 and 1937, and car registration was continuing to mount.<sup>788</sup> As a result, the city had instated one way traffic as early as 1928 and regulations to protect pedestrians from the growing "traffic chaos" were instated soon after.<sup>789</sup> Another approach to tackle traffic was to conduct traffic counts to survey which routes were most popular with different modes of traffic. Besides accommodating moving cars, parking them became an increasingly thorny issue for the inner city. Although many office developments were scattered throughout the city (considered a "very fortunate condition"), the inner city still contained most of The Hague's commercial, cultural and civic destinations and parked cars were clogging downtown streets. A traffic count in 1934 demonstrated that especially the retail core of the inner city was at its parking capacity, and shortages were exacerbated by parking bans to promote the flow of traffic on main streets. Many of the city's squares were already used as parking lots, and they were supplemented by the still undeveloped lots left by street breakthroughs. Nevertheless, the city proposed to create more parking lots within or close to the retail core of the city and to spread inner city destinations to prevent further congestion.<sup>790</sup> This public approach to

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<sup>788</sup> Boekraad and Aerts, "Berlage En De Lotgevallen Van De 'Schone Stad' - Den Haag in De Jaren 1900-1934," 53; Gemeentebestuur, "Enige Grondslagen Voor De Stedebouwkundige Ontwikkeling Van 'S-Gravenhage," 275.

<sup>789</sup> N.D. Pool, "Verkeersverordening - Met Toelichting Uit De Algemeene Politieverordening Der Gemeente 'S-Gravenhage," ed. Afdeeling verkeerswezen(The Hague1928); Th. van Swieten, "De Residentie Pakt Moeilijke Verkeersproblemen Aan," *De Auto - officieel orgaan van de Koninklijke Nederlansche Automobiël Club* 33(1936).

<sup>790</sup> P. Bakker Schut, "De Binnenstad Van Den Haag Als Parkeer-Ruimte," *Wegen* 11, no. 9 (1935).

curbing traffic stood in stark contrast to the speculation-led densification of downtown Detroit.



**Figure 140. Parked cars on the Outer Court, around 1938.<sup>791</sup>**

As the Depression came to The Hague, the economy suffered but perhaps less so than in many other trade oriented cities. Cultural life flourished like never before in the 1930s, and in 1932 the main commercial artery of the city was still filled with people that were attracted to the many shops, traveling salesmen, buskers, but most of all to each other: “there is plenty of entertainment in the Spuistraat and we all feel like citizens of a large

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<sup>791</sup> Image courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.

city... in the heart of The Hague, the nerve of this world city."<sup>792</sup> Yet the relatively large chain stores that were lining these central streets were increasingly challenging the survival of the many more marginal stores in the periphery of the inner city. That same year, the Chamber of Commerce warned that the number of stores in The Hague was on the decline, and small businesses would inevitably suffer from the retail boom on the city's main streets.<sup>793</sup> Furthermore, a retail survey at the height of the Depression in 1935 found the number of shops in the city far exceeding the capacity of shop owners to make a living. The sizes of most businesses were very small, with 60% of shops smaller than 500 square feet and almost 20% of shops not located in a retail building. Many of these were illegal establishments that operated without taxation or oversight. The city considered these smaller businesses as a visual and social blight to their surroundings, with their presence "inversely related to the social class of the neighborhood residents", their awnings and signs significantly deteriorating the "character of quiet residential streets" and their "unified architecture." The report recommended to weed out these smaller establishments in order to improve the livelihood of the remaining retailers and the appearance of the city's streets.<sup>794</sup> This process would be supported by national licensing policy that mandated creditworthiness and professional knowledge for retailers from 1937 onwards, essentially curbing many smaller retailers from obtaining a license to continue their business.<sup>795</sup> These interventions would only reinforce the trend toward a decline of business activity and resulting frontage interactivity of the inner city periphery, while the core prospered.

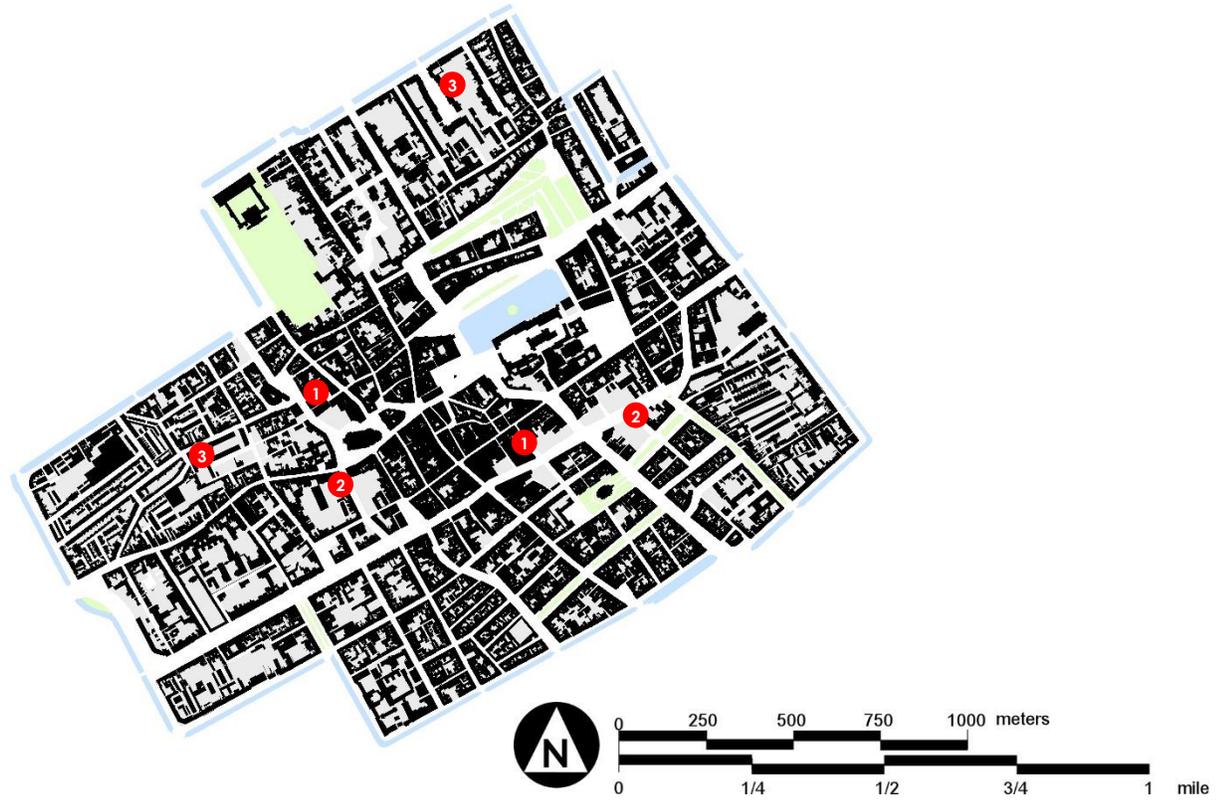
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<sup>792</sup> L.W., "Het Haagje - De Gleuf," *Het Vaderland*, December 1 1932; Maarten van Doorn, "Het Leven Gaat Er Een Lichten Gang : Den Haag in De Jaren 1919-1940" (Waanders, 2002).

<sup>793</sup> "De Ontwikkeling Van Het Bedrijfsleven in Het Gebied Van De Kamer Van Koophandel En Fabrieken Voor 'S-Gravenhage," (The Hague 1932).

<sup>794</sup> The survey was also an unemployment relief work project. Schut, "Rapport Betreffende Winkel telling 1935."

<sup>795</sup> The policies were the Vestigingswet Kleinbedrijf 1937 (establishment law small business 1937) and the Besluit Algemeen Vestigingsverbod Kleinbedrijf 1941 (decree general ban on establishment small business 1941).



**Figure 141. The Hague's inner city blocks, buildings, parcels, open spaces, parks and rivers in 1937.**



**Figure 142. The Hague's inner city interactivity in 1937.**

As the above maps show, The Hague's urban form had changed drastically between 1911 and 1937. The new boulevards (1) had cut their way through the city's dense medieval fabric, bringing a new image of modernity to the city. Yet most of these boulevards were also still lined by fenced in vacant lots, waiting for post-Depression development to occur (2). Many of these lots were temporarily used for parking, for lack of any better use – a pattern highly similar to downtown Detroit. Furthermore, the new streets only increased the segregation between the inner city's highly active core, and a deactivating periphery. A significant part of this peripheral deactivation came from the loss of street-level businesses. The fringe's independent shops, bars and restaurants were clearly losing out to the ever-strengthening retail core of the city. Vacant storefronts were usually converted into residences or small workshops, deteriorating their physical and visual permeability. Some smaller renewal projects had taken place on the western and northern edge of the city (3), replacing slums and obsolete land uses with newer apartment buildings, often containing a fraction of the street-level businesses that were cleared.

## 5.2 1937-1961

The landscape of The Hague had changed drastically at the end of the Depression. Economically, unemployment in the city had grown significantly during the Depression and small business owners were struggling for survival. Partly as a result of anti-cyclical investments to relieve the worst unemployment, the city had become much more dependent on the growth of the national government for its job base, with the number of civil servants increasing by more than 50% between 1930 and 1937. The number of municipal employees had increased accordingly. The growth of car ownership also continued unabated, with the number of registered cars almost doubling between 1928 and 1939.<sup>796</sup> Furthermore, residents were living further away from the urban core than ever, with urban expansions overtaking surrounding settlements as early as the 1920s.

The inner city of The Hague was clearly struggling with the rapid transformation of The Hague's economy, society and urban form. The newly created central streets had faltered as catalysts for the amount and type of development that would build an envisioned "new city", leaving undeveloped land as scars in some of the city's prime spots. As traffic had mounted, they were becoming as clogged as the medieval streets they replaced. But perhaps most importantly, these interventions did little to alleviate the slum conditions that were rapidly worsening in large parts of the inner city. Through their rather sparse land assembly, the projects had proven too cautious to really instigate change in the inner city, leaving a result that "could be considered only a very partial success."<sup>797</sup> Especially around the prime corner of the Grote Marktstraat and Spui, housing conditions were rapidly worsening while development opportunities were looking up.

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<sup>796</sup> Boekraad and Aerts, "Berlage En De Lotgevallen Van De 'Schone Stad' - Den Haag in De Jaren 1900-1934," 52-53.

<sup>797</sup> Kamer van Koophandel en Fabrieken voor Zuid-Holland, *Rapport Van De Commissie Tot Voorbereiding Van Herbouw En Herstel Van 'S-Gravenhage*(The Hague: N.V. boek- en kunstdrukkerij v/h Mouton & Co., 1945), 26.



**Figure 143. Fenced “building land available” at the Kalvermarkt, 1941.<sup>798</sup>**

The municipality was unsuccessful in its attempt to tackle the redevelopment of this area, with a range of plans coming and going over the past decades. In frustration, the Dutch Society for Industry and Trade would instate a Foundation for the Renewal of the Inner City in The Hague in 1939.<sup>799</sup> The founders represented business interests in the inner city, housing developers and the local press. The foundation would not act as a developer itself, but would instigate renewal through sparking the interest of developers by plan making and holding design contests. The organization would be funded through a profit share in the eventual development, and their instatement speech propagated action: “... in contrast

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<sup>798</sup> Rooker, *Plan Tot Verbetering Van Het Stadsdeel Tusschen Spui En Zwarteweg*, 1.

<sup>799</sup> Translated from Stichting Saneering Binnenstad. Renewal or ‘sanering’ has a distinctly hygienic undertone, in line with the focus of urbanism at the time of the foundation’s establishments.

to what can be seen in municipal renewal, the fences around the [renewal sites] will only be erected for a short time, and they will be construction fences.”<sup>800</sup> The foundation would initially focus on the area around the Spui and Grote Marktstraat, which they considered to be scattered with “low, ugly construction, slums and alleyways.” Yet their ambitions reached much further, including plans for new traffic arteries and the wholesale renewal of the southeastern portion of central The Hague, named the ‘Spuiwijk’.<sup>801</sup> Most of this district had deteriorated as a result of the loss of business activity from the filling of canals in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Soon after, the foundation would suggest a more elaborate plan for renewal of the district, with monumental office buildings, department stores and apartment buildings “worthy of this important access point to the city.” Simultaneously, the city had announced grandiose yet rather vague plans for the district and had started to purchase properties to materialize their yet undisclosed vision.<sup>802</sup> Neither private nor public plans led to any significant construction, and their resulting speculation would only accelerate the decline of this segment of The Hague’s inner city.

World War 2 would put an abrupt end to all building activity in the city. Although The Hague’s inner city was able to avoid major damage, the city as a whole suffered greatly from German-built defense works and forced evacuations of entire districts, missile launch sites and a mistaken bombing by allied forces toward the end of the war. As the dust from the war had settled, 8,000 homes had been obliterated, leaving 27,000 residents in search of a home and the national government scrambling for space, often taking up precious residential space for their offices.<sup>803</sup> The post-war baby boom only made matters worse – a ‘housing crisis’ was born.<sup>804</sup> A 1948 survey of The Hague’s economic, social and physical condition of the city also concluded that the inner city contained a large number of small manufacturers, wholesalers and shipping companies, which lacked space for growth and

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<sup>800</sup> "Saneering Binnenstad - De Acte Van Oprichting Gepasseerd," *Het Vaderland*, December 28 1939.

<sup>801</sup> Nederlandsche Maatschappij voor Nijverheid en Handel - Departement 's-Gravenhage, "Rapport over De Saneering Van De Binnenstad Van 'S-Gravenhage in Het Bijzonder Van Het Spui En Omgeving,"(1939).

<sup>802</sup> Stichting saneering binnenstad 's-Gravenhage, *Plan Tot Verbetering Van Het Stadsgedeelte Tusschen Spui En Zwarteweg*(The Hague: N.V. Drukkerij Trio, 1941).

<sup>803</sup> Zuid-Holland, *Rapport Van De Commissie Tot Voorbereiding Van Herbouw En Herstel Van 'S-Gravenhage*.

<sup>804</sup> Irene van Huik, "'Ingebed in Het Zo Karakteristieke Groen' - Dudok En Den Haag in De Jaren 1930-1950," in *Het Veranderend Stadsbeeld Van Den Haag*, ed. Victor Freijser(Zwolle: Waanders, 1991), 113; Sluijs, *Haagse Stedebouw : Mijn Ervaringen in De Jaren 1946-1983*.

posed a nuisance to surrounding residents, a process of 'cardiac dilation' enabled by a lack of retroactive zoning which had grandfathered these uses in.<sup>805</sup> The number of retailers had dropped significantly since 1935 due to war damage and the instatement of the aforementioned national laws to weed out smaller.<sup>806</sup> Although the number of registered cars had decreased due to World War 2 damages, car parking remained a highly pressing issue for the inner city.<sup>807</sup> Yet as a result of the massive shortage of housing, the municipal priorities immediately after the war were set to rehouse The Hague's citizens, not its institutions, businesses or cars. Yet even the most urgent demands were greatly frustrated by a lack of construction materials, funding and manpower. This had positive and negative implications for the transformation of the inner city in the decades that would follow.



**Figure 144. War damaged buildings on the Korte Voorhout in 1945.<sup>808</sup>**

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<sup>805</sup> As non-residential functions scattered throughout residential districts, the core was seen as expanding their undesirable functions. P.T. van der Hoff, "Renewal Plans within the General City Plan of the Hague," in *International seminar on urban renewal*(The Hague1958).

<sup>806</sup> Part of the drop can be ascribed to the different sourcing of data for the 1948 measurements.

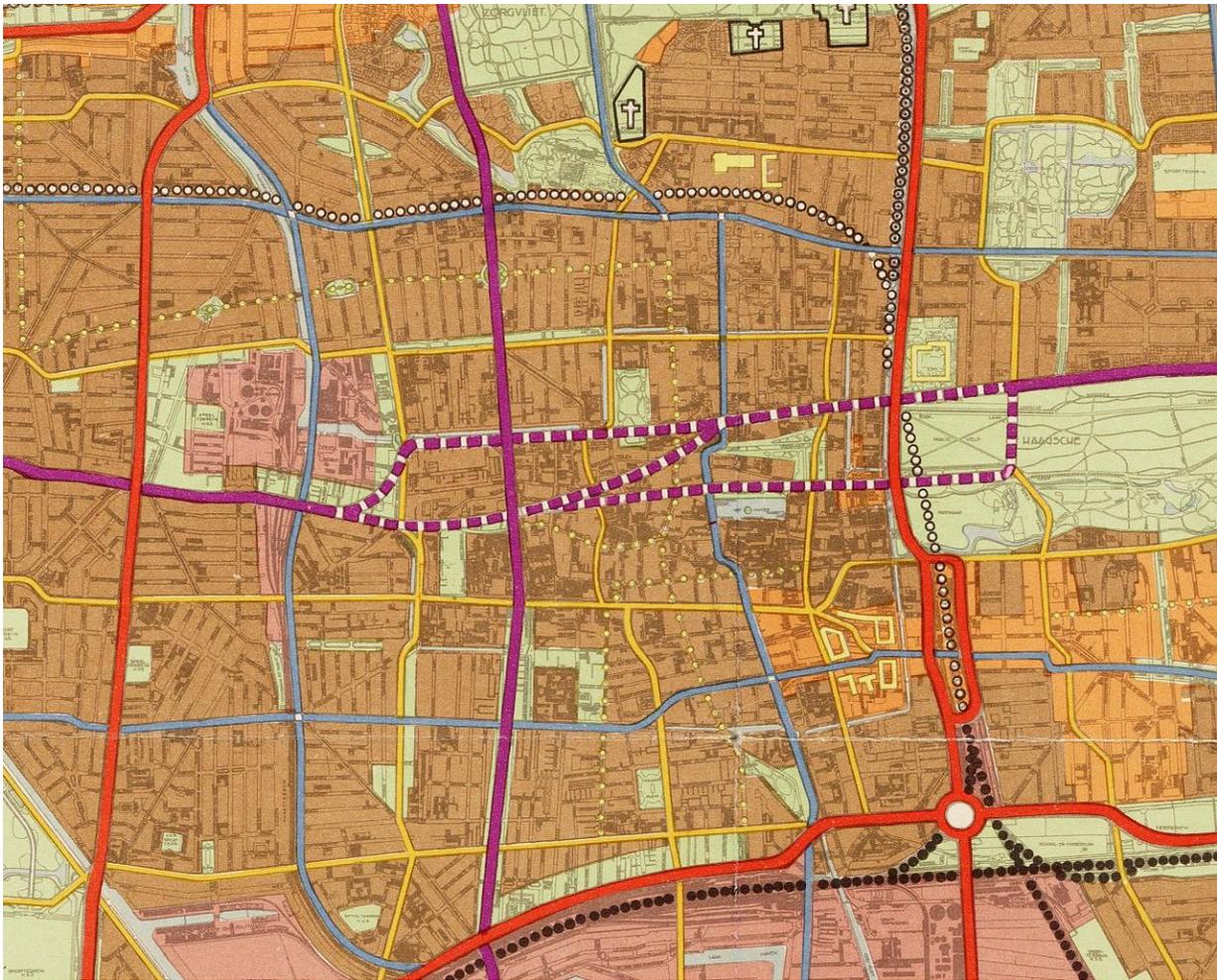
<sup>807</sup> Gemeentebestuur, "Enige Grondslagen Voor De Stedebouwkundige Ontwikkeling Van 'S-Gravenhage."

<sup>808</sup> Photographer Benfer. Image courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.

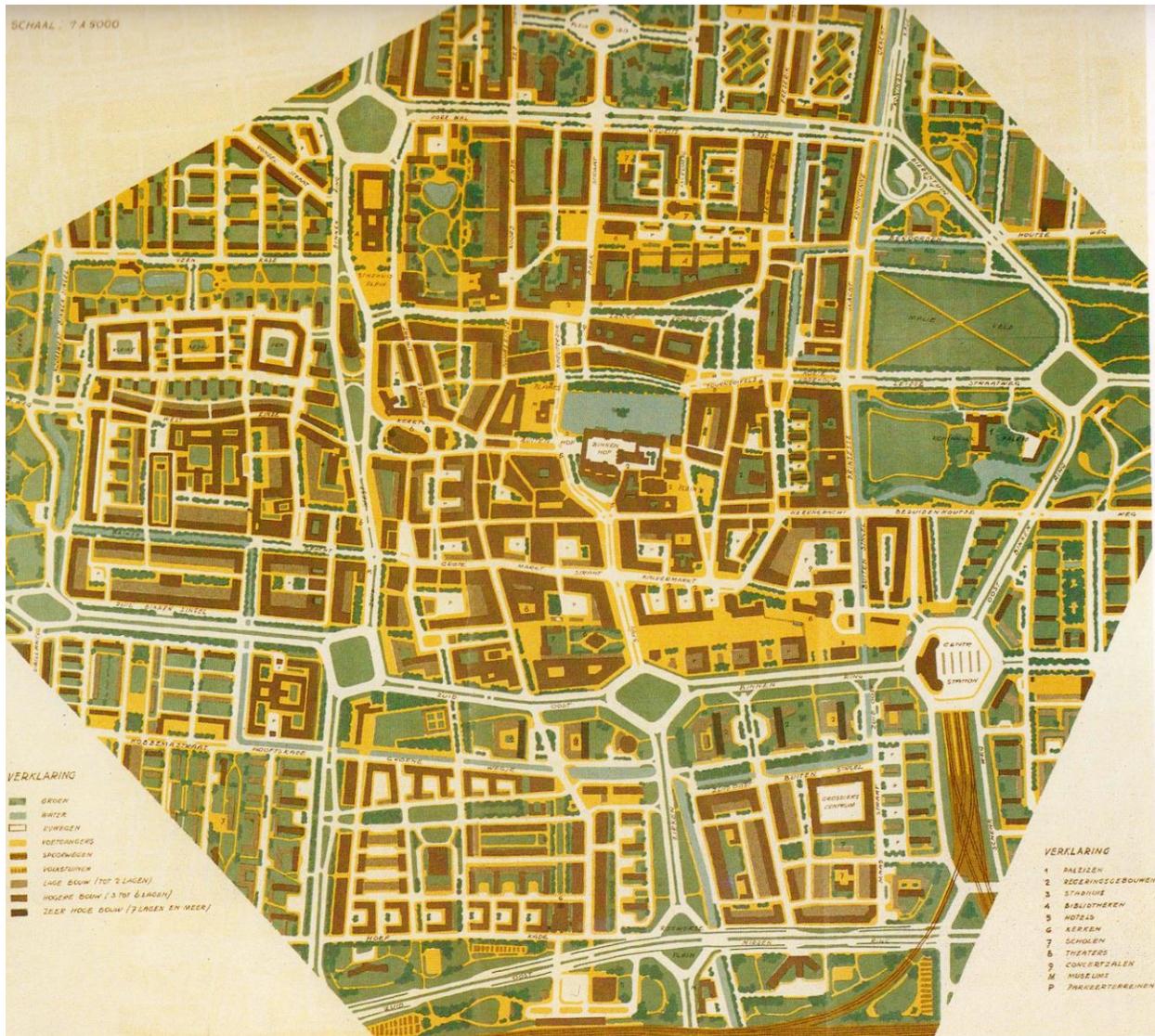
Architect Dudok, who had succeeded Berlage in 1934 to work on urban expansion plans, was commissioned again to draft plans for the expansion of The Hague to its city limits and to draft a renewal plan for the inner city. While Dudok shared Berlage's attention to esthetics in urban design, his style was recognizably more modern, with architectural repetition and the adoption of open building blocks and fluid spaces featured prominently in his design repertoire. As a result, Dudok's signature architecture produced larger single structures with a far weaker relationship between buildings and public space. During the late 1940s, he would produce a master plan for the city as a whole<sup>809</sup> in which traditional inner city functions would be spread throughout the city, with plans to scatter offices, locate a new city hall north of the ring canal and a large cultural center between the city and the sea, leaving the inner city for the retail core and a new inner city district that would house the national government. Dudok recognized the growth of automobile traffic and had planned an extensive network of wide traffic arteries, including an east-west road to be constructed through the most historic northern portion of the inner city, connecting the growing western districts of the city with the national road network. Although this was a highly controversial decision, the biggest threat to the master plan actually came from a far more radical proposal. 'Plan 2000' was presented by a group of local architects to clear and proposed to renew almost the entire pre-20<sup>th</sup> Century city and reconstruct a Modern metropolis centered on the automobile. With a radical shortage of housing and the means for reconstruction, this far-reaching counterproposal was shoved aside and Dudok's more realistic vision was approved in 1949 with minor changes. However, only minor parts would be realized, with the proposed decentralization of inner city amenities and the east-west traffic artery halted by a range of opponents.

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<sup>809</sup> The Master Plan is translated as 'Structuurplan' or 'Structure Plan', which had no direct legal implications but would guide more detailed plans that would.



**Figure 145. Inner city insert from Dudok's Master Plan for The Hague, 1947 with east-west traffic artery alternatives in dashed purple.**



**Figure 146. Inner city detail from “Plan 2000”. Note that most of the urban tissue in the inner city periphery is replaced.<sup>810</sup>**

Dudok also produced a more detailed proposal for a government district directly south of the existing Inner and Outer Court, but his proposal was ultimately unsuccessful.<sup>811</sup> For this district, Dudok followed earlier proposals by suggesting a radical clearance of the existing blocks between the Spui and ring canal. He designed a series of large, relatively low rise

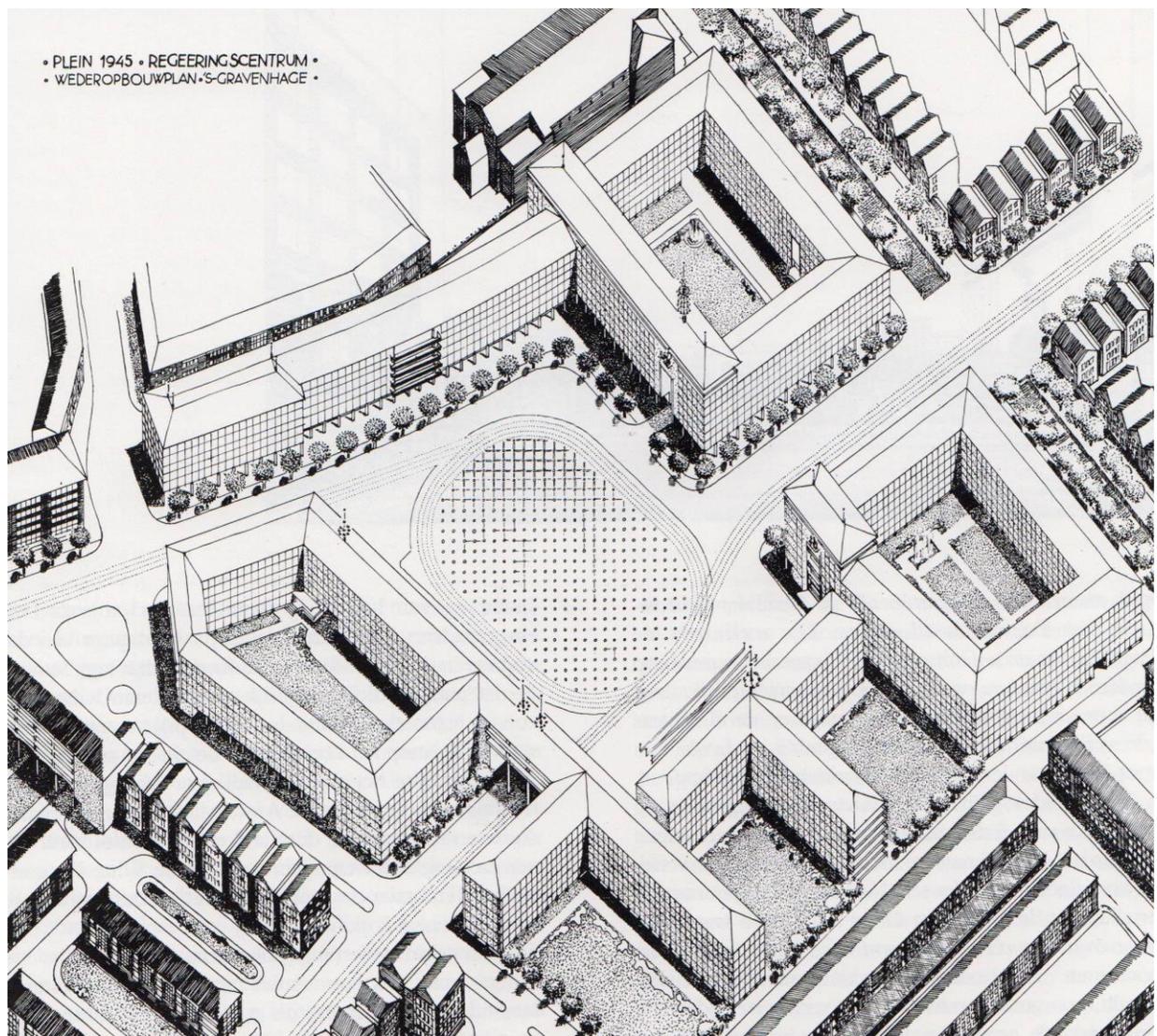
<sup>810</sup> J.J. Hornstra et al., *Het Plan 2000, Studieplan Van De Stedebouwkundige Ontwikkeling Van Den Haag* (The Hague 1949).

<sup>811</sup> Huik, "'Ingebed in Het Zo Karakteristieke Groen' - Dudok En Den Haag in De Jaren 1930-1950," 123-24.

offices surrounding a central “Square 1945”, which would connect the inner city with the Central railway station and several heavily damaged districts to its east. Although the district contained residential buildings as well, about a million square feet was allocated to the growth of national agencies, which at the time occupied different buildings throughout the city. Despite the design’s obvious benefits in terms of efficiency and the release of countless badly needed residential buildings by the clustering of government offices, the national government was unreceptive to what they saw as the creation of a secondary center for government, competing with their existing buildings around the Inner and Outer Court. Furthermore, the plan included a redesigned underground railway station, to which the National Railways vehemently protested. The most harmful opposition came from the Province and the national traffic authority, which wanted to realize a sunken freeway right at the heart of the plan. Due to all the proposed alterations and amendments the original plan was rejected, and a frustrated Dudok would resign and leave the city in 1950.<sup>812</sup>

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<sup>812</sup> Ibid., 124-29; Sluijs, *Haagse Stedebouw : Mijn Ervaringen in De Jaren 1946-1983*, 30-31.



**Figure 147. Dudok's design for The Hague's government district: medium-rise buildings centered on "Square 1945".<sup>813</sup>**

Despite the rather mixed results of Dudok's efforts to reshape the postwar city, his visions did mark a radical shift in the approach to urban design and architecture in central The Hague from 1950 onwards. While his vision for the creation of a government district wasn't well received initially, it stuck with subsequent planners and architects. Also, his proposal to build an east-west artery through the downtown would materialize in the decades that

<sup>813</sup> *Haagse Stedebouw : Mijn Ervaringen in De Jaren 1946-1983*, 27.

followed. Most importantly, Dudok brought a sense of urgency to his successors by his acknowledgement that the inner city was transforming as fast as the city as a whole and that the rapid growth of traffic and deterioration of slums would pose a strong threat to the vitality of the urban core. While in 1949 the number of cars was roughly the same as the decade before, it would triple over the next decade and parking shortages mounted. Majestic squares such as the Plein and Buitenhof would be overtaken by parked cars, leading to public outcry.<sup>814</sup> Over the same time period, the city population would increase by 25% to 600,000 in 1960. The housing crisis continued unabated, with thousands looking for a (better) place to live in a city that had run out of territory to expand. Furthermore, the post-war survey of slum conditions had called for the clearance of over 30,000 substandard dwellings between 1948 and 1975.<sup>815</sup> In stark contrast to downtown Detroit, the inner city of The Hague wasn't facing obsolescence by decentralization – if anything, it was under pressure to accommodate more urban functions than it could in its existing building stock.

After Dudok's departure, his esthetic approach to urbanism was replaced by the radical rationalism of the Department of Rebuilding and City Development, which made plans to drastically transform the inner city with a model that was remarkably similar to Detroit's postwar urban renewal efforts. Conceptually, the urban core was separated into four 'rings': an inner 'city' of monumental buildings that was to be preserved as the 'realm of the pedestrian', surrounded by a 'renewal belt' that was to be cleared and replaced by an inner ring road to relieve inner city traffic, lined by office and apartment buildings that couldn't be housed in the very core, bounded by a secondary ring road and an area of 'revalidation' in which only minimal renewal was necessary, surrounded by stable neighborhoods which didn't need public interventions.<sup>816</sup> The resulting new core of the 'fast growing city' of The Hague would be separated into zones for offices, retail and traffic, with a small retail and

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<sup>814</sup> Some of the opposition was organized in the committee "Heart for the city" which aimed to restore the 'dignified' character of the inner city. Leo Oorschot, "Conflicten over Haagse Stadsbeelden" (TU Delft, 2014), 304-06.

<sup>815</sup> Gemeentebestuur, "Enige Grondslagen Voor De Stedebouwkundige Ontwikkeling Van 'S-Gravenhage."; Michelle Provoost, "De Grenzen Van De Metropool: Stadsontwikkeling in Den Haag 1950-1970" (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 1989).

<sup>816</sup> This distinction is derived from the viewpoints of F. Bakker Schut, the director of the Department of Rebuilding and City Development in F. Bakker Schut, "Sanering En Reconstructie in De Grote Stad," *Bestuurswetenschappen* (1955).

monumental core cut off by a ring road from a completely rebuilt inner city periphery of towers and traffic that lacked any definition of the relation between buildings and public space.<sup>817</sup> The ambitions hinged on the support by private enterprise as consistent national funding was not available until well into the 1960s. Dudok's 1949 Master Plan would be superseded by the Department's vision with a renewed draft master plan published in 1957.

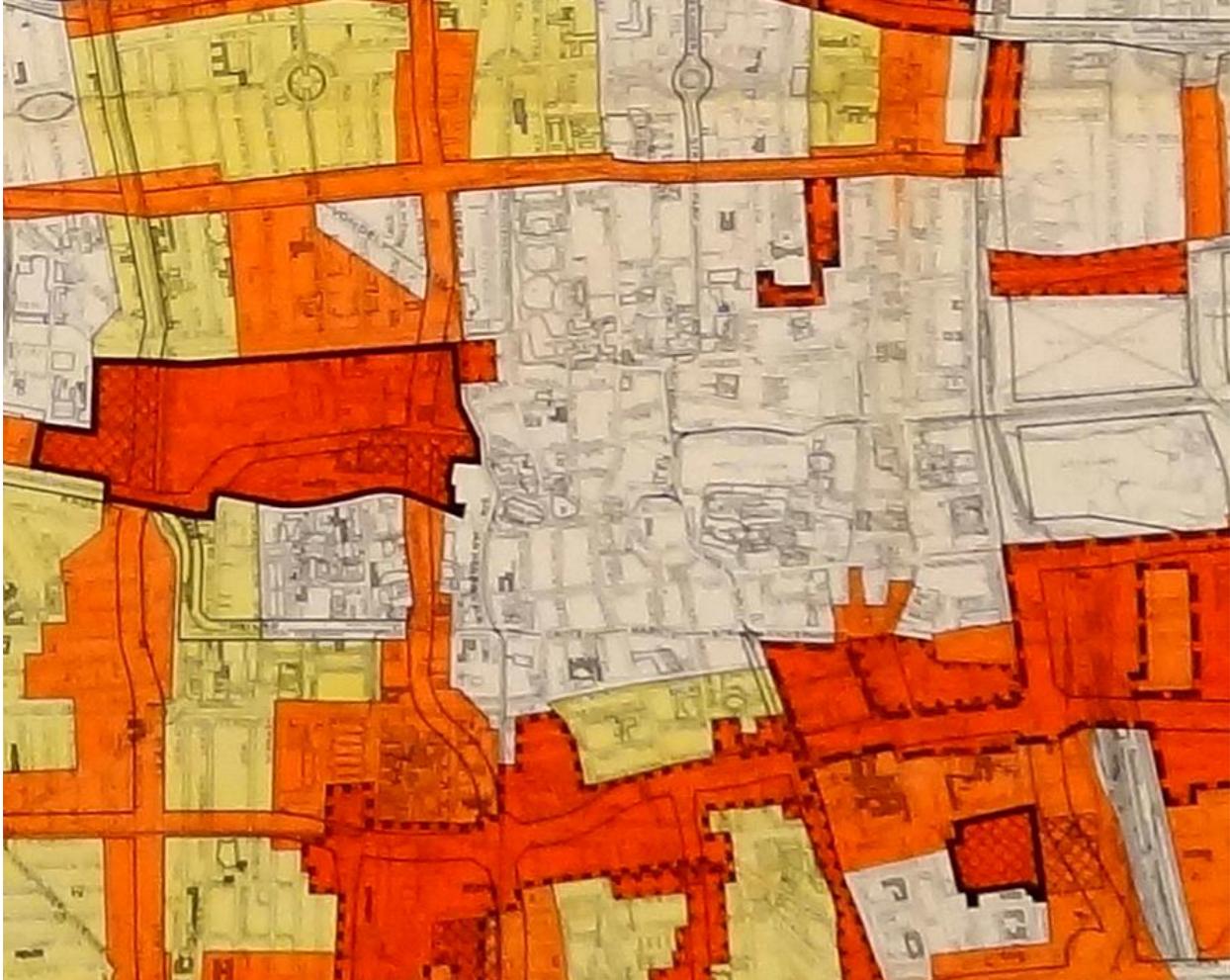


**Figure 148. Image of The Hague as a 'fast growing city': grade separated traffic, wide vistas and modern office buildings.<sup>818</sup>**

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<sup>817</sup> Dienst van de Wederopbouw en de Stadsontwikkeling and Afdeling Publiciteit, "Den Haag, Snel Groeiende Stad," (The Hague 1957).

<sup>818</sup> Ibid., 28.



**Figure 149. Urban renewal map excerpt from 1955. “Pre-phase” priority areas including Kortenbos in red with black outlines, first priority areas in red, second priority in orange, third priority in yellow. Note the outlines of the inner ring road and its correlation with renewal areas.<sup>819</sup>**

Compared to the prewar urbanism that attempted to combine existing urban qualities and new interventions, the postwar visions were ruthless toward the existing urban fabric: “To remain viable and continue to develop The Hague, like most West European cities, will need drastic and holistic changes in its build-up and structure.”<sup>820</sup> The ‘renewal ring’ contained more than 1200 acres deemed fit for clearance in the city’s 1953 “Renewal Memorandum”, with priorities set by a combination of data on housing conditions and planners’ views on which areas were most in need of renewal. Under the veil of rationalism

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<sup>819</sup> Excerpt from Dienst Wederopbouw en Stadsontwikkeling, "Overzicht Saneringsgebieden Te 'S-Gravenhage - Met Urgentie Van Uitvoering," (The Hague 1955).

<sup>820</sup> Quote from planning department head Van der Hoff in 1955 in Provoost, "De Grenzen Van De Metropool: Stadsontwikkeling in Den Haag 1950-1970."

many of these views were moral, as within these renewal areas, the number of blue-collar workers, unreligious people and communists (“extremist voters”) were markedly higher than elsewhere.<sup>821</sup> This part of the inner city was deemed “largely the residence of the very poor and also the neighborhood and ‘workplace’ of certain anti-social elements,”<sup>822</sup> and renewal was meant to bring these neighborhoods to a “higher level.”<sup>823</sup> This statement rings quite similar to the rhetoric used in Detroit during the same decade, leading to the Motor City’s redevelopment of significant portions of its inner city slums. Another similarity was the cooperation between slum clearance and the development of infrastructure. Like in Detroit, The Hague’s highest renewal priorities were set by traffic engineers: especially the planned 180 foot wide inner ring road would rank highest in the city’s plans and its path would slowly be purchased and cleared awaiting construction.

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<sup>821</sup> Schut, "Sanering En Reconstructie in De Grote Stad," 163-64.

<sup>822</sup> J. Groenendaal, "Houdt Het Hart Van Onzen Steden Jong!," *Vrijheid en Democratie*, May 14 1960.

<sup>823</sup> A remark by director Bakker Schut December 14 1957, file 365 archief Urban Development in Provoost, "De Grenzen Van De Metropool: Stadsontwikkeling in Den Haag 1950-1970," 32.



**Figure 150. Clearance at Zuilingstraat on the pathway of the inner ring road in 1957.<sup>824</sup>**

Most renewal plans ultimately stranded. Their dependence on private financing for build-out failed to materialize as investors were shy to delve into the relatively complicated renewal areas. Like in Detroit, the public-private partnership model simply wouldn't work when private financing was lacking, and the national government was shy to fill the gap. Furthermore, the plans for the government district continued to be disputed by the national government and the national railway company, leading to a seemingly endless range of draft proposals, committees and meetings that bore little fruit until well into the 1960s.<sup>825</sup> Yet most importantly, the continuing housing shortage would put most of the plans on the back burner. With a lack of funding and political backing, the clearance of housing – no matter how dilapidated – for grandiose plans was simply impossible. Time

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<sup>824</sup> Image by H. Lamme, courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.

<sup>825</sup> Sluijs, *Haagse Stedebouw : Mijn Ervaringen in De Jaren 1946-1983*, 45-55.

schedules for the 'completion' of urban renewal were constantly shifted forward, and clearance areas were ultimately limited to the worst districts around the Spui and the west of the inner city, as well as the direct routes of the proposed inner ring road.<sup>826</sup> Many of the city planners' efforts were aimed outside the city, as they worked on the realization of the New Town of Zoetermeer to house displaced residents from the 1960s onwards. Planning director Bakker Schut should have followed his instinct when he ominously warned in 1952 that "projecting too drastic a change in the urban structure creates the danger that one sacrifices the viable to unrealizable fantasies and the realization of the plan will therefore fail."<sup>827</sup>

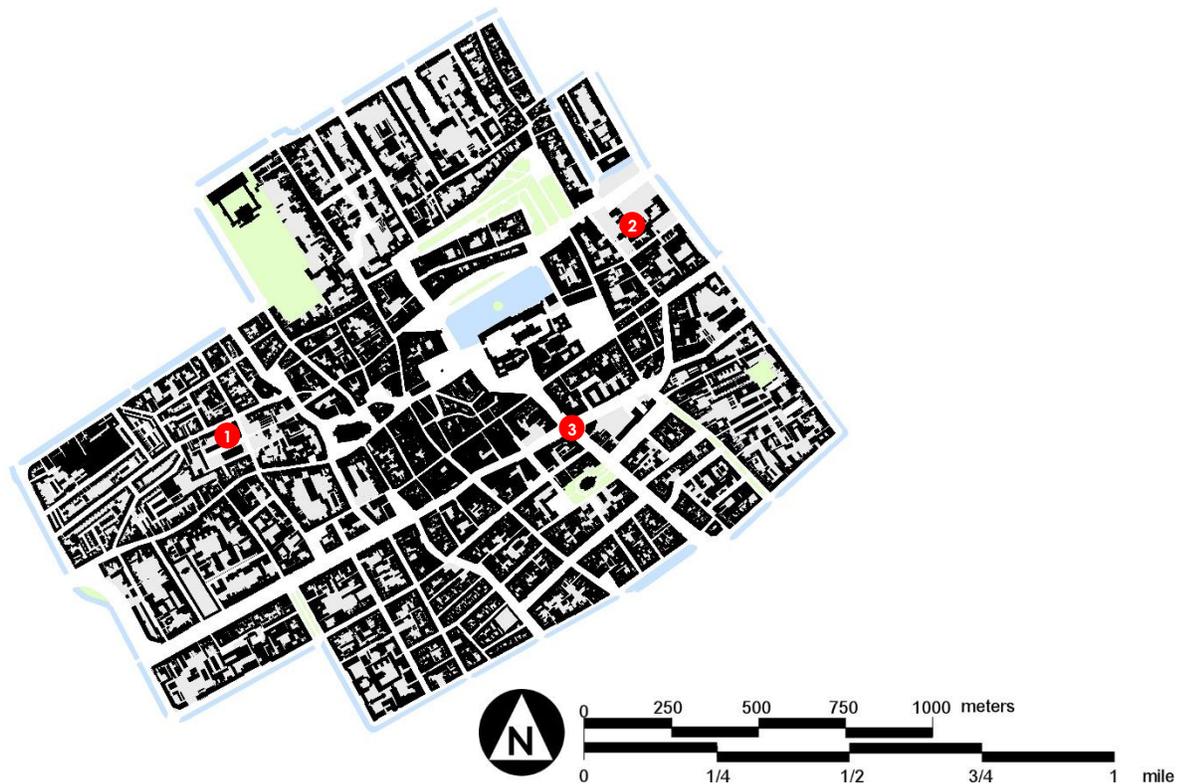
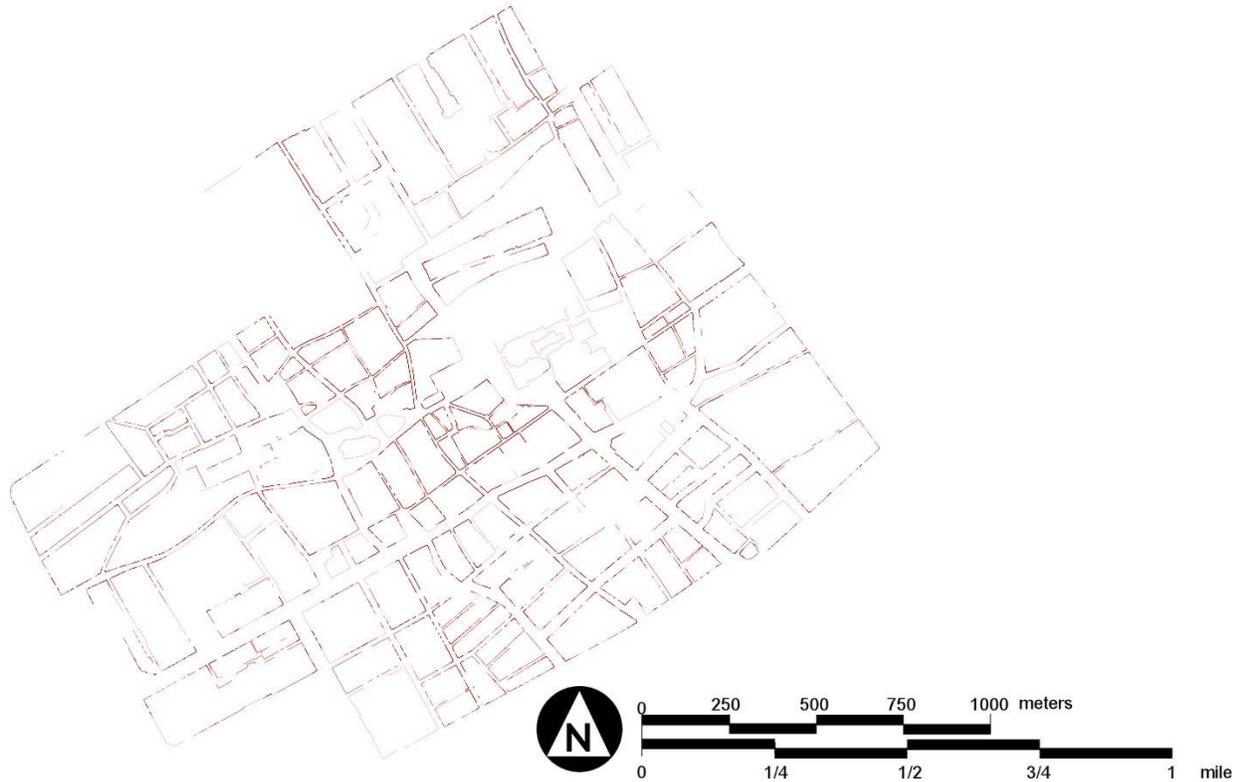


Figure 151. The Hague's inner city blocks, buildings, parcels, open spaces, parks and rivers in 1961.

<sup>826</sup> Provoost, "De Grenzen Van De Metropool: Stadsontwikkeling in Den Haag 1950-1970," 50-51.

<sup>827</sup> F. Bakker Schut, "Prae-Advies," in *International Federation for Housing and Town Planning* (Lisbon 1952).



**Figure 152. The Hague's inner city interactivity in 1961.**

In 1961, the urban form of The Hague had hardly changed from 1937. The city had started to purchase buildings on the paths for their proposed inner ring road, but clearance was mostly limited to parcels on the western end of the inner city (1). Furthermore, new construction in the city was relatively sparse, with the war-damaged Korte Voorhout only filled with Breuer's introverted American Embassy building and further plots still left empty (2). The corner of the Spui and Grote Marktstraat (3) was filled with a mixture of retail buildings, ministries and office buildings, many of which would be razed in the decades that followed. However, when looking at the street-level frontage interactivity map a rather drastic change can be seen. The decline of peripheral retailers had only accelerated since 1937, with most street-level frontages on the edge of the inner city now occupied by smaller wholesalers and workshops, or replaced by ground floor dwellings. Retailers suffered from the further growth of chain stores in the city's small retail core, and from national laws that restricted small businesses, a "quiet renewal."<sup>828</sup> In other words, while

<sup>828</sup> Evers, *Planning Van Winkels En Winkelgebieden in Nederland*, 40-43.

the urban form of the inner city hadn't transformed much due to lack of material, funding and political willpower, the ground-floor experience continued to concentrate excitement into a few blocks due to the economic modernization that was taking place in The Netherlands.

### 5.3 1961-1988

At the dawn of the 1960s, The Hague's economy was doing relatively well and the inner city was profiting as a result.<sup>829</sup> The postwar era had brought an unprecedented boom in consumer income and spending, and the national government was still expanding. The city had reached a population peak of over 600,000 in 1957, and the population remained stable in the years that followed. Yet the inner city was rapidly losing population, many of which moved to the various new neighborhoods that were constructed within and right beyond the city limits. Most emigrants were from the middle and upper classes and were considered "qualitatively superior" to the remaining inner city residents.<sup>830</sup> The hegemony of The Hague's inner city as a center for commerce also came in question with the opening of a suburban shopping mall southwest of the city in 1960, luring nearby customers with ample free parking and a relatively complete offering of daily and shopping goods. Over the following years, two more centers were constructed in neighboring cities. Yet in stark contrast to Detroit, department store owners were not overly eager to move all their business to the new shopping centers. A.C.R. Dreesmann, the largest department store owner in The Hague, even warned in 1962 not to invest too much effort in these new centers, as they were invariably less diverse and cozy than existing inner city, which would "forever be the throne room of king customer."<sup>831</sup> While he did open peripheral branches, Dreesman put his money where his mouth was and expanded his inner city establishment to the Netherlands' largest department store that same year. The municipality also exercised caution not to decentralize retail and weaken the core as a result.<sup>832</sup> However, Dreesmann did propagate the further renewal of inner cities to make them more accessible

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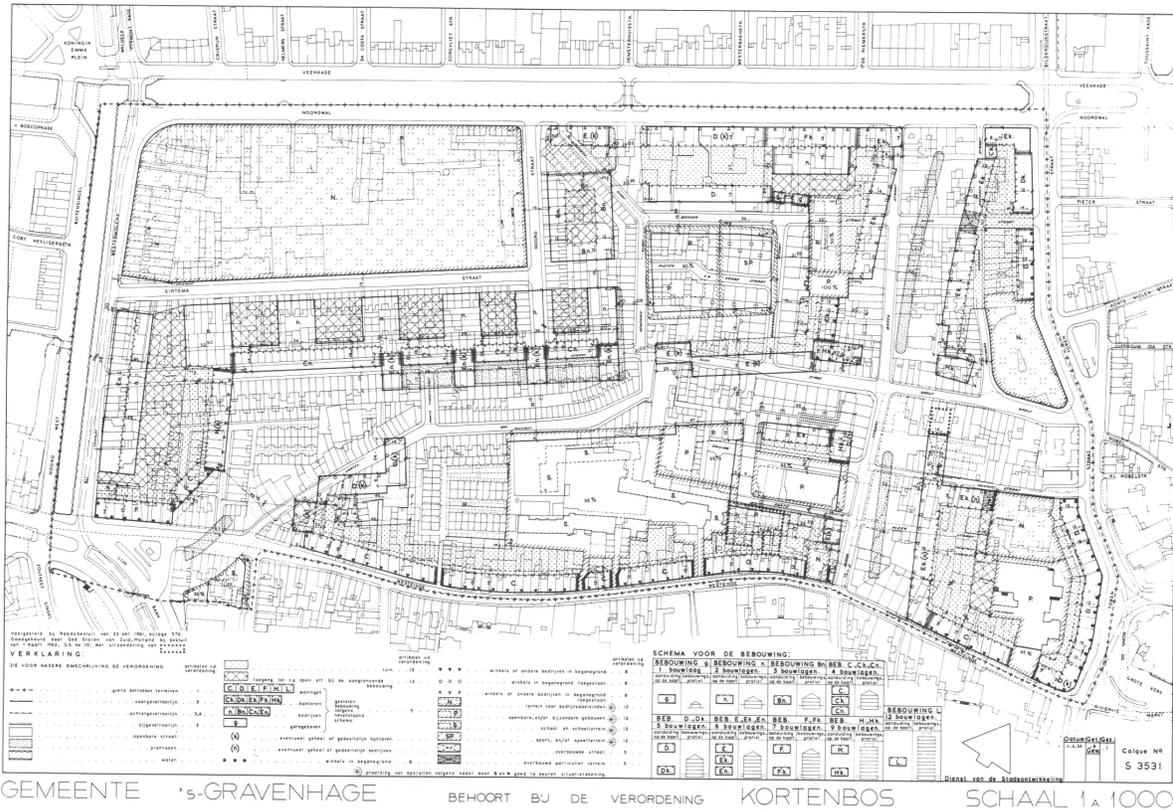
<sup>829</sup> "Voorzitter Kamer Van Koophandel: Voor Haagse Bedrijfsleven Was 1961 Bevredigend Jaar," *Haagsche Courant*, January 4 1962.

<sup>830</sup> Kamer van Koophandel en Fabrieken - afdeling 's-Gravenhage, *Het Parkeerprobleem in De Haagse Binnenstad in Verband Met Het Verkeersvraagstuk*(The Hague1961), 11.

<sup>831</sup> "Binnenstad Gezelliger Om Te Winkelen," *Haagsche Courant*, June 23 1962.

<sup>832</sup> "'Stadscentrum Mag Geen Dode Wijk Worden Door Concurrentie Van De Winkelcentra'," *Haagsche Courant*, March 22 1962.

to customers and clear their poor image. His own establishment on the Grote Marktstraat was on the edge of the retail core, "...directly behind it lie slums and vacant lots."<sup>833</sup>



**Figure 153. Kortenbos ordinance of 1965. All existing buildings except on the Westeinde (bottom) are removed, and a ring road is proposed.<sup>834</sup>**

His statement rang true as the stalled urban renewal projects of the 1950s has left much of the inner city periphery in limbo. A new draft renewal memorandum in 1962 would drastically scale back the ambitions for rebuilding parts of the inner city to the most urgent portions, leaving many inner city districts untouched. Nevertheless, the Modern paradigm of clearance and renewal was certainly not given up. The Kortenbos district to the west of the retail core was chosen as an urgent ‘test case’ in which the non-legally binding master plan would be translated into an ‘ordinance’ that would legally guide development. All

<sup>833</sup> "Den Haag Maakt Van Binnenstad Een Smeerboel," *Haagsche Courant*, October 26 1966.

<sup>834</sup> Dienst van de Stadsontwikkeling, "Verordening Kortenbos," (The Hague 1965).

elements of the 1957 Master Plan were present in the highly modernist design at the base of the Korttenbos ordinance: the wide ring road, multistory buildings to house offices and commerce and a wholesale clearance of most of the district. Yet private investors were absent, opposition grew and the plan would not be realized. Nevertheless, the city had condemned and cleared most of the district and remaining blocks strongly suffered from planners' blight. In 1967, a large apartment slab would be constructed right in the center of the neighborhood, aimed at bringing back middle-income residents which were increasingly leaving the deteriorating inner city. The "urbanistically disappointing" building had no relation to its surrounding public space and would fortunately remain the only project of its kind in the inner city.<sup>835</sup> A softening of the city's stance toward its historical building stock was taking place, as a new housing memorandum in 1969 would suggest the renovation of some of the same inner-city neighborhoods that were previously slated for demolition.<sup>836</sup> Nevertheless, the population of the city would decline sharply from the late 1960s onwards, with especially the inner city depopulating as a result of deterioration through government inaction. Many citizens moved to the New Town of Zoetermeer, with The Hague's inner city left for work, leisure and retail purposes.

The dilapidated southeastern portion of the inner city between the Spui and ring canal that had resisted a range of grand plans for decades would finally succumb to the forces of developers and planners during the 1960s. Initially, the public-private model for urban renewal seemed to function as private developer EMS purchased most of the land in this district, with the city only taking the role as provider of basic infrastructure. In 1962, EMS presented a plan for the district, centered on a 460 foot office tower designed by famed Italian architect Luigi Nervi (see Figure 255). The plan also combined cultural amenities, shops, a hotel and underground parking into an all in one megastructure that would take up two full city blocks. While the municipality was enthused at this private initiative, the national government would ultimately block the proposal, partly out of fear that the tall tower would ruin the view from the Inner and Outer Court. Instead, the district's maximum

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<sup>835</sup> Provoost, "De Grenzen Van De Metropool: Stadsontwikkeling in Den Haag 1950-1970," 36-39; Sluijs, *Haagse Stedebouw : Mijn Ervaringen in De Jaren 1946-1983*, 157.

<sup>836</sup> Dienst Stadsontwikkeling en Volkshuisvesting, "Toestand Van Het Haagse Oude Woningbestand," (The Hague 1969).

building height was relatively arbitrarily halved, and a subsequent proposal rather poorly tried to retain the initially proposed floor area in a shorter but much bulkier building. This proposal had replaced the public theater with more parking, and was widely criticized for its poor architectural massing and subsequently turned down by the city. In the meantime, most buildings in the area had been demolished and the district contained vast tracts of vacant land or parking lots, with only one office building constructed by EMS on the remains of the Arts and Sciences building that had burned down under rather mysterious circumstances.<sup>837</sup> Ultimately, EMS sold the land to pension fund ABP, which decided to sell the land back to the national government.<sup>838</sup> Frustrated by the inaction, the city proposed the “Nieuwe Hout” in 1970, a fully integrated mixed-use megastructure that would “cut away the sick peel around the old urban core and replace it with a new urban district that fits better in the structure of the new The Hague.”<sup>839</sup> While the plans specifically mentioned conceptual, physical and functional connectivity with the surrounding urban tissue, its raised pedestrian streets and limited access highways would have only increased the isolation of this rapidly deteriorating area. Investors were unenthusiastic and ultimately only a small portion of the Nieuwe Hout plan would materialize into two government office towers for the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Justice in 1978 which faced public space with parking garages, through which “the citizen at ground level is ignored in a sovereign fashion.”<sup>840</sup>

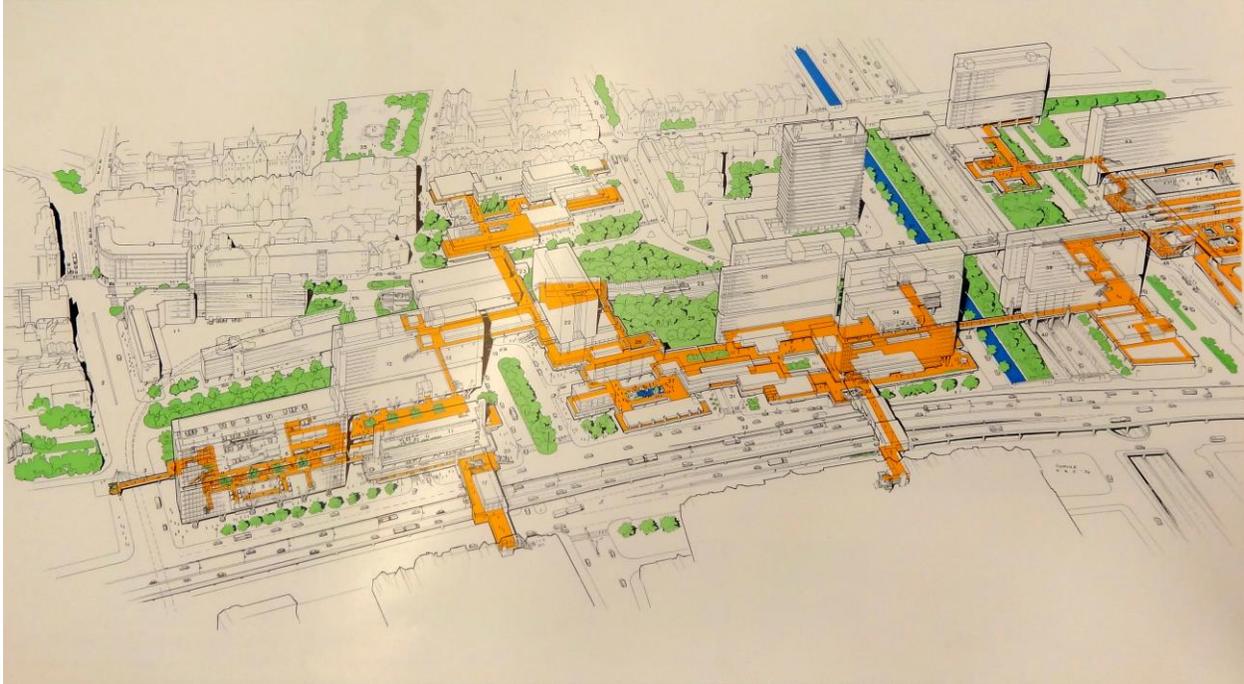
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<sup>837</sup> Rudie van Meyer Theo Meurs, *De Zwolsman-Connection : Een Meester-Speculant En Zijn Christen-Democratische Vrinden* ([Amsterdam]: [Weekbladpers], 1977), 50-52.

<sup>838</sup> Sluijs, *Haagse Stedebouw : Mijn Ervaringen in De Jaren 1946-1983*, 146.

<sup>839</sup> Afdeling voorlichting en congreszaken, "De Nieuwe Hout 'S-Gravenhage," (The Hague 1970).

<sup>840</sup> Provoost, "De Grenzen Van De Metropool - Den Haag in De Jaren 1950-1970," 165-70. Quote from architectural critic Vincent van Rossem in Robbert Hekkema Herma Meijer Anne-Ruth Roos, *Bouwen Voor De Macht : Den Haag* (Amsterdam: Stichting Kunst & Onderwijs, 1997), 10.



**Figure 154. Plan for the Nieuwe Hout, with raised pedestrian level indicated in orange, meandering amid a series of towers and the raised east-west inner ring road at the bottom of the image.<sup>841</sup>**



**Figure 155. New Ministry of Internal Affairs and Justice amid a field of grass (1978, left). Construction and dereliction in its surrounding area (1975, right).<sup>842</sup>**

<sup>841</sup> congreszaken, "De Nieuwe Hout 'S-Gravenhage."

<sup>842</sup> Left photograph by H.W. van Westering. Right photograph by P.G. Kempff. Both image courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.

Traffic also continued to be an issue for the city. The municipality became fearful of the new suburban shopping and office centers and their draw to a relatively wealthy motorized clientele, and scrambled to find a balance between retaining the inner city's unique atmosphere while welcoming automobile owners. Although only about a third of inner city shoppers would arrive by car in 1964, the number was expected to rise and parking continued to be a thorny issue for the city.<sup>843</sup> The city faced the vexing question whether further restrictions should be placed on motorized traffic to ensure the vitality of the urban core, risking to alienate car owners, or whether 'open' accessibility should be prioritized to retain motorists at all costs.<sup>844</sup> Initially, the balance seemingly tipped in favor of pedestrians. In 1966, upon the initiative of retailers the city would pedestrianize its first portion of the inner city, turning the upscale Hoogstraat district into the 'Palace Promenade', referring to the Queen's working palace that was located on the northern end of the street: "a step toward the renaissance of The Hague's inner city."<sup>845</sup> The closure was a success and several other central retail streets and squares would soon follow, turning the retail core into "an oasis of peace in which one can stroll, look at shop windows and make purchases... as well as enjoy a soft drink or beer on a sunny patio."<sup>846</sup>

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<sup>843</sup> Nederlandse Stichting voor Statistiek, *Enquete 1964 - Den Haag Koopcentrum* (The Hague 1964). figure 5

<sup>844</sup> 's-Gravenhage, *Het Parkeerprobleem in De Haagse Binnenstad in Verband Met Het Verkeersvraagstuk*, 12-14.

<sup>845</sup> A remark by mayor Kolfshoten upon the opening of the promenade. "Paleispromenade Nu Bekroond," *Haagsche Courant*, November 24 1966.

<sup>846</sup> Afdeling Voorlichting en Congresszaken, "Promenades in 'S-Gravenhage," (The Hague 1969), 2.



**Figure 156. Photo montage of the intersection Venestraat-Spuistraat-Wagenstraat-Vlamingstraat (left), finalized 'Palace Promenade' with kiosk around 1965 (right).<sup>847</sup>**

Yet only a few blocks away, the car still reigned. To alleviate parking concerns, the Vroom and Dreesmann department store would opt to build a parking deck on top of its new multistory establishment on the central Grote Marktstraat in The Hague in 1961, providing customers with full “service...in one building”<sup>848</sup>. A few blocks to the west, a private company would build a 400 car garage right outside the retail core in cooperation with nearby shops, offering patrons a gas and service station on the ground floor, “a The Hague piece of daring entrepreneurship.”<sup>849</sup> The parking garage was widely criticized for its poor contextual fit and inactive ground floor frontage, and it would not be joined by similar projects. Instead, many urban clearance sites would instead function as more or less informal parking lots – a pattern not too dissimilar from Detroit. The same traffic circulation plan that allowed for the pedestrianization of the retail core of the city would continue to deteriorate its surroundings as parts of the proposed inner ring road were still

<sup>847</sup> Photomontage: *ibid.*, 11. Photograph by J.Th. Gantvoort, courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.

<sup>848</sup> "Gebouwenarchipel Verenigd," *Het Binnenhof*, May 13 1961.

<sup>849</sup> "Parkeergarage in Den Haag," *Nederlands Transport*, April 17 1965.

planned to cut through the struggling periphery of the inner city. The approach was as ruthless as before, as the urban periphery might be “picturesque and familiar to older citizens from The Hague”, but its buildings were considered “large obstructions to the ever-busy traffic.”<sup>850</sup> To make matters worse, peripheral retail businesses continued to close in the “quiet renewal” that was cheered on by government policy. In an era of retail consolidation and modernization, sales volume became everything and retailers either had to catch up with the times or face closure. The city began to notice the desolation of the remaining frontages and started to plan for their repurposing.<sup>851</sup> Despite the aggressive stance of most plans, hardly anything would actually happen as the city simply couldn’t afford everything it had planned. As planners dragged their feet, districts were often stuck in a ‘twilight’ clearance phase, leaving a jumble of cleared sites, condemned buildings and dilapidated but occupied holdouts. Large plans with little outcome brought the classic cycle of planners’ blight: “it is prophesized that a district will deteriorate. The policy –or rather, the lack of it- will ensure this happens. The prophecy comes true: the area in question is ripe for city formation with the accompanying large scale infrastructure.”<sup>852</sup>



**Figure 157. Urban clearance in the Spui district in the 1960s.**<sup>853</sup>

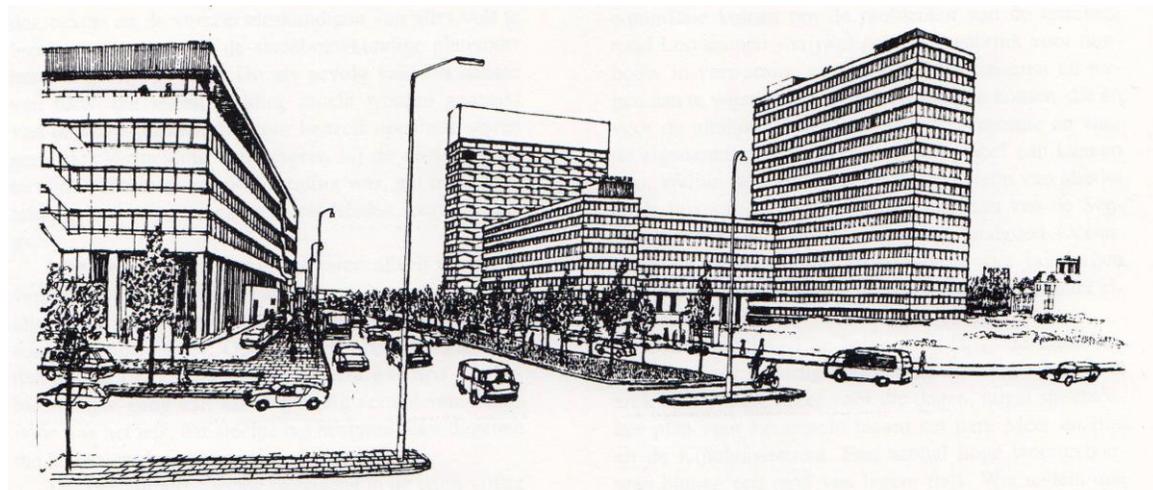
<sup>850</sup> Educatieve Dienst, "Den Haag - Vandaag, Gisteren En in De Toekomst," ed. Dienst voor Schone Kunsten der gemeente 's-Gravenhage(1964), 8.

<sup>851</sup> Afdeling Voorlichting en Congresszaken, "Kopen in Den Haag," in *'s-Gravenhage*(The Hague: Gemeente 's-Gravenhage, 1968).

<sup>852</sup> A. Th. Duivesteyn and J.J. ten Velden, "Aanval Op Cityvorming Den Haag," *Plan* 3(1980): 33.

<sup>853</sup> Left photograph by Stokvis 1969, right photograph by Ed Planken. Images courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.

Local architects complained that the resulting inner city had become “depopulated and smelling of exhaust fumes ... the continuing separation of functions leads to disintegration and eventual disurbanisation [of the inner city].”<sup>854</sup> Nevertheless, the national Spatial Planning Act of 1965 and Second Memorandum on Spatial Planning of 1966 would only strengthen the city’s beliefs in radical renewal and provide planners with extra tools to realize their vision. The 1970 draft Master Plan for the city can be considered the summit of the paradigm of the inner city as a Modern metropolitan core. The plan envisioned a “densely built up, diverse core, aimed at human interaction”, but the tools to realize this vision were strongly similar to its postwar predecessors: large trafficways and a newly designed ‘semi-metro’ system would bring the increasingly distant workforce to a cleared, rebuilt and neatly zoned inner city.<sup>855</sup> The plan could become considered the “last convulsion of metropolitan planning in The Hague”, as the time had come for a radical rethink of how the city and its society should be shaped.<sup>856</sup>



**Figure 158. “Impression of The Hague as a growing service center”<sup>857</sup>**

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<sup>854</sup> The criticism was laid out in a special edition of architectural magazine *Forum*: BNA Den Haag, "Den Haag, Levendige Stad," *Forum* (1965).

<sup>855</sup> Dienst Stadsontwikkeling en Volkshuisvesting, "Structuurplan Voor 'S-Gravenhage," (The Hague 1970); Provoost, "De Grenzen Van De Metropool - Den Haag in De Jaren 1950-1970."

<sup>856</sup> Rainer Bullhorst, "De Jaren Zeventig in De Haagse Stedebouw," in *Gids Van De Moderne Architectuur in Den Haag - Guide to Modern Architecture in the Hague*, ed. Cees van Boven, Victor Freijser, and Christiaan Vaillant (The Hague: Ulysses, 1997).

<sup>857</sup> Image caption from 1970 Master Plan in Sluijs, *Haagse Stedebouw : Mijn Ervaringen in De Jaren 1946-1983*, 77.

In a series of articles, architectural journalists Casper Postmaa and Coos Versteeg condemned the pre-1970 postwar planning paradigm as “narrow-minded”, creating a city “in which the government, hand in hand with developers, has deployed the wrecking ball.”<sup>858</sup> Their views were echoed by the ‘Dooievaar’ action group<sup>859</sup> which would quite successfully show citizens the damaging outcomes of many infrastructural and architectural proposals through photo montages, often sparking fierce debates. Furthermore, the political landscape of the city would change toward progressive parties with little mercy for the status quo of city planning and architecture. The economic landscape of the city became harsher by the day, with residents, business and government agencies leaving the city, and part of this exodus was blamed on the lack of active planning for the inner city. Ultimately, the draft 1970 Master Plan would not even be considered by city council. The opponents had brought a “complete switch in thinking about the city. No longer would the motorists, but bicycles and public transit deserve all the attention. Aging dwellings shouldn’t be demolished, but fixed up if possible. No more offices, but dwellings in the inner city. High-rise construction for any goal whatsoever was out of the question. In other words: everything the municipal leaders of The Hague would propagate before August 1970, would be at least disputable in September.”<sup>860</sup>

Indeed, the city’s view toward the urban core and its renewal would slowly start to change. Responding to the trauma of ruthless clearance, preservation would become an important part of public policy from the mid-1970s onwards, with the creation of a municipal Monument Care Agency and a non-profit organization that would restore monumental buildings in 1977, followed by the instatement of building and district preservation ordinances.<sup>861</sup> The northern part of the inner city was designated as a ‘protected city view’,

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<sup>858</sup> Casper Versteeg Coos Haagsche Courant Postmaa, *Den Haag Op Z'n Smalst : Teloorgang Van Een Hofstad*(Den Haag: Haagsche Courant, 1979).

<sup>859</sup> “Dooievaar” refers to the “Ooievaar”, the stork that features in the official crest of The Hague. Dooievaar can be interpreted as ‘dead stork’.

<sup>860</sup> A citation from surprised planning director Van der Sluijs, one of the creators of the killed 1970 draft Master Plan. Sluijs, *Haagse Stedebouw : Mijn Ervaringen in De Jaren 1946-1983*, 71.

<sup>861</sup> Oorschot, “Conflicten over Haagse Stadsbeelden,” 391-95.

ensuring that renewal would have to pass the stricter guidelines of a preservation board.<sup>862</sup> Furthermore, public participation became a more important part of the decision making process from 1971 onwards.<sup>863</sup> Planners came to realize that their renewal efforts shouldn't just be focused on physical change but had important social ramifications as well, and housing became a strong focus for inner city planning.<sup>864</sup> Nevertheless, many city memorandums would initially show little sign of the new urban paradigms, as behind the scenes a 'schizophrenic' battle between old and new guard was taking place.<sup>865</sup> The 1974 "traffic and transport structure for The Hague's inner city" persisted in the controversial inner ring road that would run through the urban core and public transportation would be curbed in many districts. Subsequent memorandums in the 1970s would "only reason toward the [inner ring] road and traffic breakthroughs." Yet public opposition grew, and only one major portion of the inner ring road would ever be finalized.<sup>866</sup> The Prince Bernhard viaduct would connect motorists from the newly constructed urban freeway right east of the inner city to its retail and office heart, cutting deep into the urban tissue before 'landing' at the Spui due to opposition of residents to the west. Yet even this truncated portion of the ring road was "poisonous" enough to damage the vitality of the remaining blocks that surround it: "since this four lane gangway has been rammed through the city, the Spui district is really ill."<sup>867</sup> In the western edge of the inner city, a large hospital structure would clear several blocks of historic structures, to construct a high-rise structure that "didn't relate at all to the historical surroundings in which they were building." Although the city did protest, the hospital's interests would ultimately prevail.<sup>868</sup>

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<sup>862</sup> M. J. E. Blauw, *Ruimte Maken Voor Den Haag : Schetsen Uit Een Kleine Eeuw Uitbreiden En Inschikken* ([Den Haag]: Dienst Stedelijke Ontwikkeling gemeente Den Haag, 2008), 85.

<sup>863</sup> This was the year that a 'participation memorandum' was drafted by the city. Ibid., 81.

<sup>864</sup> Sluijs, *Haagse Stedebouw : Mijn Ervaringen in De Jaren 1946-1983*, 135-37.

<sup>865</sup> Oorschot, "Conflicten over Haagse Stadsbeelden," 342-44.

<sup>866</sup> Richard Kleinegris, "Democratisering Van De Stedebouw - Den Haag in De Jaren 1970-1980," in *Het Veranderend Stadsbeeld Van Den Haag*, ed. Victor Freijser (Zwolle: Waanders, 1991).

<sup>867</sup> Postmaa, *Den Haag Op Z'n Smalst : Teloorgang Van Een Hofstad*.

<sup>868</sup> Sluijs, *Haagse Stedebouw : Mijn Ervaringen in De Jaren 1946-1983*, 159; Joop Niesten, "Nieuw Westeinde Ziekenhuis Den Haag," *Cobouw magazine* 6(1980).



**Figure 159. The new Westeinde hospital under construction behind a series of vacant buildings on the Prinsegracht.<sup>869</sup>**

While planners fought, the inner city was at the verge of slipping into a downward spiral. Despite all the investment in office renewal, the vacancy of office buildings in the inner city had more than tripled between 1973 and 1976 as government agencies decentralized their operations to peripheral parts of the country. The office market had become a game of musical chairs. Shops were closing as a result of the declining city economy, and through the continuing attrition of smaller businesses due to the rise of larger chain stores. Especially peripheral retail streets were hurting, and in 1980 the first policy document was produced to survey their decline and plan for the transformation of their closing ground-

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<sup>869</sup> Photograph Nico de Vries, courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.

floor businesses into dwellings and workshops.<sup>870</sup> The city's pleas to the central government not to leave or to compensate the lost businesses went unanswered. The Hague's inner city was also struggling as a night-time leisure destination, as the public found the city too dull to visit after work hours. To make matters worse, the percentage of inner city commuters that arrived by car rose to more than 50% in 1975, mostly at the cost of pedestrians and cyclists.<sup>871</sup> All these numbers were devastating for the relationship between buildings and public space in the inner city, as the number of active ground-floor retailers, bars and restaurants dropped, while the percentage of the city that was dedicated to cars only increased. In 1975, representatives from inner city businesses and cultural institutions would join forces in the "Inner City The Hague Foundation", aimed to turn the inner city's tide and strengthen the role and functioning of the urban core through representation to the city and the wider public. The foundation would gain a foothold partly by publishing regular bulletins on inner city affairs and partly by shaping policy through their representative force in the municipal decision making process.<sup>872</sup> Slowly, city planners and politicians would realize that the paradigm shift that was started in 1970 should be continued, and the inner city needed to rethink its future in order to survive.

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<sup>870</sup> Dienst voor de Stadsontwikkeling, "Haagse Aanloopstraten Met Een Winkelfunctie," (The Hague 1980).

<sup>871</sup> Gemeentesecretarie, "Manual Binnenstad," (The Hague 1976).

<sup>872</sup> Stichting Binnenstad Den Haag, "Akte Van Oprichting," (The Hague 1975).



**Figure 160. Junkyard in The Hague's inner city in the late 1970s.<sup>873</sup>**

A central figure in this shift was Adri Duivesteijn. His background in resident protests against urban renewal evolved into a more engaged and organized opposition to the postwar planning paradigms of urban clearance and infrastructure construction as he joined the city government as a Labour politician. In 1975, Duivesteijn would co-author a memorandum in which he strongly criticized the undemocratic planning process that didn't take the demands of existing inner city residents into account. Councilmembers agreed, and under Duivesteijn the inner city would focus on residential construction over

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<sup>873</sup> Dienst voor de Stadsontwikkeling, "Kleine Ambachtelijke En Industriële Bedrijven in De Oudere Haagse Stadsdelen," (The Hague 1979).

offices, valuing public participation and humanly scaled construction “for people”.<sup>874</sup> As a result of his strongly supported vision for the inner city, Duivesteijn became alderman in 1980 and promptly drafted a Historical Compromise in which the inner ring road plans would be abandoned in lieu of further ring road widenings outside the inner city. The compromise would be amended with plans for a ring of parking garages to take cars out of the retail core of the city and the proposal to demolish part of the Prince Bernhard viaduct. Most of the area left by the demolition would later be filled with an office building. Urban renewal for infrastructure had officially come to an end, allowing the infill of the partly demolished path of the much-maligned inner ring road.<sup>875</sup> In the following years, over 2000 homes were constructed in the ‘holes’ that were left by the planners since World War 2.<sup>876</sup>



**Figure 161. Protesters Joop ten Velden and Adri Duivesteijn on the controversial Prins Bernhardviaduct (left), tent camp to protest its further route through the inner city (right).<sup>877</sup>**

Yet in the Spui district, the damage of postwar renewal had eroded the existing urban structure beyond the point where simple infill was possible. After a design competition

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<sup>874</sup> Duivesteijn and Velden, "Aanval Op Cityvorming Den Haag."

<sup>875</sup> Sluijs, *Haagse Stedebouw : Mijn Ervaringen in De Jaren 1946-1983*, 159.

<sup>876</sup> Oorschot, "Conflicten over Haagse Stadsbeelden," 415.

<sup>877</sup> Left image Kleinegris, "Democratisering Van De Stedebouw - Den Haag in De Jaren 1970-1980," 211. Right image from *Haagsche Courant* May 1<sup>st</sup> 1976, courtesy of The Hague municipal archives

between architects Herman Hertzberger, Wim Quist and Carel Weeber, the latter was commissioned by the city to make sense of the scattered buildings in the remaining district, using his experience as a vocal opponent to the district's status quo. To repair the urban structure of the devastated district, Weeber designed the "Forum", a series of large blocks that would bring back street-level definition and functions, centering around a newly constructed pedestrian route between the Central railway station and the inner city, culminating in a cultural center around a square on the Spui. While many of Weeber's urban design proposals were indeed implemented, he would only design one housing block and a hotel building within the site. Both buildings had a rather ambiguous relationship to public space: while they contained ground-floor retail and open lobbies on certain sides, others were completely closed off toward the street. Furthermore, Weeber's interventions continued the trend of large-scale construction he had criticized before. Other designs would follow from Weeber's master plan, such as a combined concert hall and dance theater designed by van Mourik Vermeulen and Rem Koolhaas, and a multifunctional cinema, exhibition hall and housing complex by Herman Hertzberger.<sup>878</sup> These buildings were located on the newly created "Spui Square", a rather oversized and empty area materialized by architect Joan Busquets, with a fountain by Peter Struijken. Southeast of the Spui district, a residential development would replace the last historical parts of the southeastern inner city with a relatively dense but introverted mixture of dwellings, offices and parking garages by 1983. Due to the lack of definition of its public spaces and their relation to the buildings that lined them, crime plagued the area until significant parts of its alleyway system was closed to the public.<sup>879</sup>

Duivesteijn's vision for repairing the inner city became clearer in his manifestation "Urban Renewal as a Cultural Activity" in 1985. The manifestation condemned the quantitative renewal of the previous decades that focused on providing as many dwellings as possible for the lowest rents, resulting in "standardization and repetition... following the arbitrary fashionable image of today or the sentiment of yesteryear... the death of the city as a source

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<sup>878</sup> Oorschot, "Conflicten over Haagse Stadsbeelden," 551. The area is covered in more detail in chapter 7.

<sup>879</sup> The high density of the development was required to offset the losses in land value as a result of the rezoning of the district from commercial to residential. Kleinegris, "Democratisering Van De Stedebouw - Den Haag in De Jaren 1970-1980," 215.

of culture.”<sup>880</sup> Indeed, many existing renewal projects consisted of “non-architecture”<sup>881</sup> which was rather monotonous and introverted, presenting themselves to the street with closed facades that contained parking or storage space, “dead spots... which invite unwanted behavior... and promote the alienation of children and adults with their environment.”<sup>882</sup> A large renewal project in the northwest part of the inner city had indeed shown that blank frontages would strongly correlate with negative experiences of public space and crime, and various parts would be closed to the general public.<sup>883</sup>



**Figure 162. Typical 1980s renewal entrance on Zuidwal with residential stairwell in center, lined by storage entrances on either side (left), the crime-sensitive blank walls and tunnels of the ZHB-hoven, originally conceived as a complex transition between public and private space by architects Klunder and Sybesma (right).<sup>884</sup>**

Instead, Duivesteijn’s proposed urban renewal should propagate a diverse architecture that would fit with the specific culture of a city and district, and the needs of existing

<sup>880</sup> Adri Overduin Henk Rook G. J. de Duivesteijn, *Stadsvernieuwing Als Kulturele Activiteit* ('s-Gravenhage: Gemeentemuseum [etc.], 1985).

<sup>881</sup> Joris Molenaar, "Architectuurklimaat Na 1980," in *Gids Van De Moderne Architectuur in Den Haag - Guide to Modern Architecture in the Hague*, ed. Cees van Boven, Victor Freijser, and Christiaan Vaillant (The Hague: Ulysses, 1997), 31.

<sup>882</sup> A. A. Hebly Hebly and Theunissen, *Bouwen in De Stad : Stedebouwkundige & Architectonische Aspecten Van De Stadsvernieuwing in Den Haag* ('s-Gravenhage: Project Organisatie Stadsvernieuwing, 1989).

<sup>883</sup> Dienst beleidszaken en onderzoek, "Onderzoek Naar De Relatie Criminaliteit - Ruimtelijke Structuur - Eerste Rapportage," (The Hague 1985).

<sup>884</sup> Left image: Dienst Stadsontwikkeling March 8 1985, right image Robert Scheers May 14 1980. Both images courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.

residents. As a result, high quality architecture would have a much more central role in creating a diverse and lively inner city building stock. A small and efficient Project Organization [for] Urban Development was created to accelerate the various urban renewal projects that were planned throughout the city.<sup>885</sup> Budgetary restrictions were loosened due to an influx of national funding for urban renewal.<sup>886</sup> As a result, a slew of famous architects were hired to design 'contextual' plans for urban renewal areas throughout the city, but it would be local architects from Atelier PRO that would design what many consider the flagship renewal project of this era. Around the Katerstraat, a block ensemble of buildings had suffered from condemnation and clearance for the inner ring road, resulting in physical decline and the rise of prostitution. The block ensemble would be cleared and redesigned as dwellings which closely interacted with a pedestrian street on top of a sunken parking garage, "an exemplar for urban renewal in The Hague."<sup>887</sup> The renewal efforts were a success in numbers, as the inner city population of The Hague would sharply increase from 1980 onwards.<sup>888</sup> Also, most renewal plans would indeed propose a much higher quality architecture which often had a closer and finer grained relationship between the building and the street.

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<sup>885</sup> Victor Freijser and Ruud Ridderhof, "Stedelijke Vernieuwing Door Architectonische Vormgeving - Den Haag in De Jaren 1980-1990," in *Het Veranderend Stadsbeeld Van Den Haag*, ed. Victor Freijser (Zwolle: Waanders, 1991).

<sup>886</sup> Molenaar, "Architectuurklimaat Na 1980," 31.

<sup>887</sup> Architext, *De Katerstraat : Voorbeeld Van Haagse Stadsvernieuwing* (Haarlem: Architext-Haarlem, 1987).

<sup>888</sup> P. Almekinders, "Bevolkingsveranderingen in De Binnenstad Van Den Haag," (Utrecht: Rijksuniversiteit te Utrecht - Faculteit der Ruimtelijke Wetenschappen, 1989).



**Figure 163. Katerstraat before renewal, with adult shop and theater (left); Katerstraat after renewal, with entrances and central square (right).<sup>889</sup>**

In the peripheral renewal districts, retail streets would increasingly serve as neighborhood centers, serving their upgraded surroundings with daily goods and services. Nevertheless, the center of gravity would shift toward the new Spui district, leaving retailers on the streets to the south and west of the city struggling for their survival.<sup>890</sup> Especially the Westeinde would change from one of the city's main retail streets toward a more residential environment, as its hinterland was lost due to renewal and business shifted eastwards.<sup>891</sup> Yet in the retail core, business was still going strong. The pedestrianized shopping streets would drastically improve the quality of public space for the inner city consumer, which highly valued the safety and comfort of its new realm. The inner city would continue to reflect the city's class separation with northern streets catering to upper and middle class consumers and southern streets serving a wider but often lower class clientele. The more peripheral southern streets would even specialize toward discount retail, while northern streets would cater to niche luxury markets. The center of the city

<sup>889</sup> Image left: Dienst Stadsontwikkeling, February 7 1984; image right: Wim de Koning Gans, around 1985. Both images courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.

<sup>890</sup> Werkgroep lange termijn stadsvernieuwing, "Stadsvernieuwing in Perspectief," (The Hague 1986), 55-60.

<sup>891</sup> Postmaa, *Den Haag Op Z'n Smalst : Teloorgang Van Een Hofstad*; Wijkberaad Westeinde-Kortenbosch, "De Toekomst Die Ons Toekomst," (The Hague 1980), 7-8; Dienst voor de Stadsontwikkeling, "Knelpuntennota Centrum-West," (The Hague 1980).

had expanded its retail offering during the 1970s and 1980s through the construction of various midblock arcades, such as the Queenspassage, Buitenhofpassage, Markthof and Pasadenha. The latter was promoted as an airconditioned center for “easy shopping”, in which customers could find a comfortable and “high-class” experience, but was perceived as a rather dark and inconvenient establishment and ultimately proved unsuccessful.<sup>892</sup> All of the other arcades would meet the same fate over time.<sup>893</sup>



**Figure 164. Artist rendering of the interior of the Pasadenha shopping center, with the sunken ‘coffee corner’ in the center of the image.<sup>894</sup>**

A major underlying issue was the inability of The Hague’s inner city to cater to the changing needs of consumer, which was increasingly in search of an overall experience rather than a targeted purchase. Consumption had developed into a leisure activity, and ‘fun-shopping’

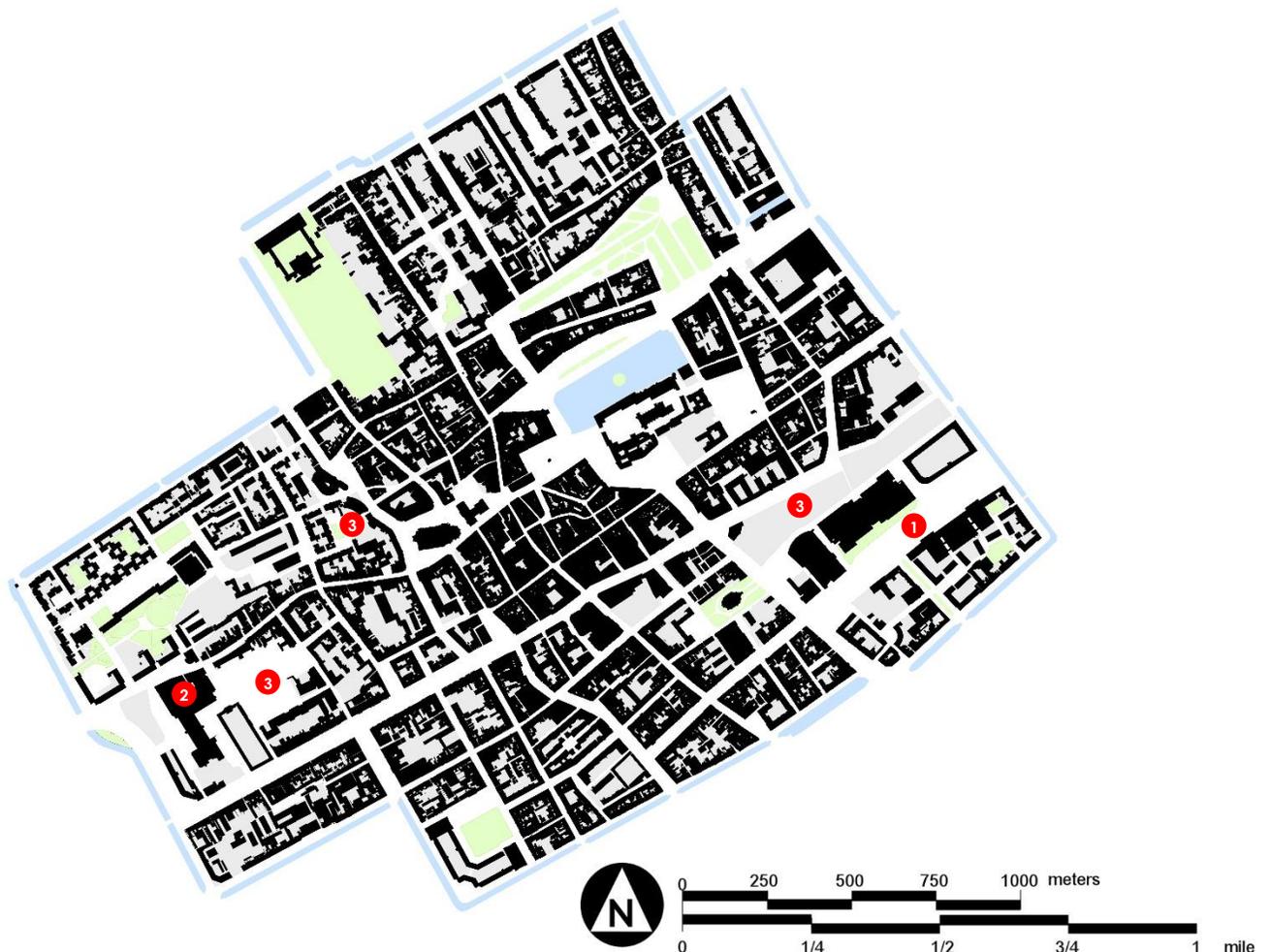
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<sup>892</sup> Pasadenha Winkelcentrum, "Pasadenha," (The Hague 1975).

<sup>893</sup> Stadsontwikkeling, "Haagse Aanloopstraten Met Een Winkelfunctie," 14-16.

<sup>894</sup> Makelaars A. Nadorp en Zoon BV, "Pasadenha Den Haag," (The Hague 1975).

was on the rise in the “experience economy”.<sup>895</sup> While The Hague’s inner city still offered the most contiguous retail floor space of any Dutch city, it was considered mono-functional and not ‘alive’, with most activity focused on retail rather than leisure, resulting in a core that was practically deserted after business hours. Furthermore, the attractiveness of the core was rated rather low, as visitors complained about the lack of upkeep and the core’s ‘uncosy’ atmosphere. The Hague acted as an efficient shopping center for targeted purchases, a role that was better fulfilled by its suburban competition. As a result, the inner city risked losing its retail hegemony. The future of a unique inner city should be sought in its cultural and leisure uses, and its unique sense of place.<sup>896</sup>



**Figure 165. The Hague’s inner city blocks, buildings, parcels, open spaces, parks and rivers in 1988.**

<sup>895</sup> Evers, *Planning Van Winkels En Winkelgebieden in Nederland*, 45-46, 119.

<sup>896</sup> Centraal Instituut voor het Midden- en Kleinbedrijf and Stichting Binnenstad Den Haag, "De Binnenstad Van Den Haag - Kansrijke Strategieën Ter Verbetering Van Het Binnenstedelijk Milieu," (The Hague 1985).



**Figure 166. The Hague's frontage interactivity in 1988.**

Compared to 1961, the urban form of The Hague had changed drastically in 1988. The urban renewal era had left its mark upon the periphery of the city, with entire blocks replaced by large infrastructural projects and offices in the east of the city (1), and housing, parking and a hospital (2) in the west. Furthermore, some crucial parcels in the city still laid vacant, awaiting planning and development (3). Urban renewal had strong ramifications for the ground floor interactivity pattern, with the relationship between buildings and public space widely differing between areas. Overall, renewal before 1970 had resulted in large, inactive buildings such as the government offices on the inner city's east side, while later renewal brought small-scaled housing infill in the southern and western side of the inner city and often actually increased frontage interactivity by

replacing wholesalers and car shops with a fine grained pattern of dwellings. Nevertheless, the pattern of peripheral retail erosion had clearly continued since 1961, with peripheral retail streets such as the Wagenstraat, Boekhorststraat and Westeinde suffering from the loss of their residential hinterland as a result of local renewal and citywide population loss.

## 5.4 1988-2011

At the end of the 1980s, The Hague knew it had to change its attitude and approach toward its urban core, not only to save it from irrelevance in an increasingly connected and competitive urban region, but also to shed the entire city's image of a rather stuffy residence without a proper heart. Surrounding cities like Delft, Leiden and Amsterdam could depend on their expansive historical cores that were drawing more tourists every year, and even Rotterdam was successfully reconstructing its war-damaged inner city. Yet The Hague's downtown had suffered decades of relative amnesia, preferring function over form, offices over residents, traffic over people and most importantly, an unachievable future over a crumbling past.



**Figure 167. Closed shutters after business hours on the Spuistraat (left), parked cars and vacant land in the former Spui district (right).<sup>897</sup>**

While thinking about downtown had slowly shifted after the rejection of the 1970 Master Plan and the 1980 Historical Compromise, it hadn't yet materialized in official city policy. This would change with the 1987 publication of "Heart for the City", a report on inner city revitalization under the supervision of former state secretary of Housing Brokx. For the

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<sup>897</sup> Left image: Pevry Press, January 1993. Right image: Dienst Stadsontwikkeling February 14 1984. Both images courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.

first time since World War 2, a government report proposed strategies for revitalization that would build on the existing qualities of the inner city, acknowledging that its “identity had to be reshaped in our times. The inner city then again becomes the core from which the rest of the city can grow.”<sup>898</sup> The Hague’s inner city should function as the city’s “living room” and cultural heart of the region. The strategies focused on the distribution of urban functions throughout the city, but connected them with a drastically improved quality of public space, in which cars would take up much less space. Echoing sentiments from the decades when the car was popularized in the city, the report proposed to restrict through traffic and on-street parking and divert cars to a ring of existing and proposed parking garages around the urban core. Furthermore, public space should receive a massive overhaul to improve its quality as a destination in itself, instead of just a space to traverse. Many of the proposals would have to take place under public private partnership, in which the priority was set on cleaning up the existing city, followed by reinforcing its existing qualities, only after which adding new quality was encouraged, mainly in the still mostly vacant Spui district. The city maintained that this area should become “the new national center for governance.”<sup>899</sup>

The report also provided the first proposals for ‘zoning’ the inner city into atmospheres that were aimed at target groups. Of course the city had a long history of separation between the aristocracy in the north and the common man in the south of its urban core, but the distinction between families, youth and the growing contingent of immigrants was relatively new in public policy. Partly the distinction was made to increase social safety in the inner city, giving especially youth a place to stay in which other social groups wouldn’t feel threatened. Partly the southern periphery of the inner city was acknowledged as a multicultural area in which immigrant groups could present their merchandise to a wider audience.<sup>900</sup> Social safety was further enhanced by policy and funding for reopening the upper floors of central shopping buildings to dwellers. Shops on central streets had become so successful that their ground-floor rents were a multitude of upper floors, with many

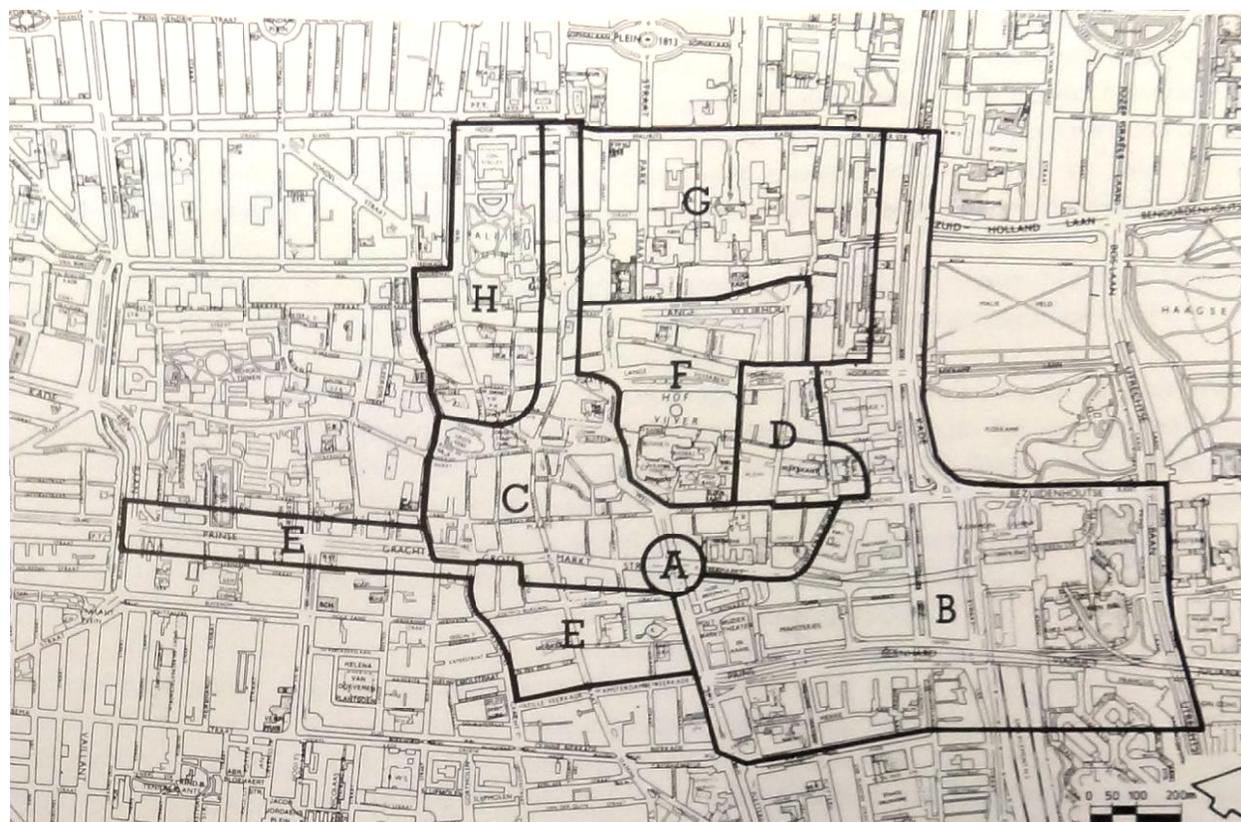
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<sup>898</sup> G.P.H. Brokx and A. Th. van Delden, "Hart Voor Den Haag," (The Hague: Gemeentedrukkerij, 1987), 11.

<sup>899</sup> Ibid., 5-6 and 37.

<sup>900</sup> Ibid., 33-49.

building owners replacing the narrow stairways to these floors with a few extra square feet of valuable retail space. As a result, upper floors were often used for storage or vacant, which played a big role in the retail core's perceived unsafety at night.<sup>901</sup>



**Figure 168. Distinction of The Hague's inner city into eight zones that each required a different approach in Heart for the City, 1987.<sup>902</sup>**

In a report which was published the following year, the leisure function of the inner city was proposed to be improved using the various inactive alleyways that ran between the busy central shopping streets. The inner city was considered 'too large', and peripheral streets would have to be turned to other uses such as housing or ground floor workshops and offices to retain a critical mass in core streets, echoing sentiments from earlier decades. As the retail center of gravity continued to move eastwards, the western portion of the inner city had lost most of its retailers. A market was proposed to compensate for the loss

<sup>901</sup> Dienst Bouwen en Wonen, "Evaluatie Wonen Boven Winkels: Met Het Oog Op De Toekomst," (The Hague 1991).

<sup>902</sup> Brokx and Delden, "Hart Voor Den Haag," 33.

of commercial activity and to generate footfall for the remaining struggling retailers. This was an important acknowledgement of the century-long peripheral shrinkage of ground floor retail, and the report presented a coordinated approach to grapple with what would be left.<sup>903</sup>



**Figure 169. Distinction of The Hague's inner city into atmospheres in "The Core Healthy" report, centered around a north-south "Core line".<sup>904</sup>**

The focus of The Hague's inner city renewal on upgrading its public spaces was materialized as the memorandum "The Core Healthy"<sup>905</sup> in 1988, presenting designs by

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<sup>903</sup> Afdeling Economische Zaken, "Winkelen in De Haagse Kern," ed. Dienst Stadsontwikkeling(The Hague1988).

<sup>904</sup> Dienst Stadsontwikkeling, "De Kern Gezond - Plan Voor De Herinrichting Van De Openbare Ruimte in De Haagse Binnenstad,"(The Hague1988).

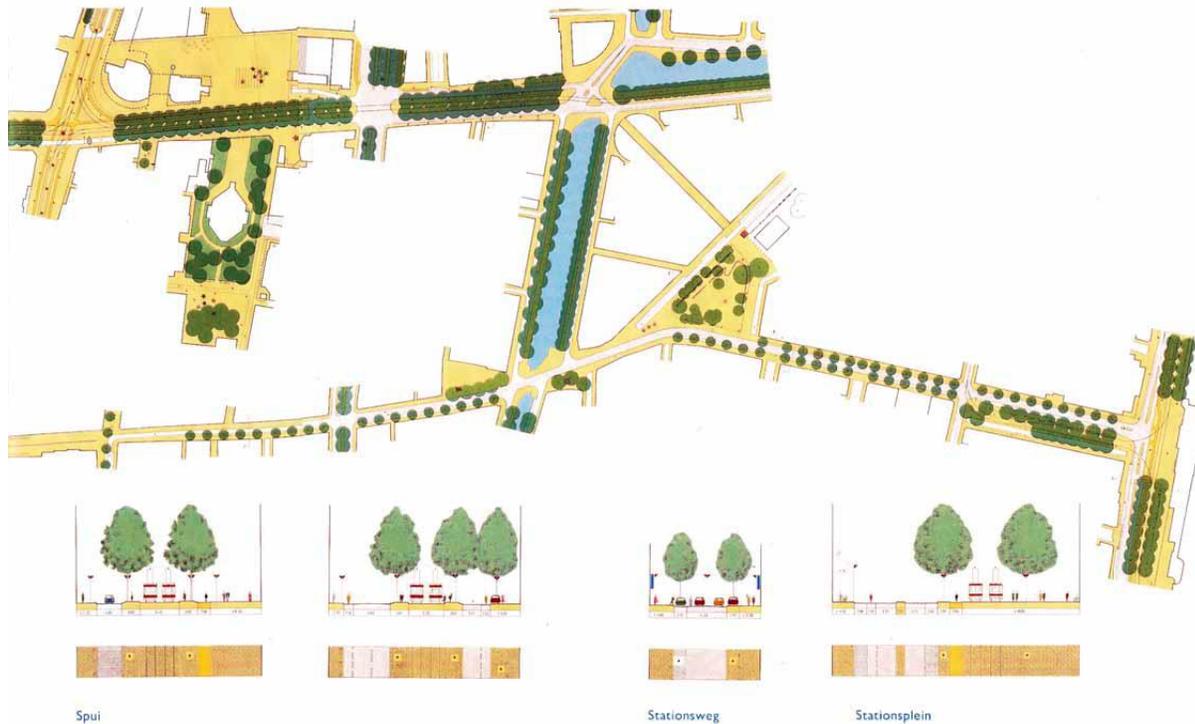
<sup>905</sup> Translated from "De Kern Gezond", which also refers to the superlative "very healthy".

landscape architect Alle Hosper. The memorandum proposed designs for a car-free public realm that was given over to strolling, shopping, recreation and enjoying leisure activities. It reflected the successful public space-led regeneration in Barcelona during the 1980s and the focus on high quality public space in the national Fourth Memorandum on Spatial Planning, which saw public space as a place of encounter and identification where “connections between people are made”.<sup>906</sup> Also, it connected various other public policy documents that had been drafted on the issue of traffic, green space and public space in the previous years, while also taking a public input campaign into account. The experiential quality of the inner city would finally count as a unique selling point, as various distinctive ‘atmospheres’ were recognized in the city and connected with a design that would not forsake their separate identity. This approach is reminiscent of the zoning in the Heart for the City report published a year previous. A carefully composed choreography of street pavement, furniture and lighting would give the inner city a unified image while highlighting different spaces, often strongly connecting with architectural monuments. Traffic would be routed outside the urban core, with the controversial inner ring diluted to a simple signage system for motorists to reach the nearest available parking garage. The relationship between buildings and public space was approached from a social safety standpoint, as a clear separation between private and public space was propagated.<sup>907</sup>

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<sup>906</sup> Stadsontwikkeling, "De Kern Gezond - Plan Voor De Herinrichting Van De Openbare Ruimte in De Haagse Binnenstad," 11.

<sup>907</sup> Oorschot, "Conflicten over Haagse Stadsbeelden," 471-74; Stadsontwikkeling, "De Kern Gezond - Plan Voor De Herinrichting Van De Openbare Ruimte in De Haagse Binnenstad," 19-26.



**Figure 170. Example of public space designs for the southern edge of the inner city, indicating the overall vision and various street profiles.<sup>908</sup>**

The approach to position The Hague's inner city as a diverse district with a rich history and high quality public spaces can be considered a great success. Since 1988, the number of visitors to the inner city has risen by about 50%, and sales have increased even more. Visitors decreasingly arrived by car, with over 75% of people using public transportation, bicycles or walking to the inner city. The amount of floor space for retail has also increased, but the number of retailers has decreased as chain stores have continued to threaten smaller businesses. Most importantly, the renovation of public spaces has opened up the city as a leisure destination, with the newly reclaimed squares becoming a popular spot for patios and open-air festivals. To enable the growth of the inner city's night-time bar scene without disturbing residents, five concentration areas were designated in which bars could have later opening hours and use of their patios.<sup>909</sup> These areas have consequently received an influx of new establishments, enlivening the inner city during the evening and into the

<sup>908</sup> "De Kern Gezond - Plan Voor De Herinrichting Van De Openbare Ruimte in De Haagse Binnenstad," 57.

<sup>909</sup> Gemeente Den Haag, "Nota Horeca Binnenstad," (The Hague 1994); V. Kompier and L. van der Meij, "Den Haag Grijpt Zijn Kansen," ed. Stichting binnenstadsmanagement (The Hague 1995).

night. While most shops are closed at these times, city policy has helped to curb the use of defensive shutters that protected merchandise but gave retail streets a dilapidated outlook at night. Instead, more transparent shutters and reinforced glass offer afterhours visitors a more positive inner city experience.<sup>910</sup>



**Figure 171. The Grote Markt has been overtaken by bar and restaurant patios.<sup>911</sup>**

Besides the investment in its existing urban quality, The Hague's inner city would also host a range of development projects, mostly filling in the clearance that had occurred over the previous decades. The Dutch House of Representatives would be renovated by Pi de Bruijn, following a rather contentious design contest. Although his design would include a public passageway through the entire building, subsequent security concerns have made the

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<sup>910</sup> "Den Haag Grijpt Zijn Kansen," 38.

<sup>911</sup> Image by author, summer 2012.

complex far more introvert.<sup>912</sup> Especially the Spui district would see a drastic transformation from the late 1980s onwards, and was even coined the “New Center” of the city. The area would host an array of different developments, varying in form and function. Scared off by the expense of hiring Norman Foster to draft an urban design for the eastern part of the district, postmodern architect Rob Krier was retained to formulate a vision for “repairing” the scattered area.<sup>913</sup> His vision for “The Resident” would wrap the existing Transitorium building into a set of small squares, streets and urban blocks, inserting an interesting piece of traditional urbanism in a distinctly Modern setting. Financed by private developer MAB, “an elite corps” of postmodern architects such as Michael Graves, Cesar Pelli and Sjoerd Soeters were commissioned to design buildings in the district, which achieved more humanly dimensioned buildings with a stronger connection toward public space.<sup>914</sup> The district would contain a mixture of housing, ground floor shops and offices for private firms and the national government.

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<sup>912</sup> Oorschot, "Conflicten over Haagse Stadsbeelden," 427-31.

<sup>913</sup> Ibid., 512-14.

<sup>914</sup> Den Haag Nieuw Centrum, "The New the Hague Centre: 'More Than Five Billion Guilders'," (The Hague 1999).



**Figure 172. City hall, designed by Richard Meier.**<sup>915</sup>

Directly to the southwest, the image of The Hague would take a distinctly more Modern look. After a lengthy and controversial tendering process that would oust two aldermen including Adri Duivesteijn, Richard Meier was ultimately commissioned to design the new city hall to be located at the corner of the Spui and Grote Marktstraat, more than 80 years after the first proposals for this location were made. While the building has a very large floor plate and mass, it presents itself to the street through smaller volumes and interactive frontages that contain a mixture of shops, restaurants, offices and a public library. Furthermore, it mixes interior and exterior public space, with a large atrium housing important city services and events. Following the trend of public-private participation, even this city hall would be privately financed and developed, with the city initially leasing almost the entire building.<sup>916</sup> Partially, this deal was borne out of necessity as Duivesteijn's

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<sup>915</sup> Image courtesy of Remon Rijper.

<sup>916</sup> Most of the controversy surrounding city hall hinged on the financial burden to the city. The system in which the city leased the building from a private developer reduced their risk, and they were ultimately able

enthusiastic and generous urban renewal efforts and the city's continued population decline had plunged The Hague into national receivership by 1995.<sup>917</sup> With the new projects, housing, offices, cultural amenities and the government were combined into a mixed-use urban district which reverted the decentralization of the urban core that had started at the turn of the century. While the new district combined a range of functions it contained little formal relation between its buildings, as it had become a mish-mash of half-finished grand plans. "Lo and behold, The Hague is growing into a modest little metropolis.... a spicy gulash of urban design leftovers none of which is large enough to impart its 'flavour' to the city."<sup>918</sup> The eclecticism would continue with the demolition of Weeber's residential block and its replacement with two high-rise office towers and a high-rise apartment building by German architect Kolhoff and Rapp + Rapp architects, a contextual urban ensemble with interactive ground floor frontages that referred to "Chicago or/oder Berlin", finished after 2011.<sup>919</sup>

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to buy the building outright. Hans Schmit, "Den Haag Schept Een Binnenstad," *Trouw* 1995; Veen and Ambachtsheer, "Een Simpele Verkeersverbetering": *De Geschiedenis Van De Grote Marktstraat En Omgeving*, 109-16.

<sup>917</sup> Aukje van Roessel, "Den Haag Wacht in Spanning Op Artikel 12-Status," *Volkskrant* 1995.

<sup>918</sup> Hans van Dijk, "The Hague Today - Irresolute Wanderings of a City Centre," *Archis*, no. 9 (1994): 80.

<sup>919</sup> Oorschot, "Conflicten over Haagse Stadsbeelden," 704-06.



**Figure 173. Urban 'bricolage' in the Spui district: the 1970s ministries of Internal Affairs and Justice in the middle in white, the 1980s Anton Philipszaal concert venue to the right, the 1990s City Hall to the left, and the 2000s new ministry and housing towers in red brick in the background.<sup>920</sup>**

Although the city's planning policies from the 1980s onwards had pushed for a car-free urban core, accessibility for the urban core remained a contentious issue. The originally intended ring of parking garages to relieve inner city traffic would be frustrated by the controversy of building a garage underneath the Court Pond, considered 'sacred ground' by most citizens. Poor soil conditions would ultimately cancel the centerpiece of the inner city parking strategy. The planned closure of retail core streets to traffic would threaten to push cars to the periphery of the inner city, which had fortunately averted the drastic inner ring road clearance but as a result would still have to cope with comparable traffic volumes in

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<sup>920</sup> Bricolage refers to Colin Koetter Fred Rowe, *Collage City*(Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1978).Image by author, summer 2012.

its under-dimensioned infrastructure. They would protest central road closures through forming the influential action group “The Core Wounded”, referring to the Core Healthy plan they opposed.<sup>921</sup> Simultaneously, the city planned to remove cars and street cars from the Grote Marktstraat by placing them into a combined transit and parking tunnel designed by OMA, leaving the ground floor open to pedestrians. Although the street’s small businesses and large department stores protested, the tunnel construction would start in 1996. Due to extensive construction delays, the tunnel would only open in 2004, spurring a range of new developments in its vicinity such as a housing and retail tower, several office developments and a mixed-use leisure and retail complex.<sup>922</sup>

The city’s policy for continuing the improvement of the inner city would build on the Core Healthy memorandum of the late 1980s. In cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce and local retailers united in the Foundation Inner City The Hague the city would start the Foundation Inner City Management The Hague and the Bureau Inner City in 1992. In 2000, the city would recognize five different “atmosphere areas” that each presented visitors with a different experience for living, shopping and leisure. The inner city policy increasingly focused on this “unity in diversity”, as “the power of the inner city lies simultaneously in that multitude of faces and the diversity of the offerings.”<sup>923</sup> Each of these areas would be surveyed for their own opportunities and threats, and each would be marketed differently, often toward a different target audience. This distinction into zones was further elaborated in a 2010 follow-up plan in which the inner city was seen as the “bearer of the identity” for the entire city: the center had progressed from a lifeless void to a representation of the diversity of the surrounding city. The definition of these zones was slightly altered, but their branding was strengthened. For example, the southern end of the inner city was branded as The Hague’s ‘Chinatown’, with the local Chinese community sponsoring two gates. Furthermore, the city would increasingly be marketed toward tourists, international organizations and expats and the inner city would be a crucial part of

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<sup>921</sup> Veen and Ambachtsheer, *“Een Simpele Verkeersverbetering” : De Geschiedenis Van De Grote Marktstraat En Omgeving*, 119.

<sup>922</sup> Ibid., 120-34; Gonda Mellink Bert Buursma, *Architectuurgids Den Haag* (Rotterdam: Uitgeverij 010, 2011).

<sup>923</sup> Bureau Binnenstad Den Haag, “Binnenstad Buitengewoon!,” (The Hague 2001).

The Hague's brand image.<sup>924</sup> The inner city should reflect the "Signature of The Hague" even stronger in the following decade, defined as royal yet common, governing, stately and chic, historical yet modern, international and multicultural, music and dance. The "city as a stage" would never lose its penchant for paradox.<sup>925</sup>

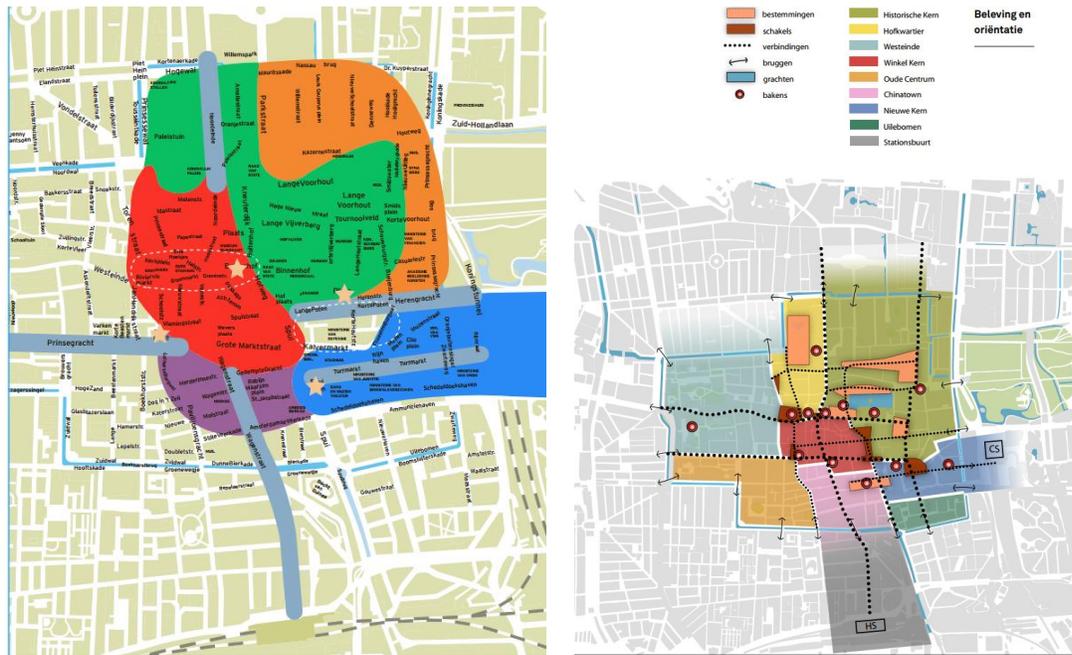


Figure 174. Various atmosphere areas as defined in the inner city plan of 2000-2010 (left) and 2010-2020 (right).<sup>926</sup>

At the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the inner city of The Hague was taking shape as a high-quality center for shopping, leisure, housing and work. The number of visitors would continue to grow, as would their expenditures in the inner city shops, bars and restaurants. Visitors would value the improvements in public space and the increased safety of the inner city, as well as the improved accessibility by public transportation and parking availability. The number of bars and restaurants has steadily increased, shedding at least

<sup>924</sup> Oorschot, "Conflicten over Haagse Stadsbeelden," 553-56.

<sup>925</sup> Bureau Binnenstad and CityWorks, "Naar Een Complete Haagse Binnenstad! Binnenstadsplan Den Haag 2010-2020," (The Hague 2010).

<sup>926</sup> Haag, "Binnenstad Buitengewoon!"; Binnenstad and CityWorks, "Naar Een Complete Haagse Binnenstad! Binnenstadsplan Den Haag 2010-2020."

some of the city's persistent boring image.<sup>927</sup> Traffic calming would finally be implemented with the Traffic Circulation Plan in 2009, finally closing off through traffic in the inner city, giving back important streets like the Spui and Lutherse Burgwal to the pedestrian, while significantly reducing traffic on other streets.<sup>928</sup> The inner city has repeatedly won awards for its high quality public space, urban design and street-level experience, including the "best inner city 2013-2015" award, which specifically mentioned the continuous development from a monofunctional retail core to a multifunctional "destination" which combines leisure, work, culture, events, housing and an increasing number of students.<sup>929</sup> Yet the large amount of new construction in the Spui district has also led to significant office vacancy, especially since the national government has decided to drastically shrink its workforce and resulting demand for space. Furthermore, peripheral retail streets continue to struggle and the city has no strong intention to stem their decline, as their efforts are focused on developing the retail core into the "best shopping city of the Netherlands".<sup>930</sup> The city therefore continues to grapple with the changing needs and image of its urban core.

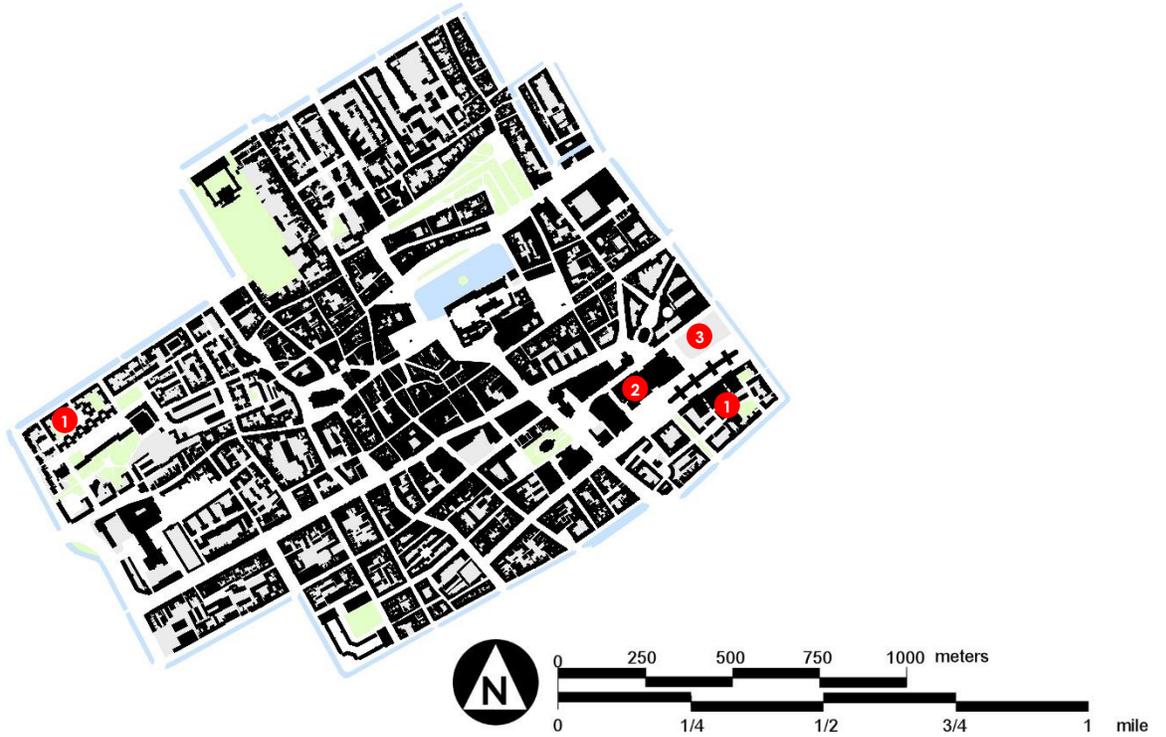
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<sup>927</sup> CityWorks, "Binnenstad Buitengewoon! In Cijfers," ed. Bureau binnenstad Den Haag(The Hague2009).

<sup>928</sup> Gemeente Den Haag, "Verkeerscirculatieplan,"(The Hague2009).

<sup>929</sup> Platform binnenstadsmanagement, "Juryrapport Beste Binnenstad 2013-2015,"(2014).

<sup>930</sup> Interview with Martijn van Dam, senior policy advisor retail at the City of The Hague July 18 2013. Official city policy in Afdeling Economie, "Detailhandel in Den Haag - Maak Het Nieuwe Mogelijk, Behoud Het Goede," ed. Dienst Stedelijke Ontwikkeling(The Hague2005).



**Figure 175. The Hague's inner city blocks, buildings, parcels, open spaces, parks and rivers in 2011.**



**Figure 176. The Hague's inner city interactivity in 2011.**

After a century, The Hague's central urban form has drastically changed. The retail core of the city has undergone relatively few changes, with the exception of the traffic breakthroughs of the 1910s and 1920s. However, most buildings have been renovated or rebuilt even in the historical central blocks. Yet the real transformation has occurred in the urban periphery: the ring around the core has almost completely been replaced by infrastructure, office buildings and urban renewal housing of various eras (1). Consistency within this ring is very difficult to find, as it has been the stage of so many planning, development and design contentions. A pattern has emerged in which a relatively dense and morphologically coherent core has been surrounded by an exhibition of architectural and planning ideals from the past century, often clashing in function and scale. The colorful mixture of construction styles is most apparent in the Spui district (2), which has been almost completed between 1988 and 2011, with only Weeber's residential block awaiting the construction of the new office and residential towers of Kolhoff and Rapp + Rapp (3). While not always very coherent, the fragmentation of the inner city's development has created a heterotopia which can be seen as "the city's greatest quality."<sup>931</sup>

At ground level, frontage interactivity slightly improved between 1988 and 2011. Especially the amount of frontage that was taken up by ground floor businesses has improved, as stronger inner city planning has resulted in a revitalization of The Hague's core as a destination for retail and especially leisure uses. Former forlorn city squares that were taken up by parked cars now host an array of active restaurants and bars with patios opening up their establishments to the public. Nevertheless, the periphery of the inner city has continued to shed retail business, but at a slightly slower pace than in previous time intervals. More positively, the significant number of fenced in parcels that resulted from the postwar renewal era have mostly been filled in with relatively interactive buildings, albeit mostly large in scale. This has solidified the pattern of a small scaled interactive core, surrounded by less active new construction and struggling older streets.

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<sup>931</sup> Oorschot, "Conflicten over Haagse Stadsbeelden," 629.

## 5.5 CONCLUSION

The inner city of The Hague has shown a significant transformation from an eclectic mixture of housing, workshops, factories, offices, shops and cultural venues at the onset of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, through a mono-functional metropolitan center for retail, work and traffic during the postwar decades toward a revitalization into today's relative heterotopia. Its remarkable itinerary has created an urban bricolage that is almost unparalleled in any Dutch city, as central The Hague now reflects the thinking of every decade of its growth, decline and rebirth. Generations of architects, urban designers and planners have imbued the inner city with their "image of the city", often only partly realizing their visions due to the strong debates which emanated.<sup>932</sup> At street level, the interaction between buildings and public space reflect the layered history that has resulted from these often contrasting views. To an outsider, this may seem to have led to an incoherent jumble of ground floor forms, functions and connotations. However, certain forces can be recognized that help explain the transformation and ultimate current state of The Hague's building frontages.

More than any other external force, the culture of the city has strongly shaped its urban core. Much more than in Detroit, The Hague has a tradition of balancing preservation and progress, as the city's most historic buildings and tissue have consistently been viewed as historically significant. The postwar plans which deviated from this path were mostly met with widespread public opposition and lukewarm political backing. Yet while citizens and public officials alike strove to retain the character of the existing city, they didn't hesitate to make changes that they felt necessary. When the first traffic issues arose in the city in the early 1900s, the widening of streets and the construction of new streets through the inner city were conducted with the preservation of historic buildings and streets in mind, and even then were they often met with significant opposition. When slum clearance was gathering steam in the 1920s and 1930s, the character of the city's most prominent spaces was deliberately preserved with contextual architectural and urban design interventions, but did result in larger scale construction that could accommodate the changing economy

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<sup>932</sup> Ibid.

of the fast-growing city of the interbellum. Even the most radical plans of the 1940s and 1950s would avoid altering the most historical blocks of the inner city, yet did radically alter its periphery. From the 1970s onwards, the historic core of the city would increasingly become recognized as the identifying selling point of a city that was competing with peers across the region, country and globe for jobs, inhabitants and visitors. Nowadays, the image of the city strongly hinges on its vibrant heart.

The cultural conviction of preserving the urban core did not only reflect in morphological preservation, but also in the strong belief that the inner city had to remain the functional heart of the metropolitan region. While in many regards the national government has proven to be an unreliable partner for the city and its core, it has bolstered the inner city's hegemony as a concentration of political and administrative power. Ministries and large public agencies have been located throughout the city and country, following the wide variation of political regimes over the past century, but the role of The Hague's inner city as the Dutch center of power has never been in question. Over recent decades, many government offices have been relocated within the boundaries of the inner city. Retailers also fostered the sense of preserving the hegemony of the urban core, as they resisted leaving the inner city when new malls and edge cities were constructed in the 1960s, instead investing in expanding and renovating their existing central establishments. Even during the economic downturn of the 1970s and 1980s, retailers remained committed to the central city. Today, the city has the largest concentration of retail floor space in the country, although retailers are increasingly under pressure from online competition. The local political landscape of The Hague has experienced large shifts over the past century, most significantly with socialist councilmember and Alderman Adri Duivesteijn investing in the inner city as a place to live and meet others from the 1980s onwards. His policies and their successors have solidified the hegemony and experience of the urban core, focusing on high quality design and buildings that interact with their surrounding public spaces.

A balance the city was far less able to strike has been between diversity and division. From its onset The Hague has been a city for aristocrats and commoners, two groups that have struggled to mingle. This struggle has been reflected in the urban fabric of the city and its core, with the working class and industrial areas of the inner city receiving the bulk of its

economic distress, often followed by ruthless clearance and reconstruction. The diverse streetscape of small dwellings, workshops, retailers and offices in the poor inner city periphery of 1911 was often the target of moral objections by the ruling class, which equated their mixture of ground floor uses to social deterioration. All renewal plans for these districts in the following century had a common aim to separate living, working, retail and leisure, almost consistently damaging the interaction between buildings and public space by discouraging ground-floor businesses. Only in the most recent decades a moral shift toward rediversification of the ground floor is taking place, often spurred by the rather opportunistic realization that the growing stock of vacant retail frontages can be conveniently filled with other types of small businesses and residents. While peripheral streets are benefiting from this newly appreciated diversity of living and working, retail is no longer a significant element of their ground floor experience. Instead, an eclectic mixture of small craft businesses, offices and dwellings now occupy the inner city periphery at eye level.

On this cultural basis, it has been the economy that has most significantly shaped the inner city experience at street level, especially with regard to ground floor retail. The most important underlying reason for the continuous erosion of businesses in especially the inner city periphery was rooted in the obsolescence of its underlying economic model. The small-scaled and often informal retail commerce that was taking place in most of central The Hague's peripheral streets was based on an economic model of single ownership, low volume production and sales, and a lack of planning, skills or will to expand operations beyond this status quo. It also hinged on hard labor, below-poverty level wages and a lack of outlook for retailers to improve their situation, ultimately an unsustainable situation. The rise of central department stores during the 1920s brought stiff competition for smaller retailers, and the simultaneous decentralization and consolidation of manufacturing and consequent rise of chain retailers threatened the survival of independent crafts-based businesses. The popularization of consumer cooperatives during the 1930s and supermarkets during the 1950s and 1960s was the death knell for most inner city grocers, bakers, vegetable and milk sellers, as a small number of larger and more

efficient establishments replaced dozens of smaller competitors.<sup>933</sup> The city and national governments would do little to stem this tide, as it deemed most small peripheral businesses as a blight to economic sustainability and the character of residential neighborhoods. For decades, small businesses were considered a remnant of times past, ready to be replaced by new dwellings or larger competitors. Only in recent decades would the rise of the leisure economy and the realization of the value of independent businesses percolate into fledgling policy to promote smaller ground-floor businesses. Nevertheless, the pattern of central retail consolidation at the cost of peripheral streets continues virtually unabated.

At the same time, the inner city job base shifted from manufacturing and crafts toward a service economy. Many small craftsmen that populated the ground floors of the inner city periphery were gradually moved to newer industrial areas outside the urban core or replaced by larger competitors that were located elsewhere. Similarly, wholesalers that lined many inner city canals would see their business replaced by road or rail based transportation in other parts of the city or country. The vacant spaces they left behind were only marginally filled with similar businesses or retailers, instead often making way for automotive workshops from the postwar era onwards. Larger manufacturers such as the South Holland Beer brewery on the northwestern side of the inner city would leave larger tracts of central city land to be eventually redeveloped for mostly residential use. In the southeastern portion of the inner city the obsolete wholesalers, small manufacturers and craftsmen made way for the rapidly growing government district of the Spui district, with entire blocks demolished for the construction of office buildings and cultural amenities. The district was described as transforming from 'crafts to civil'.<sup>934</sup> Yet with the recent economic downturn and governmental budget cuts, this move has resulted in significant office vacancies, opening opportunities for the inner city to re-diversify its job base to include crafts, wholesaling and manufacturing.

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<sup>933</sup> This process was worsened by the fact that the downtown population and hence the local customer base was also rapidly shrinking. More on this process in: Gerard Koning Josee Rutte, *Zelfbediening in Nederland : Geschiedenis Van De Supermarkttoekomst*(Baarn: De Prom, 1998).

<sup>934</sup> Gerda van Mast Michiel van der Beek, *Van Ambachtelijk Tot Ambtelijk : Het Spuikwartier Door De Eeuwen Heen*(’s-Gravenhage: Staatsuitgeverij, 1978).

Technologically, the city has been challenged to welcome a wide range of transportation modes to its public space, which was traditionally viewed as a meeting place, a space of cultural and economic exchange. With the growth of city neighborhoods beyond the relatively walkable inner city ring canal, streetcars became a necessary mode of transportation for many residents, with inner city streets such as the Grote Marktstraat and Torenstraat newly constructed or widened to accommodate this new mode of transport. At the time of their construction during the 1920s, the automobile was only a novelty for the elite. This would only change during the postwar era, when the rise in car ownership would start to cause more drastic congestion and parking problems. While the city would plan for drastic new traffic thoroughfares, central public spaces were still considered a meeting place as the city's first streets were pedestrianized. Furthermore, a lack of funds and strengthening public opposition would allow the city to only construct one major artery through the inner city in the form of the Prince Bernhard viaduct, with half of its roadway demolished and filled with an office building soon after completion. The attitude of the city government toward traffic would shift significantly during the 1970s and 1980s, resulting in a focus on public transport, cycling and walkability. The focus on public space as a place for sojourning intensified with the Core Healthy Plan of the late 1980s. The instatement of the most recent traffic circulation plan and the construction of an underground streetcar tunnel has removed much of the streetcar and automobile through-traffic on inner city streets, ironically returning the 1920s 'traffic improvement' of the Grote Marktstraat to only pedestrians and cyclists.<sup>935</sup> The policy shift can be considered a success, as most visitors to the inner city arrive by another mode than a private car and are nevertheless relatively satisfied with its accessibility.<sup>936</sup>

Architects, urban designers and planners had a relatively limited role in the transformation of The Hague's inner city at eye level. While these professionals were ultimately responsible for the almost complete transformation of especially the inner city periphery, most of their professional interventions only answered to the aforementioned cultural,

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<sup>935</sup> Veen and Ambachtsheer, *"Een Simpele Verkeersverbetering" : De Geschiedenis Van De Grote Marktstraat En Omgeving.*

<sup>936</sup> Binnenstad and CityWorks, "Naar Een Complete Haagse Binnenstad! Binnenstadsplan Den Haag 2010-2020."; binnenstadsmanagement, "Juryrapport Beste Binnenstad 2013-2015."

economic, political and technological forces. It was the consolidation in manufacturing and retail that would prompt department stores to commission their grand new premises along the Grote Marktstraat and Hofweg, just as it would be the loss of smaller retailers and craftsmen that would alarm planners to improve social and physical conditions in the inner city periphery during the 1920s and 1930s. The rise of street traffic resulted in the drafting of various plans for new streets and parking garages from this era onwards, culminating in the radical proposals of the postwar era. Admittedly, it were the strong architectural visions of Dudok and his opponents from Plan 2000 that would guide the vision for the inner city during the 1950s and 1960s. Yet ultimately, architects and planners were forced by the city's housing, material and funding shortage to drastically reduce their inner city ambitions. The amount of central and local government money that was spent on the urban core can be considered far less in The Hague than in Detroit, and as a result most plans were shelved. With the influx of national funding during the 1970s some architectural and infrastructural projects materialized, but their political backing waned quickly as increasingly organized opposition to urban clearance would shift the political climate in the early 1980s. This opposition would come from the architects of Dooievaar, but materialized as the new urban renewal department under former activist Duivesteijn. As Alderman he would give far more power to designers to shape the periphery of the inner city, leading to buildings that interacted more closely with public space. Nevertheless, the loss of retail in these areas would continue under the new regime. The only area in which architects and urban designers were given almost free reign was the Spui district, in which contrasting views have created the jumble of scales, materials and functions still experienced today. Yet the recently elected council has vowed to put an end to large architectural projects and visions for the inner city, as the economic crisis has prompted a return to smaller scaled urbanism.<sup>937</sup>

To conclude, the eye-level experience of The Hague's inner city seems to have been highly dependent on external forces other than the professional disciplines that aimed to shape the urban core. No matter whether plans were implemented or not, the dichotomy between

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<sup>937</sup> City Council, "Vertrouwen Op Haagse Kracht - Coalitieaccord 2014-2018," (The Hague 2014).

a highly interactive retail core and a declining interactivity in the inner city periphery has only grown over the past century. In fact, most large-scale interventions only seemed to worsen this pattern. It is therefore difficult to recommend professional answers to counter these almost unalterable external forces to interactivity decline. Planners and designers will need to realize their limited role and power in the transformation of the ground floor in the inner city in order to produce realistic proposals for improvements. Too many planning policies and architectural designs have provided the inner city with 'interactive' ground floors that have remained vacant from their construction onward. Nevertheless, the recent re-appreciation of the value of high quality public space for people, surrounded by small-scaled, interactive and often historic architecture combined with the rise of the experience and leisure economy and increasing interest in inner city living have great potential to stabilize and potentially improve the connection between buildings and public space in the inner city. In the periphery of the inner city, small offices, workshops and crafts-based businesses have taken over former retail frontages, a pattern that is likely to continue. If new ground-floor retail is desired, only a critical mass of businesses will be able to survive in the most central and well-connected locations. In most others, the inner city has and will continue to move on.

## **CHAPTER 6.**

### **INTERNAL PATTERNS OF FRONTAGE TRANSFORMATION**

This chapter aims to answer the question how frontages have changed over the past century, and whether differences and similarities can be found between the two case studies. The chapter is structured to describe and explain frontage change in increasing detail as it progresses, and is divided into two main sections. The first section contains observations from the categorized, mapped and quantified frontage surveys in both cities and serves to show differences and similarities between both case studies as well as to provide a general overview of their transformation over the past century.

The second section serves to explain these observations by finding patterns and mechanisms behind the observed frontage transformation. It does so by subjecting the frontage data to a familiar range of statistical analyses derived from the field of architecture and urban planning, but extending to the fields of economy, sociology and biology. The structure of this second section is based around the themes and hypotheses that have been mentioned in the research design chapter.

# 1911



Figure 177. Frontage interactivity comparison in 1911.

# 1937



Figure 178. Frontage interactivity comparison in 1937.

# 1961



Figure 179. Frontage interactivity comparison in 1961.

# 1988



Figure 180. Frontage interactivity comparison in 1988.

# 2011



Figure 181. Frontage interactivity comparison in 2011.

## 6.1 FRONTAGE INTERACTIVITY TRANSFORMATION

By calculating the interactivity value for all frontages within each time interval, and taking the average interactivity value (weighted by the length of each frontage), a ‘total interactivity value’ can be derived for each case study and each time interval.<sup>938</sup> This score demonstrates the level of interactivity between buildings and public space for each time interval and when compared across time, it demonstrates the growth and decline of frontage interactivity.

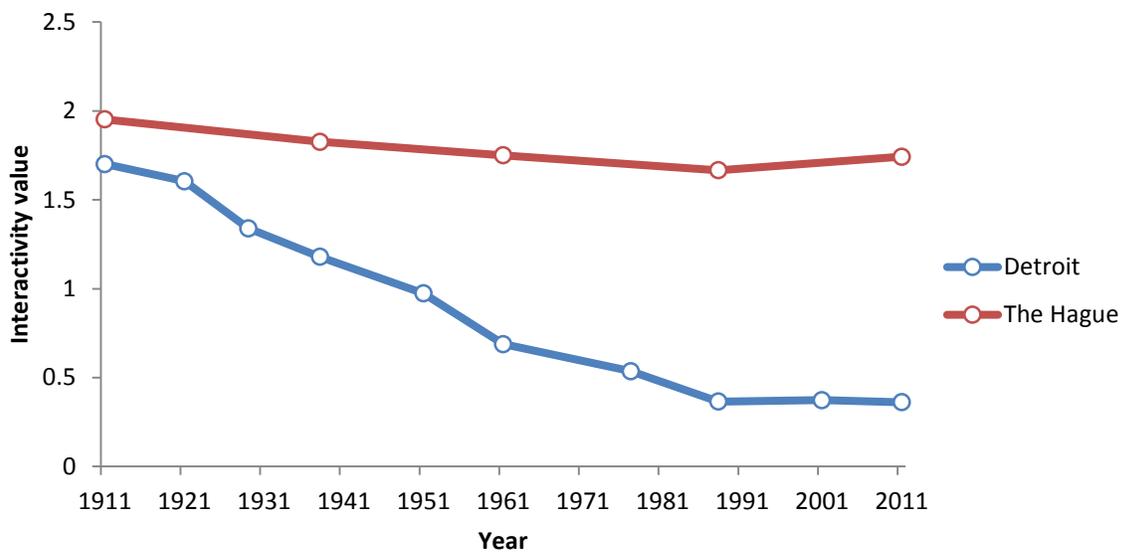
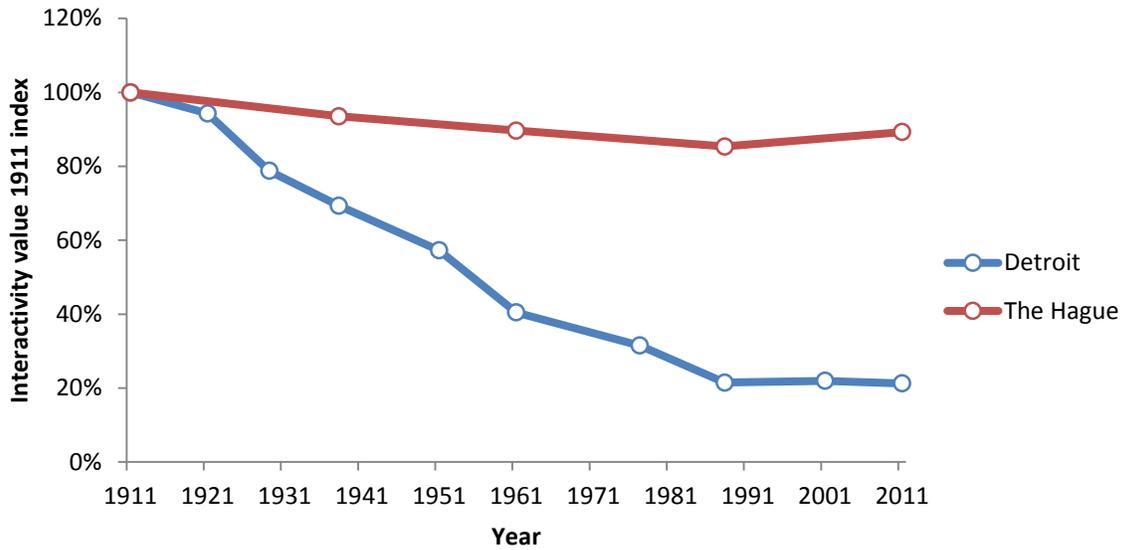


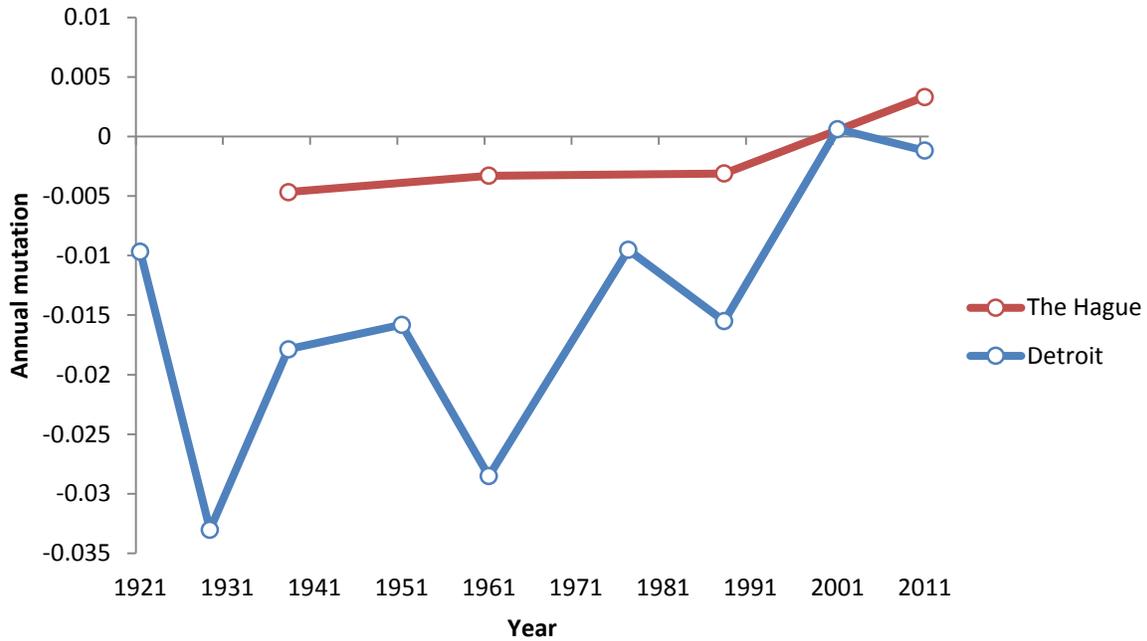
Figure 182. Average interactivity value.

<sup>938</sup> Calculated as follows:  $\frac{\sum_{x}^n \text{frontage length (type } x) \times \text{frontage interactivity value (type } x)}{\text{total frontage length}}$  n=9243 – 6023 for The Hague and n=14151-5014 for Detroit. The sample sizes decrease as frontages have been removed or combined.



**Figure 183. Average interactivity value indexed to 1911.**

A clear conclusion is that in both cases, frontage interactivity declined significantly over the past century. However, Detroit’s downtown decline has been far greater with 79% over the past century, compared to 11% in The Hague’s inner city. In both cities, the decline seems to have been stemmed over the past decades, with Detroit showing a stabilization of decline and The Hague a small increase in interactivity.



**Figure 184. Annual mutation of interactivity value.**

Upon calculating the annual mutation of frontage interactivity between the two cities,<sup>939</sup> it becomes apparent that The Hague seems to be on the upswing after decades of interactivity decline, with about a 0.3% annual growth of interactivity between 2001 and 2011. Decline in Detroit seems to be stabilizing. It is also interesting to see that the biggest annual decline of interactivity in Detroit didn't occur in the postwar era, but in the era that the city experienced its fastest growth during the 1920s, when the downtown was losing over 3% of its interactivity each year. The downtown's second building boom during the 1960s again saw a marked annual decline in frontage interactivity. In other words: as the downtown was experiencing its fastest floor area growth, it also experienced its fastest interactivity decline.

Similarly, in The Hague the biggest annual decline occurred during the interwar period building boom between 1911 and 1937 after which frontage activity decline stabilized. This conclusion seems to substantiate that most interactivity decline came from the

<sup>939</sup> Following the formula  $\left( \frac{\text{Activity score interval } (x)}{\text{Activity score interval } (x-1)} \right) \div \text{years between interval } (x) \text{ and } (x-1)$ .

economic shift toward fewer street level businesses in the prewar period more than any urban renewal activity in the postwar period, which seemed to have relatively little effect on overall frontage interactivity.

The decrease of frontage interactivity over time can be the result of five processes:

1. Replacement of a frontage type with a high interactivity value by a new building with a lower interactivity value (for example when a shop is razed and replaced by an office building);
2. Demolition of a building with an interactive frontage (for example when a shop is razed and replaced by a vacant lot or parking lot);
3. Downgrading of a frontage type with a high interactivity value to one with a lower interactivity value (for example when a shop goes out of business and an office takes its place in the same building);
4. Abandonment of a previously interactive frontage (for example when a shop goes out of business and leaves a vacant frontage in the same building);
5. Removal of a frontage from counts (for example when entire streets are removed for large urban renewal projects such as highway construction).

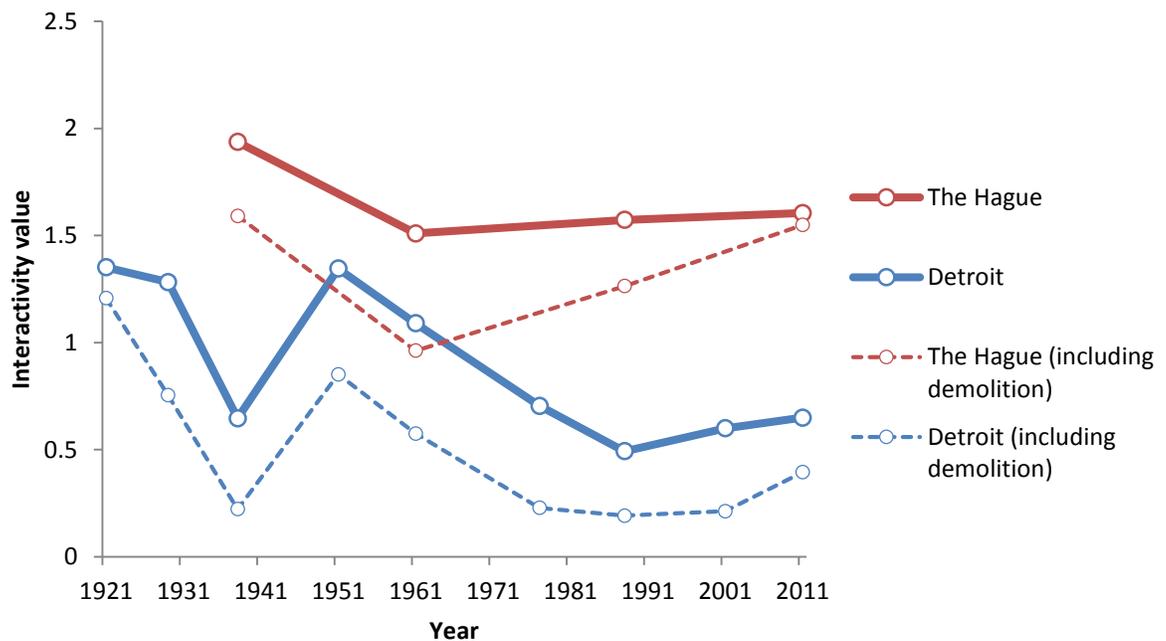


Figure 185. Interactivity value for new construction and demolition activity.

The first two of these processes are outlined in Figure 185, which indicates the interactivity value for all construction and demolition activity in Detroit and The Hague over the past century.<sup>940</sup> The solid lines represent the interactivity value of all new building construction, and the dashed line represents the interactivity value of all construction and demolition activity combined.<sup>941</sup> In other words: the solid line shows how interactive new built construction is at a certain interval, comparison with the dashed line shows how much interactivity is lost through demolition of buildings without being replaced by another building.

The graph clearly shows that the interactivity of new construction in The Hague was relatively high in 1937, reflecting the large central boulevard projects that were soon lined by department stores and apartment buildings. From 1961 onwards, interactivity declined sharply as large new developments included land uses that interacted less with public space such as offices, government buildings and parking garages. This lower level of interactivity (at roughly halfway between the level of residential and office construction) reflects this decline, which stabilizes after 1961. When taking demolition into account, the sharp decline of interactivity in 1961 represents early urban renewal clearance and war damage inflicted during World War 2. This pattern is continued in 1988 due to continuing demolition for urban renewal projects without building replacements. In 2011, demolition without replacement has practically been eliminated.

In Detroit, frontage interactivity for new construction has sharply declined over the past century, with a pronounced dip in 1937 due to the construction of parking garages and gas stations amidst a halt in any other construction during the Depression. While the interactivity of new construction recovered in 1951, values continued to decline due to

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<sup>940</sup> For The Hague, 1937 n=1017, 1961 n=309, 1988 n=1287, 2011 n=500. For Detroit, 1921 n=2164, 1929 n=2169, 1937 n=1771, 1951 n=3098, 1961 n=3488, 1977 n=2010, 1988 n=683, 2001 n=520, 2011 n=426.

<sup>941</sup> The average interactivity score of new construction is calculated as:

$$\frac{\sum_x^n \text{newly constructed frontage length (type } x) \times \text{newly constructed frontage interactivity value (type } x)}{\text{total newly constructed frontage length}}$$
. The average

interactivity score of new construction and demolition is calculated as:

$$\frac{\sum_x^n \text{newly constructed frontage length (type } x) \times \text{newly constructed frontage interactivity value (type } x)}{\text{total newly constructed frontage length} + \text{newly demolished frontage length}}$$
.

large scale construction of relatively inactive land uses such as offices and parking garages, combined with increasingly defensive architecture. The interactivity value of new construction after 1921 is consistently below 1, meaning new construction includes a significant number of inactive frontage types such parking garages and blank walls. The picture becomes even bleaker when taking demolition into account as a value dipping to below 0.5 indicates that the city experienced a significant percentage of its activity decline through removal of previously interactive frontages.

## 6.2 TRANSFORMATION OF INTERACTIVITY VALUE TIER

While overall interactivity values declined in both case studies, it is interesting to study the decline and growth of the four different tiers of interactivity value to see whether decline came from the growth of relatively inactive frontages or the decline of interactive frontages. Tier three is the highest, tier one is the lowest. The results for both cities are plotted in Figures 177 to 180.

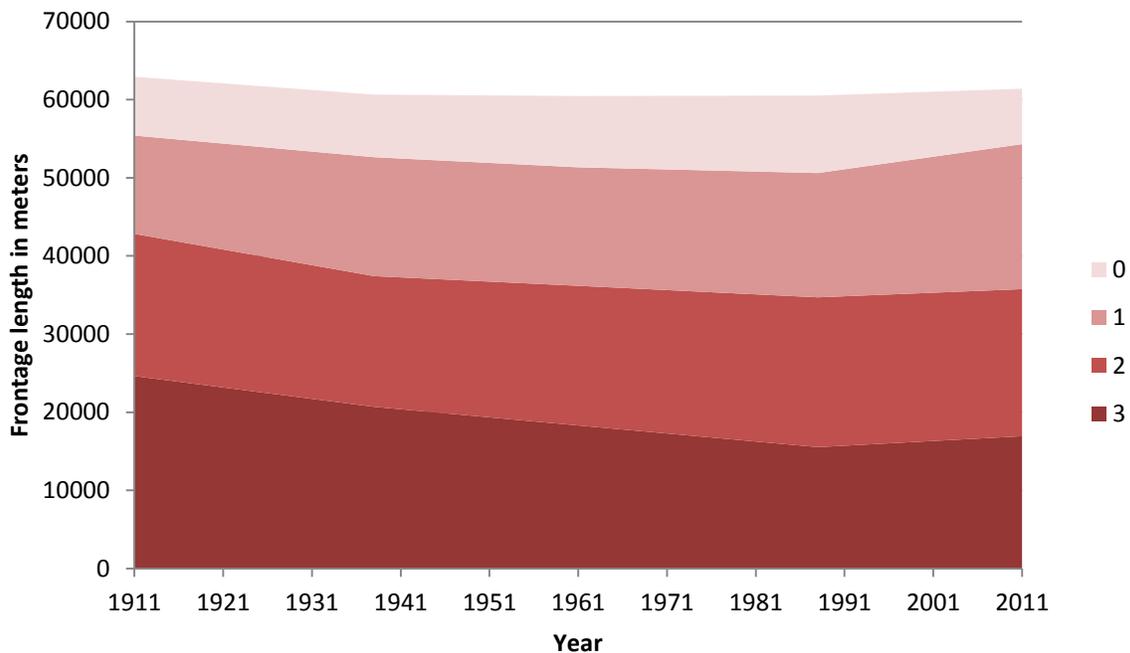


Figure 186. Frontage interactivity tiers in The Hague.

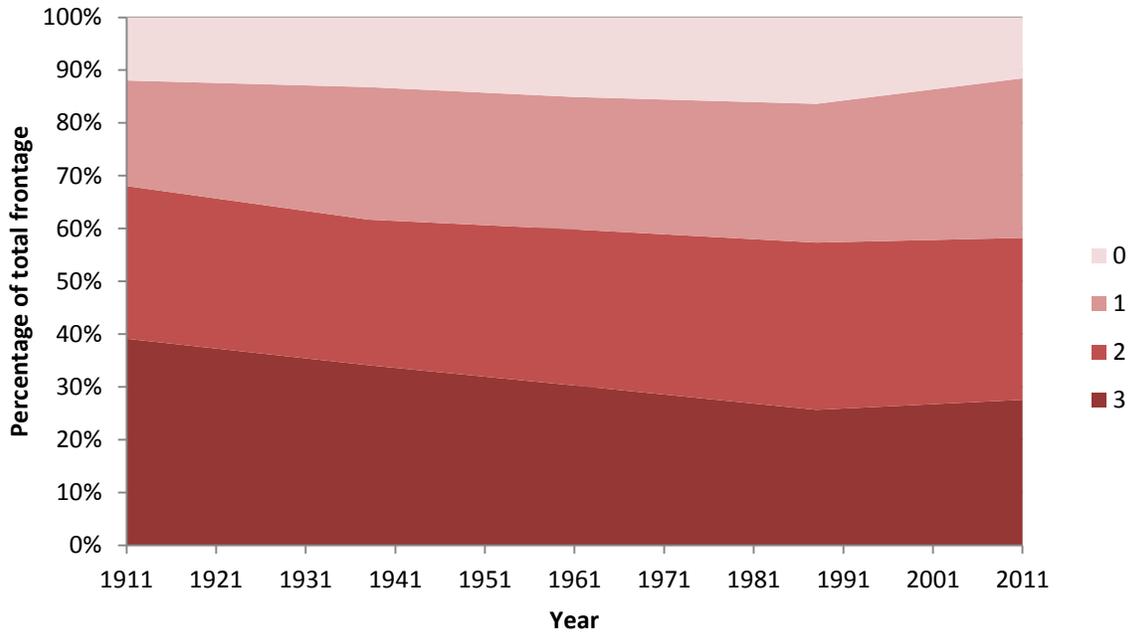


Figure 187. Frontage interactivity tiers in The Hague, indexed to 100%.

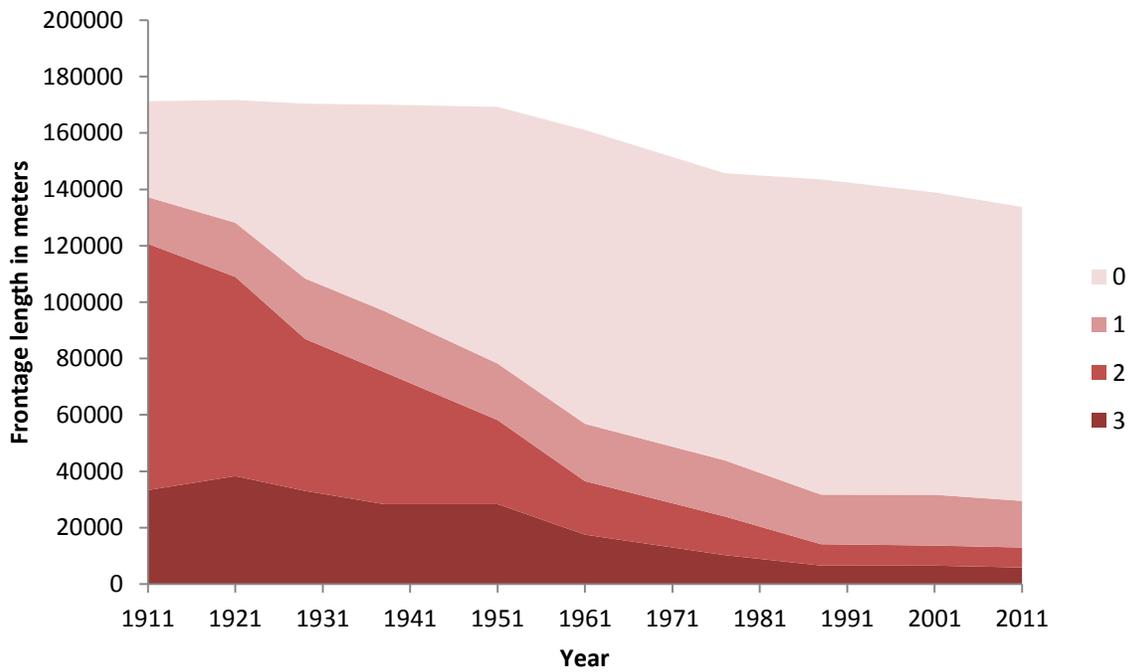
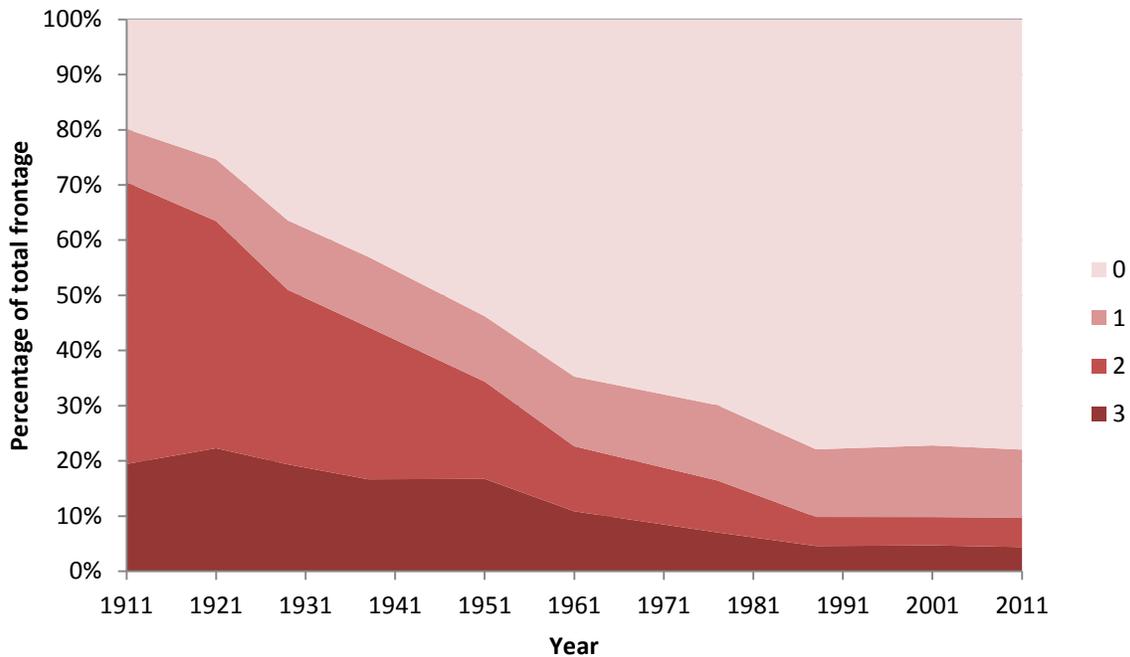


Figure 188. Frontage interactivity tiers in Detroit.



**Figure 189. Frontage interactivity tiers in Detroit, indexed to 100%.**

Firstly, it is clearly recognizable that shops, restaurants and leisure frontages have historically taken a much higher percentage of frontage in The Hague than Detroit (39% versus 20% in 1911), and have continued to do so while this frontage type in Detroit has declined considerably at over 80%. The decline of highly interactive business frontage in The Hague should however also not be underestimated at over 30% over the past century.

A big difference between both cities is the decline in the second tier of interactivity of dwellings and hotel frontages. The percentage of frontages in The Hague of this type has remained fairly constant, but has decimated in Detroit at an over 90% decline. Interestingly this decline was fastest in the prewar period, both during the rapid absorption of residential streets into the Central Business District and the growth of parking lots in the CBD fringe during the Depression.

The third tier of interactivity, consisting of offices, institutional buildings (including churches) and wholesalers has remained constant in Detroit (but growing in percentual

importance) and has grown in absolute and relative importance in The Hague by about 50% due to the rapid growth of the government district in the postwar era.

Yet the biggest difference between both cities is surely the explosive growth of inactive frontage in Detroit versus the gradual growth and recent decline of this lowest interactivity tier in The Hague. As mentioned in the land use section, the most rapid growth of ground floor frontages and uses that do not interact with the street occurred in the 1930s in Detroit as buildings required an increasing amount of parking and corner stores were replaced with gas stations or vacated altogether. While the seeds of further growth of inactivity were sown during the Depression, this trend has continued in Detroit until stabilizing during the 1980s. This was the same era during which inactive frontages were actually declining again in The Hague.

To conclude: both cities experienced a significant decline in its most active frontage tier, with Detroit adding a decline in its second residential tier of frontages. What makes the biggest difference between the two cities is the rapid growth of inactive frontages in Detroit from the 1920s onwards, compared with a relative stability of the number of inactive frontages in The Hague.

### 6.3 TRANSFORMATION OF FRONTAGE TYPE

The overall transformation of frontage interactivity is a direct result of the shift in ground floor frontage types in the urban core, as all calculations are ultimately based on the historic frontage type surveys. Therefore, it is valuable to assess the transformation of frontage types over time. The aggregate length of frontages per type has been calculated for each time interval and plotted in Figure 190 and Figure 191.<sup>942</sup>

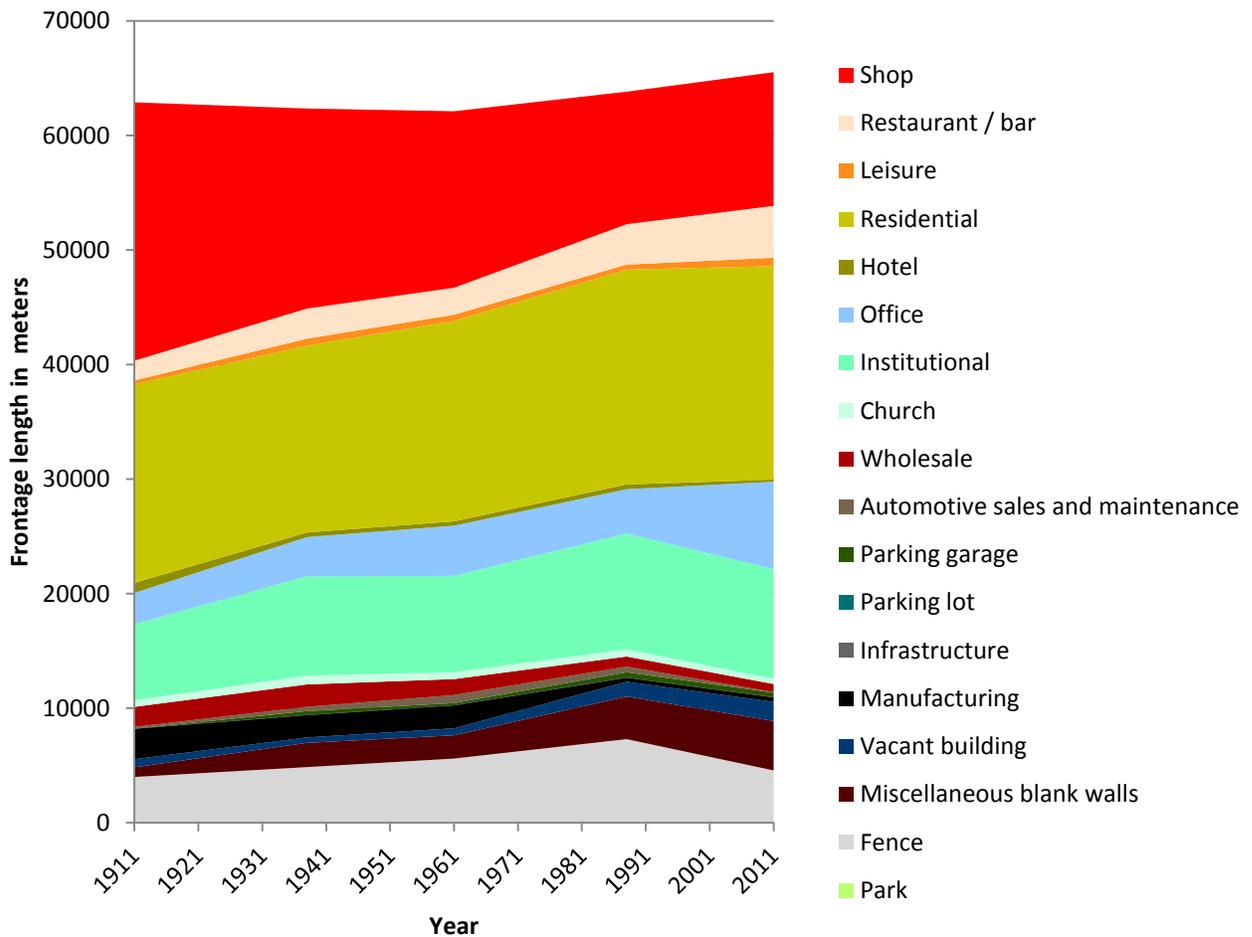


Figure 190. Transformation of ground floor land uses in The Hague's inner city.

<sup>942</sup> It is worth noting that these types are only measured on the ground floor and are therefore not representative of the overall change of the downtown land uses as the measurement does not count upper floors.

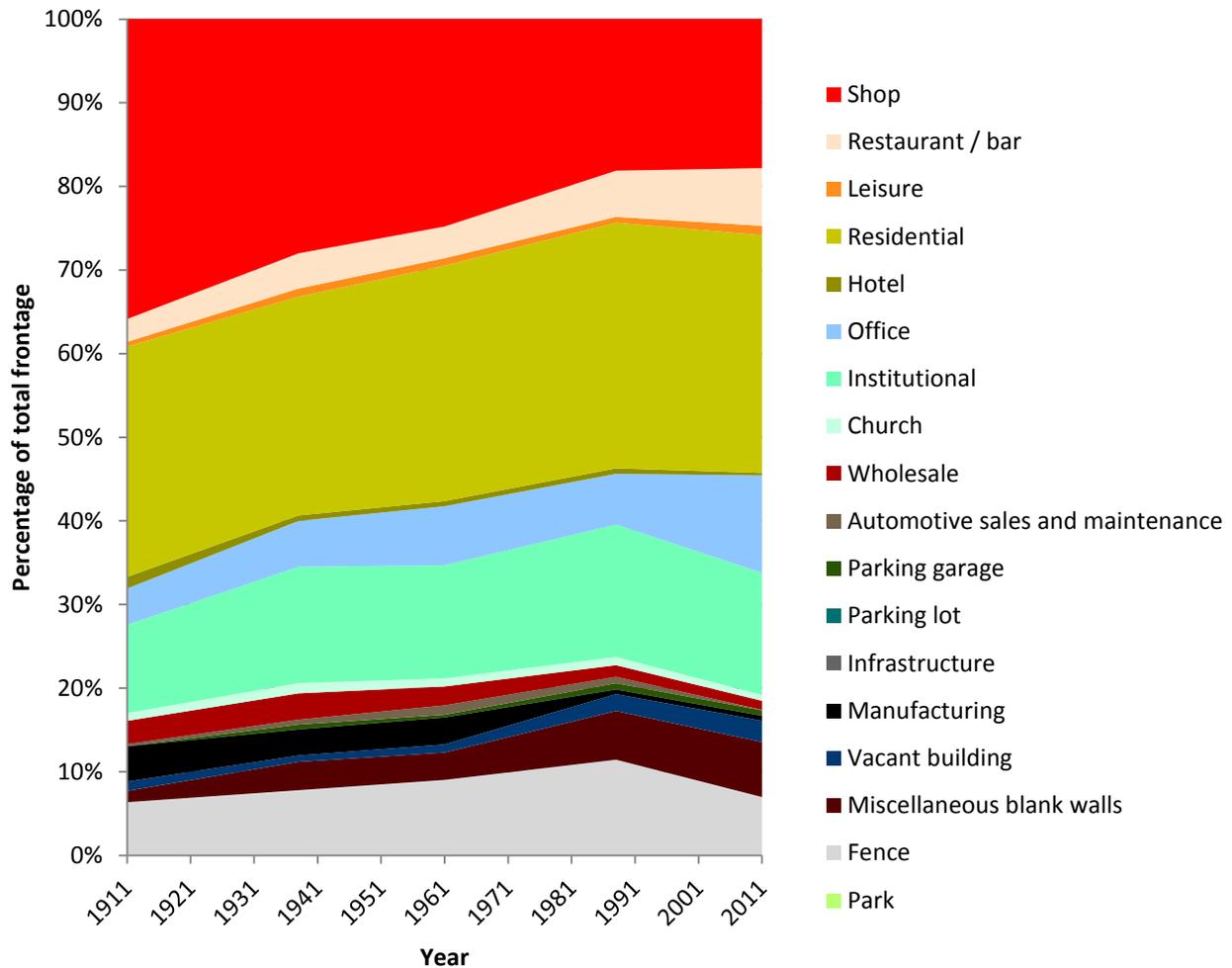


Figure 191. Transformation of ground floor land uses in The Hague's inner city, indexed to 100%.

In The Hague, the decline of shop frontage over time becomes most apparent. Over the past century, shop frontage has almost halved in the inner city. This decline mirrors the overall decline of retail outlets in Figure 55 and can be attributed to a radical shift in the retail economy over the past century leading to fewer, larger outlets. Also of interest is the more than doubling of restaurant and bar frontage over the past century, giving it a relatively more pronounced presence at street level. Similarly, leisure uses have increased over 100%, but remain marginally represented.

Although a significant amount of new construction has taken place during the past century, the amount of residential frontage has remained relatively constant and has taken over from retail as the dominant ground floor land use in the inner city. In other words, the inner city has been and remains a significant residential quarter, with most dwellings located in the periphery of the district. Conversely, the amount of hotel frontage has decreased drastically, especially due to the decline of small scale informal taverns between 1911 and 1937. Also, hotels have increasingly constructed restaurants on their ground floors and have since been counted under bars and restaurants.

The amount of office frontage has more than doubled over the past century, with the increase accelerating over the past decades due to the construction of large office buildings in the downtown area without ground floor retail. Institutional uses such as government agencies, civic buildings, museums, international organizations and embassies have experienced a 40% growth over the past. This has been a conscious decision on behalf of the municipal and central government which will be explained further in the specific chapter on The Hague. The percentage of church frontage has remained relatively marginal but constant. Wholesale activity has experienced an exodus from the inner city with a decline of over 60% over the past century. The construction of business parks and industrial estates in the urban periphery from the 1930s onwards has accelerated this decline.

While the relative representation of automotive sales and maintenance on the ground floor in The Hague has always been marginal, its count has seen an increase between 1911 and 1961 due to the rise of the automobile and a subsequent decrease after 1961 due to the rising land value and specific zoning to move this land use out of the urban core. Similarly, while the number of parking structures has increased from 1911 onwards, most parking was located underground and its representation in the downtown has been marginal. Open parking lots do not exist in The Hague's inner city, nor does frontage dedicated to car or rail infrastructure as freeways and rail lines have been located outside of the core.

Manufacturing frontage has practically disappeared from the inner city as city zoning and large factory closures have pushed factories elsewhere. However, the amount of fences that demarcate private land that is either vacant or off limits to the public has been significant

and experienced a peak in the 1980s during urban renewal and subsequent large scale urban demolition. Although the survey of vacant frontages has been very difficult in The Hague due to source material restrictions, its amount seems to have increased significantly over time as well, although their relatively marginal representation may not warrant a conclusion beyond economic cycles. Miscellaneous blank walls have almost quadrupled over the past century but represent an insignificantly small percentage of overall frontage.

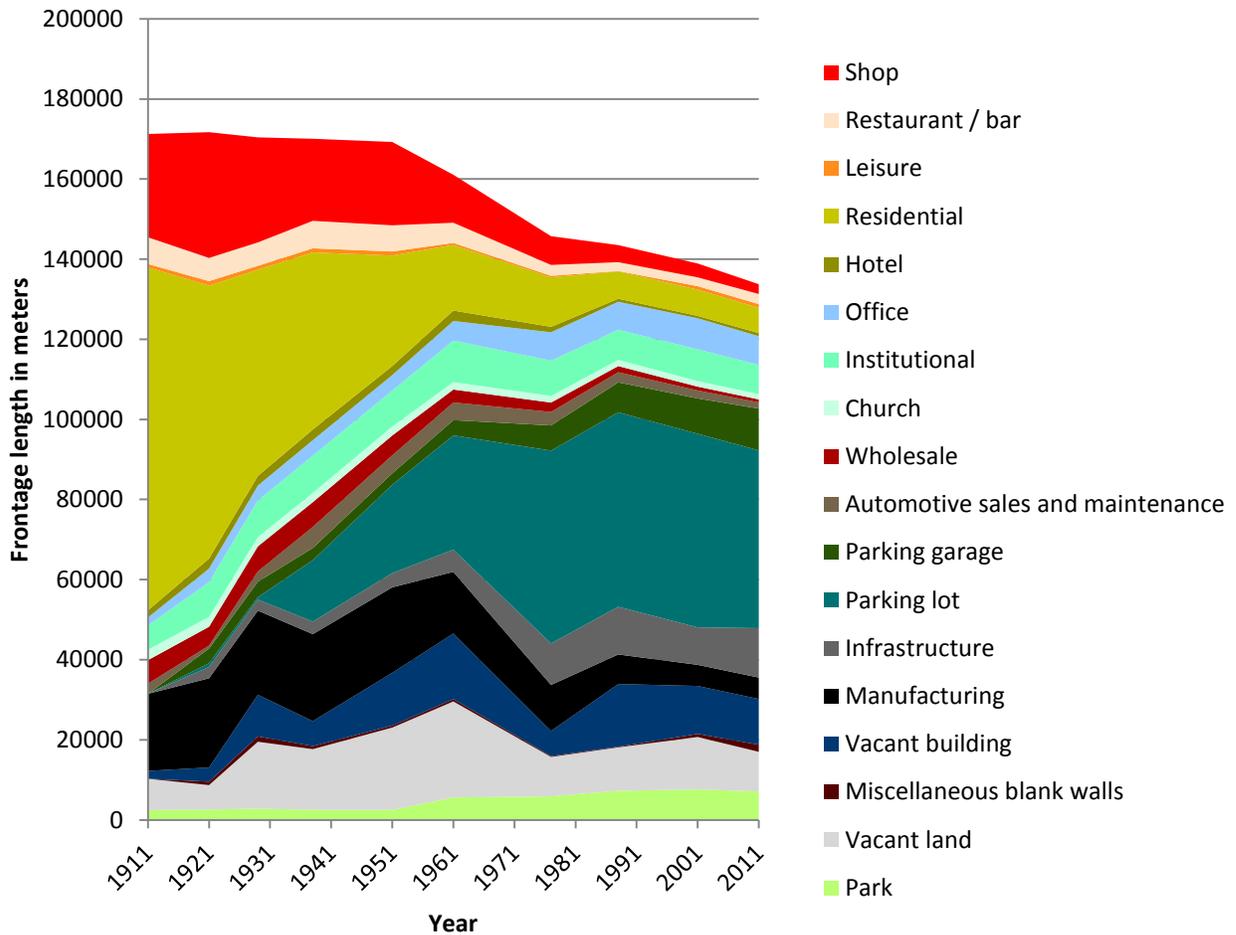
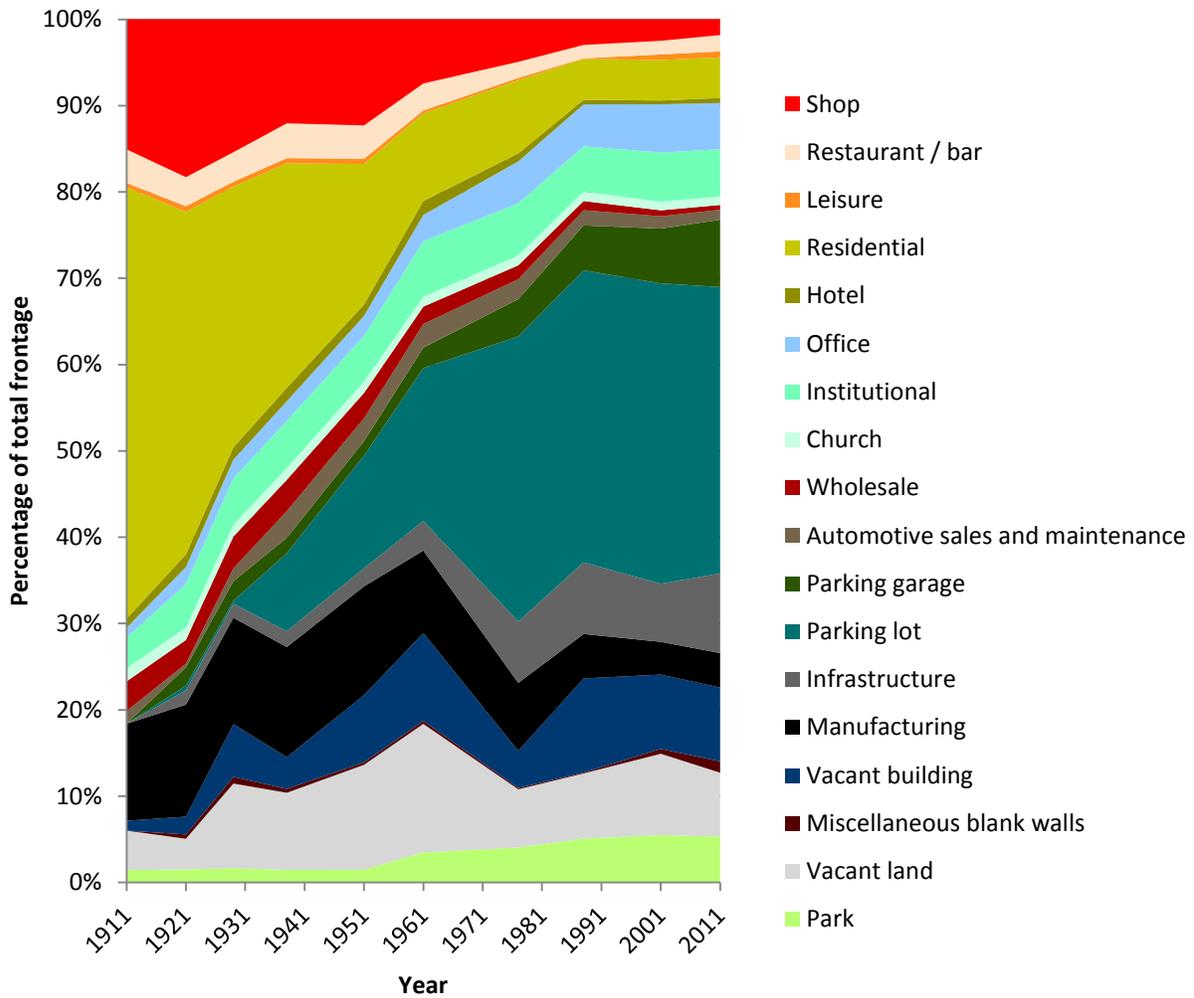


Figure 192. Transformation of ground floor land uses in downtown Detroit.



**Figure 193. Transformation of ground floor land uses in downtown Detroit, indexed to 100%.**

The decline of shop fronts in Detroit is even more striking than in The Hague, as over 90% of retail frontage has disappeared over the past century. While bars and restaurants have also experienced a 60% decline, their relative presence in downtown frontage has increased. These numbers again reflect the overall downtown statistics presented in the case study introductions. While the floor area of leisure uses has increased drastically over recent decades with the construction of casinos and sports fields, their relative introversion only results in a relatively minimal presence in the downtown frontage statistics, as most of the new construction has been surrounded by parking or blank walls.

The biggest loss in Detroit has been one of residential frontage. Especially during the building boom of the 1910s and 1920s, large numbers of dwellings were razed for large scale office construction and accompanying parking lots. Since the 1980s urban policy has stabilized this decline, albeit at less than 10% of the amount of frontage seen in 1911. Contrary to The Hague, downtown Detroit therefore has almost no residential land use left at street level. Furthermore, the city has experienced a decline of hotel frontages similar in scale to The Hague.

Another similarity is the drastic growth of office frontage to The Hague, with over 300% of growth in Detroit over the past century, much of which occurred during the 1910s and 1920s. The actual construction count is even higher as most new office construction during this era also constructed ground floor retail and therefore does not show up in these statistics. Institutional ground floor land use has been relatively constant, with civic building construction downtown compensating for the loss of neighborhood amenities like schools and libraries. Due to urban renewal and the loss of local patronage, church frontage has halved over the past century, with only few churches remaining, often due to their landmark status. Similar to The Hague, wholesale activity has decreased significantly over the past century, with only about 15% of wholesale frontage still remaining compared to 1911. Especially the clearing of the riverfront wholesale district to make way for the civic district has attributed to this decline.

Similarly, 75% of manufacturing frontage has left the downtown, either due to the general economic decline of Detroit or to relocate in specially zoned industrial areas outside the downtown. This has been the result of urban zoning from the 1920s onwards to separate these 'unwanted' land uses from residential and office districts. The automotive sales and maintenance frontage has seen a similar pattern to The Hague, growing between 1911 and 1951 due to the growth of automobile use, and experiencing a decline from then on. It could be argued that while in The Hague this decline can be attributed to displacement due to downtown revitalization, it seems plausible to conclude the decline in Detroit was due to declining patronage. Parking garages saw a rapid rise in the 1920s, a small decline in the 1950s but an even more rapid spread from the 1960s onwards due to government stimulated construction and the increasing shift of the downtown modal split toward the

automobile.<sup>943</sup> The most striking growth in Detroit is surely that of the open air parking lot, now representing about a third of all land use at eye level in the downtown. With the first open-air off street parking lots surveyed in the 1920s, the relative growth of parking lots was most striking during the end of the 1920s building boom and the subsequent Depression in the 1930s. Another boom in parking lots was seen between 1961 and 1977, with the number of lots remaining relatively constant since. Vacant lots saw a similar pattern of growth during the 1920s building boom, with a marked decline since urban renewal in the 1970s.<sup>944</sup> Vacant frontages fluctuated greatly over time as a result of economic cycles, but also due to the various efforts to replace vacant properties with new construction or remove vacant properties without replacement plans. For example, the urban renewal boom between 1961 and 1977 saw a 60% decrease of vacant frontages, although it can be reasoned some of the vacancies were buildings waiting to be demolished for these public projects. The amount of eye-level land uses dedicated to infrastructure increased significantly during these very same decades, as peripheral buildings were replaced by the freeway horseshoe ring surrounding downtown. Urban renewal however also brought a significant increase in parkland frontage to the downtown area. The number of miscellaneous blank walls fluctuates greatly and is relatively marginal over time.

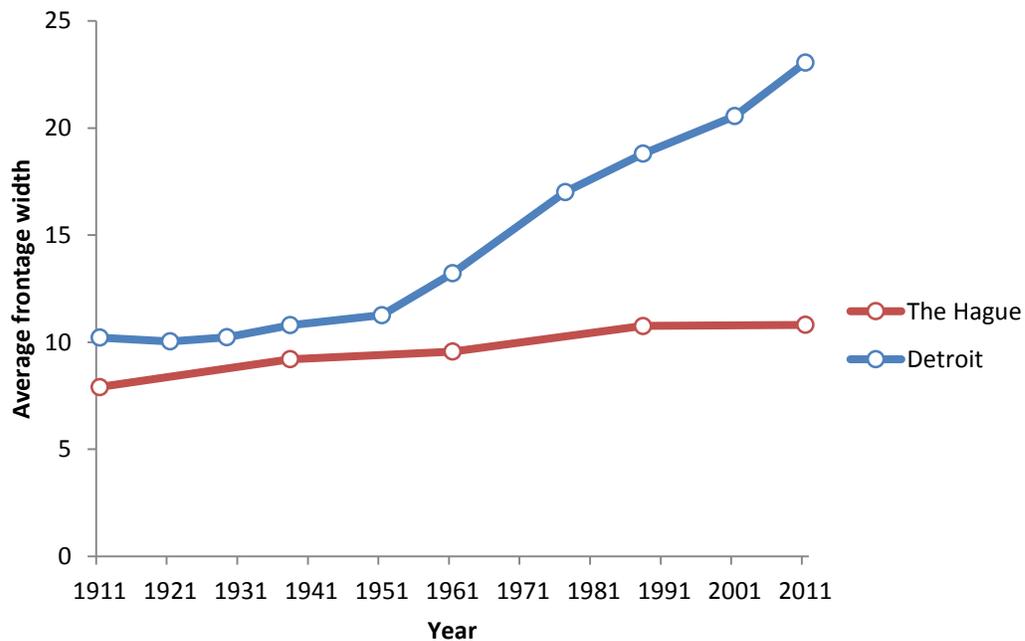
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<sup>943</sup> Due to the significant integration of automotive repair and car parking before the 1920s, the latter land use has been grouped under automotive for 1911. With the increasing reliability of cars and their ability to be stored outside and used without chauffeurs these uses became increasingly separate during later decades. More info in Jakle and Sculle, *Lots of Parking : Land Use in a Car Culture*.

<sup>944</sup> The distinction between parking and vacant lots has been increasingly difficult to make since the 1960s, as many vacant lots had a temporary use for (event) parking, and parking lots in certain parts of the downtown were abandoned due to a lack of patronage. Therefore, parking and vacant lots need to be regarded as a connected category from the 1960s onwards.

## 6.4 TRANSFORMATION OF FRONTAGE WIDTH

Besides the importance of the function for the interactivity between buildings and public space, the size of frontages is an important indicator. A larger number of frontages on a street indicate a finger grained architecture with more entrances leading to public space, leading to a higher interactivity. Therefore the average width of all building frontages that address the street has been measured for all time intervals.<sup>945</sup>



**Figure 194. Average width of frontages.**

Overall, frontages are wider in Detroit than in The Hague, and the difference between the two cities increases over time. For both cities, the average frontage width steadily increases

<sup>945</sup> Note that the width of frontages does not automatically correlate with the width of buildings, as larger buildings may contain multiple frontages on their ground floor. The average width of frontages excludes all non-building frontages (such as parking lots, fences and vacant lots), excludes corner frontages that belong to a property that addresses another street (because it has no address on the that frontage) and excludes frontages under 2 meters in width (geo-modification errors in GIS). Sample sizes: n=6845 – 5070 for The Hague and n=13198-2176 for Detroit.

over time but Detroit faces an accelerated increase from 1951 onwards due to the increasing scale of postwar construction. Frontages in Detroit are now more than twice as wide on average as in 1911. The largest increase in frontage width in The Hague happened during its urban renewal period between 1966 and 1988, resulting in a more than 25% increase in frontage width between 1911 and 2011.

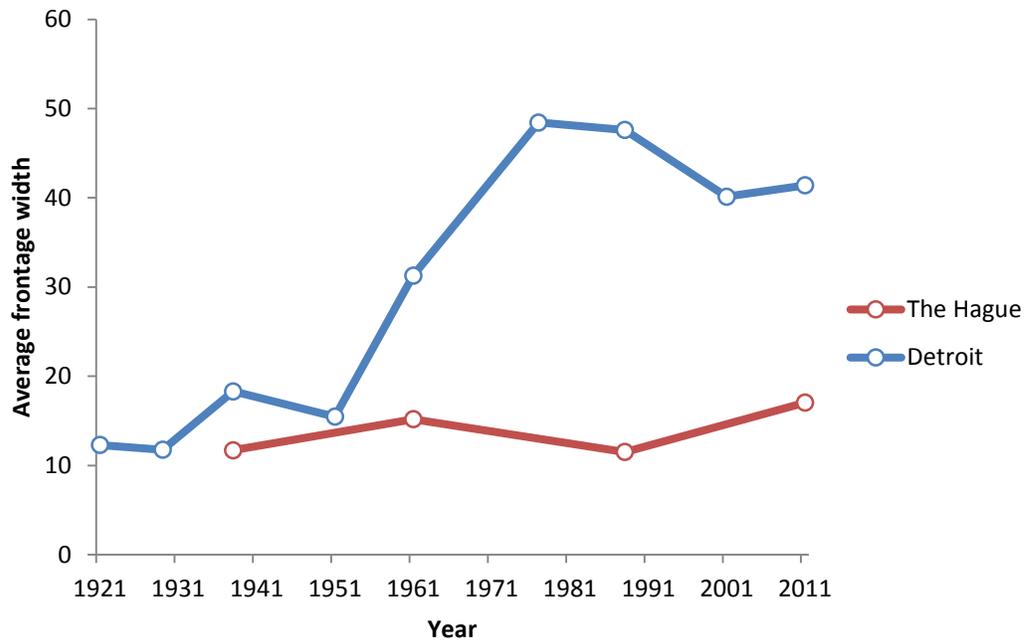
Frontage width increase can either be the result of the consolidation of frontages within the same building or between several existing buildings, or the construction of new buildings with wider frontages than average. The former effect has often occurred on major retail streets in Detroit and The Hague as successful businesses grew out of their former shell. Even today, chain stores have a penchant for consolidating several smaller buildings into one large frontage as they seek a minimum floor area that is often unavailable in historic centers.



**Figure 195. Pharmacy taking up several buildings as one frontage at the corner of Spuistraat and Venestraat, The Hague.<sup>946</sup>**

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<sup>946</sup> Image by author, 2011.



**Figure 196. Average width of newly constructed frontages.**

The latter effect of frontage widening through new construction has been plotted in Figure 196. The Hague shows a fluctuating pattern of newly constructed frontage width, corresponding with building cycles over time. The average width of newly constructed frontages is at all times higher than the average overall width of frontages of frontages in the inner city (compare with Figure 194). In 1937, newly constructed frontages are still relatively narrow as buildings focus on close interaction with the new urban boulevards in the inner city and often contain smaller businesses on the ground floor. The frontage width increases in 1961 as postwar urban renewal brings larger buildings to the inner city, although 1988 urban renewal brings a wave of smaller scaled construction back to the inner city, mostly in residential urban renewal areas. The large-scale urban projects in 2011 mark a return to wider frontages with fewer entrances at street level.

Detroit shows a clearer pattern of frontage width increase, with a first increase during the 1930s depression due to the construction of automobile repair and fueling stations that often replaced smaller, fine-grained buildings. Notwithstanding a dip in frontage width in

1951, the pattern of ever-widening frontages continues into the 1980s, when newly constructed frontages reach an average width of about 50 meters (150 feet). This is a stunning figure compared to the average frontage width of only 10 meters (30 feet) of buildings in 1911. Newly constructed frontage width has decreased marginally since, but still significantly adds to the average increase in downtown built frontage grain.

## 6.5 FRONTAGE TRANSFORMATION AND LOCATION

The transformation of frontages is highly dependent on its location in the city and its accessibility to its surroundings. This section aims to link the transformation of frontages to their physical location in the downtown area along two lines: location and time.

Economic theories often describe the effects of a central location on frontages, which can be described as a factor of their *distance from the center of activity* in the urban core. These theories state that more centrally located frontages should contain more retail businesses and be more interactive as a result. Also, the *connectivity* of frontages to their direct surroundings and the city as a whole are presumed to affect the retail component and subsequent interactivity of frontages. Together, these patterns may create a growing *divergence* between ‘successful’ interactive streets and less active streets in the urban core.

Also, the influence of central location or connectivity on frontages could change over time, and the dependency of frontage types on their location could vary between Detroit and The Hague. The questions and topics in this section are categorized in table 7.

Questions	Frontage interactivity	Percentage of business
<b>Distance from center of activity</b>	Does the interactivity of frontages depend on their distance from the center of activity in an urban core? Has this dependency changed over time?	Does the percentage of business in frontages depend on their distance from the center of activity in an urban core? Has this dependency changed over time?
<b>Connectivity</b>	Does the interactivity of frontages depend on their connectivity to the rest of the city? Has this dependency changed over time?	Does the percentage of business in frontages depend on their connectivity to the rest of the city? Has this dependency changed over time?
<b>Divergence</b>	Has the transformation of frontages increased the divergence between interactive and less active streets?	

**Table 2. Themes and questions linking frontages and location.**

### 6.5.1 Distance from center of activity

Following the theories of Earnest Burgess in 1925 and Homer Hoyt in 1933, the location of buildings in relation to the center of activity in a city is highly influential on its land value and subsequent land use. Both Burgess and Hoyt found that the most centrally located land in a city was taken up by its retail district, followed by office buildings and a 'zone in transition' consisting of less glamorous land uses such as warehouses, parking lots and small manufacturers. Mostly residential neighborhoods would only be located outside this Central Business District ring.<sup>947</sup> The center of activity in most cities was a hotly debated topic, and was often defined in real estate atlases as the "100% corner" that marked the highest footfall, the highest land values and the highest perceived success of retail operations.<sup>948</sup>

These theories should hold true at the level of the ground floor frontage as well. If Burgess and Hoyt are correct, most ground floor retail should be located close to the perceived center of activity in Detroit and The Hague, which in turn should be surrounded by less active office frontages, 'servicing' land uses and finally residential districts. The interactivity as a result should be highest in the center, decline in the service ring and rise again in residential districts.

In order to test this hypothesis, the center of activity in Detroit was derived from the 1925, 1929 and 1951 Nirenstein Real Estate atlas as the corner of Woodward Avenue and Gratiot Avenue: the busiest corner of when counting footfall, right in front of Hudson's department store. For The Hague, the center of activity was more difficult to define, but the center of

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<sup>947</sup> For more information please see the literature review. Burgess, "Concentric Zone Model of Urban Structure and Land Use."; Hoyt, *One Hundred Years of Land Values in Chicago*.

<sup>948</sup> An example atlas was made by Nathan Nirenstein, *Nathan Nirenstein's One Hundred Per Cent Preferred Real Estate Locations* (Springfield, Mass. 1925). More information in Fogelson, *Downtown: Its Rise and Fall, 1880-1950*; Isenberg, *Downtown America: A History of the Place and the People Who Made It*.

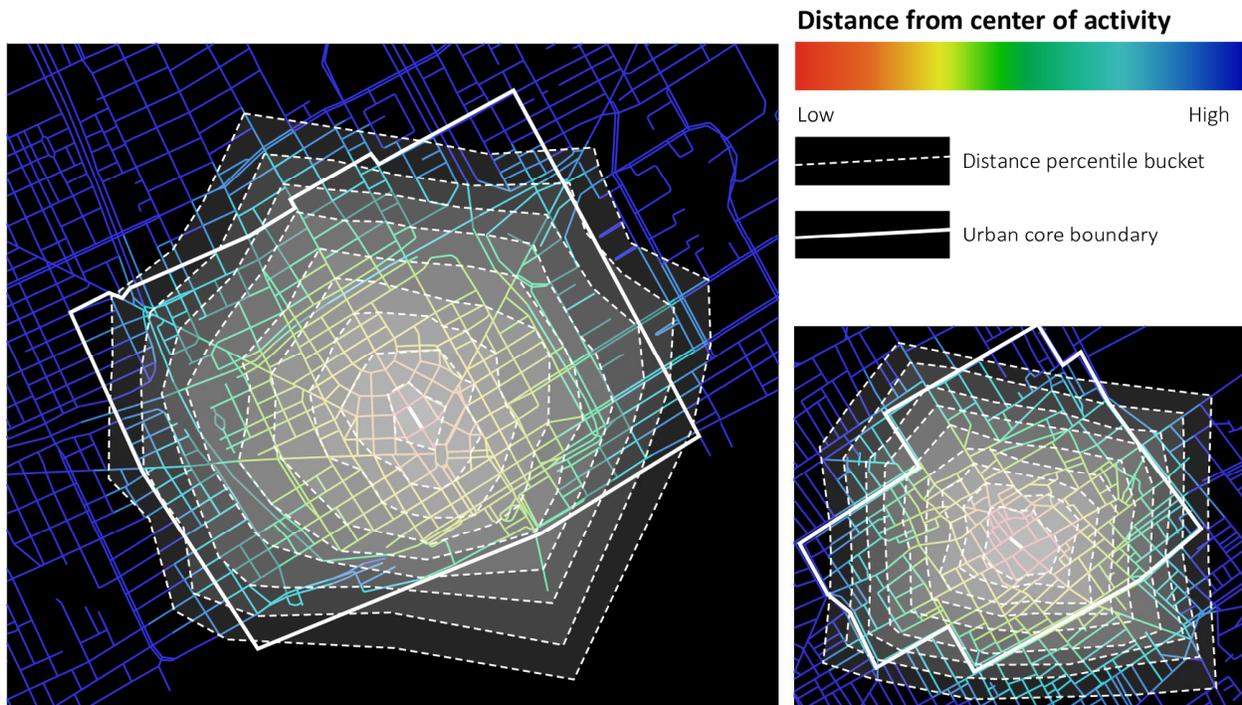
footfall activity has been most consistently defined by archival research and current counts to be the intersection of the Wagenstraat, Spuistraat, Vlamingstraat and Venestraat.<sup>949</sup>

From these centers of activity, the on-the-ground distance has been defined by selecting its corresponding street segment in DepthMapX, and calculating the walking distance from this segment. This was conducted for each time interval, as new road construction has altered the street configuration in the urban core. For each street segment and each frontage within it, the distance to the center of activity was noted.<sup>950</sup> The range of different distances was subsequently bucketed to ten percentiles that contain a similar sample size of frontages, denoting whether a frontage was within the 10%, 20%, 30%, 40%, 50%, 60%, 70%, 80%, 90% or 100% distance range from the center of activity. The 10% bucket is the closest and 100% the farthest from the center. Because this is on-the-ground walking distance, these percentiles do not equal perfect rings but are deformed by the street configuration of the city. An illustration of the center of activity and the distance percentiles is given in Figure 197 below.

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<sup>949</sup> Current counts are conducted by Locatus, historical documentation e.g. Furnée, "Om Te Winkelen, Zoo Als Het in De Residentie Heet'. *Consumptiecultuur En Stedelijke Ruimte in Den Haag, 1850-1890*."; Gram, 'S *Gravenhage in Onzen Tijd*. Two caveats: both Detroit and The Hague have two retail nucleations within their defined urban core. Detroit has downtown and the Eastern Market, The Hague has the retail core and the Denneweg. Furthermore, in The Hague the center of activity had shifted from the intersection Dagelijkse Groenmarkt – Halstraat – Venestraat – Gravenstraat in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, a transition that was potentially still taking place in 1911.

<sup>950</sup> All frontages within a certain segment received one defined average distance to the center of activity, as DepthMapX could only calculate per segment.



**Figure 197. Center of activity in Detroit and The Hague and distance from this center.**

Within these percentile buckets two calculations are made: the average interactivity score and the percentage of business frontage of all frontages in the bucket.<sup>951</sup> These calculations are made for each time interval. The results for interactivity are shown below.

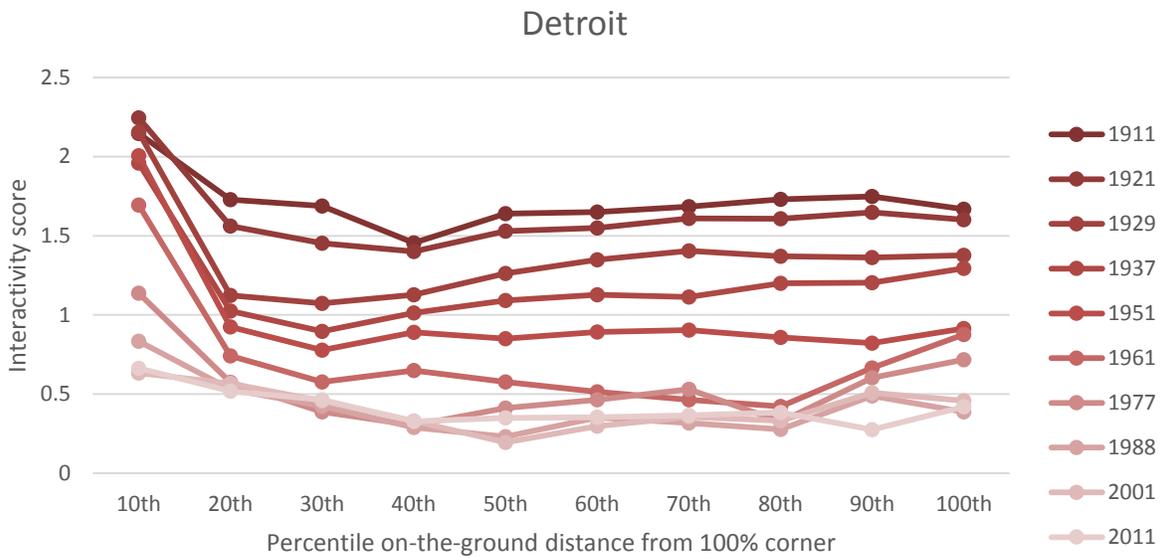
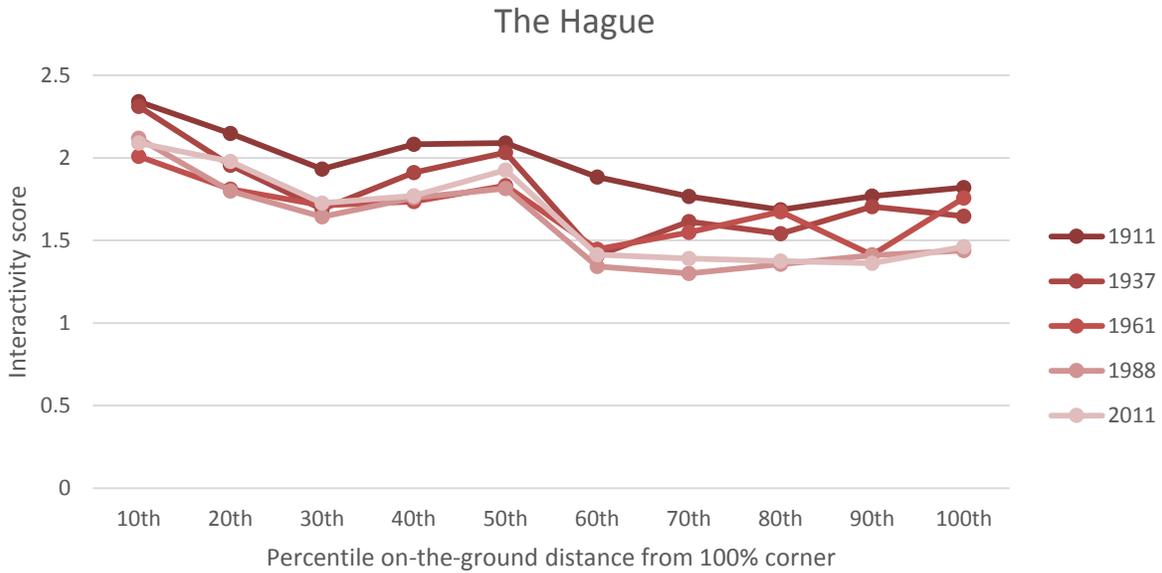
<sup>951</sup> The average interactivity score for each percentile bucket is calculated as follows:

$$\frac{\sum_x^n \text{frontage length in percentile } y \text{ (type } x) \times \text{frontage interactivity value (type } x)}{\text{total frontage length in percentile } y}$$

The percentage of business frontage for each percentile bucket is calculated as follows:

$$\frac{\text{frontage length of all retail types and Bars and Restaurants in percentile } y}{\text{total frontage length in percentile } y}$$

Instead of counting the number of businesses in each bucket, the percentage of business frontage in total frontage is counted. This is to control for the decreasing number but increasing frontage size of businesses over time, leaving a fairly constant frontage width.



**Figure 198. Interactivity score as function of on-the-ground distance from the center of activity.**

In The Hague and Detroit, a clear decline in interactivity score can be seen as a result of a greater distance from the center of activity in the urban core.<sup>952</sup> The further away a frontage is from the center, the less interactive it is likely to be, even in 1911. The dip in interactivity between the retail center and the residential periphery that contains the 'zone in transition' is more visible in Detroit than in The Hague, as parking lots and less active uses were not obstructed by significant zoning efforts until the 1940s in the former city.

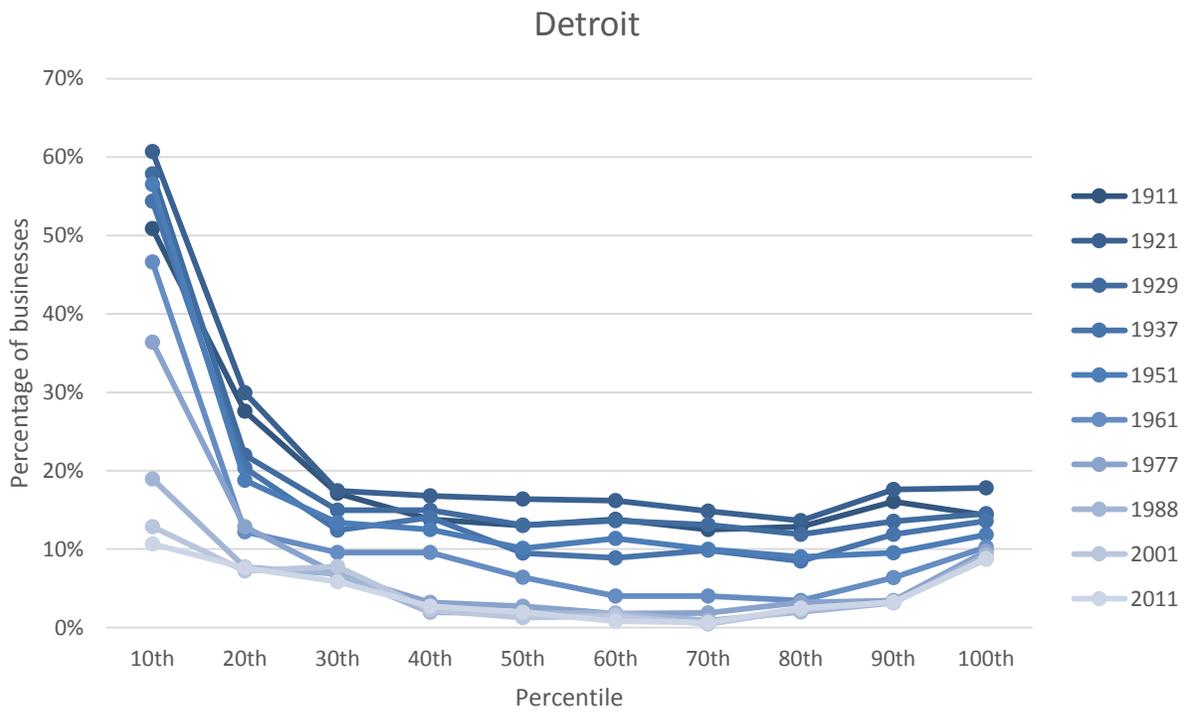
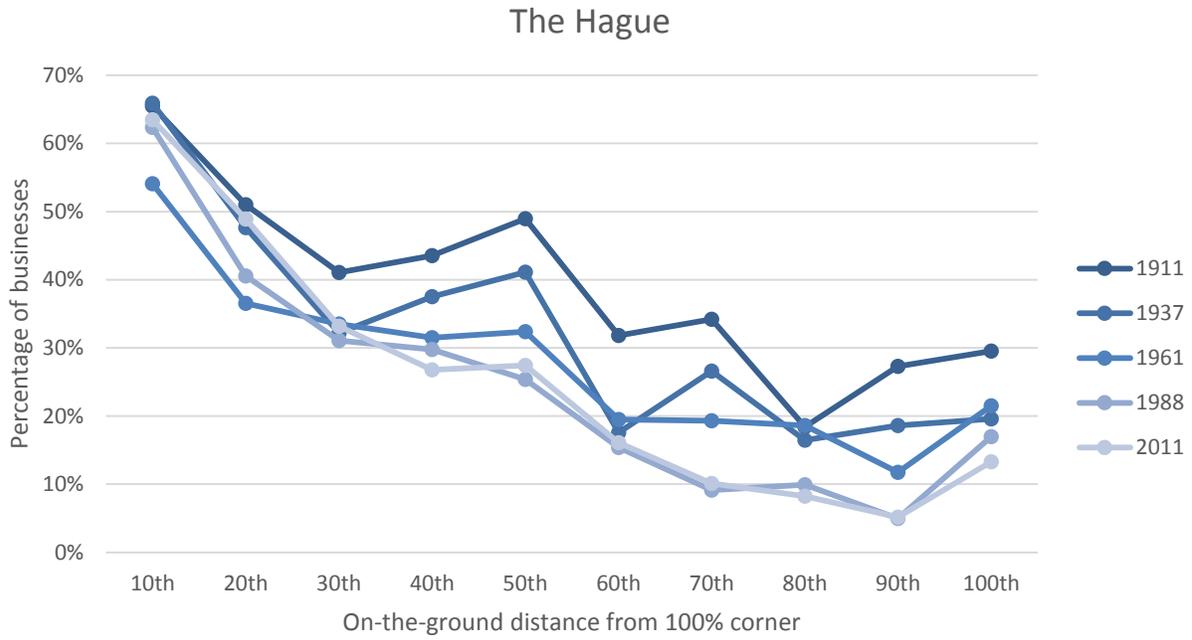
Both graphs also illustrate the significant change in the relation between frontage interactivity and proximity to the center of activity over the past century. The decline in interactivity in both cities initially occurred outside the center of activity, with the retail core remaining intact in lieu of a deteriorating ring around it. In The Hague many peripheral retailers went out of business, showing in a stronger decline of interactivity in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> percentile and 60<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> percentile.

The peripheral decline can be seen even stronger in Detroit due to the growth of parking lots in the downtown periphery, which is especially apparent in the strong 20<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> percentile decline between 1911 and 1951. The dichotomy between a strong retail core and a weaker periphery would collapse in on itself afterwards. From 1961 onwards, interactivity began to decline in the entire downtown, leaving almost no interactivity in 2011.

The role of business in the interactivity of the urban core is clearly visible in Figure 199 for The Hague and Detroit, depicting the percentage of frontage that is taken up by retail business (including bars and restaurants) for each distance bucket.

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<sup>952</sup> The average linear  $R^2$  relation between the average interactivity value of a frontage and the proximity of this frontage to the center of activity in The Hague is 0.61, versus a low 0.16 in Detroit. The low values depict the non-linear relations explained in this section.



**Figure 199. Percentage of frontage accommodating businesses as function of on-the-ground distance from the center of activity.**

The difference between The Hague and Detroit becomes more apparent when comparing the above graphs. As expected, business tend to congregate around the center of activity in both cities, but the drop in the percentage of frontage that is taken up by retail businesses is far greater in Detroit than in The Hague.<sup>953</sup> After the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile in Detroit, the percentage of business frontage halves until it flattens below 20%. In The Hague business frontage becomes less apparent only in the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile, but remains present after. A slight jump takes place in the 100<sup>th</sup> percentile in both cities, as this contains the secondary retail center of Eastern Market in Detroit and the Denneweg in The Hague. Interestingly, Detroit's 10<sup>th</sup> and The Hague's 30<sup>th</sup> percentile drop-off points are both around 1500 feet from the center of activity: a comfortable walking distance. In other words: the retail core of both cities are roughly the same size.

The graphs also show the decline of retail frontage over time. In The Hague, the presence of retail has remained stable in the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile core, but has fallen drastically outside of it. This corresponds to the closure of many peripheral retailers in the inner city, as they were usurped by larger central competitors. Between the 30<sup>th</sup> and the 100<sup>th</sup> percentile, the presence of retail frontage has dropped by about 50%. In Detroit, the same trend of peripheral retail closing but core (10<sup>th</sup> percentile) retail staying put can be observed until 1951, as judged by the fairly constant 50-60% of frontage in the very core taken up by retail until that time. From 1961 onwards, retail business collapsed downtown: retailers were leaving regardless of their location in the downtown with an especially hard hit in the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile between 1977 and 1988. This interval covers the devastation after Hudson's closure in 1983. In 2011, no percentile has more than 10% of its frontage dedicated to retail business.

To conclude: the graphs for interactivity and business proportion illustrate that over the past century, an economic optimization process has taken place in Detroit and The Hague. As the city lost its interactivity and business frontage over time, the loss mainly occurred in

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<sup>953</sup> The average linear  $R^2$  relation between the percentage of business frontage and the proximity of this frontage to the center of activity in The Hague is 0.78, versus a low 0.32 in Detroit. The latter low value is due to the exponential drop in business frontage, skewing the distribution of frontages toward the closest bucket, and due to the loss of any relation from 1961 onward.

the periphery of downtowns, caused by the closure of peripheral retail businesses and the erosion of the urban fabric by the construction of infrastructure, parking and other service facilities that didn't cater to pedestrian passersby. In other words: due to retail business downsizing and the growth of space-extensive land uses, downtown was shrinking to an interactive core, surrounded by a ring of frontage inactivity. After 1951, this optimization process collapsed in Detroit to a point where interactivity and business frontage were declining in downtown regardless of their location.

## 6.5.2 Connectivity

The type and interactivity of frontages is not only dependent on their proximity to the center of activity in the urban core, but also in their connectivity to the rest of the city. The better connected and hence more easily accessible a frontage is, the more likely it should contain 'higher and better' land uses such as retail businesses. After all, more traffic would pass by, drawing a larger potential customer base.

Connectivity can be defined in several ways. The methodology of Space Syntax calculates various connectivity measures for street segments, dependent on their location in the city and connection to other street segments. Most original Space Syntax measurements defined the 'integration' of street segments: their propensity to be moved *toward*. This is defined as the cumulative amount of corners that need to be taken to reach all other street segments within a set radius; the lower amount of corners, the more integrated a street is.<sup>954</sup> Later this measure has been refined by taking the angle of corners into account.<sup>955</sup> More recently, the influence of 'choice' on the land use of street segments has been demonstrated.<sup>956</sup> Choice is defined by the propensity of street segments to be moved *through*. This is calculated as follows: within a set radius, routes with the least amount of corners to be taken between all street segments are calculated. For each segment, it is counted how often it was chosen as a route between other segments. In other words: for each street segment, 'choice' defines how convenient it is as a through route. The more convenient a street is for through traffic, the more traffic it is likely to attract. This in turn attracts retail businesses looking to draw from this traffic, as well as other land uses that value high connectivity such as offices and civic buildings.

A pilot study surveying correlation between frontage type, street integration and choice at various radii has demonstrated that measurements of choice at the level of the city as a

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<sup>954</sup> Hillier and Hanson, *The Social Logic of Space*; Hillier, *Space Is the Machine: A Configurational Theory of Architecture*.

<sup>955</sup> A. Turner, "Depthmap: A Program to Perform Visibility Graph Analysis" (2001).

<sup>956</sup> Psarra, Kickert, and Pluviano, "Paradigm Lost: Industrial and Post-Industrial Detroit - an Analysis of the Street Network and Its Social and Economic Dimensions from 1796 to the Present." The paper has correlated commercial land uses with choice at various scales in Detroit over time.

whole (radius at 10,000 meters) correlated most closely to the various land uses lining downtown streets, especially with regard to retail businesses. Results were remarkably close between choice and integration, and measurements at lower radii in the downtown area.

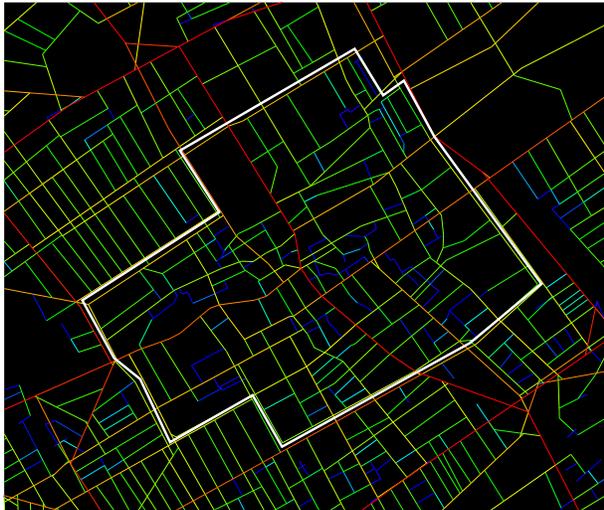
To present the relation between connectivity, frontage use and frontage interactivity therefore the measurement of choice at radius 10,000 meters is used. For each time interval in Detroit and The Hague, choice at this radius has been calculated for downtown street segments, with all other streets in the city outside of downtown drawn in the same model to ensure that edge effects are eliminated and connectivity measurements are more accurate. To equalize choice values between different time intervals (with different numbers of streets as the cities grew over time) and to equalize values between the vastly different size of The Hague and Detroit's street network, choice has been normalized.<sup>957</sup>

As street configuration has changed over the past century, choice values of streets have changed accordingly. Therefore, Figure 200 and Figure 201 illustrates the choice distribution of streets in both cities in 1911 and 2011.

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<sup>957</sup> Normalized Choice is calculated as follows:  $NAchoice (radius x) = \frac{\log(Choice (radius x)+1)}{\log(Total Depth (radius x)+3)}$  WRG Hillier, Tao Yang, and Alasdair Turner, "Normalising Least Angle Choice in Depthmap-and How It Opens up New Perspectives on the Global and Local Analysis of City Space," *Journal of Space Syntax* 3, no. 2 (2012).

1911



Choice value 10,000 meter radius  
Low High  
Urban core boundary

2011

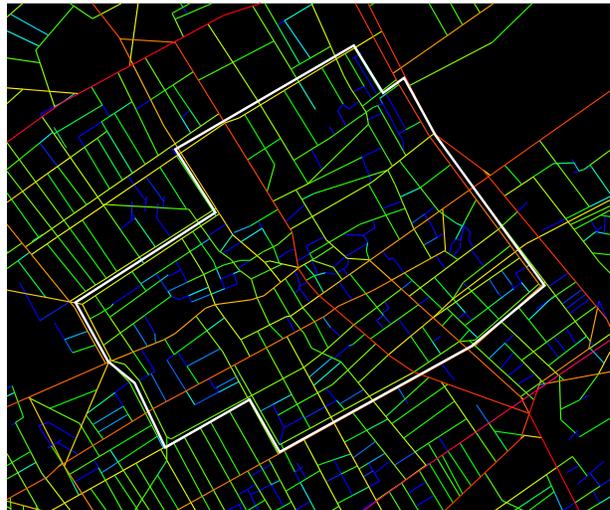
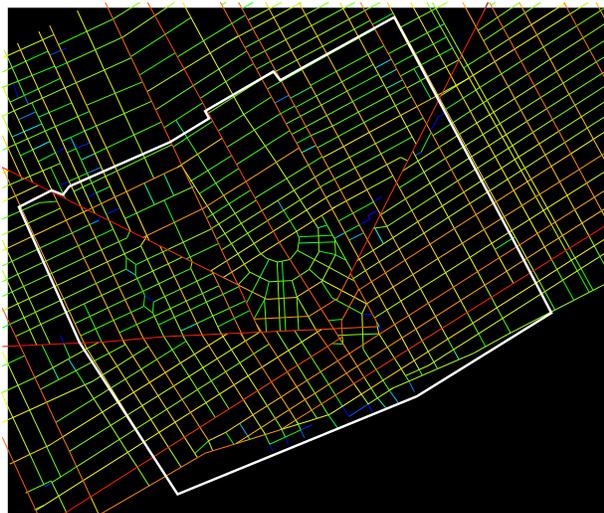


Figure 200. Choice distribution for The Hague.

1911



Choice value 10,000 meter radius  
Low High  
Urban core boundary

2011

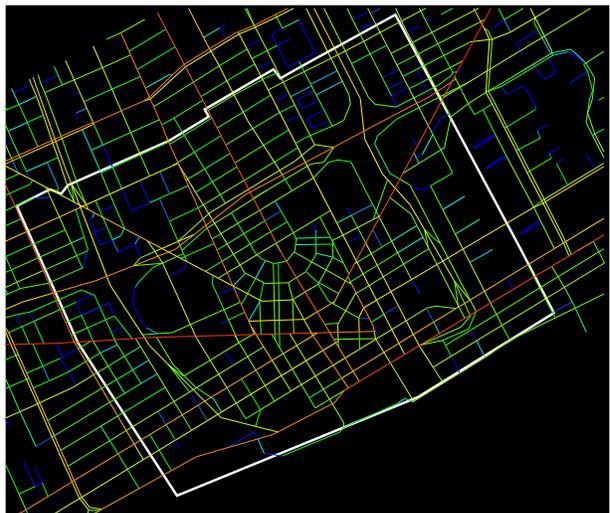


Figure 201. Choice distribution for Detroit.

Similar to the previous section, choice has been bucketed in ten percentiles to allow for calculations with a consistent sample size. The following graphs depict the relation between choice and frontage interactivity in The Hague and Detroit.

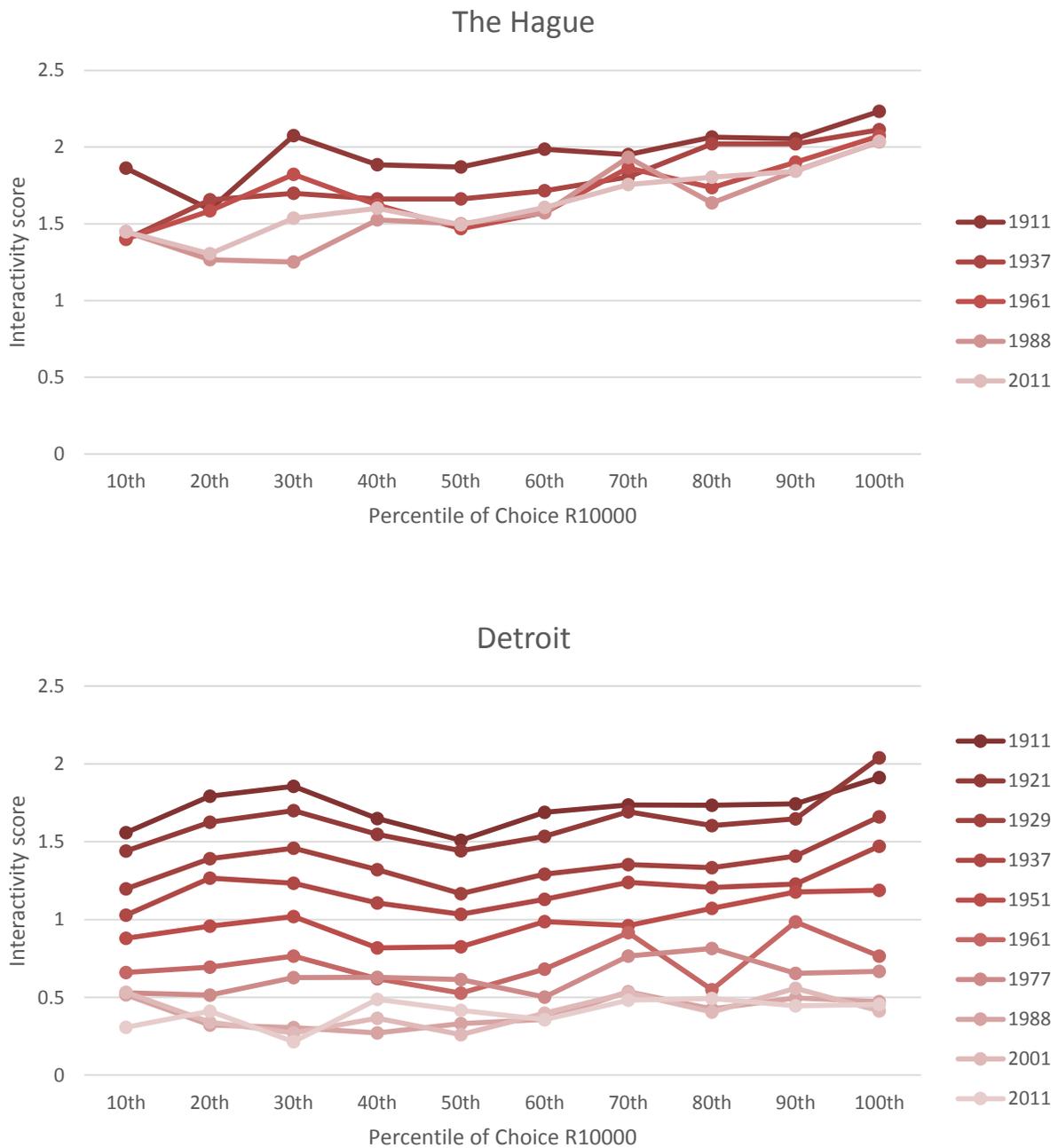


Figure 202. Interactivity score as function of choice value at R10000.

Interestingly, the interactivity of frontages is more pronouncedly dependent on the choice value of street segments in The Hague than in Detroit.<sup>958</sup> Yet in both cities, the interactivity of frontages is higher in the top 100<sup>th</sup> percentile of most connected street segments compared to the bottom 10<sup>th</sup> percentile, although this linear relation deteriorates in later years in Detroit.

Less connected streets in Detroit still see a significant rise in interactivity between the 20<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> percentile. These are most likely the residential side streets in the downtown that are purposely not configured for through traffic, yet maintaining a healthy balance of residences and small corner shops that interact with the street. The more connected arterial streets have always contained a mixture of highly interactive retail businesses and less interactive parking lots, car workshops, wholesalers and small manufacturers. It's the buckets between the highly connected and less connected streets that saw the sharpest decline as they were attractive as parking lots or garages, being too connected to become a quiet residential street yet not connected enough to become a retail corridor. Over time, a gradual decline of interactivity over all choice buckets can be seen, but until 1951 at least the relation between higher choice value and higher interactivity remains fairly intact. From 1961 onwards the relation becomes almost flat as downtown is declining regardless of location.

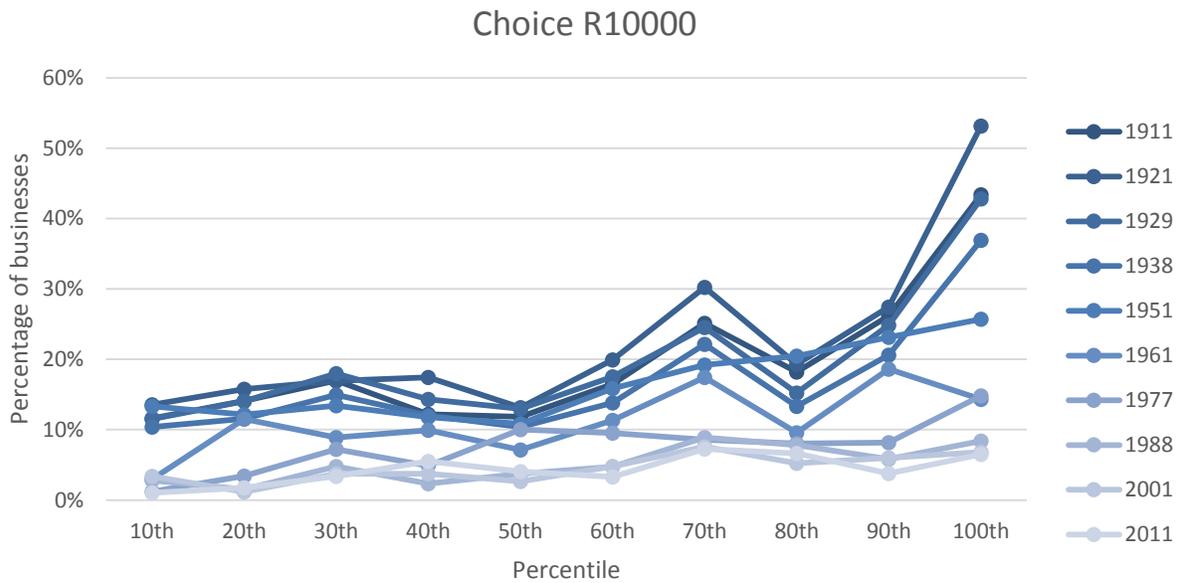
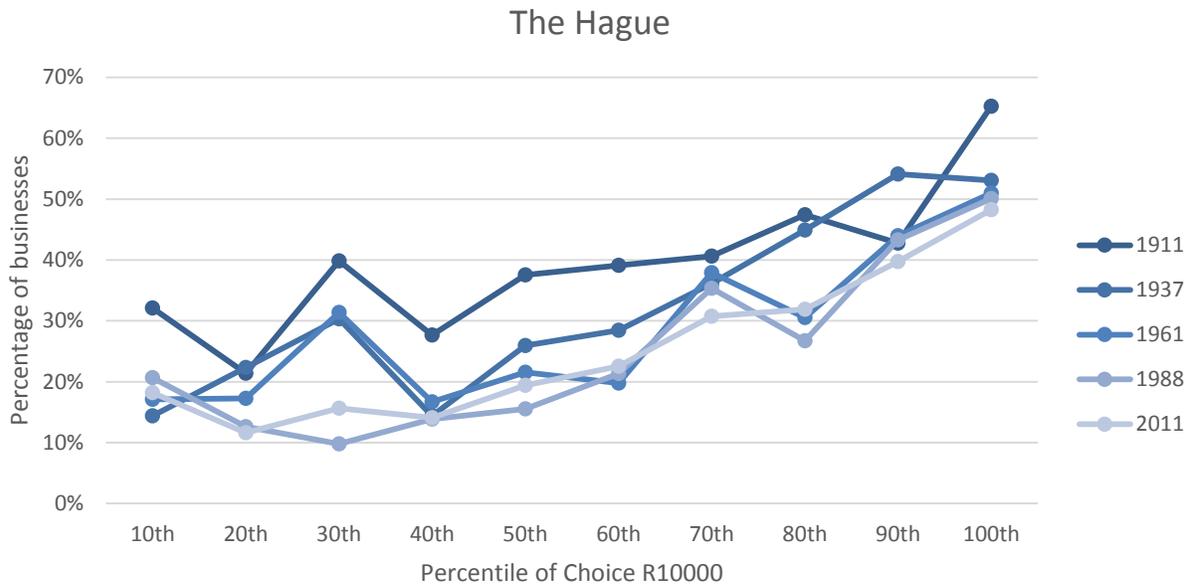
In The Hague the relation between choice and interactivity remains intact throughout the years, and even slightly strengthens over time. The top bucket of the best connected street segments with the highest choice value in the urban core have retained their interactivity, mostly because retailers stayed put on these streets. Yet on less connected streets interactivity has decline up to 30%, especially in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> percentiles. In other words: an economic optimization is taking place in which frontages in less connected streets become less interactive with public space, while the most connected streets retain

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<sup>958</sup> Linear R<sup>2</sup> in The Hague: 0.61, in Detroit 0.23.

their interactivity. Downtown not only shrinks toward the center of activity; it also shrinks to focus only on the best connected streets.

The following graphs indicate how much of this transformation is due to the location of retail businesses in both cities.



**Figure 203. Percentage of frontage accommodating businesses as a function of the Choice value at R10000.**

The relation between retail business location and street connectivity is clearly visible in both cities.<sup>959</sup> The best connected street segments with the highest choice value also have the highest percentage of retail business in their lining frontage. However, retail seems much more concentrated in Detroit than The Hague: a significant drop in frontage already takes place below the top 100% percentile in Detroit, versus a more linear drop in The Hague.

Over time, the percentage of business frontage in The Hague especially decreases in less connected streets, demonstrating an optimization process in which business shrinks toward well connected streets. In Detroit, the same can be seen until about 1937, after which frontage decline on every street segments, regardless of connectivity.

Similar to the dependence of frontages on the proximity to the center of activity, frontage interactivity and retail percentage is influenced by the connectivity of streets. The better the connectivity of a street, the higher its average interactivity value and the higher the percentage of its lining frontage that is taken up by retail business. In both The Hague and Detroit the dependence has been growing over time due to economic optimization of mostly retail business location, although the economic downturn in Detroit has resulted in a decline of interactivity and retail frontage regardless of street connectivity from 1961 onward. Overall, street connectivity seems to influence frontages slightly less than their distance to the center of activity.

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<sup>959</sup> The linear relation between retail and street connectivity is slightly stronger in The Hague than in Detroit, with an average  $R^2$  of 0.74 compared to 0.61.

### 6.5.3 Interactivity divergence

As the two previous sections have shown, frontages have slowly optimized themselves along the lines of their distance from the center of activity in an urban core and the propensity of the streets they line to function as through routes. Over the past century more centrally located and more connected streets have been lined with more interactive frontages, while peripheral and less connected streets have increasingly become less interactive. Has this created a dichotomy between downtown ‘winners and losers’: a core of highly interactive main streets brimming with retail business in humanly scaled frontages, surrounded by a ring of inactive side streets?

To measure whether the divergence between streets has indeed grown, a Gini Coefficient can be calculated. Rooted in sociology, this coefficient expresses inequality between predetermined values in a certain dataset. The higher the coefficient, the more unequal the values are. While mostly used to indicate income or wealth inequality, the coefficient calculation can also be used to show whether certain properties of streets are unequally distributed. In other words: the higher the Gini Coefficient for a certain property is, the more this property is high for some street segments and low for others, with no gradual distribution.<sup>960</sup>

The Gini Coefficient is calculated for the following properties, all at the level of the complete street segment and for all time intervals:

- The **average interactivity value**, to show whether buildings along certain streets have become more interactive while leaving other streets to become less active.
- The **percentage of business frontage** as part of the total built frontage, to show whether certain streets have gained businesses while leaving other streets to lose businesses.

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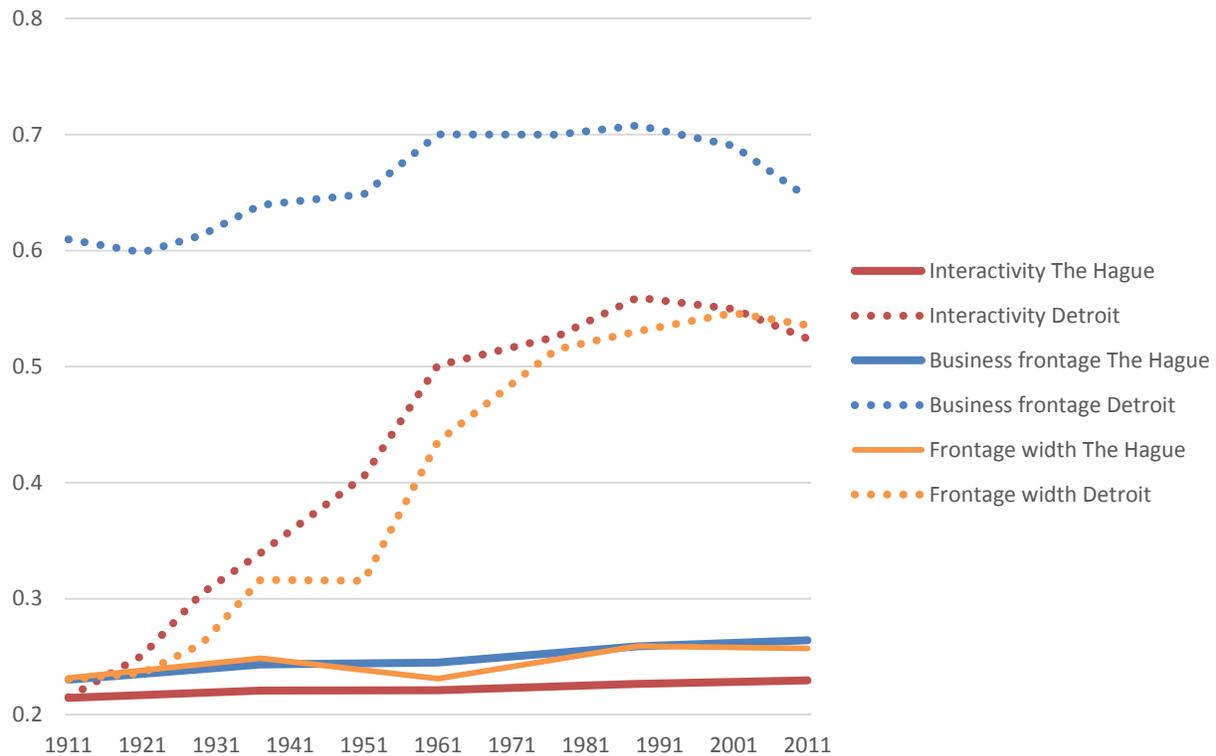
<sup>960</sup> Calculated as follows:

$$\text{Gini Coefficient (property)} = 1 - \frac{2}{n-1} \left( n - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n iy_i}{\sum_{i=1}^n y_i} \right)$$

where  $n$  is the number of values in the property dataset,  $i$  is the bucket of the property and  $y$  is the value of that property.

- The **average frontage width**, to show whether certain streets have retained a small-grained pattern of lining buildings, while others have been redeveloped by only larger buildings.

The results for The Hague and Detroit are shown in the graph below:



**Figure 204. Gini Coefficient for various properties at street level in The Hague and Detroit, x-axis starts at 0.2.**

The graph shows that for all properties, the Gini Coefficient has increased in The Hague and Detroit between 1911 and 2011. This means that in terms of interactivity, business frontage and the width of frontages some streets have won while others have lost. While much less pronounced in The Hague, the process in which some streets lose interactive buildings, business frontage and humanly sized construction while others thrive is present in both downtowns. The ‘fringe belt’ effect of a ring of decline surrounding a core of central stability is corroborated by these findings.<sup>961</sup> The processes of decline as a result of poor

<sup>961</sup> Fringe belts have been discovered in many cities by urban morphologists to decline in economic and morphological activity. Whitehand, "Urban Fringe Belts: Development of an Idea."; M. P. Conzen, "How Cities Internalize Their Former Urban Fringers: A Cross-Cultural Comparison.," *Urban Morphology* 13, no. 1 (2009).

proximity to the center of activity or the poor connectivity of streets underlies the growth of inequality among streets.

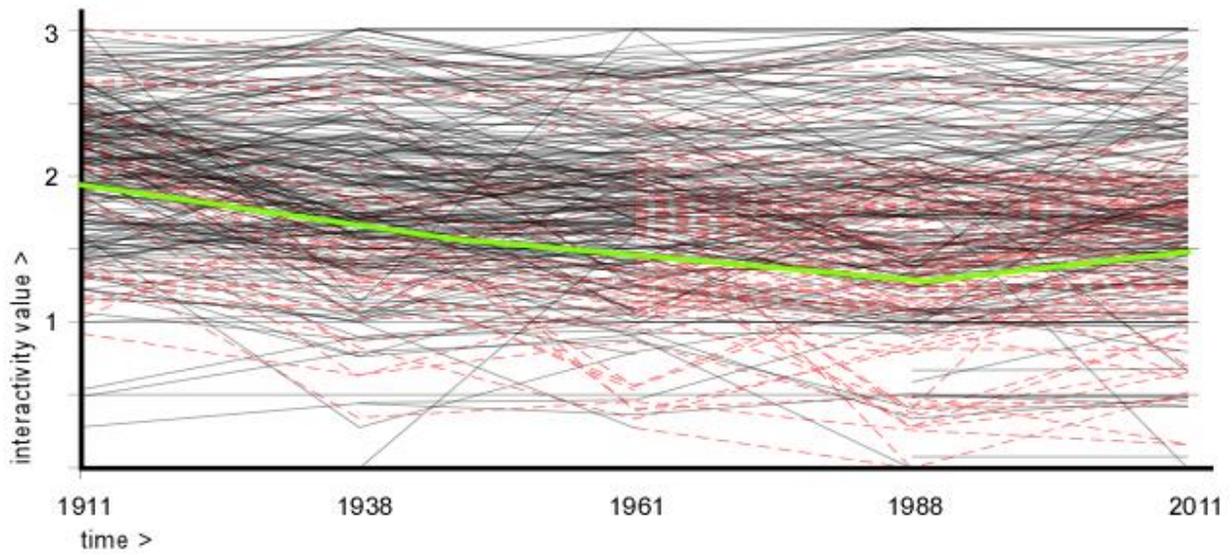
## 6.6 ACCELERATED DECLINE

*“The more infertile the simplified territory becomes for economic enterprises, the still fewer the users, and the still more infertile the territory. A kind of unbuilding, or running-down process is set in motion.”<sup>962</sup>*

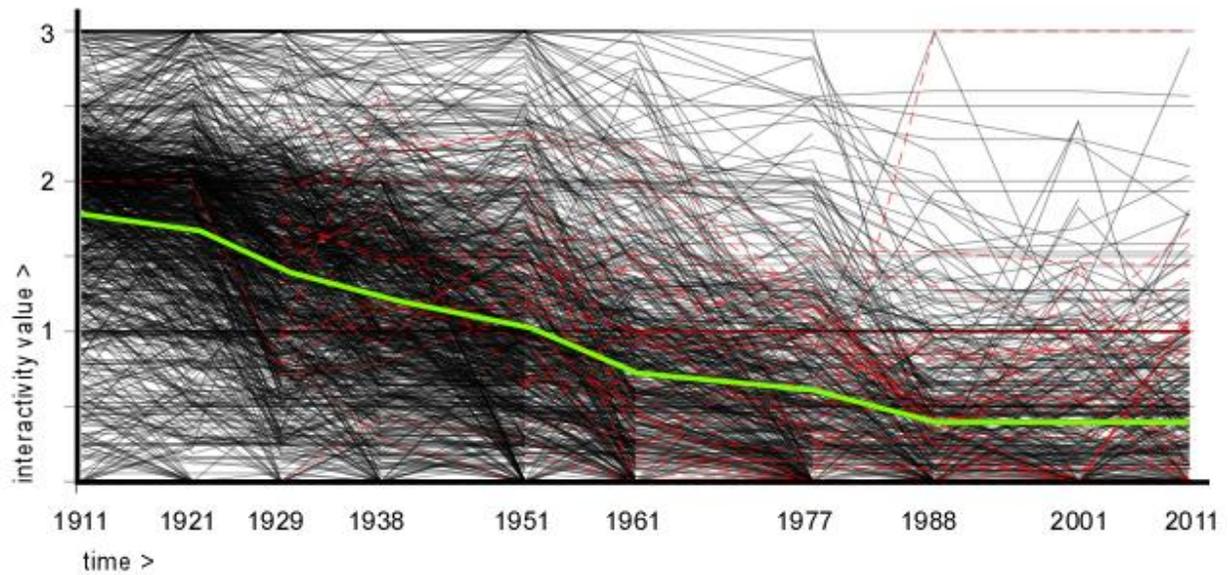
The overall pattern of frontage transformation at the level of the urban core shows that interactivity displays a pattern of decline followed by stabilization (Detroit) and a recent upswing (The Hague). However, this pattern only presents an aggregated abstraction of the more detailed transformation of frontage interactivity at street level. Figure 197 and 198 illustrate the transformation of interactivity for each street segment in The Hague and Detroit, with the average interactivity value plotted in green. Both graphs show a wide variation between the interactivity scores of street segments, with the deviation between individual streets and the average score increasing over time. In other words: the average pertains less to the reality at eye level over time. This has been corroborated by the found pattern of ‘winners and losers’ in the previous section. More importantly, both graphs also show how streets decline in interactivity in an accelerated pattern before reaching a ‘bottom-out’ point at or under about 20% of their original interactivity value. This is especially visible in the graph for Detroit.

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<sup>962</sup> In: Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 259.

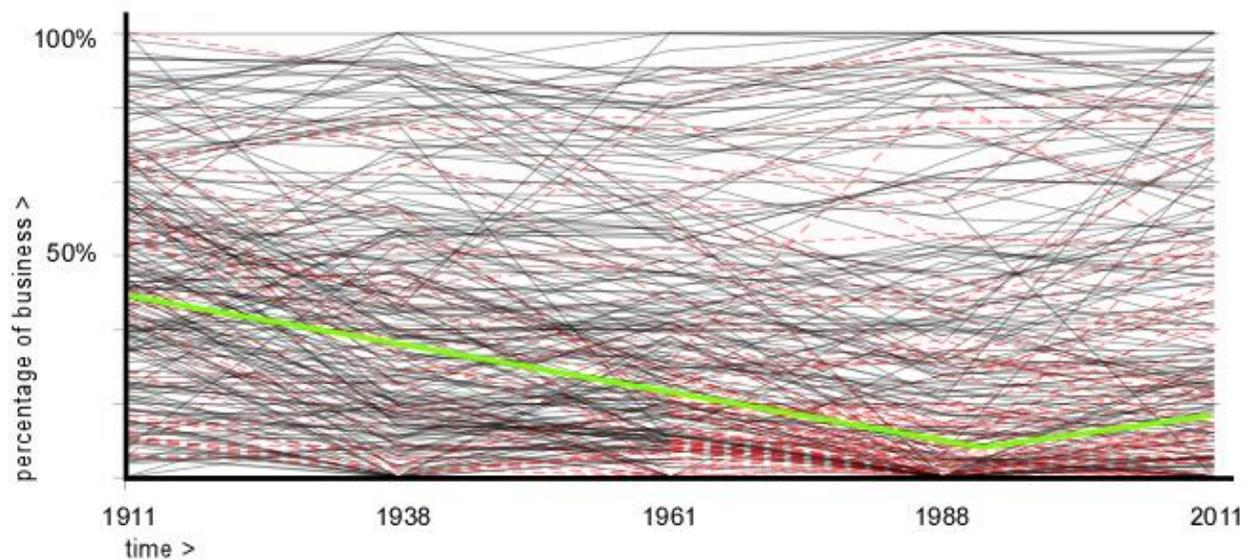


**Figure 205. Interactivity value per street segment in The Hague. Red dotted lines indicate street segments after urban renewal. The solid green line is the average interactivity value of the urban core.**



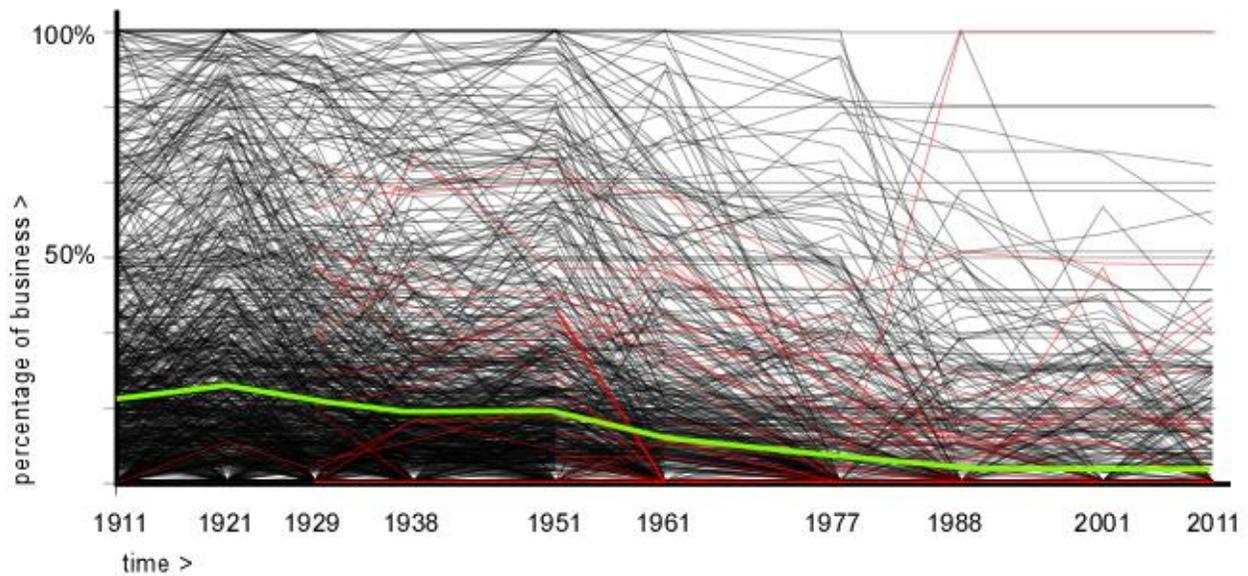
**Figure 206. Interactivity value per street segment in Detroit. Red dotted lines indicate street segments after urban renewal. The solid green line is the average interactivity value of the urban core.**

The same pattern is visible when calculating the percentage of business frontage on each street and plotting this value at the street segment level.<sup>963</sup> Like with the interactivity value, the percentage of business frontage declines in an accelerating trend on many streets until it bottoms out when diving below 20% of its original value.



**Figure 207. Percentage of business frontage on each street segment in The Hague. Red dotted lines indicate street segments after urban renewal. The solid green line is the average percentage of business frontage in the urban core.**

<sup>963</sup> Business frontage is defined as either a shop (Run, Destination or Fun) or a bar/restaurant. The percentage is taken from the total built frontage on a street, excluding vacant lots, parking lots, fences and parks. Therefore the percentage is calculated by  $\frac{\text{length of frontage (shop)} + \text{length of frontage (bar/restaurant)}}{\text{length of built frontage}}$ .



**Figure 208. Percentage of business frontage on each street segment in Detroit. Red dotted lines indicate street segments after urban renewal. The solid green line is the average percentage of business frontage in the urban core.**

The dynamics of decline at the street segment level reveals significantly more about frontage transformation than the average values for the urban core, unveiling a pattern of accelerated decline. The graph leads to the hypothesis that once a street is declining in interactivity or number of businesses, this decline tends to accelerate until there is (almost) no interactivity or business left. In order to verify this initial observation, decline acceleration has been measured under two categories.

### 6.6.1 Interactivity value decline

For overall interactivity, decline acceleration is determined by first calculating the average interactivity of frontages for each street segment.<sup>964</sup> Then, the interactivity of frontages is indexed to 1911 as having value 1, to even the playing field between highly active and less active streets. Otherwise, the annual decline of highly active main streets could potentially be more than less active side streets, skewing calculations. After this indexation, the annual decline of frontages is measured.<sup>965</sup> In order to measure accelerated decline, this annual decline is then divided by the annual decline in the previous time interval and subtracted by 1, to show whether the annual decline has increased (representing a value above 0) or decreased (representing a value below 0).<sup>966</sup> This value is the *decline acceleration value*, the decline in activity score per year, per year.

This value is only calculated under specific circumstances. Firstly, it only measures decline acceleration during an interval if it experiences decline. However, the previous interval also must experience decline, after all it aims to show decline accelerates. Since this calculation requires two consequent intervals of decline, measurements can only start during the third interval, as the decline between first and second, and second and third intervals needs to be compared. Street segments that have hardly any interactivity left (i.e. have 'bottomed out' from their decline) are not counted during that time interval, as their decline value can only decelerate to zero.<sup>967</sup> Similarly, street segments that have been part of an urban renewal project are counted separately, as their decline is induced by an externality and often greatly accelerates during the construction of the urban renewal project.

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<sup>964</sup> This calculation follows the logic as outlined under section 4.1, but at the level of the street segment: 
$$\frac{\sum_x^n \text{frontage length on street } x (\text{type } x) \times \text{frontage interactivity value (type } x)}{\text{total frontage length on street } x}$$

<sup>965</sup> This calculation follows the logic as outlined under section 4.1:  $(\text{Activity score interval } (t) - \text{Activity score interval } (t - 1)) \div \text{years between interval } (t) \text{ and } (t - 1)$

<sup>966</sup> This calculation is conducted as follows:  $\left( \frac{\text{annual decline (interval } t)}{\text{annual decline (interval } t-1)} \right) - 1$

<sup>967</sup> Bottomed out values are defined as having less than 20% of the original 1911 interactivity value left.

	1911	1921	1929	1937	1951	1961	1977	1988	2001	2011
<b>Interactivity value</b>	1.41	1.41	1.35	1.22	0.98	0.94	0.69	0.62	0.54	0.54
<b>Indexed interactivity value</b>	1.00	1.00	0.95	0.86	0.70	0.67	0.49	0.44	0.38	0.38
<b>Annual interactivity decline</b>	start	0.000	-0.006	-0.010	-0.013	-0.003	-0.011	-0.004	-0.004	0.000
<b>Interactivity decline acceleration</b>	start	start	No previous decline	0.82	0.23	-0.77	<b>2.85</b>	-0.60	-0.04	Value stable

Table 3. Example of interactivity decline acceleration calculation for Bagg Street, segment 4 in Detroit.

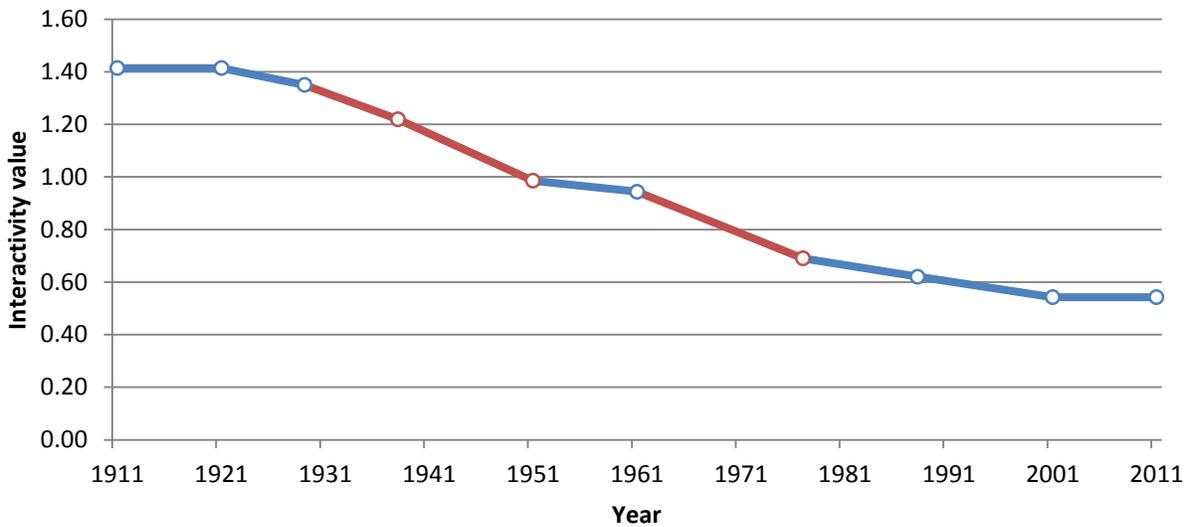


Figure 209. Interactivity value over time for Bagg Street, segment 4, illustrating intervals in which decline accelerated in red.

Following these exclusions, the maximum decline acceleration value for each street segment is measured. If it is above zero, activity decline has accelerated during at least one interval over the past century as a result of its own economy rather than an externality from urban renewal. This is clearly visible in the example for Bagg Street, segment 4 in Detroit. This street experienced accelerated decline during the Depression and during the postwar era, before stabilizing at an interactivity score of 0.54, about 1/3 of its original interactivity score. The maximum interactivity decline acceleration value for this street segment is 285% between 1961 and 1977. In other words, the decline in 1977 was 285% higher than in 1961. This shows as a sharper decline in Figure 209.

Of all 895 street segments in downtown Detroit, 93% experienced a decline in their interactivity between buildings and public space. Of these street segments, 75% experienced accelerated decline and 53% experienced accelerated decline not counting urban renewal. Their average maximum decline acceleration value is 1369%.

Of all 299 street segments in The Hague's inner city, 64% experienced a decline in their interactivity between buildings and public space. Of these street segments, 42% experienced significantly accelerated decline and 20% experienced accelerated decline not counting urban renewal. Their average maximum decline acceleration value is 1597%.

These numbers demonstrate that a majority of street segments in Detroit and The Hague experienced decline. Of these streets, a significant amount experienced accelerated decline and the acceleration is very rapid. In other words: once a street faces decline, this is likely to escalate significantly.

## **6.6.2 Business decline**

Similar to the calculations for interactivity values, the decline acceleration for the number of businesses on a street segment has been determined.<sup>968</sup> The number of businesses on each segment is determined for each time interval and indexed to 1911. Subsequently, the

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<sup>968</sup> The number of businesses include shops (Run, Destination, Fun) and bars/restaurants.

decline of this indexed number per year is determined, after which the decline of each time interval is divided by its previous interval to show whether decline accelerated.

Of all 625 street segments in downtown Detroit that contained a business in 1911, 66% experienced a decline in the number of businesses. Of these street segments, 37% experienced significantly accelerated decline and 24% experienced accelerated decline not counting urban renewal. Their average maximum decline acceleration value is 186%.

Of all 244 street segments in The Hague's inner city that contained a business in 1911, 80% experienced a decline in the number of businesses. Of these street segments, 26% experienced significantly accelerated decline and 11% experienced accelerated decline not counting urban renewal. Their average maximum decline acceleration value is 169%.

While these numbers show that most street segments in both cities experienced a decline in the number of businesses, they don't strongly support the hypothesis that this business decline is likely to escalate over time. Yet the chances that decline significantly accelerates aren't insignificant at 37% and 26% with urban renewal and 26% and 11% without. Note that the lower values for The Hague may reflect that counting only starts in the third time interval, in this case 1961. At this time, most business decline in the city had already taken its course.

## 6.7 CONTAGIOUS DECLINE

*“The city streets would be broken down into loose sprawls, incoherent and vacuous for anyone afoot. Downtowns and other neighborhoods that are marvels of close-grained intricacy and compact mutual support would be casually disemboweled.”<sup>969</sup>*

The accelerated decline of interactive frontages and businesses may point to an underlying system of contagious decline. After all, as the mutual support between buildings and public space disintegrates in a declining urban core, small-scale processes are set in motion. When a building becomes vacant, is demolished or a business closes, it may increase the risk of surrounding buildings to follow in its wake. This section will explore three parts of this process: the spread of vacant buildings, vacant and parking lots, and the spread of closed shops, bars and restaurants. All of these processes depend on space and time to take place, a major impetus for the retrospective nature of this research.

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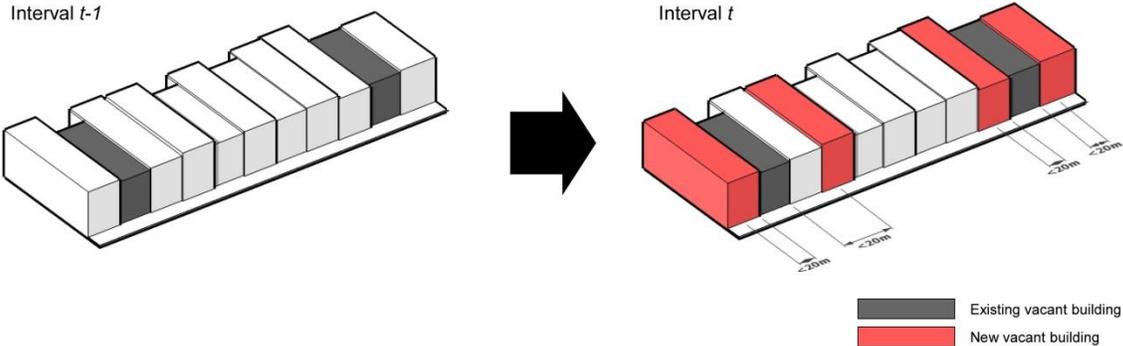
<sup>969</sup> On urban attrition in: Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 339.

### 6.7.1 Building vacancy contagion

The decline of streets in Detroit and The Hague can partly be ascribed to the vacation of frontages. Sometimes this is the result of simple friction in supply and demand, as for example storefronts are no longer needed by a certain retailer and stand empty for a period of time. The snapshot nature of the research will mark this frontage as vacant for an interval, only to be corrected for the next. More serious is the permanent departure of retail from a frontage, not to be replaced by any other use, and even worse is the abandonment of entire buildings by tenants that no longer see any use in this location for any number of reasons. But how does this pattern affect the neighboring properties?

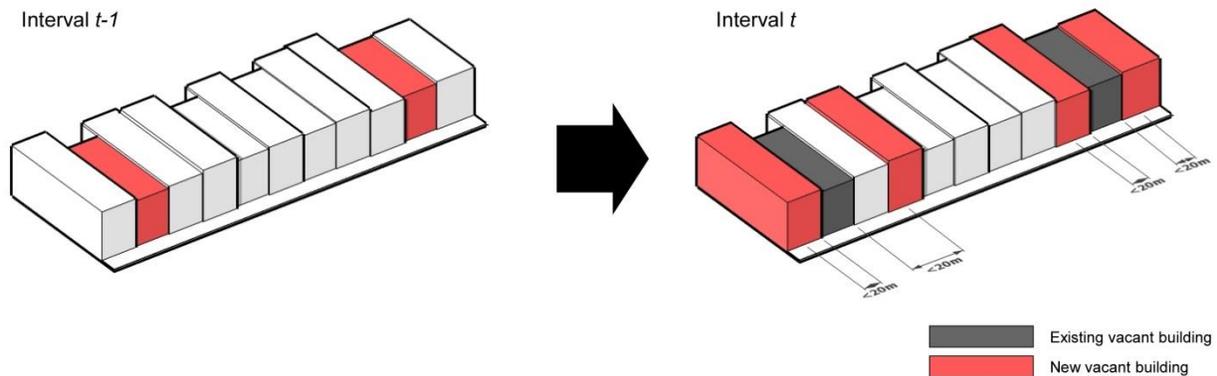
This section draws from the vacant frontage survey in Detroit as described in the previous chapter, and operationalizes contagion based on this data. Due to unreliable documentation of frontage vacancies and the low overall number of vacant frontages, these statistics were unable to be accurately conducted in The Hague. The Detroit data can point us to the following two questions on contagion that are useful for planning and design practice:

1. *What is the increased chance an active frontage becomes vacant when it is close to frontages that were already vacant?*



**Figure 210. Process of frontages becoming vacant when close to frontages that were already vacant, as studied under question 1.**

2. What is the increased chance an active frontage becomes vacant when it is close to frontages that recently became vacant?



**Figure 211.** Process of frontages becoming vacant when close to frontages that newly became vacant, as studied under question 2.

The answer to these two questions allows designers and planners to assess the risk of growing vacancies on the street and to act accordingly by curbing vacancy or focusing resources elsewhere. Below, the questions are dissected for proper definition.

First and foremost, the two questions differ in one way: whether a newly vacant frontage is close to one or more *already vacant frontages* or whether a newly vacant frontage is close to one or more frontages that were *newly vacated*, defined as vacated during the previous time period. This difference has an impact on the structuring of data.

Secondly, the definition of 'chance a frontage becomes vacant' is defined as the percentage of active frontages in interval  $t-1$  that became newly vacant in interval  $t$ . This percentage excludes frontages that were already vacant during interval  $t-1$ . After all, during each time

interval an active frontage can become newly vacant or not, but an already vacant frontage cannot become newly vacant again.<sup>970</sup>

Thirdly, the ‘increased chance’ is defined in more detail as the chance a building becomes vacant when it is close to frontages that were already vacant or recently became vacant, compared to the chance a building becomes vacant when it is *not* close to frontages that were already vacant or recently became vacant.<sup>971</sup>

Finally, the definition of ‘close’ is defined as being within 20 meters of either end of an existing frontage. As the average frontage width is roughly half that, this distance counts frontages that are one or two buildings away. As the average street width is about 20 meters, this distance mostly counts frontages that are only on the same side of the street.<sup>972</sup>

To find the data for both formulas, the GIS data was structured to not only note whether a frontage was vacant during a certain interval (this was already part of the regular denotation of its land use), but also whether it became newly vacant during that interval.

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<sup>970</sup>  $P(\text{frontage becomes vacant in interval } t) = \frac{\text{number of newly vacant frontages in interval } t}{\text{number of active frontages in interval } t-1}$

<sup>971</sup> Leading to the formulas:

*The increased chance a frontage becomes vacant when it is close to frontages that were already vacant =*

$$\frac{P(\text{frontage becomes vacant in interval } t \text{ when it is close to already vacant frontages in interval } t-1)}{P(\text{frontage becomes vacant in interval } t \text{ when it is not close to already vacant frontages in interval } t-1)} - 1$$

*The increased chance a frontage becomes vacant when it is close to frontages that are newly vacant =*

$$\frac{P(\text{frontage becomes vacant in interval } t \text{ when it is close to newly vacant frontages in interval } t-1)}{P(\text{frontage becomes vacant in interval } t \text{ when it is not close to newly vacant frontages in interval } t-1)} - 1$$

<sup>972</sup> Leading to the expanded formulas:

*The increased chance a frontage becomes vacant when it is close to frontages that were already vacant =*

$$\frac{\left( \frac{\text{number of newly vacant frontages in interval } t \text{ within 20m of } >1 \text{ vacant frontages in interval } t-1}{\text{number of active frontages in interval } t-1 \text{ within 20m of } >1 \text{ vacant frontages in interval } t-1} \right)}{\left( \frac{\text{number of newly vacant frontages in interval } t \text{ within 20m of } 0 \text{ vacant frontages in interval } t-1}{\text{number of active frontages in interval } t-1 \text{ within 20m of } 0 \text{ vacant frontages in interval } t-1} \right)} - 1$$

*The increased chance a frontage becomes vacant when it is close to frontages that are newly vacant =*

$$\frac{\left( \frac{\text{number of newly vacant frontages in interval } t \text{ within 20m of } >1 \text{ newly vacant frontages in interval } t-1}{\text{number of active frontages in interval } t-1 \text{ within 20m of } >1 \text{ newly vacant frontages in interval } t-1} \right)}{\left( \frac{\text{number of newly vacant frontages in interval } t \text{ within 20m of } 0 \text{ newly vacant frontages in interval } t-1}{\text{number of active frontages in interval } t-1 \text{ within 20m of } 0 \text{ newly vacant frontages in interval } t-1} \right)} - 1$$

This was done by overlapping the vacancy maps for each interval and comparing where new vacancies had sprouted.

Then, a bounding box with the radius of 20 meters (in x-y coordinates) is drawn around each frontage during a time interval. Within this box, a search is conducted to determine whether it contains any frontages that were already vacant in previous intervals. Also, a search is conducted to determine whether it contains any frontages that became newly vacant in the previous interval.

Frontages that were located in an urban renewal area at the time of measurement are counted separately, as their dynamics of vacancy was caused by an externality rather than internal economies of aggregation and contagion. Also, frontages that were the non-addressing side of a street corner were not counted to prevent aggregation by double counting corner vacancies. When the increased chance is calculated for all intervals, the average chance is defined by weighting the calculations for each interval by the amount of years lapsed between it and the previous interval.

The results confirm the hypothesis:

In Detroit, the higher chance an active building becomes vacant within 20 meters of an **existing** vacant building is 93.3% (when including urban renewal this number is 57.1%).

The higher chance an active building becomes vacant within 20 meters of a building that **newly vacated** during the previous time period is higher at 66.8% (when including urban renewal this number is 42.6%).<sup>973</sup>

In other words: vacancy is indeed highly contagious. It is significantly influenced by surrounding vacant properties and to a lesser but still significant extent by surrounding new vacancies. Once a frontage is boarded up, neighbors are very likely to follow. In order

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<sup>973</sup> Average weighted by year. Standard deviation for new vacancies as a result of existing surrounding vacancies: 94% (40% including urban renewal). Standard deviation for new vacancies as a result of recent surrounding vacancies: 58% (24% including urban renewal). All values are above 0. Sample size counts all frontages during the peak year of 1911 at n=28622.

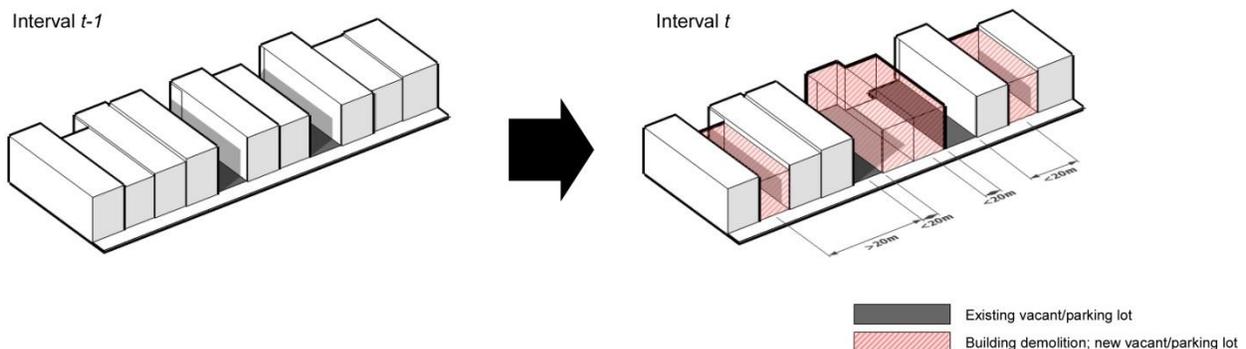
to curb the growth of vacancy, it would therefore be advisable to prevent dispersed vacant buildings from negatively influencing their environment.

## 6.7.2 Vacant and parking lot contagion

Similar to the contagiousness of vacant frontages, the accelerated decline pattern discovered in Detroit and The Hague can be the result of the spread of building demolitions leaving vacant land or parking lots. Section 4.1 has demonstrated that this process significantly adds to the declining interaction between buildings and public space. Whether already vacant or still active, an area that may be considered on the decline may experience an accelerating number of building demolitions, either by official means or through decay or vandalism, the earliest cases of which were noted in Detroit on Sanborn maps in 1951 as ‘fire ruins’. Many of these demolitions have not resulted in a replacement building and instead left a vacant lot or parking lot, harming the vitality and viability of buildings surrounding it. Is this a downward spiral?

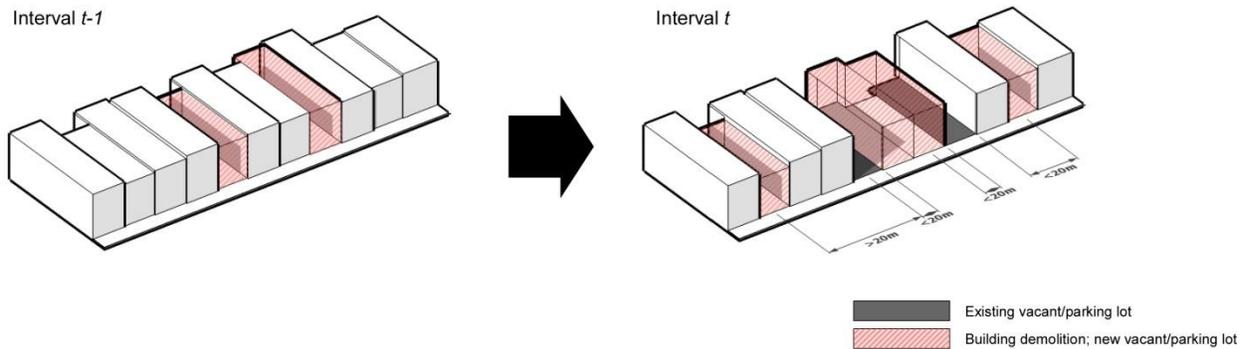
This section will take a similar mathematical approach to frontage vacation and will again only focus on Detroit, as the number of newly demolished properties in The Hague is too small to accurately present conclusions based on a representative sample size. The questions that will be answered are:

1. *What is the increased chance a building becomes a vacant or parking lot when it is close to lots that were already vacant or used for parking?*



**Figure 212. Process of buildings being demolished and replaced with vacant or parking lots when close to existing vacant or parking lots, as studied under question 1.**

2. What is the increased chance a building becomes a vacant or parking lot when it is close to lots that have recently become vacant or used for parking?



**Figure 213. Process of buildings being demolished and replaced with vacant or parking lots when close to newly demolished buildings turned vacant or parking lots, as studied under question 1.**

Answering these questions also takes a similar approach to the previous question. The main probability under measure is whether a building is demolished for a vacant or parking lot. In other words, the percentage of all buildings in interval  $t-1$  that have turned into vacant or parking lots in interval  $t$ .<sup>974</sup> It describes the percentage of all buildings Existing vacant and parking lots in interval  $t-1$  are not counted, as these cannot again become vacant or parking lots; internal transitions between these two types of lots are also

<sup>974</sup>  $P(\text{building becomes vacant or parking lot in interval } t) = \frac{\text{number of newly created vacant or parking lots in interval } t}{\text{number of building frontages in interval } t-1}$ .

not counted. After this, the increased chance a building becomes a vacant or parking lot when close to already or newly vacant or parking lots can be calculated.<sup>975,976</sup>

The GIS data is prepared to show whether any vacant or parking lot was newly created during a certain interval. As with vacant frontages, 'close' is defined as located within an x-y bounding box of 20 meter radius of each newly created vacant lot. This distance is set to include about three buildings in either direction while excluding buildings across the street.

Vacant lots that were located in an urban renewal area at the time of measurement were taken aside, as their dynamics of vacancy was caused by an externality rather than internal economies of aggregation and contagion. Also, vacant lots that were the non-addressing

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<sup>975</sup> The increased chance is calculated as follows for question 1:

$$\frac{P(\text{building becomes vacant or parking lot in interval } t \text{ when it is close to already vacant or parking lots in interval } t-1)}{P(\text{building becomes vacant or parking lot in interval } t \text{ when it is not close to already vacant or parking lots in interval } t-1)} - 1$$

For question 2:

$$\frac{P(\text{building becomes vacant or parking lot in interval } t \text{ when it is close to new vacant or parking lots in interval } t-1)}{P(\text{building becomes vacant or parking lot in interval } t \text{ when it is not close to new vacant or parking lots in interval } t-1)} - 1$$

<sup>976</sup> The formulas can be expanded as follows:

*The increased chance a building becomes a vacant or parking lot when it is close to lots that were already vacant or used for parking =*

$$\left( \frac{\text{number of newly created vacant or parking lots in interval } t \text{ within 20m of } >1 \text{ existing vacant or parking lots in interval } t-1}{\text{number of building frontages in interval } t-1 \text{ within 20m of } >1 \text{ existing vacant or parking lots in interval } t-1} / \frac{\text{number of newly created vacant or parking lots in interval } t \text{ within 20m of } 0 \text{ existing vacant or parking lots in interval } t-1}{\text{number of building frontages in interval } t-1 \text{ within 20m of } 0 \text{ existing vacant or parking lots in interval } t-1} \right) - 1$$

*The increased chance a frontage becomes vacant when it is close to frontages that recently became vacant =*

$$\left( \frac{\text{number of newly created vacant or parking lots in interval } t \text{ within 20m of } >1 \text{ new vacant or parking lots in interval } t-1}{\text{number of building frontages in interval } t-1 \text{ within 20m of } >1 \text{ new vacant or parking lots in interval } t-1} / \frac{\text{number of newly created vacant or parking lots in interval } t \text{ within 20m of } 0 \text{ new vacant or parking lots in interval } t-1}{\text{number of building frontages in interval } t-1 \text{ within 20m of } 0 \text{ new vacant or parking lots in interval } t-1} \right) - 1$$

side of a street corner were not counted to prevent aggregation by double counting corner vacancies.

When all chances are calculated over time, the average chance is defined by weighting the calculations for each interval by the amount of years lapsed between it and the previous interval.

In Detroit, the higher chance a building becomes a vacant or parking lot within 20 meters of an **existing** vacant or parking lot is 163.3% (when including urban renewal this number is 145.3%).

The higher chance a building becomes a vacant or parking lot within 20 meters of a **newly demolished** building turned into a vacant or parking lot during the previous time period is 151.4% (when including urban renewal this number is 109.1%).<sup>977</sup>

In other words: building demolition without replacement is even more contagious than frontage vacancy. Demolished buildings are significantly influenced by surrounding vacant or parking lots and to a lesser but still significant extent by surrounding new vacant or parking lots. In other words: once a building is demolished for a parking lot or even a vacant lot, neighbors are very likely to follow. The weakening of continuous urban tissue can be curbed by preventing the random scattering of building demolitions over time.

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<sup>977</sup> Average weighted by year. Standard deviation for new vacant/parking lots as a result of existing surrounding vacant/parking lots: 134% (136% including urban renewal). Standard deviation for new vacancies as a result of recent surrounding vacancies: 90% (55% including urban renewal). These high deviations are influenced by a high 1921 value; all values are above 0. Sample size counts all frontages during the peak year of 1911 at n=28622.

### 6.7.3 Business closure contagion

Another element that contributes to the accelerated decline of streets doesn't come from the rise of inactive land uses such as vacant frontages, vacant lots or parking lots, but may come from the decline of a highly interactive land use: ground floor shops and restaurants. As demonstrated in Figure 190 and Figure 192 for The Hague and Detroit, the total number of ground floor businesses has declined significantly over the past century. Furthermore, section 4.5.2 has demonstrated that in a significant number of streets, the decline in the number of businesses has accelerated.

The figures point to an overall decline of businesses, but the accelerated decline points to the hypothesis that like the spread of vacant frontages and vacant and parking lots, business closures are contagious. Firstly, businesses need to be surrounded by a critical mass to survive, and once that critical mass is disrupted business continuity is at stake. Secondly, the closure of business on a street may diminish the potential of other surrounding businesses. This section aims to verify these two claims.

The starting point for verification is to define the question into two parts:

1. *Does the chance a business will close decrease if it is close to more other businesses?*

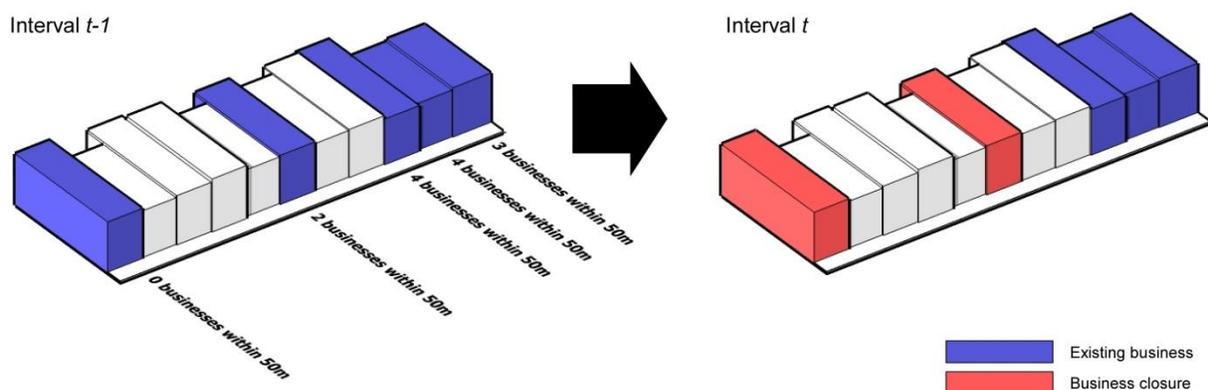


Figure 214. Process of store closure influenced by a critical mass of surrounding stores, as studied under question 1.

2. Does the chance a business will close increase if it is close to other recent business closures?

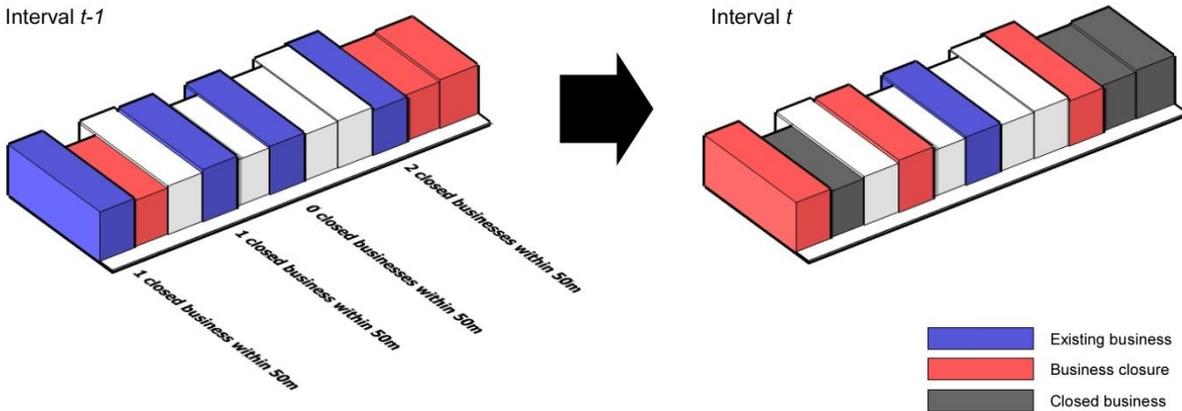


Figure 215. Process of store closure influenced by stores that closed recently, as studied under question 2.

It is important to define two elements in both questions. Firstly, the chance a business closes is defined as:

$$\frac{\text{number of businesses closing in interval } t}{\text{number of businesses in interval } t}$$

Secondly, 'close' is defined as being located within 50 meters in x-y direction. This is wider than the definition of the zone of blight around a vacant building or lot (at 20 meters), as business customers are mobile to walk between stores, cross the street and go around a corner. A pilot study has shown this wider distance will most accurately demonstrate the zone of influence around a store.

The first question essentially aims to measure the influence of the number of nearby businesses on the chance of business closure: the sensitivity of businesses to a surrounding

critical mass. It measures the *increased or decreased* chance a business closes during time interval  $t$  when surrounded by  $x$  number of other businesses within 50 meters.<sup>978,979</sup>

It is also interesting to study whether this sensitivity is influenced by retail type (Run, Fun, Destination or Bars and Restaurants). Various theorists have argued that for example comparison shopping needs a critical mass of surrounding businesses to survive, while destination shops are far less dependent on neighboring peers.<sup>980</sup>

The second question aims to measure the influence of the number of nearby recently closed businesses on the chance of business closure. In other words, it measures the increased or decreased chance a business closes during time interval  $t$  when surrounded by  $x$  number of businesses that closed during time interval  $t-1$ .<sup>981,982</sup>

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<sup>978</sup> Increased chance a business closes during time interval  $t$  when surrounded by  $x$  other businesses:

$$\frac{P(\text{business closes in interval } t \text{ when surrounded by } x \text{ other businesses within 50 meters in interval } t)}{P(\text{business closes in interval } t \text{ when not surrounded by } x \text{ other businesses within 50 meters in interval } t)}$$

Expanded:

$$\left( \frac{\text{\# of businesses closing in interval } t \text{ when surrounded by } x \text{ businesses within 50 meters in interval } t}{\text{\# of businesses in interval } t \text{ surrounded by } x \text{ businesses within 50 meters in interval } t} / \frac{\text{\# of businesses closing in interval } t \text{ when not surrounded by } x \text{ businesses within 50 meters in interval } t}{\text{\# of businesses in interval } t \text{ not surrounded by } x \text{ businesses within 50 meters in interval } t} \right) - 1$$

<sup>979</sup> A pilot study has shown that sample sizes become too small for accurate statistical measurement if calculations are made for each individual  $x$  number of nearby businesses. With less than 100 businesses left to close in Detroit from 1980s onwards, subdivision leads to overly small sample sizes and subsequent statistical error. Instead, the  $x$  values are bucketed as: up to 5, 6-10, 11-15 and more than 15 nearby businesses. Also, shops in urban renewal areas are not counted as their closure is due to externalities.

<sup>980</sup> E.g. Nelson, *The Selection of Retail Locations*; Berry, *Commercial Structure and Commercial Blight: Retail Patterns and Processes in the City of Chicago*.

<sup>981</sup> Increased chance a business closes during time interval  $t$  when surrounded by  $x$  other bususiness that closed during time interval  $t-1$ :

$$\frac{P(\text{business closes in interval } t \text{ when surrounded by } x \text{ number of closed businesses within 50 meters in interval } t-1)}{P(\text{business closes in interval } t \text{ not surrounded by } x \text{ number of closed businesses within 50 meters in interval } t-1)} - 1$$

Expanded:

$$\left( \frac{\text{\# of businesses closing in interval } t \text{ when surrounded by } x \text{ closed businesses within 50 meters in interval } t-1}{\text{\# of businesses in interval } t \text{ surrounded by } x \text{ closed businesses within 50 meters in interval } t-1} / \frac{\text{\# of businesses closing in interval } t \text{ when not surrounded by } x \text{ closed businesses within 50 meters in interval } t-1}{\text{\# of businesses in interval } t \text{ not surrounded by } x \text{ closed businesses within 50 meters in interval } t-1} \right) - 1$$

<sup>982</sup> Final values are averages of all intervals weighted by the time following the interval.

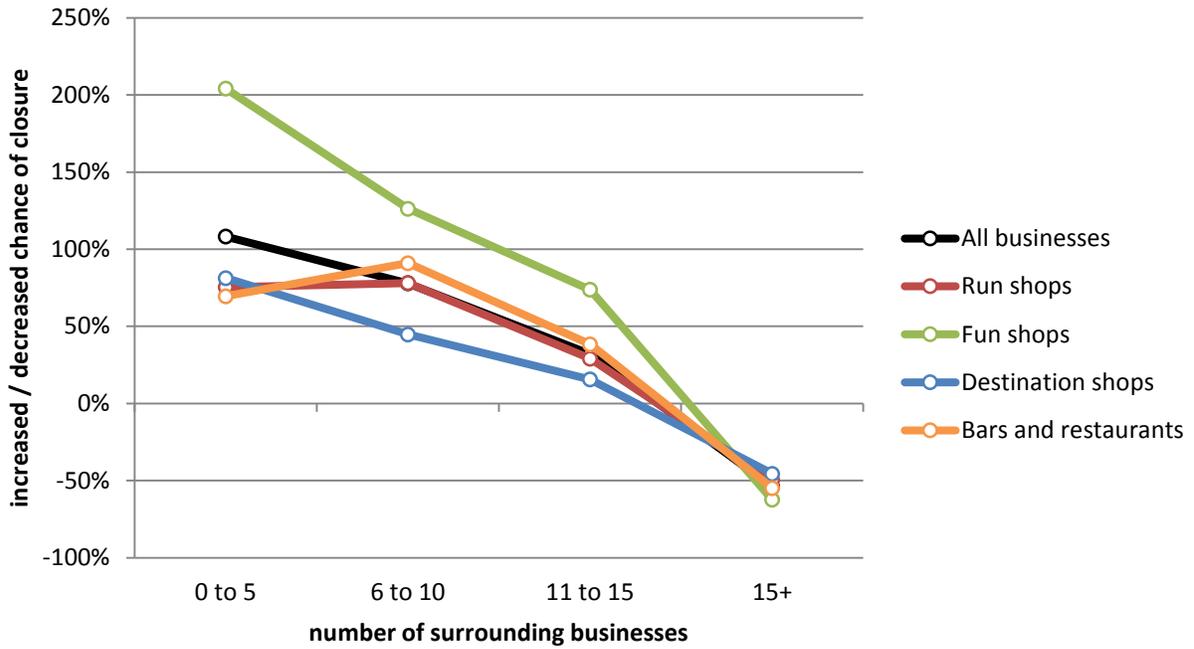


Figure 216. Increased and decrease chance of business closure as a function of the number of surrounding businesses in The Hague.

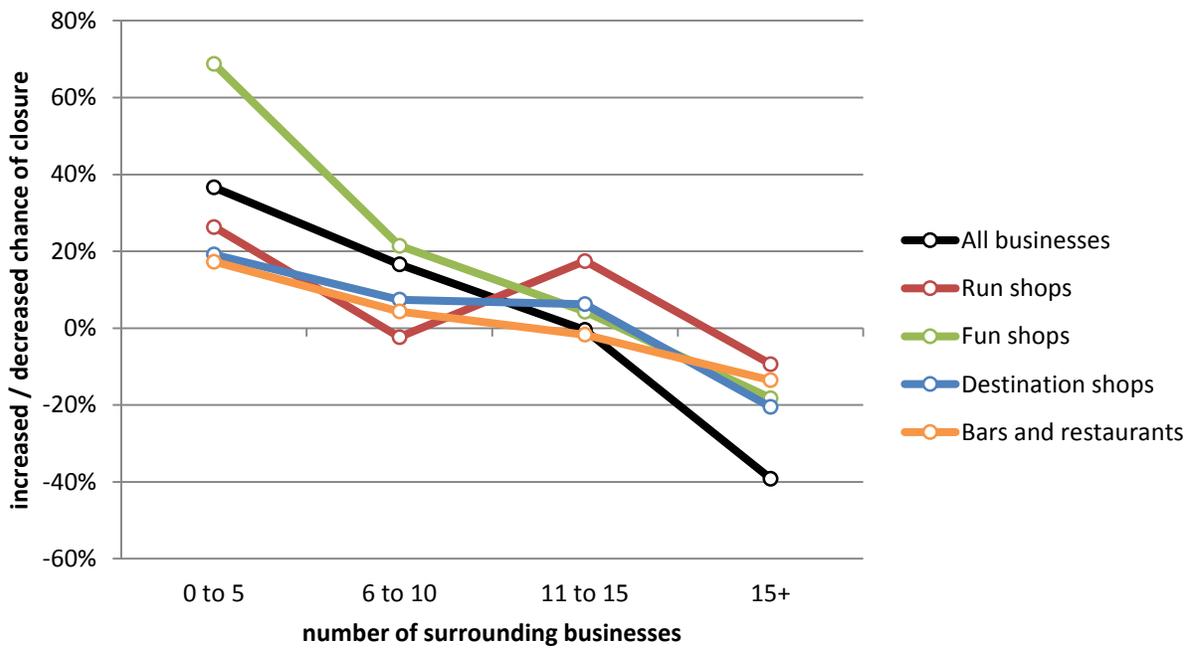


Figure 217. Increased and decrease chance of business closure as a function of the number of surrounding businesses in Detroit.

Figure 216 and Figure 217 above clearly show that business closures are highly sensitive to critical mass. The higher the number of surrounding stores, the lower the chance of closure. Furthermore, this sensitivity differs when taking the different types of ground floor businesses into account. Comparison retail (“Fun shops”) is the most sensitive to surrounding businesses in their closure pattern. This is quite logical: as the name implies these businesses depend on neighbors for comparison of merchandise such as fashion or luxury items. If a critical mass of peers is not present, comparison isn’t possible and business fails. To a lesser extent destination shops are sensitive to critical mass, as their name again implies that they can serve as a free standing destination in and of themselves. Yet the graphs depict that they too can benefit from surrounding shops, most likely as a part of a linked trip to visit multiple establishments. Run shops and bars and restaurants are the least sensitive to critical mass. Nevertheless, all shops exhibit a decreased chance of closing when surrounded by a large number of peers. Interestingly, this sensitivity holds true in both Detroit and The Hague.

The number of recently closed stores nearby has an opposite effect.

In The Hague, stores are 15.3% more likely to close if surrounded by more than 5 stores that closed during the previous time interval. If surrounded by 1 or more stores that closed during the previous time interval, this drops to 0.7%.

In Detroit, stores are 12.5% more likely to close if surrounded by more than 5 stores that closed during the previous time interval. If surrounded by 1 or more stores that closed during the previous time interval, this drops to 4.3%.

These numbers show that like vacant buildings and vacant and parking lots, store closures are contagious. In other words: store closures are likely to take nearby businesses in their wake.

## 6.8 DECLINE AND URBAN RENEWAL

While the previous sections mostly dealt with the observation of frontage transformation and some of the internal forces that contribute to this transformation, a significant external force in downtown Detroit and The Hague's inner city is that of the many urban renewal plans that have been implemented over the past century. With the combined areas of all urban renewal projects covering almost half of The Hague's inner city and almost two thirds of Detroit's downtown, this is certainly a strong force to be reckoned with. When looking street level, over 57% of street segments in Detroit and 41% of street segments in The Hague were part of an urban renewal plan at least once over the past century. It is important to note that the definition of urban renewal differs between the United States and the Netherlands. For this dissertation, urban renewal is defined as any project that exceeds one entire urban block, either financed by public or private funds. Therefore, projects include for example the privately financed Renaissance Center in Detroit (taking up more than a dozen city blocks) and the privately developed Louis Couperusplein in The Hague (cutting a new street into a city block). At this scale, most projects have been initiated by public institutions.

This section will study whether urban renewal areas have benefited the interactivity between buildings and public space or not. Did urban renewal areas experience a stronger than average decrease in the interactivity between buildings and public space, and have they positively or negatively influenced the areas around them?

### 6.8.1 Urban renewal and frontage interactivity

Throughout the past century, a range of large projects in Detroit and The Hague have aimed to improve their urban cores. Street construction and widening projects in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century aimed to introduce the automobile downtown, followed by ever-growing infrastructure projects. The poor state of peripheral housing and businesses subsequently prompted the wholesale urban clearance and renewal projects from the early postwar years onwards, followed by the growth of megaprojects in the 1970s and 1980s. As such, urban renewal has significantly influenced the experience of the city at eye level, with almost half of The Hague's and more than half of Detroit's urban core affected by urban renewal over the past century.

While a significant amount of literature has been written on the effects of urban renewal on the city, its effects on the relationship between buildings and public space are relatively unknown.<sup>983</sup> This section will test two premises, each in two dimensions. Firstly, it will measure whether urban renewal projects have deteriorated the relationship between buildings and public space *by their design*, comparing this relationship right before construction commenced and its status after the project was completed. Secondly, it will measure whether urban renewal projects have been able to stabilize the relationship between buildings and public space in the districts they reconstructed *over time*, comparing this relationship right before it was constructed and its status in 2011. After all, the premise for many of these projects was to stem the decline of urban cores, providing users with a stable, often fully designed environment. Answering this question requires looking at the complete lifetime of the project after it was finished, rather than studying the shock of construction outlined in the previous two paragraphs.

The two dimensions in which the study takes place are as follows. Firstly, the interactivity value of street segments that underwent urban renewal is compared. This study will point out whether urban renewal projects deteriorated the interactivity of frontages due to the

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<sup>983</sup> A notable exception is Gehl's comments on downtown urban renewal in Stockholm, resulting in streets filled with office buildings that didn't relate to public space. Gehl, "Close Encounters with Buildings."

construction of larger buildings that don't face the street, or by the replacement of interactive land uses with less active ones. Secondly, the transformation of interactivity is further inspected by studying the effect of urban renewal on street level business. While many prewar renewal projects aimed to marry business interests with urban growth, most postwar renewal cleared substandard housing along with what was considered marginal business activity on the downtown fringe. Instead, renewal areas received their own planned retail concentrations, with wholesale and manufacturing uses mostly removed.<sup>984</sup> The questions prompted by these two premises and two dimensions are outlined below.

	<b>Interactivity</b>	<b>Percentage of business frontage</b>
<b>Design</b>	Has the interactivity between buildings and public space declined more than average in urban renewal areas before and after their construction? <sup>985</sup>	Has the percentage of business frontage declined more than average in urban renewal areas before and after their construction? <sup>986</sup>
<b>Stabilization</b>	Has the interactivity between buildings and public space declined more than average after construction in urban renewal areas over their lifetime? <sup>987</sup>	Has the number of businesses declined more than average after construction in urban renewal areas over their lifetime? <sup>988</sup>

**Table 4. Matrix of questions comparing urban renewal areas to the urban core as a whole.**

<sup>984</sup> An exception to this rule is the clearance of parts of Detroit's Corktown for an industrial district. More information in the next chapter.

<sup>985</sup> For street segments marked as located in an urban renewal area, the interactivity value change before and after completion of the renewal project was compared with the average change for the entire urban core during the same time period.

$$\frac{\text{interactivity value before construction (segment in UR)} - \text{interactivity value before construction (average all segments)}}{\text{interactivity value after construction (segment in UR)} - \text{interactivity value after construction (average all segments)}}$$

<sup>986</sup> For street segments marked as located in an urban renewal area, the change in the percentage of business frontage before and after completion of the renewal project was compared with the average change for the entire urban core during the same time period.

$$\frac{\% \text{ of business frontage before construction (segment in UR)} - \% \text{ of business frontage before construction (average all segments)}}{\% \text{ of business frontage after construction (segment in UR)} - \% \text{ of business frontage after construction (average all segments)}}$$

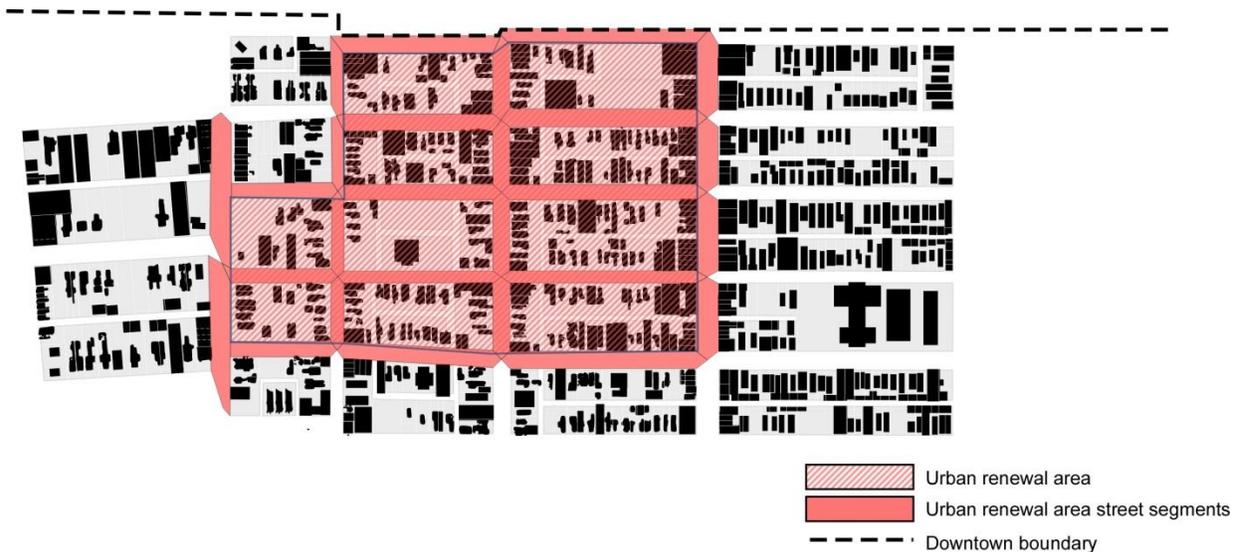
<sup>987</sup> For street segments marked as located in an urban renewal area, the interactivity value change between the start of the renewal project and 2011 was compared with the average change for the entire urban core during the same time period. Streets that were removed before 2011 are not counted.

$$\frac{\text{interactivity value before construction (segment in UR)} - \text{interactivity value before construction (average all segments)}}{\text{interactivity value in 2011 (segment in UR)} - \text{interactivity value 2011 (average all segments)}}$$

<sup>988</sup> For street segments marked as located in an urban renewal area, the change in the percentage of business frontage between the start of the renewal project and 2011 was compared with the average change for the entire urban core during the same time period. Streets that were removed before 2011 are not counted.

$$\frac{\% \text{ of business frontage before construction (segment in UR)} - \% \text{ of business frontage before construction (average all segments)}}{\% \text{ of business frontage in 2011 (segment in UR)} - \% \text{ of business frontage in 2011 (average all segments)}}$$

In order to answer these questions, the first step was to map urban renewal projects for all time intervals, and mark all street segments and buildings within them and abutting them accordingly. Segments were marked 'on' at the time they were in or right next to an active urban renewal project, and were marked 'off' again after the project had completed. The reason this study is conducted at the level of the street segment is that average transformations can only be calculated through the aggregation of data beyond the individual building. All street segments already had calculated values for the interactivity and the percentage of business frontage. Calculations were therefore mostly a matter of comparing street segments marked as urban renewal areas with the average of all street segments.<sup>989</sup>



**Figure 218. Urban renewal area with affected street segments is marked. Example from Brewster-Douglas housing project in Detroit. The study area boundary lies right north of the diagram. Map not to scale.**

The outcomes for all calculations for The Hague and Detroit are outlined in Table 5 and Table 6 below.

<sup>989</sup> Due to significant variability between the various interactivity and business frontage scores for urban renewal areas, the choice has been made to compare the median of these scores with the average total frontage interactivity or business frontage transformation. Also, due to the sign change of the average interactivity score in The Hague between 1988 and 2011, the difference is calculated by deduction, not division. Street segments with no interactivity or business frontage left either in 2011 or after their immediate urban renewal were not included in the calculation for mathematical reasons.

THE HAGUE	Interactivity	Percentage of business frontage
<b>Construction</b>	The interactivity between buildings and public space has declined <b>11.5% more than average</b> in street segments that underwent urban renewal.	The percentage of business frontage has declined <b>40.2% more than average</b> in street segments that underwent urban renewal.
<b>Stabilization</b>	The interactivity between buildings and public space has declined <b>1.3% more than average</b> in street segments that underwent urban renewal until the present.	The percentage of businesses frontage has declined <b>31.8% more than average</b> in street segments that underwent urban renewal until the present.

**Table 5. Urban renewal outcomes for The Hague.**

The calculations for The Hague show that street segments undergoing urban renewal construction have experienced rather small declines for interactivity value, which can be explained by the fact that urban renewal were often focused on fine-grained and strong interaction between buildings and public space, offsetting the loss in interactivity from earlier renewal projects. Also, many urban renewal projects replaced various inactive frontages such as car workshops, wholesalers and small manufacturers with residences which interacted more with public space. This outcome corroborates the numbers seen on new construction in section 4.1. However, the amount of lost retail business frontage in urban renewal areas is significantly higher than average, and corresponds with the aim of many urban renewal projects to ‘sanitize businesses’, as will be outlined in the chapter on The Hague. Also, urban renewal projects were not significantly able to stabilize urban areas, as their median frontage interactivity decline almost perfectly kept pace with the average decline and recent upswing, and the median decline of business frontages was much faster than average. Again, these numbers shows an urban renewal approach that is relatively sensitive to the relation between buildings and public space but has strongly encouraged the departure of street level businesses.

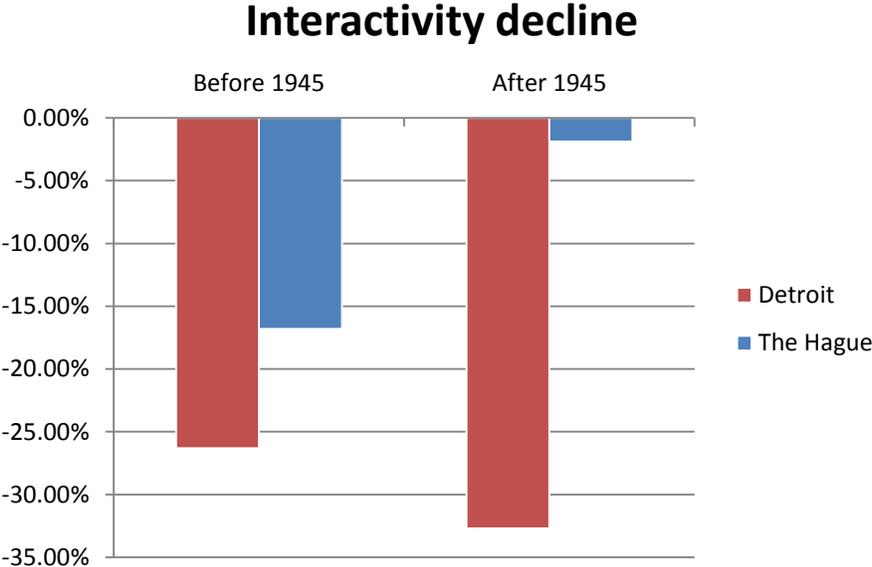
DETROIT	Interactivity	Percentage of business frontage
<b>Construction</b>	The interactivity between buildings and public space has declined <b>27.6% more than average</b> in street segments that underwent urban renewal.	The percentage of business frontage has declined <b>9.3% more than average</b> in street segments that underwent urban renewal.
<b>Stabilization</b>	The interactivity between buildings and public space has declined <b>10.6% more than average</b> in street segments that underwent urban renewal until the present.	The percentage of business frontage has declined <b>26.3% more than average</b> in street segments that underwent urban renewal until the present.

**Table 6. Urban renewal outcomes for Detroit.**

The numbers for Detroit are significantly worse than The Hague, demonstrating that urban renewal projects oftentimes proved devastating to the relationship between buildings and public space. This corroborates the history of Detroit’s renewal projects as often focused on infrastructural improvements and large scale housing and office construction at the cost of the close interrelationship between buildings, businesses and the street, as also demonstrated by the numbers in section 4.1.

Similar to The Hague, urban renewal areas in Detroit did not significantly stabilize the areas within them. Their median frontage interactivity loss kept pace with the average loss of interactivity in the downtown but the median decline of business frontages was much faster than average. Like in The Hague, Detroit’s history of urban renewal demonstrate that projects were specifically geared to weed out mostly peripheral business, often in an effort to prevent perceived incompatible land uses from mixing. After urban renewal areas were completed, the departure of businesses was further encouraged. A caveat to this might be that in both cities, businesses in urban renewal areas were often located in the periphery, an area that is more sensitive to business decline in general.

Another perspective on measuring the role of urban renewal on the relationship between buildings and public space is that of time of construction. Most literature on urban renewal focuses on criticism of postwar efforts to ‘modernize’ urban cores. However, many urban renewal projects in The Hague and Detroit were initiated in the prewar era to accommodate increased car traffic, growing businesses and civic buildings. Oftentimes, these projects had a closer focus on the interaction between buildings and public space and the importance of street level businesses. Did this focus benefit the relation between buildings and public space? The change in frontage interactivity and percentage of business frontage before and after the construction of prewar and postwar urban renewal is compared to the average decline during these eras and illustrated in figure 211 and 212.<sup>990</sup>

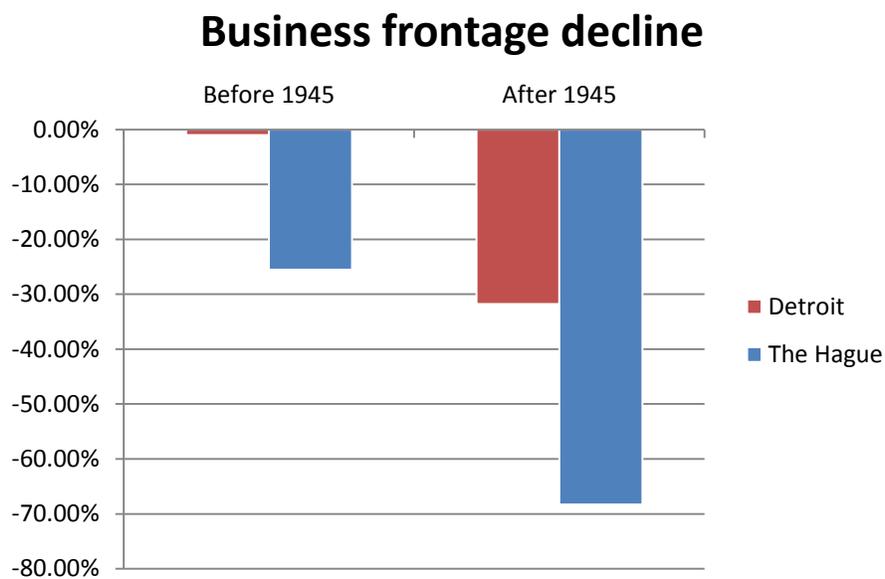


**Figure 219. Increased decline in frontage interactivity in urban renewal areas constructed before and after World War 2.**

Figure 38 reveals the interesting phenomenon that prewar urban renewal projects in The Hague were actually more harmful to the interactivity of frontages than postwar projects. This can be explained by the fact that many of these early projects were constructed in

<sup>990</sup> The calculations for these values are the same as under the previous section, but have been filtered to cut off at 1945. Therefore, in The Hague prewar urban renewal projects only count 1911 and 1937, postwar urban renewal projects count 1961 and 1988 (2011 is not counted as before and after effects are unknown). In Detroit, prewar urban renewal projects count 1911, 1921, 1929, 1937 and postwar projects count 1951, 1961, 1977, 1988 and 2001.

relatively active urban areas, replacing a multitude of small shops with a smaller number of larger and less interactive land uses. Furthermore, many of these projects lay vacant for decades as the Depression and World War 2 considerably obstructed new construction. In Detroit, prewar and postwar urban renewal projects have both been very harmful to the interaction between buildings and public space, but the relationship even deteriorated in postwar projects.



**Figure 220. Increased decline in percentage of business frontage in urban renewal areas constructed before and after World War 2.**

The business frontage decline in The Hague and Detroit shows that prewar urban renewal projects were less harmful to street level businesses than postwar urban renewal projects compared to the average decline. Postwar urban renewal projects in both cities caused a significant decline in street level businesses, which can be attributed to modernist design paradigms aiming to curb mixed use development. The smaller differences between urban renewal decline and average decline in Detroit can be attributed to the fact that business was declining rapidly in the entire urban core during both periods.

## 6.8.2 Urban renewal and border vacuums

*“... by oversimplifying the use of the city at one place, on a large scale, they tend to simplify the use which people give to adjoining territory too, and this simplification of use (...) feeds on itself.”<sup>991</sup>*

Urban observer Jane Jacobs vividly describes the detrimental effects of urban renewal areas not only to the people within them but to their neighboring areas. Large projects tend to isolate their contexts by forming borders, which create a vacuum of activity. Described as creating a misbalance between public space and buildings in cities, the often large single land uses of urban renewal areas tend to take surrounding diversity in their wake of homogenization.

To measure which areas are affected by urban renewal projects, a one-block wide buffer is drawn around all urban renewal areas, in which all street segments are marked as ‘urban renewal border zone’. The change in interactivity value and number of businesses are measured in these border zone street segments from the moment they led to an urban renewal project until the present or until these segments become urban renewal areas themselves.<sup>992</sup> The latter takes place quite often as urban renewal areas expand to surrounding streets, either through planned phasing or because border zones decline to such an extent they warrant public intervention. Figure 221 demonstrates how border vacuum street segments are chosen.

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<sup>991</sup> Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.

<sup>992</sup> The calculation for this is similar in structure to the previous section for stabilization:

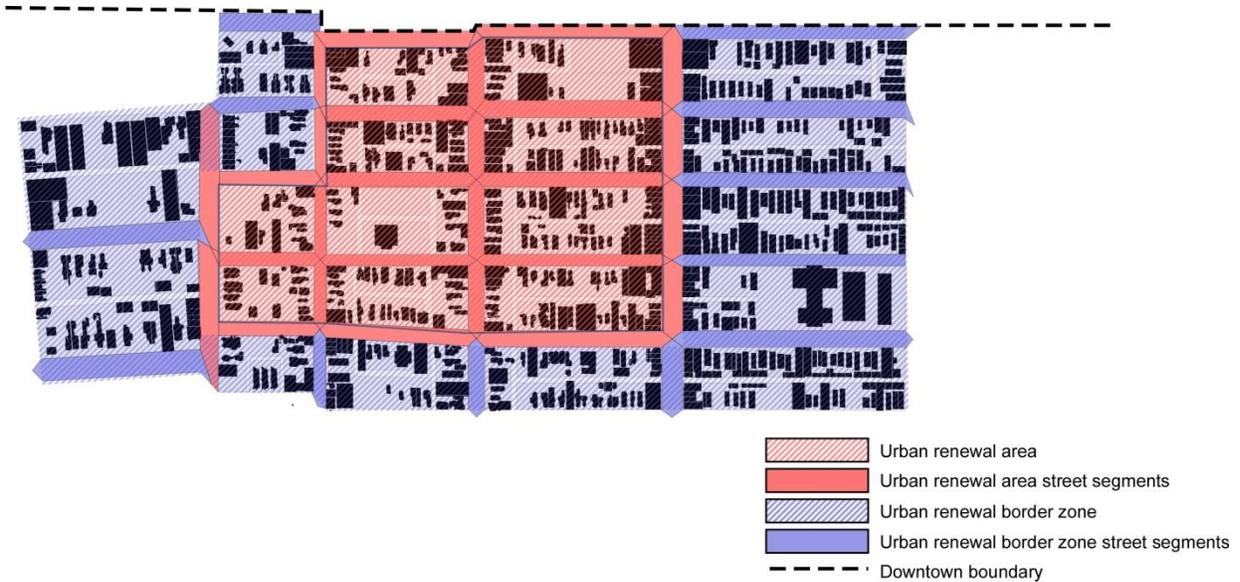
Increased decline of interactivity value in URzone:

$$\frac{\frac{\text{interactivity value before becoming URzone (segment in URzone)}}{\text{interactivity value in 2011 or when segment becomes part of urban renewal project (segment in URzone)}} - \frac{\text{interactivity value before becoming URzone (average all segments)}}{\text{interactivity value in 2011 when segment becomes part of urban renewal project (average all segments)}}}{\text{interactivity value in 2011 when segment becomes part of urban renewal project (average all segments)}}$$

Increased decline of business frontage in URzone:

$$\frac{\frac{\% \text{ of business frontage before becoming URzone (segment in URzone)}}{\% \text{ of business frontage in 2011 or when segment becomes part of urban renewal project (segment in URzone)}} - \frac{\% \text{ of business frontage before becoming URzone (average all segments)}}{\% \text{ of business frontage in 2011 when segment becomes part of urban renewal project (average all segments)}}}{\% \text{ of business frontage in 2011 when segment becomes part of urban renewal project (average all segments)}}$$

The median of all values are taken to filter large outliers. Values that have been bottomed out to 0 are not taken into account.



**Figure 221. Urban renewal area and border zones with affected street segments are marked. Example from Brewster-Douglas housing project in Detroit. The study area boundary lies right north of the diagram. Map not to scale.**

In the measurements, two distinctions were made. Firstly, the border vacuum effects of prewar and postwar urban renewal projects were calculated separately. Jacobs' sharp criticism of large, single use projects mainly pertains to postwar clearance and renewal projects that often focused on housing, infrastructure or commercial development. Prewar urban renewal projects were often smaller in scale and mixed uses, as well as ensuring good connections with the surrounding urban fabric. The difference in effects between these two eras can be measured.

Secondly, the shock effect of urban renewal construction is taken into consideration. The chance exists that many areas that border urban renewal projects suffered from their prolonged construction, temporary street closures and other construction-related negative effects. Therefore, a separate category is created that only measures border area decline after the urban renewal projects they are adjacent to are finished.

<b>THE HAGUE</b>	<b>Interactivity value decline above average</b>	Percentage of segments that declined above average	<b>Percentage of business frontage decline above average</b>	Percentage of segments that declined above average
Urban renewal border zone decline worse than average, including construction	<b>-7%</b>	64%	<b>-35%</b>	72%
before 1945	-9%	70%	-21%	81%
after 1945	-6%	58%	-35%	65%
Urban renewal border zone decline worse than average, excluding construction	<b>-1%</b>	53%	<b>-4%</b>	56%
before 1945	-1%	54%	-5%	59%
after 1945	-2%	56%	-5%	52%

**Table 7. Urban renewal zone calculations for The Hague.**

The calculations mostly corroborate Jacobs' thesis that the street segments that lead up to urban renewal areas experience an above average rate of decline. In The Hague the differences are relatively small, with the median interactivity between buildings and public space declining 7% more than average, and only 1% when excluding the urban renewal construction period.<sup>993</sup> Even though a majority of border zone street segments did experience worse than average decline, the numbers are insignificantly low. It can therefore be concluded that urban renewal projects in the city (both before and after World War 2) did not have adverse effects on the street level interactivity of their surroundings.

This conclusion is very different when looking at the percentage of business frontage on border street segments, as these decline far worse than average at 35%.<sup>994</sup> A large majority of 72% of street segments in border zones experience a worse than average decline in business. Most of the damage seems to be inflicted by postwar urban renewal projects, as many of these focused on business 'sanitation' in the inner city periphery. However, when

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<sup>993</sup> n=66

<sup>994</sup> n=64

controlling for the shock of the actual urban renewal construction, numbers are far less significant. It seems that for both interactivity and business frontage, the construction of urban renewal projects seems to have a more adverse effect than their actual existence.

<b>DETROIT</b>	<b>Interactivity value decline above average</b>	Percentage of segments that declined above average	<b>Percentage of business frontage decline above average</b>	Percentage of segments that declined above average
Urban renewal border zone decline worse than average, including construction	<b>-11%</b>	56%	<b>-21%</b>	75%
before 1945	-9%	55%	-20%	74%
after 1945	-28%	58%	-27%	77%
Urban renewal border zone decline worse than average, excluding construction	<b>-11%</b>	57%	<b>-23%</b>	72%
before 1945	-9%	58%	-23%	71%
after 1945	-23%	56%	-40%	76%

**Table 8. Urban renewal zone calculations for Detroit.**

In Detroit the numbers are more significant, with the median interactivity between buildings and public space declining 11% more than average, with by far most damage inflicted during postwar urban renewal projects.<sup>995</sup> The construction shock experienced in The Hague seems to matter less in Detroit. A small majority of street segments in urban renewal border zones decline faster than average.

The numbers are even stronger when looking at the percentage of business frontage in border zones, declining 21% more than average, again mostly inflicted by postwar urban renewal projects.<sup>996</sup> When taking construction out of the equation, decline went even faster. Ironically, this signals that finished urban renewal projects were worse neighbors than an active construction yard.

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<sup>995</sup> n=223

<sup>996</sup> n=154

The previous section found that urban renewal projects were hardly able to stem the declining relation between buildings and public space downtown within their perimeters. This section concludes that these projects are actually a detriment to their direct surroundings, especially when constructed after World War 2. In other words, Jane Jacobs was right.

## 6.9 DIVERSITY

*“Here is a process, then, that operates for a time as a healthy and salutary function, but by failing to modify itself at a critical point becomes a malfunction. The analogy that comes to mind is faulty feedback”<sup>997</sup>*

The previous section has demonstrated the spatial effects of an economic optimization process in which types of frontages have distributed themselves along lines of proximity and connectivity over the past century. Some streets are clearly gaining interactivity and retail business while others are losing out. Inevitably, this optimization may encourage clustering of similar frontage types in certain areas of the downtown and as a result adversely affect the diversity of frontages on streets. Some streets in central locations have turned into monofunctional retail corridors while others in the periphery have withered into parking ramps, office parks or residential estates. When zooming in on retailers, some streets are now only lined by (chain) fashion shops, while others only supply daily goods to nearby residents. This marks a dangerous decline in downtown diversity, which according to many scholars constitutes the very root of urbanism. Has frontage type and retail diversity measurably declined in the urban core of Detroit and The Hague and has it declined more in some parts of the urban core than in others?

The Simpson Index has been deployed to measure diversity for frontage type and retail categories. This index is rooted in biology to measure the under- or overrepresentation of certain species in ecosystems.<sup>998</sup> In the case of this research, the ‘species’ are the different frontage types that have been noted in the frontage database for The Hague and Detroit, as well as the categorization of retail into Run, Fun and Destination shops and Bars and Restaurants. The index runs from 0 to 100; the higher the index the more diverse a sample

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<sup>997</sup> On the self-destruction of diversity: Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 251.

<sup>998</sup> The Simpson Index is calculated as follows:

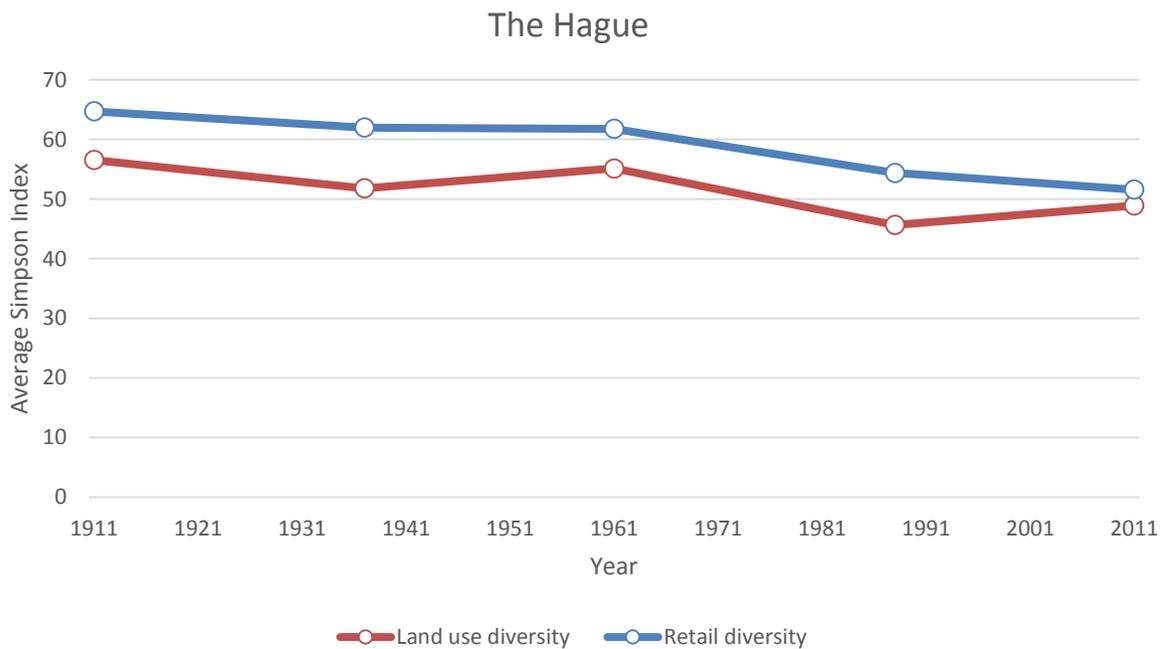
$$Diversity = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^R n_i(n_i - 1)}{N(N - 1)}$$

Where  $n_i$  is the number of frontages of type  $i$  and  $N$  is the total number of frontages in the sample, with  $R$  number of types.

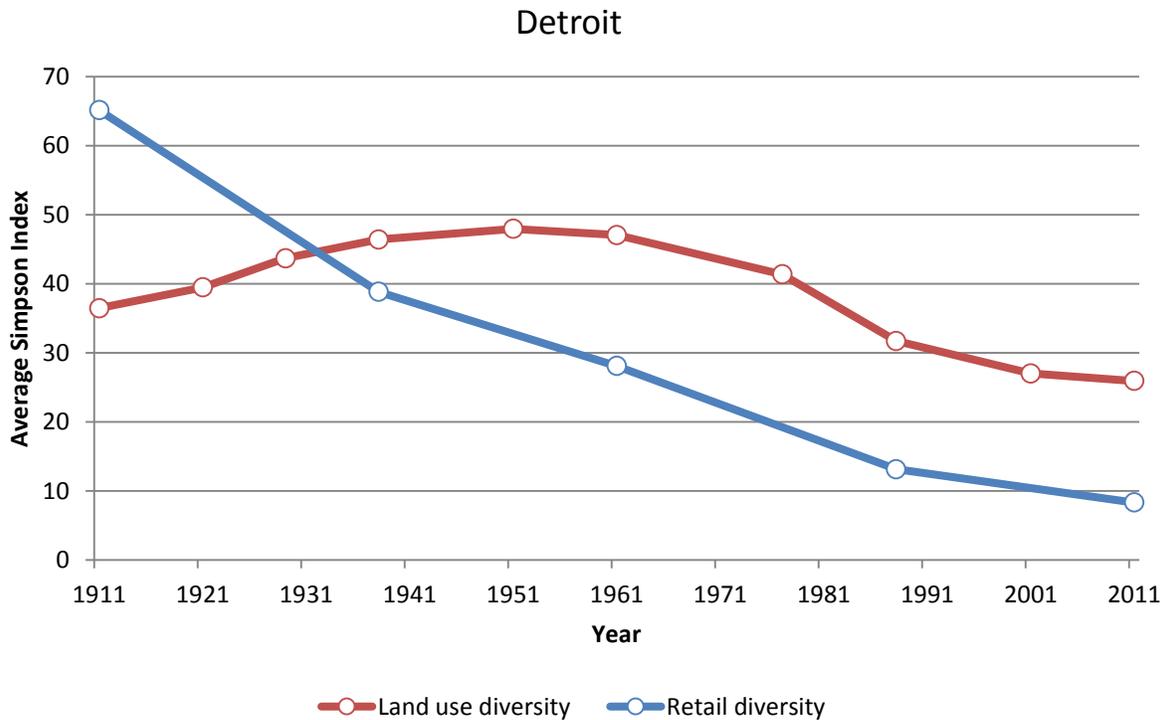
is. The lower the index, the more dominant one type of frontage or retailer is, and the less diverse a sample is.

In initial pilot tests the Simpson index was calculated for all frontages on a certain street segment. However, the outcome of the index is highly influenced by the sample size of the dataset it analyzes, causing significant bias among streets that contain different amounts of frontages. Shorter side street segments in The Hague and Detroit would receive lower diversity values as a result. To remedy this bias, a 50 meter box has been drawn in x-y directions around each frontage during each time interval, and the number of different frontages surrounding it has been counted for each category. For example, a frontage on Abbott Street in Detroit is surrounded by 10 dwellings, 5 offices, 3 shops, 2 wholesalers and 1 manufacturer within 50 meters. When looking at retail diversity, 2 of 3 shops sell daily Run goods and one is a destination shop. The Simpson index is 56 for frontage types and 67 for retail, indicating a lower diversity of frontage types but a higher diversity of retailers.

The average diversity for all frontage types and only retail types during all time intervals are shown in the graphs below:



**Figure 222. Land use and retail diversity indices for The Hague.**



**Figure 223. Land use and retail diversity indices for Detroit.**

It is clearly visible that diversity has indeed decline in both The Hague and Detroit, both when comparing all frontage types and only retail types. Average retail type diversity started from an index of about 65 in both cities, but has declined to just over 50 in The Hague and less than 10 in Detroit. This indicates that establishments have ‘sorted’ themselves into clusters of Run, Fun and Destination stores and Bars and Restaurants. Inspection of the frontage type maps indicates that especially Fun stores have clustered around the most centrally located and well-connected streets of The Hague (and Detroit until the 1950s), as they are often able to pay the highest rents for buildings.

Average diversity of all frontage types demonstrates a different process in motion: while in The Hague diversity has slowly decreased due to the clustering of land uses, in Detroit a curve is visible. This indicates that diversity was actually on the rise as the small downtown

of the city was growing into a diverse conglomeration of shops, offices, cultural venues and civic buildings. The growth in diversity peaked in 1951 when parking lots and urban renewal projects made significant inroads in the downtown, resulting in an accelerated decline of diversity in the years that followed as these land uses ultimately usurped the urban core. Interestingly, economic optimization was taking place in Detroit just as much as in The Hague, but one was racing to the bottom while the other was homogenized by its success. Jacobs maligned 'self-destruction of diversity' is therefore not only accountable to economic success but to failure as well, leaving diversity in a very ephemeral state between the two polar opposites.

It is interesting to delve deeper into the decline of diversity as a result of overall economic success or failure. Can a more detailed pattern be discovered if one zooms in further to areas within the urban core? To answer the question whether diversity has decreased *more in the center versus the periphery of downtown*, the average diversity has been calculated for each percentile of distance from the center of activity. Like in the previous section, ten buckets of 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90 and 100% percentiles have been created to allow for similar sample sizes. The diversity of all frontage types is illustrated in the graphs below:

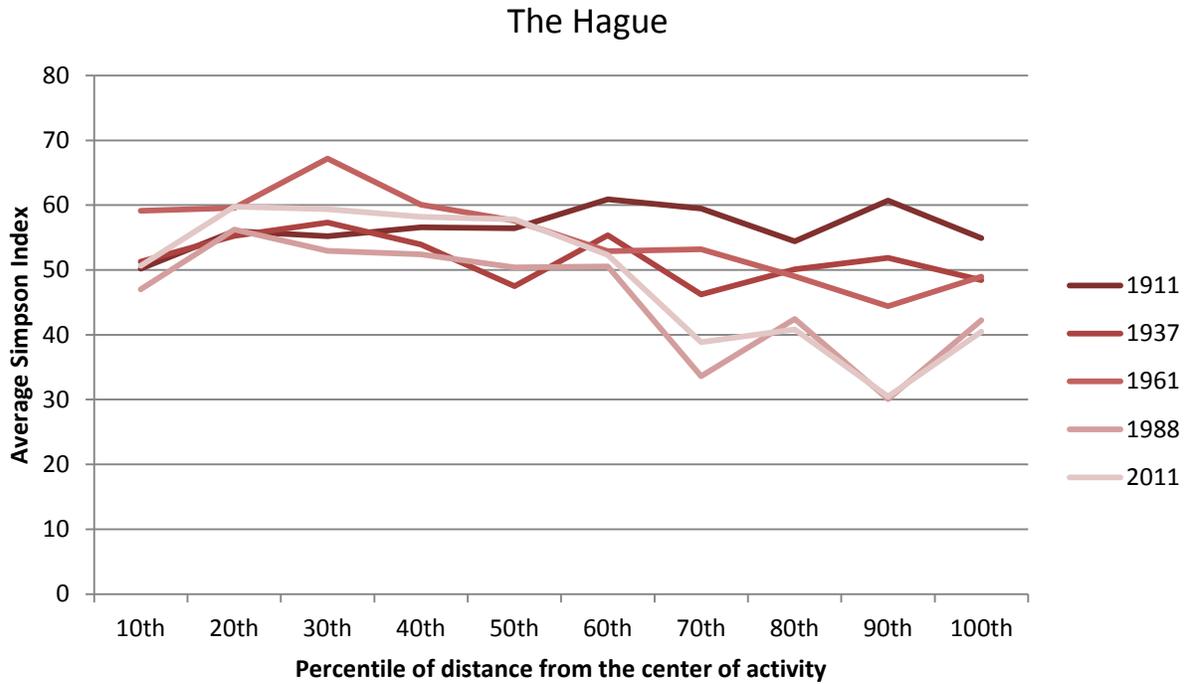


Figure 224. Land use diversity as a function of distance from the center of activity in The Hague.

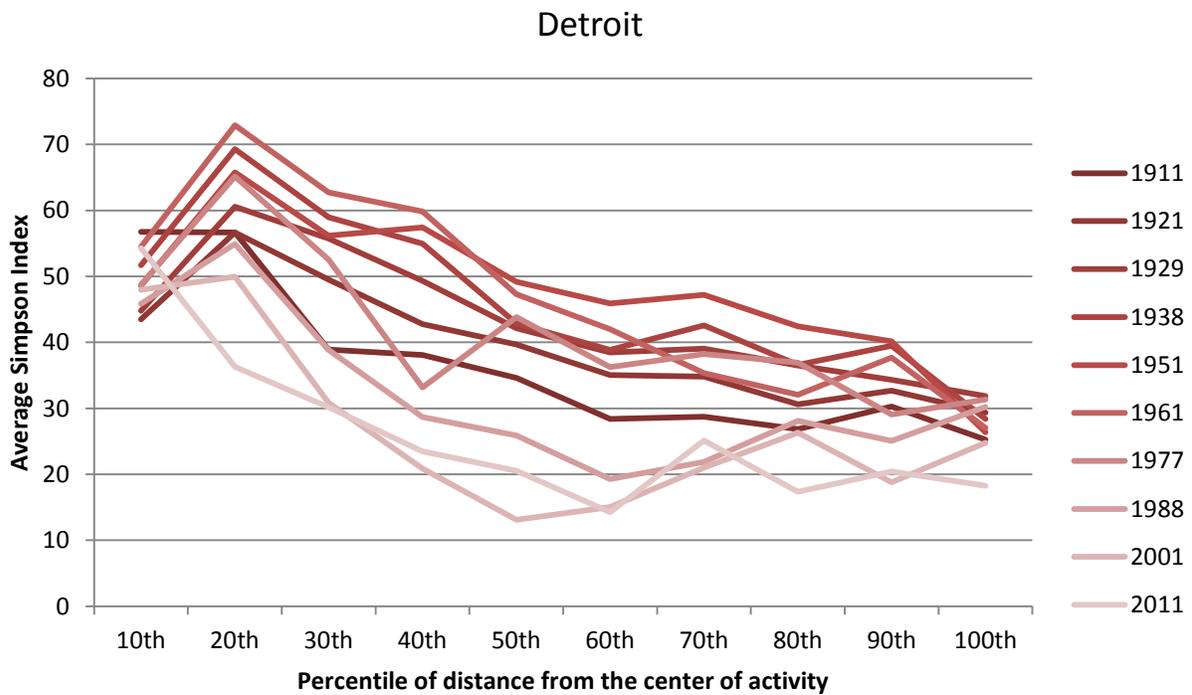


Figure 225. Land use diversity as a function of distance from the center of activity in Detroit.

The graphs demonstrate that diversity is lowest in both the very center and the very periphery of the urban core. In Detroit this pattern deteriorated from the 1950s onwards, but in The Hague it solidified. This makes sense when looking at the frontage maps: the most centrally located streets in the downtown form a homogenous mass of retail stores, and the periphery of the downtown contains fairly monofunctional residential districts. It is the 'zone in transition' where diversity blossoms. In both cities, the 20<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> percentiles have the highest diversity as their spot in the shadow of Main Street allows for a mixture of retail spillover from the center of activity with residences, wholesalers, small offices and manufacturers. Furthermore, in both cities these percentile have remained the most stably diverse. These are the kind of areas Jacobs would describe as having a "... diversity, intricately mingled in mutual support."<sup>999</sup> In The Hague these streets are located in the cherished Hofkwartier and Chinatown, areas that give the inner city a distinct identity. Bars, shops and residences intermingle in these districts. In Detroit diversity could be found in the side streets of Greektown, Capitol Park and Lower Woodward Avenue, where shops, wholesalers and manufacturers met. With the exception of Greektown, these districts have unfortunately been all but eliminated from the 1960s onward.

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<sup>999</sup> Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 241.

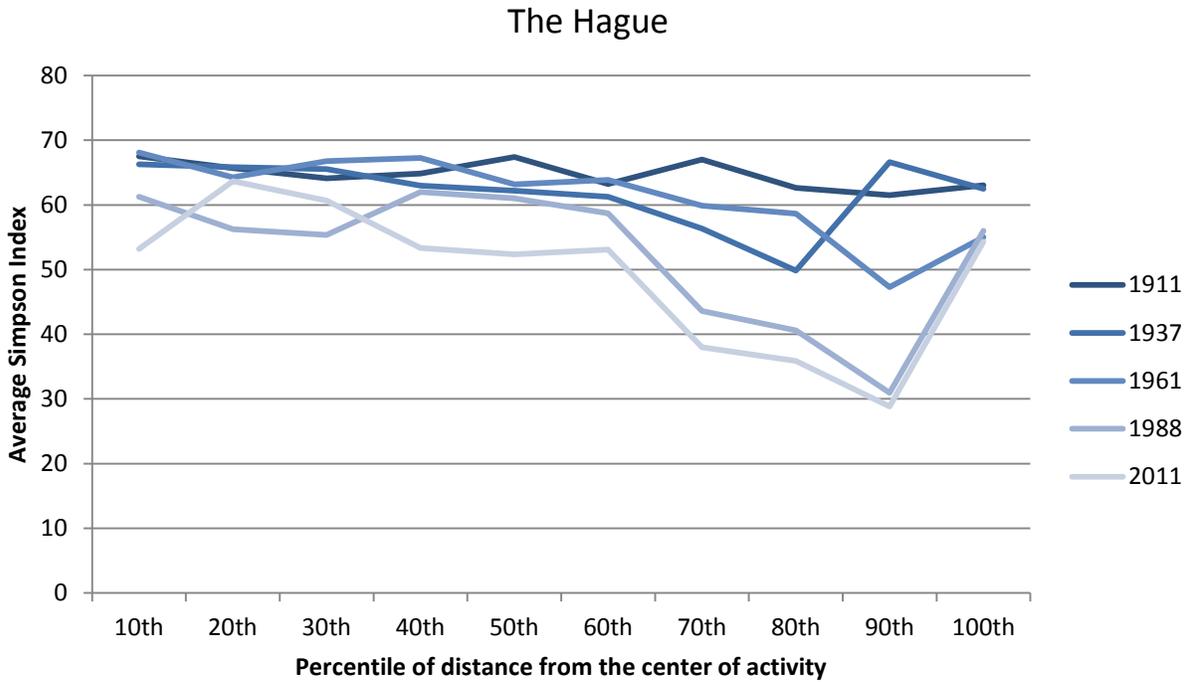


Figure 226. Retail diversity as a function of distance from the center of activity in The Hague.

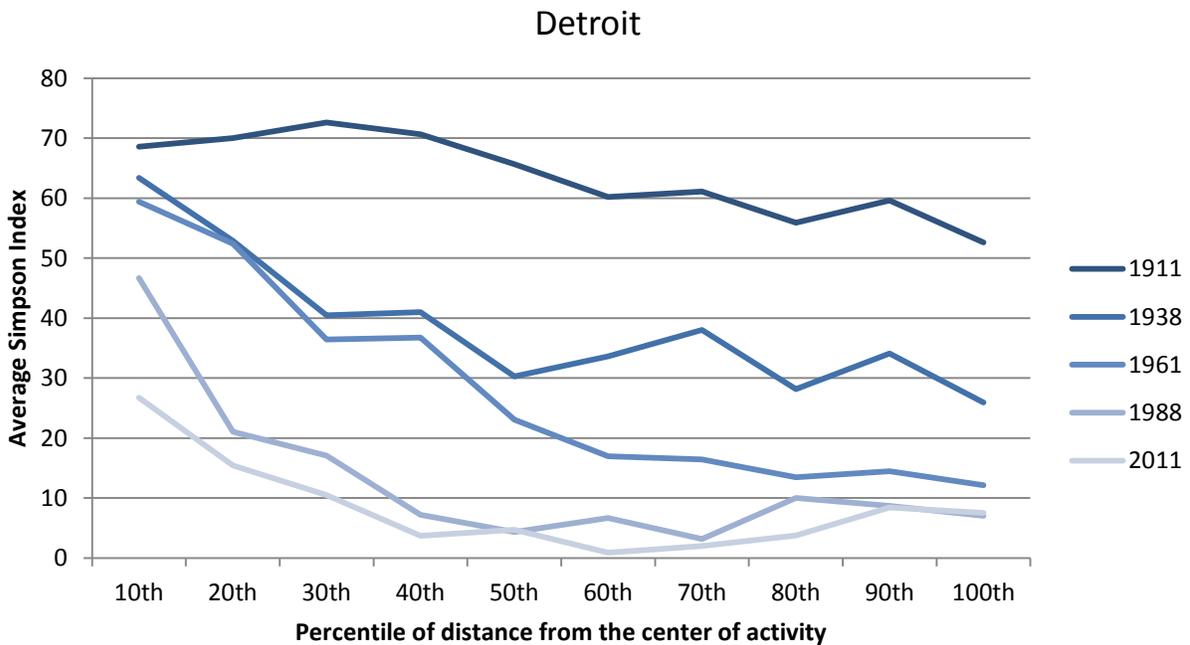
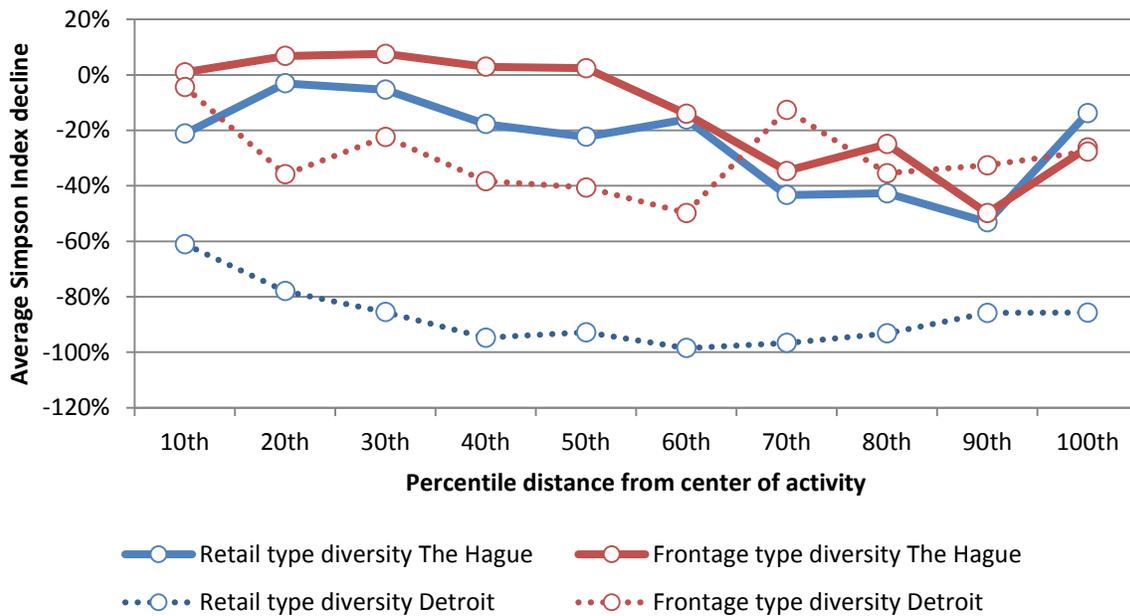


Figure 227. Retail diversity as a function of distance from the center of activity in Detroit.

The different levels of diversity as a function of the distance from the center of activity becomes even more apparent when only looking at internal retail diversity, as outlined in the figure above. The further away from the center of activity, the less diverse the retail stock. This is an interesting given since main retail streets are often accused of not being diverse enough. However, the criticism is often aimed at chain retailers, whose ownership pattern has not been surveyed for this research. Overall, peripheral retail has decline in diversity at the greatest pace, as the colorful mix of Run, Fun and Destination shops have mostly died off in lieu of a much smaller number of neighborhood-serving Run shops. In The Hague, retail diversity in the very core at the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile has markedly declined in 2011 due to high-yielding fashion retailers taking over most of the main retail streets, and in Detroit retail diversity declined sharply after 1961 with the wholesale departure of retailers.

The following graph sums up the average decline of frontage type and retail type diversity in both cities. In The Hague diversity decline clearly took place in the very core and the periphery of the inner city, while in Detroit diversity declined in a fairly homogeneous pattern.



**Figure 228. Retail and land use diversity decline in The Hague and Detroit as a function of the distance from the center of activity.**

To conclude, the research has demonstrated that frontage type and retail type diversity has declined significantly over the past century. In a sense, Jane Jacobs had a correct observation: economic optimization leads to the homogenization of streets and districts, destroying their diversity they had so carefully built up. What she couldn't fathom in the early 1960s is that this process wasn't just fueled by economic success: the failure of downtown Detroit resulted in a marked decline in its diversity toward monofunctional office districts, infrastructure and parking lots but the failure of The Hague's inner city periphery to keep its retail has turned it into a relatively monofunctional residential district. It is the district between the overly successful core of the inner city and its sleepy periphery that is most renowned for its diversity of land uses and retail types, but the balance is fragile indeed.

## **6.10 CONCLUSION**

The relationship between buildings and public space has significantly deteriorated in The Hague as well as Detroit over the past century. Building frontages that interact with public space have declined and land uses that interact less or not at all with public space have often taken their place. In both cities, the presence of street level retail has diminished significantly, and blank walls, parking garages and parking lots have been on the rise. Furthermore, the width of frontages has increased significantly, especially through the construction of newer, larger buildings in the urban core. While these processes have eroded the urban core of both cities, their outcomes can be seen much more pronouncedly in Detroit than in The Hague. In Detroit, even during the city's most rapid period of growth frontage interactivity was already on the decline, and the downfall of downtown has only accelerated this pattern. In The Hague, recent renewal efforts have actually improved the average interactivity between buildings and public space. Certain patterns have been recognized in this chapter, which will be outlined below.

### **Optimization**

When looking at the location of frontage erosion in both cities, a clear pattern of economic optimization becomes visible. As interactive frontages and street level businesses decline in overall number, they decline the fastest in areas that are far removed from the center of activity in the urban core, and on streets that are poorly connected to their surroundings and the city as a whole. Instead, they cluster along the most centrally located and well-connected streets of the city, strengthening a pattern of a highly active core of blocks surrounded by increasingly deactivated streets. The division between interactivity and business 'winner and loser' street segments increases as a result. In Detroit from the 1980s onwards, this pattern has collapsed as the entire downtown became vacant.

### **Homogenization**

The same forces that cluster certain frontage types on the most central and well-connected streets also tend to homogenize these streets and their hinterland. Land uses will filter out along lines of connectivity and centrality, leaving certain districts as only residential while

others are only commercial or industrial, or used for parking. Zoning has served to amplify this process in both cities. The same process occurs when focusing in on retail business types. Comparison shops that benefit from high numbers of passersby have the means to locate in the city's most central and well-connected streets, pushing out destination and daily goods retailers to peripheral locations. Main streets therefore become the sole territory for fun-shoppers, often only served by chain outlets.

### **Acceleration and contagion**

Several reinforcing loops are taking place, accelerating the pace of frontage decline at the level of the street segment. Once a street begins to decline with regard to frontage interactivity or the number of businesses, this trend tends to accelerate until it bottoms out at a fraction of the original value. Decline is contagious: vacant buildings, vacant lots and closed shops have the tendency to influence their context to follow suit. Early signs of decline can therefore serve as canaries in a coalmine: if a street is losing active uses, act fast or face decimation.

### **Critical mass**

Retail shops are highly sensitive to a critical mass of surrounding shops to remain viable. A sufficient cluster of shops will attract enough footfall to become a destination, and conversely the loss of tenants will put others in peril. This axiom holds especially true with regard to non-daily comparison goods stores, that rely on enticing passersby to view their merchandise and make a purchase, often serendipitously. Without a cluster of businesses, comparison is not possible, and solitary stores have to rely on destination trips. Daily goods stores and destination stores also benefit from a critical mass of surrounding similar businesses, albeit to a smaller extent. This pattern is remarkably similar between Detroit and The Hague.

### **Urban renewal**

Large scale urban renewal projects have significantly altered the experience of the city at eye level. While often initiated to stabilize or improve the vitality of parts of the urban core, they have mostly not been able to accomplish either goal at eye level. Urban renewal areas usually replace existing street frontages with less interactive ones, especially removing

street-level businesses. After completion the decline in frontage interactivity and percentage of frontage that is taken by businesses does not decline significantly less than average. Furthermore, they create 'border vacuums' of frontage interactivity and business decline around their perimeter, dragging their direct neighbors along. The negative effects of urban renewal are more strongly felt in Detroit than in The Hague.

## CHAPTER 7.

# ON THE GROUND – TWO BLOCK ENSEMBLES IN DETROIT AND THE HAGUE

While the previous chapters have demonstrated the transformation of the relationship between buildings and public space at the level of the urban core as a whole, the rather abstract study and description of this changing relationship is hardly tangible for the end user – the downtown pedestrian. Furthermore, the *architectural* implications of the patterns and forces behind this transformation are hitherto unknown. Explaining how the changing relationship between buildings and public space has subsequently transformed the *experience* of the urban core and its street level architecture will require delving deeper into the transformation of singular buildings and blocks. Yet this is an impossible task to achieve for the thousands of buildings and hundreds of blocks in each case study. Therefore, two block ensembles have been selected in each case study that represent the most important transformation forces and patterns found in the previous chapters. Also, they contain significant cross-cultural similarities.

In The Hague and Detroit, one central block ensemble has been selected that demonstrates a continuous but gradual transformation through progressively larger scale new construction, replacing smaller buildings and land uses in its wake. Ultimately, a small number of large businesses (The Hague) or a single business (Detroit) has usurped the entire block ensemble, drastically transforming its architecture and subsequent ground floor relationship to public space.<sup>1000</sup> In both cases, the block consolidation has led to a decrease in frontage diversity and a growing disparity between streets with highly

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<sup>1000</sup> The dominant business is in both cases a large department store, whose rise and fall can be traced throughout the century-long observation of the block.

interactive and inactive frontages, as found in previous chapters. The second representative block ensemble in both cities demonstrates a cataclysmic and complete transformation of a range of smaller buildings with different functions into one large complex that houses only few buildings and functions. In both cases this transformation has occurred in the postwar era, with significant use public funding and power, and in both cases it has resulted in a vastly decreased interaction between buildings and public space.

In total, these four block ensembles aim to illustrate the forces and patterns which have been found in the previous chapters in a more tangible manner. At the scale of the building and the block, the consolidation, homogenization and selective deactivation will become more visible as the end results of larger overarching forces and trends, combined with the local agency which is the aggregate of micro-scale decisions of tenants, designers and public officials. A Nolli diagram has been used to illustrate this transformation to its fullest extent, showing interior and exterior spaces that occupy the ground floor in one plan. The diagrams have been drawn at transformative points in the lifetime of the block. For the gradually transformed blocks, intervals are chosen around 1911, 1937, 1961, 1988 and 2011 with a slight time margin due to recent significant building activity.<sup>1001</sup> For the cataclysmically transformed blocks, the situation before and after the change has been illustrated. The diagrams focus on the frontage of buildings, its transparency and the number and type of entrances it contains. Entrance types are categorized as retail (including bars and restaurants and cultural venues), residential, office or service entrances (garages, warehouses, wholesalers or rear entrances for other buildings). For larger buildings and buildings that contain significant interior public spaces the interior layout is also drawn.

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<sup>1001</sup> For example, when a building is under construction in 1961 to be completed a year later, the stable 1962 situation is illustrated instead of the ephemeral construction phase.

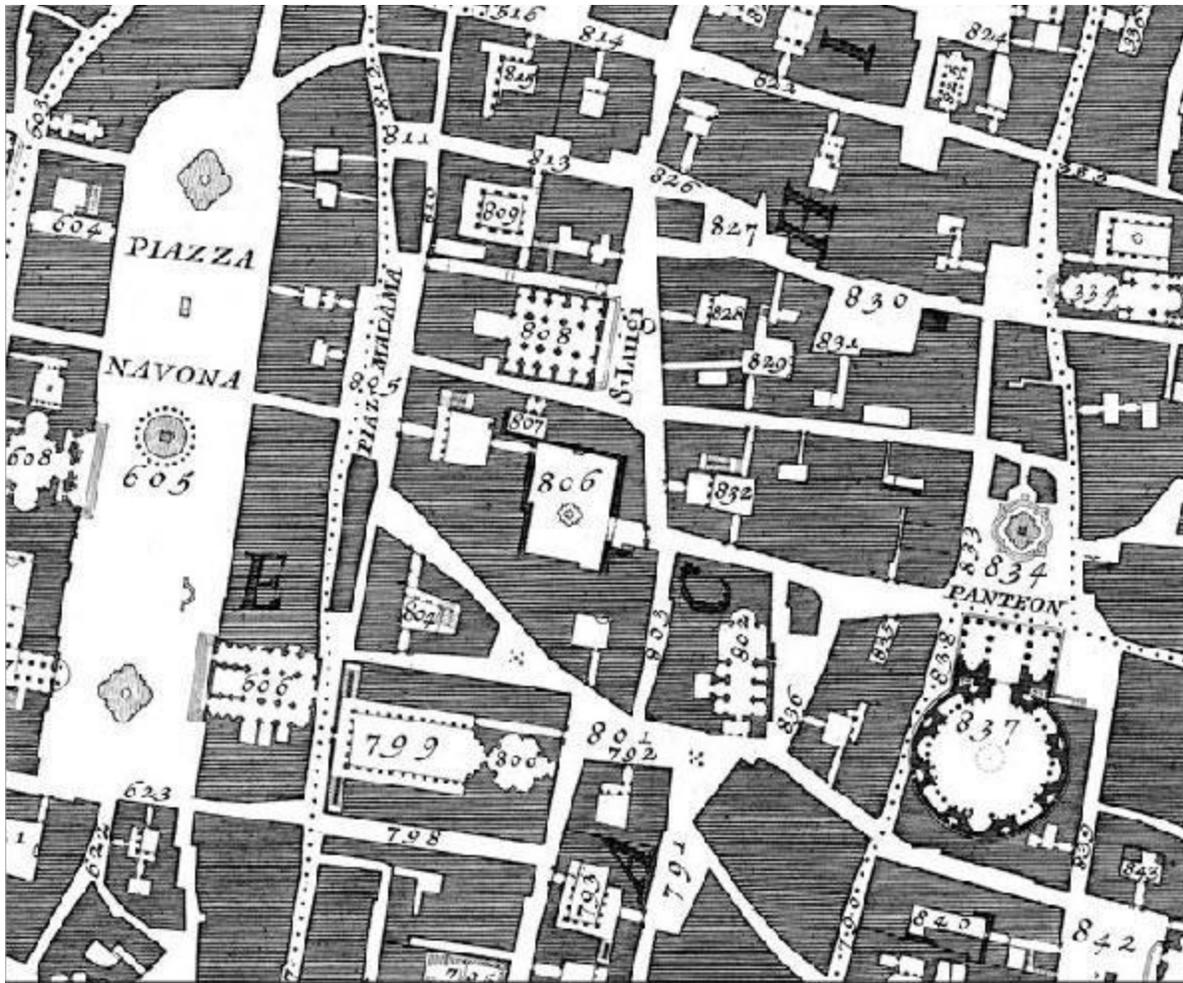


Figure 229. Image of original plan of Rome by Giovanni Battista Nolli in 1748 with church interiors drawn as public (white) spaces.

The base data for the diagrams is derived from archival research, basing as much information as possible on original building plans.<sup>1002</sup> If these were unavailable, photographic material has been gathered to infer the exterior frontage form, entrance

<sup>1002</sup> In The Hague, these plans have been acquired from the following archives: Bouwpolitie en Bouw- en Woningtoezicht, Hinderwet, plattegronden van gebouwen die voor 1906 zijn gebouwd, plattegronden van gebouwen die voor 1989 uit het woningbestand zijn onttrokken, plattegronden van gebouwen die voor 1989 zijn gesloopt. Also, the archives of architects Van Dorsser at the Dutch Institute of Architecture have been consulted, as well as the company archives of architects Kraaijvanger and the Multi Corporation. Some building plans have been derived from newspaper articles and advertisement materials. In Detroit, original building plans were not available.

pattern and likely interior layout of buildings.<sup>1003</sup> This material has been combined with the previously gathered data on the ground floor land use of buildings to determine the type of entrance. As both plans and images were often missing for Detroit, Sanborn Fire Insurance maps have been used to derive the location of entrances and internal stairways and elevators for larger buildings. Through data comparison and combination, a relatively accurate representation of the blocks has been created.<sup>1004</sup>

The Nolli plans and frontage and entrance patterns are synthesized into a conclusion which observes patterns of frontage transparency and entrance pattern transformation, combined with the underlying forces of micro-scale decisions that have led to building consolidation and large scale public interventions.

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<sup>1003</sup> In The Hague, these photographs have been acquired from the Haagse Beeldbank, with various acquisitions from newspaper articles and advertisement materials. In Detroit, the photographs have been acquired from the Virtual Motor City image collection, the Burton Historical Collection, various publications, as well as newspaper articles and advertisement materials.

<sup>1004</sup> However, data sources have been incomplete and have sometimes been contradictory. In the case of the latter, photographs have been used as the lead reference as they represent the reality at the time of exposure, followed by business directories as they represent an annually updated resource, versus much less frequently updated mapping and potentially rejected building plans.

## **7.1 THE HAGUE CENTRAL BLOCK ENSEMBLE – ACHTEROM, SPUI, GEDEMPTE GRACHT, HAAGPOORT**

In the pulsating retail core of The Hague, one block ensemble has stood out for its remarkable transformation over the past century. Through its lifetime, the blocks within this ensemble have contained the city's first large department store as well as the nation's largest department store and one of its foremost movie theaters. The blocks have been chopped up by new boulevards to alleviate traffic, while other streets have been closed due to large scale construction. Almost every building within them has been replaced over the past century, leaving only the ensemble's perimeter street structure as a structural memory to its past. This is the block ensemble lined by the Spuistraat, the Spui, the Gedempte Gracht and the Haagpoort. Central to its story are the streets that run through the middle of the ensemble, the buzzing Spuistraat and Grote Marktstraat as existing and new retail corridors, and the completely overhauled Voldersgracht as the perpendicular service street.

Figure 230. The Hague's central blocks in 1911.



1911

- ▲ Retail/bar/restaurant/culture entrance
- ▲ Residential entrance
- ▲ Service/warehouse/garage entrance
- ▲ Office entrance



In 1911, the area was defined by contrast. The Spuistraat was considered the city's most popular retail street, lined by a wide variety of retailers. It lacked the grandeur of more upscale streets to the north of the city, instead catering to the tastes of the middle and lower class clientele that lived in the southern part of the city. Nevertheless, visiting the Spuistraat was considered an urban adventure, in which viewing merchandise had as central a role as other citizens, bathing in 'a sea of light and radiating reflecting windows.'<sup>1005</sup> With the industrialization of merchandise and the growing wealth of Dutch citizenry, shopping had become a form of leisure activity, as vividly described by urban chroniclers like Johan Gram in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1006</sup> With the onset of fixed prices and increased consumer demand, window shopping became a popular activity and shops in The Hague's retail core strived to maximize the size and impact of their displays. The popularization of plate glass and steel framing enabled shop retailers to increase their exposure to the outside world, aided by the onset of electric lighting.<sup>1007</sup>

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<sup>1005</sup> Botine Koopmans, *Haagse Winkelpuien : Een Inventarisatie in De Binnenstad*(Den Haag: Gemeente 's-Gravenhage, Afdeling Verkeer en Vervoer, Binnenstad en Monumenten, 1990), 8-9.

<sup>1006</sup> Gram, *'S-Gravenhage Voorheen En Thans*.

<sup>1007</sup> Koopmans, *Haagse Winkelpuien : Een Inventarisatie in De Binnenstad*, 18.



**Figure 231. Spuistraat seen towards the Spui around 1910. Note the large display windows on several buildings to the left of the image.<sup>1008</sup>**

The Spuistraat was also at the southern end of the city's first shopping arcade, the Passage, built in 1885. This arcade was specifically targeted at the growing urban bourgeoisie, which used its sheltered interior space to purchase goods as much as to affirm their status. The project connected the high-end northern retail district with the popular retailers on the Spuistraat with a tall, covered passageway lined by relatively small retail units with large plate glass windows. The complex also contained upper floor dwellings and offices, a hotel and a bar, with a cinema added at a later stage. Its esthetic coherence and lush decoration provided the Passage with a strong and upscale identity, setting it apart from the surrounding cacophony of medieval buildings in various shapes and sizes.<sup>1009</sup> Where

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<sup>1008</sup> Image from postcard by Trenkler Co., Leipzig. Courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.

<sup>1009</sup> Booi, *De Haagse Passage : Geschiedenis Van Een Nieuw Winkelfenomeen*; Coos Versteeg, *Passage 100 Jaar* (Den Haag: Vereniging Passage Belangen, 1985).

the Passage exited to the Spuistraat, the city's first large department store was constructed in 1906, the Grand Bazar de la Paix (1). Using steel-frame technology, a "hall of enormous dimensions, magically lit from all sides, both during the day and at night" was constructed in a matter of months. Almost 27,000 square feet of retail space clearly contrasted and competed with surrounding smaller businesses, but "progress has its demands."<sup>1010</sup> Indeed, the department store itself occupied eight properties, including a previous small department store.<sup>1011</sup> To the rear of the building, a service entrance led to the Voldersgracht and Haagpoort. Almost next door to the large Bazar was the growing branch of Vroom en Dreesmann, a chain department store from Amsterdam, which had already taken up several historical buildings on the street (2). Nearby, the Kattenburg company had combined two buildings into the start of a small department store of their own, the "Magazijn Nederland" (3). Retail consolidation was clearly taking place, but smaller retailers and dwellings were still present on the Spuistraat.



**Figure 232. Central Hall of the Grand Bazar de la Paix (left) and exterior (right), both around 1906, architects van Dam and van Dorsser.<sup>1012</sup>**

<sup>1010</sup> "Grand Bazar De La Paix," *Haagsche Courant*, July 16 1906.

<sup>1011</sup> This store, "Magazijn de Adelaar", had only been constructed a few decades prior. "Het Waarenhuis," *Haagsche Courant*, June 1 1906.

<sup>1012</sup> Images courtesy of NAI archives (left) and The Hague municipal archives (right).



Figure 233. Magazijn Nederland at the corner of the Spuistraat and Spui (left), and former Magazijn de Adelaar (right)<sup>1013</sup>

A large contrast was visible with surrounding streets such as the Achterom, Voldersgracht and Gedempte Gracht, which were streets with a much less cosmopolitan appearance. The former street ran along the long filled ring canal which surrounded the Inner and Outer Court government complex, and was lined with an eclectic mixture of small retailers, warehouses, wholesalers and craftsmen. Building conditions on the street were generally considered rather poor, with many buildings lacking basic plumbing and access to light and air, resulting in a range of health concerns.<sup>1014</sup> The latter streets were at the heart of The Hague's Jewish district. The Voldersgracht and Gedempte Gracht were lined by a large

<sup>1013</sup> Left image by S. de Vries (1913), right image by E. Weh (1900), both courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.

<sup>1014</sup>Vereeniging tot verbetering van den gezondheidstoestand te 's-Gravenhage, "Verslag Van De Vereeniging Tot Verbetering Van Den Gezondheidstoestand Te 'S-Gravenhage,"(The Hague: Gebr. Gianta d'Albani, 1876-1904).

number of small retailers, often with dwellings at the back of shops or accessed above. The street also contained a number of wholesalers and craftsmen, as well as a Jewish synagogue. The poorest residents of the street lived in a series of inner courtyards that could be accessed through gates, often in appalling conditions. These courtyards also housed a school complex as well as a range of workshops, providing education and jobs to the surrounding community.<sup>1015</sup> Sight, sounds and smells were abound in the district, full of “carts, orange peels, cabbages, steaming pots in the open air and all sorts of stands ... trade and more trade, negotiation and more negotiation.”<sup>1016</sup> Trade was not only conducted inside buildings but spilled over into various street markets and sales carts. The Spui to the east of the blocks was formerly the main canal that brought goods and passengers into the city, but had been filled in stages during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as rail travel had replaced water based transportation and hygienic concerns mounted. As a result, the Spui is in a clear state of transition in 1911, lined with a mixture of wholesalers, retailers, dwellings and the occasional office building. While building conditions on the canal itself were relatively good, numerous inner courtyards contained some of the city’s worst housing stock. This situation would drastically change over the next few decades, as The Hague leapt into an era of rapid growth and modernization.

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<sup>1015</sup> Creveld, *De Verdwenen Buurt : Drie Eeuwen Centrum Van Joods Den Haag*.

<sup>1016</sup> Johan Gram, *'S-Gravenhage in Onzen Tijd*(Amsterdam: J.L. Beijers, 1893).cited in Creveld, *De Verdwenen Buurt : Drie Eeuwen Centrum Van Joods Den Haag*, 156-58.

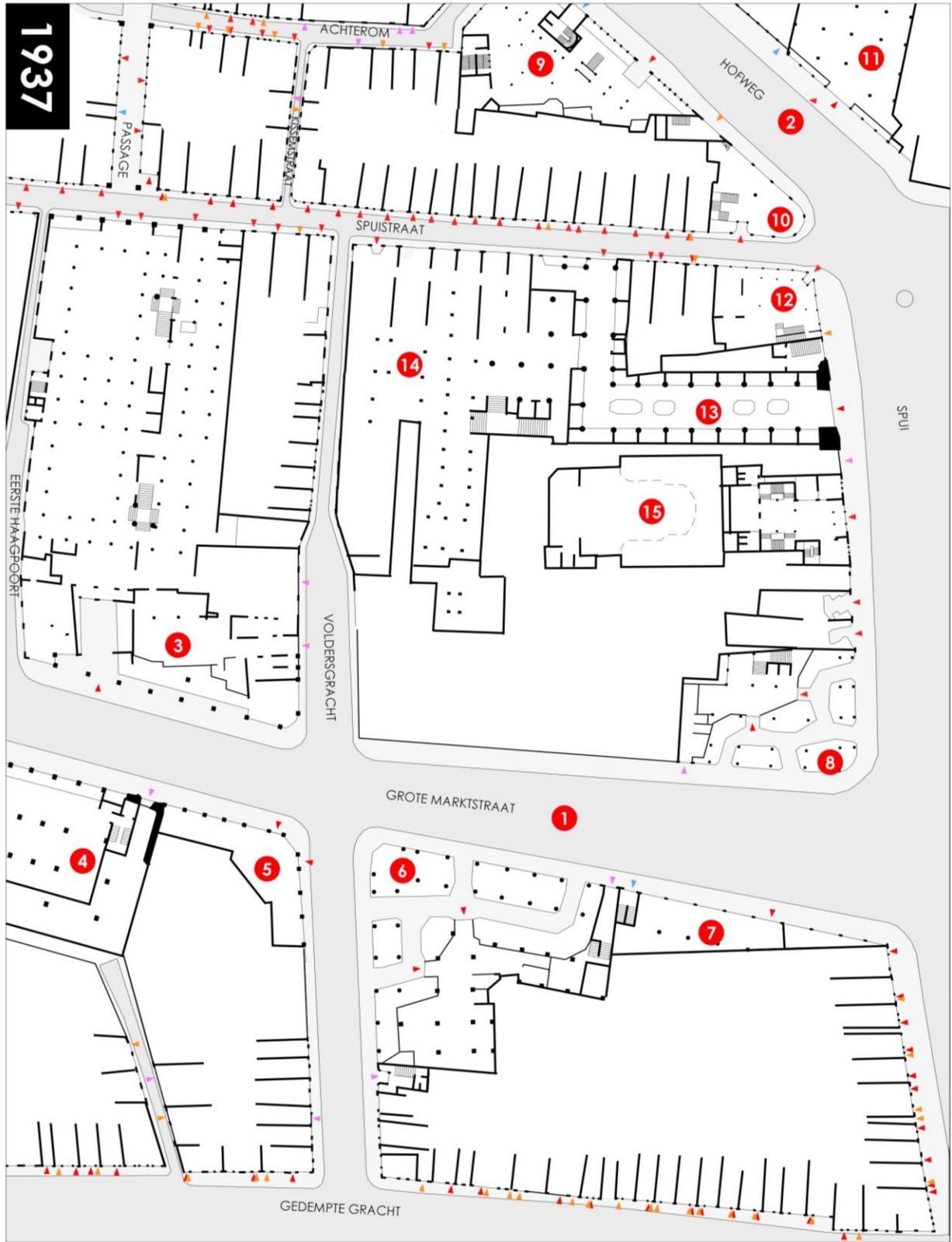


Figure 234. View of the Voldersgracht around 1900.<sup>1017</sup>

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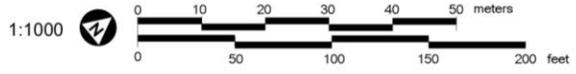
<sup>1017</sup> Image courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.

Figure 235. The Hague's central blocks in 1937.



1937

- ▲ Retail/bar/restaurant/culture entrance
- ▲ Residential entrance
- ▲ Service/warehouse/garage entrance
- ▲ Office entrance



With the rapid growth of traffic and the worsening of housing conditions in the district south of the Spuistraat, the city decided to construct the Grote Marktstraat (1) and Hofweg (2) between 1914 and 1924. As discussed in the chapter on The Hague, the rationale behind the costly and lengthy construction of these two arteries was a mixture of concerns about the growth of traffic and the alleviation of some of the city's worst housing conditions around the Jewish district. As the city's population and wealth grew rapidly during the 1910s and 1920s, the building plots that were created by the new street cuts allowed for the construction of radically new building types at a scale hereto unknown to the city. At street level, the new wave of buildings would also blur the relation between buildings and public space in the ever-intensifying quest to draw in customers.



**Figure 236. Original design concept (left) and final design rendering (right) for the southern Grote Marktstraat extension of Grand Bazar de la Paix by van Dorsser.<sup>1018</sup>**

On the Grote Marktstraat, the existing Grand Bazar de la Paix commissioned an extension to their premises to face the new street by architect van Dorsser in 1929 (3). While early designs were more elaborate, later designs acknowledged the scale and modernity of the street with a “very simple, but true” design that faced the street with large plate-glass

<sup>1018</sup> Images undated from van Dorsser file in the Dutch Institute of Architecture.

windows, which also housed a lunch room.<sup>1019</sup> The Bazar had to respond to the building that turned all the heads on the Grote Marktstraat, the Bijenkorf department store built in 1926 (4). This “palace of life’s enjoyments” brought the Amsterdam School of architect Piet Kramer along with its capital city owners to The Hague, and with over 100,000 square feet of retail space the store marked a new era and scale of retail for the city. The ground floor drew in customers with brightly lit display windows which were uninterrupted by massive columns, turning the otherwise massive building into a “large floor on legs.”<sup>1020</sup> The Bijenkorf branch was the largest department store in the country at the time, introducing the first escalator to the Netherlands to a crowd of thousands.<sup>1021</sup> A temporary store was constructed on the adjoining parcel (5), as a permanent structure would not come for several more decades.



**Figure 237. Bijenkorf department store opening, 1926 (left), display window on Wagenstraat (right).<sup>1022</sup>**

<sup>1019</sup> "Warenhuis Te Den Haag," *Haagsche Courant*, November 25 1929.

<sup>1020</sup> Citation by architect Piet Kramer in Bernhard Kohlenbach, *Pieter Lodewijk Kramer, 1881-1961: Architect Van De Amsterdamse School*(Naarden: V+K Publishing, 1994). The display windows were self-contained units which did not offer a view into the rest of the store.

<sup>1021</sup> Veen, "Een Simpele Verkeersverbetering" : *De Geschiedenis Van De Grote Marktstraat En Omgeving*, 80-82.

<sup>1022</sup> Left image 1926 courtesy of The Hague municipal archives. Right image by Piet Kramer 1926, courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.

On other nearby plots, several other growing retailers would soon construct their premises, often at a multitude of their original size. The rising empire of Clemens and August Brenninkmeijer named 'C&A' after their initials (6) and the Modehuis (Fashion House) of the Lampe company (8) both attempted to lure in the public through an elaborate mixture of display pavilions, corridors and the ultimate recessed storefront, allowing a maximum amount of merchandise to be on display at all times of the day and night. Interestingly, the highly similar buildings were finished in 1933. The resulting frontages blend interior and exterior public and private space in an aim to remove the 'threshold resistance' between the passerby and a potential purchase.<sup>1023</sup> Two stores north of the Modehuis would follow this example in the 1930s, inspired by their larger neighbor. Nevertheless, the resulting maze-like entrance structures would be removed and straightened in the subsequent decades. The adjoining store of Levi Lassen (7) had straight facades from the onset, but struggled with its difficult triangular plot which resulted from the sparing purchase of land for the Grote Marktstraat construction.



**Figure 238. Entrance with display pavilions at the Modehuis by L. Simons and Th. van Braningen (left), new store of C&A Brenninkmeijer by K. Sickler (right).<sup>1024</sup>**

The new Hofweg traffic breakthrough also brought larger scale buildings to the city, but in a more monumental form. As the architect of the traffic intervention itself, Hendrik Petrus

<sup>1023</sup> A term coined by retail developer Taubman, *Threshold Resistance : The Extraordinary Career of a Luxury Retailing Pioneer*.

<sup>1024</sup> Left image 1933; right image by van Dijk around 1938 , both courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.

Berlage also designed the new street's most significant building, a fashion store and office building for the Meddens family, completed in 1915 (9). The building "on the best piece of business land" faced the street with 33 display windows, and was considered "one of [Berlage's] most successful commercial properties."<sup>1025</sup> The property would cut off the narrow Achterom and route it through a small tunnel to the Hofweg, diminishing the once through route to a service alley. Adjacent to Meddens' store, the Voss fashion store (10) was designed by architect Jacot and constructed in 1908, marking the diagonal corner of the Spuistraat and Hofweg with a landmark building in a fairly traditional 'um-1800' style. The narrow plot, combined with the high transparency of the storefront allowed passersby to see through the building. Across the Hofweg, a rather hastily built temporary fashion store for Gerzon (11) was constructed during the 1930s, which would be demolished soon after.



**Figure 239. Voss store at the corner of the Spuistraat and Hofweg (left), and Meddens store with new Passage branch and tunnel to the Achterom (right).<sup>1026</sup>**

<sup>1025</sup> Meddens, *Honderd Vijf En Twintig Jaar in Vogelvlucht: 1830-1955*(The Hague1955).

<sup>1026</sup> Left image undated, courtesy of Dutch Architecture Institute; right image around 1930, postcard by Klitzsch & Co., The Hague, courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.

Opposite the Voss store at the corner of the Spuistraat and Hofweg, competitor Magazijn Nederland materialized its growth into a new and larger store, designed a similar Um-1800 style in 1915 by architects Simons and Van Braningen (12). At the Spui south of the Hofweg, the growing Vroom en Dreesmann department store chain built a grand new building to expand their retail floor space and their presence to a growing clientele (13). The building, designed by the company's preferred architect Jan Kuyt in 1929, connected the busy Spuistraat with the Spui through an arcade that aimed to provide passersby with a shortcut between both streets in an attempt to sell merchandise en route rather than as a destination. Like with the C&A and Modehuis stores, interior and exterior public space blended to maximize contact between potential customers and merchandise with almost 60 various display windows and pavilions, connecting up with the expanded existing store (14) and a grand staircase that led customers to higher sales floors. The modern art deco façade on the Spui propelled the former canal from a bygone era into the future and was considered "a jewel of our City."<sup>1027</sup> Yet the complex was only part of a much larger envisioned building which would stretch the entire block between Spui, Spuistraat, Voldersgracht and Grote Marktstraat.<sup>1028</sup> As these plans faltered during the Depression, the department store's frontage on the Grote Marktstraat remained vacant for decades. Adjacent to the new department store on the Spui, a large cinema complex had been designed by J. van der Weele and constructed in 1921. The Asta Theater faced the street with a large set of doors, lined by ticket sales windows on either side, "...leaving the passerby no doubt: here a Cinema has established itself."<sup>1029</sup> In 1938, the façade was radically simplified to fit the more modern setting of the Spui.

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<sup>1027</sup> The City in this citation refers to the commercial core of The Hague. "Vroom En Dreesmanns Winkelpaleis," *Het Vaderland*, September 24 1930.

<sup>1028</sup> "Een Geweldig Winkelpaleis," *De Tijd*, January 21 1929.

<sup>1029</sup> "Het Asta-Theater," *Het Vaderland*, December 24 1921.

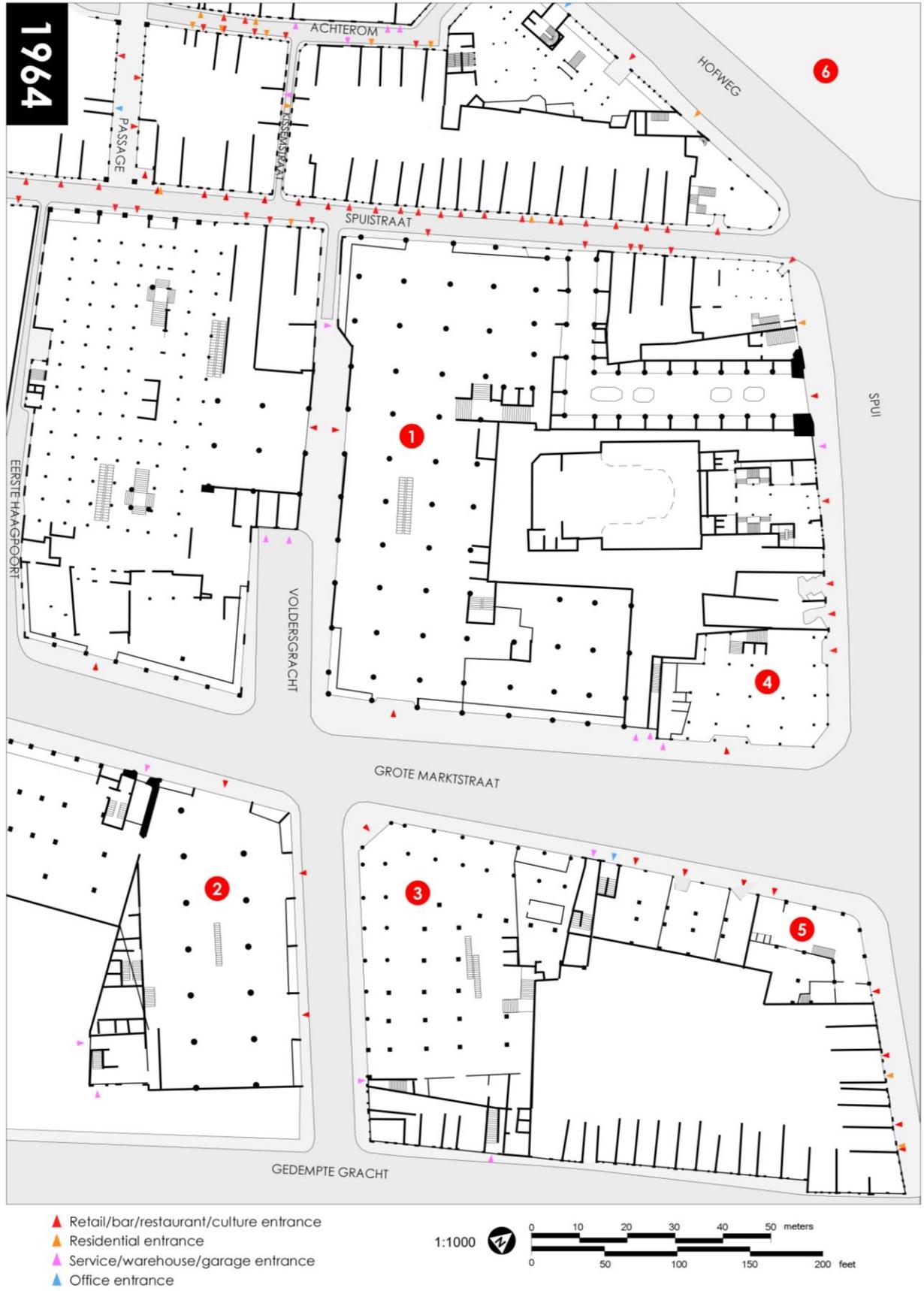


**Figure 240. The arcade of the new Vroom en Dreesmann department store (left), drawing passersby into their front façade (right).<sup>1030</sup>**

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<sup>1030</sup> Both images 1937, courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.

Figure 241. The Hague's central blocks in 1964.



As the Depression and World War 2 came to an end, The Hague was economically and physically in dire shape. More bad news came from the suburbs, where shopping malls were planned from the late 1950s onwards. Nevertheless, retailers flourished in the urban core, especially around the Grote Marktstraat. Vroom and Dreesmann significantly expanded their emporium with the purchase of the ailing Grand Bazar de la Paix in 1948, followed by the ambitious construction of the nation's largest department store at over 240,000 square feet. This area was achieved by combining the retailer's 'archipelago' of buildings on the Spuistraat, Spui and Voldersgracht with a massive Modern addition by architects Kraaijvanger, opened in stages between 1961 and 1964. The new department store was a clear signal that the urban core was still the heart of the commercial life of the region.<sup>1031</sup> Beyond its size, the store contained a range of novelties, including a parking deck on its roof which was accessed via two automobile elevators on the Voldersgracht. The store was clearly marketed toward an increasingly automobile and suburban clientele, as the direction aimed to serve "...those, that want to make all their purchases in one building complex. All the purchased goods will be delivered to the roof, if needed, to store in the car parked there."<sup>1032</sup> Even a supermarket was constructed in the basement level of the store, also in an aim to serve the local population. Yet the store's sheer size and attempt to court the automobile required difficult decisions with regard to its relationship to public space. The difficult balance between its inner city location and regional ambitions required long-drawn discussions with the city on the role of the Voldersgracht, which had lost most of its business activity over the past decades. While Vroom en Dreesmann didn't get their way to close the street and turn it into a service alley for goods and cars, they instead built over most of the Voldersgracht, turning the remainder into an entry ramp for parking, effectively achieving the same result.<sup>1033</sup> While the store faced the Spuistraat and Grote Marktstraat with interactive storefronts, it had killed the last remaining frontage activity on the Voldersgracht.

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<sup>1031</sup> "Hoogste Punt Nieuwbouw V. En D. (33 Meter) Bereikt," *Haagsche Courant*, May 13 1961.

<sup>1032</sup> "Nieuwbouw V. & D. Over 3 Jaar Geheel Gereed," *Het Binnenhof*, May 13 1961.

<sup>1033</sup> Reconstructed from letters between the directors of Vroom en Dreesmann and city planners Van der Sluys and Bakker Schut, December 21, 1953, March 30, 1955, April 6, 1956.



**Figure 242. Rendering bij Kraaijvanger architects of the Vroom en Dreesmann department store, with the bridged Voldersgracht and its car elevator entrance to the left.<sup>1034</sup>**

South of the Vroom en Dreesmann, a large new building was constructed in 1962 for the HEMA department store, a down-market sibling of the adjacent Bijenkorf department store (2). The rather unassuming building by architect A. Elzas housed two sales floors underneath two office floors, and faced the Grote Marktstraat and Voldersgracht with large glass windows, creating a “cosy modern atmosphere.”<sup>1035</sup> However, the rear of the building toward the Gedempte Gracht was used for servicing and was mostly blank. Furthermore, the Bijenkorf had razed most buildings on the southern street to allow for the expansion of their store and for an open parking lot. Like with Vroom & Dreesmann, the chain had clearly picked ‘winners and losers’ with regard to frontage interactivity, and the Gedempte Gracht was destined to become a service alley. The area south of the street was eyed for

<sup>1034</sup> Rendering from "Hoogste Punt Nieuwbouw V. En D. (33 Meter) Bereikt."

<sup>1035</sup> A citation from Ms. De Graaf, saleswoman in HEMA, *Hema-Nieuws, Uitgegeven T.G.V. De Opening Van Het Nieuwe Warenhuis Op 11 Oktober 1962*(The Hague1962).

further parking expansion, as the city's larger retailers feared an exodus of suburban customers.<sup>1036</sup> As the C&A department store expanded (3) and the Modehuis modernized (4), they also joined the cry for more parking. Some was provided in the place of the removed temporary buildings on the northern side of the Hofweg (6).



**Figure 243. HEMA department store around 1964.**<sup>1037</sup>

At the corner of the Grote Marktstraat and the Spui, Levi Lassen was able to buy more land to expand his store with a lunchroom 'Carillon' designed by architect A.H. van Leeuwen in 1955 (5). The new restaurant faced the busy intersection with large plate glass windows, allowing patrons to overlook the vibrant heart of the city. On the upper floors the Ministry of Internal Affairs was housed.<sup>1038</sup> Yet Lassen's ambitions reached further, as the Jewish

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<sup>1036</sup> "Grote Marktstraat Herkent Zich Zelf Niet Meer," *Haagsche Courant*, September 16 1964.

<sup>1037</sup> Image courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.

<sup>1038</sup> "Op Nieuwbouw Lassen De Vlag in Top," *Haagsche Courant*, October 21 1955.

businessman aimed to rejuvenate the Gedempte Gracht as the commercial heart of the Jewish district which had been decimated after World War 2. This wasn't an easy aim, as the city agreed with the Bijenkorf to turn the struggling street into a service corridor. Through strategic property purchases and political pressuring Lassen ultimately prevailed.<sup>1039</sup>

On the Spuistraat, many retailers started to optimize their internal store layout, partly due to the rise of chain formulas and new air curtain technology, combined with anti-theft devices. As a result, the shop window was slowly replaced by an open frontage, often missing the stairway to upper floors which were increasingly used for storage. The number of residents dwindled in the decades that would follow. Unsafety became a problem, especially in the lesser used streets like the Gedempte Gracht, Haagpoort and Achterom, as a lack of residents decreased natural surveillance.<sup>1040</sup>

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<sup>1039</sup> Laetitia van Rijckevorsel, "Leven En Werken Van Jacques Levi Lassen (1884-1962)," in *Jaarboek Geschiedkundige Vereniging Die Haghe* (The Hague: 2010).

<sup>1040</sup> A steakhouse on the Achterom even installed a video surveillance and buzzer system to let patrons in only after inspection: "Bodega Bistro Pepe: Tv-Bewaking Bij Een Goed Stuk Vlees," *Ingaan op uitgaan*, July 4-11 1974.



Figure 244. New construction for the Carillon lunch room, which was opened during construction.<sup>1041</sup>

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<sup>1041</sup> Image from 1956 by Friezer-Meyer, courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.

Figure 245. The Hague's central blocks in 1888.



While the large department stores on the main streets prospered but remained stable between 1964 and 1988, the main transformation in the district occurred on the side streets. Levi Lassen expanded his holdings in the block between the Grote Marktstraat, Spui and Gedempte Gracht to realize his vision of a commercial quarter that would rekindle the trade activity of the prewar Jewish district, but died in 1962. Behind his store and lunch room on the Grote Marktstraat, his heir foundation would construct the 'Markthof', a provisional open air marketplace in 1967, with a northern entrance toward the Grote Marktstraat itself constructed in 1971. While the area continued to struggle as a retail destination, the Lassen foundation would construct a large apartment complex during the mid-1970s, followed by an office addition in the early 1980s designed by LIAG Architects (1 and 3).<sup>1042</sup> The marketplace would meander through narrow passageways below these new buildings, providing a home to a wide range of smaller businessmen to sell their goods in a modestly priced establishment, close to the retail core of the city. Nevertheless, most retailers struggled in the marketplace which many citizens considered dark and confusing.<sup>1043</sup> Also, retailers would continue to optimize their internal layout, removing the last remaining residents from the Spuistraat and Spui in a quest to maximize sales area and frontage exposure. Some stores would expand into an adjacent property (2), slowly decreasing the number of retail entrances.

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<sup>1042</sup> Veen, *"Een Simpele Verkeersverbetering" : De Geschiedenis Van De Grote Marktstraat En Omgeving*, 105-06; Creveld, *De Verdwenen Buurt : Drie Eeuwen Centrum Van Joods Den Haag*.

<sup>1043</sup> Interview with Arno Ruigrok, July 22, 2014.



Figure 246. Markthof complex as seen from the Spui in 1983.<sup>1044</sup>

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<sup>1044</sup> Image by Haagsche Courant, courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.



Figure 247. The Hague's central blocks in 2014.

Since 1988, the intensity of retail in the block ensemble has only increased, often bringing retailers to upper and lower floors. In 2007, the Markthof was replaced by the Spuimarkt (1), a complex of ground floor and basement shops and restaurants in various sizes (integrating the large C&A department store), a multiplex cinema, a health club and a casino. While the building volume itself accommodates the various functions in a rather massive form, the building designed by Bolles + Wilson presents itself to the street in a mostly transparent manner. The tradition of melding public and private space is continued in the open stairway that connects the various floors of the complex to the Grote Marktstraat. The service entrance has been kept as narrow as possible and is constructed on the Gedempte Gracht. The rhythm of relatively fine grained retail has been maintained in the design, although fewer but larger retailers are accommodated compared to its 1970s predecessor.



**Figure 248. Spuimarkt, view from corner of Voldersgracht and Grote Marktstraat.<sup>1045</sup>**

<sup>1045</sup> Image by Bert Mellink, 2009, courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.

Across the Grote Marktstraat, the Modehuis has been replaced in 1997 by the Spuihof (2), a mixed use complex of shops, restaurants and upper floor dwellings designed by Cees Dam & Partners architects that marks what has become the main intersection of the city, “providing the transition between the old inner city and the large scale building complexes between city hall and the more distant Central Station of The Hague.”<sup>1046</sup> The ground floor shop windows address the street and culminate in an open stairwell that brings customers at the corner of the Grote Marktstraat and Spui to three floors of retailers, maximizing the leasable floor area of the complex. Importantly, the building has brought residents back into the district via a lobby entrance at the Spui, after being nearly banished by other building functions over the past decades. Directly to its north, the Asta Theater has been converted into a casino, while briefly serving as a dance club.



**Figure 249. Spuihof complex in The Hague.**<sup>1047</sup>

<sup>1046</sup> Cees Dam and Dam & Partners Architecten, *Cees Dam* (Amsterdam: Nieuw Amsterdam, 2007).

<sup>1047</sup> Image from 2009, courtesy of Google Streetview.

While most retailers have only grown in size over the past decades, the Vroom en Dreesmann department store retrenched from its position as largest department store in the country during the 1990s, shedding the former Grand Bazar de la Paix in 1992 and the ground floor of its original 1929 building in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. The latter has been remodeled as a single shop which unfortunately has no entrance onto the Spui anymore (4). Next to the rather introverted Asta, this leaves the Spui with a significant gap in frontage interactivity. The Grand Bazar has faced a more adventurous future, as only its front façade to the Spuistraat still stands as the entryway to a new extension of the Passage, in which over 100,000 square feet of smaller and larger retailers connect the Spuistraat with the Grote Marktstraat in a “very light, open and transparent” complex designed by French/American architect Bernard Tschumi, topped off by a 118 room hotel.<sup>1048</sup> Although the complex faces both external and internal public space with highly interactive frontages, its construction will be the death knell for the Voldersgracht and Haagpoort, which will be closed to the public and function as goods alleys instead. Nevertheless, the public will now be able to walk through a new, highly interactive arcade between the city’s two main retail streets – a dramatic contrast to the dark and inactive Voldersgracht and Haagpoort. Directly across the Grote Marktstraat exit of the new Passage is the opened entrance of the HEMA and Bijenkorf, which also provides access to an underground supermarket (5).

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<sup>1048</sup> Description from [www.nieuwehaagsepassage.nl](http://www.nieuwehaagsepassage.nl) and The Hague’s municipal website.



**Figure 250. View into the new Passage from the former façade of the Grand Bazar de la Paix in the Spuistraat.<sup>1049</sup>**

<sup>1049</sup> Image courtesy of Multi Development Corporation, AM Vastgoed, ASR Vastgoed, The Hague municipality.

## 7.2 THE HAGUE PERIPHERAL BLOCK ENSEMBLE – SPUIKWARTIER

The peripheral Spuikwartier district has seen one of the most radical downtown transformations in any large Dutch city. This section will discuss the reasons behind and process of this transformation, which takes us back to the history of the district and the strong forces that were exerted upon it. As the district transformation has been rather cataclysmic rather than gradual, only the 1911 and 2011 before and after situations are depicted.

In 1911, the Spuikwartier was already on its way down, having lost its centuries-long economic role in the city during the previous decade. The district formerly contained numerous canals and harbors which served as the freight life line of the city to the Dutch hinterland, as boat transportation reigned before the dawn of the railways in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The central Spui canal provided direct access to the vast Dutch inland waterway network, and from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, its capacity would be expanded to serve the various industries that were prospering in The Hague as well as the increased demand for imported goods.<sup>1050</sup> This expansion occurred through the digging of new canals throughout the Spuikwartier district, whose former roles are reminisced by today's street names, referring to the city's textile industry (Voldersgracht, Schedeldoekshaven), raw goods import (Houtmarkt, Turfmarkt) or pivotal role in securing food (Kalvermarkt, Wijnhaven).<sup>1051</sup> The Spuikwartier never possessed the glamour of Amsterdam's canal belt which started its gradual construction during the same era, nor did its canals serve as fortifications, as they did for the many Dutch trade cities like Delft and Leiden. Instead, they were lined with an eclectic mixture of small warehouses, factories and working class housing, with the odd institutional building and hotel adding luster. One of the largest tenants of the district was a brewery constructed in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, after which the Kleine and Grote Brouwerstraat were named.<sup>1052</sup> For centuries, the Dutch water-based

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<sup>1050</sup> "In 300 Jaar Onderging De Binnenstad Vele Wijzigingen," *Haagsche Courant*, July 12 1952.

<sup>1051</sup> "Wijk Spui-Wagenstraat Had Vroeger Eigen Karakter," *Haagsche Courant*, November 12 1960.

<sup>1052</sup> Ben Hoornweg, *Het Spuikwartier : De Haagse Havenbuurt : Beknopte Geschiedenis Van De Havenbuurt Rondom Het Spui in Woord En Beeld* ([Den Haag]: "De Nieuwe Haagsche", 1999), 107-08.

transportation system supported small-scaled commercial activity in the district, with crime and vice following closely in its wake.<sup>1053</sup>



**Figure 251. Turfmarkt and Houtmarkt before their filling around 1904.**<sup>1054</sup>

The onset of the railway system would prove to start the downfall of the district, as trains would begin to replace boats to bring in goods to the city from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The boats which remained became larger to compete with rail transportation, and wouldn't fit into the small canals which were dug centuries before. Furthermore, the lack of proper sanitation resulted in the severe pollution of the canals by residents and businesses, which had led to a horrendous stench in the city as well as several outbreaks of infectious

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<sup>1053</sup> "Nieuwe Haven Heeft Woelig Verleden," *Haagsche Courant*, May 17 1968. Anecdotally, the Italian merchant Giacomo Casanova stayed in a hotel on the Elsemoerstraat in the 18<sup>th</sup> century for a business transaction, only to find fraud and strife as described in "Casanova Was Hier," *Haagsche Courant*, January 19 1965.

<sup>1054</sup> Image around 1900, courtesy of The Hague municipal archives

diseases such as cholera in 1868.<sup>1055</sup> The last straw was the rapidly growing demand for space for streetcars and automobiles during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The days of the canals were counted, and they would gradually be filled between the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, completing in 1903 with the last portion of the formerly central Spui canal, “in the name of hygiene, in the name of public traffic.”<sup>1056</sup> Along with the esthetic loss inflicted through this technocratic measure, the economic base for the district collapsed as businesses moved out toward larger harbors and rail yards.



**Figure 252. Slum housing mixed with warehouses in the Elsemoeerstraat in 1907.**<sup>1057</sup>

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<sup>1055</sup> Beek, *Van Ambachtelijk Tot Ambtelijk : Het Spuikwartier Door De Eeuwen Heen*, 59.

<sup>1056</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

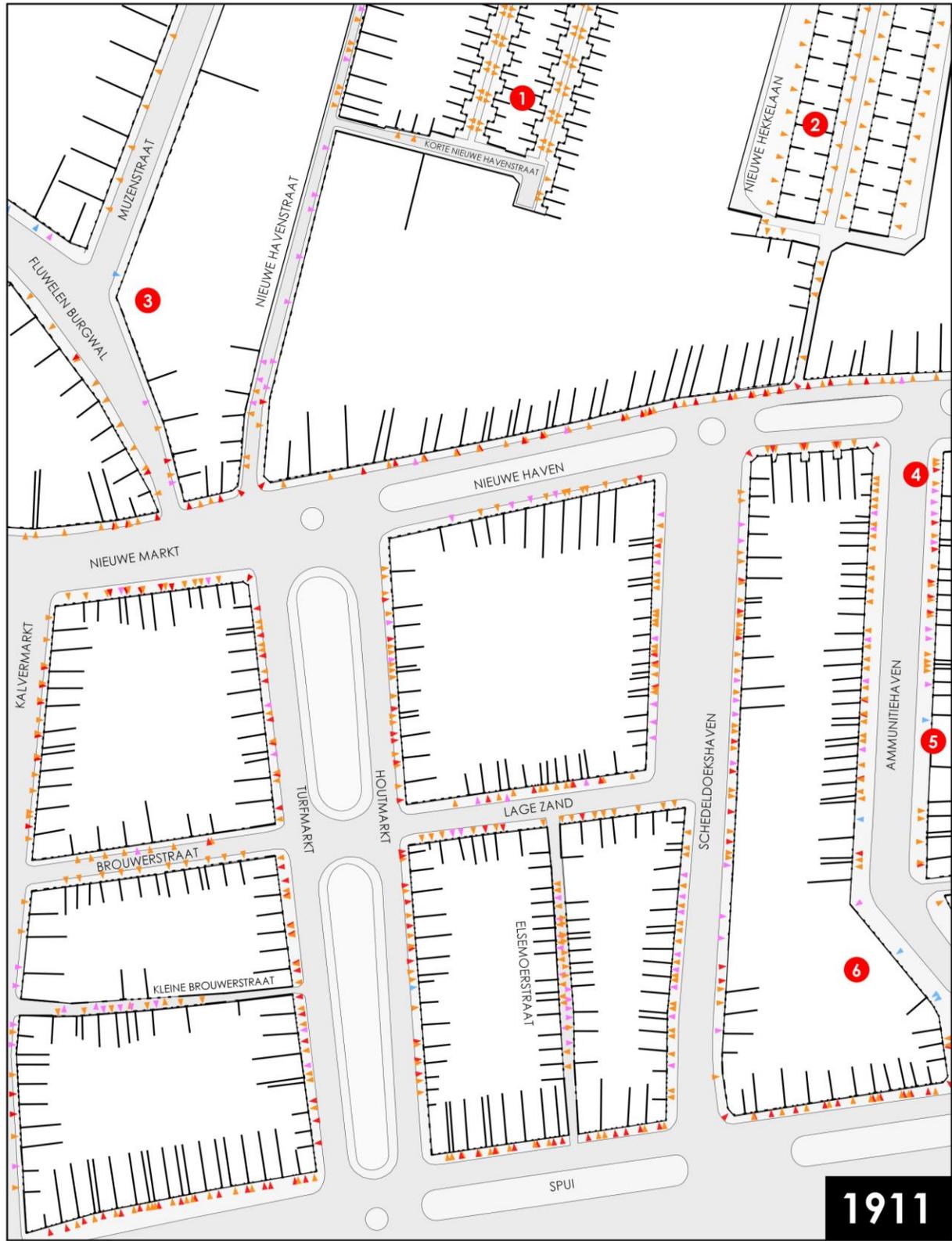
<sup>1057</sup> Image courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.

The district was left to deteriorate economically and physically, as witnessed by the appalling housing conditions of the working class which remained in “slummy, dirty, moist, stinking, polluted, neglected, run down and infested” housing in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1058</sup> Many of these homes were located in small courtyards in the interior of the blocks, and often provided the direst living conditions in the city. Larger and cleaner courtyard housing was provided toward the east of the district, in speculative developments such as the Korte Nieuwe Havenstraat (1) and the Nieuwe Hekkelaan (2) which contained hundreds of worker-class homes with small gardens, often built back-to-back to save space. In other parts of the district, housing was usually combined with whatever would prosper on the ground floor, such as remaining retailers, small manufacturers, warehouses and garages. Retail was focused on the main traffic arteries such as the Spui and Nieuwe Haven, with smaller side streets often occupied by warehouse and garage entrances. In 1911, only institutional buildings which didn’t specifically required a representative location remained, such as the military hospital on the Fluwelen Burgwal (3), the country’s first animal asylum on the Ammunitiehaven (4) and a few smaller school buildings (5 and 6). Overall, the district contained a wide range of uses, most of which were small scaled and some of which related closely to public space.

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<sup>1058</sup> A description of the residence of an elderly lady on the Bagijnestraat, just north of the district in "Hoe Arm Den Haag Woont."

Figure 253. The Hague's peripheral blocks in 1911.



- ▲ Retail/bar/restaurant/culture entrance
- ▲ Residential entrance
- ▲ Service/warehouse/garage entrance
- ▲ Office entrance



As a result of the clearly visible deterioration of the district, the municipality had started to plan for its renewal as early as architect Berlage's plan for the construction of a new traffic artery and city hall on the Spui and Kalvermarkt in 1908. Yet as demonstrated in the history chapter on The Hague's inner city, the city chose to locate their headquarters elsewhere and faltered on any renovation proposals for the district.<sup>1059</sup> Large private investors also shunned the area. As the city's leaders dragged their feet, only crime seemed to prosper in the crumbling district: "Awaiting the renewal almost nothing is being improved, the homes are deteriorating more and more. (...) because of the increased deterioration of the rest of this neighborhood many members of the underworld have again settled in this environment."<sup>1060</sup> Even the *Stichting Saneering Binnenstad*, a private initiative borne out of frustration in 1939 about the slow progress in renovating the district, was unsuccessful in their efforts to stem the Spuikwartier's decline as World War 2 would stop any significant building activity.

After the war had ended, municipal architect Dudok would draw a proposal for wholesale clearance of the district, to replace it with a district to house the national government's growing need for office space. None of the existing buildings in the district would survive in this vision, as they were to be replaced by large-scale midrise architecture which centered on a series of monumental squares which represented the newly regained power of the Dutch state. For the first time, the proposal would lift the district into the national spotlight as a center of national importance, rather than a local neighborhood. However as shown in chapter six, the government was unconvinced by the sheer scale of the proposals and chose to remain scattered throughout the city in various smaller buildings. The lack of money or materials to execute the plans combined with the lack of cooperation from the national railways to construct a nearby underground train station would sound the death knell for the plans, much to the dismay of Dudok.<sup>1061</sup>

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<sup>1059</sup> A process outlined in more detail in Veen, "*Een Simpele Verkeersverbetering*": *De Geschiedenis Van De Grote Marktstraat En Omgeving*.

<sup>1060</sup> 's-Gravenhage, *Plan Tot Verbetering Van Het Stadsdeel Tusschen Spui En Zwarteweg*, 9.

<sup>1061</sup> A process further explained in Huik, "'Ingebed in Het Zo Karakteristieke Groen' - Dudok En Den Haag in De Jaren 1930-1950."; Sluijs, *Haagse Stedebouw: Mijn Ervaringen in De Jaren 1946-1983*.



**Figure 254. Deterioration and vacancy along the filled Schedeldoekshaven around 1950.<sup>1062</sup>**

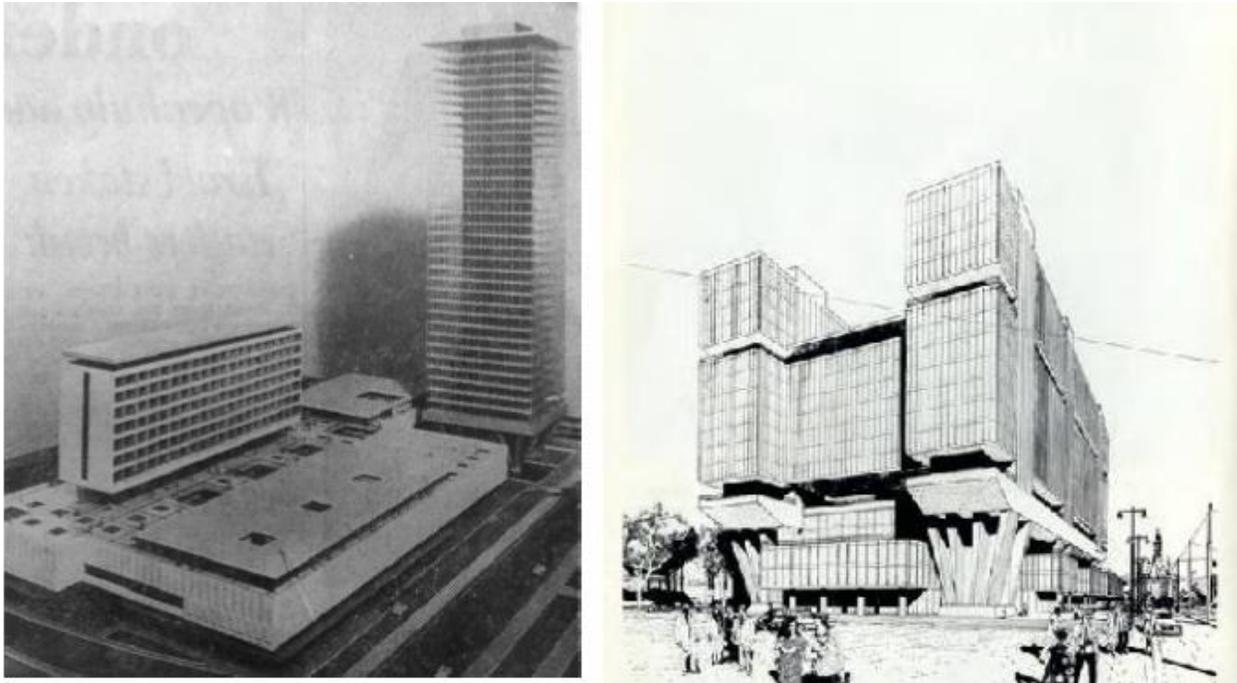
Meanwhile, the district continued to deteriorate. Planners' blight was in full force as Dudok's vision for the grand renewal of the district had resulted in a virtual standstill of any building improvements in the area by remaining tenants and building owners, knowing they would soon be forced to vacate their premises. The stalemate was exacerbated by a municipal ban on building in several parts of the district from 1954 onwards to make way for parking garages and a ring road which would cut through the block between the Schedeldoekshaven and Ammunitiehaven, as well as cultural and office development between the Kalvermarkt and Turfmarkt.<sup>1063</sup> Although the latter took shape during the late 1950s, the ring road wouldn't materialize for decades to come, leaving large parts of the

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<sup>1062</sup> Image courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.

<sup>1063</sup> "Het Parkeerprobleem in De Binnenstad," *Haagsche Courant*, February 20 1956; "Bouw Van Parkeergarages Langs De Beide Ringwegen Rondom De Oude Stadskern," *Haagsche Courant* July 7 1956; "Sanering Stadsdeel Tussen Kalvermarkt En Turfmarkt," *Haagsche Courant*, October 27 1956.

Spuikwartier as temporary parking lots. Over the course of this decade, most active ground floor businesses would leave the district, partly as their clientele had departed long ago and partly because they were either incentivized or forced to do so. Shops were replaced by service stations, second hand tire shops and garages, or vacated altogether.



**Figure 255. First (1965) and second (1968) proposal for the Spuikwartier by Pier Luigi Nervi and Lucas and Niemeyer.<sup>1064</sup>**

Meanwhile, private developer Zwolsman saw the opportunity for large-scale renewal and would start to buy up land in the area through his company EMS, benefiting from the damage inflicted by the slow progress of the municipality to convince remaining owners and tenants to sell their properties. As further plans were hatched, vacant buildings literally collapsed into the street.<sup>1065</sup> In 1961, Italian architect Pier Luigi Nervi and Dutch

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<sup>1064</sup> Left image from "Den Haag Vandaag," *Het Vaderland*, August 2 1965. Right image from Patricia Smeets Ruud Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie Gerrits, *Onder Ambtenaren : Verhalen Van Verandering* (Den Haag; Den Haag: Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties ; Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie, 2013), 97.

<sup>1065</sup> "Voorgeschiedenis Nervi-Blok Is Al Acht Jaar Oud," *Haagsche Courant*, June 26 1964.

architects Lucas and Niemeyer would start to draw plans for a large scale mixed-use office, hotel, retail and theater complex to be located right in the middle of the district, topped with a 140 meter tall office tower. When it was presented to the general public in 1965, opposition was widespread. The massive structure would dwarf any surrounding urban fabric, including a nearby monumental church; traffic would increase without any solutions for its proper handling and the skyline to the city would be altered irreversibly.<sup>1066</sup> Ultimately, it would again be the central government which would halt the plans as it would affect the views from the monumental Inner Court government center. After a rejected second design, EMS gave up and sold their land to pension fund ABP.<sup>1067</sup> It unsuccessfully pitched the land to private stakeholders with “De Nieuwe Hout”, a spectacular plan by the same Lucas and Niemeyer architects which envisioned an entire raised district of offices, dwellings, shops and cultural amenities, in sharp contrast to the existing inner city of The Hague.



**Figure 256. Ministries of Justice and Internal Affairs by Lucas and Niemeyer (1978) under construction.**<sup>1068</sup>

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<sup>1066</sup> An example of opposition could be found in "Den Haag Vandaag."

<sup>1067</sup> *Onder Ambtenaren : Verhalen Van Verandering.*

<sup>1068</sup> Image by P.G. Kempff, 1980, courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.

The district would finally be reshaped in 1972, when ABP managed to interest the rapidly growing national government to construct a vastly downsized version of their ambitious master plan for the district as two large ministry towers connected with a low-rise structure, housing the Ministry of Justice and Internal Affairs (1). Several elements in the planning and design process proved highly detrimental to the landmark structure's relationship with public space. Firstly, its architects were under high pressure to finish the final designs for the project, at a low cost to the taxpayer. The envisioned complex had to be detached from Lucas and Niemeyer's initial design for the entire district, and up to the last minute even its ultimate location would be shifted hundreds of feet.<sup>1069</sup> Secondly, the national government was concerned about the security of its civil servants and resisted the construction of a transparent (let alone permeable) ground floor frontage. Furthermore, the government was interested in maximizing office floor space over creating a contextual fit, considering a higher and lighter entrance or any other ground floor use a waste of space. Originally envisioned ground floor shops were replaced by a parking garage and a defensive interior entrance constructed along a dark passageway between the two buildings.<sup>1070</sup> Thirdly, the building hardly had any vital context left to connect to. By the time of its construction in 1974, the urban tissue was almost completely wiped out by urban clearance, leaving the building wedged between the Prins Bernhardviaduct (2), a large east-west urban freeway under construction to its south and a tramway viaduct to its north. Lastly, the city of The Hague was happy that any building activity was taking place at a time when its population and tax base was shrinking and the national government – arguably the city's largest employer- continued to threaten to decentralize its departments to peripheral cities. The city was not keen to obstruct the construction process, and the enforcement of active ground floor retail was further obstructed by the fact that there was no perceived need for it – the inner city retail base was shrinking rapidly during the 1970s.

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<sup>1069</sup> The last minute shift occurred due to the perceived effects of the building on the city's skyline: Sluijs, *Haagse Stedebouw : Mijn Ervaringen in De Jaren 1946-1983*, 147.

<sup>1070</sup> Gerrits, *Onder Ambtenaren : Verhalen Van Verandering*.

Unhindered by this local pressure, the building could assume its fortress-like appearance it had upon its opening in 1978 and still has today.



**Figure 257. The ministries of Justice and Internal Affairs at eye level: a protective mound, inactive ground floor and ventilation shafts for a subterranean nuclear bunker.<sup>1071</sup>**

Soon after the completion of the ministries and the nearby infrastructure, the city realized that a total vision for the now completely disemboweled district had to be created, and the ministerial “meteorite fallen from the sky... coincidentally landed in the city with the result

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<sup>1071</sup> Image by author, 2014.

of no visible connection to the environment” had to be avoided in the future.<sup>1072</sup> Less than a decade after its construction, part of the Prins Bernhardviaduct would already be demolished. After providing assistance in planning for streetcar routes through the district in the late 1970s,<sup>1073</sup> architect Carel Weeber was invited with architects Wim Quist and Herman Hertzberger to enter a design competition to draft a master plan for the entire Spuikwartier district, newly dubbed the ‘Forum’. The three proposals each sharply responded to the Modern lack of contextuality by proposing a return to the urban block “making spaces we are used to in the city” (Hertzberger), building upon The Hague’s traditional sequence of urban space (Quist) or providing a simple and clear structure for the thus far chaotic district, in which architects could build to their own insights but within guidelines (Weeber).<sup>1074</sup> Weeber’s ‘realistic, viable and clear’ proposal hinged on a clear Turfmarkt axis between the city’s newly constructed Central Station right outside the ring canal and a proposed cultural center on the Spui.<sup>1075</sup> Weeber won the competition and was appointed as urban design coordinator for the Spuikwartier in 1982, for which he would design a housing complex on its eastern side in 1985 as well as a hotel complex in the new cultural district in 1988, which unfortunately faced away from public space on three of its four sides (3).

However, the district would continue to be shaped by vastly different insights, most notably those of architects Mourik and Vermeulen, and Rem Koolhaas in their dual design for respectively the Anton Philipszaal orchestra hall (4) and Nederlands Danstheater (5) around the newly created Spuiplein square. While Weeber had envisioned a cultural center on this site, it would take years of political bickering and support from large cultural stakeholders to realize this vision, with construction for the orchestra and theater building only commencing in 1984. A significant part of the delay was caused by the initial plans to house the Danstheater near the coast, considered a more suitable location than the urban-

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<sup>1072</sup> A cited comment by architect Carel Weeber on the ministry towers in Beek, *Van Ambachtelijk Tot Ambtelijk : Het Spuikwartier Door De Eeuwen Heen*, 76.

<sup>1073</sup> Sluijs, *Haagse Stedebouw : Mijn Ervaringen in De Jaren 1946-1983*, 150.

<sup>1074</sup> Cees Zwinkels, "Drie Plannen Voor Haagse Binnenstad - Een 'Forum' Voor Stedebouw," *De Architect* 10(1980).

<sup>1075</sup> Oorschot, "Conflicten over Haagse Stadsbeelden," 432-33.

renewal-stricken Spuikwartier for a high-culture venue.<sup>1076</sup> After pressure by alderman Duivesteijn and the minister of Culture and to save money, both cultural venues were combined in one building sharing a single entrance and foyer, which faced the Spuiplein as a 'duplex'.<sup>1077</sup> The scandalously low project budget and the last-minute change of location for the Danstheater resulted in a difficult working relation between architects Mourik, Vermeulen and Koolhaas, resulting in two buildings which hardly interacted with one another, let alone with public space.<sup>1078</sup> Technical and budget constraints caused these buildings to also only face public space on one side, complementing the inactive architecture of the surrounding ministries and Hotel Central. The end result is a series of large structures which only add street life at a very limited amount of entrances, mostly focus toward the Spui and Spuiplein. Nevertheless, The Hague would have its coveted cultural life back to where it belonged, right in its heart.<sup>1079</sup> The completion of the Filmhuis cinema across the Spui by Hertzberger in 1991 would complete the cultural center, at least for two decades.



**Figure 258. The Hague's Spuiplein with from left to right City Hall by Meier Architects (1995), the Anton Philipszaal by Van Mourik and Vermeulen architects (1987), the Nederlands Danstheater by Rem Koolhaas (1987) and the Hotel Central by Carel Weeber (1985).<sup>1080</sup>**

<sup>1076</sup> Ibid., 433-36.

<sup>1077</sup> Paul Groenendijk, "Muziek En Dans Aan Het Spui: De Combinatie Concertzaal En Danstheater," *Architectuur / bouwen* 3, no. 10 (1987).

<sup>1078</sup> The lack of cooperation is acknowledged by Koolhaas in a 1987 interview in Leen van Duin, *Motief Voor Herhaling* (Delft: Delft University Press, 1988), 109.

<sup>1079</sup> Arno Haijtema and Jaap Huisman, "Bruisend Den Haag," *Volkskrant*, September 4 1987.

<sup>1080</sup> Image by author, 2003.

The pattern of landmark buildings which hardly interacted with public space would change soon after with the construction of several projects which did face outward. The newly inaugurated alderman for urban planning Duivesteijn relaunched the debate to bring back city hall to the inner city, setting his sights on the prominent but underutilized location between the new cultural center and the Spui and Kalvermarkt corner. His ambitions were nothing short of spectacular: the city hall should become a landmark for The Hague, drawing in visitors and providing residents with a sense of pride and identity. In 1985, a design competition was held in which famous international architects like Helmut Jahn, Rem Koolhaas, Richard Meier, Hans Boot and Sabot et Jullian submitted proposals for the new building. Most designs showed a close interaction with public space while creating highly identifiable architecture, a paradigm shift from only five years back. After a long-drawn political discussion,<sup>1081</sup> the choice was ultimately made for Richard Meier's design for a hybrid city hall and library (6) which centered on a covered atrium from which all upper floors could be reached, "Europe's largest covered square." Yet the massing of the building and the carefully thought out connection with its surrounding urban tissue also allowed for the transparency and permeability which a democratic institution requires.<sup>1082</sup>

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<sup>1081</sup> The political battle behind the construction of city hall is discussed in more detail in chapter 6 and Oorschot, "Conflicten over Haagse Stadsbeelden."

<sup>1082</sup> Freijser and Ridderhof, "Stedelijke Vernieuwing Door Architectonische Vormgeving - Den Haag in De Jaren 1980-1990," 285.



**Figure 259. Central Muzenplein square in De Resident, with taller structures embedded into a midrise urban tissue which addresses the street.<sup>1083</sup>**

Nearby, ground floor transparency would be shaped in an entirely different form by postmodern architect Rob Krier. The devastation left by the tramway viaduct and the anonymous ‘Transitorium’ office structure in the northern half of the Spuikwartier during the 1970s, coupled with an increased demand for government office space and local pressure to bring back housing into the inner city prompted integrated development of this strategic area between the inner city and the Central railway station. Starting in 1988, Krier designed “De Resident” (7), a densely built and finely mixed district of clearly shaped public spaces lined by low- to midrise dwellings, interspersed with taller office structures

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<sup>1083</sup> Image courtesy of Roel Wijnants, 2010.

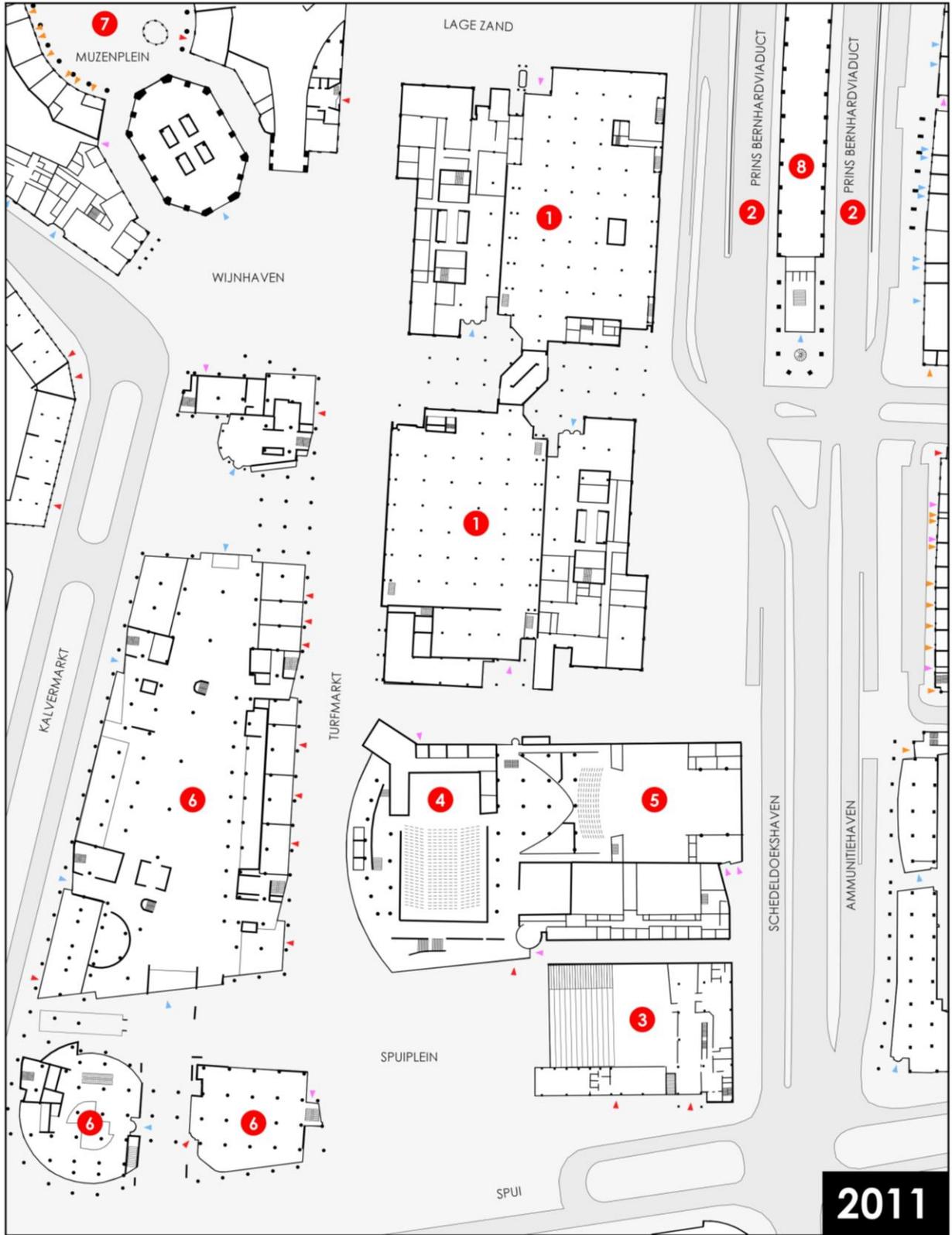
for governmental agencies and private firms.<sup>1084</sup> Together with Sjoerd Soeters, Krier acted as supervising architect for such illustrious names as Natalini, Graves and Pelli, coupled with local architects Daan, Dirrix, Drijver and Karelse van der Meer. Buildings were to present themselves to public space in a small-scaled manner, using as much frontage transparency as possible. By lining the tramway viaduct by dwellings with interactive ground floor frontages, the development especially helped enliven the pedestrian Turfmarkt route, although subsequent proposals by Busquets to open up the 1974 ministry towers toward public space have not been realized.<sup>1085</sup> The gap left by the demolished portion of the Prins Bernhardviaduct was filled with an office building in 1985 by ZZ+P architects (8), at least partly mitigating the damage the viaduct had left to the city.

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<sup>1084</sup> Freijser and Ridderhof, "Stedelijke Vernieuwing Door Architectonische Vormgeving - Den Haag in De Jaren 1980-1990," 284.

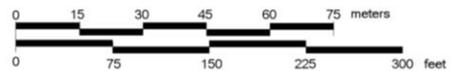
<sup>1085</sup> Dijk, "The Hague Today - Irresolute Wanderings of a City Centre," 78.

Figure 260. The Hague's peripheral blocks in 2011.



- ▲ Retail/bar/restaurant/culture entrance
- ▲ Residential entrance
- ▲ Service/warehouse/garage entrance
- ▲ Office entrance

1:1500



Very little of the Spuikwartier of 1911 remains today. The number of buildings has greatly diminished as large developments have replaced the small buildings that made up the former district. Interactive frontages are few and far between. The numerous expressions of economic life, cultural values and architectural insights over the past decades have turned the Spuikwartier district from a struggling but charming harbor neighborhood into a “goulash of urban design meat-byproducts, none of which were large enough to give the city any taste.”<sup>1086</sup> Yet as also discussed in chapter six, the bricolage of the various buildings in the district have also provided it with a sense of identity and serve as a testament to modern history in the city. And history is created even today, as the ministry towers of Justice and Internal affairs have been vacated in lieu of a new abode designed by Kollhoff and Rapp+Rapp architects to the north on the now demolished site of the Zwarte Madonna housing complex. After a period of vacancy due to the economic downtown, the towers are currently under renovation to provide housing and a satellite campus for the Leiden University, at least partly opening up the building to its surroundings with ground floor retail, uncovering the Nieuwe Haven crossing as an open passageway. The biggest criticism of the former ministry complex –its poor connection to public space- is therefore addressed by architect Felix Claus and Heijmans developers. It’s a good sign that the singular building complex has been renamed “Wijnhavenkwartier”, an entire district surrounding the former Wijnhaven.<sup>1087</sup>



**Figure 261. Ground floor retail in an artist rendering of the Wijnhavenkwartier, a renovation of half of the Ministry of Justice and Internal Affairs.**<sup>1088</sup>

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<sup>1086</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>1087</sup> Hilde Straathof, "Kolos Wordt Speelse Woontoren," *Algemeen Dagblad*, August 29 2014. The project has an estimated completion date of 2016, as per [www.wijnhavenkwartier.nl](http://www.wijnhavenkwartier.nl).

<sup>1088</sup> Image courtesy of Heijmans developers.

Yet controversy has also returned to the area with the hotly debated redesign of the city's cultural center, in which the orchestra hall and dance theater may have to make way for a new building which would also contain the Royal Conservatory to become the hub for cultural life in the city. Contrary to two decades ago, active ground floor businesses and public life are crucial elements in the current debate, which has already led to the striking down of Neutelings Riedijk's original design for the 'Spuiforum' and occupies citizens of all ranks today – the Spuikwartier continues to be the face and therewith the focal point for The Hague's metropolitan ambitions.



**Figure 262. Artist rendering of the cancelled Spuiforum project.<sup>1089</sup>**

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<sup>1089</sup> Image courtesy of Neutelings Riedijk architects.

### **7.3 DETROIT CENTRAL BLOCK ENSEMBLE – CAMPUS MARTIUS, WOODWARD, GRAND RIVER, LIBRARY, MONROE**

For more than half a century, the blocks surrounded by Campus Martius, Woodward Avenue, Library Street and Monroe Street were the unrivaled commercial heart of Detroit and its wide hinterland. People would travel for hours to witness and become part of the retail splendor of this district, amazed by the crowds, the window displays, the architecture but above all by the wealth of merchandise on offer in its millions of square feet of amassed sales area. Today, almost no signs of this golden era remains in the city as shop fronts have been replaced by blank walls, parking garages, offices or in some cases, by nothing at all. The history of these blocks represent a microcosm of the fate of downtown Detroit as a retail destination, and in many regards the path which many other American urban cores have taken. Their story is remarkably young but vigorous, worthy of further investigation as these blocks have been crucial to the eye-level experience of downtown for many Detroiters of generations past, and may become as relevant as they once were in the nearby future.

The true birth of these blocks as a retail destination would only occur at the brink of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Detroit's retail core was formerly located around the intersection of Woodward and Jefferson Avenue near the river front, as commercial activity focused on water-based trade. As the city's rapid growth since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century could only take place in one direction due to its geographical and political location, the commercial center of the city would shift along with its population toward the northwest. What had been considered the leafy outskirts of town only by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century would grow to become the center of the thriving metropolis of Detroit in the decades to follow.<sup>1090</sup> The radial layout of the city and the growth of the streetcar network would ensure that while jobs and citizens were spreading throughout the city, they would continue to meet at the confluence of its avenues in downtown: "all [avenues] converge, as do all the city's transport facilities,

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<sup>1090</sup> Poremba, *Detroit in Its World Setting : A Three Hundred Year Chronology, 1701-2001*, 138.

in downtown Detroit.”<sup>1091</sup> As all the city’s eyes, feet and wallets passed these precious few acres, they would become the scene of some of the fiercest competitions for survival and prosperity in the city over the following decades.



**Figure 263. Campus Martius with the Detroit Opera House in 1915.**<sup>1092</sup>

Campus Martius had been the center of Detroit civic since the completion of the Woodward and Hull radial street plan in 1807, complemented by the construction of City Hall in 1871

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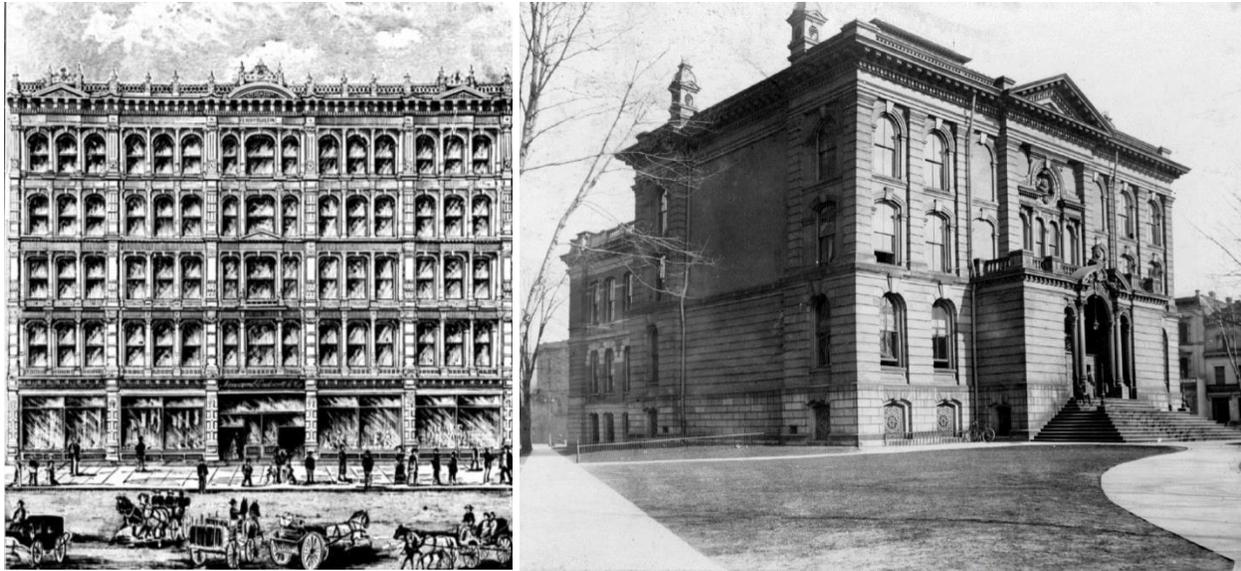
<sup>1091</sup> A citation from a Hudson’s 1930s brochure, explaining its location to visitors. C. C. Kickert and S. Psarra, "Mapping Centrality in Detroit - an Analysis of the Street Network and Its Social and Economic Dimensions from 1796 to the Present," in *Mapping Detroit*, ed. J. Manning Thomas and H.C. Bekkering (Detroit: Wayne State Press, 2012).

<sup>1092</sup> Image courtesy of the Burton Historical Collection.

on the square as designed by James Anderson and the Wayne County Building in 1902 across nearby Cadillac Square as designed by John Scott. The central square was often used for civic events and celebrations; it was the place where troops were ceremoniously sent off to fight in the Civil War in 1861 and it was the place where their loss was remembered through the Michigan Soldiers' and Sailor's Monument of the American Civil War, erected in 1872. The nearby Centre Park between what was then called Farras Street and Farmer Street was chosen for the city's first dedicated library building, designed by architect Henry Brush and completed in 1877(1). The area's role as Detroit's cultural center was also anchored with the opening of Detroit's first Opera House designed by Mortimer Smith in 1869 (2). This building would not only draw crowds from across the state to watch performances, but its ground floor retail spaces would prove to be the incubator for some of Detroit's leading merchants in the decades to come. New England retailers Cyrenious Newcomb and Charles Endicott, founders of the state's first department store in 1868, were among the first tenants of the modestly sized retail nooks which abutted the entrance of the Opera House, outgrowing the space after a long decade to relocate northwards near the corner of Woodward and Grand River Avenues in 1881, into "the most massive and elegant [building] as yet erected by private enterprise in this city," built by seed magnate D.M. Ferry (3), soon extending back toward Farmer Street.<sup>1093</sup>

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<sup>1093</sup> The opening ceremony was covered in "Opening Day at Newcomb, Endicott & Co's - the Formal Dedication of a Magnificent New Business Structure," *Detroit Free Press*, April 7 1881. The move date is wrongly stated as 1879 in Frank B. Woodford Arthur M. Woodford, *All Our Yesterdays : A Brief History of Detroit*(Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1969), 221.



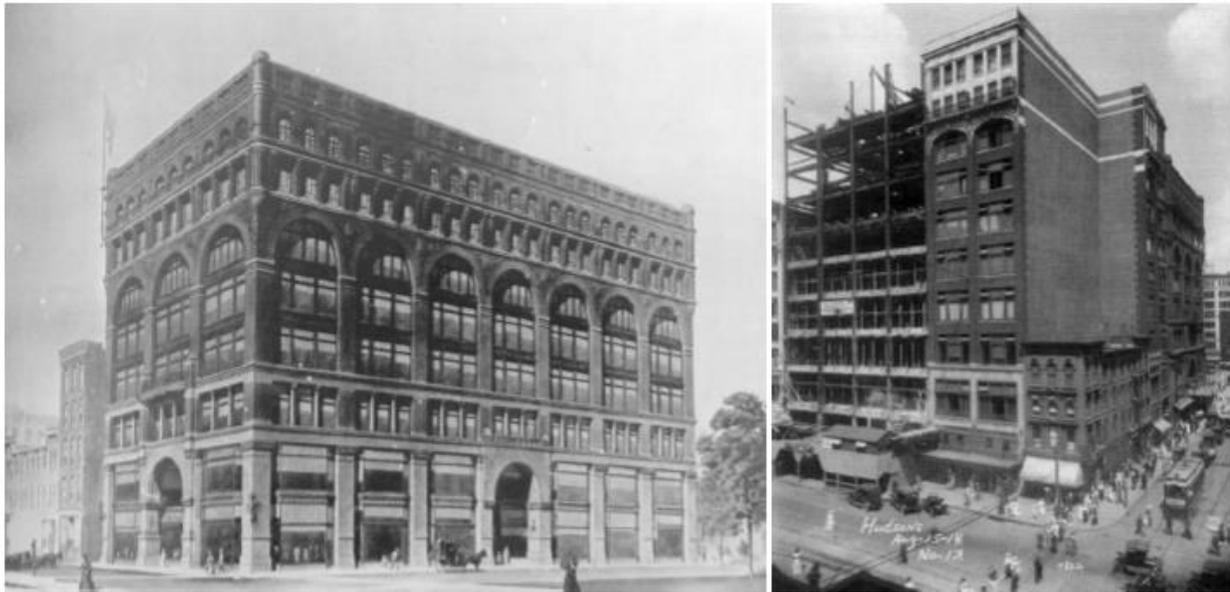
**Figure 264. Left: the new home of Newcomb and Endicott's department store in the Ferry Building. Right: Detroit's first dedicated public library.<sup>1094</sup>**

Their space in the cultural venue was taken by English-born retailer Joseph Lowthian Hudson that same year. After amassing sufficient starting capital while working as a manager for Mabley's clothing store for years, Hudson's would start his empire at the Opera House to great success. His successful business would also outgrow this location in a matter of years, as after a brief settlement on Woodward Avenue Hudson set his sights on a large parcel of land at the corner of Farmer and Gratiot Street, where the city's First Presbyterian Church had been located. Against the advice not to stray from the city's main retail street of Woodward Avenue, Hudson commissioned architect Mortimer Smith to build an eight-story retail palace (4) "for maximum commercial efficiency and convenience."<sup>1095</sup> Interior columns were minimized to ensure the optimal sales floor, surrounded by large plate glass windows to display merchandise to passersby. Although the location was off the beaten path, the store opening in 1891 proved a smashing success

<sup>1094</sup> Left image from Farmer, *The History of Detroit and Michigan or, the Metropolis Illustrated ; a Chronological Cyclopaedia of the Past and Present, Including a Full Record of Territorial Days in Michigan, and the Annals of Wayne County*, 465. Right image circa 1900, courtesy of the Burton Historical Collection.

<sup>1095</sup> Thomas J. Holleman, James P. Gallagher, and Smith Hinchman and Grylls Associates, *Smith, Hinchman & Grylls : 125 Years of Architecture and Engineering, 1853-1978*(Detroit: Published by Wayne State University Press for Smith, Hinchman & Grylls Associates, 1978), 52.

and in its first year after opening, the store would already generate four times the construction cost in sales volume.<sup>1096</sup> The store would soon expand northwards on Farmer Street and in 1911, the store would make its grand entry on Woodward Avenue through the construction of a ten-story 'annex', providing shoppers on the main street with a shortcut to its larger store at the back of the block. While costumers had to traverse the alleyway to reach this building, from the second floor up the buildings would be connected with a bridge.<sup>1097</sup>



**Figure 265. Left: artist rendering of Hudson's department store on Farmer Street and Gratiot Avenue. Right: Hudson's first presence on Woodward, with expansion underway.<sup>1098</sup>**

Nearby, German-born retailer Ernst Kern Sr. and his wife had moved into a five-story building purpose built for their growing textile firm on the central corner of Gratiot and Woodward Avenue in 1897 (5), "one of the handsomest and most conveniently arranged establishments in the city", while maintaining a foothold at their old location a few blocks

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<sup>1096</sup> Pitrone, *Hudson's: Hub of America's Heartland*, 32-33.

<sup>1097</sup> "Hudson's Annex Will Open Today - New Ten-Story Building on Woodward Contains Latest in Goods and Fixtures," *Detroit Free Press*, October 17 1911.

<sup>1098</sup> Left image from Holleman, Gallagher, and Associates, *Smith, Hinchman & Grylls : 125 Years of Architecture and Engineering, 1853-1978*. Right image courtesy of Detroit Historical Museum, from Michael Weldon Marianne Hauser, *Remembering Hudson's : The Grande Dame of Detroit Retailing* (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Pub, 2010), 10.

east.<sup>1099</sup> Its location would be right at the heart of the battlefield between the rapidly growing Newcomb-Endicott department store on Woodward Avenue and Hudson's department store on Farmer Street. More competition would come from the east in 1909, where wholesale and retail experts Joseph Crowley and William Milner would take over the ailing department store of Partridge and Blackwell designed by Smith, Hinchman and Grylls on Monroe and Farmer Streets and Gratiot Avenue only three years previous in 1906 (6). Crowley, Milner & Co. would aggressively modernize the massive block-long, six-story building to include new fashion departments and a restaurant, aiming for nothing short of making the department store "the strongest establishment of its kind in this section of the country."<sup>1100</sup> Yet Monroe Street would also become the entertainment center for the city, with the construction of many theaters including the Wonderland Building designed by Jogn Scott containing the Temple Theater designed by J.M. Wood, opening in 1901 to seat up to 1573 people to watch then-popular vaudeville shows (7).<sup>1101</sup> The theater would be one of many to grace Monroe Avenue, thronging the wide street with evening crowds.<sup>1102</sup> Patrons could stay overnight in the nearby Library Park Hotel opened in 1885 (8).<sup>1103</sup> In a matter of only 50 years, these central blocks had become the 24-hour central district in the city, offering a wealth of different venues at ground floor level. Yet as Detroit was about to embark on an era of rapid expansion, their growth had only started.

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<sup>1099</sup> "Great Business Event - Ernst Kern's Magnificent New Store, Corner Woodward and Gratiot Avenues, to Be Opened Next Thursday Noon," *Detroit Free Press*, October 24 1897.

<sup>1100</sup> "New Firm Assumes Entire Control and Ownership of Big Partridge and Blackwell Department Store," *Detroit Free Press*, May 13 1909.

<sup>1101</sup> "Wonderland Opening," *Detroit Free Press*, September 23 1900; "Theater Is Magnificent," *Detroit Free Press*, December 20 1901; Andrew Craig Morrison, *Theaters*(New York; Washington, D.C.: W.W. Norton & Co. ; Library of Congress, 2006), 151-52.

<sup>1102</sup> Hauser and Weldon, *Detroit's Downtown Movie Palaces*.

<sup>1103</sup> Clarence Monroe Burton, William Stocking, and Gordon K. Miller, *The City of Detroit, Michigan, 1701-1922*, vol. 3(Detroit-Chicago: S.J. Clarke Pub. Co., 1922), 925.

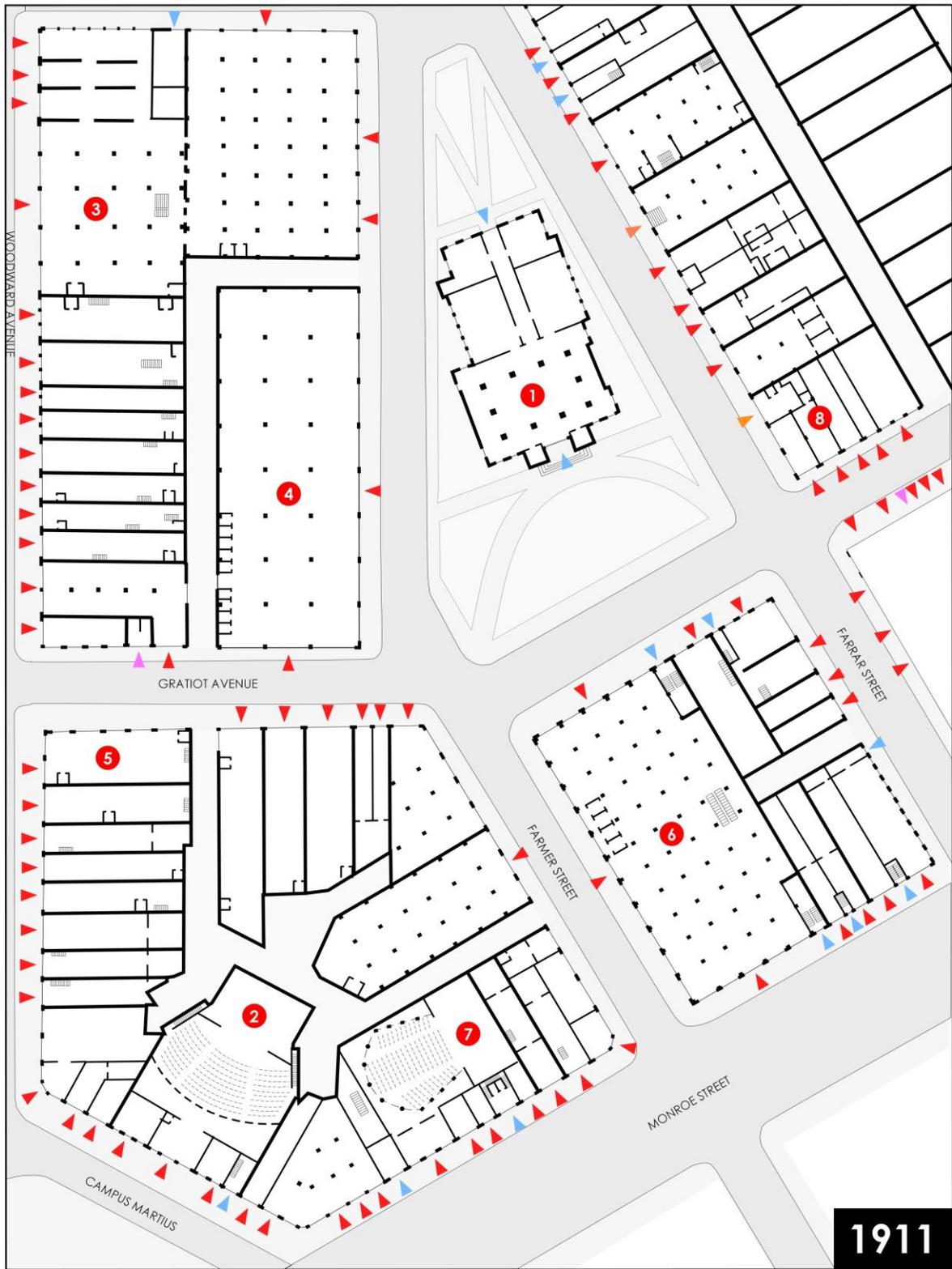


**Figure 266. Left: Partridge and Blackwell shortly before their acquisition by Crowley and Milner. Right: the auditorium of the Temple Theater.<sup>1104</sup>**

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<sup>1104</sup> Left image from Holleman, Gallagher, and Associates, *Smith, Hinchman & Grylls : 125 Years of Architecture and Engineering, 1853-1978*. Right image from Detroit Publishing company, via [www.shorpy.com](http://www.shorpy.com).

Figure 267. Detroit's central blocks in 1911.



- ▲ Retail/bar/restaurant/culture entrance
- ▲ Residential entrance
- ▲ Service/warehouse/garage entrance
- ▲ Office entrance



All of the large department stores were set for rapid growth in the decades that would follow. In 1913, Kern's department store would buy up an adjacent structure to expand its retail operations, soon followed by another expansion in 1915 with the former Webber building on Gratiot Avenue, resulting in a remodeled store with "spacious, well-lighted rooms [and] correctly appointed furnishings."<sup>1105</sup> Yet the business growth proved unstoppable as in 1919 yet another adjacent building was purchased to build a consolidated ten-story department store on Woodward and Gratiot Avenues designed by Smith, Hinchman and Grylls,<sup>1106</sup> taking up Kern's original corner building in 1928 (1).<sup>1107</sup> As a result, Kern's sales floor area increased more than tenfold in the fifteen years between 1913 and 1928.



**Figure 268. Artist rendering of the Kern's department store expansion on Woodward Avenue.<sup>1108</sup>**

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<sup>1105</sup> "Kern's Business Forces Extension," *Detroit Free Press*, July 27 1913; "Kern's Remodeled Store Has Opening," *Detroit Free Press*, September 30 1915.

<sup>1106</sup> "Kern's Plans Great Store," *Detroit Free Press*, April 10 1919.

<sup>1107</sup> Michael Weldon Marianne Hauser, *20th Century Retailing in Downtown Detroit*(Charleston, SC: Arcadia Pub., 2008), 74.

<sup>1108</sup> The number of bays was overestimated in the rendering, most likely as Kern's was looking to expand further. Image from Holleman, Gallagher, and Associates, *Smith, Hinchman & Grylls : 125 Years of Architecture and Engineering, 1853-1978*.

Meanwhile, Crowley and Milner were expanding as feverishly as Kern's did nearby. The original building was rather clandestinely topped with two extra sales floors, and in 1917, the department store would buy up all the remaining tenants on its block and construct a near facsimile of its building to fill the block (2). Soon even this size would prove to obstruct further growth and the company would look to expand its presence across Library Street<sup>1109</sup> to create an 11-story tower for the sales of home furnishings, considered a first for a department store (3). While the addition across Library Street would initially be connected via an underground tunnel, Detroit's city council approved the construction of an overpass bridge in the mid-1920s.<sup>1110</sup> With this bridge, the department store arguable started a dangerous precedent for the countless efforts in following decades to internalize pedestrians rather than to promote street activity. In 1925, Crowley-Milner had reached almost five times the floor area it had just over ten years before, topping at around 800,000 square feet, being the largest department store in Michigan.<sup>1111</sup>

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<sup>1109</sup> Renamed from Farrar Street due to the presence of the city's public library.

<sup>1110</sup> Hauser, *20th Century Retailing in Downtown Detroit*, 66.

<sup>1111</sup> Paul Vachon, *Forgotten Detroit* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2009), 38.



**Figure 269. Crowley Milner's department store around 1935, as viewed from Gratiot and Farmer Streets, with tower addition across Library Street in background.<sup>1112</sup>**

Yet the most aggressive growth was experienced by J.L. Hudson's department store which also greatly benefited from the increased number and wealth of Detroiters. As J.L. Hudson had passed away in 1912, the reign of the department store was given to a family member. While in 14 an annex was purchased on Library Street to house the store's music department (4), Hudson's eyes were set on expanding its presence on Woodward Avenue. Realizing the value of presenting its merchandise to a growing audience on the city's main

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<sup>1112</sup> Image courtesy of Manning Brothers Historical Collection.

retail street, Hudson would slowly continue to buy up smaller competitors on Woodward Avenue to expand its sales floors. One by one, the relatively narrow buildings of independent retailers would be bought up and replaced with Hudson's coherent, tall façades – their plans to dominate the block were all too clear. Holdouts wouldn't stand a chance against Hudson's superior purchasing power, marketing and research budget, aided by the store cooperating with major department stores in other cities.<sup>1113</sup> Hudson's growth reached fever pitch during the 1920s as Detroit's population had skyrocketed since World War 1. The building of Himelhoch, one of Detroit's leading retailers was purchased in 1923, filled with Hudson's familiar façade which had surrounded it for years and the store would sponsor the first of its famed Thanksgiving Parades two years later in 1925, drawing crowds from across the state. That same year Hudson's original retail building on Farmer Street would be replaced by an almost twice as tall structure, completed in 1926, reflecting the city's growth. Hudson's growth would reach its climax in 1927 when the struggling Newcomb-Endicott department store agreed to sell their coveted location on Woodward Avenue to the department store. Only a year later, Hudson's would have razed the site (including a twelve story tower built less than a decade ago!) and erected a seventeen-story addition to its already massive operations on the site (5), topped by a twenty five-story tower on the Farmer Street side (6). As four sixty-foot long neon "Hudson's" signs were lit at the top of the tower, the operation would be complete.<sup>1114</sup> Except for one small corner holdout, Hudson's had usurped the entire block between Woodward, Grand River, Farmer and Gratiot to become the nation's tallest and second-largest department store, significantly outclassing any Detroit competition with over 1850,000 square feet of sales floor area, built to conduct the "largest retail trade in [the] nation."<sup>1115</sup> Interestingly, the original alleyway through the block would continue to be in use for supplying the massive store (7), with customers crossing the alley at street level or bridging it at all higher levels. Although the number of store entrances on the block had declined due to Hudson's consolidations, it still closely interacted with public space by displaying its wealth of

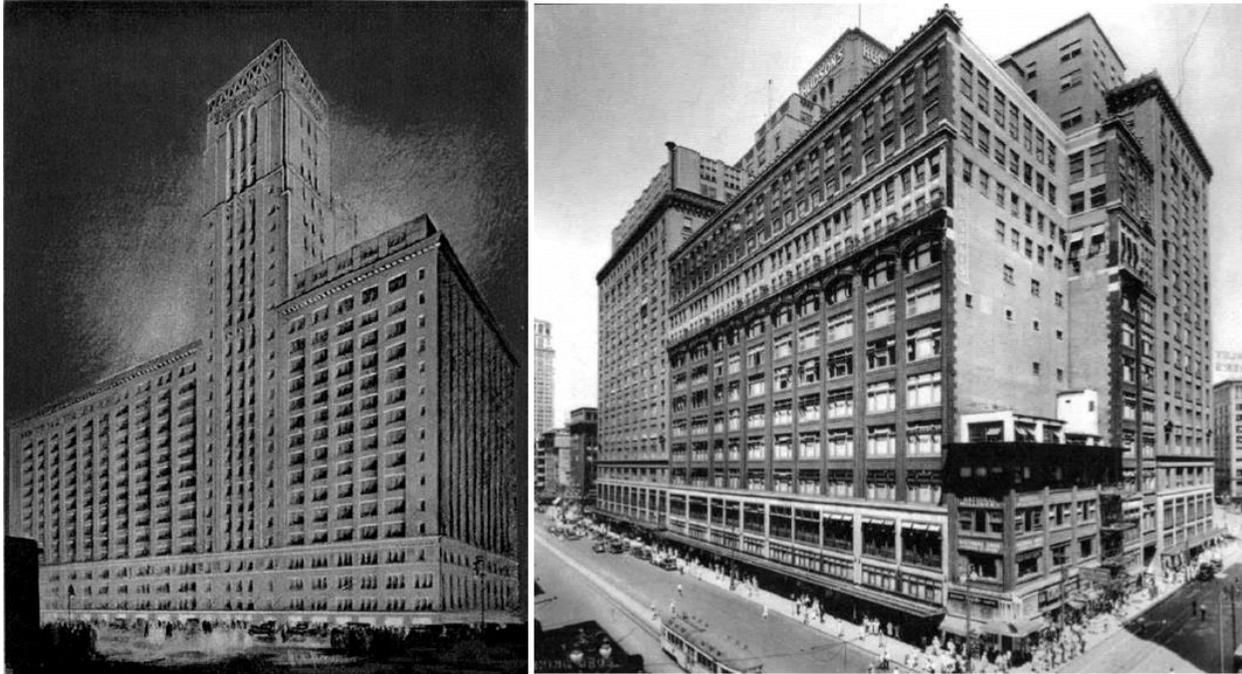
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<sup>1113</sup> Especially the store's cooperation in the Retail Research Association in 1916 helped streamline operations. Pitrone, *Hudson's: Hub of America's Heartland*, 62.

<sup>1114</sup> *Ibid.*, 51-84; Hauser, *Remembering Hudson's: The Grande Dame of Detroit Retailing*, 9-15.

<sup>1115</sup> "Fitted to Do Largest Retail Trade in Nation," *Detroit Free Press*, November 4 1928. The floor area is more than any of the shopping malls in the Detroit region today.

merchandise through 46 display windows. In 1929, Hudson's sales had increased almost twentyfold since 1912.<sup>1116</sup>



**Figure 270. Left: artist rendering of Hudson's new building as viewed from Farmer Street in 1928. Right, Hudson's presence on Woodward Avenue (with holdout corner) in 1935.<sup>1117</sup>**

Yet all retail growth would grind to a halt as the Depression arrived in Detroit after the stock market crash of 1929. Retailers were especially vulnerable to the economic downturn of the city as Detroiters would cut spending to the bare necessities. Hudson's sales halved between 1929 and 1930<sup>1118</sup> and Crowley-Milner's sales similarly dropped by almost 75%.<sup>1119</sup> Although both had created bargain basements during the previous decades, the reduction in disposable income would drive many Detroiters to Sam's Cut Rate store which

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<sup>1116</sup> John Thomas Mahoney and Leonard Sloane, "Inside Hudson's 49 Acres - a New Book Reveals a Detroit Phenomenon," *ibid.*, January 15 1967, 18.

<sup>1117</sup> Both images from Hauser and Weldon, *Hudson's: Detroit's Legendary Department Store*. Left image from promotional postcard, right image courtesy of Manning Brothers Collection.

<sup>1118</sup> Pitrone, *Hudson's: Hub of America's Heartland*, 85.

<sup>1119</sup> Tina Grant, *International Directory of Company Histories. Volume 19* (Detroit, Mich.: St. James Press, 1998), 106-11.

had opened a new presence in the now closed Detroit Opera House (8),<sup>1120</sup> further harming sales at the traditional department stores in its vicinity. Sam's had quickly become another growing empire in central Detroit, founded by Russian immigrant Sam Osnos in 1917.<sup>1121</sup> The store was so successful that an adjacent building on Farmer Street would soon be bought to accommodate more sales floors (9). The adjacent Temple Theater wasn't lucky enough to find a new tenant, as it would be razed for a parking lot in the 1930s – one of the first blank spots in the heart of downtown (10). The Depression did bring public investments to Detroit, as the city commissioned the demolition of its former central library to be replaced by an expanded Art Deco library designed by William Kapp at Smith, Hinchman and Grylls as part of Detroit's efforts to provide employment (11). The district would become almost the sole territory of this firm's esthetic influence, as they had designed Crowley-Milner's department store to the library's south side, Hudson's to its west and Kern's to its southwest.<sup>1122</sup>



**Figure 271. Detroit Public Library downtown branch, with Hudson's department store windows in the background.**<sup>1123</sup>

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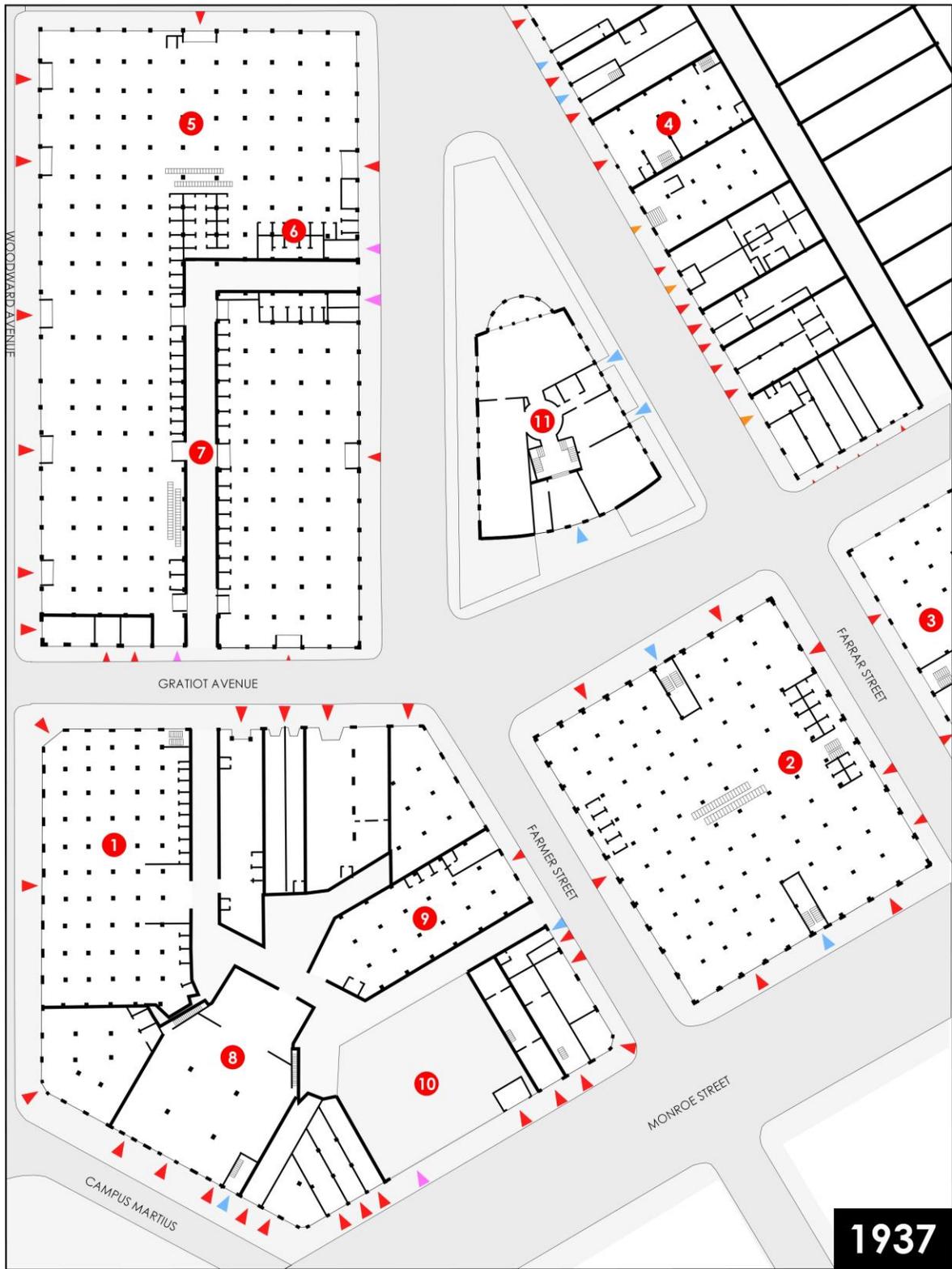
<sup>1120</sup> Sam's was already present since 1925 on Monroe Street, just south of the mapped blocks. Hauser, *20th Century Retailing in Downtown Detroit*, 120-21.

<sup>1121</sup> William W. Lutz, "Cigar and \$350 Started Success Saga of Sams," *Detroit News*, January 26 1961.

<sup>1122</sup> Holleman, Gallagher, and Associates, *Smith, Hinchman & Grylls: 125 Years of Architecture and Engineering, 1853-1978*, 131.

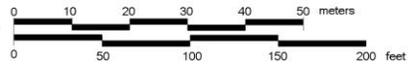
<sup>1123</sup> Image circa 1940, courtesy of Burton Historical Collection.

Figure 272. Detroit's central blocks in 1937.



- ▲ Retail/bar/restaurant/culture entrance
- ▲ Residential entrance
- ▲ Service/warehouse/garage entrance
- ▲ Office entrance

1:1000



As America stumbled into its Second World War, Detroit prospered from wartime construction jobs. New and existing customers flocked the department stores, and sales were on the rise. Store expansion could only follow - Hudson's would add two more stories to its existing building and was finally able to buy up the last remaining holdout at the corner of Woodward and Gratiot Avenue in 1945 (1).<sup>1124</sup> At its peak, it was a store of superlatives: 200 departments offering 553,921 items on 17 floors, connected by 51 elevators. The store had its own hospital, art gallery and delivered across the globe.<sup>1125</sup> Yet the department store was also aware of the rapidly changing dynamics of Detroit's population, as it recognized the need for car parking to continue to entice its increasingly automobile affluent clientele to visit the store over its growing suburban competition. In 1941, Hudson had commissioned one of Detroit's first dedicated shopping parking decks, designed by its house architecture firm of Smith, Hinchman and Grylls.<sup>1126</sup> The Library Park hotel would be replaced by a parking structure in 1951 (2).

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<sup>1124</sup> "New Building to Be Erected by J.L. Hudson," *Detroit Free Press*, November 20 1945.

<sup>1125</sup> Hauser and Weldon, *Hudson's: Detroit's Legendary Department Store*, 7.

<sup>1126</sup> "Parking Deck: Shopper's Parking Deck, Detroit, Mich. Smith, Hinchman & Grylls, Inc., Architects."

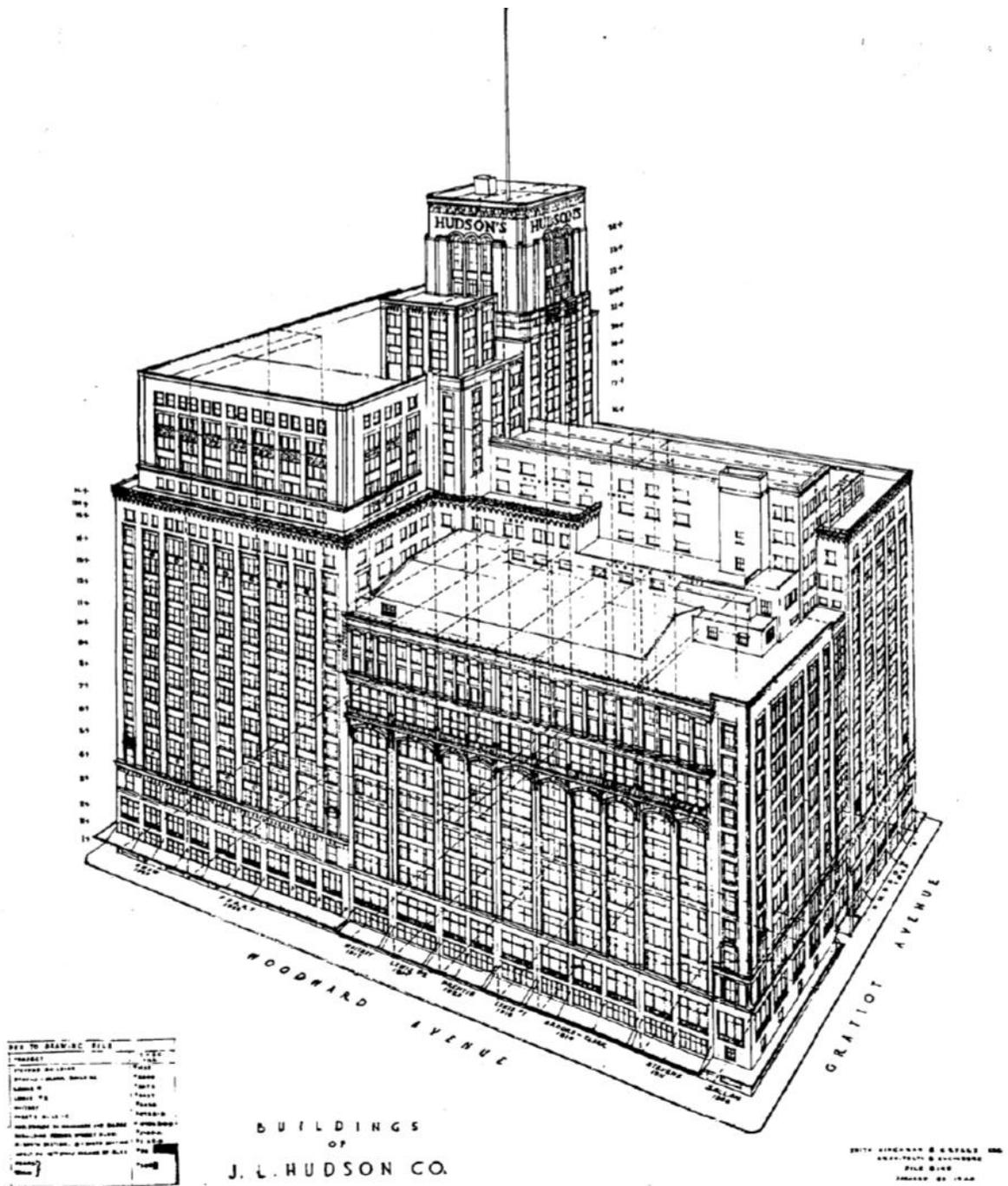


Figure 273. Hudson's structure at its peak after the acquisition of the last remaining corner lot.<sup>1127</sup>

Yet many affluent Detroiters would continue to move further away from the urban core. As a result, the fate of Detroit's central retail blocks was increasingly decided by what

<sup>1127</sup> Image courtesy of Michael Hauser, from correspondence. Date unknown.

happened miles away from them – the department store battlefield had shifted from downtown to suburban fields. While the store’s window displays captured Detroiters with a lavish portrayal of their city’s 250-year history in 1951,<sup>1128</sup> Hudson’s managers were looking to the future. In 1950, they had made the decision to follow Detroit’s suburbanizing middle class whose custom was increasingly taken by competing chain stores in car-accessible locations. Working with famed retail architect Victor Gruen, Hudson’s spared no expense as they built a 550,000 square foot department store in the middle of a more than 1,100,000 square foot mall they financed. The resulting retail experience was unprecedented in its novelty, replacing the noise and bustle of downtown Detroit with a neatly laid out yet playful environment for consumption.<sup>1129</sup> Hudson’s Northland bet paid off, as the \$30,000,000 investment already yielded \$88,000,000 in trade in its first year, a return on investment which Hudson’s had only seen before at the 1891 opening of its first department store. The startling initial sales figures prompted the company’s management to open a second branch in Eastland Center in 1957.<sup>1130</sup> Westland Center followed in 1965.



**Figure 274. Northland Center with Hudson’s department store in 1965.<sup>1131</sup>**

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<sup>1128</sup> Hudson's department store, *Detroit's 250th Anniversary - Hudson's 70th Year*(Detroit1951).

<sup>1129</sup> M. Jeffrey Hardwick and Victor Gruen, *Mall Maker : Victor Gruen, Architect of an American Dream*(Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

<sup>1130</sup> Pitrone, *Hudson's: Hub of America's Heartland*, 118-20; Longstreth, *The American Department Store Transformed, 1920-1960*.

<sup>1131</sup> Image courtesy of Wayne State University Virtual Motor City Collection, from Detroit News August 11, 1965.

Hudson's suburban success was widely published throughout the nation and did not go unnoticed by its downtown competitors. Two years later, Crowley's would follow Hudson's lead and opened up its first new branch store in West Dearborn in 1959. They had little other choice, as downtown sales were starting to decline to the point where the company decided to rent out part of its initial store to the Veterans Administration. Although the store only had an eighth of the space of the downtown anchor, its sales were stellar from the start. More would soon follow in malls around the region, but their modest sizes never matched Hudson's grand efforts.<sup>1132</sup> Kern's department store was unable to follow suit and establish branch locations, and was sold twice between 1957 and 1959. The new owners were unable to turn the store's tide, as affluent postwar consumers had parked their cars at greener pastures years before. The store would become the first major casualty of Detroit's suburbanization of the middle class and would lose after the Christmas shopping season of 1959.<sup>1133</sup> The new reality for downtown Detroit's retail palaces was clear: branch out or lose out. The percentage of CBD department store sales in the metropolitan region would plummet by almost 50% between 1954 and 1963, and by 1966, less than 15% of Detroit's metropolitan department store floor space was located in downtown, almost all of it in Hudson's main building.<sup>1134</sup> That same year, only 40% of Hudson's income would be generated from its downtown store sales.<sup>1135</sup>

The increasingly aggressive urban renewal policies of the 1950s and early 1960s would do little to stem the decline of downtown's retail palaces. After an unsuccessful plan to build a seven-story shopping center on the entire block which was occupied by Kern's closed department store in 1961,<sup>1136</sup> the city applied and received federal funding to clear the block in 1965. The city argued for the block's potential by extrapolating the downtown's existing retail offer and by putting a significant amount of faith upon the return of middle class residents and workers through urban renewal projects like Lafayette Park, the

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<sup>1132</sup> Vachon, *Forgotten Detroit*. Despite the small sizes of their branch stores, Crowley's would open in some of America's largest enclosed shopping malls in western Detroit.

<sup>1133</sup> Hauser, *20th Century Retailing in Downtown Detroit*.

<sup>1134</sup> Company., "Development Opportunities in Downtown Detroit - Cbd #5," III-2 - III-3.

<sup>1135</sup> Mahoney and Sloane, "Inside Hudson's 49 Acres - a New Book Reveals a Detroit Phenomenon," 16.

<sup>1136</sup> Joseph N. Hartmann, "7-Story Shopping Center Set for Downtown Site - New Development Praised," *Detroit News*, January 26 1961.

reconstruction of Lower Woodward Avenue and the riverfront.<sup>1137</sup> In 1966, the block was cleared to make way for a temporary park, a mere shadow of the memories it replaced (3). Although there was no shortage of grand redevelopment plans for the site, it would take decades for any plan to materialize. Meanwhile, the site would host temporary events to keep visitors downtown and support nearby retailers.



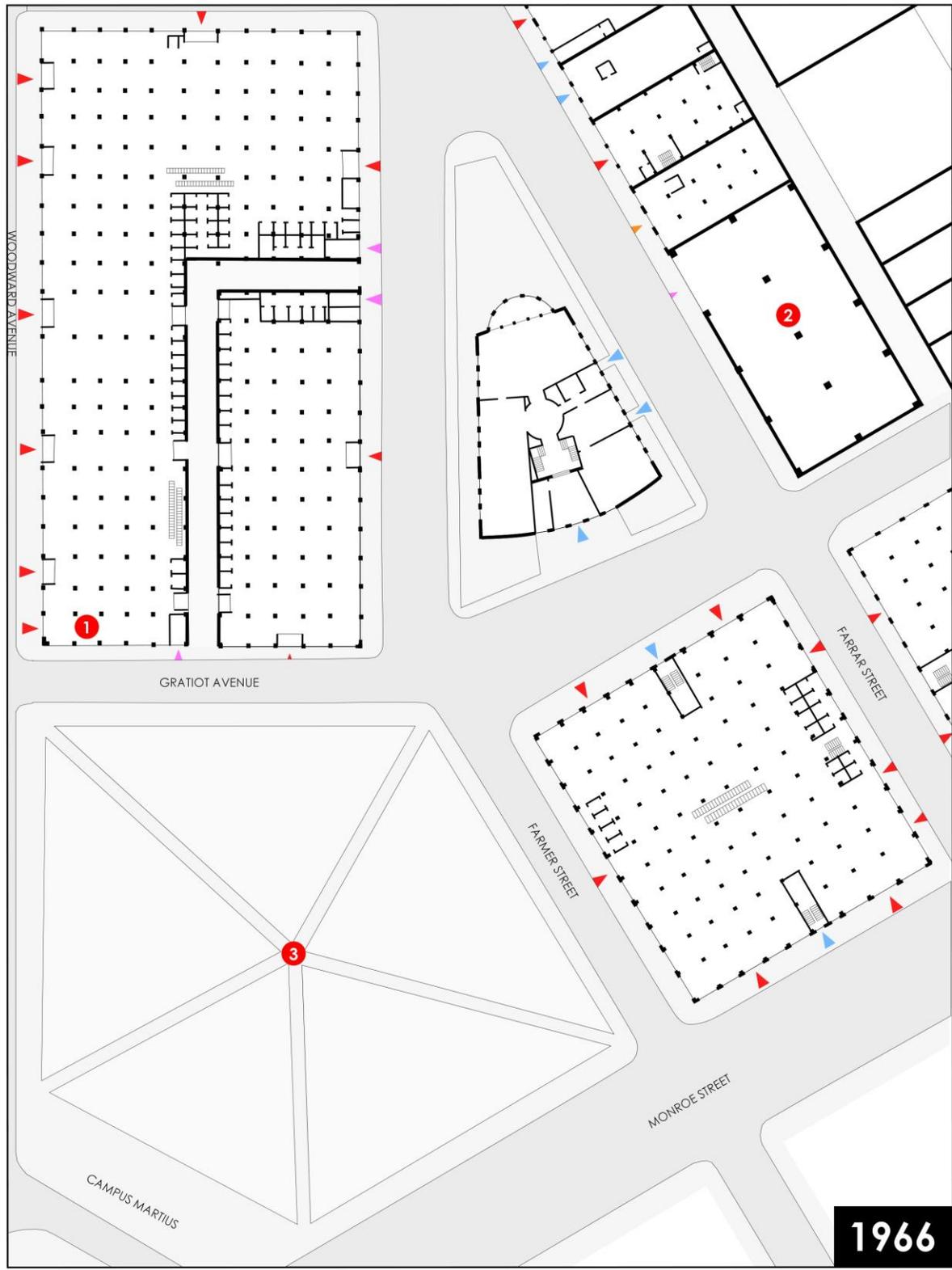
**Figure 275. Demolition of Kern's department store and block in 1966.<sup>1138</sup>**

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<sup>1137</sup> Company., "Development Opportunities in Downtown Detroit - Cbd #5," III-8 - III-13.

<sup>1138</sup> Image courtesy of Wayne State University Virtual Motor City Collection, from Detroit News June 13, 1966.

Figure 276. Detroit's central blocks in 1966.



- ▲ Retail/bar/restaurant/culture entrance
- ▲ Residential entrance
- ▲ Service/warehouse/garage entrance
- ▲ Office entrance



The two remaining department stores in downtown Detroit could not fathom that their suburban branch stores would start to lead a life of their own. Hudson's wasn't necessarily immune to Crowley's competition but mostly saw its downtown sales bleed towards its very own branch stores. Although one could argue that the downtown merchants had dug their own graves by branching outward, the closure of Kern's un-branched department store in 1959 and the flourishing of Sears' car-accessible chain stores throughout the metropolitan region – taking sales from their downtown competitors – demonstrate that Hudson's and Crowley's had no other choice.

The plight of downtown retail would get even worse after the civil disorders of 1967. Although most damage was inflicted outside the central business district of Detroit, the image of downtown as a vibrant and desirable destination would be severely marred by the disorders and the steady increase of crime which followed. Hudson's became the scene of various assaults and losses due to theft were mounting rapidly at all downtown retailers. Hudson's profits declined almost 25% between 1965 and 1968,<sup>1139</sup> with Crowley's most likely following in its wake. Special sales and events (including the first Sunday openings) did little to stem the decline for both stores.<sup>1140</sup> Continuing tough market conditions would prompt Hudson's to merge with the Minneapolis-based Dayton Corporation in 1969, arguably taking the decision-making process away from downtown Detroit.<sup>1141</sup>

The 1970s would prove tough if not fatal for both downtown department stores. The high cost of maintaining and heating their ageing buildings were exacerbated by the rapidly mounting inventory shortages due to theft.<sup>1142</sup> By 1972, rumors had started to spread that Hudson's was retreating from downtown, planning to rent a significant portion of its mammoth store to third parties, a move that Crowley's had successfully made a decade ago.<sup>1143</sup> Efforts to modernize the store and the merchandize it offered were to no avail. Over the years, Hudson's would slowly close off upper sales floors, dwindling to only three

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<sup>1139</sup> Pitrone, *Hudson's: Hub of America's Heartland*, 153.

<sup>1140</sup> Hauser, *20th Century Retailing in Downtown Detroit*, 71-72.

<sup>1141</sup> This removal was initially denied by Hudson's management.

<sup>1142</sup> In 1972, Hudson's inventory shortage mounted to \$12,000,000. Pitrone, *Hudson's: Hub of America's Heartland*, 163.

<sup>1143</sup> Susan Watson, "Hudson's... Where Memories Fill the Aisles," *Detroit Free Press*, September 23 1972.

of its seventeen original floors by the 1980s. Down at the ground floor, Hudson's decided to close off half of its display windows to save money and prevent further break-ins in 1977. Amidst a rapidly decaying urban core, "people weren't coming... to windows shop any more."<sup>1144</sup> The former cathedral of consumption had become a fortress, defending itself from -instead of presenting itself to- passersby.<sup>1145</sup> Downtown lost its significance and viability as a retail destination, as its sales only amounted to 2.1% of the metropolitan total in 1977.<sup>1146</sup> Crowley's department store was forced to downsize its central store drastically from 1973 onwards as well. Efforts to modernize the store was obstructed by the building's complicated ownership structure. By 1976, downtown sales were even lower than during the worst Depression years. By July of the next year, the store was shuttered.<sup>1147</sup> By December, crews would start erasing the building from Detroit's memory. After three years of wrecking the job was done - another downtown landmark was gone (1).

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<sup>1144</sup> Citation of director Joe Hudson in Pitrone, *Hudson's: Hub of America's Heartland*, 166.

<sup>1145</sup> Warren, "Downtown Hudson's Closes Off Half of Its 65 Display Windows."

<sup>1146</sup> Derived from the business census of 1977.

<sup>1147</sup> Kenyon, "Crowley's Closing Ends a Detroit Era."



**Figure 277. Crowley's remains with Hudson's department store in the background.**<sup>1148</sup>

Hudson's department store would remain open, but it was rapidly leaking heat and water and more importantly, merchandise. Efforts to find tenants for the mostly empty structure were unsuccessful, as tenants had many vacant downtown buildings to choose from – a fate worsened by the opening of the modern Renaissance Center in 1977. Yet Detroit's final department store would not go down without a fight. As discussed in chapter 6, Hudson's management would join forces with retail developer Alfred Taubman to create a vision for Hudson's sustainable continued presence in downtown Detroit. The ageing department store was to be replaced by a multistory downtown shopping mall, named the "Cadillac Center", in which a drastically downsized Hudson's would be one of three anchor stores. The former sites of Kern's and Crowley's department stores were also included in the grand plan, as was an adjacent historical retail block on Monroe Street. While preservationists vehemently protested the inherent demolition of Hudson's downtown

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<sup>1148</sup> Image courtesy of Detroit Free Press archives via [www.historicdetroit.org](http://www.historicdetroit.org)

building to make way for the mall, ultimately the plan would fail due to a lack of interest by other department stores to become anchors.

Despite threats by Hudson's management that this plan would be their last attempt to stay downtown, the city conceded it was off the table by 1980.<sup>1149</sup> After a change in management, Hudson's announced its closure in 1982.<sup>1150</sup> All remaining departments were slowly dismantled, leaving the once-grand "Matriarch of Woodward" as a shadow of its former self, "a forlorn place that could have been the stage set for a period movie."<sup>1151</sup> The store would open for its last day on January 17, 1983, sending a ripple effect of closures among downtown's remaining businesses (2).<sup>1152</sup> All that remained of Hudson's wealth of window displays and grand entrances at street level was a single lobby which would bring Hudson's remaining office staff up to the five highest floors of the store's Farmer Street building for a few more years (3), and four remaining corner window displays.<sup>1153</sup> When Detroit's People Mover opened the year after,<sup>1154</sup> it would embark on a journey past Kern's and Crowley's vacant blocks before turning the corner past Hudson's empty shell from downtown's most ironically named stop – named Cadillac Center (4).

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<sup>1149</sup> Fireman, "Kern Block Mall Plan Dead."; Roach, "Kern Block Project Shelved."; "Hudson's Gives City Ultimatum," *ibid.*, July 11 1978.

<sup>1150</sup> Bob Luke, "Hudson Gives up Downtown," *ibid.*, July 14 1982.

<sup>1151</sup> Jerry Herron, "The Forgetting Machine: Notes toward a History of Detroit," *Places* (2012).

<sup>1152</sup> Gribbin, Bulgier, and Powers, "Hudson's Downtown Store Closes."; Don Tschirhart, "More Stores Follow Hudson's Closing," *ibid.*, May 1.

<sup>1153</sup> Pitrone, *Hudson's: Hub of America's Heartland*, 177-78.

<sup>1154</sup> Mieczko, "The People Mover - Downtown Merchants Say It's Nice, but Not Crucial for Them." The corner window displays were promised to Mayor Coleman Young to remain open until the building was either renovated or torn down: Pitrone, *Hudson's: Hub of America's Heartland*, 186.

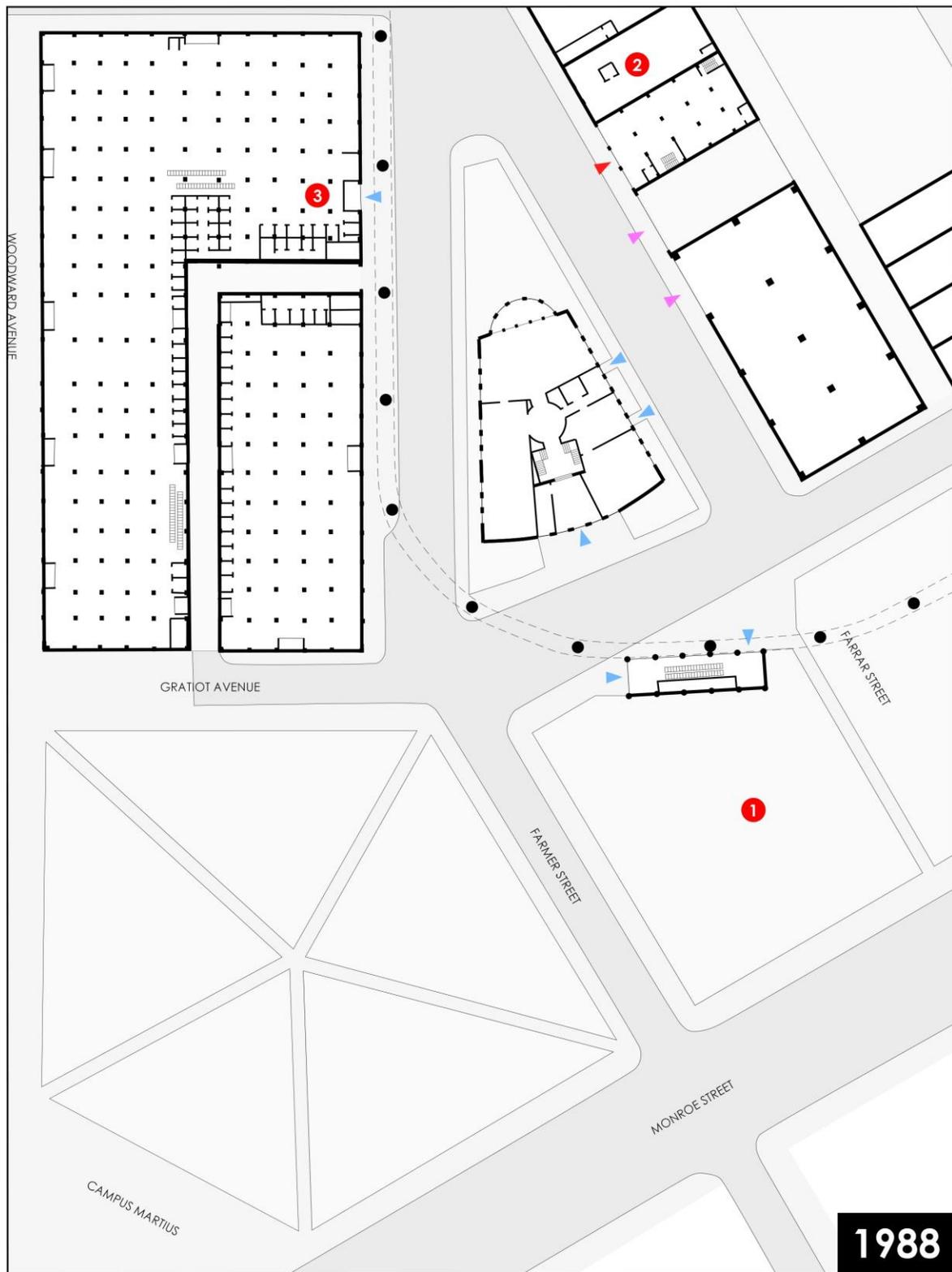


**Figure 278. Hudson's empty building amidst the cleared remains of Kern's (below right) and Crowley's department stores (right).<sup>1155</sup>**

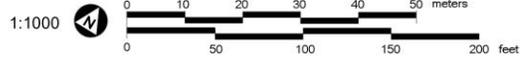
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<sup>1155</sup> Image courtesy of Detroit Free Press archives, via [www.historicdetroit.org](http://www.historicdetroit.org).

Figure 279. Detroit's central blocks in 1988.



- ▲ Retail/bar/restaurant/culture entrance
- ▲ Residential entrance
- ▲ Service/warehouse/garage entrance
- ▲ Office entrance



1988

After its closure, Hudson's empty building remained as a silent landmark to downtown Detroit's decline amidst hundreds of shuttered stores, offices and cultural venues. Efforts to renovate the building using Urban Development Action Grants were unsuccessful, and a Canadian developer which had purchased the building in 1989 was accused to have only stripped its valuable parts.<sup>1156</sup> As the group filed for bankruptcy in 1991, the store was left in an almost irreparable state. The death knell for Hudson's building was remarkably similar as it had been for its retail use – a grand plan. A mayor-backed Greater Downtown Partnership had set its sights on Hudson's building as part of "Campus Martius", a multi-block commercial development which would take a similar footprint to the failed Cadillac Center development of two decades past. Another similarity was that the plan saw no place for Hudson's old building. The empty hulk was considered an obstruction in the path to the Partnership's charted downtown progress, and its demolition would gather sufficient financial and political support in the mid-1990s.<sup>1157</sup> On October 24, 1998 at 5.47 p.m. the Hudson's store met its inevitable fate, as it was imploded with "a deafening roar that will echo in the hearts of Detroiters for decades." (1)<sup>1158</sup>



**Figure 280. Hudson's implosion in 1998.**<sup>1159</sup>

The Campus Martius master plan prompted the construction of Compuware's headquarter building in 2000, designed by Detroit-based Rossetti Architects. As it opened in 2003, the

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<sup>1156</sup> Pitrone, *Hudson's: Hub of America's Heartland*, 187-88.

<sup>1157</sup> "Raze Old Building, Taubman Says."; Hauser and Weldon, *Hudson's: Detroit's Legendary Department Store*, 126.

<sup>1158</sup> Ron French, "It's History - the Hudson's Building: 1911-1998," *Detroit News and Free Press*, October 25 1998.

<sup>1159</sup> Images courtesy of Lowell Boileau.

building would house the technology firm in a million square foot, fifteen story building surrounded a publicly accessible atrium – a “bold, fresh start” for the struggling downtown core (2).<sup>1160</sup> Nearby, Campus Martius Park was redeveloped and opened a year later. This prize-winning plaza and park was designed by Indiana-based Rundell Ernstberger Associates landscape architects and finished in 2004. While the Compuware building contains ground-floor retail units facing Woodward Avenue and Monroe Avenue, the ‘rear’ of the building consists of parking ramps, service entrances and blank walls. Furthermore, the two blocks formerly taken up by Crowley’s department store had now been usurped with a massive ten-story parking structure, only presenting itself to Monroe Avenue with ground-floor retail (3). As a result, Gratiot and Farmer Streets have definitively been cut off as viable retail streets by the very structure which was aimed to jumpstart the economic revitalization of downtown Detroit – a drastic departure from their former roles as incubators of the rapid growth of Detroit’s two largest retailers – Hudson’s and Crowley’s. This process corroborates the pattern demonstrated in chapter 6: only the main retail streets remained in the urban core’s decline, at the cost of side streets.



**Figure 281. Left: the Compuware building as seen from Campus Martius. Right: the Compuware building’s rear toward Farmer and Gratiot Street.**<sup>1161</sup>

<sup>1160</sup> Citation from the project description by Rossetti Architects, accessed September 23, 2014 via [www.rossetti.com](http://www.rossetti.com).

<sup>1161</sup> Left image courtesy of OpenBuildings database. Right image by author, August 2014.

Yet a new era may be looming for Detroit's most central blocks. In 2010, mortgage banker Dan Gilbert settled in the Compuware building, along with thousands of his employees. His vision for downtown is one of vibrant public life as desired by his relatively young workforce, as the Creative Class now desires "urban core excitement."<sup>1162</sup> While many visionaries have preceded him, Gilbert would put his money where his mouth is and would start to buy up significant portions of downtown Detroit, including purchasing development rights for the former Hudson's site. In 2013, Gilbert would host an international design competition for the Hudson's site, inviting various significant design firms to include ground floor retail and residential space above, which ultimately led to the choice for New York-based SHoP architects to draft proposals for a renewed Hudson's block, nicknamed "Hudson's 2.0".<sup>1163</sup> Meanwhile, Gilbert's real estate subsidiary has completed the construction of the "Z Lot" in 2014, a parking garage in the block between Library Street and Broadway with ground floor retail units on both sides, designed by Neumann/Smith (4).<sup>1164</sup> The garage fuels the continued revitalization of Library Street, where formerly shuttered stores and buildings have been reopened as bars, art galleries and upscale lofts (5). Slowly, Detroit's retail core assumes a new form, but islands of interactive frontages remain scattered among empty lots and blank facades. Only the future holds whether the new development impetus will be able to stitch the newfound street-level activity together into a district that will once again gain a place in Detroit's collective memory.

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<sup>1162</sup> Segal, "A Missionary's Quest to Remake Motor City."

<sup>1163</sup> John Gallagher, "Gilbert Hopes to Recapture Hudson's Magic with New Iconic Woodward Structure," *Detroit Free Press*, November 25 2013; J.C. Reindl, "Gilbert Seeks Ideas for Developing Hudson's Site in Detroit," *ibid.*, February 28.

<sup>1164</sup> John Gallagher, "Dan Gilbert's Z Garage Opens," *ibid.*, January 29 2014.



**Figure 282. Z Lot parking garage above ground floor retail, with new businesses on Library Street in the background.<sup>1165</sup>**

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<sup>1165</sup> Image by author, 2014.

Figure 283. Detroit's central blocks in 2014.



- ▲ Retail/bar/restaurant/culture entrance
- ▲ Residential entrance
- ▲ Service/warehouse/garage entrance
- ▲ Office entrance



2014

## 7.4 DETROIT PERIPHERAL BLOCK ENSEMBLE – RENAISSANCE CENTER

The current site of the Renaissance Center has a long history, but not necessarily a glamorous one. The current address of General Motors' headquarter building has been a crucial part of Detroit's growth since its founding over three centuries ago. Jefferson Avenue ran parallel to the Detroit River, sprouting numerous farms along its length from the era of French occupation in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. As such, the avenue housed some of the city's most notable founding families, building the city inland on the narrow and long farm plots which projected perpendicularly from the river. The Renaissance Center stands on the site of the farmhouse of politician and lawyer Elijah Brush, and was later occupied by governor Lewis Cass<sup>1166</sup>. As the industrial and commercial growth of Detroit caused an increased interest in the accessibility of Jefferson Avenue and its adjacent blocks to the river, the once-grand street would lose its luster as a place of residence. Instead, a curious mixture of commercial and industrial buildings would sprout among the remaining homesteads in Detroit's rapidly transforming riverfront district. The "former lordly thoroughfare ... had been transformed into ... a skeleton of the glorious past."<sup>1167</sup> By 1911, the area was in a clear state of transition.

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<sup>1166</sup> "Ren Cen Going up on Historic Detroit Site," *Detroit Monitor*, May 7 1975.

<sup>1167</sup> "Jefferson Avenue Has Lost Its Glory."



**Figure 284. Wholesalers on Jefferson Avenue between Randolph and Bates Street, circa 1911.<sup>1168</sup>**

A remnant of Jefferson Avenue's history as a prestigious address was the Yondotega Club (1), a highly exclusive social organization founded in 1892 with membership limited to around 100 people, interested in "divine food and card playing", visited by British royalty and American presidents alike.<sup>1169</sup> Another sign of the Avenue's past was the Biddle House (2), a hotel constructed in 1849 on the site of Detroit's first brick structure and an older hotel building. The hotel "saw the entertainment of some of the most distinguished persons of the country" in its early days, including General Ulysses S. Grant, President Andrew

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<sup>1168</sup> Image courtesy of Burton Historical Collection.

<sup>1169</sup> Norman Kenyon, "A Dump So Exclusive Death Guards the Door - That's Detroit's Yondotega Club," *Detroit Free Press*, March 2 1952.

Johnson and David Glasgow Farragut. Yet the hotel lost its viability with the construction of newer, grander hotels inland such as the Russell House in 1857. The building stood mostly vacant during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, until a fire destroyed most of it in 1909.<sup>1170</sup> The building's remains would be turned into a warehouse for the Krolik & Co. wholesaler, which constructed a new building designed by Albert Kahn in 1916.



**Figure 285. Biddle House hotel on Jefferson Avenue.**<sup>1171</sup>

Not only residents would leave the area. Jefferson Avenue's role as a commercial street would also be severely hampered by the rise of Hudson's, Crowley-Milner's and Kern's department stores north of Campus Martius in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The

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<sup>1170</sup> "Old Biddle House Gone," *ibid.*, November 20 1909.

<sup>1171</sup> Image courtesy of Burton Historical Collection, date unknown.

retail core of Detroit shifted northward, leaving many commercial buildings on Jefferson Avenues as wholesale units (3). Consumer goods made way for automobiles and parts, bicycles, tires and bulk goods such as foods, textiles and machinery. Interspersed with these buildings were many open lots which were often used for storing bulk goods. While not necessarily as glamorous as the Avenue's former role, the wholesaling shift complemented the growth of the many warehouses in the riverfront district, manufacturing a wide range of smaller and larger items such as carriage goods, iron and engines, lights, picture frames, as well as storing paper, chemicals, stones, dry goods, food, lumber and Detroit's growing arsenal of horse and motorized carriages.<sup>1172</sup> The district even contained a small power station for the Edison Illuminating Company, predecessor to the Detroit Edison Company (4). Henry Ford is likely to have worked in this building, as he was charged with maintaining Edison's electric facilities in working order between 1891 and 1899. Amidst these utilitarian structures stood the Brush Street Station (5), first used for a rail line toward Pontiac in 1852. This line consolidated into the Detroit & Milwaukee Railroad, subsequently absorbed by the Grand Trunk railway. The station had been rebuilt in 1882 after a fire in 1866 and would connect Detroit to many destinations in northern Michigan, as well as Chicago.<sup>1173</sup> Adjacent to the rail yard were ferry docks which could bring train passengers across the river into Canada. Just northeast of the passenger station stood the freight depot (6), providing carriage access for goods via platforms on either side. The stations were surrounded with a rather clandestinely consolidated set of small hotels such as the Wabash House (7), City Hotel (8), Canada Hotel (9) and Lawrence Hotel (10), places of crime rather than glamour.<sup>1174</sup>

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<sup>1172</sup> These items are derived from the 1911 Baist's Real Estate Atlas, combined with the 1911 Polk Directory for Detroit.

<sup>1173</sup> Patrick C. Dorin, *The Grand Trunk Western Railroad: A Canadian National Railway* (Seattle: Superior Pub. Co., 1977).

<sup>1174</sup> "G.T. Detective Shot in Hotel," *Detroit Free Press*, March 6 1917; "Much Better: The Condition of the Wabash Hotel Sufferers," *Detroit Free Press*, May 26 1883; "Connelly on Trial - the Decetive Accused of Being in a Drunken Fight," *Detroit Free Press*, August 29 1896.

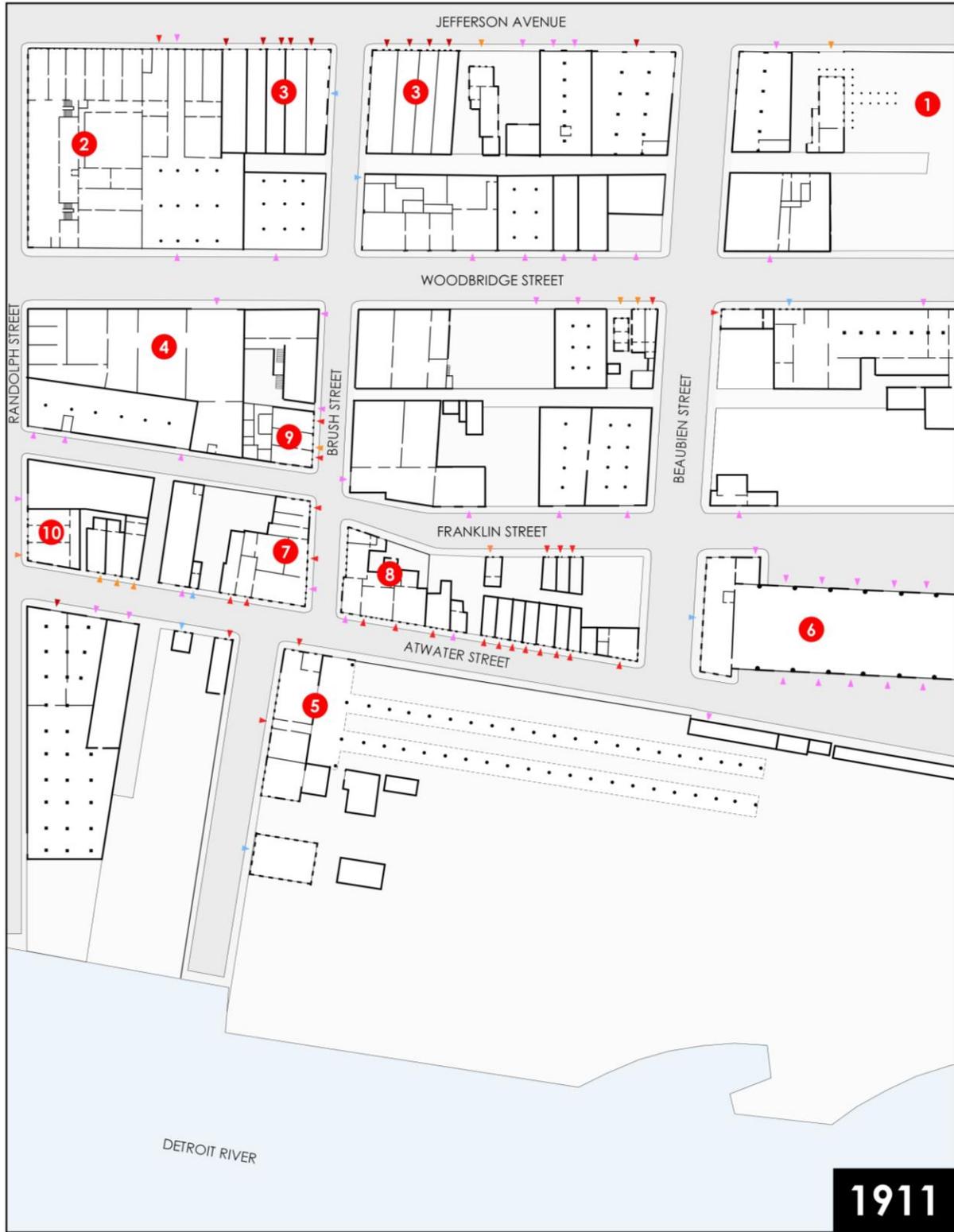


**Figure 286. City Hotel at the corner of Brush and Atwater Street, taken from the Brush Street railway station. The Wabash Hotel is located on the far left corner of the image.<sup>1175</sup>**

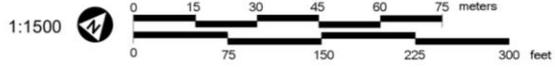
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<sup>1175</sup> Image circa 1905, courtesy of Burton Historical Collection.

Figure 287. Detroit's peripheral blocks in 1911.



- ▲ Retail/bar/restaurant/culture entrance
- ▲ Residential/hotel entrance
- ▲ Service/warehouse/garage entrance
- ▲ Office entrance

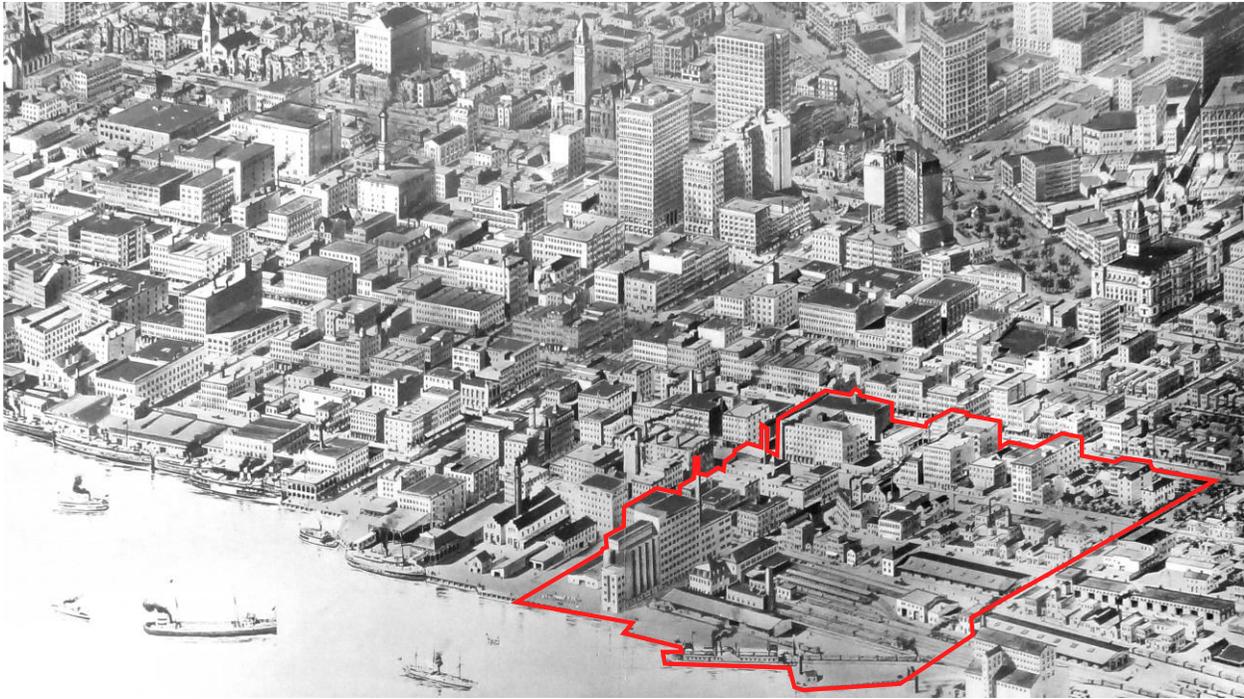


As commercial activity continued to prosper north of Campus Martius, most remaining retailers would leave the area during the 1910s and 1920s. Any remaining residents would depart for upscale districts like Indian Village and Palmer Woods. The district was left with a blossoming wholesale trade, interspersed with manufacturing buildings and warehouses. The Krolik wholesale company commissioned architect Albert Kahn to design a grand new nine-story warehouse on the site of the former Biddle House hotel by 1916. Nearby, the Detroit Edison Company would slowly expand its operations across the block between Woodbridge, Brush, Franklin and Randolph Streets. Detroit's automotive industry manufactured, stored and sold cars in the district, with the Packard Motor Company taking up the entire block north of Grand Trunk's freight depot for sales and servicing of their cars. Yet the most striking symbol of Detroit's industrial strength at the riverfront was the ten-story flour mill constructed in 1911 for the Commercial Milling Company of Henkel and Vorhess. The mill consisted of eleven tall silos, connected to a massive elevator to load and unload flour unto ships and trains. After the mill's purchase by International Multifoods in 1942, the building was topped with a large "Robin Hood Flour" sign, displaying the brand name of its contents.<sup>1176</sup> Over the years, the mill would expand significantly, building a dedicated train shed in 1950.<sup>1177</sup>

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<sup>1176</sup> Don Tschirhart, "Riverfront Flour Plant Yields to Progress," *Detroit News*, January 5 1973. "Big Flour Mill Is to Be Built," *Detroit Free Press*, April 9 1911.

<sup>1177</sup> Noted on the 1951 Sanborn Fire Insurance map.



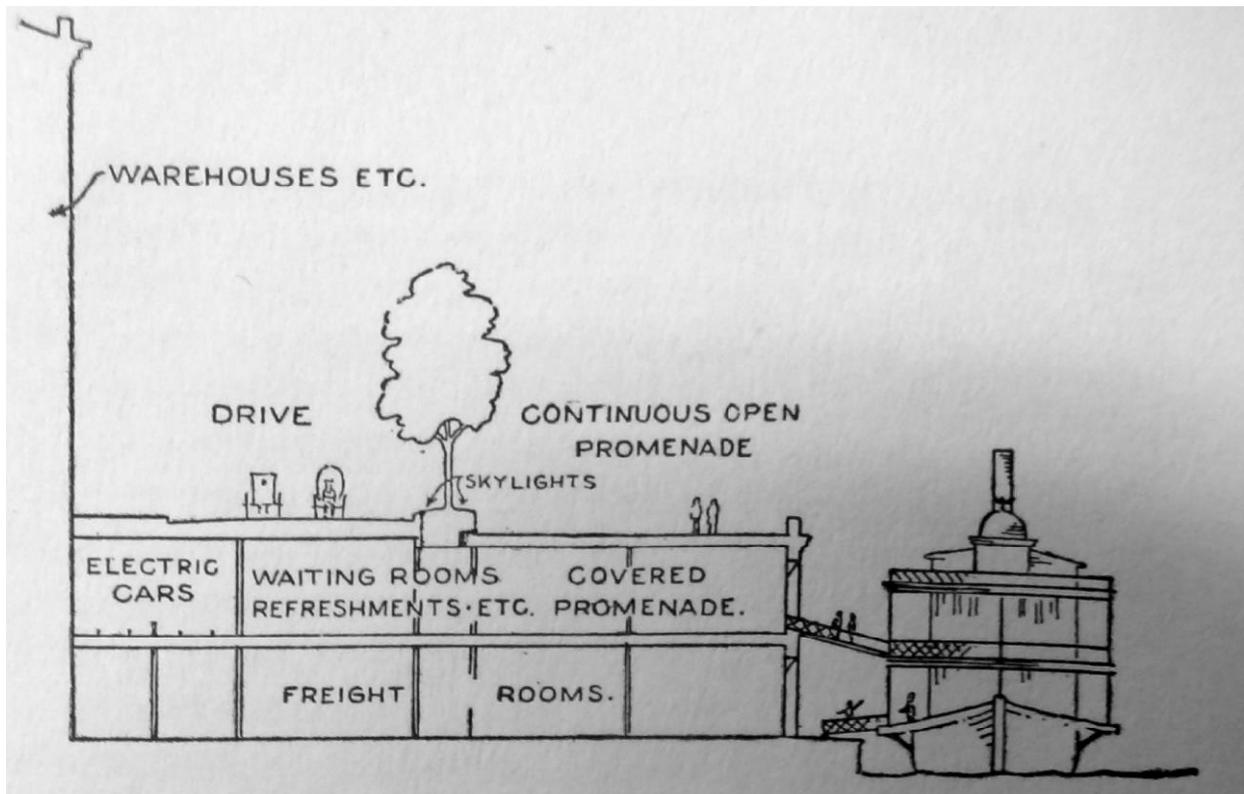
**Figure 288. Excerpt from 1918 depiction of downtown Detroit, with current Renaissance Center footprint indicated in red. Note the flour mill at the left corner of the site, adjacent to the Brush Street station, rail yard and ferry docks.**

Despite (or because of) the industrial image of the district, Detroit wasn't proud of its riverfront. Almost from the moment the riverfront was becoming industrialized in the late-19<sup>th</sup> century, the city sought a more civic and publicly accessible connection to the river it sprouted from. As early as the 1900s, concrete proposals would be made to clear the downtown riverfront industry in lieu of a more representative image toward Detroit's visitors, which then mostly arrived either via boat or riverside train station. In 1905, visiting landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted suggested the separation of freight and passenger traffic in a multi-level boulevard, topped by an open promenade, "admirably dignified in architecture character, [forming] a really noble front to the city."<sup>1178</sup> While not discounting the value of warehouses along the river, Olmsted foresaw the potential for a

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<sup>1178</sup> Frederick Law Olmsted and Robinson, "Improvement of the City of Detroit," 16.

hotel for excursions and conferences, an insight which would come true only seven decades later.<sup>1179</sup>



**Figure 289. Olmsted's third and most extensive section for Detroit's riverfront, consisting of three levels for freight, passengers, streetcars ("electric cars"), topped with a separated car and pedestrian promenade.<sup>1180</sup>**

In 1924, architect Eliel Saarinen would take Detroit's riverfront to an even grander scale with the proposal for a "City Gateway", a "welcome, [which] is not dark, confining, suspectful, but sunny and broad. It is Cosmopolis, and the path to its door has been worn by the footsteps of every race, and this is their symbolic gateway, the pledge of the liberty they found, of the opportunity they grasped, of the opportunity they won. This City."<sup>1181</sup> The plan again proposed to separate pedestrian and motorized traffic, but was far more symbolic than Olmsted's rather utilitarian predecessor. The riverfront was to house a new

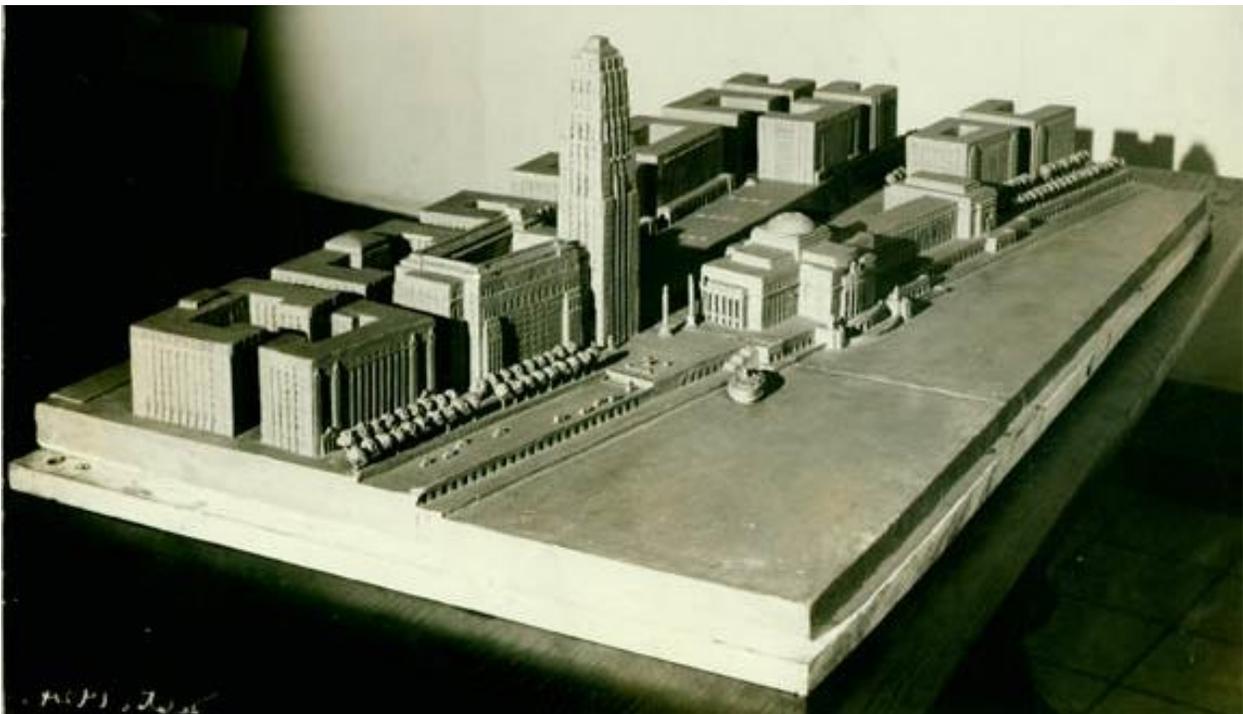
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<sup>1179</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>1180</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>1181</sup> "The City -- What Lies Behind Veil That Conceals Its Future?."

city hall and war memorial, and would be lined by grand office structures and residences, centered on a grand boulevard for cars and pedestrians. While approved by Detroit's voters in 1925, the grand vision would never be realized,<sup>1182</sup> as would a more modern 1928 successor by local architect and urban planner Harrison W. Gardner.<sup>1183</sup> Two years later in 1930, Detroit would leap into the future with the construction of the world's third underwater car tunnel to Windsor, Canada. The tunnel plaza would be located on an entire city block west of Randolph Street.<sup>1184</sup> As a result of the increased traffic and decreased commercial activity in Detroit during the 1930s Depression, an increasing number of buildings in the riverfront district would make way for open parking lots and service stations.



**Figure 290. Clay model of Saarinen's proposed riverfront, with memorial hall to the veterans of World War 1 in the center.**<sup>1185</sup>

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<sup>1182</sup> "How Father, Son Changed Detroit Dream."

<sup>1183</sup> "Detroit's 1928 Riverfront Dream."

<sup>1184</sup> Poremba, *Detroit in Its World Setting : A Three Hundred Year Chronology, 1701-2001*.

<sup>1185</sup> Image from Andrew Foot of [www.internationalmetropolis.com](http://www.internationalmetropolis.com).

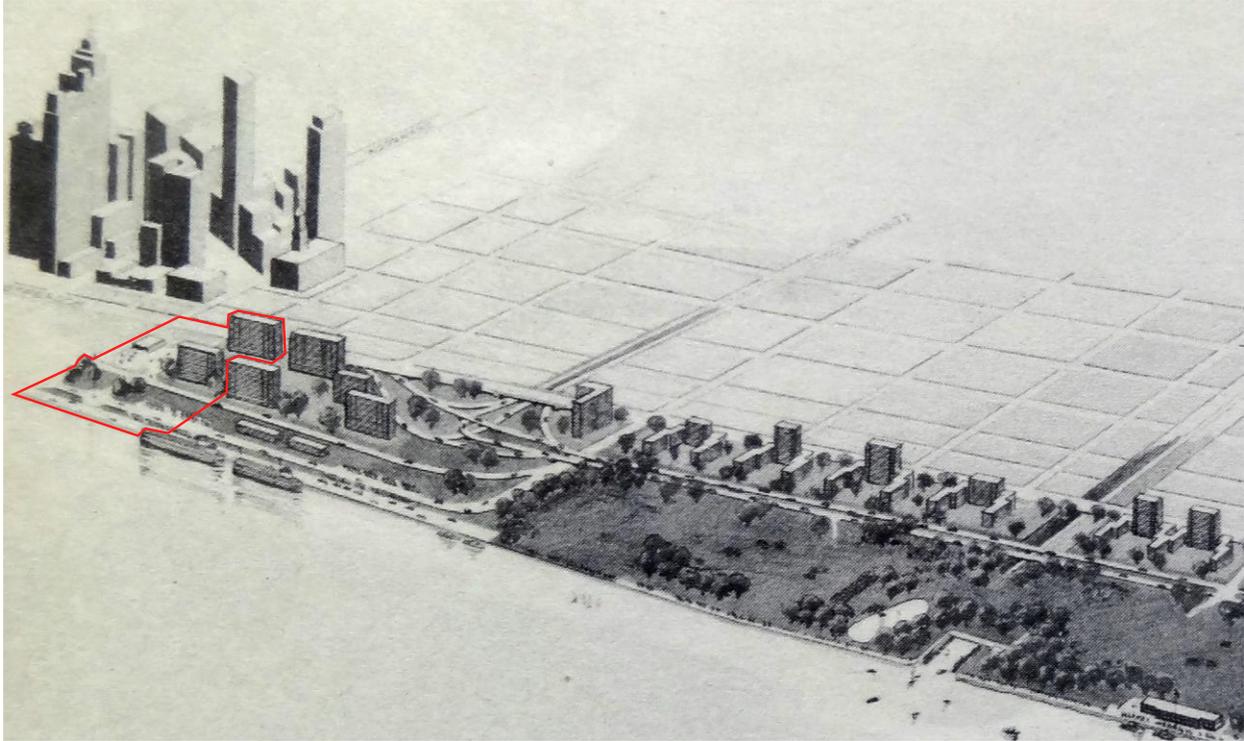
The proposals did continue to spark the debate on creating a presentable riverfront for Detroit. More than two decades later in 1947, the City of Detroit would commission Eliel Saarinen's and his son Eero to design a proposal for a new Civic Center on the riverfront, resulting in a collection of buildings in "harmony and a high degree of architectural excellence",<sup>1186</sup> mixing a war memorial and other cultural, civic and government buildings just west of the Detroit-Windsor Tunnel and current Renaissance Center site. The Saarinens' design would become part of the city's 1951 Master Plan, which foresaw a large riverfront park bounded by a freeway and residential structures on the current Renaissance Center site, after observing that the riverfront is "covered now with a mass of railroad yards, factories, crumbling homes – unsightly developments which through the years have spread, haphazardly, like a blight over much of the area." Yet the study was already realistic in acknowledging that "no city, not even Detroit, could afford to liquidate the investment which some of our industries have made on the riverfront."<sup>1187</sup> This foresight proved true – except for Saarinen's civic center, the grand riverfront project would never materialize. A subsequent riverfront master plan in 1963 underwent the same fate.<sup>1188</sup>

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<sup>1186</sup> Commission, "Detroit Master Plan."

<sup>1187</sup> Detroit City Plan Commission, "Master Plan Report: Riverfront Development Study," (Detroit 1945).

<sup>1188</sup> Maryanne Conheim, "The Shocking State of the Riverfront: Our Most Abused Asset," *Detroit Free Press*, April 13 1975.



**Figure 291. Artist rendering of Detroit's riverfront master plan, with the current Renaissance Center site outlined in red.<sup>1189</sup>**

Yet Detroit's postwar urban renewal boom would bring drastic changes to northern portion of the district. In 1962, Jefferson Avenue was being widened to alleviate the growing downtown traffic stream toward the two newly constructed freeways on its eastern and western edge. The entire south side of the street had to be demolished, including the iconic Krolik warehouse building.<sup>1190</sup> Between the growing Detroit-Windsor Tunnel Plaza, the newly constructed Civic Center and the fast-paced traffic on Jefferson Avenue, the riverfront district stood out as a dying anachronism, a "wasteland filled with industrial debris and weed-choked lots." Furthermore, the Grand Trunk railroad owned a large portion of the Renaissance Center district, and wouldn't sell their land for less than top dollar.<sup>1191</sup> Efforts by architect Rossetti and developer LePatin to renovate part of the

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<sup>1189</sup> Note that the Detroit-Windsor Tunnel entrance was placed in the wrong block. Commission, "Master Plan Report: Riverfront Development Study."

<sup>1190</sup> "With a Hint of Future," *Detroit News*, March 14 1962.

<sup>1191</sup> Conheim, "The Shocking State of the Riverfront: Our Most Abused Asset."

site into a 'festival marketplace'-like complex of shops, restaurants and theaters, including an observation tower in 1971 were ultimately fruitless.<sup>1192</sup>



**Figure 292. Detroit's riverfront in 1956, with the Robin Hood flour mill in the top left corner, surrounded by empty lots, parking and construction for the Civic Center plaza.<sup>1193</sup>**

Real changes wouldn't come until after the devastating 1967 civil disorders in Detroit. The disorders resulted not only in a physical but also mental shift in the way Detroiters saw their city and its future. The postwar positivism of urban renewal would come to an abrupt end as funding and political backing would evaporate as the political paradigm shift in Detroit would focus local funding and support on social rather than physical issues in the city. In 1970s, business leaders including Max Fisher and Henry Ford II would form Detroit Renaissance, as they wanted to maintain hope for a city whose problems clearly overshadowed the capacities of local and regional governance. The organization would focus on physical improvements to generate social and economic spinoff to revitalize Detroit's positive image. As one of the leaders of Detroit Renaissance, Ford felt compelled to create a landmark project that showed the world that Detroit was a vibrant city, worth investing in.<sup>1194</sup> Furthermore, the project needed "to be of such scale, of such critical mass, as to have an effect on the whole city." In 1971, Ford laid out his plans to the city council

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<sup>1192</sup> Jack Woerpel, "New Life for an Old Detroit Waterfront Site?," *The Sunday News*, August 1 1971.

<sup>1193</sup> Image January 5, 1956 by Tony Spira, courtesy of Wayne State University Reuther Library.

<sup>1194</sup> Furthermore, he was under fire for being on the Detroit Renaissance committee while investing most of his money elsewhere: "How's Downtown? Looking up, Thanks."

and began to gather support among his suppliers, creditors and interestingly, his competitors.<sup>1195</sup> After a long struggle for financing, Ford managed to gather 51 companies in the “largest investment group ever assembled for a redevelopment project”, ultimately investing over \$357,000,000 into the complex.<sup>1196</sup>



**Figure 293. Architect John Portman (left), with Henry Ford II (right) overlooking the Renaissance Center model in 1972.<sup>1197</sup>**

Architect John Portman was hired by the consortium to design a mixed use “town within a great city”, containing over two million square feet of office space in four 39-story towers

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<sup>1195</sup> "Ford Motor Plans 'Save Detroit' Project, \$400 Million Housing-Hotel-Office Complex," *Wall Street Journal*, November 26 1971.

<sup>1196</sup> "How's Downtown? Looking up, Thanks," 25; Irvin, "Henry Ford Admits It's a Struggle to Get Renaissance Center Funds."

<sup>1197</sup> Image from "'An Unashamed Capitalist'."

(1), the world's tallest hotel structure at 73 stories (2) on top of a 340,000 square foot three-story "World of Shops" shopping mall aiming for an upscale suburban clientele. Later phases would include residential buildings fronting the river (3), office expansion and parking structures. Ironically, the world's tallest hotel tower would be located right on the spot where the rather modest City Hotel once stood. In 1973, the complex would receive its name as a result of a contest: Renaissance Center.<sup>1198</sup> At the time when ground was broken in 1973, the project was the largest private urban redevelopment project undertaken in the United States thus far, complying with architect Portman's vision of urban revitalization: "private enterprise presents the best basis for rebuilding America's cities, because it gives the greatest creative freedom."<sup>1199</sup> The remaining structures on the site were removed, including the Brush Street station, whose tracks were moved a block east to continue bringing commuters from Pontiac and nearby suburbs downtown until the 1980s (5).<sup>1200</sup> With considerable effort, the Robin Hood flour mill was also taken down amidst throngs of spectators.<sup>1201</sup>

Yet even before the center would open in 1977, architecture critics and the general public would be dismayed by how defensive and introverted the Renaissance Center was shaping up to become. The building would be shielded from Jefferson Avenue by a 25-foot berm containing its HVAC and other technical systems (6), to be planted with greenery to hide the construction.<sup>1202</sup> Traffic concerns were cited as the official reason for these berm buildings, as Jefferson Avenue was seen as 'a thirteen-lane freeway.'<sup>1203</sup> Furthermore, the rest of the complex was to be raised on a podium of roads leading to driveway entrances (7), surrounded by large parking garages, expanses of parking lots and defensive construction, impeding pedestrians from entering. As former mayor Jerome Cavanagh

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<sup>1198</sup> Michael Maidenberg, "Riverfront Project - Now It's Renaissance Center," *Detroit Free Press*, March 23 1973.

<sup>1199</sup> "'An Unashamed Capitalist'."

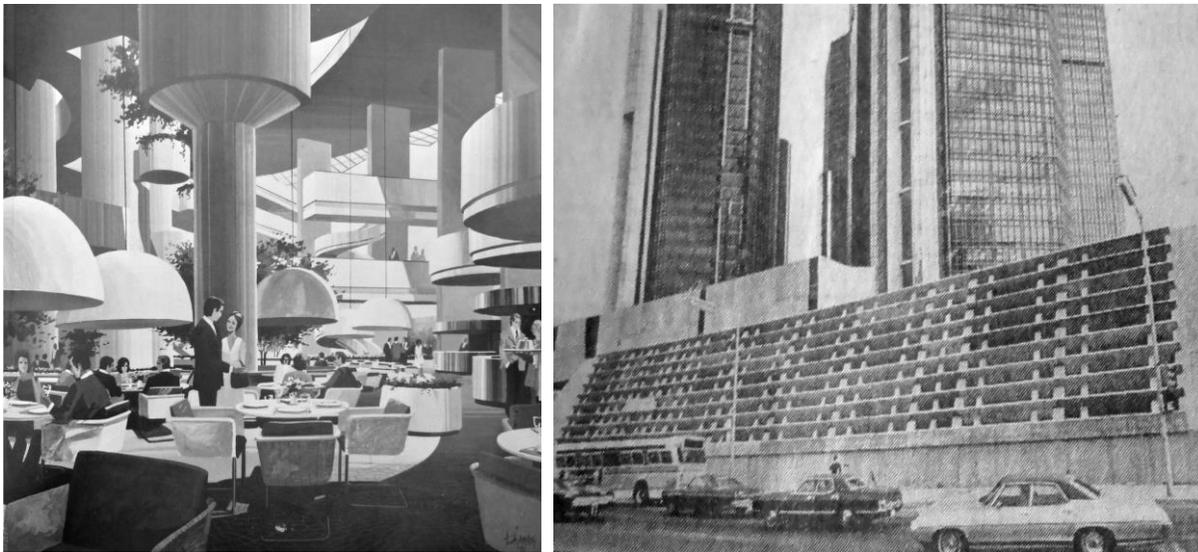
<sup>1200</sup> "An Era in City Fades in Dust," *Detroit Free Press*, July 10 1973. The commuter line was running at a loss: Paul Gainor, "Detroit Commuters' Train Ride 'Subsidized' by Canadian Firm," *Detroit News*, June 10 1973.

<sup>1201</sup> Don Tschirhart, "Riverfront Flour Plant Yields to Progress," *ibid.*, January 5; James Harper, "Old Mill Is Grist for City's Progress," *Detroit Free Press* 1973.

<sup>1202</sup> Maryanne Conheim, "Riverfront Center to Be Shielded by 25-Foot Wall," *ibid.*, October 23; Hicks, "Grim Wall Is a Challenge."; Dave Anderson, "Renaissance Front Walls to Become Exotic Garden," *Detroit Free Press*, November 15 1976.

<sup>1203</sup> John Portman, interview by Paul Goldberger 1988, Transcript in Paolo Riani, "John Portman", 1991.

already warned the Renaissance Center could become “an oasis of prosperity on the river”<sup>1204</sup>, criticism was swelling. The “fortress-like berms... don’t say welcome. They say keep your distance. They say the Renaissance Center has chosen not to interact with the streets, but to seal itself off from them.”<sup>1205</sup> Only a year after the Renaissance Center’s opening, a team of experts was hired by the City to study the improvement of linkages between the Renaissance Center and its context.<sup>1206</sup> They were stunned by the project’s insularity and wondered if the plan was specifically set up to shield off native Detroiters.<sup>1207</sup> An architectural critic from the Washington Post complained that “a pedestrian ... must prove his ingenuity by finding his way through a labyrinth of driveways, without signs or sidewalks, until he finds the all but hidden entrance into drive-in Portmanland.”<sup>1208</sup> Urban scholar William Whyte specifically mentioned the Renaissance Center in his criticisms of defensive architecture in his books and media presentations.



**Figure 294. Left: Interior rendering of the Renaissance Center’s publicly accessible interior environment. Right: concrete berm separating the Renaissance Center from Jefferson Avenue.**<sup>1209</sup>

<sup>1204</sup> "How's Downtown? Looking up, Thanks."

<sup>1205</sup> Carr, "Rencen, Don't Turn Your Back on Old Detroit."

<sup>1206</sup> Christopher Willcox, "Linking Rencen to Downtown," *ibid.*, May 17 1978.

<sup>1207</sup> "High-Rise Project Chills Architects," *Detroit News*, June 6 1978; Thomas C. Fox, "Architects Ponder How to Make Renaissance Center Part of City - Consultants Ask If Plan Was to Bar Natives," *Detroit Free Press*, June 3 1978.

<sup>1208</sup> Wolf von Eckardt in

<sup>1209</sup> Left image courtesy of Portman Architects, right image from Anderson, "Renaissance Front Walls to Become Exotic Garden."

Arguably, the critics were right. Despite the official silence on the subject, Portman's vision of the Renaissance Center as an interior world shielded from Detroit's urban decline was deliberate, and fitted with his earlier work as an architect. He sought to look beyond the traditional notion of the street as a public space: "As urban designers, architects frequently over-emphasize the street façade to the exclusion of many other pressing concerns. I say, never mind just the façade, the street is not everything."<sup>1210</sup> Instead, Portman aims to focus on the creation of high-quality interior public space, as demonstrated by his atrium for the Atlanta Peachtree Center, and taken to Detroit: "The idea of the atrium is to create an interior park. Therefore, when you enter the atrium from a busy, noisy, smog-polluted street and move into it, a resort-like image is projected. The atrium is an antithesis to congestion and anxiety."<sup>1211</sup> Partly, the context of the site was deemed responsible for the isolated design of the Renaissance Center, as Jefferson Avenue and the Detroit-Windsor Tunnel plaza were hardly friendly to street-oriented design. Yet Portman acknowledges that the inward-looking design mostly responded to the condition of fear in post-1967 Detroit: "The threat of crime was an important factor. In medieval times they built castles and moats. Society required protection, that was a fact of life... Likewise today, you have to recognize the real world as it exists... What I have to do is recognize the reality of a situation and seek a solution for that point in time."

Portman's defensive architecture was deliberately aimed at assuaging the fear that the growing cohort of Detroit's émigrés had of their home town: "In Detroit, urban fear was prominent... In response to the reality, we needed to create something of such magnitude and force that, as I have said, it would create a desirable option to help stop the outflow to suburbia."<sup>1212</sup> Portman specifically referred to the fear of social unrest as seen in the 1967 "insurrection in an earlier attempt to burn the city."<sup>1213</sup> This admission was carefully concealed in the official interviews which were given to the Detroit public at large about

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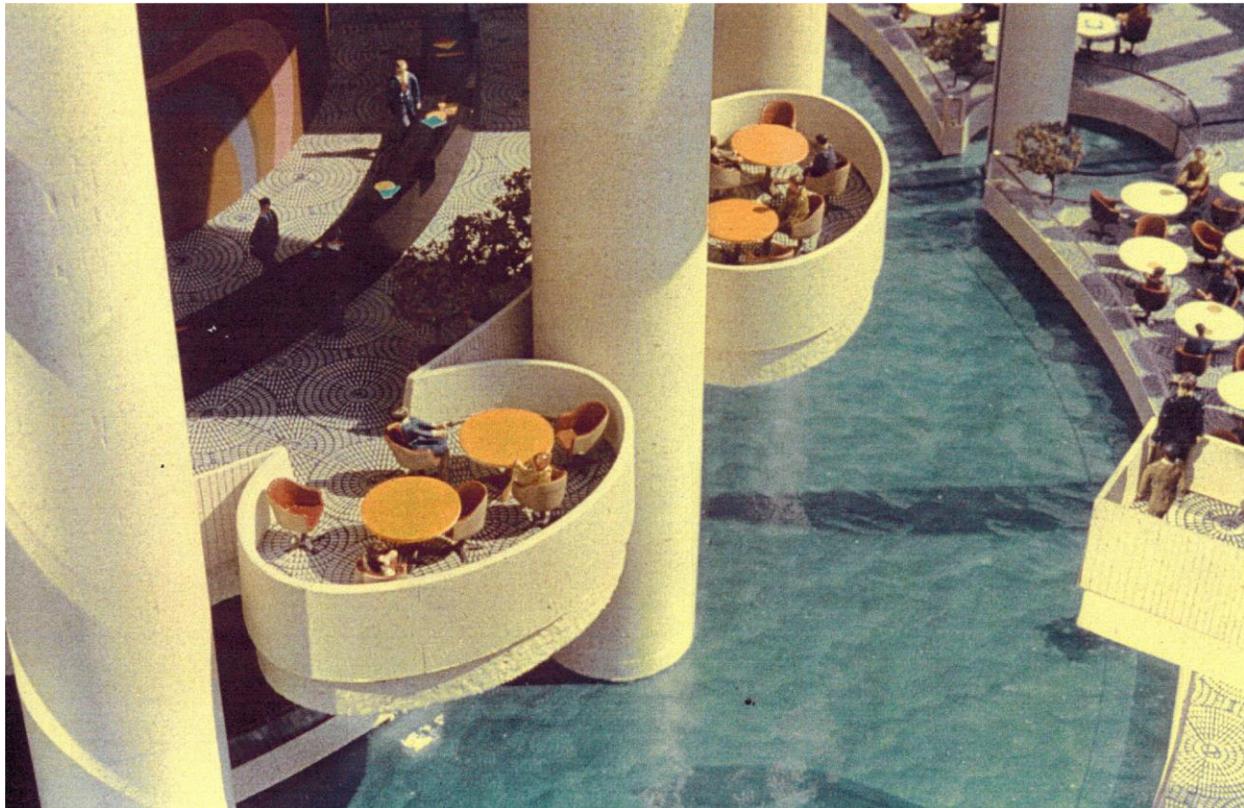
<sup>1210</sup> Portman, "Shape of the City," 31.

<sup>1211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1212</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>1213</sup> Ibid., 40.

the project, which focused on security as an element of the comfort the Center could offer visitors: “without putting on your topcoat, [you can] enjoy a complete and total life style... We are creating a safe, secure environment. Convention people can be here and women can walk alone at any hour.”<sup>1214</sup> In security and comfort, the experience of the Renaissance Center could be controlled by the architect, allowing tenants to “enjoy a complete and total life style.”<sup>1215</sup>



**Figure 295. Interior rendering of Renaissance Center's reflective pool surrounding the circular hotel tower.<sup>1216</sup>**

Nevertheless, the introverted nature of the Renaissance Center complex cannot be squarely blamed on its design concept. The complex was simply never finished to John Portman's original and complete design. For example, the architect had envisioned a bridge with

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<sup>1214</sup> "How 50 Firms Are Reviving Detroit."; Woolley, "Ren Cen's Creator Visits His Growing Baby."

<sup>1215</sup> Excerpt from a 1972 speech in Detroit Magazine, February 4, 1973.

<sup>1216</sup> Image courtesy of Portman Architects.

shops crossing Jefferson Avenue, connecting the center with the rest of downtown. This element hasn't been implemented, instead replaced with a smaller footbridge and the Detroit People Mover station. Furthermore, the blank walls on the south, west and east side of the complex were remnants of other unfinished parts of the project, including parking garages on the west side, more office towers on the east side and residential buildings on the riverfront. As development stuttered in the late 1970s, the Center's frayed edges were left to be filled in later decades. Perhaps the most devastating omission was the failure to build housing between the Renaissance Center and the Detroit River, instead disconnecting the Center and the riverfront with a makeshift parking lot.



**Figure 296. The Renaissance Center in 1987, surrounded by parking with the Detroit River just below the image. Right: Beaubien Street still consists of blank walls today.<sup>1217</sup>**

After its dedication in April, 1977, the Renaissance Center initially opened to great success as the majority of the offices were leased and the upscale mall was swarmed with the

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<sup>1217</sup> Left image from Montemurri, "Rencen at 10 - All over Downtown, It Has Made Its Mark." Right image by author, 2014.

sought-after suburban clientele.<sup>1218</sup> Yet almost from the onset, the interior experience was not appreciated by all. A review by the *Detroit News* in 1977 called the maze of interior spaces, atriums and stairways “forbidding, even oppressive.”<sup>1219</sup> More importantly, the complex would be illegible to visitors, causing many to get lost: “Most of us are used to turning left or right to get somewhere. At RenCen, the directions are around, up or down.”<sup>1220</sup> Security guards, maps and even news articles with tips to cope with the cavernous complex were of little help. The retail portion of the Renaissance Center was a failure almost from the start. In 1978, only 20 of the 100 envisioned shops were occupied. In 1983, over a third of the Center’s retail space was vacant, more than the already high downtown average.<sup>1221</sup> Office workers complained that they felt like “inmates”, and saw themselves as being “out of town” as opposed to the people across Jefferson Avenue in downtown.<sup>1222</sup> The promised economic spinoff from the Renaissance Center also hardly materialized. Although initial reports demonstrated nearby investments,<sup>1223</sup> the Center ultimately mostly drew tenants from existing downtown office and retail buildings, further saddling the struggling urban core with vacancy.<sup>1224</sup> Furthermore, the Center caused a surge in demand for downtown parking,<sup>1225</sup> eating away a ring of nearby downtrodden buildings, causing one Detroiter to comment: “It seems like the whole downtown area is becoming a parking lot for the Renaissance Center.”<sup>1226</sup>

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<sup>1218</sup> Partnership, "Renaissance Center Dedication Signals Cities' Revitalization."; Taylor, "World of (\$) Success at Rencen Shops."; Susan Watson and Peter C. Gavrilovich, "Detroit Hails City Renaissance," *ibid.*, April 16 1977.

<sup>1219</sup> Carr, "Rencen, Don't Turn Your Back on Old Detroit."

<sup>1220</sup> George Bullard, "An a-Maze-Ing Place to Get Lost," *ibid.*, April 12 1981.

<sup>1221</sup> Hansell, "Retail Scene Looking up in Other Major Cities."

<sup>1222</sup> "View from the Top," *ibid.*, April 20 1978.

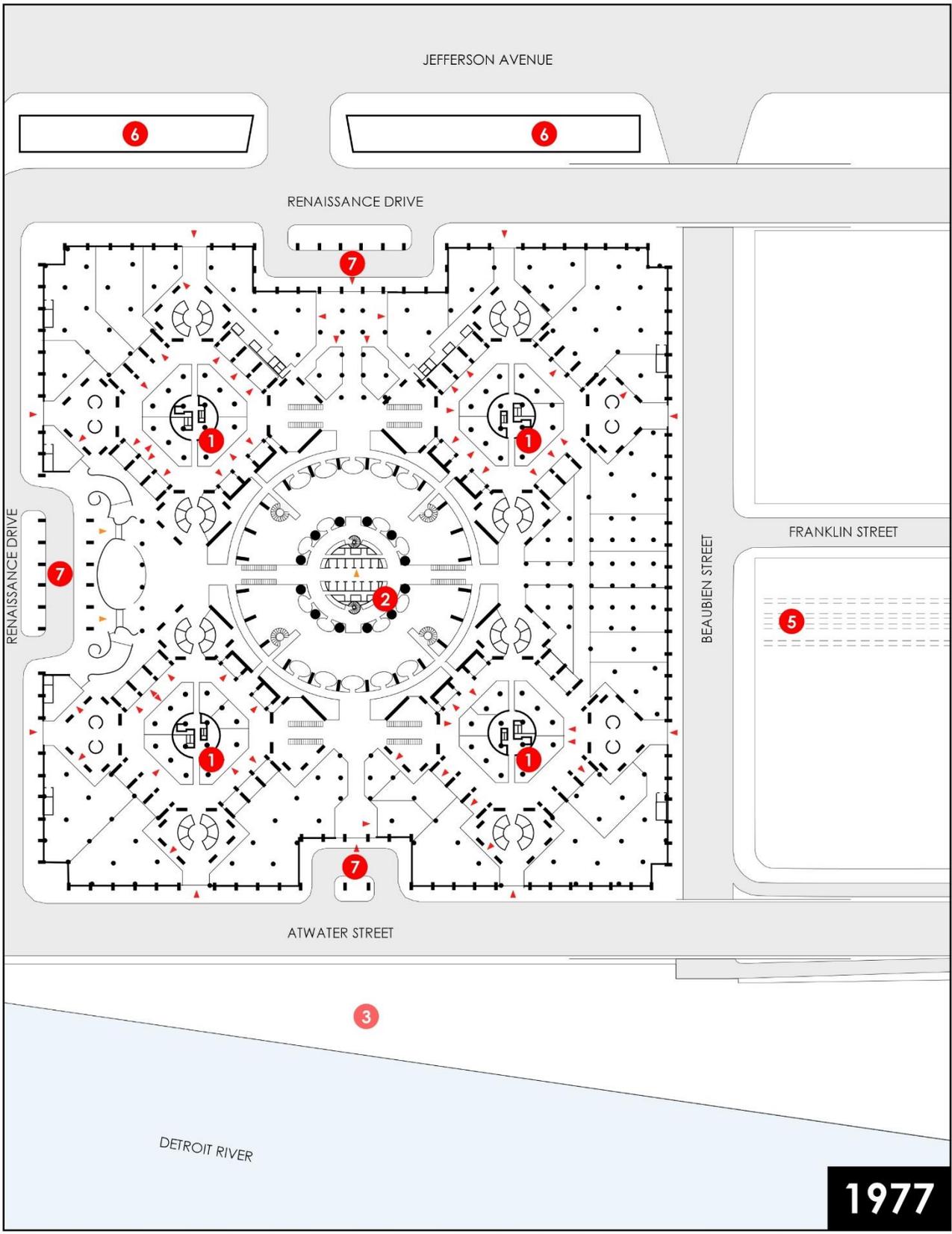
<sup>1223</sup> Partnership, "Renaissance Center Dedication Signals Cities' Revitalization."; Stephen Cain, "Rencen Ignites a \$1-Billion Boom," *Detroit News*, November 3 1978.

<sup>1224</sup> Gavrilovich, "Marketing a Renaissance - Problem: Take 39 Floors X 4 and Fill..."; Hadden and Willcox, "Older Buildings Feel Effect of Tenant Shift to Ren Cen."

<sup>1225</sup> Fox, "Parking Woes Grow Along with Rencen."

<sup>1226</sup> "Need for Parking Gobbling Dozens of City's Buildings."

Figure 297. Detroit's peripheral blocks in 1977.



- ▲ Retail/bar/restaurant/culture entrance
- ▲ Residential/hotel entrance
- ▲ Service/warehouse/garage entrance
- ▲ Office entrance



**1977**

In 1981, only a very small portion of phase two would be constructed as two office towers east of the existing complex. The economic recession of the 1970s proved to be too hard to bear for the Renaissance Center, and the complex had to be sold at a significant loss in 1982 to avoid bankruptcy.<sup>1227</sup> Just over years after its opening, the Renaissance Center would receive a \$27,000,000 makeover by Smith, Hinchman and Grylls, which drastically downscaled the retail component of the Center and linked them with a clear “yellow brick road” of porcelain tiles. Furthermore, the mall would focus on stores which were more accessible to a larger slice of the Detroit metropolitan population, after most upscale retailers had closed. More importantly, the firm added a new, friendlier and more prominent front entrance on Jefferson Avenue, adding lights to part of the defensive berms to mark a newly opened glass atrium lobby. Some of the introverted walls of the complex would be clad in granite, hardly a gesture to welcome passersby.<sup>1228</sup>



**Figure 298. Left: the new circular walkway above the General Motors showroom. Right: the Winter Garden.**<sup>1229</sup>

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<sup>1227</sup> Ken Fireman, Luther Jackson, and Dorothy Weddell, "Rencen Sold at Loss to Investor Group," *ibid.*, April 29 1982.

<sup>1228</sup> Marcia Ming, "Rencen Revival," *Detroit News*, February 7 1988; Suzanne Stephens, "Project Diary - Som's Radical Renovation in Detroit, the G.M. Renaissance Center, Raises Hopes for John Portman's Famous Icon of the 1970s," *Architectural Record* 194, no. 2 (2006).

<sup>1229</sup> Images from "Project Diary - Som's Radical Renovation in Detroit, the G.M. Renaissance Center, Raises Hopes for John Portman's Famous Icon of the 1970s."

Yet less than ten years later in 1996, General Motors bought the complex for less than a quarter of its original construction cost at \$75 million. The retail renovation still had limited success and a third of the offices were empty. The company would soon hire a team of architects and developers to provide the complex with a new lease of life, spending a total of \$500 million on renovations. Furthermore, the company would move thousands of employees from across the region to its new headquarters.<sup>1230</sup> Skidmore Owings Merrill architects were hired as supervising architects, while Gensler Architects were responsible for renovating the office spaces with Hines developers. The Taubman Company was hired to provide a strategy for revitalizing the retail portion of the complex and the adjacent Millender Center.<sup>1231</sup> The design would address some of the original flaws of Portman's complex, like the illegible layout and the poor connections with its urban surroundings. SOM added a glass "soaring, suspended circulation ring" between the stark concrete pillars in the center of the building to ease navigability between the office towers.<sup>1232</sup> The central tower – now occupied by the Marriott Hotel- would renovate its rooms and the top-floor restaurant, splitting the renovation cost with GM.<sup>1233</sup> At the foot of the tower "GM World" was created as a showcase for General Motors' products (1). Around it, the publicly accessible part of the center was reorganized by clustering all retail by merchandise type on only two levels<sup>1234</sup> and by building a five-story Wintergarden at the level of the Detroit River, one story below the Jefferson Avenue entrance (2). The large glass-domed space was lined by shops and cafes, and furnished with tables, chairs and palm trees. The Wintergarden connected with the river by replacing a former car parking lot with "GM Plaza", a riverfront park and square connecting to the growing Detroit Riverwalk recreational network (3).

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<sup>1230</sup> Daniel Howes and R.J. King, "Gm Consolidation Uproots Thousands, Reshapes State," *Detroit News*, March 1 1998; Paul Gargaro, "G.M. Begins a Game of Musical Chairs," *New York Times*, June 20 1997.

<sup>1231</sup> King, "Rencen Upgrade to Glitter.," Stephens, "Project Diary - Som's Radical Renovation in Detroit, the G.M. Renaissance Center, Raises Hopes for John Portman's Famous Icon of the 1970s.," PRNewswire, "General Motors Adds Taubman Centers, Inc. To Renaissance Center Redevelopment Team," news release, September 13, 2000.

<sup>1232</sup> Doron Levin, "Coming Full Circle," *Detroit Free Press*, October 27 1999.

<sup>1233</sup> R.J. King, "Marriott Plans \$100m Update," *Detroit News*, October 27 1999.

<sup>1234</sup> Robert Alan Glover, "Retailers Fear Losing Niche in Rencen," *ibid.*, June 28 2000.



**Figure 299. Left: Renaissance Center front entrance to Jefferson Avenue. Right: the Winter Garden from the Riverwalk.<sup>1235</sup>**

Perhaps most importantly, one of General Motor's priorities for the center was to remove the maligned berms which cut it off from Jefferson Avenue and the rest of the city, replacing their internal HVAC systems elsewhere and constructing a highly transparent and visible front entrance in 2004, which led visitors straight into the heart of the building via a large two-level atrium – taking the 1980s renovations a step further (4). The automaker's director of assets management John Blanchard stated that the berms "effectively walled off the RenCen from the city, which will not be the case with our new main entrance."<sup>1236</sup> The Center's glasnost did result in nearby spinoff development, as General Motors leased land to develop a mixed use district directly to the east of its complex. The seemingly ever-growing range of parking garages began to respond to the center's connectivity by constructing ground floor retail, including the failed "Asian Village" collection of ethnic restaurants at the corner of Beaubien and Atwater Streets (5).<sup>1237</sup> Nevertheless, most of the Center is still surrounded by blank walls, parking ramps and open lots, with pedestrians

<sup>1235</sup> Left image by author, 2014. Right image courtesy of bikes, books and a little music weblog.

<sup>1236</sup> Glover, "Reshaping the Renaissance Center."

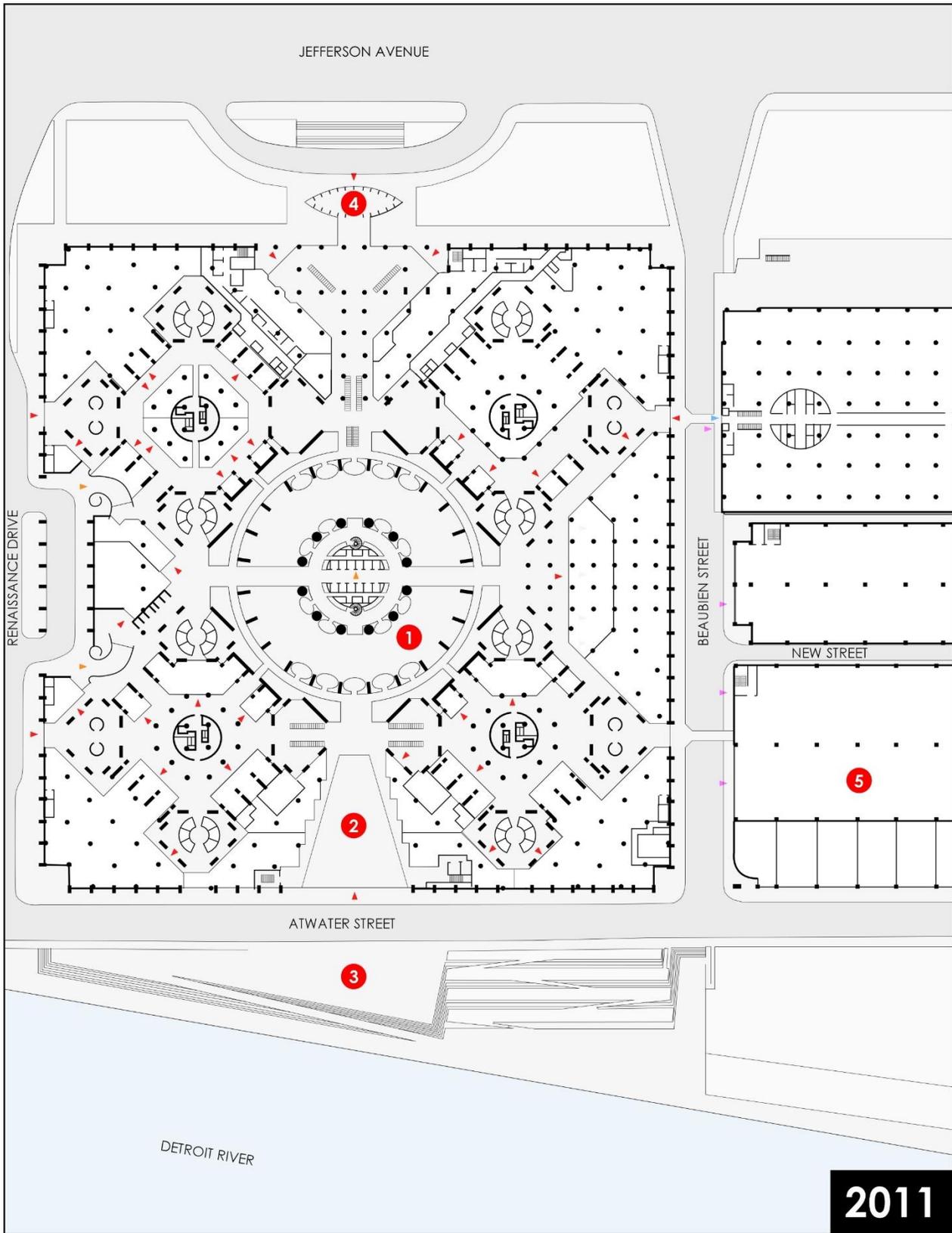
<sup>1237</sup> Gina Damron, "Detroit to Get Taste of Asian Flair," *Detroit Free Press*, January 2 2007. Corruption was involved in the failure: Jim Schaefer, Dave Ashenfelter, and M.L. Elrick, "Ex-Kilpatrick Aide Faces Corruption Probe," *ibid.*, August 19 2008.

funneled into covered overhead walkways. The interior of the complex is also still highly reminiscent of the mistakes made in the 1970s. Architecture critic Suzanne Stephens still qualified the rather eclectic mixture of SOM's new circular walk and Winter Garden with Portman's beton brut with "a Piranesian parking garage"<sup>1238</sup>, as the poor legibility and cavernous atmosphere of the complex are difficult to polish. Yet Portman's design of the Renaissance Center's interior space has carefully considered materials, daylight and colors to create a rather unique interior environment which offers an exciting and unique experience to tenants and visitors. Stephens' criticism does seem to run true with retail tenants, as a significant portion of the Center's units are vacant, as the visibility, legibility and coherence of units is often obstructed by the massive design of the Center's column grid. The Renaissance Center still continues to struggle to offer tenants and visitors the critical mass of activity that integrated urban cores can offer, and it remains to be seen whether the Center can sufficiently benefit from a blossoming riverfront context.

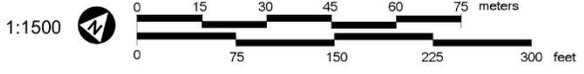
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<sup>1238</sup> Stephens, "Project Diary - Som's Radical Renovation in Detroit, the G.M. Renaissance Center, Raises Hopes for John Portman's Famous Icon of the 1970s."

Figure 300. Detroit's peripheral blocks in 2011.



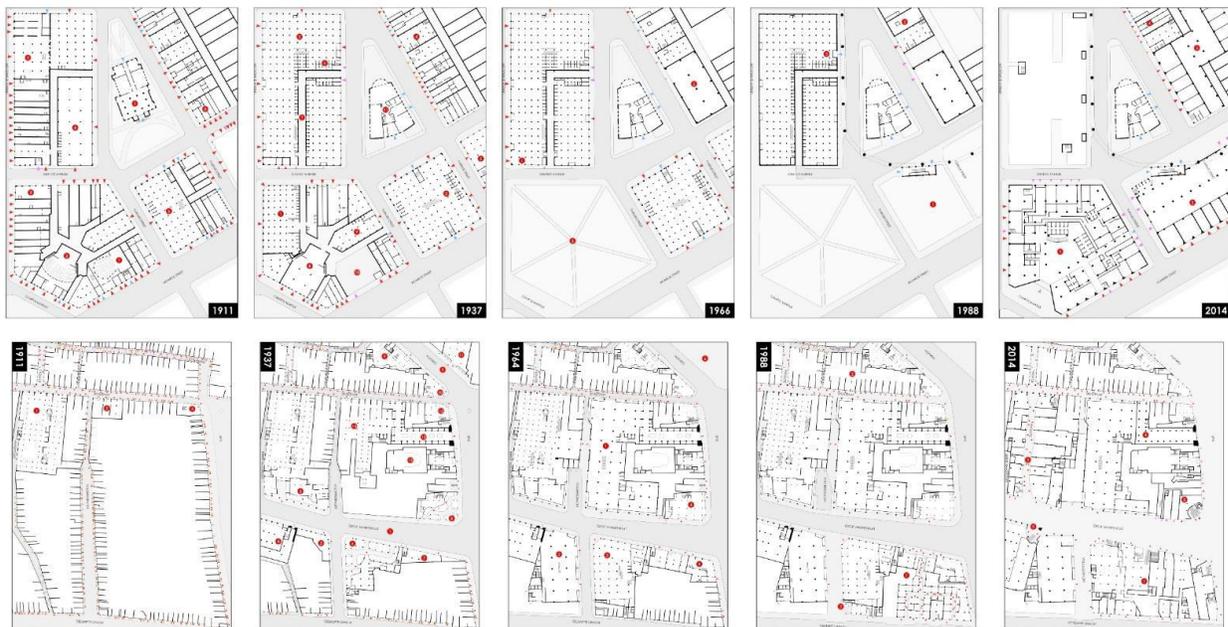
- ▲ Retail/bar/restaurant/culture entrance
- ▲ Residential/hotel entrance
- ▲ Service/warehouse/garage entrance
- ▲ Office entrance



2011

## 7.5 CONCLUSION

The blocks studied in this chapter each demonstrate their own unique transformation process. The social, economic, political and cultural forces which have led to their often drastically altered urban form are difficult to categorize and compare between their local and international setting. Nevertheless, a few patterns have emerged which help elucidate the micro-scale transformation of ground-level frontages, which will be outlined in this section.



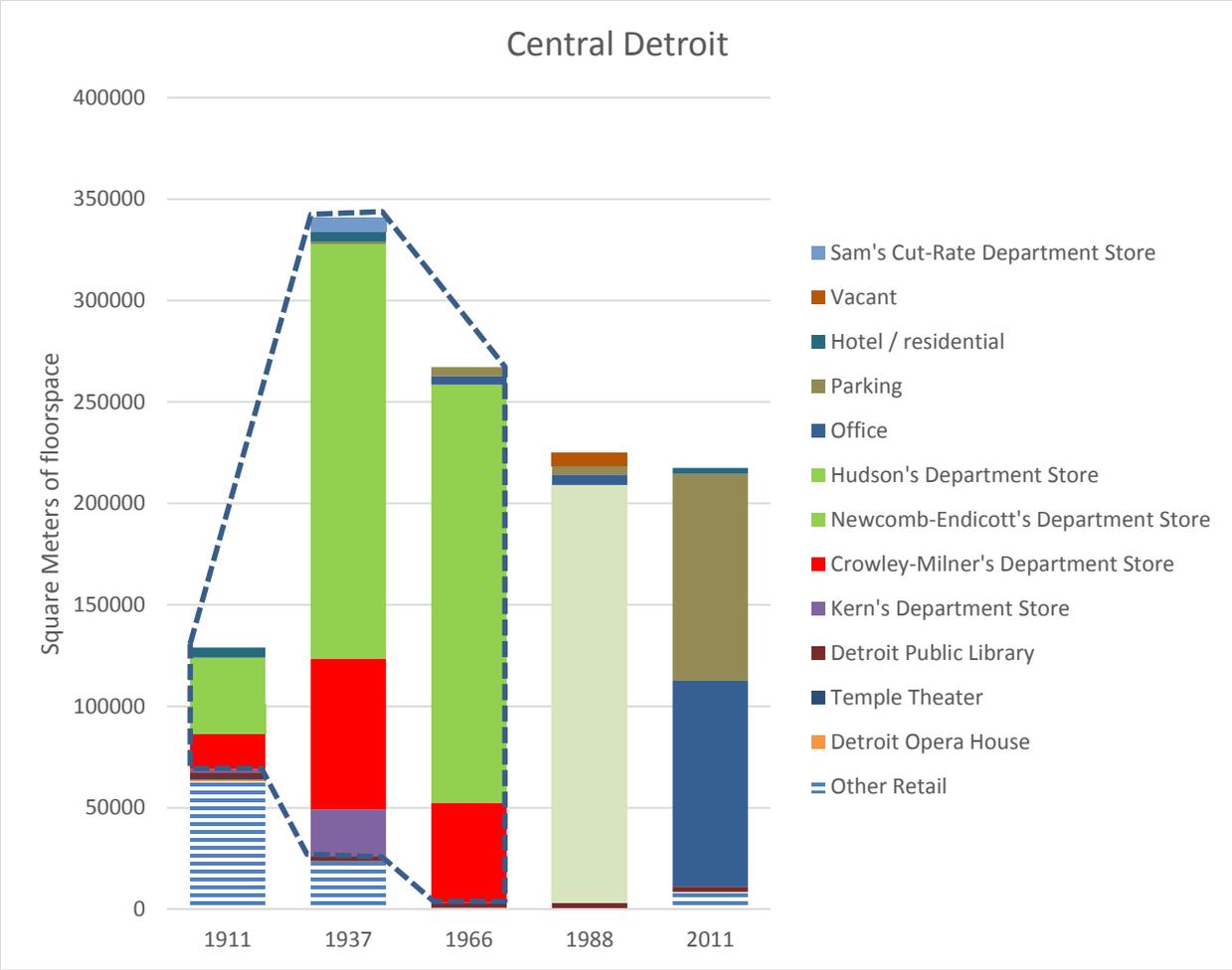
**Figure 301. Comparison between the central blocks of Detroit (top) and The Hague (bottom).**

### **Entropy and diversity**

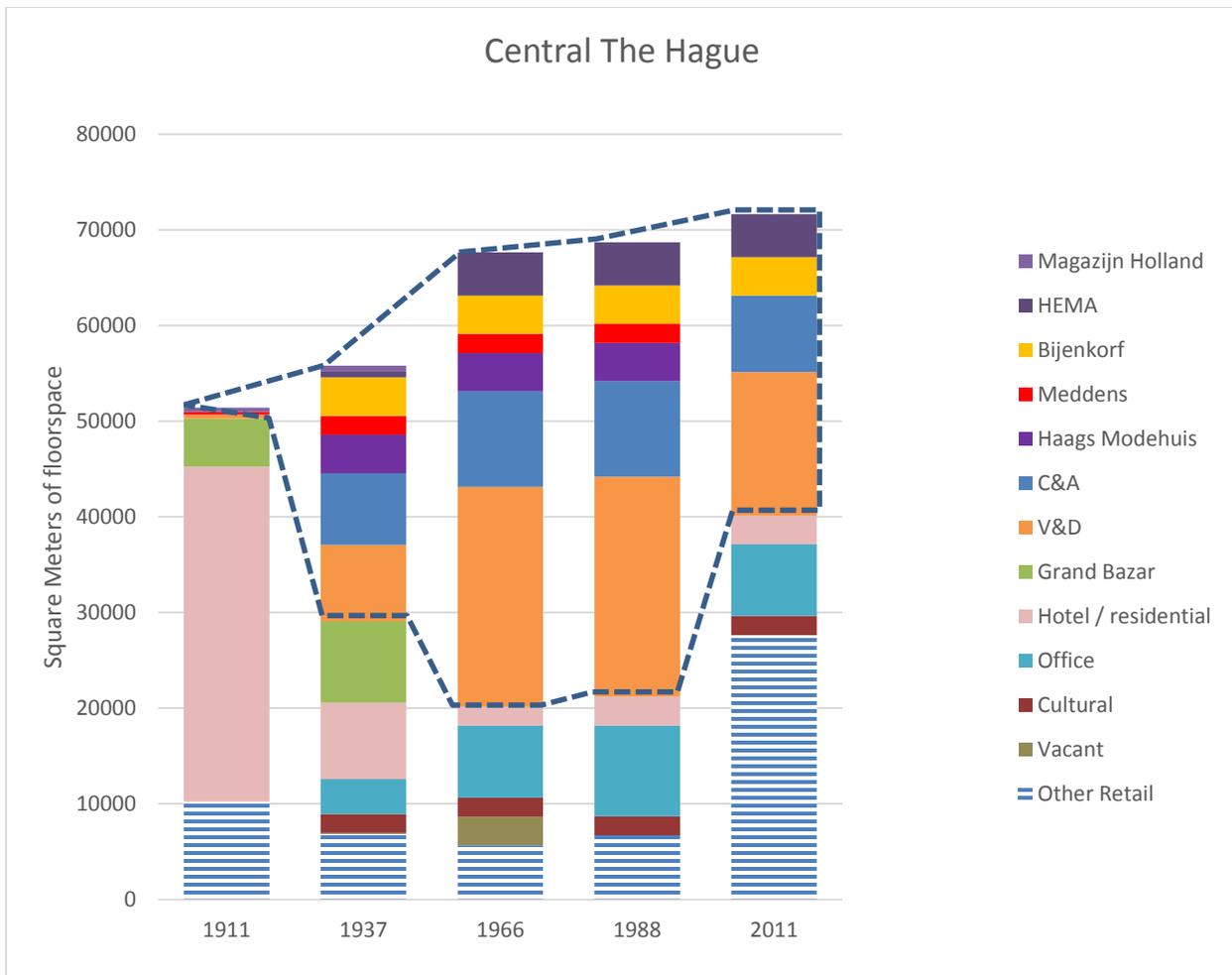
The two central retail blocks in The Hague and Detroit have a significant sense of similarity in that they express the ambitions of growing companies to at once dominate their competitors by size and significance, as well as to maintain the fine-grained connectivity between their buildings and public space. The blocks also represent the life and death of an era of retail as dominated by the department store. The Hague's various large retailers such as C&A, Lampe, Hema and V&D fought as vicious a battle as Detroit's Newcomb-Endicott's,

Hudson's, Kern's and Crowley's department stores. As their battlefield was restricted to the city's most central blocks, a game of attrition was taking place in which survivors would grow at the cost of withering or closing competitors. It is no coincidence that The Hague once contained the nation's largest department store after the completion of V&D's landmark building in the 1960s, and Detroit boasted the nation's tallest store as Hudson's crowned their building in 1928, all in the 100% location of the city. Of course, the magnitude of this growth reflected the different population sizes of each city, as V&D's department store was only slightly more than 10% of the size of Hudson's in Detroit at their respective peaks.

Yet their growth disrupted the diversity and the entropy of downtown as a resilient retail core, which is clearly expressed when the giants started to tumble. Over the years, a shrinking V&D hemorrhaged significant parts of its original store, leasing an increasing percentage to smaller competitors as shown in figure 60. As such, it has left space for new vitality at the ground floor level for smaller retailers, for example by the construction of a new shopping arcade. Detroit's Hudson's was less fortunate and failed to lease any part of their block-sized store to others, instead forced to close its entire downtown operation, taking almost all remaining adjacent retail activity in its wake, as shown in figure 59. The story could serve as a lesson in caution when a small number of stores usurp significant parts of an urban core, a warning to continue to diversify the ground floor activity of cities as a matter of resilience and survival.



**Figure 302. Floor space taken up by various stakeholders in Detroit's central blocks with department store era in blue.**

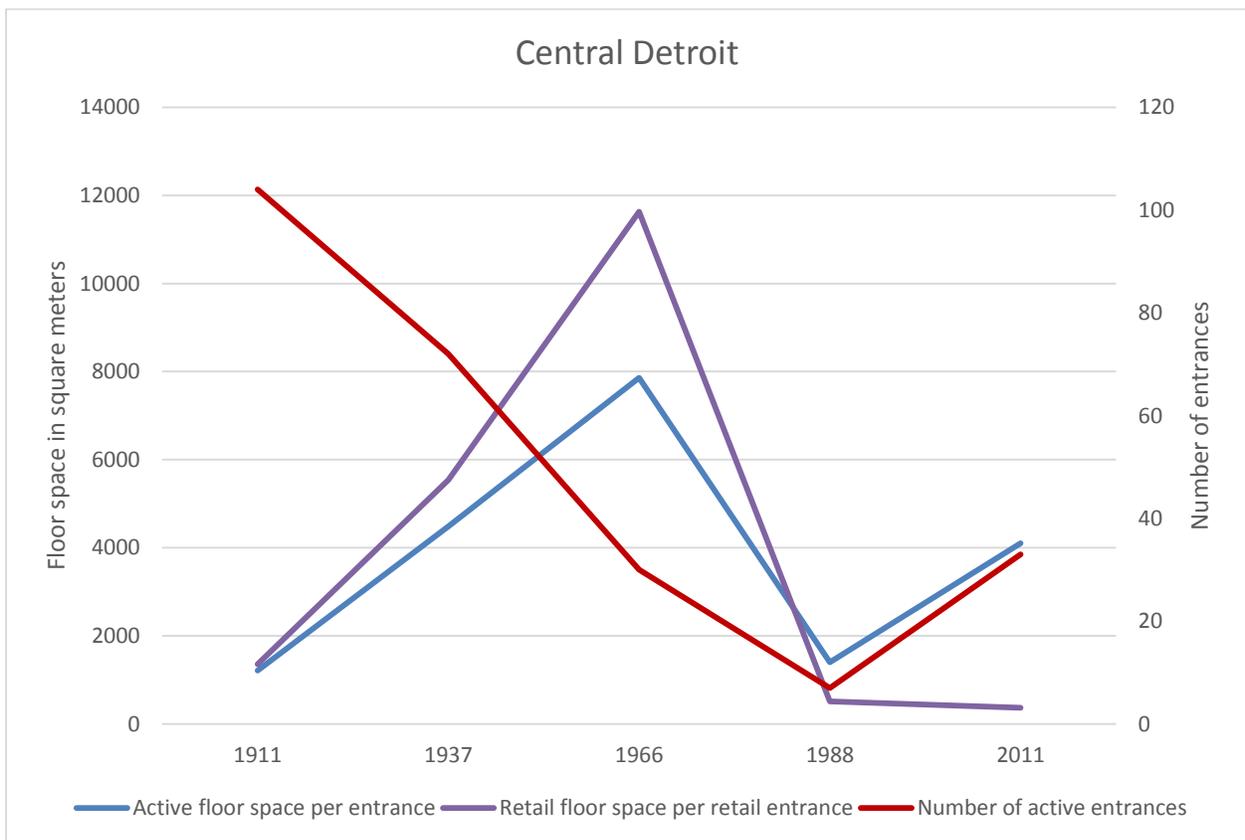


**Figure 303. Floor space taken up by various stakeholders in The Hague's central blocks with department store era in blue.**

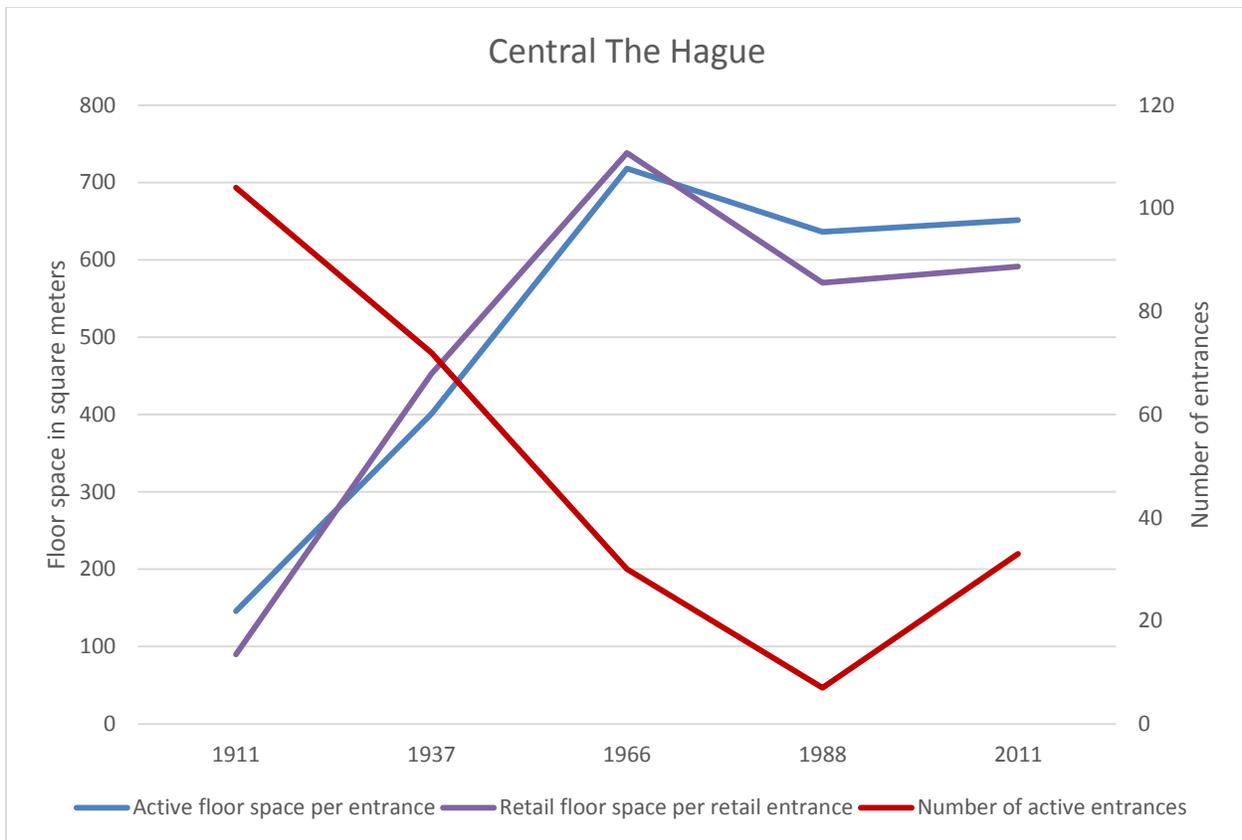
### **Increasing floor space – decreasing contact**

Furthermore, the growth of building sizes and the changing internal layout of the department stores in the area resulted in a different relationship between buildings and public space. As department stores grew in The Hague and Detroit, they became more focused on creating a controlled interior environment which aimed at providing consumers with a total experience, encompassing the multitude of different stores they replaced as sections within their buildings. As a result, the interface between merchandise and consumer was increasingly taken inside the building, as goods were displayed inside large buildings rather than to consumers at street level. The amount of retail floor space served

by a single door has increased drastically as a result, as shown in figure 61 and 62. At the peak of the large department stores in the 1960s, the average retail entrance would provide access to almost 734 square meters of retail floor area in The Hague and a staggering 11631 square meters in Detroit, a five to tenfold increase since 1911. In recent years, the demise of the department store in lieu of smaller retailers has brought this number back down. This pattern of a declining number of entrances, even when the floor area density is increasing, can also be seen in general. The Floor Area Ratio of central The Hague and Detroit has increased 50% to 100%, yet the number of entrances has decreased by 50% to 66%.



**Figure 304. The relationship between interior floor space and exterior entrances in central Detroit.**



**Figure 305. The relationship between interior floor space and exterior entrances in central The Hague.**

Furthermore, as department stores became increasingly dependent on larger volumes of sold merchandise, they would reserve parts of their ground floor facades for loading docks, parking ramps and service entrances, often in a smoldering domino effect of decreasing activity on certain streets. Despite initial public opposition, V&D’s department store has successfully turned an entire street into a closed service alley and central Detroit’s recent construction of the Compuware building has effectively deactivated half of its surrounding streets by lining them with parking ramps and blank walls, never to see another viable retailer again. The deliberate decision to construct a front and back of a building reinforces the growing dichotomy between vibrant main retail streets and ever-dwindling side streets, which in turn can unbalance the diversity between ground floor retail tenants with different budgets, again distorting the entropy of an urban core. In a city where only high-grade retail spaces are left on main streets, the seeds cannot be sown for the modern-day

Joseph Hudsons or Levi Lassens to emancipate their seedling business on a side street, ready to step into the Main Street limelight.

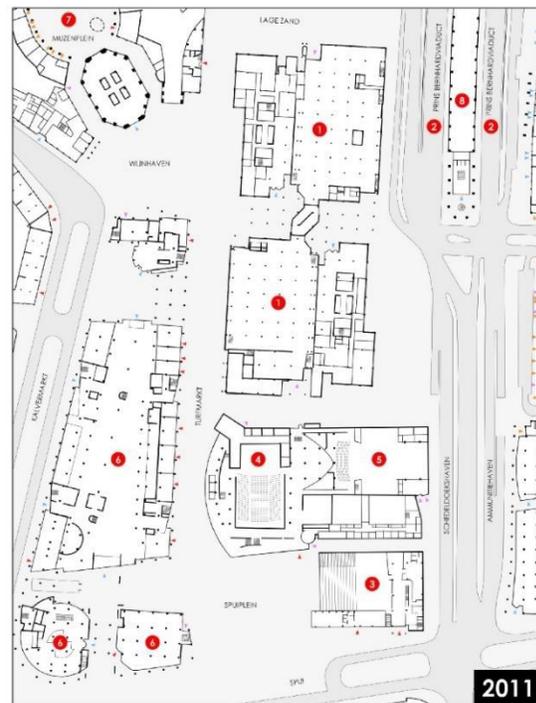
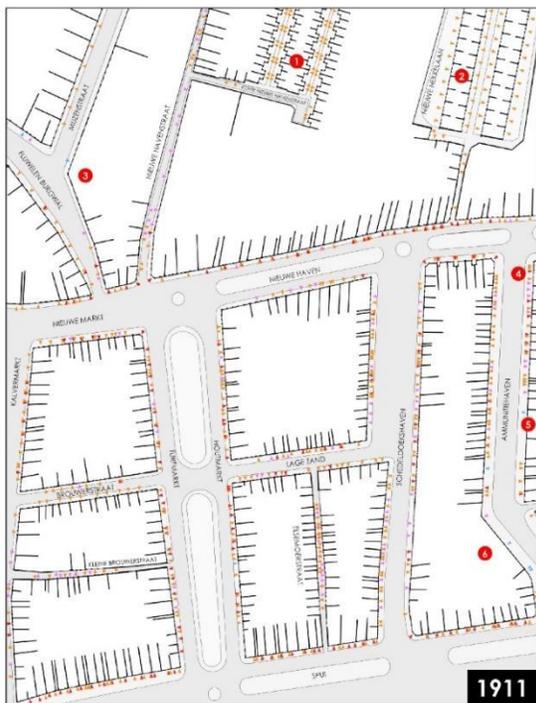
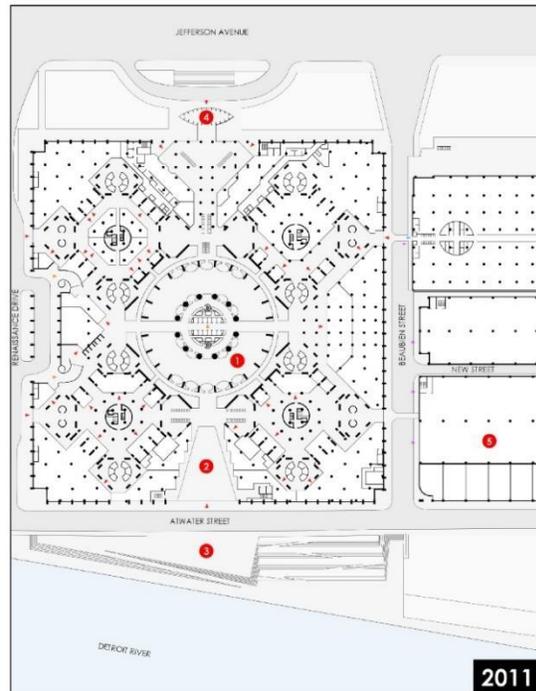


Figure 306. Comparison between peripheral blocks in Detroit (top) and The Hague (bottom).

At the periphery of the urban core, the process of frontage deactivation takes place at an even grander scale. In The Hague and Detroit, the urban fringe belt scrambled to maintain its economic significance as witnessed by the curious mixture of warehouses, housing and stock yards of the Spuikwartier and Riverfront district. In their struggle to reinvent their use for the city, these districts were the ideal locations to realize the grand ambitions of the postwar corporate era. The poor state of their building stock and urban structure yet paradoxically perfect proximity to the rest of the urban core, coupled with low land values due to economic decline and planners' blight made these fringe districts the best possible location for large-scale land consolidation to construct the a-contextual office complexes of the 1960s and 1970s. The context in which The Hague's ministry of Justice and Internal Affairs were constructed is not wholly different from Detroit's Renaissance Center site: a mostly derelict district, a desperate city willing to look the other way during the design review process but most importantly, a single entity looking to build a self-contained megastructure for reasons of security, image and control. While the social situation in both cities differed greatly, the ground floor of these buildings can be explained from a desire to carefully filter visitors by minimizing permeability, to create a controlled interior environment at the cost of external appearances, and a preference for logistical efficiency over esthetic appearances. The effects are clearly demonstrated in table 1: the number of active entrances has been decimated in both districts.

As the Renaissance Center and Ministry towers opened less than a year apart in the 1970s, it is interesting to see their plight since, as they both struggled with their relative disconnection from public space almost from the onset. Both complexes have undergone or are undergoing drastic renovations to open up their ground floor frontages to the public and become interactive parts of the urban fabric, as this will ultimately benefit their resilience as lasting elements in downtown.

		<b>1911</b>	<b>2011</b>
<b>DETROIT</b>	Retail	19	7 (+29 internal)
	Residential	12	2 (+1 internal)
	Office	9	1
	Wholesale	11	0
	Service	45	4
	<b>TOTAL ACTIVE</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>10 (+30 internal)</b>

		<b>1911</b>	<b>2011</b>
<b>THE HAGUE</b>	Retail	163	19
	Residential	406	18
	Office	9	23
	Service	96	13
	<b>TOTAL ACTIVE</b>	<b>578</b>	<b>60</b>

**Table 9. Entrance count in peripheral blocks of Detroit and The Hague.**

Yet in all cases, no matter whether central or peripheral, one conclusion can be clearly drawn: the fine-grained interactivity between private buildings and public open space which prevailed on central streets a century ago has all but vanished in today's age of consolidation, efficiency and control. Buildings have become ever larger, the number of entrances has vastly decreased and the notion of public space has increasingly hybridized between the interior and exterior of buildings, transgressing boundaries of ownership and management. The initial emulation of exterior public space by the Passage arcade in The Hague would be followed by initially careful forays to increase display space by cutting major street corners by department stores, overtaken by stores like Hudson's, Crowley's and V&D which would build their entire premises as a public route between urban destinations, culminating in the interior public worlds of the Spuimarkt and Renaissance Center. As the notion of public realm has transformed with the buildings that line and

contain space, it would therefore be an anachronism to define the ground-level experience of architecture as one solely defined by the boundary of private and public, and interior and exterior space.

## **CHAPTER 8.**

### **CASE STUDY COMPARISON**

Besides delving into the specifics of each case study in the previous chapter, the comparison between two seemingly divergent case study cities allows for a cross-cultural synthesis of frontage change. The study of both cities allows us to take a step back from the complexity of each case study and generate new insights on frontage transformation by comparing differences and similarities. The comparison will shed new light on the forces behind the two different fates which the urban cores of Detroit and The Hague have taken. It will also analyze the differences and similarities in the patterns of change in both cities. In turn, the analysis can lead to the question whether certain commonalities exist between the case studies, hinting at wider generalizability. Also, the differences between both cities can be used to elucidate lessons for each city to improve its relation between buildings and public space.

## 8.1 EXTERNAL FORCES TO CHANGE

In both cities, a range of underlying forces have contributed to frontage transformation, coming from various perspectives. Yet as witnessed in the various maps presented in this dissertation their outcome has taken Detroit and The Hague in rather different directions over the past century.

### **Culture**

A significant underlying element in the divergence between both cities has been the cultural stance toward urban cores and their architecture in the United States and the Netherlands. While Detroit's downtown is a strong expression of the American belief in individual achievement, expression and private enterprise, The Hague's downtown has been shaped by the traditional Dutch conviction of a strong balance between individual interventions and collective governance. This has resulted in a different approach to the urban core as a key element in the collective memory of the city, with Dutch society embracing the preservation of the historic experience and functional relevance of city centers through policy restrictions on decentralization, combined with consistent funding of initiatives bolstering centers such as transit infrastructure, civic buildings and contextual renovations. Today, The Hague's inner city stands at the center of the urban region, presenting itself to visitors as a bricolage of individual and collective ambitions –whether successful or not- of centuries past. Conversely, Detroit's negligence of its central building stock earned downtown a spot on the National Trust for Historic Preservation's list of most endangered historic sites in 2005. Only in recent years are long-vacant buildings painstakingly restored through a combination of scraped-together tax incentives, institutional funding and entrepreneurial insight. Yet as the newly renovated retail palaces on Woodward Avenue are about to re-enter the regional limelight, only blocks away buildings are crumbling toward their seemingly inevitable fate to become another parking lot. Downtown Detroit's plight goes deeper than its suffering building stock: its functional relevance in the metropolitan region has been obliterated by edge city development, freeway construction and consistent suburban fear, leaving the urban core at best as a

historical playground –a simulation of urbanism past- amongst fields of decline and defense.

### **Stakeholders**

Interestingly, the most powerful stakeholders in both urban cores were not necessarily that different. Both cities have been shaped by strong business interests in the downtown area, such as the Hudson family in Detroit and the Dreesmann family in The Hague which strived to bolster and stabilize the urban core as a retail destination. Their faith did not always benefit the entire urban core, as postwar efforts to ‘sanitize’ the ring around downtown were often strongly influenced by the fear of decline of central business interests. Today, private groups like the Downtown Detroit Partnership and the Stichting Binnenstad Den Haag (Inner city The Hague Foundation) strongly influence the shape of the urban core and its street level experience. Yet the largest tenants of downtown Detroit and The Hague’s inner city have proven rather hesitant partners at best – negligent at worst. The automobile manufacturers have historically not supported the vitality of downtown Detroit, as they would locate their headquarters in peripheral locations and ultimately produced the vehicles for decentralization. In The Hague, the national government wavered in their relationship with the inner city as they frequently sought to decentralize agencies and ministries at the cost of the urban core, while simultaneously constructing large and defensive central structures which detracted from inner city public life. The general public hardly had a say in the general direction of the urban cores of Detroit and The Hague, as large public and private stakeholders decided on the landmark projects that would shape the architecture and infrastructure of downtown. During the 1970s this climate shifted in The Hague, where residential redevelopment projects began to focus on public participation, embracing the views of existing tenants in the design and development process of buildings and blocks.

### **Society**

Both cities faced social division as upper and lower classes were housed in separate districts of the city. Yet Detroit’s inability to cope with mass migration, racism, and economic and social instability has caused its urban core to cease its role as a connector of all classes and races, with various riots and rising crime fueling the continued exodus of the

middle class from the city. While The Hague is known as one of The Netherlands' most segregated cities, its inner city strives to continue its function as a meeting place for people of all walks of life, although even its urban core is arguably demarcated between upper and lower class areas. Detroit's decline in the late postwar era was accelerated by a culture of fear from the 1967 civil disorders onwards, resulting in increasingly defensive planning and architecture. A downward spiral was set in motion as buildings became increasingly defensive and even hostile toward an increasingly hostile public space. As fewer people walked past the new generation of downtown fortresses, crime continued to rise and neighboring buildings followed suit and boarded up. Some evidence of a comparable trend can be found in The Hague, where embassies and certain ministry buildings have barricaded themselves for security reasons, harming the vitality of streets and viability of nearby businesses.



**Figure 307. The Renaissance Center in Detroit, albeit having opened two pedestrian entrances toward public space, still stands out in its scale and inhospitability toward public space. Conversely, the patios of the Plein in The Hague reflect vitality and trust in public space.<sup>1239</sup>**

<sup>1239</sup> Both images by author, 2013 (left) and 2012 (right).

## **Economy**

Beyond culture, the changing economy of both cities have strongly influenced the experience of the urban core at street level. Detroit's economic woes have caused a significant decline in its population, job and tax base, decimating the commercial activity in its downtown. Planning efforts by public and private stakeholders were simply unable to stem the tide of decline. Conversely, The Hague's inner city remains a significant center for retail trade, culture and administration. While both cities suffered from significant economic and population decline from the 1970s onwards due to their undiversified job base, The Hague has mostly recovered through significant investments in regional cooperation and downtown revitalization. Nevertheless, economic diversification remains a sore spot for both cities, as they are forced to transition from former 'one company towns' and embark on a search for their economic identity.

## **Retail economy**

At street level, the most important transforming force has been the changing nature of the retail market. The traditional pattern of a multitude of small, independent retailers which often produced a significant percentage of their own merchandise has made way for a much leaner and consolidated group of large retailers. Industrial mass production, marketing and logistical innovations paved the way for department stores and chain retailers to overtake their competition in both countries, albeit with the United States often leading the way. Smaller food vendors were often the first to shut down as their inner city clientele shrank and supermarkets took over. Specialty retailers suffered from the rise of department stores and larger chain stores, causing them to shut down or move out toward the downtown periphery, filling in the voids left by food stores. Government intervention did little to alleviate this situation, as American federal policy mostly stood idle and Dutch national policy drafted during the 1930s even encouraged the usurping of smaller retailers by larger counterparts.

The paths of downtown retailers between the Netherlands and the United States began to diverge in the postwar era, as an explosive mixture of American local, regional and federal policy encouraged retailers to follow their rapidly suburbanizing clientele through tax

write-offs and a lack of control on retail location,<sup>1240</sup> while Dutch policies began to focus on maintaining retail centrality and diversity by curbing retail decentralization.<sup>1241</sup> These policies did keep retailers in the urban core, but their retrenchment from less-connected streets into homogenized retail clusters continued. As the Dutch inner city periphery withered, core retail streets had become mostly lined by those who could afford its high rents by the 1960s – chain retailers and large department stores. This process has also led to the significant decline of the number of retailers in Dutch inner cities, while the total sales floor area mostly stabilized as a smaller number of retailers grew ever larger. Meanwhile, Detroit took the process of retail optimization a step further. Unhindered by centralizing regulation or regional cooperation, Detroit's chain retailers and department stores followed the increasingly mobile middle class to the suburbs. The landmark opening of Northland Center in 1954 marked a downward spiral for downtown, culminating in the departure of the last department store in the 1980s and the subsequent implosion of the urban core as a significant retail destination. Pedestrianization schemes on Woodward Avenue and Washington Boulevard, mixed-use malls in the Renaissance and Millender Centers, festival marketplaces such as Trappers Alley or renovations of Broadway stores – no matter what local interventions were staged to salvage what was left of Detroit's downtown retail core, the macro-scale force of business decentralization prevailed.

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<sup>1240</sup> K. T. Jackson, "All the World's a Mall: Reflections on the Social and Economic Consequences of the American Shopping Center," *The American Historical Review* 101, no. 4 (1996).

<sup>1241</sup> Evers, *Planning Van Winkels En Winkelgebieden in Nederland*.



**Figure 308. The leisure economy is taking a different shape in The Hague (left) than in Detroit (right).**<sup>1242</sup>

However, both cities have seen the rise of the leisure economy from the 1990s onwards. At the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, urban cores across the Western world have transformed from centers of transaction to centers of experience, bringing a wave of new leisure establishments downtown. Yet each city accommodated this new economic role in a widely different manner. While The Hague has brought life and frontage interactivity back to many of its inner city squares with an array of bars, restaurants, clubs and patios, Detroit has launched its downtown as an entertainment destination through large megastructures such as casinos, sports stadiums and theaters which often face the street with blank walls and parking facilities in an aim to provide a controlled experience to their patrons.

### **Office and residential economy**

Office construction in both cities have had mixed results for the street-level experience of urban cores. While prewar office construction in both cities integrated ground floor retail, and as such did not have a significant deteriorating effect on the interactivity of frontages,<sup>1243</sup> postwar offices have had a significantly worse outcome. Defensive architecture, the internalization of previously street-level amenities such as restaurants and small shops, and large-scale office construction have deactivated street-level frontages

<sup>1242</sup> Left image by author, 2012. Right image courtesy of Google StreetView, 2013.

<sup>1243</sup> In many ways, office construction brought workers to urban cores, strengthening its retail base.

in significant parts of the downtown periphery of Detroit and The Hague. The deactivating trend is worsened by the currently high level of office vacancy in both cities. While the office market is struggling in both cities, the role of the urban core as a place of residence has enjoyed renewed attention over the past decades. After shedding the majority of its residents through commercial displacement and large scale urban renewal, Detroit and The Hague realized in the postwar era it had to bring people back to its core to ensure its street level vitality and retail viability. While The Hague suffered a wave of poorly designed urban renewal housing during the 1960s and 1970s, the following decade brought a marked leap in the quality of inner city residential design, resulting in buildings which interacted more closely with public space. A long halt in residential construction followed the relatively open, Modernist design of Lafayette Park in Detroit in the 1950s. During the 1980s, Detroit built several housing complexes in the downtown which hardly interacted with public space, as the targeted middle class residents traversed the city through raised walkways and easy parking access. At the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Detroit's urban core is seeing a renewed interest in downtown living, as demonstrated by the wealth of high-end renovations of its prewar office stock.

### **Automobiles**

A major force in the deactivation of street life in both cities has been the automobile. Arguably, no city has suffered more from the car than its own creator, Detroit. Downtown Motor City has been irreversibly eroded by moving and parked cars, to the point where its value as a destination is at stake. Even The Hague has been transformed significantly by the rise of the automobile as its urban form was not prepared for motorized transportation, even with its far slower rise of car ownership over the past century. The saga of automobile erosion was remarkably similar in both cities, as the 1910s and 1920s brought ambitious road widening schemes to their urban cores. Massive public expenditure brought cars deeper into downtown, but the effect of the Depression was that the newly cut boulevards in The Hague and Detroit were slow to heal with new construction. While The Hague ultimately lined its central boulevards with some of the city's grandest offices and department stores, Detroit's widened boulevards never recovered from their destructive inception, especially in the struggling periphery of downtown. Both cities would construct

their first large public parking garages in the 1920s and 1930s. Yet when the Depression hit, car parking eroded Detroit's downtown periphery due to a lack of land use controls and an absence of transportation or development alternatives. In contrast, The Hague focused on bolstering transit by the expansion of its streetcar and bus network and curbed car parking construction through restrictive zoning.

The 1940s were a landmark decade for the rise of the automobile in both cities. Planners paved the way for the car to invade the downtown to an unprecedented scale with the 1945 Expressway Plan in Detroit and the 1947 Structuurplan in The Hague, as well as its Plan 2000 competitor. Expressways cut through struggling neighborhoods, flowing into large-scale parking garages and lots in the downtown periphery. In Detroit, postwar prosperity as well as political and industry-based support for car infrastructure enabled the city to break ground on their ambitious plans even ahead of state and federal aid. On the other hand, war-damaged The Hague suffered from a lack of money, materials and alternative housing for those displaced by the new plans. While construction stalled, plans continued and many districts under the route of newly planned arteries suffered from significant planners' blight. In the following decades, Detroit's its autocentric planning continued unabated, disregarding public transit almost entirely. Meanwhile, The Hague's efforts to accommodate cars with the construction of the Prins Bernhardviaduct were almost immediately resisted and resulted in the part-demolition of the viaduct mere years after it was first opened. Instead, the city increasingly focused on making its core pedestrian friendly through the implementation of pedestrianized streets during the 1960s and a comprehensive plan for pedestrianizing the urban core in the late 1980s.

Furthermore, the city continued to invest in high quality city and regional public transit with the construction of an underground streetcar tunnel in the 1990s and the renovation of its regional and national rail connections in the 2000s. Over the past few years, the city has banned through traffic entering its urban core altogether. Detroit is slowly overcoming the trauma of its two failed transit malls in the 1970s and 1980s, as the city is making small steps toward reshaping its downtown public spaces for pedestrians. The construction of Campus Martius, the renovation of its riverfront park and the potential removal of the Interstate 375 leg of the downtown ring freeway to reinstate a surface street is marking a

paradigm shift in the role of public space in the Motor City toward non-motorized transportation.



**Figure 309. Efforts to revitalize the urban core by curbing traffic in The Hague in 1989 (left) and Detroit's proposal to bring Interstate 375 back to an urban boulevard (right).<sup>1244</sup>**

### **Urban planning and architecture**

Architecture and planning efforts certainly did not always help the interaction between buildings and public space. The street widening projects in Detroit and The Hague of the 1910s and 1920s scarred the urban core with vacant properties for decades (The Hague) or caused the urban periphery to never fully recover (Detroit). The Dutch national policy on curbing small businesses in 1937 was as disastrous for frontage interactivity as the American national policy on mortgage insurance and public housing of the same decade. Postwar planning efforts in both countries displayed a complete disregard for interactive frontages and humanly scaled architecture, the consequences of which The Hague escaped with only minor damages because most plans were not implemented due to a lack of resources. The hegemony of the automobile was celebrated in both countries well into the 1970s, significantly scarring Detroit and The Hague's downtown fringes with freeway underpasses, fly-overs and parking garages. Only in the past few decades have the governments in both cities realized the value of both walkable urban cores and

<sup>1244</sup> Left image from Haag, "Note De Kern Gezond.", right image courtesy of the Downtown Development Authority, the Michigan Department of Transportation and the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy, 2014.

architecture which supports public life. Yet even today the cards are often stacked against local policies encouraging interactive frontages as regional and national governments continue to incentivize car infrastructure over transit and suburbanization of retail, jobs and people in Detroit. The traditionally strong Dutch national controls which curb the decentralization of inner city functions are at risk of following the same path of paradox due to their slow erosion by subsequent neoliberal administrations.

The interventions of architects and urban planners were remarkably similar in both urban cores. The conventional wisdom that The Hague bolstered its inner city through effective public policy, while Detroit let its downtown slide because of laissez-faire policy and uncoordinated planning is not necessarily true. Admittedly, Detroit's culture has traditionally allowed more room for individual expression and enterprise, allowing for the rapid rise of skyscrapers and parking lots in the prewar era, unhampered by zoning until the 1940s. Yet Detroit spent considerable sums of public money on street widening projects during the 1920s, demolishing significant portions of its downtown periphery to ensure the continued accessibility and viability of its core. Similarly, the city was among America's first to construct public housing (from the 1930s onwards) and urban freeways (from the 1940s onwards), often without waiting for state or federal aid. The city was touted as a national example of urban renewal coordination and persistence as it cut through its struggling downtown periphery to make way for infrastructure, middle class housing, new industrial areas and public parks and amenities.

Meanwhile, The Hague's stance toward planning has been more focused on collective efforts and benefits, balancing public and private interventions with esthetic controls and often fierce public debate. The Hague's urban renewal only gathered steam during the 1970s, as the immediate postwar decades prevented the city to realize its vision due to a lack of funds, materials and housing. Even during its heyday during the 1970s, the city's urban renewal process was slow and controversial, hampered by political bickering and public opposition. Nevertheless significant portions of the inner city periphery have been replaced by large-scale office, housing and infrastructure works.

During the same decade, Detroit's changed political climate, lack of tax base and external funding caused the urban renewal pipeline to dry up. Large-scale master planning was replaced with eye-catching landmark interventions such as the Renaissance Center and the renewal of Washington Boulevard, often with little or no success. Furthermore, most of these interventions were highly defensive architecturally, preventing them from sharing any vitality with their immediate surroundings. This pattern has only continued with the construction of highly internalized sports stadiums, casinos and corporate campuses, functioning as suburban islands in a sea of continued urban decline.

From the 1980s onwards, The Hague engaged in coordinated efforts to revitalize its inner city from the 1980s onwards, based on high quality public space, a strong sense of place, improved transit accessibility and strategically placed new buildings with high quality architecture which connected to public space. More recently, Detroit is undertaking a similar approach with the public space-led regeneration of Campus Martius and the riverfront, combined with large private investments around Woodward Avenue.

In hindsight, it was not so much the lack of tools and means for city planners to revitalize the urban core (after all, Detroit has attempted most interventions available in the North American context), but the lack of planning at the regional and national level that has resulted in the wide disparity in downtown vitality between Detroit and The Hague. The Dutch government and The Hague's regional government has instituted strong curbs on suburbanization of people, jobs and retail amenities while promoting public transportation and urban infill construction; whereas Detroit has suffered from the absence of a regional and national governance structure which would have helped curb the exodus of people, jobs and retailers that has led to the inevitable demise of its downtown. If anything, regional and national policies have exacerbated the departure of the city's middle class. They have promoted suburban home ownership while limiting inner city mortgages and almost entirely cutting community redevelopment funds, promoted renewal by demolition while ignoring the needs of inner city residents, promoted highway construction while underfunding any viable public transit alternative, and promoted retail suburbanization by tax write-off policies while lacking significant funds to retain commercial activity downtown. Combined with the lack of economic foresight into the continued decline of the

automobile industry in Detroit, its 2013 bankruptcy did not come as a surprise. The cards at the national and regional level were simply stacked against downtown Detroit's viability, no matter what internal effort was undertaken to stem its tide.

Where do these forces leave planners and architects? Overall, over the past century architects and planners can be seen as following and reinforcing larger cultural, social, economic and technological trends rather than leading the way on shaping the urban cores of The Hague and Detroit. It was the rapid growth of land values and economic activity in Detroit that brought the abundant architecture of its skyscrapers in the 1920s, and in The Hague it was the growth of the national government that brought a new wave of wealth embodied in lavish department stores, apartment houses and movie theaters. In subsequent decades, it was the fear of crime and violence in the Motor City that prompted the defensive construction of the Renaissance and Millender Centers; and it was the continuous disagreement on urban planning in The Hague that resulted in the jumble of inactive and interactive buildings of various kin and style in its Spui renewal district.

Planners in both cities have radically transformed the periphery of the two cores, but only after economic and social forces had led to the rapid decline as desirable places to live, work and shop. They responded to the rapid increase in car ownership, but still seemed continuously behind on expanding car infrastructure and parking facilities in both urban cores. Only in recent decades have both cities discovered that shaping urban cores for the automobile is ultimately self-defeating, as its planners lead toward more pedestrian and transit-friendly interventions. Even today, the efforts of planners and architects to revitalize downtown Detroit and The Hague's inner city can be seen as accommodating the growing economic, social and environmental interest in living, working and shopping in the urban core.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, not one single force or set of forces can be blamed for the deactivation of frontages. Rather, it has been a complex but often reinforcing combination of cultural, social, economic and technological forces that stacked the cards against the strong relationship between buildings and public space. Even as the urban core grew, retail

presence at street level receded from the downtown fringe, its place quickly taken by the rapidly growing stock of automobiles. Urban planners and architects responded only by reinforcing this trend, digging under, paving over and building into the struggling fringe in an effort to bolster the core. Meanwhile, the machine of economic consolidation and optimization continued unhampered, clustering land uses into homogenous districts within the urban core and destroying diverse districts in its path. Detroit and The Hague's paths began to diverge in the 1960s, when the Motor City's downtown growth machine ground to a halt as a result of continued social and economic decline. Planning efforts and landmark projects were to no avail as street life in downtown gasped its final breath with the closure of most shops on Woodward Avenue by the 1980s. Subsequent initiatives largely internalized urban vitality, keeping the streets empty.

In contrast, The Hague changed course during the same decade, as city policies and economic conditions were looking out for the urban core. Over the past two decades, public life has boomed in the inner city as the result of joint efforts of enlightened architects, planners, developers; a vigorous economic upswing especially in the leisure market; and renewed interest of the general public in visiting, working and living downtown. This trend is picking up in Detroit with the renewal of Campus Martius, the Riverfront and various upcoming leisure districts, including the impending revitalization of Woodward Avenue by the construction of light rail and the reopening of retailers.

A summary of the various forces which have influenced the interaction between buildings and public space in the widest sense is provided in the table below, which also uncovers the overlap of similarities and differences between the case studies.

	<b>THE HAGUE</b>	<b>DETROIT</b>
<b>CULTURE</b>	Balance between individual interventions and collective governance.	Strong focus on individual achievement, expression and private enterprise.
	Cultural embracement of preserving urban cores as functional parts of the collective memory of a city, with national policies aiming at bolstering cores by supporting public transportation and central building projects, promoting regional cooperation while curbing decentralization.	Pioneering mentality supporting the obsolescence of urban cores by infrastructural development, suburbanization and fear of urban life. In recent years, preservation and public transportation is embraced as a commercial strategy.
<b>STAKEHOLDERS</b>	A mixture of public intervention and strong private organizations to preserve the relevance of urban cores.	
	The national government as a wavering, unreliable force in the urban core.	The auto manufacturers as a detrimental force to the urban core, as they located their headquarters elsewhere from the 1920s onwards and produced cars generating decentralization.
	Poor public participation until the 1970s; strong resident-led redevelopment efforts in the inner city periphery afterwards.	Poor public participation, currently exacerbated by the lack of remaining downtown residents.
<b>SOCIETY</b>	The urban core is a reflection of the relatively segregated urban society in both cities, yet to a much larger extent in Detroit.	
	While the urban core remains divided between classes, people of all walks of life still mix on the street.	Mass migration, racism and economic and social instability has virtually obliterated the urban core's role as a connector of various people, especially after the 1967 civil disorders.
	Open, trustful ground floor frontages connecting with passersby, except for government buildings.	Closed, defensive architecture aimed at shielding tenants from the general public.
<b>ECONOMY</b>	Relative dependence on one major industry in both cities (Detroit: manufacturing, The Hague: governance).	
	Relatively stable economy, ensuring a relatively predictable return on real estate investment.	Highly cyclical economy, obstructing long-term real estate investments.
	Rapid economic growth between 1911-1929, followed by a significant downturn during the Depression era, halting most construction projects.	
	Almost complete construction stop during World War 2.	Boom years during World War 2, yet little downtown construction due to materials and labor shortages.
	Postwar economic recovery, mostly benefiting the urban core.	Postwar economic recovery, benefiting the urban fringe, harming the urban core.

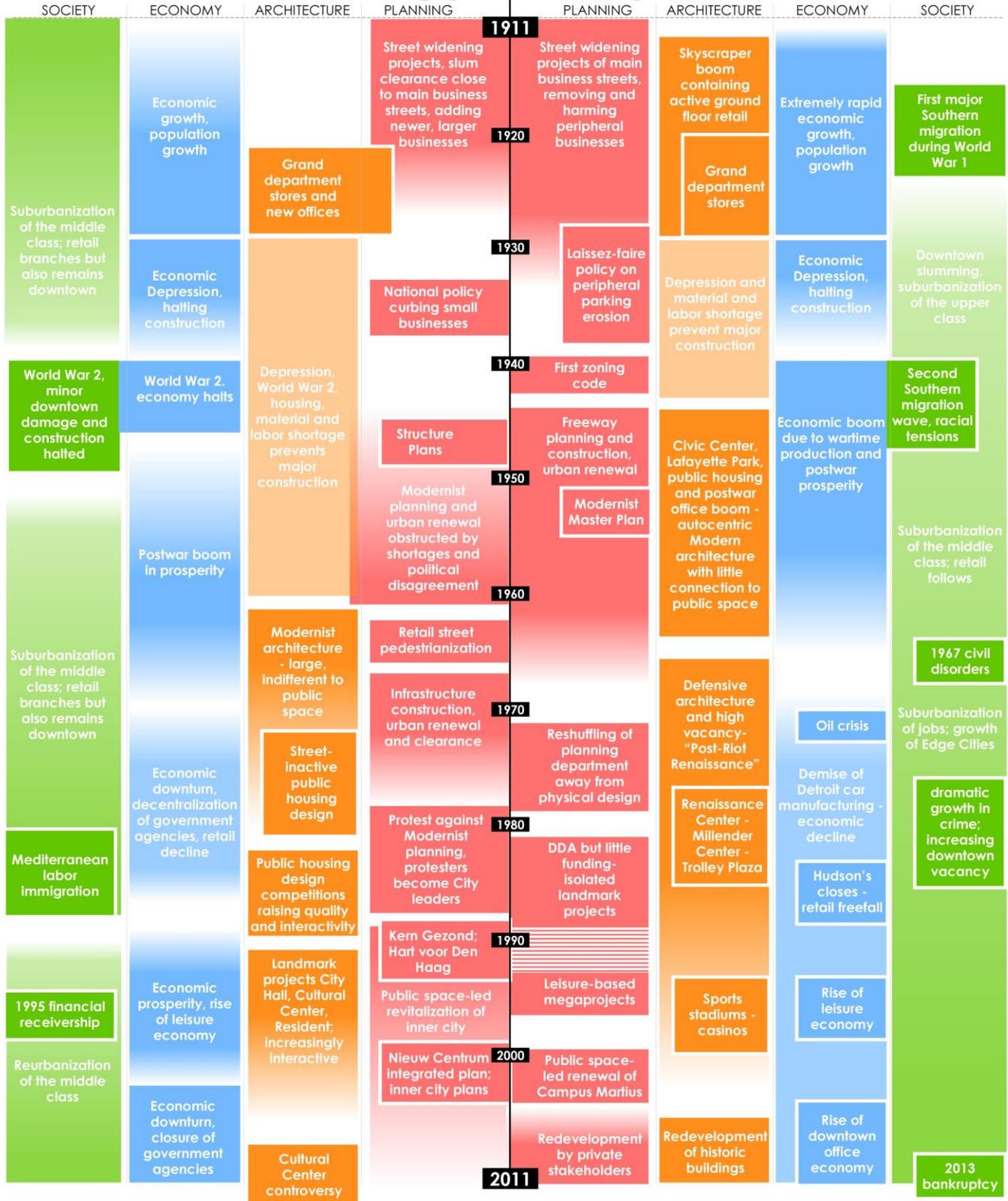
	Economic downturn in the 1970s, significantly harming retail viability in the urban core.	
	Economic recovery in the 1980s and beyond, putting renewed life and trust in the urban core.	Continued economic downturn, draining the last remaining street-level life from the urban core.
<b>RETAIL ECONOMY</b>	Changing nature of retail: loss of smaller independent retailers from the 1910s onwards to chain and department stores, initially in the food sector. National policy is indifferent to or promoting this process: peripheral retail streets withered.	
	In postwar era, rise of centralizing national retail policy: core retail streets became the territory of chain stores.	In postwar era, promotion of suburban retailing through federal tax, mortgage and infrastructure policy: core retail streets became vacant.
	Rise of the leisure economy in the 1990s: transformation of city squares to lively bar and restaurant spaces, connecting private and public space.	Rise of the leisure economy in the 1990s: construction of large, self-contained leisure complexes such as sports stadiums and casinos.
<b>OFFICE ECONOMY</b>	Prewar office construction usually integrated ground floor retail to boost rental revenues.	
	Postwar office construction retreated from the street, facing public space with lobbies or blank walls. Office vacancy is exacerbating the lack of presence toward public space.	
<b>RESIDENTIAL ECONOMY</b>	Decline of residents from the early 20 <sup>th</sup> century onwards.	Decline of residents from the mid-19 <sup>th</sup> century onwards.
	Focus on bringing back residents to urban core from the postwar era onwards in an effort to enliven streets and support central retailers.	
	Poorly designed urban renewal housing during the 1960s and 1970s, followed by a leap in design quality from the 1980s onwards.	Open, Modernist Lafayette Park redevelopment in the 1950s, followed by more defensive residential projects during the 1970s and 1980s.
<b>AUTOMOBILES</b>	Road widening in the 1910s and 1920s – new boulevards away from the existing main retail streets, combined with slum clearance.	Road widening schemes in the 1910s and 1920s – widening existing peripheral retail streets, decimating their business viability.
	Continuous focus on promoting public transportation.	Underfunding of public transportation, laissez-fair policy on parking erosion.
	Postwar focus on large-scale car infrastructure frustrated by lack of funding, materials and housing. Only a small amount of the planned infrastructure has been realized.	Postwar focus on large-scale car infrastructure promoted by politicians and automobile manufacturers. All planned infrastructure has been realized.
	Pedestrianization of central retail streets from the 1960s, public space-led regeneration from the late 1980s, large public transit investments during the 1990s and 2000s.	Failed transit malls in the 1970s and 1980s, small pedestrian projects like Campus Martius, the Riverfront park in the 2000s, potential removal of an urban freeway in the 2010s.

<b>URBAN PLANNING</b>	Urban planning efforts were often preceded by external forces and events, and reinforced the dichotomy between the active downtown core and deactivating downtown periphery.	
	Significant government intervention in the urban core in the 1910s to late 1920s, mostly pertaining to street widening and early slum clearance	
	Zoning and building control policies implemented in stages from the 1900s onwards.	First zoning ordinance only implemented in 1940.
	Almost no urban renewal projects completed in the immediate postwar era due to a lack of funding, materials and housing for displaced residents.	Significant investments in urban renewal and infrastructure from the 1940s onwards, preceding federal funding.
	Urban renewal gathering steam in the 1970s, yet often slowed down by political disagreements.	Urban renewal losing strength in the 1970s due to a lack of funding and political support.
	Integrated inner city planning from the 1980s onwards, focusing on high quality public space and buildings that enliven it.	Landmark projects from the 1980s onwards, often resulting in solitary, defensive buildings which lack a connection to public space.
<b>ARCHITECTURE</b>	Large buildings replacing small-scaled architecture from the 1910s onwards, often in well-connected locations in conjunction with new infrastructural investments.	Large buildings replacing small-scaled architecture from the 1850s onwards in well-connected locations.
	Large-scale new construction decreasing the number of entrances per square meter of interior floor space, and often decreasing the interactivity of frontages on side streets.	
	Large scale postwar construction often took a larger distance toward public space.	
	Post-1970s development refocused on the connection between buildings and public space, bolstered by design competitions and official guidelines.	Post-1967 development would become increasingly defensive toward passersby, reinforcing a cycle of distrust between architecture and public space.

**Table 10. Similarities and differences between The Hague and Detroit’s external forces to frontage transformation.**

On the next page, a timeline of the most important external forces to frontage transformation in The Hague and Detroit is presented.

# THE HAGUE — DETROIT



## 8.2 INTERNAL PATTERNS OF CHANGE

The aforementioned forces have shaped frontages in both cities in a remarkably similar pattern. This is a significant finding, seen how contextual and therefore unique some of the forces which have influenced frontage transformation have been. In both cities, frontage interactivity has declined significantly, and frontage width has increased in tandem. Decline has taken place especially in locations which were at a locational disadvantage, either because they are far removed from the city's center of activity, or on a poorly connected street. Retail frontages have especially been decimated by this pattern due to the changing nature of the retail business, in which often smaller peripheral businesses gave way to larger, central businesses.

As a result, a common pattern can be recognized of a strengthening but homogenizing 'walkable' core of only a few blocks with highly interactive retail frontages,<sup>1245</sup> surrounded by a continuously deactivating downtown fringe. This pattern has been found by other scholars and described as either the Core-Frame model (economic geography)<sup>1246</sup>, or the urban Fringe Belt (urban morphology)<sup>1247</sup>. Only the *extent* to which this has occurred seems to differ between the Detroit and The Hague. While the struggling inner city fringe of The Hague has been redeveloped as large-scale housing, offices and civic buildings, a fringe of vacancy, parking lots and crumbling infrastructure has expanded to erode the viability of core blocks in Detroit. The existential fear of the Motor City's downtown retail businesses from the 1950s onwards has come true in many regards, no matter what planners, architects and engineers did to stem the tide – the Pensacola Syndrome cycle has completed as downtown imploded from the 1960s onwards.<sup>1248</sup> The process of

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<sup>1245</sup> Within this core, certain streets have become less interactive as they serve as supply routes for growing retailers.

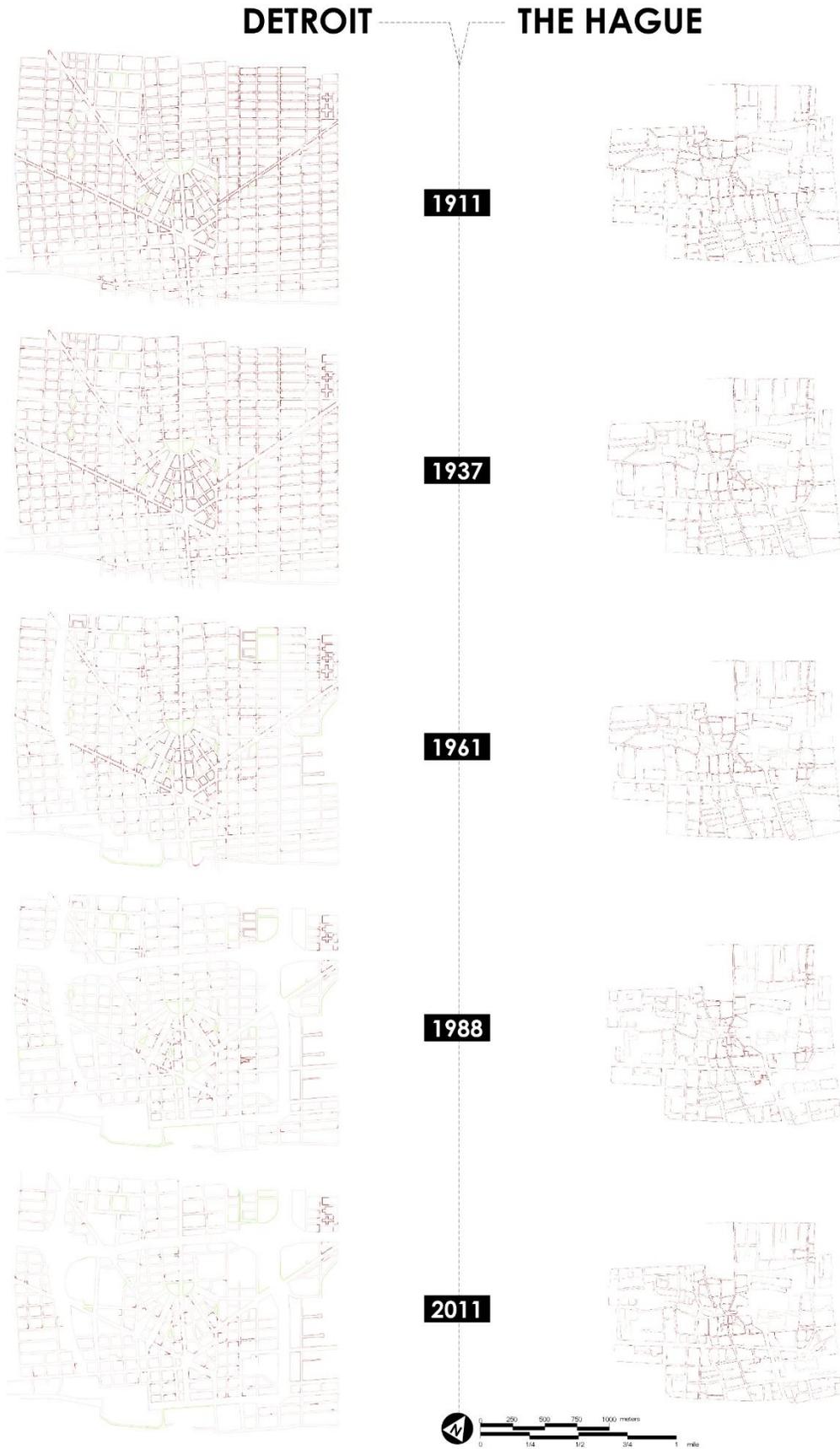
<sup>1246</sup> Horwood and Boyce, *Studies of the Central Business District and Urban Freeway Development*.

<sup>1247</sup> Whitehand, "Urban Fringe Belts: Development of an Idea."; J. W. R. Whitehand, "British Urban Morphology: The Conzenean Tradition.," *Urban Morphology* 5, no. 2 (2001).

<sup>1248</sup> This fear is further discussed in Isenberg, *Downtown America : A History of the Place and the People Who Made It*; Fogelson, *Downtown : Its Rise and Fall, 1880-1950*. The Pensacola Syndrome refers to the erosion of urban cores by cars to the point where its value as a destination is lost, as described by Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck, *Suburban Nation : The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream*.

concentrated shrinkage (and in the case of Detroit – wholesale obliteration) of frontage interactivity is shown on the following page.

Figure 310. Frontage interactivity comparison.



While the same pattern of economic, social and physical decline was at the root of the plight of both urban fringes, the maps immediately show the difference in the extent to which this has led to peripheral frontage decline. This difference corresponds to the economic, cultural and political climates of Detroit and The Hague as these cities varied in their response to fringe frontage deactivation. This can also be seen in the morphological maps of both cities, as frontage interactivity and urban morphology are closely interrelated. Oftentimes, frontage deactivation is a sign of economic decline of an area, which can be followed by demolition or urban renewal. In other cases, frontage deactivation is the direct result of demolition or renewal.

Much more than The Hague, Detroit experienced a building boom in the 1910s and 1920s. Unhindered by zoning or stringent building guidelines, residential streets gave way to sweeping office skyscrapers and grand department stores, changing the face of Detroit's urban core in the span of less than two decades. Yet outside its booming core, downtown Detroit would soon embark on a different path. As demonstrated in chapter six, an explosive mixture of rising car ownership, falling land values and laissez-fair planning had essentially doomed Detroit's immediate downtown periphery by the late 1930s, turning the struggling ring of districts into an unwalkable hodgepodge of parking lots, vacant buildings and marginal businesses. The widening of most radial avenues into downtown only worsened this pattern, and frontage interactivity suffered as much decline as the building stock in this district. Further afield, the residential ring around downtown deteriorated socio-economically and physically into slums, while the ring's building stock remained in place until the 1950s. It was only in this decade that the combined forces of planners, architects and traffic engineers found the private and public support for the wholesale renewal of the entire fringe of downtown Detroit, replacing slum housing and parking lots with grand schemes such as Lafayette Park, the Brewster-Douglas and Jeffries Housing projects and the freeway horseshoe around downtown. Not only did these developments drastically alter the morphology of Detroit's downtown fringe, they were also downright disastrous for its frontage interactivity. Having lost its significance as walkable environment, the fringe became host to defensive megaprojects such as the

Renaissance Center in the 1970s, and various sports and gambling megastructures and the DTE campus in the 1990s and beyond. Altering the scale of the urban tissue toward cars rather than pedestrians, these projects were the final nails in the coffin of Detroit's downtown fringe as a walkable destination.

In contrast, The Hague curiously benefited from much greater morphological inertia: although it allowed its fringe to lose its socio-economic vitality and frontage interactivity, it nevertheless saved much of its building stock. Although large infrastructural projects altered the scale and form of the downtown core in the 1910s and 1920s, office developments were nevertheless dispersed throughout the city and unregulated building speculation was not an issue. The fringe suffered from a similar socio-economic and physical decline as in Detroit, but the cultural and political climate –coupled with the preference of public transit access over individual car ownership- prevented much of the periphery from falling prey to parking erosion and large-scale urban renewal. At the time when Detroit was planning and executing its most drastic renewal plans in the 1950s, The Hague's inner city morphology remained stable – not for the lack of grand plans, but rather due to shortages of materials, housing and political agreement. When urban renewal plans finally landed on the ground in the 1960s and 1970s, the most drastic clearance occurred in the southeast part of the inner city, sparing most other districts. Within about a decade, the era of Modern urban renewal had already come to an end due to public opposition and a resulting political paradigm shift. Slum clearance was mostly restricted to relatively contextual public housing construction from the 1970s onwards, followed by a wave of historic renovations in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The end result is an inner city which has retained its basic structure of dense, interrelated tissue – even while the role and building stock of its periphery has been altered drastically.

# DETROIT

# THE HAGUE

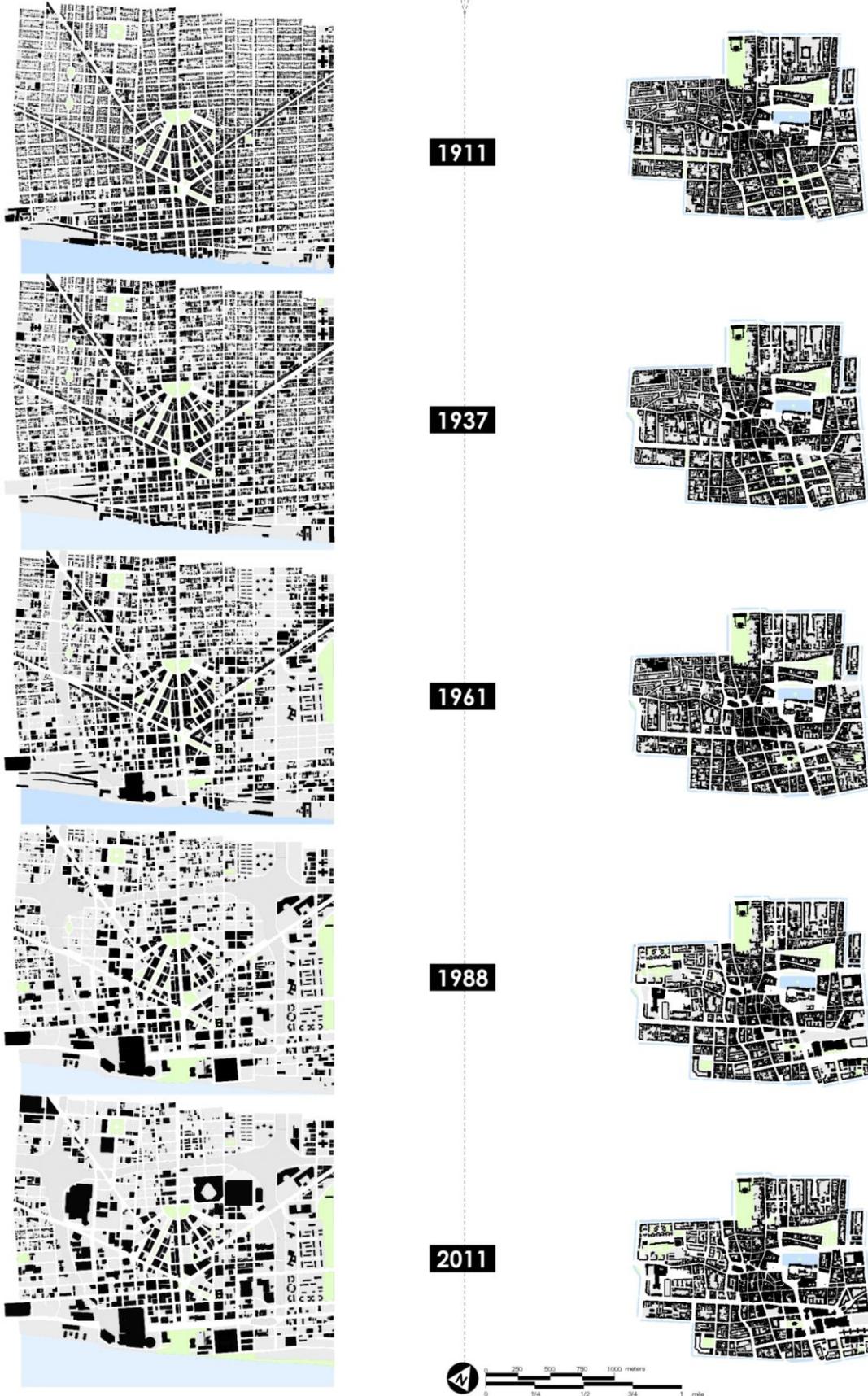


Figure 311. Morphology comparison.

	<b>DETROIT</b>	<b>THE HAGUE</b>
<b>CORE</b>	<b>1911-1929</b> Strong economic transformation and growth, drastic replacement of residences by offices and department stores.	<b>1911-1929</b> Moderate economic transformation and growth, regulating new construction with zoning and architectural guidelines and spreading office development.
	<b>1910s - 1930s</b> Street widening projects in the downtown area: The Hague builds new streets close to existing business streets, Detroit widens existing business streets.	
	<b>1910s - 1960s</b> Growth of significant consumption clusters with large department stores (Detroit: Hudson's as second largest department store in United States in 1928; The Hague's V&D largest department store in The Netherlands in 1964).	
	<b>1950s &gt;</b> Decline in retail floor space due to strong decentralization of shopping and middle class customers and rise of car ownership, leading to closure of retailers and first demolition of Kern's department store in 1959.	<b>1950s &gt;</b> Stabilization of retail floor space due to only moderate decentralization of shopping and middle class customers which continue to reach inner city by transit, leading to the construction of large department stores on the Grote Marktstraat.
	<b>1960s</b> Modernist planning realized: grand street widening of Woodward Avenue and Washington Boulevard, construction boom of large office buildings and parking garages.	<b>1960s</b> Modernist planning obstructed: core tissue mostly remains intact, first retail streets pedestrianized.
	<b>1970s-1990s</b> Retailers completely abandon downtown, crowned by the closure of Hudson's department store in 1983 followed by its demolition in 1998.	<b>1970s-1990s</b> Inner city core retail increasingly homogenizes toward chain and department stores.
	<b>1970s-1980s</b> Solitary megaprojects in downtown core to lure back suburban visitors, defensive toward public space, e.g. Millender Center and Trolley Plaza.	<b>1970s-1980s</b> Contextual urban renewal in downtown core, with mixed-use complexes such as the Markthof, public housing and new cultural center.
	<b>1990s-2000s</b> Public space-based revitalization with Kern Gezond integrated plan in The Hague, Campus Martius redevelopment in Detroit.	

**Table 11. Similarities and differences in shaping the morphology and frontages of the downtown core of Detroit and The Hague.**

	<b>DETROIT</b>	<b>THE HAGUE</b>
<b>FRINGE</b>	<b>1911-1960</b> Loss of economical relevance due to the demise of independent retailers, loss of residents and closure of manufacturing plants.	
	<b>1911-1960</b> Socio-economic decline, leading to deteriorating physical housing conditions.	
	<b>1930s&gt;</b> Erosion of immediate downtown fringe to parking lots due to rise in car ownership and lack of governmental control; demise of fringe as walkable destination.	<b>1930s&gt;</b> Erosion of business in downtown fringe due to 1937 national law curbing small business, yet maintenance of fringe building stock due to lack of resources to intervene and continued investment in public transport.
	<b>1940s-1960s</b> Wholesale clearance of urban fringe as a result of successive Modern planning policies; replacement by private and public housing projects, civic buildings and car infrastructure.	<b>1940s-1960s</b> Despite drastic Modern planning for urban fringe replacement with civic buildings and car infrastructure, World War 2 and subsequent shortages of materials, housing and political agreement prevent mass clearance.
	<b>1970s</b> Large-scale fringe clearance halted due to lack of funding; switch to solitary megaprojects such as Renaissance Center. Parking erosion and building vacancy continues at a rapid pace.	<b>1970s</b> Funding allows for parts of the Modern planning to take place: clearance of Spuikwartier in lieu of large office buildings and raised urban freeway. Other districts suffer from planners' blight.
	<b>1980s -1990s</b> No significant fringe building activity.	<b>1980s-2000s</b> 'Reparation' of parts of the cleared fringe with public housing under Duivesteijn and mixed-use complexes such as De Resident. Revision of the city's Cultural Center is under debate.
	<b>1990s - 2010s</b> Leisure-based megaprojects take over the fringe, such as casinos, sports stadiums and office campuses.	

**Table 12. Similarities and differences in shaping the morphology and frontages of the downtown periphery of Detroit and The Hague.**

Over the past decade, the dichotomy between the urban core and fringe has grown, and this process has its own reinforcing internal pattern. Frontage interactivity decline usually occurs in an accelerated manner when observed at the scale of the street segment. Once decline has started, chances are that it will accelerate until a bottoming-out has been reached, either because the street has no interactivity left or because an intervention has taken place. This acceleration can be explained through the contagion of decline, especially in the case of street level businesses. As demonstrated in Detroit, vacant buildings and lots

highly increase the risk of surrounding buildings to also become vacant. In both cities, the closure of a retail shop will increase the risk of surrounding businesses to follow suit. The loss of businesses along Detroit's Grand River Avenue followed the same pattern of The Hague's Westeinde: shop closures broke the walkable continuity of the street, leading to a domino effect of further closures, until hardly any retailer was left. This pattern is remarkably similar between daily goods, destination and comparison retailers in both cities, an early sign of a universal law on the need for critical mass in frontage interactivity. Interactive frontages of all types need to be surrounded by peers in order to survive, especially in the case of ground floor retailers, bars and restaurants. Interactive frontages highly benefit from clustering since they can form continuous districts that cater to a pedestrian audience, either as residents, workers or customers. Once this continuity has been broken through parking erosion, vacancy or demolition, the survival of interactivity is at risk. Conversely, revitalization efforts have a higher chance of survival if efforts are condensed in sufficient clusters or hook into the interactivity of existing continuous districts. The failure of Detroit's Trapper's Alley festival marketplace and The Hague's Queenspassage and Pasadenha arcades can be ascribed to the same phenomenon: the creation of a new destination for retailers without successfully hooking into the existing vitality of the city.

The selective and accelerated decline of frontages enter a reinforcing cycle to drastically increase the dichotomy between interactive and inactive streets. While well-located streets continued to gather more highly interactive comparison shops in The Hague and Detroit (until its decline in the 1960s), the diversity of land uses and retail types on these streets declined rapidly. Similarly, poorly located streets in both cities suffered from business closures, exacerbated by building and lot vacancies in Detroit. In other words: while highly interactive streets in the retail core became even more interactive (but less diverse), struggling peripheral streets rapidly lost their interactive frontages. Urban renewal often only exacerbated this growing dichotomy, as most plans were located in struggling, peripheral areas and resulted in less frontage interactivity within and outside their perimeters. As demonstrated in the previous sections, the combined patterns create a

strong division between ‘winners and losers’, limiting frontage interactivity to a few central streets while severely harming most other public spaces.

Recent initiatives in The Hague demonstrate countermeasures for this growing dichotomy. The revaluation of the urban fringe as an important source of historical heritage and street-level diversity has led to new life for various peripheral districts, and promises to expand to more streets. Vacant storefronts are leased to artists and underutilized structures become part of creative spaces, ready to again become part of the city. It is on these ‘losing’ streets where the barriers for new businesses to present themselves to the general public are the lowest, and it is on these streets that ultimately, street-level diversity is the greatest. These pockets of heterogeneity come to the core of urbanity: the potential for citizens to choose their own path. A similar pattern can be seen in some streets of Midtown Detroit.



**Figure 312. Street-level diversity in the urban fringe: the Wagenstraat in The Hague contains bars, restaurants, unique stores, houses of prayer, houses of vice and the city’s Chinatown.**

### 8.3 COMPARISON CONCLUSION

The inner city of The Hague and downtown Detroit have far more similarities than one might expect at first sight. While each followed their own paths, they faced many similar issues over the past century as the result of social, economic, political and cultural forces. The plight of The Hague's urban fringe was largely the same as Detroit; the loss of residents, social and physical decay and the obsolescence of the fringe's economic base occurred in both cities. Similarly, both cities experienced the rise and fall of the department store in their retail core, followed by the rise of the leisure economy in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

While socio-economically the internal forces in the urban cores of Detroit and The Hague were relatively similar, the different planning approaches and fates of The Hague and Detroit are mainly the result of a drastically different cultural view toward architecture and the city. While The Hague recognized the value of its central building stock as a habitat and part of a collective memory, Detroiters viewed buildings as investments, ready to be razed when a better land use came along, even if this was a mere parking lot. This allowed the Motor City's downtown to become a far more flexible but ephemeral environment – it declined as fast as it had grown. More importantly, the fate of both urban cores differed due to the cultural view of centrality in both countries in general. While the Netherlands regards cities as centers of culture, commerce and collective memory, the United States has set their sights elsewhere. Downtowns were commonly considered a thing of the past, replaced by the safety and convenience of suburban living, shopping and working. While Dutch national policies have protected urban cores with curbs on decentralizing jobs and retail and incentives to build inner city housing and public transportation, American policies have stacked the cards the opposite way, subsidizing suburbia through a complex network of tax incentives, infrastructure investments and zoning restrictions.

American cities can learn from The Hague in many regards: its successful public-space led regeneration from a nine to five working and shopping center into a thriving residential,

commercial and leisure destination has earned the inner city numerous awards and accolades. The continued investment in public transportation, historic building renovation and public space upgrades for people rather than cars can be a model for many foreign urban cores. Most importantly, the city's focus on contextual architecture which interacts with the street has imbued public space with trust and public life. Yet in the wider cultural and national policy context it remains to be seen whether these local measures can overcome the regional and national disincentive for American urbanism to recentralize in the face of growing economic disparity, continued autofocused investment and suburban subsidization. Nevertheless, many recent successes in The Hague have happened elsewhere: as the Dutch government capital has invested in creating pedestrian-friendlier public spaces, so has Detroit started its modest revolution. Streetcars are currently being reintroduced along Woodward Avenue after an almost 60-year hiatus, and frontages are reopened as smaller and larger businesses draw back downtown.

## **CHAPTER 9.**

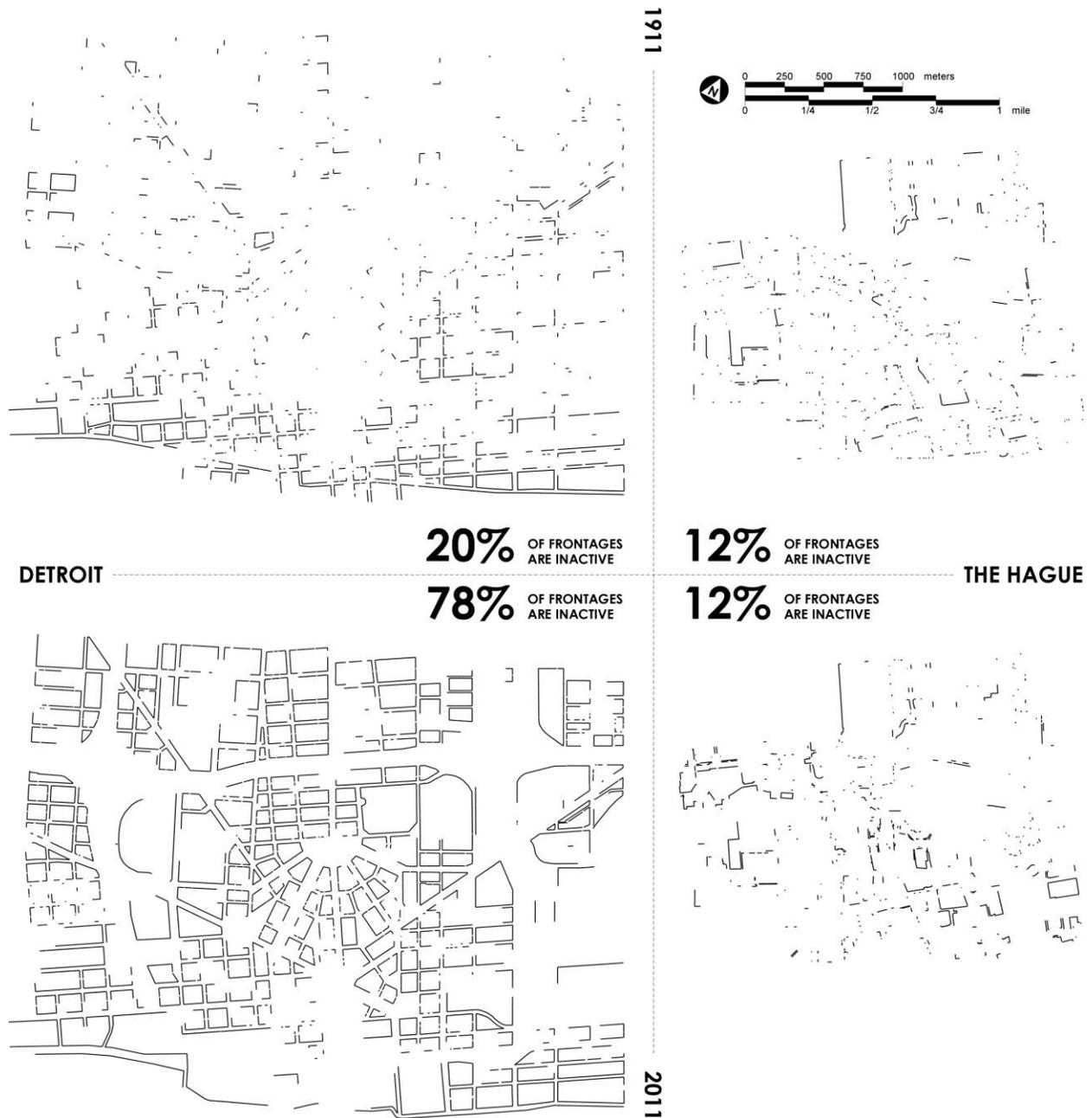
### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

As the dissertation comes to a close, this chapter will summarize and synthesize the insights generated from the study of Detroit and The Hague's urban cores, ultimately generating a set of recommendations for the future improvement of the relationship between buildings and public space.

## 9.1 CONCLUSION

Frontages are an ephemeral expression of the social, economic, cultural and physical state of an urban core and its public spaces. For many reasons, this state has led to a rapid deactivation of the relationship between buildings and public space over the past century. Almost 80% of downtown Detroit's frontage interactivity has been lost during this time span, compared to 11% in The Hague. The 20-foot building with a front door –the fabric of much of the American and Dutch urban core a century ago- struggles to remain relevant as contemporary construction has moved on to ever-larger structures, instigated by the economic growth and consolidation in modern Western society. The average frontage width has more than doubled in Detroit over the past century, and increased by 25% in The Hague.

This can be ascribed to three key factors. Modern architecture has favored efficiency over intricacy, replacing the fine-grained interaction between buildings and public space of years past with consolidated entrances, reflective glass and concrete facades and access ramps. Secondly, buildings are increasingly protected from the entry of sights, noise, smells and intruders by various defensive measures which have substantially damaged the relationship between the interior and exterior. As found in the research, postwar construction in both cities has a significantly lower interactivity with public space, especially in urban renewal areas. Finally, the rise of the automobile completed the perfect storm by making the pedestrian passerby nearly obsolete, replacing doorknobs with parking booths and ramps. The most drastic expression of this trifecta can be experienced by observing most contemporary architecture in Detroit, where one is bound to be treated to blank walls, fences and parking – guaranteeing a feeling of mutual distrust and insignificance. More than 75% of downtown Detroit's sidewalks are currently lined with inactive land uses, compared to 12% in The Hague.



**Figure 313. Inactive frontages in Detroit and The Hague – showing a remarkable increase in the former, and stability in the latter case.**

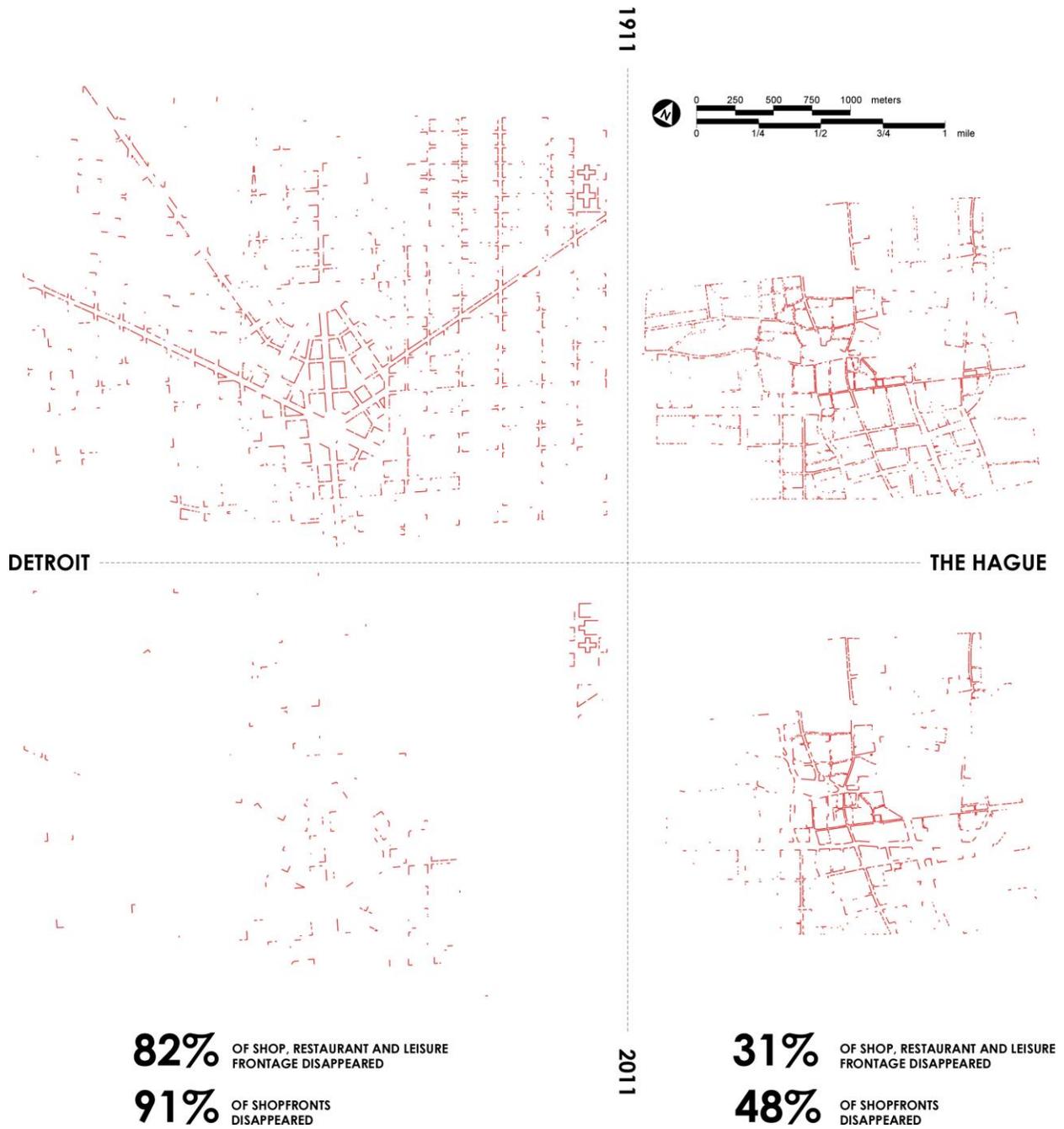
Yet the traditional discourse on the deteriorating relationship between buildings and public space seems overly focused on a mixture of melancholy of the past and criticism of the subordinate role of interactive frontages in contemporary architecture. Yet it is a mistake to ascribe this change only to drivers, designers and distrust. The high level of

interactivity between buildings and public space which was experienced a century ago reflected the context of that time period, a context that isn't likely to return to the Western world anytime soon. As discovered through this dissertation research, a significant yet underappreciated reason for the deactivation of the relationship between buildings and public space is the changing nature of the ground floor economy. Especially the complete transformation of retailing over the past century –surviving two revolutions, and entering a third<sup>1249</sup>- has drastically reduced the exposure between stores and public space, both by decimating the number of stores due to consolidation, and by altering the nature of stores by favoring internalized control over external appearance. Over 90% of the downtown store frontage in Detroit has disappeared, compared to over 30% in The Hague. This is the process responsible for most of Detroit's loss of street level interactivity, and practically all of the decline in The Hague. The quaint corner store has been usurped by the efficiency of the supermarket as the independent seamstress now works for the department store, with customers and business owners unlikely to accept a return to the past.

As the ranks of independent retailers have been decimated by the force of modernization, the inner city's periphery has lost most of its ground floor businesses to consolidated competitors in the retail core. This can be seen in the sharp decline of frontage interactivity in the downtown periphery of both cities, accelerated by the loss of a critical mass of retail on peripheral streets. In Detroit the urban core *became* the periphery, as retailers moved out to consolidated suburban malls. Yet even in The Hague's still-vibrant retail core, the elaborate display of merchandise in storefronts, stands and racks has often given way to the recognizable brand, often indicated by the banal window sticker or overhanging sign – diminishing the ground floor as a place of cultural transfer and serendipity. The ongoing rise of online shopping only spells further trouble for ground-floor retailers, but the rise of the leisure economy expressed by the growing number of downtown bars and restaurants may offer respite.

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<sup>1249</sup> The first retail revolution was the rise of the fixed price, greatly increasing the need for advertising merchandise to passersby and inciting the rise of the department store. The second retail revolution was the transformation of the sales process to self-service, inciting the rise of the supermarket and drastic growth of store floorplates. The third and ongoing retail revolution is the rise of online shopping, putting many existing retail fields in peril of disappearing from physical stores. Davis, *A History of Shopping*.



**Figure 314. Business frontage decline in Detroit and The Hague.**

Furthermore, blaming the lack of ground floor presence in contemporary architecture directly to designers and planners omits the role of society and culture at large in shaping

its urban environments. While greatly the construction industry has been greatly consolidated and institutionalized over the past century, architecture and especially its street-level appearance remains a reflection of the hopes and fears of its users. The increasing defensiveness of new buildings in downtown Detroit from the 1970s onwards can be ascribed to the architects which made them, but they ultimately responded to the rapidly deteriorating social conditions on the street. The much-maligned berms in front of the Renaissance Center were explained by architect John Portman as a social necessity, a contemporary moat to protect tenants from the escalating unrest in the center's urban context. While the Renaissance Center was an easy target for architecture critics, thousands of store owners across the city had already followed the same path by barricading their premises in what would be called the "post-riot Renaissance".<sup>1250</sup> The stark metal shutters protecting store windows in The Hague's inner city remind late night passersby of the lack of safety caused by diminished number of residential eyes on the city's most central streets. Admittedly, the resulting blank facades, fences and plywood are not making streets any safer, but in the reciprocal cycle between defensive design and unsafe public space it is counterproductive to blame only one side. The ground floor is an everyday reflection of the level of trust in the perceived safety and vitality of public space, yet it in turn influences the perceived safety and vitality of this same space. The reactivation of frontages and public space can therefore only occur in tandem, and should take larger societal processes into account.

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<sup>1250</sup> Fogelson, *Downtown : Its Rise and Fall, 1880-1950*.

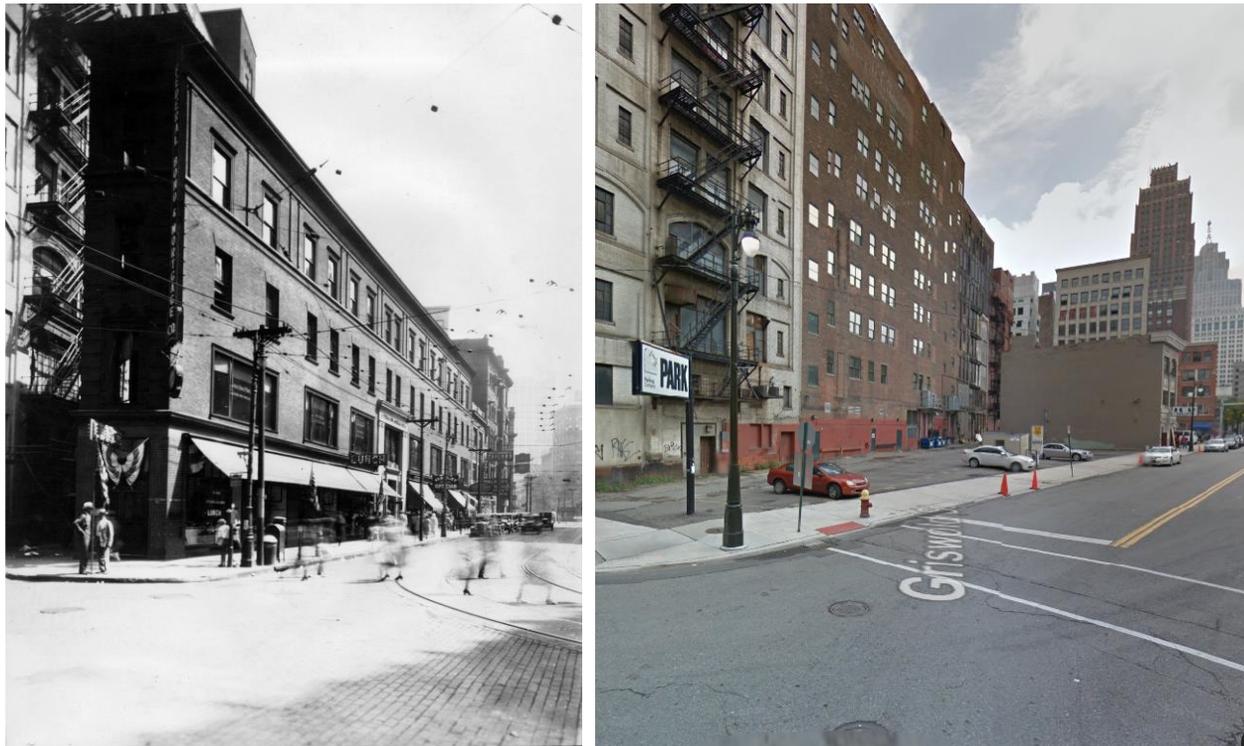


**Figure 315. Left: barricaded liquor store at the corner of Temple and Trumbull Street. Right: shuttered stores on the Wagenstraat.<sup>1251</sup>**

Quantitatively, the strong deactivation of downtown frontages in both cores can be explained through a range of mutually reinforcing processes. Firstly, frontages have tended to deactivate much faster in sub-optimal locations, such as poorly connected streets which were far away from the city's center of gravity. In these areas, retailers were the first to leave, often followed by the socio-economic and physical decline of the remaining building stock. Urban renewal programs tended to only widen the dichotomy between the core and periphery of downtowns by promoting large-scale construction with little street presence. This process of location-based deactivation has resulted in the shrinkage of frontage interactivity to a small, walkable core, surrounded by inactive feeder streets. In the case of Detroit, this pattern has collapsed in on itself as a result of the ongoing social and economic problems of the city and its core. At the level of the street itself, decline was quick, ruthless and often irreversible. Once an interactive ground floor land use would leave a street, surrounding buildings were very vulnerable to suffer the same fate and a domino-effect of decline would often take place. This process is especially visible among retail businesses. The rapid decline of some streets while others remained vibrant has led to a growing dichotomy between the interactivity of street frontages in different parts of the urban core – a pattern of 'winners and losers' has emerged. Urban planning interventions have mostly made this worse, by allowing or even encouraging space-hungry land uses such as parking

<sup>1251</sup> Left image by author, 2014. Right image Ton Schütz 1987, courtesy of The Hague Municipal Archives.

and utility buildings to locate in 'losing' streets. This process has also negatively affected the diversity of frontage types: streets are increasingly lined with only one land use, such as shops, residences or parking lots. On the most central shopping streets, diversity has been further harmed by the rise of chain stores over the past decades.



**Figure 316. Griswold Street in 1915 (left) and 2011 (right): parking erosion on a 'losing' street behind Detroit's main retail street.<sup>1252</sup>**

In the end, no single culprit can be named for the deactivation of the relationship between buildings and public space. Tentatively, most forces can be attributed to the ongoing modernization of construction, traffic and the ground floor economy, supplemented by the increasing cultural divide between the public and private realm and the growing divide between social classes. Yet these forces far exceed the realm of the urban planner, designer or architect to overcome. The clock on many of these forces is impossible to turn back, and many processes are taking place at the regional, national and even international level. The

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<sup>1252</sup> Left image courtesy of Burton Historical Collection. Right image courtesy of Google Streetview.

1937 Dutch law restricting small businesses started the long cycle of decline in the country's ground-floor retail presence, as would the American tax and infrastructure laws of the 1950s – hardly anything a city could counter by itself. The internationalization of retail brands and corporations, and their increasing presence in the city's top locations – either downtown or not- is also uncontrollable at the local level. Even the growing inequality and distrust between classes is nearly impossible to counter without regional, national and international cooperation. The political will to bridge the divide between urban cores and their surrounding suburbs is key to ensuring the vitality of the heart of the city, as witnessed by the protection of inner city vitality by national policy and regional cooperation in The Hague and the lack thereof in Detroit. Yet all of these processes influence the smallest of grains in the urban experience: the ground floor frontage.

Even controlling the character of frontages at the local level is easier said than done. The relationship between buildings and public space is shaped by the interplay between professionals, tenants and the general public. Designers and planners only have a limited and often rather banal role in this relationship, making it difficult to recommend strategies for them to be able to reactivate frontages on their own. The difficulty is demonstrated by the lack of control in both cities to counter the decline of frontage interactivity in their downtown periphery. No matter what measures were taken in Detroit to revitalize ground floor businesses in the 1970s and 1980s, frontages became ever more vacant and defensive as tenants' trust in the general public and commerce evaporated. Even in the stringent climate of zoning, building controls and retail planning in The Hague, frontages don't always abide by the wishes of public and private officials; peripheral retail streets have high vacancy rates, and former storefronts are turned into dwellings and offices by shuttering them with blinds and stickers. The reality of a changing retail economy simply caught up with the intended environment as conceived by the city's planners and designers. A counterattack on frontage deactivation can only be launched by embracing frontages as a physical, social, economic and cultural construct. While many current cards are stacked against the reactivation of frontages in the urban core, others are more encouraging. The need for social interaction as expressed by the rise of the leisure economy and a renewed interest in the sense of place of historical environments can be of

great importance for the revitalization of public life in downtown and its corresponding architecture.



**Figure 317. Public spaces in historic environments are ideal frontrunners in the leisure economy: the historic winding streets of The Hague's Hofkwartier are favored by bars and restaurants (left), as are landmark buildings in downtown Detroit such as the old Grand Trunk ticket office. The divide between private and public space can easily blur.<sup>1253</sup>**

The reactivation of frontages is only possible when they are viewed as an element of the urban environment as a place. This means that frontages shape and are shaped by the tripartite entities of physical space, its functional and its connotative aspects. In other words: interactive frontages are not only physically permeable and transparent, they are functionally interactive with public space and have a connotation of openness, trust and vitality. As mentioned before, this state can only be achieved when private and public space can interact in trust, and when both have sufficient vitality to support a functional

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<sup>1253</sup> Both images by author, 2014.

relationship. Conversely, an inactive frontage is physically impermeable and intransparent, functionally inactive and has a connotation of closure, distrust and dullness. This state has mostly been achieved by the slow deterioration of one or more of its aspects, but its reinstatement will require the balancing of all three dimensions of place. Without the active street life and passersby, ground floor businesses will stay away from downtown Detroit; and without trust in a safe public space they will remain barricaded even when open. Yet transparent and permeable ground floor businesses will be a key element in rebuilding the vitality and safety of the same downtown public spaces. The recent upswing in restaurants and bars in The Hague was made possible by a renewed interest and trust in the city's public life, and has greatly supported its further prosperity. Reactivating the architecture of public life is therefore a cyclical affair, for which strategies are outlined in the next section.

## 9.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

As noted in the introduction, a significant purpose of this dissertation is to generate and substantiate recommendations for improving the street level experiences of urban cores. In order to achieve change, it has studied the forces and patterns of frontage change and deactivation over the past century. As the research comes to a close and these elements have been identified in two case studies, this section will summarize the actions that can be taken to counter these forces and patterns, for the purpose of bolstering an interactive relationship between buildings and public space. These actions can be taken by all stakeholders, including architects, urban designers and planners, developers, managers, tenants, and the public at large.

First and foremost, stakeholders must realize their role and their limitations. As noted in the previous section, the character of frontages is transformed rapidly, reflecting the social, economic, cultural and physical context. The urban grid and building stock of Detroit and The Hague may have changed significantly over the past century, but their downtown ground level experience changed more drastically and at an even faster pace. Planners and architects were often not at the center of this transformation, as frontages they don't necessarily obey the traditional policy and design tools, instead abiding by forces, patterns and trends which are often outside the scope of these professions. Frontages will not become any less affected by these trends, as the elements which have shaped them over the past century will likely not diminish in strength or change course. Only those who know and act upon these forces, patterns and trends of change will shape the future of frontages.

### **1. Acknowledge and embrace economic change**

The most significant culprit of frontages deactivation over the past century has been the changing economy in urban cores, especially with regard to retail. The evolution of the retail industry will continue to pose a threat to the viability of many smaller and peripheral businesses. There are no signs of a slowing trend toward the closure of poorly located

retailers in lieu of the city's most central locations, and the clock won't turn back toward the fine-grained retail pattern of the past either. The decline of peripheral retail streets which is the topic of heated debates in The Netherlands is merely the continuation of a trend of concentrated shrinkage which set in a century ago, as is the homogenization of the country's main retail streets. The exodus of retailers from downtown Detroit toward suburban shopping malls has been ongoing since the departure of food stores in the 1920s toward suburban locations, a tide which is difficult to stem without national or regional controls. The rise of online shopping may spell the same fate for the retail cores of Dutch cities, which have been carefully protected to date.<sup>1254</sup> Planning for growth without taking these market forces into account will hardly lead to results. Many city plans mandate active ground floor retail in unviable locations, but retail tenants can't be forced to start an unviable business and frontages will remain empty, a mere write-off for developers of upper floors. The only new retail developments occur in the most central and well-connected locations, and even the market for these has struggled significantly since the past recession.<sup>1255</sup>

Yet not all hope is lost for retail frontages. Instead, economic trends can be used to the benefit of rediversifying the main retail core and filling in frontages in the downtown fringe. The unique selling point of urban cores can be more than the utilitarian offer of mass produced merchandise, which can also be found in nearby towns (Netherlands) or shopping malls (United States). Instead, the experience and leisure economy is taking urban cores by storm, leveraging their unique sense of place to create environments which combine cultural capital and authenticity with commerce and leisure.<sup>1256</sup> Global brands are becoming aware of the recognition value inherent in the urban context: for example Apple and Levi's stores locate in unique locations not to sell, but to be seen. As a result, main retail streets may experience a resurgence of interest in architectural excellence and

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<sup>1254</sup> Many of these trends are discussed in Gibbs, *Principles of Urban Retail Planning and Development*.

<sup>1255</sup> A trend which is likely structural, as demonstrated by the continued rising vacancy of retail frontages in The Netherlands by the Locatus consultancy firm, and Cushman & Wakefield in The Netherlands, corroborated by interviews with Aart Jan van Duren (Retail consultant for StedPlan, Netherlands) and Arno Ruigrok (associate director Multi Development, Netherlands).

<sup>1256</sup> As described by Zukin, *Point of Purchase : How Shopping Changed American Culture*.

building a sense of place over the simple display of large brands of homogenized chain formulas.

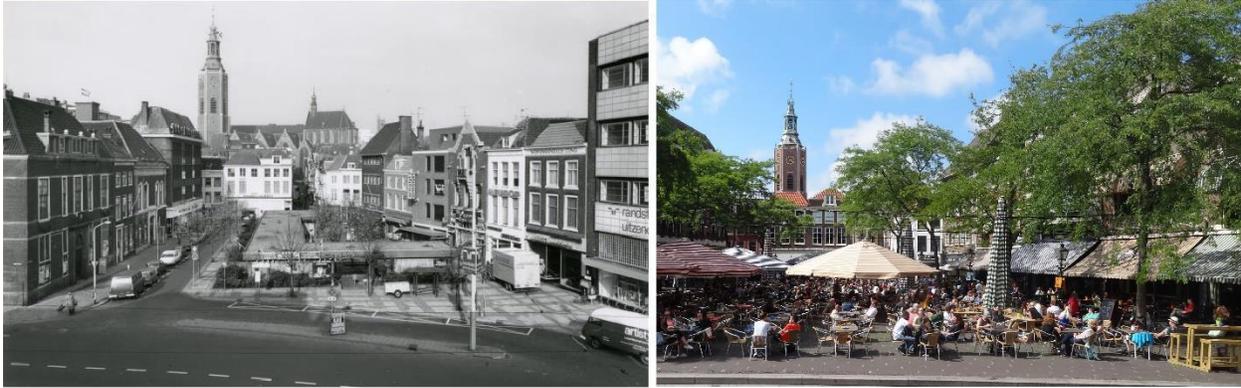
The search for authenticity is also reviving smaller independent retailers in peripheral locations, catering to an audience looking for unique items in the age of mass production. Peripheral areas can greatly benefit from this trend as their lower rents allow for innovative new businesses to sprout and prosper. Jane Jacobs' Hudson Street in the New York of the 1960s was diverse exactly because it was in the downtown fringe and rents were low enough to accommodate a mixture of ground floor tenants. Now that Hudson Street has mostly lost its diverse edge, its experience can now be found in parts of Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan and New Jersey.<sup>1257</sup> Diversity can be found in most large cities in the US and the Netherlands, such as Midtown Detroit and the Hofkwartier in The Hague<sup>1258</sup>, following the success of the Bristol Lanes in England and the Nine Streets in Amsterdam.

Beyond working, living and shopping, the urban core is increasingly seen as a place to play, enjoying leisure time in bars and restaurants and during events. Formerly disregarded locations in the fringe of the retail core can be revived as destinations to see and be seen, as witnessed by the wealth of bars, restaurants and patios on the Grote Markt and Plein in The Hague and to a certain extent the Park Avenue district in Detroit. Leisure activity should be turned toward the street rather than internalized in large casino or sports complexes, as it can bring a significant amount of street life back downtown. Arguably, Detroit's busiest downtown street is Monroe Street in Greektown, squarely aimed at leisure visitors. Only in the narrow bandwidth of the downtown fringe will the right mixture between central accessibility and affordable rents and land values allow for frontage diversity to prosper, as small retailers, leisure facilities can mix with other uses such as daycare facilities and small startup businesses to ensure a unique sense of place.

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<sup>1257</sup> Bonnie Kavoussi, "Jane Jacobs' Old Hudson Street Townhouse for Sale in West Village Jane Jacobs Probably Wouldn't Have Wanted to Live In," *New York Observer*, June 8 2009.

<sup>1258</sup> Statistically the most diverse area of the inner city when measuring frontage functions and retail types.



**Figure 318. Grote Markt in The Hague – from a struggling peripheral retail square (1975, left), to an epicenter of the city’s leisure economy (2014, right).<sup>1259</sup>**

## **2. Protect flexibility and diversity – it’s a matter of survival**

Bolstering diversity is not just a matter of building cultural capital or jumping on the latest trend, it is a matter of building resilience into the ecosystem of interactive frontages: if one frontage type fails, another can take over. Frontages need to have the flexibility to accommodate the old, the new, the large and the small as economic, cultural and social forces may change directions in the future. Yet frontage diversity and flexibility is self-defeating, especially in the retail market, as demonstrated by the monotonous retail streets of central The Hague, as homogenous as the fields of car parking in the fringe of downtown Detroit. Homogenization of streets and buildings should be seen as an inevitable byproduct of economic optimization: as found in the studies of both cities, streets will gravitate toward a single land use corresponding to their location in the city. This is the same process that generates ‘winner’ and ‘loser’ streets. Homogenization occurs through consolidation as well, as witnessed by the large retail palaces created by department store V&D in The Hague or Hudson’s in Detroit which by expansion have decreased the diversity of the core retail ecosystem to a point of great vulnerability. Hudson’s closure spelt the end of downtown Detroit as a retail destination, and V&D has repeatedly retracted from their original buildings as business declines. Homogenization can be accompanied by a

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<sup>1259</sup> Left image by Dienst voor de Stadsontwikkeling, courtesy of The Hague municipal archives. Right image by author, 2014.

significant decrease in flexibility. A case in point is again seen in both cities' most central blocks: as the Hudson's and V&D department stores prospered and grew, they created buildings which literally set their use in stone, rendering the redevelopment of Hudson's in Detroit almost impossible after its downfall, and making the redevelopment of V&D in The Hague a costly and time-intensive affair. Diversity of street-level functions and tenants needs to remain bolstered as a matter of survival by adaptability. The same goes for the need for flexibility of street-level frontages: the only constant of the city at eye level is rapid change.

### **3. Fight fear comprehensively**

The culture of fear in public space is another challenging trend which shows no sign of abating, especially in North America. While downtown Detroit has successfully created some of the only remaining meeting places for people of all walks of life such as the riverfront, Campus Martius and Eastern Market, much of its other public realm continues to suburbanize in form, function and connotation. Detroit's current middle class meets in coffee shops, malls and recreation centers safely located in the suburbs, but suburbia has returned downtown with a vengeance. The large casino complexes, sports stadiums, shopping malls and conference centers that provide a safe, comfortable experience to a carefully filtered audience have brought suburbanites back downtown but add nothing to its public life outdoors. Emulating suburban success from the 1950s onwards, Detroit's architectural interventions over the past decades have become ever larger and more focused on security. DTE Energy's corporate campus has taken over an entire portion of downtown for a confined corporate campus, across from the barricaded streets of Detroit's growing federal complex and next to the multi-block, single entrance MGM Grand Casino. While internally highly transparent, the upcoming Red Wings sports and entertainment complex north of downtown will take up more than a dozen former city blocks, facing the struggling Cass Park district with parking garages, fences and walls.

The only way to counteract this trend is to ensure that downtown public spaces are safe to walk through and enjoy. A secure and comfortable public space is a precondition for

revitalizing any urban core, and architecture has a strong role in reflecting whether a street is safe and sound to walk on. This means that opening frontages without securing public spaces will be fruitless – architecture won't be able to cure socio-economic ills. Fortunately, frontages are a key element in providing security. Interactive street-level frontages are a sign of trust in public space, indicating to passerby that building tenants trust the safety and viability of public space. In turn, interactive frontages feed public space with more passersby, ensuring safety by numbers.<sup>1260</sup> Interactive, small scaled frontages do not have to contain retail businesses or restaurants, but a pattern of frontage transparency and closely placed entrances will help to activate street life, as noted in many urban zoning plans. As streets gain trust from passersby and gather public life, commerce can follow in an upward cycle. This can also be described as meeting the hierarchical needs of pedestrians: when a base level of safety is met, utility can follow and excitement can prosper.<sup>1261</sup>



**Figure 319. Opening up street-level architecture as a reciprocal sign of trust in the safety and vitality of public space: the Bronx Bar in Midtown Detroit in 2007 and 2013.<sup>1262</sup>**

<sup>1260</sup> As already observed by Jane Jacobs in 1961, the quietest streets are the most unsafe: Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.

<sup>1261</sup> A theory based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, as described in Methorst, "Assessing Pedestrians' Needs.."

<sup>1262</sup> Image courtesy of Google Streetview.

#### 4. Use architecture to promote walkability

Similarly, cars will likely remain a significant element in urban cores for the foreseeable future. Although public transportation investment is increasing in Detroit and The Hague's inner city continues to prosper from its pedestrian and transit-first policy, a significant percentage of workers, residents and customers will continue to arrive downtown by car. Infrastructure and parking will therefore likely continue to stake their claim in the urban core, especially in North America. Bit by bit over the past century, the pedestrian-scaled architecture of downtown Detroit has been eroded by a car-oriented environment which only caters to high-speed passersby, allowing drivers to view establishments through large-scale signs and buildings, while welcoming them with ramps and parking garages. Any remaining pedestrians are made to feel small and unsafe.<sup>1263</sup> Humanly scaled, interactive frontages at street level can counter this trend by catering to pedestrians while demonstrating an alternative mode of enjoying the urban core. Large scale infrastructure can be curbed to include all modes of transportation, as witnessed by the demolition of parts of the Prins Bernhardviaduct in The Hague and the potential demolition of Interstate 375 in Detroit. Parking and other car-oriented functions can be integrated with humanized architecture, as shown by the 1930s Torengarage in The Hague or the recently finished Z-lot in Detroit. Furthermore, by promoting walking as a mode of transportation the need for car access and parking is greatly diminished, with the potential to start an upward cycle.

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<sup>1263</sup> An environment described as consisting of '60 km/h architecture' in Gehl, *Life between Buildings : Using Public Space*.



Figure 320. Parking with interactive retail frontages on the ground floor: “the Z-lot” in Detroit.<sup>1264</sup>

### 5. Take action with a critical mass

Knowledge of the forces and trends which have deactivated frontages is insufficient to counter them. Additionally, frontage interactivity can only be maintained and bolstered by knowing and employing pattern of its transformation, which hinges on the concept of critical mass. To enhance the viability of business and to ensure the safety and walkability of downtown streets and public spaces, taking action at a sufficient critical mass is paramount. This is certainly the case for stemming frontage deactivation. Once a large inactive frontage is inserted into any interactive district (regardless of the function of these interactive frontages), the likeliness of losing other frontages will soon increase, either through becoming vacant or losing interactivity through new inactive construction. In

<sup>1264</sup> Image courtesy of Bedrock Real Estate, 2012.

other words: once a street is on its way down, its decline will accelerate. This is especially the case for street-level businesses. As canaries in the coalmine, businesses will close first as a sign of decreased passersby, after which other land uses may be dragged along until a street has bottomed out to complete vacancy or transitioned to a car-oriented environment. Decline of interactivity is contagious and should be stemmed at all cost to maintain the viability of remaining interactive frontages. Efforts to counteract retail vacancy are starting in The Netherlands with the proposed 're-parceling' of struggling retail streets to re-cluster the remaining shops into a continuously interactive frontage pattern.<sup>1265</sup> Vacant retail frontages can also be used for other interactive uses such as temporary shops or art galleries, rented at cost, as demonstrated in The Hague.<sup>1266</sup> Business improvement districts and retail street managers can significantly aid these processes. At the level of non-retail frontage interactivity, city policies should be more proactive in mandating standards for frontage transparency, width and entrance density to ensure entire districts don't succumb to inactivity. It is most effective to focus on districts which (still) have this type of interactive architecture, as the chance of successfully maintaining interactivity increases.<sup>1267</sup>

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<sup>1265</sup> This is achieved without demolishing existing buildings, but only occurs at the ground level, as proposed by the Locatus retail analysis company in Peter Nieland, "Retail Issues and Shop Re-Parcelling," in *The City at Eye Level - Lessons for Street Plinths*, ed. Meredith Glaser, et al.(Delft: Eburon, 2012).

<sup>1266</sup> Many vacant frontages are brokered by Anna Vastgoed, a 'professional vacancy management' company.

<sup>1267</sup> An overview of these management and policy measures to help stem frontage decline is provided in *The City at Eye Level - Lesson for Street Plinths*, ed. Meredith Glaser, et al.(Delft: Eburon, 2012).



**Figure 321. Art galleries (left) and pop-up stores (right) aim to fill in vacant storefronts and maintain the continuity of interactive ground-floor business frontages.<sup>1268</sup>**

Unfortunately in some instances, interactive frontages have all but vanished in the urban core, as for example in Detroit or the southeastern portion of The Hague. In the absence of existing interactivity, the same critical mass concept is essential when aiming to bring interactive frontages back into the urban core. The revitalization of districts should focus on attracting a sufficient cluster of interactive frontages from the onset, especially when the process involves opening new retail businesses, bars or restaurants. Comparison retailers need neighbors to compare merchandise with, in clusters of at least one viable block or street segment.<sup>1269</sup> Too often, singular locations for these establishments are planned without connecting to surrounding businesses, only to remain vacant. Only when there is a critical mass within a walkable environment with multiple viable destinations to walk to, will visitors leave their car parked and become pedestrian users of the urban core, greatly diminishing the need for parking, ensuring the further density, continuity and viability of interactive frontages. This upward cycle of central revitalization can be achieved, but a catalyst with a critical mass is needed; or, revitalization must extend an existing sufficiently

<sup>1268</sup> Left image by author, 2014. Right image by author, 2012.

<sup>1269</sup> This realization is not too different from shopping mall design, which creates critical mass in a greenfield location as described in e.g. Gruen and Smith, *Shopping Towns USA; the Planning of Shopping Centers*.

sized cluster of interactive frontages. This realization is at the base of Daniel Gilbert's purchase of large clusters of buildings in downtown Detroit in an aim to reopen the city's central retail district at once, allowing visitors to walk past a continuous array of stores, bars and restaurants, also by connecting the new district to the already active stretch of Monroe Street in Greektown.

Achieving critical mass with minimal means (funding or interactive ground floor tenants) requires a bundling of all strengths and efforts into a small area to prevent the dispersal of businesses or other interactive frontages due to an oversized plan. Too often, new district plans of downtown revitalization efforts overestimate their success by planning for large expanses of interactive frontages, with developers only breaking ground on parts. From a retail perspective, the results are scattered clusters of activity in a field of vacancy, ultimately harming all tenants' business. Similarly, large master plans envision small-scaled architecture among an existing sea of automotive urbanism, resulting in disconnected pockets of pedestrian-friendly architecture which can only be reached by car, continuing the cycle of erosion by parking lots and garages. While starting small can seem slow or disorganized, focusing on enhancing existing strengths or ensuring a sufficiently sized new cluster of strength is the only way to restart viable frontage interactivity.

## **6. Acknowledge frontages as a key element of downtown as a place**

To conclude, interactive frontages add to the life of urban cores by providing a positive sense of place, feeding public space with functions that add to street life and bolstering walkability with a sense of safety, trust and excitement in public space. Yet frontages can only thrive in the very environments they create: safe, vibrant, walkable places. This tripartite is mutually reinforcing: safe and walkable places will support vibrancy. Furthermore, they correspond to the elements of place as studied by psychologist David Canter.<sup>1270</sup>

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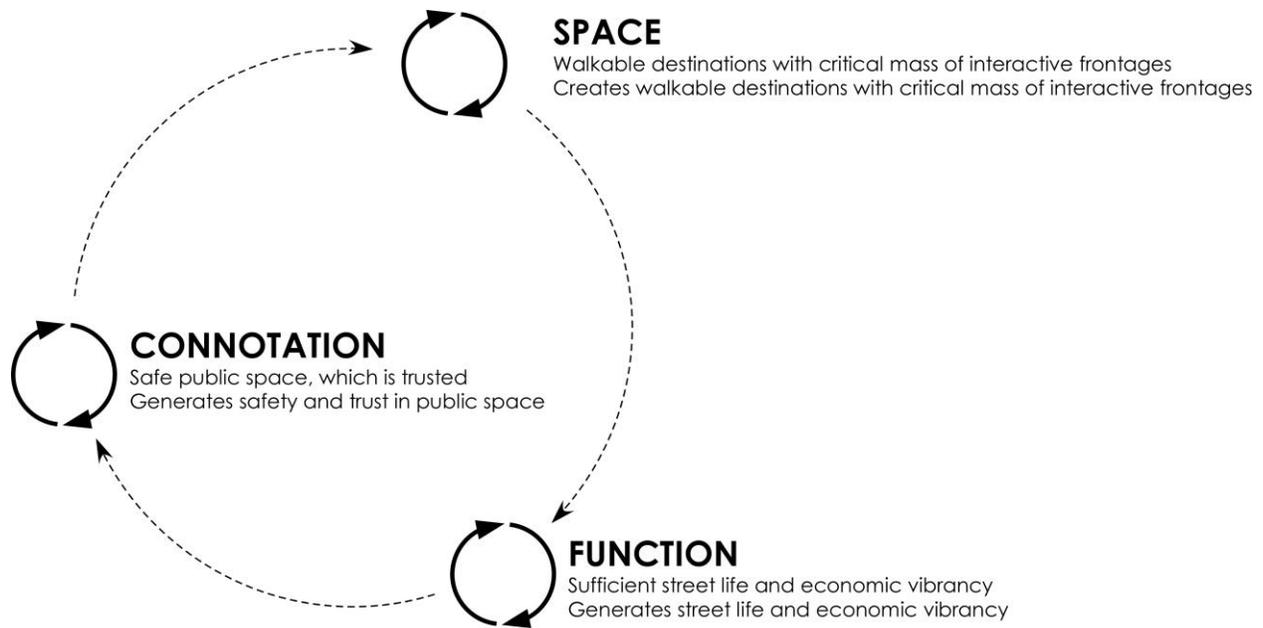
<sup>1270</sup> Canter, *The Psychology of Place*.

Frontages are a highly ephemeral aspect of the experience of the urban environment, and their constant transformation is difficult to steer with traditional architectural and planning tools. Therefore, in order to revitalize the interactivity of frontages, the upward cycle of space, function and connotation must be observed as without all its elements, the chances of success are highly diminished.

Physically, interactive frontages thrive in buildings on well-located streets that contain a critical mass of similarly interactive neighboring frontages. Yet frontages themselves make streets into a walkable destination by building a critical mass of interactive frontages. Planning policies and design interventions which omit a critical mass of buildings which related to the street, focus on poorly connected public spaces or don't look at the context of frontage interactivity are destined to underperform, resulting in vacancy.

Functionally, interactive frontages and street life have to mutually reinforce each other to thrive. While street-level businesses are most well-known for their dependency on passersby and their subsequent ability to generate more street life, a lack of activity on the sidewalks may also cause other frontages to close off for lack of interest and security. If streets go quiet, frontages are likely to follow soon. Conversely, interactive frontages can add to street life, helping other surrounding businesses.

Connotatively, interactive frontages are an expression of trust in public space and its users. Conversely, a lack of interactive frontages is a sign of a downward spiral: it signifies a lack of security in public space, and does little to ameliorate the situation. Planning for interactive frontages is therefore a cornerstone of establishing a safe urban core, and vice versa. Again this relationship is cyclical: interactive frontages depend on safe streets; safe streets depend on interactive frontages.



**Figure 322. Preconditions to interactive frontages.**

The spatial, activity and connotative context of frontages are preconditions to their interactivity. If frontages are poorly located or not surrounded by interactive peers, they won't thrive. If they are not lining active public space, they won't thrive. If their context is unsafe, they won't thrive. Oftentimes, the deactivation of frontages has coincided with the loss of one or more of these cyclical preconditions. This has happened regardless of professional wishes; interactive frontages don't adhere to policy or design interventions which don't take this tripartite relationship into account. One can plan or design transparent ground floor frontages, but their interactivity is ultimately decided by the end user: the tenant and the passerby. Yet their deactivation has been a result of a systemic process of mutually reinforcing decisions and processes, and reactivation can only occur at a collective level with a sufficient critical mass – the territory of the urban designer and planner. The survival of interactive frontages therefore depends on the mutual understanding and cooperation between planning and design professionals and the general public. Yet survive they must, as the future of public life depends on the architecture and urban quality which feeds it.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A.

### FRONTAGE TYPOLOGY

#### A.1 SHOPS

##### **Function and connotation:**

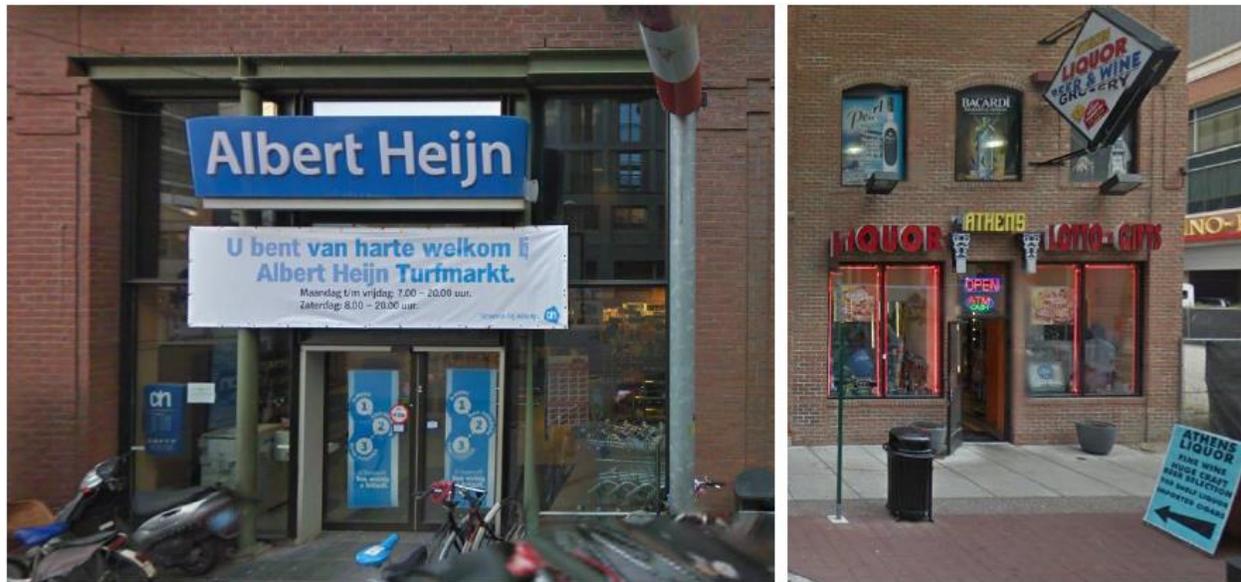
Shops are focused on a strong interaction with public space to invite passers-by and ultimately turn them into customers. However, the degree of interaction with public space is highly dependent on the type of merchandise the shop aims to sell as well as the motives for consumers to visit them. Three main types of shops have been distinguished based on the mostly aligning combination by the type of goods a store supplies and the motives for their patronage by a Dutch report by David Evers et al. for the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency. This report on future patterns of retailing in The Netherlands distinguishes between *Run* (daily goods) *Destination* (non-daily destination goods) and *Fun* (comparison shopping goods) retail. The authors make this distinction mostly according to the goal of visitors to enter a store: *“a visit to a shop doesn’t just depend on the type of person, but also on the goal – strolling through the city looking for entertainment, or to do quick, easy and cheap shopping.”*<sup>1271</sup>

Certain goods are part of the basic daily needs of customers, such as groceries and pharmacy goods. The mode of presentation of these goods toward public space is relatively unimportant, as customers tend to frequent the same outlets as a destination of their trip and purchase more or less the same items. Historically, grocery stores and pharmacies presented their goods in display windows to indicate their availability to passersby, but the

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<sup>1271</sup> “Een winkelbezoek is niet alleen afhankelijk van het sort mens, maar ook van het doel – slenteren door de stad op zoek naar licht vermaakt, of juist snel, makkelijk en goedkoop boodschappen doen.” Evers et al., *Winkelen in Megaland*, 21.

rise of chains and more or less guaranteed merchandise availability has significantly decreased the need for window displays, and current shops often indicate their presence by a sign containing their brand combined with the latest sales. The symbolism of the stores has shifted from display to branding.<sup>1272</sup> Evers et al. mark these establishments selling daily goods as *Run* shops.



**Figure 323. Run shops have a limited need for merchandise display, instead focusing on branding by signs. Albert Heijn supermarket on Turfmarkt in The Hague suffices with a large sign with opening hours (left), Athens Liquor and Convenience Store on Monroe Street, Detroit advertises goods and services with large signs (right).<sup>1273</sup>**

Certain goods and services are purchased less frequently, but are items that fulfill specific basic requirements. For example hardware stores, electronics outlets and hair salons hardly rely on inviting the occasional passerby to make a purchase, as they are considered destinations for specialized purchases. Their customers travel to the store in a purposeful visit to purchase an item or service. Similar to Run shops, these establishments generally indicate their presence to public space with a sign and branding, but have relatively little need for extensive window displays. Both the daily and non-daily destination goods have

<sup>1272</sup> A pattern that has been identified in Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi, "A Significance of a&P Parking Lots, or Learning from Las Vegas" (paper presented at the Architectural Forum, 1968).

<sup>1273</sup> Left image 2010, right image 2013, both images courtesy of Google Streetview.

been described by retail developer Yaromir Steiner as ‘need-based’ goods: their purchase is to fulfill basic needs of customers.<sup>1274</sup> These establishments are indicated by Evers et al. as *Destination* shops.



**Figure 324. Typical destination shops: a furniture and woodworking shop on the Wagenstraat in The Hague (left) and a shoe repair shop on Michigan Avenue in Detroit (right).<sup>1275</sup>**

However, historically the urban core has been a place to find goods that Steiner describes as ‘want-based’: goods that fulfill consumers’ aspirations, such as fashion and luxury items. Within the retail field, these are considered ‘comparison goods’ and shops strongly vie for the attention of customers to spend their disposable income after the purchase of basic need-based goods. Shops aim to present their goods in just the right atmosphere to entice their target audience to purchase them. Furthermore, these goods are highly dependent on impulse purchases, further stressing the need for these stores to maximize the attention they receive from passersby. These are the kind of shops Alfred Taubman describes as having to minimize their threshold resistance, as they aim to blur the boundary between private and public space, between consumer and merchandise. Furthermore, these shops

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<sup>1274</sup> Yaromir Steiner, "Building Sustainable Town Centers," in *The Economics of Urbanism*, ed. Robert Gibbs (Birmingham, MI 2014).

<sup>1275</sup> Left image by author, 2014. Right image courtesy of Google Streetview, 2013.

greatly benefit from clustering as consumers are able to compare their offerings to ultimately decide on a purchase. These establishments are marked as *Fun shops*.<sup>1276</sup>



**Figure 325. Fun shops aim to lure in customers using displays of merchandise and branding and a maximum of ground floor transparency, as demonstrated by Tamaris on the Spuistraat in The Hague (left), and Henry the Hatter on Broadway in Detroit (right).<sup>1277</sup>**

The distinction between daily goods, non-daily destination goods and comparison goods is not a recent invention of the aforementioned report, but has been made by various theorists over time and across the Atlantic, usually using different terminology but arriving at similar conclusions.<sup>1278</sup> Most statistics actually distinguish between more than three retail categories. Retail statistics in United States are derived from its Census of Business, originally distinguishing between about nine main retail categories, although this number

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<sup>1276</sup> This term refers to shopping as a leisure activity, known in Dutch as “funshopping”. This trend has been identified in much earlier times by e.g. Furnée, "Om Te Winkelen, Zoo Als Het in De Residentie Heet". *Consumptiecultuur En Stedelijke Ruimte in Den Haag, 1850-1890'*."; Coleman, *Shopping Environments : Evolution, Planning and Design*. Department stores are counted as fun shops.

<sup>1277</sup> Left image by author, 2014. Right image courtesy of Google Streetview, 2013.

<sup>1278</sup> Description of retail types are given in e.g. Berry, *Commercial Structure and Commercial Blight: Retail Patterns and Processes in the City of Chicago*; Nelson, *The Selection of Retail Locations*; Brown, "The Complex Model of City Centre Retailing: An Historical Application."

and its definitions have changed and expanded over time.<sup>1279</sup> The most frequently used retail categorization in modern European retail centers has originally been developed by Charles Goad in his work to survey shopping centers throughout the continent and Canada.<sup>1280</sup> In the Netherlands, Goad licensor and private retail survey consultancy Locatus distinguishes a system of nine main retail categories, with a wider range of subcategories.<sup>1281</sup>

Beyond categorizing a building as a shop, this research aims to delve deeper into the internal functioning of retail in the urban core. Therefore, the decision has been made to subcategorize shops between the aforementioned three types, mainly in an effort to strike a balance between defining land uses according to their likely interaction with public space, but to remain within the boundaries of statistical comparability. Distinguishing three categories (Run, Fun, Destination) rather than one (Shop) allows the research to study the internal functioning of retail in the urban core in greater detail. However, distinguishing more than these three categories has proven to cloud diversity statistics and provides little further information about internal retail patterns while taking significantly more time to

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<sup>1279</sup> Across the Atlantic, the U.S. Census Bureau has started counting and categorizing retail trade at various intervals since 1929, and its first Retail Trade Distribution report was included in the fifteenth census of the United States in 1930. This report identified 64 types of retail which were subdivided into the following categories: food, general merchandise, automotive, apparel, furniture, restaurants, lumber and building materials, other retail and secondhand stores. The current Census of Business includes 69 different classifications of retail trade under the North American Industry Classification System.

<sup>1280</sup> In 1875, Goad founded a map-making company to support fire insurance companies, first surveying the attributes pertaining to the fire safety of buildings in Canadian cities. Goad moved his offices to London in 1885 and his operations in Canada ceased in 1930. As his fire-insurance maps began to encompass the functions of buildings, Goad noticed retailers' interest and expanded his business into retail surveying and mapping in 1966, launching a series of British Shopping Centre Plans. These plans have been highly popular with retail developers, consultants and public planning agencies since, and form an essential database for retail research today in several countries in Western Europe and Canada. Currently, Goad plans distinguish between no less than 91 categories of shops and services ranging from antique shops to retail banks. Often these categories are compiled into a smaller number of clusters, such as a tripartite of convenience, comparison and leisure establishments. More information in Gwyn Rowley and Peter McL Shepherd, "A Source of Elementary Spatial Data for Town Centre Research in Britain," *Area* (1976).

<sup>1281</sup> Locatus conducts on-the-ground retail surveys of urban cores in The Netherlands, Belgium and Luxemburg as well as a range of European capital cities on a mostly annual schedule for public agencies, developers and the retail industry. It categorizes (and in parentheses subcategorizes) stores as Daily (Groceries, Personal care); Fashion and Luxury (Department Store, Fashion, Shoes, Jewelry and Eyecare, Household and luxury goods, Antiques and art); Leisure goods (Sport and games, Hobby, Media, In and around the house, Appliances and electronics, Car and bicycles, DIY, Living); Retail other; Transportation and Fuel (Automotive, Fuel); Leisure (Hotels/restaurants/cafes, Culture, Amusement); Services (Rental, Artisanal, Financial, Personal); ATM. Locatus also has a category for vacant stores.

survey and process.<sup>1282</sup> For the time intervals that overlap between The Hague and Detroit, the subcategorization has been used. Due to time restrictions, the intermediate time periods for Detroit (1921, 1929, 1951, 1977 and 2001) have not been subcategorized.

### **Form:**

Shops interact with public space through as much frontage transparency as possible. This transparency serves the dual purpose of showing passersby the kind of goods the shop has on offer, and the brand-related and physical atmosphere the passerby can expect upon entering.<sup>1283</sup> Storefront design has changed significantly over time, following the latest trends and technology. Traditional storefront design consisted of a glass pane window offering an open view of the interior with an adjacent door, sometimes also leading to upper floors. Sometimes, display cases would focus the view of passersby on careful compositions of shopping goods without being able to look inside the shop itself. More recently, many urban shops have aimed to minimize the 'threshold resistance' of entering by removing the shop frontage altogether and bringing goods out into public space. Other stores have actually become less open to public space and cover their frontage with advertisements, or secure their frontage in fear of theft or vandalism.<sup>1284</sup>

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<sup>1282</sup> A pilot study using Locatus' detail categories demonstrated that due to the extensive definition of retail types, diversity statistics consistently returned high values, even if functional diversity between daily, non-daily and comparison goods was limited.

<sup>1283</sup> Sen, Block, and Chandran, "Window Displays and Consumer Shopping Decisions." Victor Gruen, "Planned Shopping Centers," *Dun's Review* (1953); Victor Gruen Associates. and American Federation of Arts., *Shopping Centers of Tomorrow* ([United States: s.n., 1954).

<sup>1284</sup> The effort to reduce threshold resistance is described in great detail by developer Taubman, *Threshold Resistance : The Extraordinary Career of a Luxury Retailing Pioneer*. Further historic information in Coleman, *Shopping Environments : Evolution, Planning and Design*. More information on the form of shop windows is found in the literature review chapter.



**Figure 326. Retail store transparency can be seen as sign of trust in the security of public space, as demonstrated by the highly transparent (but equipped with anti-theft gates) entrance to Baretta on the Vlamingstraat in The Hague (left), and the barricaded entrance to Paul's liquor store on Cass and Henry in Detroit (right).<sup>1285</sup>**

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<sup>1285</sup> Left image by author, 2014. Right image courtesy of Google Streetview, 2013.

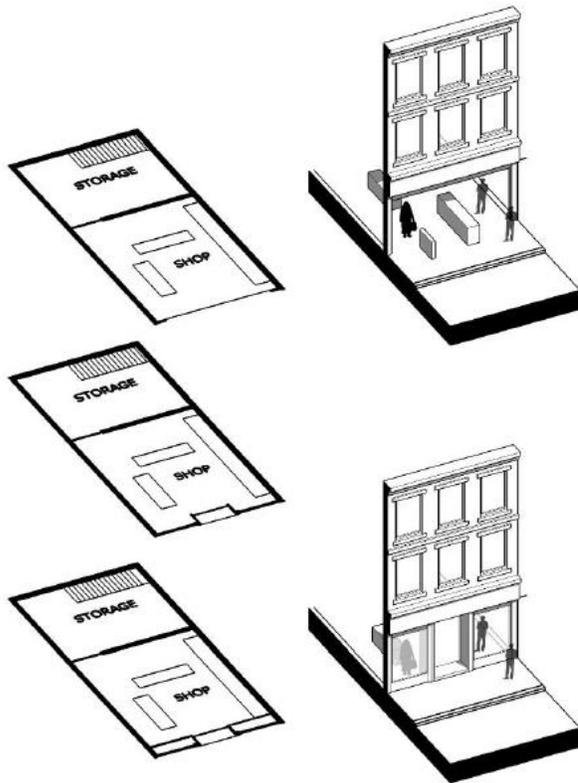


Figure 327. Typological diagram.

## A.2 BARS AND RESTAURANTS

### **Function and connotation:**

Bars and restaurants are taking up an increasing amount of frontages in European and North American downtowns, due to the rise of the leisure-based experience economy.<sup>1286</sup> The rational consumer looking for predetermined goods is making place for a new type of consumers that are in search of experiences, and these leisure establishments are a big part in providing them. From a purely functional standpoint, bars and restaurants offer food and drinks to patrons, but the main distinction between these establishments lies in the experience they can offer alongside.<sup>1287</sup> Similarly to shops, a range of bar and restaurant types can be distinguished along the lines of Run, Destination and Fun with a significant influence on how establishments present themselves to public space.

Neighborhood bars, often located in street corners, serve a mostly local audience that does not need to become familiar with the establishment's experience before visiting. Large windows or outdoor seating is therefore less frequent in these establishments. Due to their mostly residential context, outdoor seating is can even be seen as a nuisance.

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<sup>1286</sup> More info in e.g. B Joseph Pine and James H Gilmore, *The Experience Economy: Work Is Theatre & Every Business a Stage*(Harvard Business Press, 1999); Linda Nazareth, "The Leisure Economy," *Mississauga, ON: Wiley* (2007).

<sup>1287</sup> Jan Oosterman, *Parade Der Passanten : De Stad, Het Vertier En De Terrassen*(Utrecht: J. van Arkel, 1993); Carl Abbott, "Five Downtown Strategies: Policy Discourse and Downtown Planning since 1945," *Journal of Policy History* 5, no. 01 (1993).



**Figure 328. Neighborhood bars can be more closed toward public space, as they are less dependent on passersby for patronage. This is demonstrated by the Happy End bar in The Hague (left) and Nick's Gaslight Restaurant in Detroit (right).<sup>1288</sup>**

Night clubs and discos that mostly open during nighttime hours serve can be regarded as the counterpart to destination shops. Patrons visit these establishments to participate in certain events during specific hours during which the establishment will be open toward public space but often secured by ticketing and safety personnel. At all other times the establishment will be closed off, except for the occasional advertisement of future events.

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<sup>1288</sup> Left image 2010, right image 2013, both images courtesy of Google Streetview.



**Figure 329. Night clubs are often closed toward public space during daytime closing hours. Club Bleu on Michigan Avenue in Detroit (left), and club Danzig in The Hague (right).<sup>1289</sup>**

Most open to public space are bars and restaurants that focus on daytime and evening patrons. These establishments function in similar ways to comparison goods shops, with the service and atmosphere offered in a restaurant as the product on offer. Like comparison goods, these experiences can serve the aspirations of patrons to attain a certain identity. Interestingly, restaurant patrons themselves serve as advertisements to potential passersby as they gauge the type of audience to fit their lifestyle and any potential over- or undercrowding. Restaurants are known to place early patrons close to the street to show passersby their establishment is a popular place to visit. Increasingly, bars and restaurants enter public space with outdoor seating to further blur the lines between the consumer and the product: the experience of an establishment.

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<sup>1289</sup> Left image 2013, right image 2010, both images courtesy of Google Streetview.



**Figure 330. Inner city bars and restaurants often blur the divide between public and private space to lure in customers and provide them with a space to see and be seen, as demonstrated by the extensive patios of various establishments on the Grote Markt in The Hague (left) and the Fountain Bistro on Campus Martius in Detroit (right).<sup>1290</sup>**

**Form:**

Bars and restaurants present themselves to public space in a wide variety of ways. Many bars and restaurants have a fairly similar appearance to shops, as they aim to entice passersby to enter and use their services. Threshold resistance between public space and the interior of these establishments is often minimized by placing patrons in large windows overlooking the street, or by bringing tables and chairs outdoors by use of patios. In the United States, alcohol consumption regulations often prevent the free placement of seating throughout public space, and regulations vary between localities in The Netherlands.<sup>1291</sup> However, bars aimed at local patrons can have a more closed frontage. An important

<sup>1290</sup> Both images by author, 2014.

<sup>1291</sup> In the United States, states set the standards for outdoor seating in establishments that serve alcohol through their state liquor laws, taking mostly a public health and morality perspective. Michigan state law states that outdoor seating should be “well defined and clearly marked”. In: Michigan Liquor Control Commission, "Michigan Liquor Control Code, Administrative Rules and Related Laws," ed. Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs(Lansing, MI2014). This rather vaguely worded stipulation has prompted business owners to test their boundaries, as described in e.g. Garret Ellison, "No Fence Required: Michigan Alcohol Laws Cause Outdoor Seating Confusion," *MLive*, October 19 2013. Governments in The Netherlands mostly view outdoor seating as an issue of public space negotiation and issue patio licenses (terrasvergunningen) at the municipal level. In an effort to promote outdoor seating that doesn't interfere with pedestrian traffic, cities like The Hague waive the need for a permit if only one row of outdoor seating is offered. More information in rule 2, section 10: Gemeenteraad, "Algemene Plaatselijke Verordening Voor De Gemeente Den Haag," ed. Gemeente Den Haag(The Hague2007).

distinction within this category has to be made between daytime and nighttime establishments, as night clubs and discos can be completely closed during daytime hours.

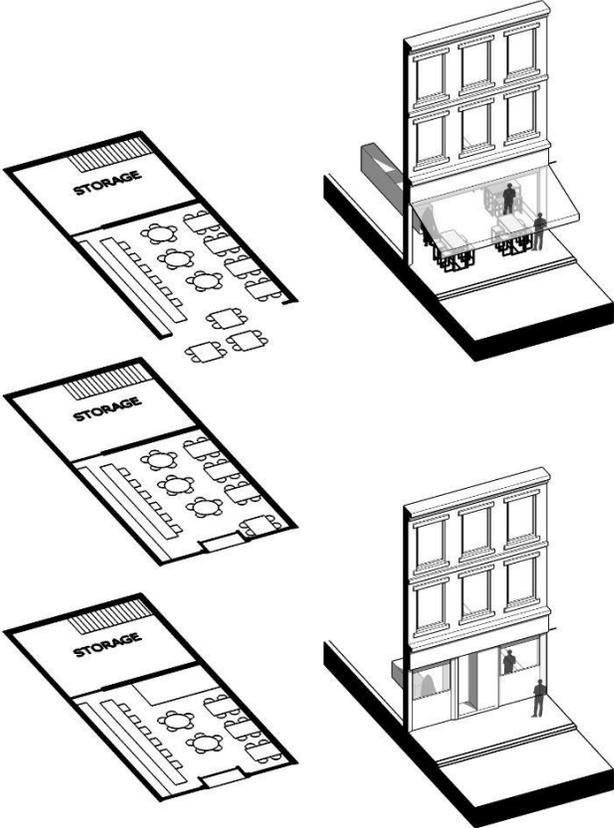


Figure 331. Typological diagram.

## A.3 LEISURE

### **Function and connotation:**

Leisure establishments contain a range of different building types that provide cultural and leisure amenities such as theaters, cinemas, sports stadiums, concert halls, casinos and other recreational amenities. Like bars and restaurants, leisure establishments have experienced significant growth in urban cores over the past decades as a result of the rise of the leisure economy. Even more than bars and restaurants, leisure establishments sell experiences to patrons, usually in the form of a predetermined event such as a theater show, a movie, a sports game or a concert. These events are rarely visited on impulse. More participatory recreation is offered in casinos and active recreation is offered in recreational amenities such as gyms, swimming pools and sports clubs.

Mostly, these establishments aim to provide a guaranteed experience in a controlled environment. A concert, movie or play rarely benefits from its urban setting; sports events are focused on the performance of players, not context and casinos carefully orchestrate their environment to maximize the expenditure of time and money by patrons. An exception to this rule is the rise of the ground floor gym, offering patrons a view of public space and conversely offering passersby a view of exercising patrons, hopefully in an aim to entice them to join.

The exterior of the building therefore has the dual function to contain an often large controlled interior environment, and a representational function to exert symbolism of the promised interior experience and the brand to the outer world, a duality that is described in Scott Brown and Venturi's 1972 work *Learning from Las Vegas*.<sup>1292</sup>

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<sup>1292</sup> Referring to the difference between historical types of communication between buildings and public space and the newly found symbolism in Las Vegas' architecture of leisure: "On Main Street, shop-window displays for pedestrians along the sidewalks and exterior signs, perpendicular to the street for motorists dominate the scene almost equally." In newer architecture, "both merchandise and architecture are disconnected from the road. (...) The graphic sign in space has become the architecture of this landscape. (...) Because the spatial relationships are made by symbols more than by forms, architecture in this landscape becomes symbol in space rather than form in space." In Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1977), 13.



**Figure 332. Entrance to the Fox Theater, designed by C. Howard Crane and completed in 1928 in Detroit (left), and Comerica Park, designed by HOK and completed in 2000 in Detroit (right).<sup>1293</sup>**

### **Form:**

While the different types of leisure establishments have significant differences in their target audience, they share the commonality of introversion, as their function is mostly internalized. Most patrons arrive at the venue as a destination, and contact with public space is often limited to advertisements of future events and ticket sales. Also, the building often represents a strong image or brand toward the surrounding city by form, color and materialization. The ground floor of these buildings is often shaped for capacity, as large crowds of patrons need to enter and exit before and after events. This results in large passageways that are closed to the street most of the time.

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<sup>1293</sup> Both images courtesy of Google Streetview, 2013.



Figure 333. Typical leisure entrances: Pathe cinema on the Buitenhof in The Hague, originally designed as restaurant Deux Villes in 1904 by J. Mutters Jr. (left), Fillmore theatre Detroit by C. Howard Crane in 1925 (right).<sup>1294</sup>

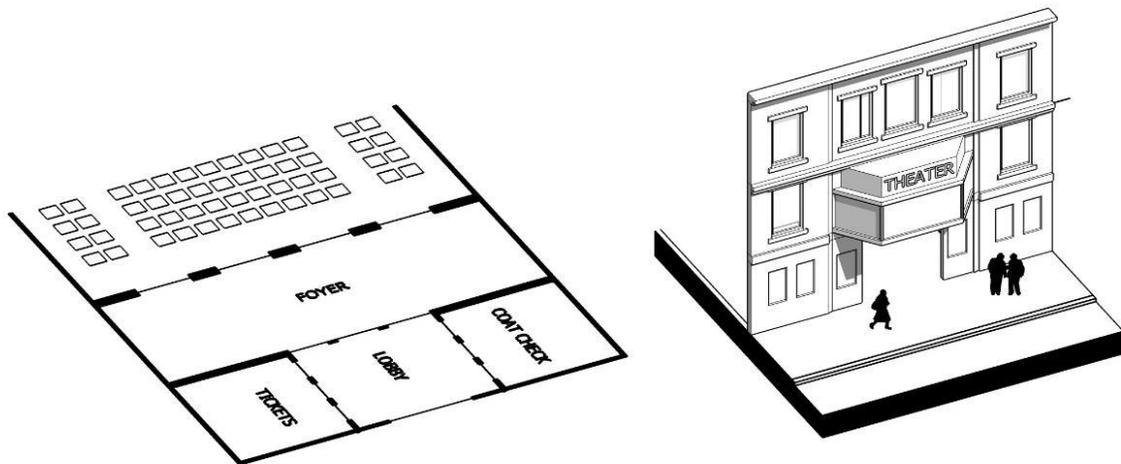


Figure 334. Typological diagram.

<sup>1294</sup> Left image courtesy of Jan Parie, 2009. Right image courtesy of Google Streetview, 2013.

## A.4 RESIDENTIAL AND HOTEL

### **Function and connotation:**

Residential building types vary greatly between social, cultural, economic contexts and modes of habitation. However, a few commonalities can be found across all types. A common thread in the relation between dwellings and public spaces is the constant quest for balance between maintaining a sense of community and identity while protecting the privacy and territoriality of the home.<sup>1295</sup> Architectural designs take this balance into account by shaping the public-private transition in various steps and spatial layouts. As designs are completed, residents negotiate the balance by customizing their home as well as by creating a transition zone with a range of different territorial markers such as furniture, planting or signs. This territoriality serves to protect the privacy of residents and shield them from noise, danger and pollution. Yet territoriality is balanced with a welcoming image of the home to passersby, allowing visitors to enter premises as well as residents to prospect public space. Often the balance between territoriality and identity is shaped as a series of transition zones between the dwelling (and its most intimate spaces) and the public realm.<sup>1296</sup> Hotels can be regarded as places of residence, but often have a larger desire to express their identity to public space, using their presentation as a selling point to the public.

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<sup>1295</sup> The balance between community and privacy is described in Lang, *Creating Architectural Theory : The Role of the Behavioral Sciences in Environmental Design*, 145-56. Territoriality and demarcation of the public-private boundary is described in Bobic, *Between the Edges : Street-Building Transition as Urbanity Interface*; Madanipour, *Public and Private Spaces of the City*.

<sup>1296</sup> These transition zones are outlined as "Urban-public", "Urban-semi-public", "Group-public", "Group-private", "Family-private", "Individual-private" in Serge Alexander Christopher Chermayeff, *Community and Privacy : Toward a New Architecture of Humanism*(Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1963).



**Figure 335. Transition zones between dwellings and public space, either via stoops and height as on the Amsterdamse Veerkade in The Hague (left), or by distance and territorial markers such as vegetation and porches as on Abbott Street in Detroit (right).<sup>1297</sup>**

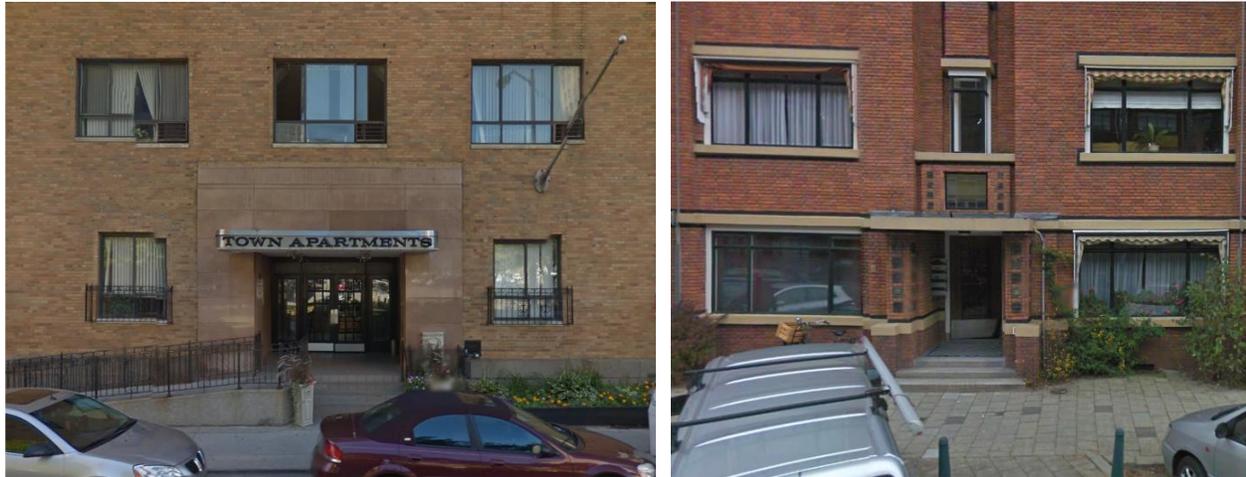
### **Form:**

In North American urban cores homes often have the space to present themselves to public space via front yards, creating territoriality and privacy by distance. In denser urban cores the balance between identity, community, privacy and territory is often pressured by a lack of space, forcing homes to either present themselves via a raised first floor (territoriality and privacy by height), or by altering the internal layout of the home or treatment of windows to ensure passersby cannot physically, visually or audibly intrude on the property. Although under pressure, the boundary between buildings and public space is strictly demarcated without any space for zones of public-private transition, traces of territoriality are still left such as door mats, flower pots or small furniture. Multi-family homes have a variety of ways to address the street, including a raised first floor, a non-residential first floor with a first floor lobby or the use of a transition zone (for example a

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<sup>1297</sup> Left image by author, 2014. Right image by author, 2014.

front yard, parking lot or common areas and access points for residents). Hotels often follow the same rules as multi-family homes, except if they have ground-floor restaurant and bar amenities, in which case they are counted as such.

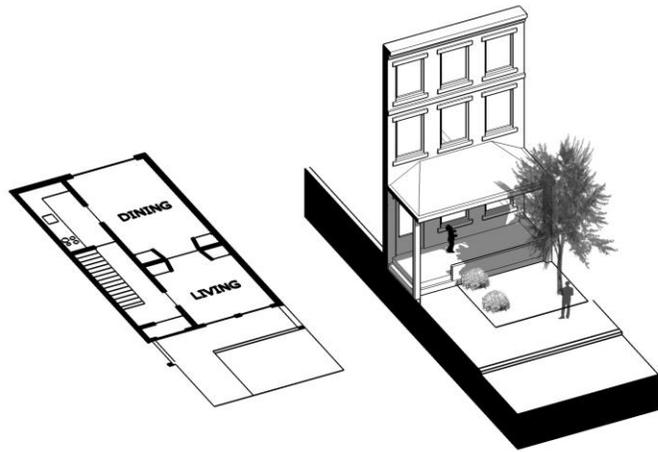


**Figure 336. Apartment lobbies often use territorial markers such as height and distance, as demonstrated in the entrance to the Town Apartments designed by Smith, Hinchman & Grylls in 1940 in Detroit (left), or the apartments on the Louis Couperusplein designed by Co Brandes in 1931 (right).<sup>1298</sup>**

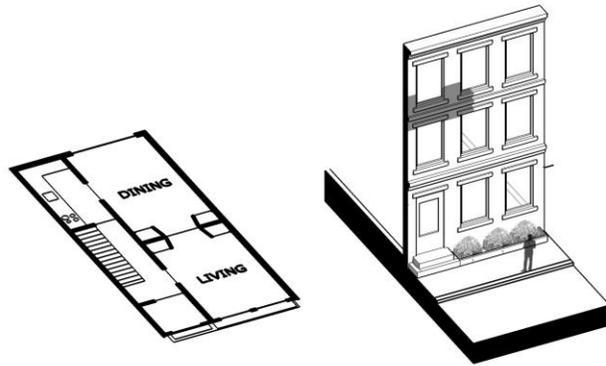


**Figure 337. Hotel lobbies of the Parkhotel on the Molenstraat in The Hague (left) and the Book-Cadillac hotel in Detroit (right) are often accompanied by bar and restaurant facilities on the ground floor, in which case they count as such.**

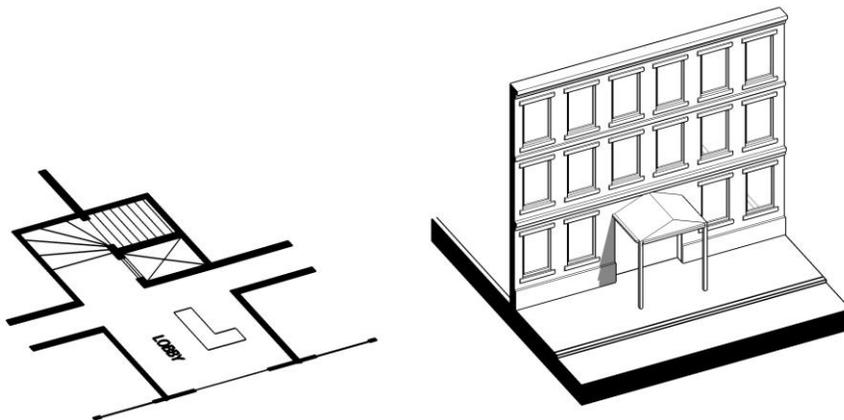
<sup>1298</sup> Left image from 2013, right image from 2010. Both images courtesy of Google Streetview.



HOUSE (SINGLE FAMILY)



HOUSE (ROWHOUSE)



APARTMENT / HOTEL

Figure 338. Typological diagram.

## A.5 OFFICES

### **Function and connotation:**

Offices in urban core are spaces where administrative work takes place. As described by architect Richard MacCormac, offices tend to be removed from their immediate urban context, as the work taking place inside them usually pertain to global transactions “totally unconnected to people outside its interests”, rather than the local transactions that take place in shops or restaurants.<sup>1299</sup> The history of office work is characterized by the optimization and internalization of those processes that could take place away from places of sale or production, significantly harming the building type’s relationship with anything but its internal organization. A common thread throughout the history of the office building is the ongoing internalization of the workplace as building design and technology increasingly allowed for larger floor plates and less contact with light and air. Elevator technology, air conditioning and fluorescent lighting have allowed for complete control over the work environment, in which the urban context of office buildings is often only seen as a distraction. As offices have internalized catering and amenities, their ground floors are no longer occupied by shops, instead presenting public space with singular lobbies surrounded by shuttered windows, blank walls or service entrances.<sup>1300</sup>

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<sup>1299</sup>MacCormac, "The Dignity of Office."

<sup>1300</sup> More information on the history of office buildings is given in the literature review chapter.



**Figure 339. Guardian Bank by Smith, Hinchman & Grylls in 1929 in Detroit (left), Rotterdamse Bankvereniging designed in 1923 by H.F. Mertens in The Hague, with ground floor windows added at a later stage (right).<sup>1301</sup>**

Besides their function as a workplace, office buildings have a representational role as well. Early office architecture highly valued the image of the company or organization that occupied the building, often creating buildings that signified solidity, power and status. The early governmental buildings of American and European cities often count as landmarks for their unique appearance which reflects the wealth and status of the organization they housed. However, many current office buildings are built as speculative objects for yet unknown tenants, obstructing the tailoring and identification of offices to a single private or public entity. Instead, office designers have focused on flexibility and neutrality of their buildings, resulting in the oft-criticized generic architecture of corporate building that dot urban cores across the Western world. They are built to refrain from evoking connotative emotions, leaving the branding of the workplace up to tenants.

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<sup>1301</sup> Left image from 2013, courtesy of Google Earth. Right image by author, 2014.



**Figure 340. Modern office buildings often don't reflect the identity of tenants, as demonstrated by the '1001 Woodward' building designed by Smith, Hinchman and Grylls and completed in 1965 (left), or the former ministries of Justice and Internal Affairs designed by Lucas and Niemeyer architects in 1977 (right).<sup>1302</sup>**

### **Form:**

As offices view public space at best as a distraction from the optimized work process, and at worst as a security hazard (for example in case of financial and banking activities), office buildings tend to have a very distant relationship to public space. If any windows are present, their blinds are likely to be shut to protect workers from glancing passersby and glaring sun on their screens. As public space is considered detrimental to a safe and productive workplace, many office buildings have completely shut themselves off to public space by placing service entrances and utility spaces on their ground floor. The passerby is left with a blank wall instead.<sup>1303</sup> However, smaller offices can often be more permeable to passersby, as for example dentists, doctors and lawyers tend to welcome their patronage.

<sup>1302</sup> Left image courtesy of Quicken Loans, 2014. Right image by author, 2014.

<sup>1303</sup> If this is the case for the majority of an office building's frontage, it is counted as a blank wall instead of an office.

Furthermore, the classic idiom of public space as a nuisance is showing signs of erosion as an increasing number of offices have open outward views to allow workers to relax from their work and give passersby a chance to look at the activities of the occupant.



Figure 341. Transparent office ground floor on Neue Grünstrasse in Berlin (left), storefront turned into an office with shutters in The Hague (right).<sup>1304</sup>

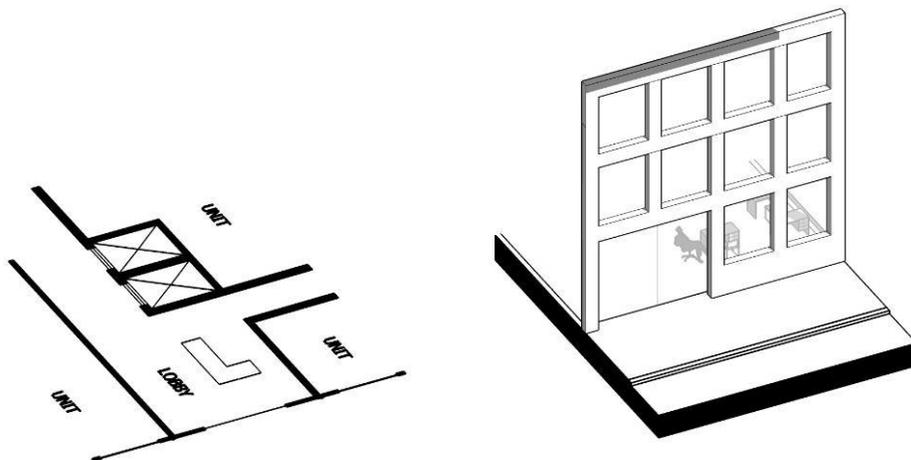


Figure 342. Typological diagram.

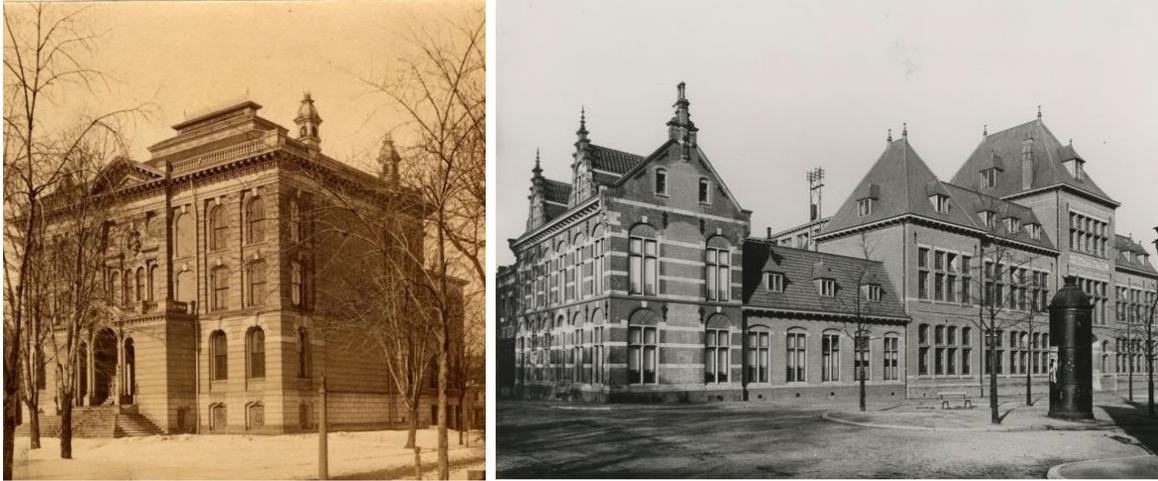
<sup>1304</sup> Left image by author, 2014. Right image by author, 2012.

## A.6 INSTITUTIONS

### **Function and connotation:**

Institutional buildings cover a variety of functions, including schools, museums, libraries, hospitals and police and fire stations. As such, it is difficult to categorize them as a single building type, let alone assess the manner in which they relate to public space.

Nevertheless, institutional architecture can be seen as an identifiable entity which has a few common denominators. Firstly, the buildings are usually quite large and occupy prime spots in urban cores, as they are often seen as having a special civic value. Their architecture often conveys a strong sense of identity, as opposed to for example speculative office buildings. The design of institutional buildings often allows architects to convey messages that align with the role of the institution in civic society. Early institutional architecture often used solidity, symmetry and scale to convey a sense of power and stability in public buildings. The 1877 Second Empire-style library building in Centre Park in downtown Detroit was a clear sign of financial and cultural wealth to citizens and outsiders. Similarly, the crafts school on the Nieuwe Haven in The Hague (built in stages between the 1860s and 1900s) has consistently projected an image of solidity and scale in the otherwise fine-grained urban context. In both cases the buildings had a rather reserved position toward public space, as windows were raised from ground level and entrances were limited.

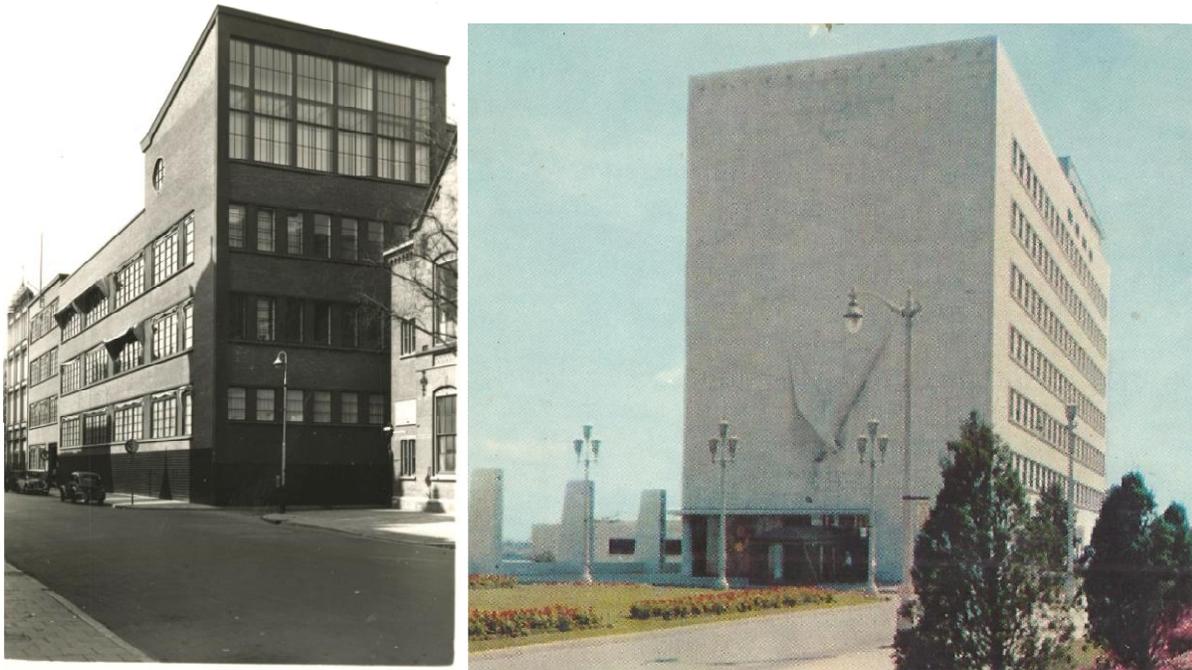


**Figure 343. Centre Park library, Detroit designed by Brush & Smith, opened in 1877 (left); Ambachtsschool on Nieuwe Haven, The Hague designed partly by A. Mondt in 1908 (right).<sup>1305</sup>**

Modernism has left its mark on Western institutional architecture, often projecting an image of solidity through scale and coherence, as well as expressing the progressive nature of institutions in urban cores. The hospital built in 1939 for cooperative society De Volharding on the Gedempte Burgwal in The Hague brought a new, clean style and scale to the formerly small-scaled and traditionally constructed street. Similarly, the Veteran's Memorial Building built in 1951 on Jefferson Avenue in Detroit was the first of a wave of Modern buildings to line Detroit's riverfront, its white marble façade, clean lines and orderly window pattern sharply contrasting with the surrounding warehouse and wholesale district.

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<sup>1305</sup> Left image courtesy of Burton Historical Collection, right image courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.



**Figure 344. Hospital by the Volharding Cooperative designed by Lürsen and Buijs in 1939 in The Hague (left), Veteran's Memorial Building designed by Harley, Ellington and Day in 1948 in Detroit (right).<sup>1306</sup>**

More recently, institutional architecture has become more eclectic, with many buildings in larger cities expressively branded by well-known architects. Museums and libraries in specific have gathered an impressive array of buildings that have provided their host city with an identity of architectural prowess. The Hague is no exception with the completion of Richard Meier's library and city hall in 1995, a highly controversial yet well-published landmark in the inner city. It emanates transparency toward the street, as library patrons are welcomed to read behind large glass windows that open up to the city's busiest intersection. Detroit has been less fortunate with recent institutional architecture, most likely as a result of tight city, state and national budgets. Furthermore, government institutions have prioritized security over representation over recent decades, further exacerbated after 2001. The federal buildings that occupy the western fringe of downtown

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<sup>1306</sup> Left image ca. 1939, courtesy of The Hague municipal archives. Right image from the early 1960s, courtesy of Michael C. Brennan via MLive.com.

Detroit could be mistaken for office buildings, if not for the extensive defense walls and gates which have been erected around them.



**Figure 345. The Hague public library with city hall in background by Richard Meier (left), Patrick V. McNamara Federal Building by Smith, Hinchman and Grylls in 1976 in Detroit (right).<sup>1307</sup>**

### **Form:**

While institutional buildings take many different forms as they house tenants with widely varying requirements, a few typological commonalities can be found, especially with regard to their relationship to public space. As buildings aim to portray a sense of solidity, status and identity, they have historically taken a reserved approach to public space. The scale of buildings is usually much larger than its surroundings, entrances are limited for formal or security reasons and windows toward public space are often raised or recessed. In more recent institutional architecture these observations don't always apply, as institutions seek to intensify their relationship to the public through transparent and permeable architecture.

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<sup>1307</sup> Left image courtesy of Marco Raaphorst, right image by author, 2014.

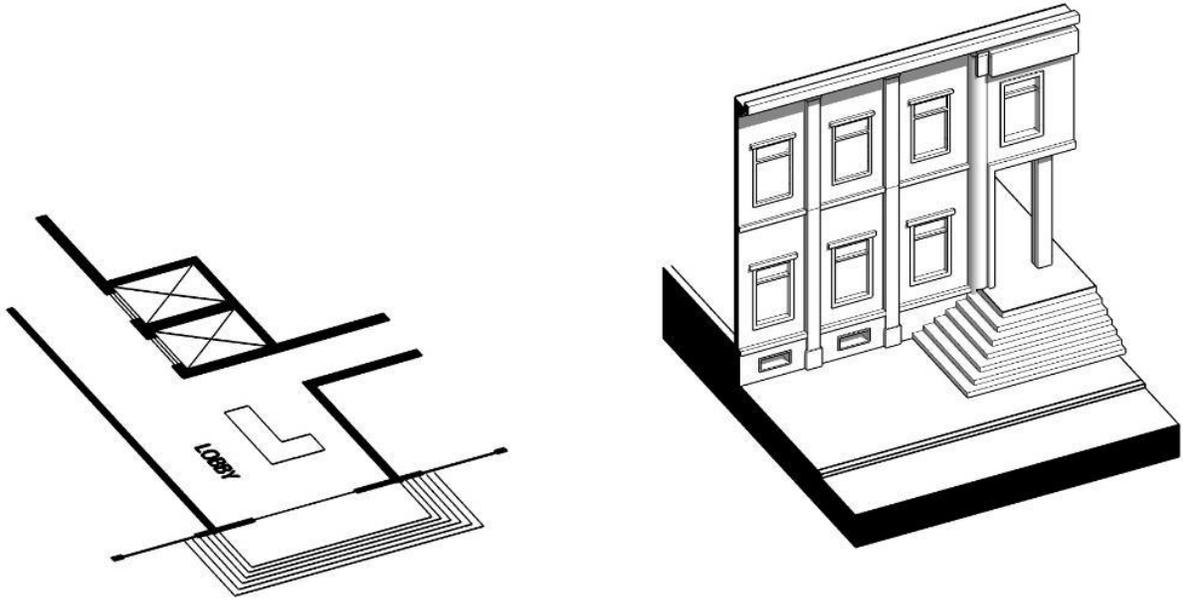


Figure 346. Typological diagram.

## A.7 WHOLESALERS

### Function and connotation:

Traditionally, commerce in urban cores was not only aimed at the end consumer, but significantly took place between businesses. The existing and filled canals of The Hague's southern inner city were filled with businesses that brought goods from other cities in the Netherlands to sell them to retailers, restaurants and hotels in the urban hinterland. Many of the names of these canals still remind us of their original, often mainly wholesale, function, such as transferring beer (Bierkade and Brouwersgracht), wood (Houtmarkt), turf (Turfmarkt), textile (Schedeldoekshaven), ammunition (Ammunitiehaven), and goods from Amsterdam (Amsterdamse Veerkade).<sup>1308</sup> Similarly, the waterfront district in Detroit was filled with wholesalers that acquired goods by boat through the Detroit River and Great Lakes to sell them to the city and its surrounding region. Especially Jefferson Avenue was lined by a wide range of wholesalers which would sell anything from produce and other food items to leather goods and steel equipment. With the redevelopment of the city's waterfront most wholesalers were forced to leave the area, relocating to units in the Corktown industrial district and around Eastern Market.



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<sup>1308</sup> Much of the wholesale and industrial activities along the city's canals have been documented in Koos Hoonte A. te Horst A. van der Havelaar, *Bedrijvigheid Aan Haagse Grachten : De Noordwal En Veenkade Rond 1900*(Den Haag: SeaPress, 1995).

**Figure 347. Loading goods from boats into warehouses of wholesalers on the Bierkade in The Hague around 1910 (left), Spater Bros. woodenware and grocery wholesalers on Jefferson Avenue in Detroit in 1911 (right).<sup>1309</sup>**

Yet the wholesale building type is rather difficult to define as businesses varied widely in their operations and subsequent relation to public space. Early wholesale businesses would often resemble retail shops as they hardly distinguished between business and personal end consumers to purchase their merchandise. Goods were displayed behind windows or in showcases on the street, albeit more austere than in lavish retail stores. The wholesaler acted in quite similar ways to the destination retailer: they had no direct need to lure in passersby for an impulse purchase but did require a representative street presence to notify customers of their branding and offers. With wholesaling scaled up significantly during recent decades, wholesalers rapidly consolidated and increased in size as a result. As business customers purchase larger volumes of merchandise and transport them by truck or postal delivery, the scale and face of wholesalers has changed drastically. The modern wholesale business often has its main presence on the internet, leaving branding to a minimum on its actual premises – a name, phone number and web address often suffices. More important to the business customer is a wholesaler's accessibility to purchase and load large amounts of goods, intensifying the building's role as a relatively neutrally designed transfer point.<sup>1310</sup>

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<sup>1309</sup> Left image from postcard by Schalekamp and Buiksloot, courtesy of The Hague municipal archives, right image courtesy of Burton Historical Collection.

<sup>1310</sup> More information on wholesalers and warehouses as a building type in Nikolaus Pevsner, *A History of Building Types* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976).



**Figure 348. Wolverine Packing Company, a wholesaler on Winder Street near the Eastern Market in Detroit.<sup>1311</sup>**

### **Form:**

As a result of the radical transformation of wholesaling over the past century, it is difficult to define how wholesale buildings have consistently addressed public space over the past century. From the resemblance to retail shops in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to its function as a transfer point for goods today, wholesale buildings have changed with the needs of their tenants. Categorizing this building type along the lines of interactivity with public space, as one consistent value over the past century, is therefore an almost impossible task. Nevertheless arguably the wholesale business was never a pedestrian-oriented ground floor tenant. Even a century ago, business customers would arrive with carts to purchase and load up merchandise, as they arrive with trucks today. The wholesaler wasn't aiming his façade at the passerby, but geared his building to the convenience of the transfer of

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<sup>1311</sup> Image from 2013, courtesy of Google Streetview.

goods. As a result, wholesalers consistently had relatively little interest in interacting with pedestrians, resulting in relatively inactive frontages.

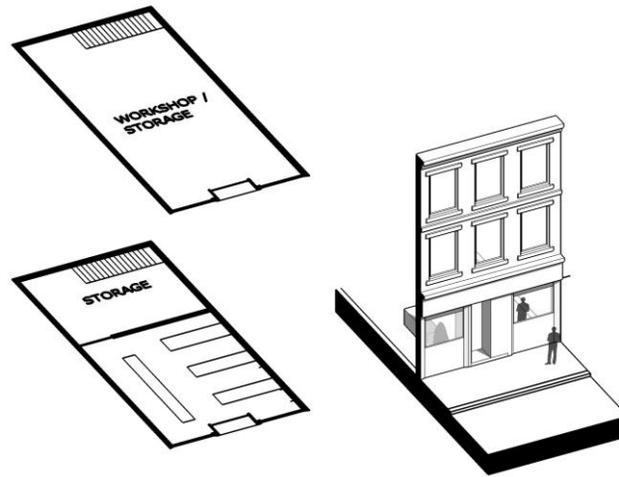


Figure 349. Typological diagram.

## A.8 PARKING GARAGES, PARKING LOTS, GAS STATIONS AND AUTO REPAIR SHOPS

### Function and connotation:

Ever since the invention of the automobile, cars had to be parked and serviced. Early parking solutions were either in the owner's house or in specialized clubs for automobile owners, usually combined with other amenities such as repair shops and gas stations. As the car became accessible to more people and car technology made vehicles more reliable, the need for parking increased and parking facilities multiplied. Multistory parking became a common sight in American cities from the 1920s onwards, and in the Netherlands from the 1930s onwards. As garage design progressed, ground floor amenities were eliminated, as garages instead faced public space at the ground floor with only ramps and parking bays. In locations with lower land values or sites that were undergoing a prolonged transition, parking lots became commonplace. Gas stations and car repair shops were decoupled from parking facilities and instead scattered in often peripheral locations.<sup>1312</sup>



<sup>1312</sup> More information on the history of parking garages is provided in the literature review chapter.

**Figure 350. Art Deco parking garage built in 1928 on Lafayette and Cass in Detroit (left), Torengarage built in 1930 in The Hague with retail on the ground floor (right).**<sup>1313</sup>

The most important functional requirement for parking or other auto-related land uses is their accessibility to the automobile. Parking facilities also require proximity to non-automobile land uses as they enable automobilists to shed their vehicle and continue their journey on foot. The symbolism of car-related architecture is built to read through a windshield and its form tailored for efficiency. The need for a close relation to the sidewalk almost never has a role in the automobile city.



**Figure 351. Gas station and car repair workshop on Fort Street in Detroit (left), parking garage exit ramps in The Hague (right).**<sup>1314</sup>

### **Form:**

By nature, auto-related uses are not related to pedestrian passersby, instead focusing their effort on luring cars by oversized advertisements which can be read at high speed, accommodating convinced metal visitors with large ramps and curb cuts. The scale, speed and esthetic of automobile architecture is almost always at odds with the need for fine-

<sup>1313</sup> Left image by author, 2014. Right image 2014 by author.

<sup>1314</sup> Left image by author, 2014. Right image by author, 2014.

grained interaction between buildings and the sidewalk. Furthermore, auto-oriented land uses can pose a risk to the safety of pedestrians.

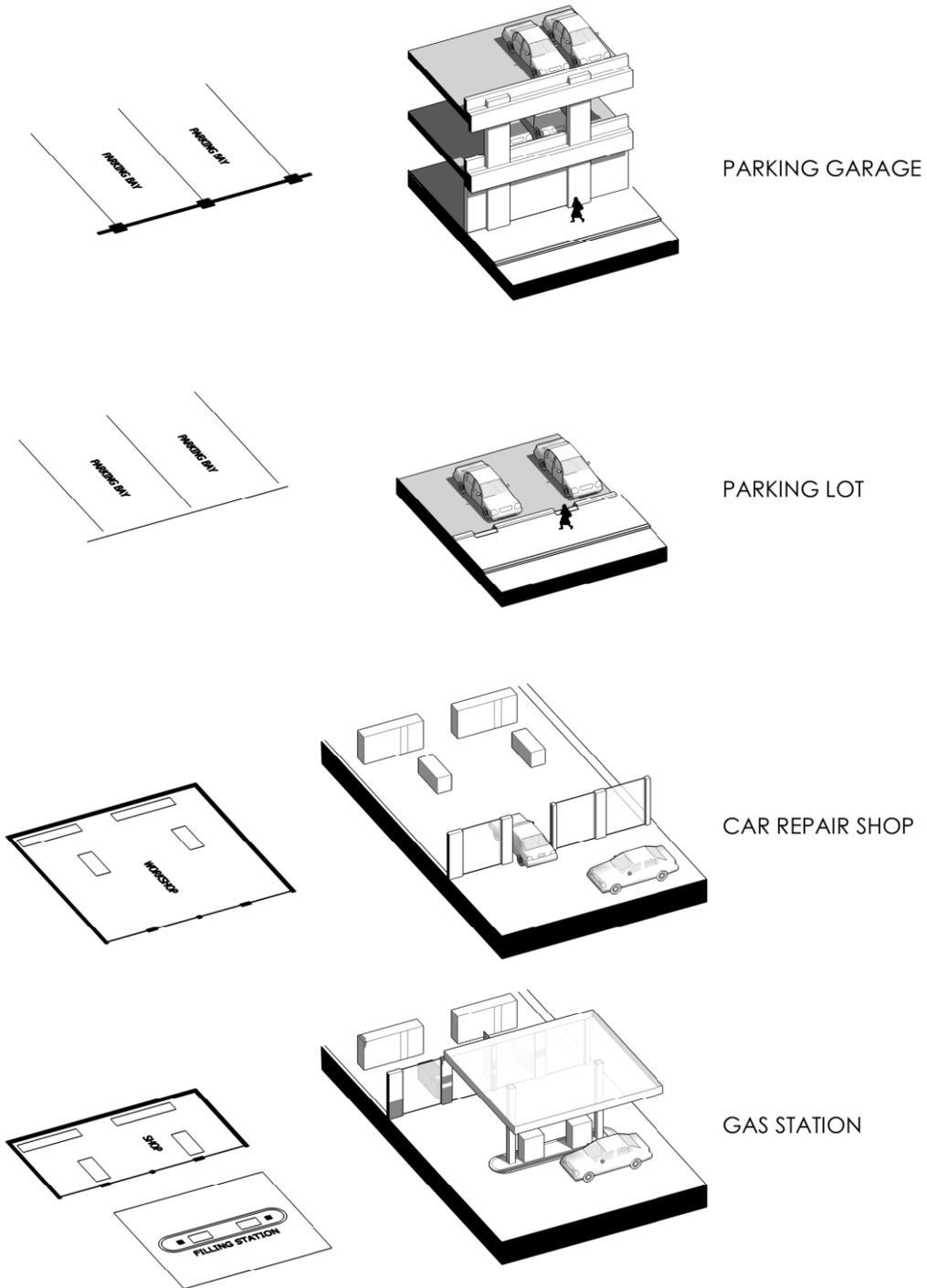


Figure 352. Typological diagram.

## A.9 MANUFACTURING

### **Function and connotation:**

Urban cores have not only served as centers of trade and commerce, but have historically also functioned as production clusters. Small manufacturers dotted the streets of most Western cities, as a steady supply of skilled and unskilled workers and local customers aided successful manufacturing. It was in downtown Detroit that Henry Ford created his first automobile in a small workshop among many other industrial innovators, benefiting from nearby sources of parts and capital. In The Hague's inner city the textile industry thrived due to the proximity of their aristocratic clientele and printing workshops produced the documents which laid the foundation of the modern Dutch nation state. Goods and services were often sold directly to the consumer from workshops, others were shipped to retailers. As such, small manufacturers often shared typological similarities to wholesalers: a commercial enterprise aimed at larger volume transactions with other businesses. Yet as industrial mass production spread throughout the Western world, small workshops were increasingly consolidated into larger factories. Ford became one of America's largest car manufacturers and The Hague's printing industry has developed into one of the country's largest publishing houses. With this industrial expansion, production shifted from workshops to factories, which rapidly increased in size and land coverage with the transition from vertical to horizontal manufacturing in the postwar era. Accessibility to raw materials and suppliers and wholesalers became key and buildings became truck-oriented transfer points of goods. Yet in the urban core of Detroit as well as The Hague a few larger factories have remained active for decades, until their proximity to unwilling neighbors, limited expansion opportunities and often poorly accessible locations forced them to move. However, small crafts-based manufacturing is making a minor comeback in urban cores as locally produced goods are gaining popularity.<sup>1315</sup>

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<sup>1315</sup> A good example of this trend toward crafts manufacturing is the resurgence of Detroit's bicycle and watch making industry, with the Shinola company as a trendsetter.



**Figure 353. Strohm brewery complex on Gratiot and Rivard in Detroit (left), Zuid-Hollandsche Bierbrouwerij (ZHB) on Noordwal in The Hague (right).<sup>1316</sup>**



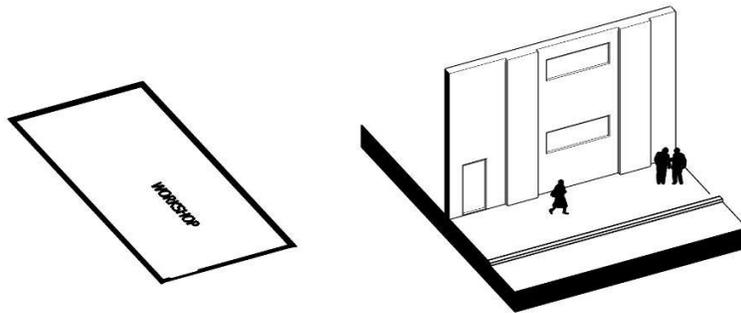
**Figure 354. A furniture workshop on the Assendelftstraat in The Hague offers passersby a glimpse of the production process(left), but a manufacturing warehouse on Adelaide Street in Detroit is completely closed toward public space (right).<sup>1317</sup>**

<sup>1316</sup> Left image from 1984, courtesy of John. J. Bailey, right image from 1931, courtesy of The Hague municipal archives.

<sup>1317</sup> Left image by author, 2014. Right image from 2013, courtesy of Google Street View.

**Form:**

As current manufacturers focus on the easy accessibility to raw materials and the easy transportation of their finished goods, they often only face the street with large loading ramps and docks. Furthermore, the consolidated horizontal manufacturing process requires very large, often closed floorplates, presenting public space with large blank walls. Smaller workshops are mostly still closed toward the street, but can also provide a glimpse to passersby of the manufacturing process, especially if end-consumer sales also occur on the premises.



**Figure 355. Typological diagram.**

## **A.10 VACANT BUILDINGS / VACANT LOTS / FENCES / BLANK WALLS**

### **Function/connotation:**

The most inactive function of a frontage is none at all. For various reasons, building frontages can be inactive. In Detroit, many downtown frontages have become vacant, as retailers, residents and office tenants have left. The next step up is the complete demolition of the building, leaving vacant lots if a destination for parking is not deemed profitable. Yet vacancy is not just a matter of Detroit's post-industrial decline. Similarly, many Dutch storefronts have become vacant as inner city retailers are suffering from the temporary economic downturn, combined with the structural rise of online retailers and suburban outlet stores. Even the most successful retail streets in the city experience friction vacancy as retail tenants and landlords are in constant negotiation for larger and better premises – a carefully choreographed game of musical chairs. While vacant buildings and lots have no function, this does not mean their existence does not evoke connotative reactions from passersby. Quite the contrary - vacancy often carries strong connotations of urban decline, potentially accompanied by a perceived sense of unsafety. As described in the pattern chapter, vacancy has the tendency to spread rapidly as vacant buildings and lots can drag down the perceived and real vitality of wider areas.



**Figure 356. Structural storefront vacancy on Fort Street in Detroit (left), friction storefront vacancy on the Spuistraat in The Hague (right).<sup>1318</sup>**

Fences and blank walls are a different category. They have not lost an original function, as in the case of vacant buildings or lots. Neither do they inherently carry a connotation of decline, after all they haven't declined from any higher function. From the onset, they have carried no function but to act as a barrier between private and public space, defending an unknown internal use from visual, audible or physical intrusion of passersby. Blank walls are derided by urban observers and scholars across the globe as a sign of disaffection with public space at best, distrust in public space at worst. William Whyte goes a step further to describe blank walls as a provocation as they "...proclaim the power of the institution and the inconsequence of the individual, whom they are clearly meant to intimidate."<sup>1319</sup> Large developments such as the Renaissance Center in Detroit and the former Ministry of Justice and Internal Affairs in The Hague relate to public space mostly through blank walls, for reasons of security and control of the internal environment. Both complexes have faced significant backlash over their poor relationship to public space, and have made changes to

<sup>1318</sup> Left image by author, 2014. Right image by author, 2014.

<sup>1319</sup> Whyte, *City : Rediscovering the Center*, 226.

alleviate their presence toward the street as in the case of the Renaissance Center, or will soon be redeveloped to do so, as in the case of the ministry buildings in The Hague.



**Figure 357. Blank frontage of the Renaissance Center toward Beaubien Street in Detroit (left). Blank frontage of the former Ministry of Justice and Internal Affairs toward the Schedeldoekskade in The Hague (right).<sup>1320</sup>**

### **Form:**

Vacant buildings and lots may offer views into the property, but no legitimate reason to enter. Fences and blank walls are completely or mostly visually and physically impermeable frontages.

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<sup>1320</sup> Both images by author, 2014.



Figure 358. Blank walls (front) and vacated storefronts (in rear) can be a canvas for expression.<sup>1321</sup>

<sup>1321</sup> Image by author in The Hague, 2014.

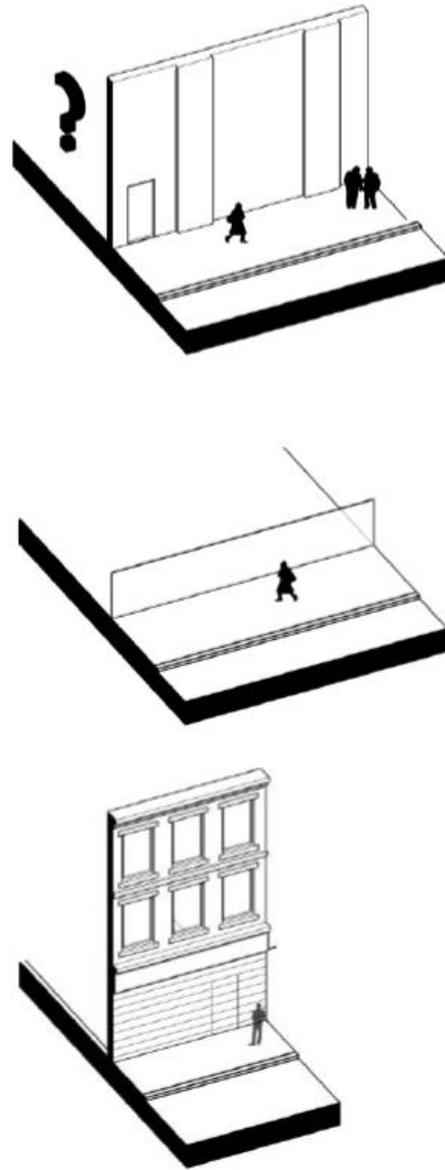


Figure 359. Typological diagram.

**APPENDIX B.**  
**FRONTAGE USE MAPS**

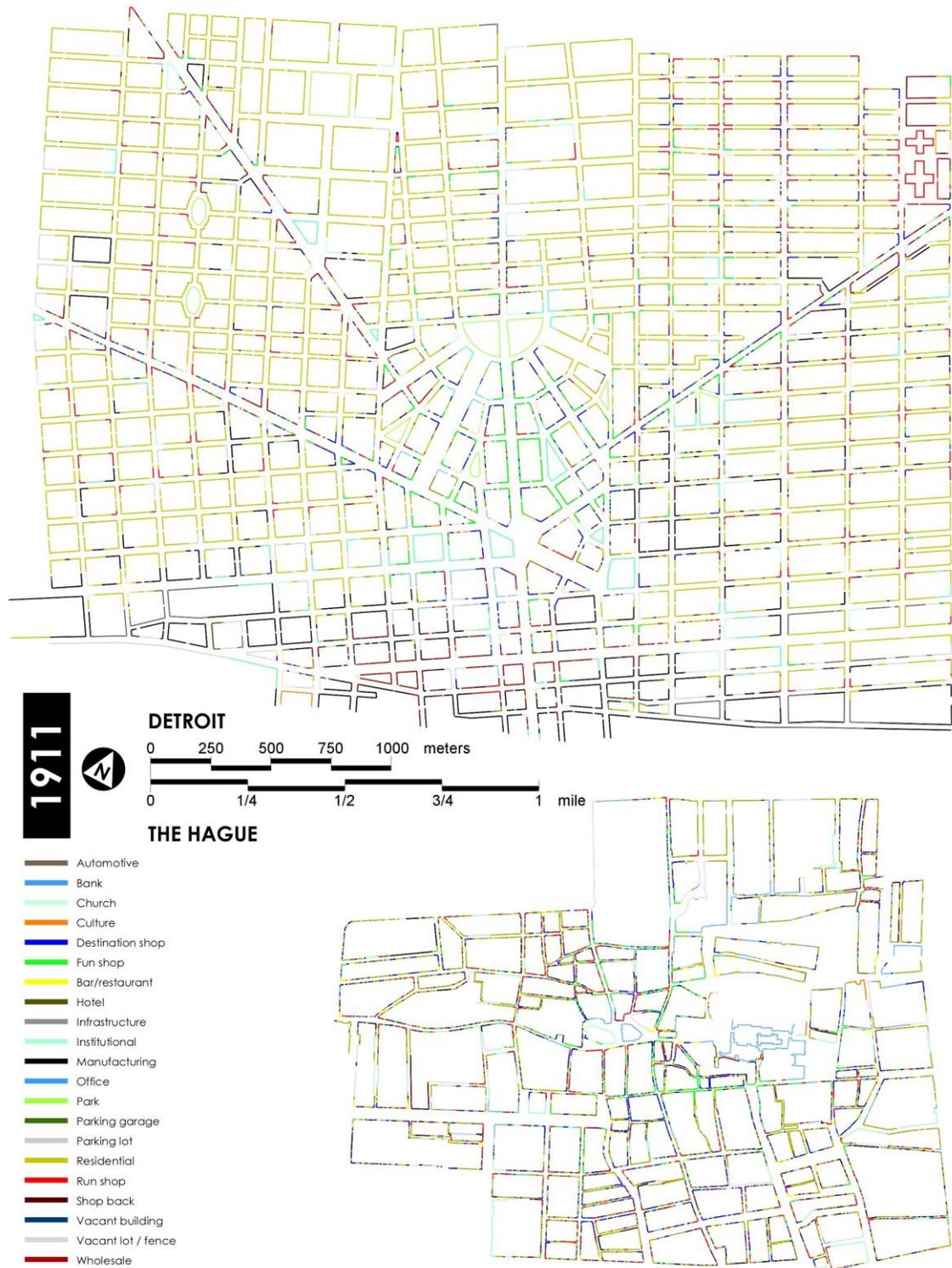


Figure 360. Frontage use in 1911.



Figure 361. Frontage use in 1921.

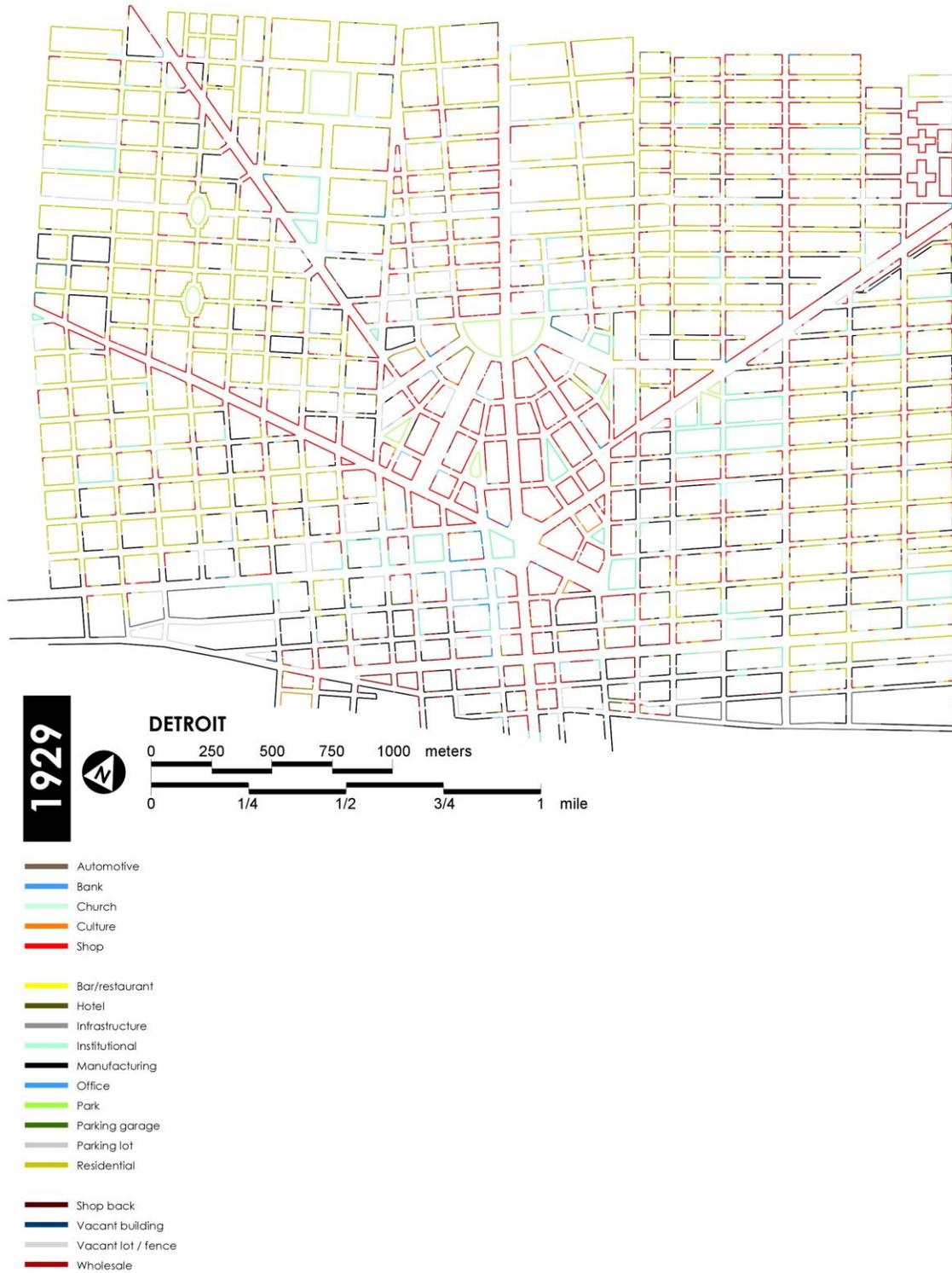


Figure 362. Frontage use in 1929.



Figure 363. Frontage use in 1937.



Figure 364. Frontage use in 1951.

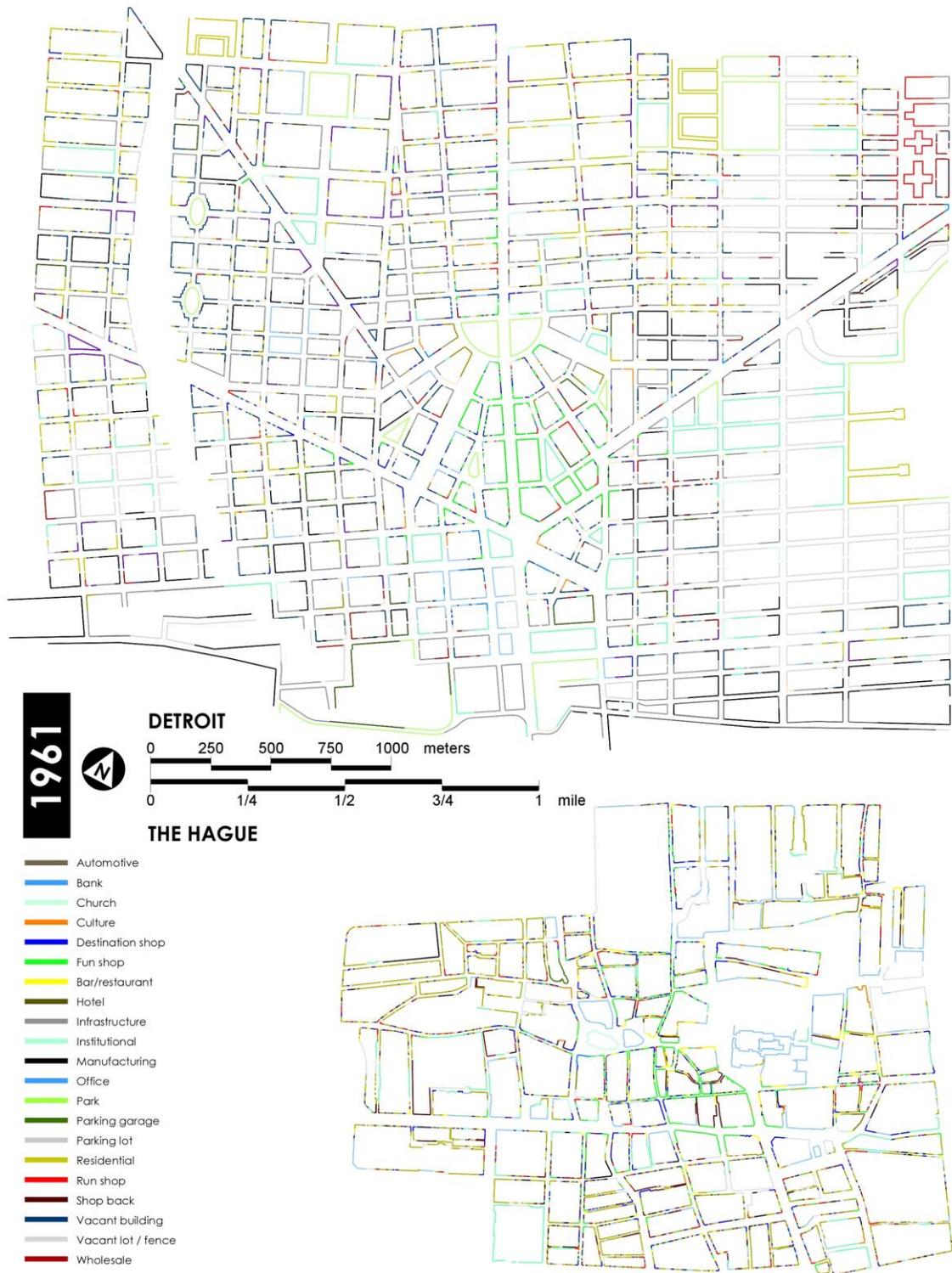


Figure 365. Frontage use in 1961.



Figure 366. Frontage use in 1977.



Figure 367. Frontage use in 1988.



Figure 368. Frontage use in 2001.



Figure 369. Frontage use in 2011.

## APPENDIX C.

### LIST OF FORMULAS

#### FRONTAGE INTERACTIVITY

$$\frac{\sum_x^n \text{frontage length (type } x) \times \text{frontage interactivity value (type } x)}{\text{total frontage length}}$$

#### ANNUAL MUTATION OF FRONTAGE INTERACTIVITY

$$\left( \frac{\text{Activity score interval } (x)}{\text{Activity score interval } (x - 1)} \right) \div \text{years between interval } (x) \text{ and } (x - 1).$$

#### INTERACTIVITY OF NEW CONSTRUCTION

$$\frac{\sum_x^n \text{newly constructed frontage length (type } x) \times \text{newly constructed frontage interactivity value (type } x)}{\text{total newly constructed frontage length}}$$

#### INTERACTIVITY OF NEW CONSTRUCTION, INCLUDING NEW DEMOLITION

$$\frac{\sum_x^n \text{newly constructed frontage length (type } x) \times \text{newly constructed frontage interactivity value (type } x)}{\text{total newly constructed frontage length} + \text{newly demolished frontage length}}$$

#### CENTER OF ACTIVITY

Also known as the 100% corner. Denotes the street segment with the highest retail rent in the urban core. In Detroit, this is derived from the 1951 Nirenstein Retail Atlas and the 1967 Land Valuation Atlas as the last land rent comparison. In The Hague, this is derived from the Experian GOAD atlas of the inner city.

### **FRONTAGE INTERACTIVITY AS A FUNCTION OF DISTANCE FROM THE CENTER OF ACTIVITY**

$$\frac{\sum_x^n \text{frontage length in distance percentile } y \text{ (type } x) \times \text{frontage interactivity value (type } x)}{\text{total frontage length in distance percentile } y}$$

### **PERCENTAGE OF FRONTAGE DEDICATED TO BUSINESS AS A FUNCTION OF DISTANCE FROM THE CENTER OF ACTIVITY**

$$\frac{\text{frontage length of all retail types and Bars and Restaurants in distance percentile } y}{\text{total frontage length in distance percentile } y}$$

### **STREET SEGMENT CHOICE VALUE**

Denotes the potential of a street segment to be en-route between all other street segments in a given model at radius X, also referred to as “betweenness”. Pilot studies have found that this radius is best set at 10,000 meters for this dissertation. This value is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Choice (segment } x) = \sum_j \sum_k \frac{g_{jk}(\text{segment } x)}{g_{jk} (j < k)}$$

Where  $g_{jk}$  (segment  $x$ ) is the number of routes between segment  $p_j$  and  $p_k$  which contain segment  $x$  and  $g_{jk}$  is the number of all routes between segment  $p_j$  and  $p_k$ .<sup>1322</sup>

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<sup>1322</sup> Bill Hillier and Shinichi Iida, "Network and Psychological Effects in Urban Movement," in *Spatial Information Theory*, ed. AnthonyG Cohn and DavidM Mark, *Lecture Notes in Computer Science* (Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2005).

As both case study cities have grown, the total size of the model has changed over time. This affects the choice values, obstructing the diachronic comparison of similar street segments. Therefore, the choice value is 'normalized' as follows:<sup>1323</sup>

$$NA_{choice}(\text{radius } 10,000) = \frac{\log(\text{Choice}(\text{radius } 10,000) + 1)}{\log(\text{Total Depth}(\text{radius } 10,000) + 3)}$$

### FRONTAGE INTERACTIVITY AS A FUNCTION OF STREET SEGMENT CHOICE VALUE

$$\frac{\sum_x^n \text{frontage length in choice value percentile } y (\text{type } x) \times \text{frontage interactivity value (type } x)}{\text{total frontage length in choice value percentile } y}$$

### PERCENTAGE OF FRONTAGE DEDICATED TO BUSINESS AS A FUNCTION OF STREET SEGMENT CHOICE VALUE

$$\frac{\text{frontage length of all retail types and Bars and Restaurants in choice value percentile } y}{\text{total frontage length in choice value percentile } y}$$

### INTERACTIVITY DIVERGENCE

Calculated as the Gini Index, often used on social sciences to denote inequality between values within a dataset with a certain property.<sup>1324</sup>

$$\text{Gini Coefficient (property)} = 1 - \frac{2}{n-1} \left( n - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n iy_i}{\sum_{i=1}^n y_i} \right)$$

where  $n$  is the number of values in the property dataset,  $i$  is the bucket of the property and  $y$  is the value of that property.

### INTERACTIVITY VALUE DECLINE PER YEAR

$$\frac{(\text{Activity score interval } (t) - \text{Activity score interval } (t - 1))}{\text{years between interval } (t) \text{ and } (t - 1)}$$

<sup>1323</sup> Hillier, Yang, and Turner, "Normalising Least Angle Choice in Depthmap-and How It Opens up New Perspectives on the Global and Local Analysis of City Space."

<sup>1324</sup> Corrado Gini, "Variabilità E Mutabilità," Reprinted in *Memorie di metodologica statistica* (Ed. Pizetti E, Salvemini, T). Rome: Libreria Eredi Virgilio Veschi 1(1912).

## INTERACTIVITY VALUE DECLINE ACCELERATION

$$\left( \frac{\text{annual decline (interval } t)}{\text{annual decline (interval } t - 1)} \right) - 1$$

Only counted for values above 20% of its original 1911 interactivity value to filter out 'bottoming out' effects.

## FRONTAGE VACANCY CONTAGIOUSNESS

First the basic probability is calculated:

$$P(\text{frontage becomes vacant in interval } t) = \frac{\text{number of newly vacant frontages in interval } t}{\text{number of active frontages in interval } t - 1}$$

The increased chance is calculated as follows:

*The increased chance a frontage becomes vacant when it is close to frontages that were already vacant =*

$$\frac{P(\text{frontage becomes vacant in interval } t \text{ when it is close to already vacant frontages in interval } t-1)}{P(\text{frontage becomes vacant in interval } t \text{ when it is not close to already vacant frontages in interval } t-1)} - 1$$

*The increased chance a frontage becomes vacant when it is close to frontages that are newly vacant =*

$$\frac{P(\text{frontage becomes vacant in interval } t \text{ when it is close to newly vacant frontages in interval } t-1)}{P(\text{frontage becomes vacant in interval } t \text{ when it is not close to newly vacant frontages in interval } t-1)} - 1$$

Leading to the expanded formulas:

*The increased chance a frontage becomes vacant when it is close to frontages that were already vacant =*

$$\left( \frac{\text{number of newly vacant frontages in interval } t \text{ within 20m of } > 1 \text{ vacant frontages in interval } t - 1}{\text{number of active frontages in interval } t - 1 \text{ within 20m of } > 1 \text{ vacant frontages in interval } t - 1} \right) / \left( \frac{\text{number of newly vacant frontages in interval } t \text{ within 20m of } 0 \text{ vacant frontages in interval } t - 1}{\text{number of active frontages in interval } t - 1 \text{ within 20m of } 0 \text{ vacant frontages in interval } t - 1} \right) - 1$$

*The increased chance a frontage becomes vacant when it is close to frontages that are newly vacant =*

$$\left( \frac{\text{number of newly vacant frontages in interval } t \text{ within } 20\text{m of } > 1 \text{ newly vacant frontages in interval } t-1}{\text{number of active frontages in interval } t-1 \text{ within } 20\text{m of } > 1 \text{ newly vacant frontages in interval } t-1} \right) / \left( \frac{\text{number of newly vacant frontages in interval } t \text{ within } 20\text{m of } 0 \text{ newly vacant frontages in interval } t-1}{\text{number of active frontages in interval } t-1 \text{ within } 20\text{m of } 0 \text{ newly vacant frontages in interval } t-1} \right)$$

-1

## VACANT LOT CONTAGIOUSNESS

First the basic probability is calculated:

$$P(\text{building becomes vacant or parking lot in interval } t) = \frac{\text{number of newly created vacant or parking lots in interval } t}{\text{number of building frontages in interval } t-1}$$

The increased chance is calculated as follows:

*The increased chance a frontage becomes a vacant or parking lot when it is close to frontages that were already vacant or parking lots=*

$$\frac{P(\text{building becomes vacant or parking lot in interval } t \text{ when it is } \textbf{close to} \text{ already vacant or parking lots in interval } t-1)}{P(\text{building becomes vacant or parking lot in interval } t \text{ when it is } \textbf{not close to} \text{ already vacant or parking lots in interval } t-1)}$$

*The increased chance a frontage becomes a vacant or parking lot when it is close to frontages that are newly vacant or parking lots=*

$$\frac{P(\text{building becomes vacant or parking lot in interval } t \text{ when it is } \textbf{close to} \text{ new vacant or parking lots in interval } t-1)}{P(\text{building becomes vacant or parking lot in interval } t \text{ when it is } \textbf{not close to} \text{ new vacant or parking lots in interval } t-1)}$$

Leading to the expanded formulas:

*The increased chance a building becomes a vacant or parking lot when it is close to lots that were already vacant or used for parking =*

$$\left( \frac{\text{number of newly created vacant or parking lots in interval } t \text{ within } 20\text{m of } >1 \text{ existing vacant or parking lots in interval } t-1}{\text{number of building frontages in interval } t-1 \text{ within } 20\text{m of } >1 \text{ existing vacant or parking lots in interval } t-1} \right) / \left( \frac{\text{number of newly created vacant or parking lots in interval } t \text{ within } 20\text{m of } 0 \text{ existing vacant or parking lots in interval } t-1}{\text{number of building frontages in interval } t-1 \text{ within } 20\text{m of } 0 \text{ existing vacant or parking lots in interval } t-1} \right) - 1$$

*The increased chance a frontage becomes vacant when it is close to frontages that recently became vacant =*

$$\left( \frac{\text{number of newly created vacant or parking lots in interval } t \text{ within } 20\text{m of } >1 \text{ new vacant or parking lots in interval } t-1}{\text{number of building frontages in interval } t-1 \text{ within } 20\text{m of } >1 \text{ new vacant or parking lots in interval } t-1} \right) / \left( \frac{\text{number of newly created vacant or parking lots in interval } t \text{ within } 20\text{m of } 0 \text{ new vacant or parking lots in interval } t-1}{\text{number of building frontages in interval } t-1 \text{ within } 20\text{m of } 0 \text{ new vacant or parking lots in interval } t-1} \right) - 1$$

## BUSINESS CLOSURE CONTAGIOUSNESS

First the basic probability is calculated:

P (business closes in interval t) =

$$\frac{\text{number of businesses closing in interval } t}{\text{number of businesses in interval } t}$$

Increased chance a business closes during time interval  $t$  when surrounded by  $x$  other businesses:

$$\frac{P(\text{business closes in interval } t \text{ when surrounded by } x \text{ other businesses within 50 meters in interval } t)}{P(\text{business closes in interval } t \text{ when not surrounded by } x \text{ other businesses within 50 meters in interval } t)}$$

Expanded:

$$\left( \frac{\text{\# of businesses closing in interval } t \text{ when surrounded by } x \text{ businesses within 50 meters in interval } t}{\text{\# of businesses in interval } t \text{ surrounded by } x \text{ businesses within 50 meters in interval } t} / \frac{\text{\# of businesses closing in interval } t \text{ when not surrounded by } x \text{ businesses within 50 meters in interval } t}{\text{\# of businesses in interval } t \text{ not surrounded by } x \text{ businesses within 50 meters in interval } t} \right) - 1$$

Increased chance a business closes during time interval  $t$  when surrounded by  $x$  other businesses that closed during time interval  $t-1$ :

$$\frac{P(\text{business closes in interval } t \text{ when surrounded by } x \text{ number of closed businesses within 50 meters in interval } t-1)}{P(\text{business closes in interval } t \text{ not surrounded by } x \text{ number of closed businesses within 50 meters in interval } t-1)} - 1$$

Expanded:

$$\left( \frac{\text{\# of businesses closing in interval } t \text{ when surrounded by } x \text{ closed businesses within 50 meters in interval } t-1}{\text{\# of businesses in interval } t \text{ surrounded by } x \text{ closed businesses within 50 meters in interval } t-1} / \frac{\text{\# of businesses closing in interval } t \text{ when not surrounded by } x \text{ closed businesses within 50 meters in interval } t-1}{\text{\# of businesses in interval } t \text{ not surrounded by } x \text{ closed businesses within 50 meters in interval } t-1} \right) - 1$$

## FRONTAGE INTERACTIVITY AND URBAN RENEWAL

Higher frontage interactivity decline in urban renewal areas immediately after their construction:

$$\frac{\textit{interactivity value before construction (segment in UR)}}{\textit{interactivity value after construction (segment in UR)}}$$

-

$$\frac{\textit{interactivity value before construction (average all segments)}}{\textit{interactivity value after construction (average all segments)}}$$

Higher business frontage decline in urban renewal areas immediately after their construction:

$$\frac{\% \textit{ of business frontage before construction (segment in UR)}}{\% \textit{ of business frontage after construction (segment in UR)}}$$

-

$$\frac{\% \textit{ of business frontage before construction (average all segments)}}{\% \textit{ of business frontage after construction (average all segments)}}$$

Higher frontage interactivity decline in urban renewal areas over their lifetime:

$$\frac{\textit{interactivity value before construction (segment in UR)}}{\textit{interactivity value in 2011 (segment in UR)}}$$

-

$$\frac{\textit{interactivity value before construction (average all segments)}}{\textit{interactivity value in 2011 (average all segments)}}$$

Higher business frontage decline in urban renewal areas over their lifetime:

$$\frac{\% \text{ of business frontage before construction (segment in UR)}}{\% \text{ of business frontage in 2011 (segment in UR)}}$$

-

$$\frac{\% \text{ of business frontage before construction (average all segments)}}{\% \text{ of business frontage in 2011 (average all segments)}}$$

## URBAN RENEWAL AND BORDER VACUUMS

Urban renewal border (URzone) areas are drawn as one block around each urban renewal area. All street segments in this zone, and the street segments directory adjacent to the urban renewal areas are counted within this zone.

Higher frontage interactivity decline in urban renewal border areas over their lifetime:

$$\frac{\text{interactivity value before construction (segment in URzone)}}{\text{interactivity value in 2011 (segment in URzone)}}$$

-

$$\frac{\text{interactivity value before construction (average all segments)}}{\text{interactivity value in 2011 (average all segments)}}$$

Higher business frontage decline in urban renewal border areas over their lifetime:

$$\frac{\% \text{ of business frontage before construction (segment in URzone)}}{\% \text{ of business frontage in 2011 (segment in URzone)}}$$

-

$$\frac{\% \text{ of business frontage before construction (average all segments)}}{\% \text{ of business frontage in 2011 (average all segments)}}$$

### **FRONTAGE DIVERSITY**

Diversity is calculated by the Simpson Index, which is derived from ecology. This index measures the under- or overrepresentation of certain species (in the case of this dissertation, frontage types) in a total sample.<sup>1325</sup> It is calculated as follows:

$$Diversity = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^R n_i(n_i - 1)}{N(N - 1)}$$

Where  $n_i$  is the number of frontages of type  $i$  and  $N$  is the total number of frontages in the sample, with  $R$  number of types.

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<sup>1325</sup> E.H. Simpson, "Measurement of Diversity," *Nature; Nature* (1949).

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- 1929 Nathan Nirenstein's One Hundred Per Cent Business Real Estate Locations, from Cleveland Public library
- 1936 central business district map, from University of Chicago library (online)
- 1938 Land use map from Real Property Survey, from University of Chicago library (online)
- 1949 Aerial photography from Wayne State University archives (online)
- 1950 Nathan Nirenstein's One Hundred Per Cent Business Real Estate Locations, from University of Michigan library
- 1951 Sanborn Fire Insurance Atlas, online through ProQuest

- 1952 Aerial photography from Wayne State University archives (online)
- 1961 Aerial photography from Wayne State University archives (online)
- 1961 Sanborn Fire Insurance Atlas, from Detroit Public Library
- 1977 Sanborn Fire Insurance Atlas, from Detroit Public Library
- 1978 United States Geological Survey aerial photography (online)
- 1988 Sanborn Fire Insurance Atlas, from Detroit Public Library
- 1991 Sanborn Fire Insurance Atlas (CBD only), from Detroit Public Library
- 2002 United States Geological Survey aerial photography (online)
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- Gemeentekaarten (municipal maps) G6, 1924; H6, 1916; H7, 1926; J5, 1923; J6, 1923; J7, 1920, from The Hague Municipal Archives
- Cadastral maps 26 section C, 1914; 43 section G, 1890-1914; 48 section H, 1905; 52 section I, 1905 from The Hague Municipal Archives
- Map from 'Gewijzigd plan for den verbindingsweg tusschen spui en buitenhof' from 1908, from The Hague Municipal Archives
- Map from 'Ontworpen wijziging op het voorstel van B. en W. in zake Verkeersweg Groote Markt – Fluweelen Burgwal' by W.B. van Liefland, 1910, from The Hague Municipal Archives
- Gemeentekaarten G6, H6, H7, J5, J6, J7 from 1936, from The Hague Municipal Archives
- Cadastral overview map of central The Hague, 1961, from TU Delft map library
- Gemeentekaarten G6, 1957; H5, 1957; H6, 1960; H7, 1961; J5, 1961; J6, 1957; J7, 1957, from The Hague Municipal Archives
- Gemeentekaarten G6, H5, H6, H7, J6, J7 from 1989, from The Hague Municipal Archives
- Digital topographical map from Cadastral basis 1:1000, from TU Delft map library

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