

# **The contribution of HST-related development projects to a competitive urban climate**

Rotterdam Centraal and Euralille

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## **Abstract**

Studies on urban competitiveness pay growing interest to such factors as innovation, knowledge spill-over and creativity. In many aspects these are localized factors, depending to a large extent on personal relations, face-to-face contacts and an attractive urban climate. In view of this, the current paper explores the relation between the competitiveness of an advanced economy and the quality of urban space, focusing on the question how newly developed urban areas, in particular HST station areas, could be developed in order to contribute to an attractive, vivid urban climate and how these areas are integrated into the existing urban fabric. As an illustration it refers to Rotterdam Central Station, in comparison to the French Euralille project. Since this project is explicitly intended not only to improve the quality of the station, but also to contribute to a better urban quality in the inner city as a whole, the questions above are highly relevant to its development.

# 1 Introduction

In the current post-industrial service economy, other factors than before define urban competitiveness. Accordingly, studies of urban economy pay growing interest to such aspects as innovation (Jacobs, 1970 [1969]), information (Castells, 1989), knowledge (Storper, 1997; Hall, 1998), culture (Scott, 2000) and creativity (Florida, 2002). Evidence is growing that these are in many aspects localized factors, depending to a large extent on personal relations, face-to-face contacts (Storper and Venables, 2002) and an attractive urban climate (Florida, 2002). In view of this, the current paper explores the relation between the abstract economical concepts that define the competitiveness of an advanced economy and specific qualities of urban space, which Florida defines as *quality of place*. It focuses on the question how newly developed urban areas, in particular HST station areas, could be developed in order to contribute to an attractive, vivid urban climate and how these areas are integrated into the existing urban fabric. Rotterdam Central Station is referred to as an illustration. While the city is struggling to overcome a phase of industrial decline and loosening ties with its seaport and to transform into a competitive service economy, the implementation of a high-speed rail connection and a new regional light rail system have induced plans to redevelop the station area. The project is explicitly intended not only to improve the quality of the station itself, but also to contribute to a better quality of place elsewhere in the city, especially the inner city. Therefore the questions above are highly relevant to its development. Some parallels will be drawn with the earlier Euralille project, comparable to Rotterdam Central Station in several aspects but completed already in the 1990s.

The structure of the paper is as follows. Section 2 discusses the role of knowledge spill-over as one of the main factors of competitiveness of the present urban economy. This is related not only to specific economic activities, but also to certain favourable characteristics of the urban environment called quality of place. The frequent positioning of railway stations as cores of economic development raises the question of their quality of place too. Section 3 considers the concept of quality of place more in detail, focusing in particular on the way newly developed area could be embedded in the existing city. The latter issue is elaborated in Sections 4 and 5. A brief discussion concludes the paper.

## 2 The railway station in the post-industrial urban economy

### 2.1 Knowledge spill-over as a localized factor of competitiveness

In history two main causes of urbanization can be distinguished (Weber, in: Hohenberg and Lees, 1995:23 ff.). A city's wealth and growth may be based on its position as a central place in an area, on the influence of the city's governmental, juridical, religious and cultural institutions. On the other hand, a city may derive its wealth from its position in economic networks, as an exchange points for people, goods, information and knowledge, and the services derived from that. Nonetheless, although typical governmental cities and trade cities may be distinguished, both elements can be found to some extent in each city of any significance. While the distinction between central places and cities-in-a-network was never that clear, therefore, it became blurred even more as for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries urban economies of both types focused mainly on industrialization. But as traditional manufacturing sectors such as metal, textile, chemical or food industry became more labour extensive, providing an ever narrowing base for urban wealth, or even have disappeared completely from European cities, current research and policy on urban economics increasingly focus again on the city as a gathering place of people, where in-

formation and knowledge are exchanged. In this regard it is tempting, but also an oversimplification, to consider the current post-industrial economy a return to previously important values. Nonetheless, a fact is that other factors than in the industrial era seem to be important to economic success or failure of cities, and that other cities than before are successful.

A recurring element in all success stories of urban competitiveness appears to be the transfer of information or knowledge between clusters of related firms. Rather than just the possession of information, knowledge such as tacit knowledge or know-how entails the use and understanding of information in a specific context (Storper, 1997:70). This is the more so as knowledge spill-overs occur not only between firms or individuals within the same business, but also between sectors with different codes and conventions. Knowledge transfer therefore largely depends on what Storper and Venables (2002:4) call *buzz*: informal, personal relations and face-to-face contacts. Consequently, it is a specific factor of urban competitiveness, rooted in those places where buzz is found.

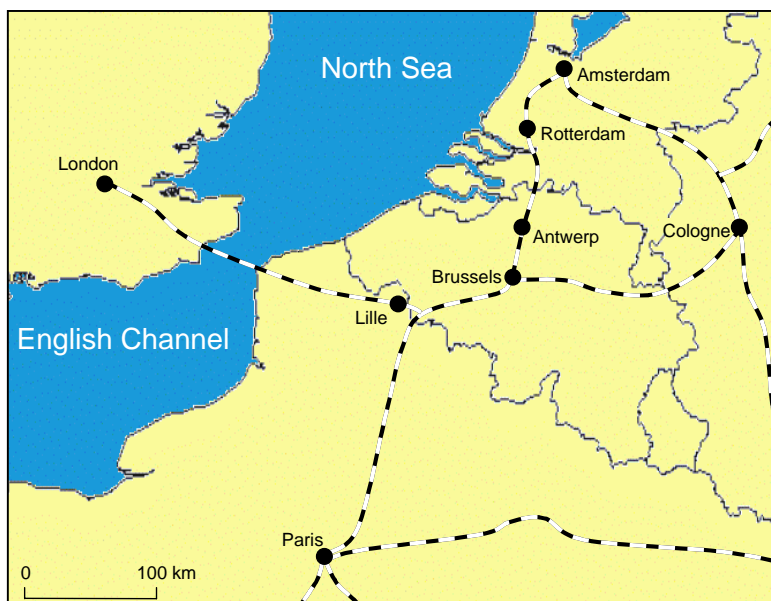
The importance of knowledge spill-over as an economic asset suggest that, regarding competitiveness, cities should focus on the category of knowledge workers (Storper, 1997:240). Florida (2002:8) defines it as a distinct *creative class*, including ‘people in science and engineering, architecture and design, education, arts, music and entertainment’, who create new ideas and new technology, as well as people in business and finance, law and health care whose work requires ‘a great deal of independent judgement and requires high levels of education or human capital’. This broad definition roughly corresponds to the producer services and derived consumer services emphasized by for instance Sassen (2001) and Hall (2001:61-62), but puts a clear focus on creativity, innovation and the cultural industries emphasized by Scott (2000).

The people involved in these specific economic activities tend to concentrate in locations which offer specific favourable qualities of life. They focus more on attractive living conditions than on the location of a specific firm, the more so as job mobility in these sectors of the economy is high. Regarding the more advanced service economies, it is therefore increasingly important to focus not so much on attracting firms, but on a strategy to attract and retain the right, talented people (Florida, 2002:293). An important aspect of this is an attractive, diverse and tolerant urban environment, which is considered increasingly important as a factor of urban competitiveness. Florida (op. cit.:215 ff.) defines it as *quality of place*: a set of specific urban qualities that collectively define the attractiveness of a city as a place of residence for the groups of knowledge workers mentioned above. Such conditions are found in many historic inner cities. However, as other locations are also increasingly positioned as places of knowledge exchange, the question of their quality of place becomes relevant too. In this respect, the railway station is a particularly interesting case.

## 2.2 *The railway station as a location of buzz*

While distance has become less important to the transfer of standardized, digitalized information, specific knowledge exchange as discussed above remains strongly dependent on personal relations, many of which cannot be fully replaced by electronic devices. It depends therefore to a large extent on spatial proximity (Storper and Scott, 1995:506; Glaeser, 1998:146-147). Yet, one’s social and professional network is not limited to one’s closest friends and colleagues: as for instance Granovetter (1973), Landry (2000), Grabher (2002) and Bathelt et al. (2004) demonstrated, essential knowledge often depends on ‘weak’ ties to distant acquaintances or quite different businesses. This points at the importance of *accessibility* (proximity in terms of travel time), rather than spatial proximity per se, for knowledge spill-overs to occur. It also implies the importance of *transport facilities*.

Indeed, traditional locations of face-to-face contacts are increasingly supplemented by newly developed locations, many of which in one way or another are based on transport nodes (cf. Hall, 2001:73-74). The introduction of a high-speed train adds an international scale to this, as well as a cosmopolitan image that may be at least as important. Accordingly, the current expansion of the HST network in Europe (Figure 1) is considered, even in advance, an important impulse for urban-economic development of those cities where the HST is expected to stop. Thus, although it is not necessarily the most important modality in terms of passenger numbers, the anticipation of the HST in many cities gives a boost to urban development, as the combined efforts of public authorities and private developers lead to an almost unprecedented redevelopment of the areas around future HST stations in cities such as Lille, Brussels, Antwerp and Rotterdam. Large projects are being developed, which entail not merely the construction of a railway station. They often imply extensive urban redevelopment projects, expected to generate considerable economic spin-off.



*Figure 1: The existing and planned high-speed rail network in Northwest Europe.*

Like any part of urban infrastructure, the railway station is at the same time part of the city as well as the transport network. Accordingly, the station and its surrounding, as a focus point for various activities and flows of people, itself become a potential place of buzz, of face-to-face contacts between knowledge workers. As Storper and Venables (2002:15) state, this entails random and semi-random contacts, which typically occur ‘in a complex, diversified urban environment’. This, again, points at a relationship between the probable occurrence of knowledge exchange and specific characteristics of the urban environment. Thus, quality of place is a highly important factor. This leaves the questions what exactly is quality of place and how it can be achieved and maintained.

### **3 A competitive urban climate: quality of place**

#### *3.1 Quality of place*

If quality of place is often considered a vague concept, it is so by its multiplicity and complexity, rather than by a lack of content. It entails a set of qualities that collectively make a city an attractive place of residence for those involved in the ‘creative’ economy. So far,

the level of urban amenities has mostly been associated with quality of life issues, rather than hard economic competition. Nonetheless, Segedy (1997:57) too concludes that quality of life is becoming more important as a location factor for firms. Likewise, Kresl (1995:51) states that relatively competitive urban economies are characterised by the creation of high-skill, high-income jobs, production of high-quality, environmentally benign goods and services, a balanced labour market, sufficient transport and communication infrastructure, a favourable location and economic structure and diverse urban amenities.

Quality of place is more specific, however. It entails a set of qualities that collectively make a city an attractive place of residence for the creative class. It includes aspects such as economic and spatial diversity, specific amenities, the possibility of informal meetings, safety, liveliness and such indefinable aspects as authenticity, tolerance, street life and urbanity. Florida (2002) expresses quality of place by a set of indices measuring in particular technology, talent and tolerance, rather than by a single overall index. Table 1 provides a non-exhaustive list of qualities related to quality of place, as well as some indicators suggested by Florida and other authors in this field.

*Table 1: Main elements of quality of place and indicators suggested by Florida (2002: 215 ff.; 252; 255-258; 331-334) and related literature (Kloosterman, 2001:13-14; Glaeser et al., 2001:35 ff.).*

quality	indicator
diversity	– functional diversity
specific amenities	– individual sports facilities, recreation areas and restaurants per capita; (semi-)public spaces for informal meetings
liveliness; culture	– cultural and musical events; live performance venues per capita
technology; innovativeness	– patents per capita; relative percentage of high-tech output
talent	– percentage of people with bachelor's degree and above
creativity, bohemia	– percentage of artistically creative people
tolerance; openness	– relative percentage of foreign-born people; idem coupled gays
safety	– crime figures

Although many of these characteristics are easy to perceive in places where they seem to be 'in the air', some of them are hard to define and even more difficult to reproduce, let alone to create out of the blue. Many elements of quality of place are most easily found in historic inner cities with their diversity, liveliness and small scale. Indeed most places that are celebrated for their (what we could now call) quality of place are located in inner cities, or in places that in many aspects resemble inner cities. In inner cities, however, quality of place may grow in time; but how could it be achieved in newly developed areas?

As many aspects of quality of place seem difficult to plan or construct, it may rather be a matter of creating favourable *conditions* for quality of place to develop. This is most obvious the case with abstract elements as urbanity, liveability or authenticity. Yet, some aspects of quality of place are undeniably related to the built environment, which by no means implies that they are easy to plan. This entails the functional and spatial diversity inside the area, by measures to plan and retain an agreeable scale, grain and functional mix. In the 1960s, Jane Jacobs already stressed the importance of both economic diversity (in *The Economy of Cities*, 1969) and spatial and functional diversity (in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 1961) for cities to remain competitive and attractive over a longer period. She mentioned several important elements of diversity: a mixture of residential and economic functions, but also a mixture of buildings of various size and age for various types of businesses (Jacobs, 2000 [1961]:162-163; 201); furthermore, 'small blocks' to achieve an open, well-accessible urban texture with a pedestrian scale, and a sufficient intensity of people.

### 3.2 *Embeddedness in the city*

Diversity within an area is but one aspect of quality of place related to the physical urban environment. Quality of place also involves the embeddedness of the area into the surrounding city. The station, to be a location of buzz and to affect the quality of place in a wider area, should not be an isolated space within the city. Yet, there is an imminent risk of this, as the station is not only a part of the city, but also a node of transport networks on different scales. The station is a concentration point of large-scale infrastructure, such as artery roads and railroads, which often has the effect of a barrier. Moreover, the fact that the station is a connection between scales makes it truly multi-scalar in terms of transport, but also culture and atmosphere, being at the same time local as well as regional and national, and in case of the high-speed train international. It resembles what Graham and Marvin (2001:408; 412) call a *premium network space*. As a consequence, there is the risk of urban fragmentation: of the HST station developing into a separate 'island', distinctive from the surrounding area in terms of spatial and functional development, ownership and control, scale and architecture. It is essential, therefore, to secure the link between the project and the city. Graham and Marvin signal a 'desperate need, in particular, to imagine ways of weaving secessionary and glocal network spaces into the finer-grained fabric of the urban spaces [...] that surround them' (op. cit.:414). The embeddedness of the station area in the city is therefore crucial. But this should be considered not only in a functional sense; it also has a clear spatial, visual and even a psychological dimension. Moreover, it may be considered on different scales.

First, there is the direct relation between the station building and the city. The station should be accessible from the city. Incoming travellers, on the other hand, should immediately have a clear sense of orientation, especially with respect to the location of the inner city. One method is to lead pedestrian traffic through the building, giving it in fact a function as a city street (as in Rome Termini). This requires the location of additional functions in or near the station as 'anchors' to lead sufficient flows through the station. A clear visual relation may also contribute to this. Second, at a larger scale there is the spatial and functional integration of the project area into the city. Possible solutions could be found in the adjustment of scale, the size of separate blocks – recall the 'small blocks' mentioned by Jane Jacobs – or the circulation of traffic through the area. Infrastructural barriers may be bridged by building over roads or railways, often by means of some kind of bridge between the station and the inner city.

The issue of the embeddedness of an urban redevelopment area in the existing city is elaborated in the next sections, illustrated by the case of the Rotterdam Central Station area. Some parallels will be drawn with the Euralille project, which is comparable to Rotterdam Central Station in several aspects, but has already been completed in the 1990s.

## 4 **Rotterdam**

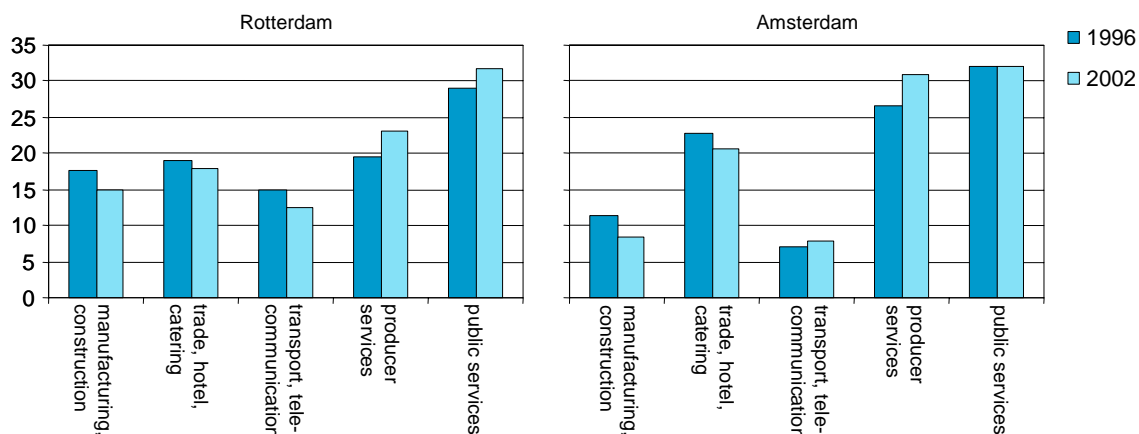
### 4.1 *The urban economy*

The relation between the city of Rotterdam and its seaport, which used to be very close, is changing spatially and economically. Port activities increasingly involve large-scale, labour-intensive or even automated processes. Port functions gradually move seaward, while old harbour areas are being redeveloped for residential and commercial functions. As a consequence, the city becomes less tied to the port. Like many old industrial cities, it has to

find ways to become less dependent on its manufacturing base and to transform itself in a modern service economy.

At the moment, Rotterdam is still far from that. The city traditionally specialized in manufacturing industries (especially food, oil, chemical and metal), construction and transport related services. In contrast, for instance Amsterdam concentrated on commerce, producer services and tourism, the sectors considered characteristic for advanced knowledge-based economies. This division of labour has been indicated by Kloosterman (1996) and, as Figure 2 shows, to a large extent still exists.

Figure 2: Sectoral composition in Rotterdam and Amsterdam in 1996 and 2002 (shares in percentages of total employment). Based on employment data taken from the LISA database (2003).



The development of the inner city seems to reflect the city's growing self-confidence. The inner city of Rotterdam was largely destroyed in 1940 and rebuilt after 1945 in a modernist fashion. Compared to other Dutch inner cities, it provides more space to car traffic and it included some novelties as for example the Netherlands' first modern pedestrian shopping street and first metro system. In many places, however, the accent was on the reconstruction itself, rather than on urban or architectural quality, and many of the 1950s and 1960s buildings now look rather characterless and outdated. Yet, since the 1980s and especially the 1990s the modern architecture of Rotterdam became increasingly important for the image and identity of the city, and an active policy evolved to encourage distinct architecture. The development of an architectural cluster, centred around the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) of Rem Koolhaas, also contributes to this (cf. Kloosterman and Stegmeijer, 2004).

Meanwhile, Rotterdam Central Station has become too small to accommodate future passenger volumes. Even nowadays it is crowded with 140 thousand travellers per day, a figure expected to increase to approximately 210 thousand in 2025 (PTRC, 2003:9,12). Especially the tunnel beneath the platforms is a bottleneck during peak hours. Moreover, the station seems too small and shabby to match the city's (and the city government's) desired modern image (Figure 3). The decision to construct a high-speed railway between Amsterdam and Paris induced the renewal plans for the station. Obviously, the station itself should be upgraded, but the objective was also to improve the quality of the station area and, thereby, the dynamics, liveliness and 'buzz' of the inner city as a whole. The project area therefore included a relatively large zone north of the inner city. Currently, this area consist mainly of the station itself, residential and office buildings and a large amount of infrastructure and busy traffic. To provide a real contribution to the quality of place of the inner city, it should include a larger variety of functions, traffic nuisance should be reduced significantly and the comfort and safety of pedestrians be improved.



Central Station Station Square Weena Kruisplein inner city

Figure 3: Rotterdam CS (to the left) and the Weena and Kruisplein (to the right) in the present situation (PTRC, 2003:14-15).

#### 4.2 The Masterplan Rotterdam Centraal

...Rotterdam Centraal is not only a physical project, it is a catalyst for other initiatives. It does not determine in advance, but facilitates a framework that will be responsive to future market development (Alsop Architects, 2001:014).

In 1995 the urban government of Rotterdam and the Dutch Railways (NS) developed the initial ideas for a new station. Finally, in 1999 these parties, together with the private investors Amvest (later Rodamco) and ING Real Estate found each other in a public-private cooperation and defined the starting points of the project. Early 2000 a shortlist of five urban design agencies was made, including OMA, the office of Rem Koolhaas who had made the masterplan for Euralille (Kooijman and Wigmans, 2003:8; see Section 5). Eventually, however, Alsop Architects from London was selected to make an elaborated design.

In April 2001, Alsop presented his *Masterplan Rotterdam Centraal*. It included a real estate programme of 641,000m<sup>2</sup>, consisting of 195,000m<sup>2</sup> of residential area, 318,000m<sup>2</sup> of offices, a hotel and 125,000m<sup>2</sup> of 'urban entertainment', entailing various amenities such as shops, catering and a theatre. Most of this would be in addition to the existing functions in the area, leading to a considerable increase in density that should improve the liveliness of the area and provide environmental and financial advantages. The exact mix of functions in each part of the area is flexible enough to adapt to future market developments (Alsop Architects, 2001:097). As a highlight, the station entrance would be marked by a group of giant 'champagne glasses' (Figure 4).



Figure 4: The giant champagne glasses and the balcony beneath (Alsop Architects, 2001:037).

A balcony, or bridge, is proposed leading over the railway and the station hall. The main streets within the project area are designed as semi-pedestrian boulevards, making up a large part of the area's public space. A final feature of the plan is the separation of traffic flows, with trams and the tram station located underground, while bus and car traffic stays at ground level, but is reduced and diverted from the station square (see Figure 7, p.11).

#### *4.3 Embeddedness in the city: the Weena as a barrier and a boulevard*

One specific objective of the Masterplan Rotterdam Centraal is to improve the embeddedness of the station area in the city and in particular its connection to the inner city. William Alsop describes his impression when he and his wife visited Rotterdam for the first time:

That's when I discovered what an interesting city Rotterdam was. But also a city without an entrance. We arrived at the central station by train and we both wondered: What are we doing here? Where do we go now? (Alsop, in: PBRC, 2001:4).

Apparently it is the intention of the station building, which as it were embraces the square, of directing the traveller towards the inner city. In practice, however, the result is at best a suggestion of where the centre might be. Standing in front of the station, one faces the chaotic Kruisplein (see Figure 3, p.8). The inner city is in fact somewhat more to the left, invisible behind the busy road and the line of high-rise buildings, many of them closed facades with no public function even at the street level. This experience seems to have provided one of the driving forces of the Masterplan:

...we have succeeded in creating a good route from the station in the direction of the shopping area around the Lijnbaan and the Museumkwartier (museum quarter) along the cultural axis. At the moment, the Westersingel is beautiful up to the Kruisplein. After that, all you can see is trams, buses and cars. In the master plan, the link with the station is perfected (op. cit.:4).

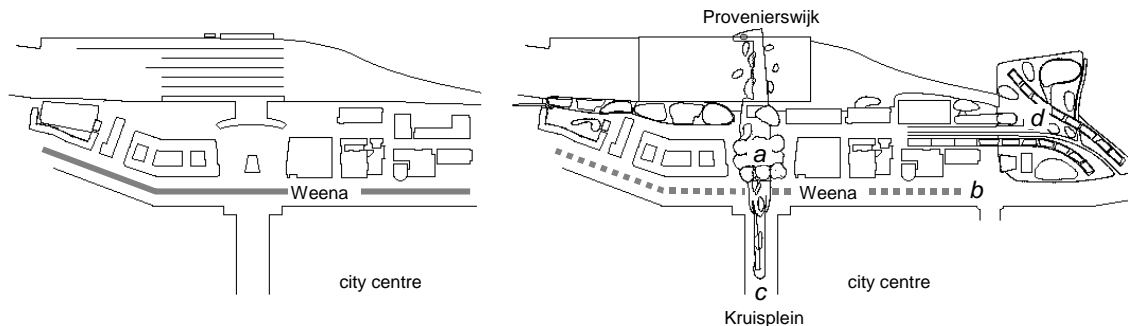
A major objective of the Masterplan was therefore to improve the relation of the station area with the inner city and to restore the coherence of the area. This was achieved by several measures with respect to transport as well as architecture (Figure 5). A first point of attention is the railway, which is a barrier between the areas north and south of the station. At present these are connected rather unsatisfactorily by a bicycle tunnel and the station tunnel itself. Alsop proposes to construct a balcony, a bridge over the station, connecting both sides of the railway. At the same time, this bridge provides a location for some of the urban entertainment, presumably shops. This will concentrate south of the station, the side of the inner city. This remains the most important entrance to the station; it is expected that in 2025 102 thousand people will leave or enter the station on this side, against only 11 thousand for the north entrance (PTRC, 2003:12).

Second, measures were proposed to reduce the barriers effect of the Weena. The balcony contributes to this too, as it extends to the Kruisplein south of the Weena, as a skywalk to the station. Other elements of the plan focus on transforming the Weena itself into a more pedestrian-friendly boulevard, by shifting the focus from car to pedestrian traffic. This entails reducing the number of car lanes to two in each direction (instead of three) and increasing the pedestrian area to two times its present size. Near the station, the tram lines should be brought underground, leading to a newly developed tram station underneath the station; elsewhere in the area trams remain at street level.

Fragmentation of the Hofplein area should be reduced by an intensive building programme (including a theatre), partly build above the railway tracks. The champagne glasses finally, the symbol and eventually the stumbling block of the project, were included as a statement, to illustrate the flexibility of the plan and the potential of the location. Furthermore, they emphasized the importance of a clear visual identity of the station,

making it recognizable among the high-rise buildings surrounding it (Kooijman and Wigmans, 2003:9).

*Figure 5: To the left, the present situation with the Weena as an effective barrier between the railway station and the city centre. To the right, the main measures proposed in the Masterplan to improve the spatial relation between the station and the city centre: a) a more clear positioning of the station by means of a landmark building; b) reduction of the barrier effect of the Weena by transforming it a more pedestrian-friendly boulevard; c) the balcony connecting the Kruisplein south of the station, the station itself, and the Provenierswijk north of it. The current fragmentation of the Hofplein area is reduced by building above the existing rail tracks (d). Comparison of the maps also reveals the increased density.*



#### 4.4 After the Masterplan: an address at the Weena

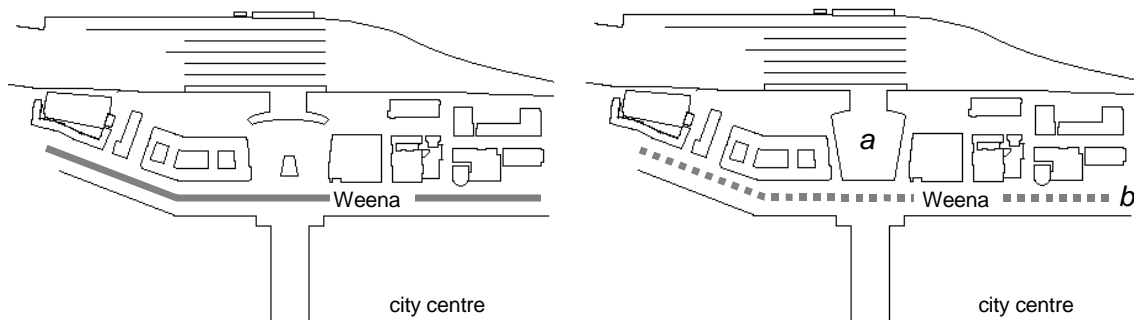
Shortly after the presentation of the Masterplan both private investors left the cooperation for economic and legal reasons not directly related to the plan itself. Meanwhile opposition increased. While the planned real estate programme and the conceptual design seemed appropriate for a project intended to be of international standing, the plan is considered by many too expensive and too extravagant for Rotterdam. Those same elements that distinguished the project were the main objects of criticism – especially the champagne glasses, in fact not essential to the plan (Kooijman and Wigmans, 2003:9). The Masterplan was finally abandoned when local elections caused a political landslide, bringing into power the *Leefbaar Rotterdam* party, strongly opposed to the ‘megalomaniac’ project. Although this is generally regarded as the deathblow of the Masterplan, in fact the elections seem to have suddenly exposed a lengthy, gradual process. In the city council support for the project now eroded quickly; a less ambitious plan was needed.

In 2003 the region of Rotterdam, the NS and the ministries of transport and spatial planning formulated a new programme of requirements (Kooijman and Wigmans, 2003:10). Recently, a combination of Benthem Crouwel, Meyer and Van Schooten and West 8 Landscape Architects has been appointed to design the new station. The new project will be cheaper, and smaller. The current project area does not include the Hofplein area, which was a part of the Masterplan and the redevelopment of which was, according to Alsop, one of its main advantages (Alsop, in: PBRC, 2001:4). However, the problems with respect to the structure of the station area have not disappeared, although the previous discussions may have made them even more obvious. Moreover, the implementation of the high-speed railway and a new light rail system, scheduled for 2007 and 2010 respectively (V&W, 2004), has increased the pressure on the planning of the station itself, as well as the logistic problems during the construction. It was also the main reason of the involvement, after all, of the national government in the project.

Gradually, engineers and politicians came to appreciate many aspects of Alsop’s design. Many of the calculations and concepts behind the Masterplan, such as the unravelling of

traffic flows, are therefore maintained as a basis for the new plan (Kooijman and Wigmans, 2003:10). Accordingly, the solutions that will be chosen may be not too different from the measures proposed in the Masterplan, although the specific architectural approach is still unknown in this stage of the planning process. Nonetheless, some significant changes and new ideas are noticeable already in the preliminary outline that is to be the starting point for a new design (PTRC, 2003). So far the approach is twofold (Figure 6).

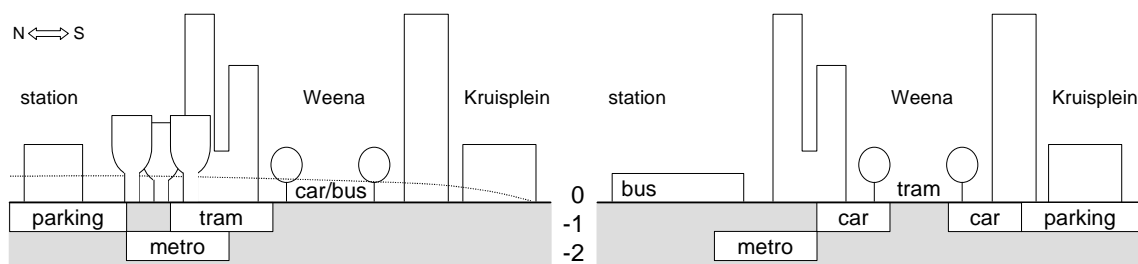
Figure 6: To the left, the present situation with the Weena as a barrier between the railway station and the city centre. To the right, the main measures to improve the spatial relation between the station and the city centre as proposed in the preliminary design made after the Masterplan: a) a more clear positioning of the station by means of an enlargement of the building, giving it 'an address at the Weena'; b) reduction of the barrier effect of the Weena by transforming it a more pedestrian-friendly boulevard.



The desire to improve the relation between the station and the inner city is most explicitly stated as the intention to give the station 'an address at the Weena'. The present station square will be included in the new railway station, extending it to the building line of the Weena. This would improve the visibility of the station and at the same time enable a considerable expansion of the station hall. This does not imply that a whole new railway station will be build; in fact it has decided that a new building will be erected in front of the existing station, which will be maintained except for its curved wings.

The proposal to transform the Weena into a more pedestrian-friendly boulevard will be maintained. However, while in the Masterplan it was proposed to maintain car traffic at ground level and bringing trams underground in a tunnel, this will probable be reversed in the plans now in study, as a mixture between trams and pedestrian traffic is considered less problematic than a mixture between cars and pedestrians (Figure 7). Consequently, it has been decided to maintain the tram lines at the street level and to construct a road tunnel of two times two lanes in the area near the station. Elsewhere the road is maintained at ground level, but the number of car lanes is reduced and the size of pedestrian space is increased.

Figure 7: The situation of car lanes, tram and metro/light rail tracks and the bus station in the Masterplan (left) and the preliminary design made after the Masterplan has been abolished (right).



## 5 Lille

Like Rotterdam, Lille had an industrial economy, based mainly on textile and clothing manufacturing and mining (rather than a seaport and petrochemical industry). In the nineteenth and twentieth century the city became one of the most important French provincial cities, but as a border town the development of its centre was for a long time restricted by a ring of fortifications. Its railway station, the present Lille Flandres station, was situated at the very edge of the inner city. A Haussmann-style boulevard was constructed to connect the station to the centre. Nevertheless, the station area was characterized by a diverse mix of functions, but a low overall value, being fragmented and cut off from other parts of the town by many infrastructural barriers (Bertolini and Spit, 1998:72; Tiry, 1999).

Since the 1970s the traditional industry of Lille has declined, however, and although it has been partly replaced by new manufacturing activities, Lille had to find ways to develop itself into a service economy. In this situation the high-speed train – the TGV to Paris and the Eurostar to London, Brussels, Amsterdam and Cologne (Figure 1, p.4) – served as a catalyst to economic developments that were already in place (Bertolini and Spit, 1998:68). In first instance, the TGV was not yet considered an important factor in urban development. Being the first of its kind, the station was initially planned several kilometres outside the inner city, in accordance to the general policy of the SNCF at the time (Duthilleul, in: Koolhaas et al., 1996:86-87); then, as an underground station in a railway tunnel. Finally, it was decided to use the new Lille Europe station as a development base for a cluster of high-valued service industries, commerce and leisure, which should improve the economic position of the city as a whole. The focus would be international, to prevent the city of becoming a ‘suburban-metropolis’ of Paris (Cuñat, 2001a:23). The complex would be built on a relatively inexpensive site that had remained vacant for military reasons (Spaans, 2002:206). Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas was selected to design a masterplan for the area, as his ideas were based on a vision on the city, rather than just the station area (Bertolini and Spit, 1998:75). During the development process, the project to a large extent depended on two men in particular, Koolhaas and Pierre Mauroy, the mayor of Lille, whose support seems to have been decisive for its success.

What is generally called Euralille mainly consists of a) the ‘Cité des Affaires’: Lille Europe station with the WTC and Credit Lyonnais office towers above it, b) the Euralille centre between the two stations with offices, housing, a 31,000m<sup>2</sup> shopping mall and a diversity of leisure, catering, cultural and educational amenities, and c) the Grand Palais congress and exhibition centre (Figure 8). This actually entails the main part of stage one of the project. Due to a crisis in the real estate development sector at the time of completion in the mid 1990s, a small part of the plan has not been completed (Bertolini, 2000:469).

The embeddedness of the station and the project area in the city has been a main source of concern in the planning of Euralille. In order to emphasize the relation between the railway and the city, the visibility of the train became one of the prime concepts in the design. Thus, the high-speed trains are shown as in a glass box – the 400m long ‘TGV-window’ – instead of being hidden behind a ‘stone wall’, to express the relation between the railway and the city (Duthilleul, in: Koolhaas et al., 1996:86-87; Tiry, 1999). Yet, apart from this visual element it appears that the embeddedness of Euralille in the city is one of the project’s less successful aspects; moreover, the station itself would have been less of a barrier when located underground, as initially proposed. The area around Euralille is rather fragmented due to the barrier effect of the two railways within the area, as well as the N351 beltway (Boulevard Pasteur) and several large artery roads.

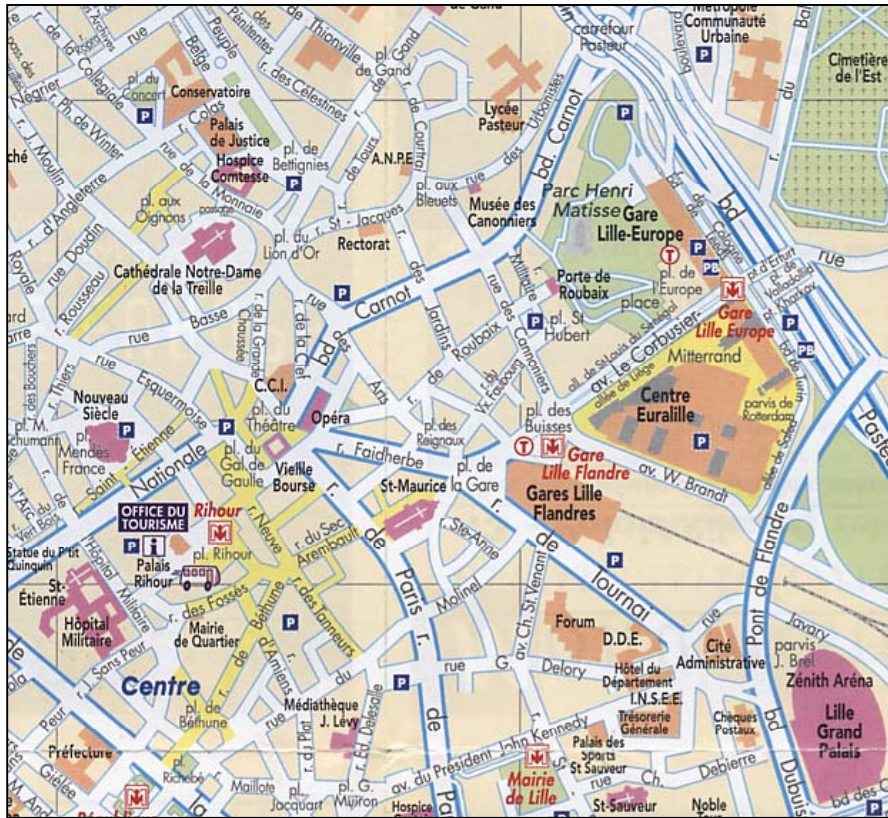


Figure 8: Situation of Euralille (to the right) relative to the historical inner city (to the left). The difference in the size of building blocks and the concentration of infrastructure in the Euralille area are visible (Office du Tourisme de Lille, 2001-2002).

Despite the intention to improve the connection between the inner city and the neighbourhoods east of it by means of the Le Corbusier fly-over, these areas remain largely separated by the beltway and, indeed, by the station itself. Likewise, the Grand Palais is separated from the rest of the project area by the Boulevard Dubuisson and the railway to the Lille Flandres station; it has been considered, therefore, to move the beltway eastward. Due to the large amount of infrastructure and the large size of individual buildings (or the lack of ‘small blocks’), the area as a whole is rather inaccessible to pedestrians (cf. Louvet, 2000:2). Furthermore, most shopping activity is inside the Centre Commerciale, leaving the streets as a transport facility, rather than as a part of public space.

As a whole, the effect of Euralille has been positive. Processes of revitalisation and economic transformation had already started when the project was initiated. Euralille was inspired by these processes, and subsequently reinforced them. The project has a large symbolic value, and contributed very much to the improvement of the image of Lille, as well as to the city’s transformation from an industrial to a service economy. Although inner city retailers had feared competition from the shopping mall in Euralille, the areas proved to be supplementary rather than competing; Euralille has actually strengthened the position of Lille as a city for shopping, attracting additional visitors to the inner city (cf. Bertolini and Spit, 1998:84; Pol, 2002; Spaans, 2002:223). The position of the inner city itself within the urban area has been strengthened (Cuñat, 2001b:24). It has been upgraded, showing the city’s regained confidence, and is increasingly able to attract tourist.

In terms of the quality of place of Lille, the contribution of Euralille is definitely positive. Apart from the international connections provided by the high-speed train, the project increased the general level of amenities and the amount of employment in high-values services. Moreover, the existing inner city benefited from this in particular. While the area around Euralille itself seems to be too much dominated by infrastructure, the project contributed very much to the improvement of the vitality, diversity and atmosphere of the inner city, and thereby to the improvement of the quality of place of the city as a whole.

## 6 Conclusion

The recognition of the role of knowledge exchange in urban economies has brought about a renewed focus of research and policy on sources of urban wealth that were important already long before the industrial era diverted attention to other location factors (cf. Hohenberg and Lees, 1995; Le Goff, 1997; Hall, 1998; Le Galès, 2002:38). Evidence is growing that there is a certain, but as yet somewhat intangible relation between these abstract economic principles and specific characteristics of the day-to-day urban environment. The term quality of place was coined for this, extensive but not easy to fully comprehend. Nonetheless, some elements of quality of place are related to the built environment. In this respect it is important to turn the undesirable tendency of homogenization within the project area and differentiation between the project area and neighbouring districts into the opposite: a more diverse area, integrated in the city. While this division in internal and external relations suggests a contrast, it seems that the main difference is the scale involved, not only of the project itself, but also of separate objects within the area. Apart from that, many of the processes involved, and the possible measures to influence them, are rather similar. In both cases it is important to stimulate diversity, to encourage the development of an open urban structure and to bridge barriers, in order to facilitate easy connections within and between different parts of the city.

In view of the above, this paper focused in particular on the way the embeddedness in the city of two large HST-related development projects: Rotterdam Centraal and, as a comparison, Euralille. These projects have much in common. Both are located in cities that suffered from the decline of old industries and had to find ways to develop a local service economy. In both cities the introduction of a high-speed train induced an extensive urban development programme, which served as a catalyst, reinforcing the economic transformation process already in place. The objectives of both projects are rather similar: the development of a cluster of mixed business, commercial, leisure and residential functions adjacent to the inner city, that would attract high-value service employment, increasing the quality of the inner city itself and, in general, mobilizing public and private parties to invest in a range of projects to develop to local economy. In Lille these aims have been achieved to a large extent, making Euralille an important source of inspiration for Rotterdam and other cities.

However, there are significant differences between Lille and Rotterdam. Euralille started in a virtually vacant area, which enabled a scale that would have been hardly possible in Rotterdam, where the project had to fit into the existing city. Most important however, Euralille was actually built in the 1990s, while the Masterplan of Rotterdam CS – in scale and approach more like Euralille than the plans that are currently being developed will be – has been sent back to the drawing board. Many reasons could be stated for this, which would be somewhat beside the focus of this paper. The Euralille project seems to have been driven very much by the support of just two men, mayor Pierre Mauroy and architect Rem Koolhaas, while this was less obvious in Rotterdam. Opposition there appears to have been larger right from the start of the project, only to increase even further during the planning process.

The embeddedness of the project in the city, and the connection of neighbourhoods now separated by infrastructural barriers, is one of the main concerns in the Rotterdam CS project. It was a main point of attention in Euralille too, but nevertheless exactly this aspect of the project has been widely criticized. Large-scale infrastructure fragments the area and separates it from other parts of the city, including the inner city. While it is true that Rotterdam CS may be easier to integrate in the city due to its location, it is obvious that in particular the railway and the Weena are main barriers here too. Bridging these was one of the

focus points of the Masterplan. In view of the experiences of Euralille it has to be seen whether the current plan will be able to provide a durable solution for this.

Finally, there is the more general question to what extent quality of place can actually be planned, especially with respect to the aspects that are not directly related to the built environment and may need time to develop. While it may be impossible to plan quality of place, it may be possible to plan *for* quality of place, creating favourable conditions for quality of place to develop. In view of the abstract, sometimes unpredictable aspects of quality of place, this even may well imply a less detailed planning, aimed at creating opportunities for the accidental to happen.

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