

## Kenniskwartier (NL) - An Unexpected Neighbor

### Context

The urban conglomerate of Tilburg and surrounding cities is unique for its high variety in businesses, houses and landscapes. This patchwork is connected locally and internally by an extensive infrastructure of roads, train tracks, river and distribution pipes.

According to research by Peter Savelberg, the region does not have a huge company or factory. However it does consist of a high variety of smaller and medium sized companies. When these businesses work together easily, innovation is stimulated in the region and contributes to a sustainable ecosystem. For example a company which is experienced in robotics will benefit if it has a nearby network of companies to implement and test their inventions.

Tilburg is entangled in a strong economic region. Originally being grown by the factories in the city, the people have a hands-on mentality. Nowadays a significant number of people in Tilburg work in the industrial and retail sector. Tilburg is a well-functioning city but to keep up with the future it will be important to stimulate innovative businesses to create jobs for the inhabitants and also make the city more sustainable.

The project site itself is an exemplary fragment of the aforementioned constellation we find in the larger region. It is situated between a small business area, suburban neighborhood, a park, sport fields and a major infrastructure of roads, train tracks and bicycles paths. The location is characterized by a series of parallel 'lines' constructed by the park and water, the bicycle highway, vegetation strokes, the train tracks, and neighboring postwar housing. The condition that the lines are traversed only incidentally affects an apparent disregard that arises between various groups of people. For example, the university students and the local residents along the tracks rarely meet each other.

We conclude that different groups live in close proximity, but have little to no interaction because they do not share the same facilities. Thus paradoxically enough, the infrastructure that connects on a larger scale simultaneously constructs borders on a local

level. Our aim is to introduce an intervention that is both responsive to these large scale regional developments, as it is sensitive to the site specific conditions.



*Dutch "Olifantenpadjes" (informal pathways) on site, that break through the vegetation, suggest a level of inaccessibility between existing structures.*

### Concept

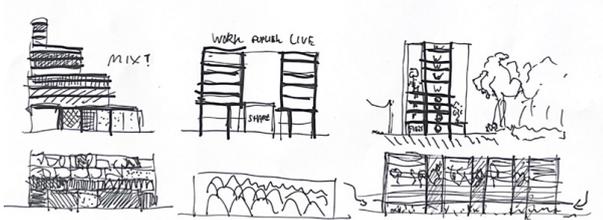
The intervention introduces a concept that combines the contextual challenges with a multipurpose program. The program entails 20.000 square meters of equally divided working, living, and learning spaces. The important part of the program is learning. Tilburg has a "knowledge-axis" comprising mostly educational institutions. Our project fosters lifelong learning for everyone and therefore we propose to make the building as public as possible. Learning happens when interacting with other people and experiencing new things.



*Pieter Bruegel de Oude, de Tower of Babel (1563)*

## Kenniskwartier (NL) - An Unexpected Neighbor

Our aim for this multifunctional building is to transcend the cliché of creating separate boxes to live, work and learn. Instead, we propose to weave them together to maximize interaction. On one floor, we position alternately living, working, and public spaces which creates a checkerboard when stacked. This allows for one to live next to an office, whilst having a workshop next to a family apartment. In this building, the neighbor is unexpected.



*Concept sketches made by the design team (2023)*

### Organization

The load-bearing structure organizes the building. The structure dimensions are specifically chosen for its flexibility and adaptability. It can host a large variety of activities. When uses and demands change, the building adapts: the structure will be filled in differently.

The routing is organized through two axes in the ground floor leading to the cores. These cores string together the program vertically. On the southside a gallery, spanning the entire width of the building, connects horizontally. All hallways and entrances function both as a vector of circulation and a place to meet. When the users go home or to work, they will pass workshops, offices, public spaces and housing units. This is where one meets their unexpected neighbor. Besides connecting, the gallery also functions as a wintergarten and a sound barrier from the train tracks.

The building tapers towards the top. The depth of the building drastically reduces. In this way the building naturally offers different working and living areas serving the different needs of the users. Activities that require more space or less light are located lower and above are the smaller and brighter spaces. On the inclined northside each living unit has a balcony with sunlight reaching over the building and view to the park.

### Interaction

The building is organized in three stratified zones: the three lower floors, three middle floors, and four top floors.

The lower floors are the larger public spaces and are open to its surroundings. The ground floor has glazing all around. The floors above are carried by only a few pedestals and long trusses to ensure maximum permeability. The ground floor has a public swimming pool, restaurant and cafe, bike storage and bike repairstore, lecture room and two entrance lobbies. Above are working and learning spaces with a view into the pool. On the second floor is a parking garage, both for the public and tenants. This floor will be transformed in the near future when shared self-driving cars take over.

The middle floors and top floors are for living and working spaces. These spaces are woven with a large grain in the middle and a small grain at the top. Larger communities live together in the middle floors, like students, artists or multiple families. Middle-sized offices and workshops are to be found here too. People meet each other in multiple public areas, like a climbing wall and lecture room.

On the top floors smaller units are located. Hosting more individual housing for families, couples and individuals, some have an adjacent working unit. Smaller workshops, ateliers and offices are dedicated for working. The many public areas create opportunities to lecture and exhibit the current developments inside the building, but also to play a game of squash with the neighbors. As a cherry on the pie, the current kitchen gardens are carefully relocated to the roof of the structure.

### Implementation

The project is destined to be an enabler for the area in West Tilburg. Through its openness, program mix and interaction, the area will develop further. The basis for a mixed city is already there and we think the existing qualities in the neighborhood can be strengthened to create sustainable activities for an economically strong city. For example, the structure might stimulate the potential of the adjacent small business district to become more dense and become an attractive space

## Kenniskwartier (NL) - An Unexpected Neighbor

for innovative companies. The houses in the area can be upgraded to become more energy efficient and nature inclusive. We see sports as an essential program in the area to foster connection between different groups of people. We keep the park as a vital element in the area and with the densification of the station area the neighborhood can become more attractive and contribute to the housing demand.

Our proposed concept for this location connects with these ingredients and can thus give a new impulse to the neighborhood, city and region.

“An Unexpected Neighbor” aims to present interaction as an essential part of life.



*Conceptual collage, by the design team (2023)*



*An Unexpected Neighbor (2023)*