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Spatial opportunities of exhibition centers: Explaining path-dependencies in Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Munich and Milan

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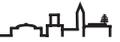
CHAPTER 3

Exhibition Center Development in Western Europe: A Multidimensional Historical Analysis

Abstract¹

All over Europe conference and exhibition centres are being renovated and extended. The aim of this paper is to propose a framework to analyse these developments. It does so from a historical institutionalist perspective and by employing path dependency arguments. However, after an analysis of past and present of exhibition centres in Europe, it is found that this theory contains some omissions which make them less suitable for the analysis of such large scale urban projects. To correct these omissions, a multidimensional view to path dependency, consisting of four different dimensions is proposed. This framework looks at path dependency within and between the dimensions of form, function, spatial embeddedness and institutional setting. It is argued that corresponding developments in all four dimensions lead to path dependent development, while divergence from this correspondence in one of these dimensions leads to a critical juncture. From this analytical framework a typology of exhibition centre development is derived.

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3.1 Introduction

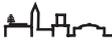
Notwithstanding the current economic downturn, conference and exhibition centers all over Europe are being renovated and extended. Even though similar pressures of an internationalizing and changing market seem to underlie those developments, their final physical form and relation to the wider metropolitan region differs much. While some centers choose to renovate their facilities and remain close to the traditional city center, others choose large-scale outlays at the urban fringe. This differentiation is especially remarkable since large European exhibition centers show similar development patterns from their foundation in the early 1920s up till the 1990s. Analysis accounting for these differences is needed.

This research is proposing a framework to analyze such developments properly. Since physical outcomes differ between locations, it is expected that recent developments are not merely caused by the pressures that globalization puts on these facilities. Local context is deemed very important and expected to mediate these global forces into location specific outcomes. In order to examine this interplay between the global and the local not only the form and function of the facility are looked at but also its embeddedness within the broader regional economic, touristic, urban and infrastructure system. Moreover the influence of the local institutional setting is examined.

The paper will start with a short overview of past and current developments in the European exhibition sector. Thereafter, an historical institutionalist perspective on these developments will be proposed. However, close analysis of one of its central concepts, path dependency, will require some adaptations to the current state of theory. Without discarding its central conceptions, a multidimensional view on path dependent development will be proposed. This alteration will then lead to a typology of exhibition center development.

The European exhibition industry

Exhibition facilities throughout Europe show a remarkably similar pattern. Starting from the middle ages, many centrally located cities such as Lyon, Leipzig and Frankfurt held annual fairs in which European merchants came together (Allix, 1922; Munro, 2000). During the nineteenth century many cities constructed civic palaces such as the Crystal Palace in London, the Glaspalast in Munich and the Paleis voor Volksvljht in Amsterdam to showcase early industrial products as well as civic culture. This continent-broad focus gradually disappeared at the beginning of the twentieth century. Fairs shifted to the display of nationally produced goods for a national market. Everywhere in big cities in Europe, groups of merchants and producers allied themselves in the organization of trade fairs and exhibitions, sometimes resulting in privately ex-



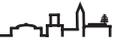
plotted exhibition centers. Around the beginning of the 1920s such facilities sprouted all over Europe from Frankfurt (1919) to Vienna (1921), Utrecht (1921), Amsterdam (1922) and Milan (1923).

As regional economies grew, so did their exhibition venues as many square meters were added to these facilities in the succeeding decades. The Second World War formed, however, a breaking point in this prosperity as economic growth turned into a decline and some centers, especially in central Europe (Vienna and parts of Milan and Frankfurt), were destroyed during warfare.

When economy prospered in the post-war years, the value of exhibition centers was again realized, resulting in rebuilt and extended facilities. Sometimes, the limited space for extension and spreading out of the city necessitated a new location. In Frankfurt a new facility opened in 1948, followed by Vienna in 1950, Milan in 1951, Utrecht in 1956 and Amsterdam in 1961. All such exhibition centers were larger than the previous buildings, preparing the cities for a new period of economic growth. This growth continued throughout the following decades resulting in the addition of square meters and in many cases also in the addition of conference space. The construction of conference facilities was necessary due to an increasing diversification of functions which took place at the premises of exhibition centers. Conferences were the most important of these new functions but also manifestations, parties and sports events were held.

What is remarkable about these rather similar stories from different European perspectives is the fact that they largely operated in a national context. Their main events were local or national in nature so mutual influence by competition was rather limited. Nevertheless, their histories are quite alike. This changed in the beginning of the 1990s when the exhibition business was still growing but markets opened and became continental and even global in nature.

Partially, this globalization was an autonomous process. Facilitated by developments in information and communication technologies (ICT) and the transportation sector, international linkages, both physical and virtual, were much easier made. A growing number of firms started multinational operations, national governments increased international co-operation and scientific and non-governmental organizations expanded their global networks (Sassen, 1991; Castells, 1996). This trend was reflected in the number of international conferences and expositions (Rogers, 2008; ICCA, 2007). Meanwhile, cities realized that in an international world they would have to compete to become or remain economically viable (Leitner, 1990; Begg, 1999; Savitch and Kantor, 2003). In this competition, many cities chose to put high stakes on their tourism infrastructure resulting in large investments in assets like museums and sports



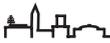
stadiums (Judd & Fainstein, 1999; Jones, 2002; De Hoog and Vermeulen, 2009), but also exhibition and convention centers (Rogers, 2008). At the beginning of the 1990s, Madrid was one of the first cities to construct a new exhibition center, a venue that has subsequently been extended. Cities like Munich (1998), Vienna (2004) and Milan (2005) followed this example. In other cities like Amsterdam and Frankfurt, facilities were frequently updated and extended over the past two decades.

This profound internationalization of the sector not only led to a new round of renovation and construction, but also to a broadening of the economic scope of the sector. These functional changes will be elaborated on first before we can turn to the question of how to analyze these developments.

A growing market

The conference and exhibition sector has recently received a lot of attention from both the scientific as well as the political world. This is largely related to a huge boom in the construction of such facilities. Different research and lobby organizations paint the picture of a largely expanding market. The UFI, The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry calculated on the basis of planned extensions of exhibition centers that their members would increase their capacity with 13 per cent between 2006 and 2010 (Wallace, 2007). Research by Tradeshow Week estimated in 2005 that by 2007 the number of exhibition locations in the US and Canada would have been increased with 68 per cent since 1986, while the supply of square meters almost doubled during the same period (Detlefsen, 2005). Meanwhile, this supply in construction has been complemented by an increase in demand. Tradeshow Week estimated that the number of exhibitions in the US and Canada increased 45 per cent between 1989 and 2004 (Detlefsen, 2005). In Europe, the European Major Exhibition Centers Association (EMECA) saw in 2006 a rise of 9 per cent in visitors and 14 per cent in exhibiting companies in relation to the previous year. The International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA, 2007) witnessed an increase from 3,713 international conferences in the world in 1997 to 5,838 in 2006.

These dramatic developments are not only instigated by the industry itself. Also city administrations have realized the potential of conferences and exhibitions in economic regeneration and branding of their cities (see Ploeger, 2004; Gonzalez, 2009). Broadly conceived as the most profitable niche in tourism, business tourists are a sought after group by municipal strategies (Hiller, 1995; Rubalcaba and Cuadrado, 1995; Cuadrado and Rubalcaba, 1998). Business travelers are generally staying in nicer hotels, spent more on food and enjoy higher forms of culture in a more civilized way than do normal 'leisure' tourists. Moreover, they are complementary to traditional tourists because meetings, expositions and conferences tend to be held during the work-week



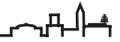
and are less common when the holiday season is at its peak within the summer months (Lawson, 1982; Fenich and Hashimoto, 2004). Thereby, business tourists are using the tourist infrastructure at normally less busy times. Little surprise, cities have also developed extensive programs to facilitate their meetings, incentives, conferences and expositions (MICE) sector. Combinations of convention bureaus, marketing campaigns (Chacko and Fenich 2000; Bradley et al. 2002), market specialization (Rubalcaba and Cuadrado, 1995; Cuadrado and Rubalcaba, 1998), and new modern facilities (Fenich, 1992; Eisinger, 2000), have to attract conventions and conventioners to the city. Policy programs to stimulate hotel construction are underway in several cities to supply the convention industry with suitable accommodation for the night.

Current situation in Europe

Hence, an industry with a much broader reach than before is emerging and growing around conferences and exhibitions. At the heart of this industry is a constant construction and renewal of conference and exhibition centers. This has not been without physical consequences. Cities like Milan, Vienna, Madrid and Munich have constructed new facilities and cities such as Frankfurt and Amsterdam have witnessed successive rounds of extension of their exhibition facilities.

What is remarkable about this new round of construction is that the development is in terms of physical form far less homogenous than the rounds of construction after the two world wars. Whereas facilities in the 1920s and their successors in the 1950s and 1960s were unanimously focusing on exhibition space for local merchants and were located just outside the city core, current developments paint a mixed picture. First, there are cities that have redeveloped their old structures. For example, the 1956 build CNIT at La Défense exhibition center in Paris was redeveloped into a conference-dominated facility with shops and offices in 1989. A similar development took place with the redevelopment of the Frankfurter Messe which has been used as the incubator for the development of a large-scale business district and broader economic boosterism to the city (Ploeger, 2004; Scholl, 2005). These developments have been linked to commercial development within the city and have taken place at a relatively small distance from the historic, cultural and touristic center. In Vienna a new facility has been built not too distant from its historical inner city.

On the other end of the spectrum are the developments in cities like Madrid, Munich and Milan. These cities have abandoned their original sites and moved out of the city and are now located in the center-airport corridor, usually fed by fast and convenient infrastructure connections. These cities have responded to a globalizing sector by leaving the city and a move into the direction of international hubs.



This leads to a paradoxical situation. In a world where exhibition facilities were operating in distinct national markets, and therefore under less mutual influence, they showed similar physical and geographical behavior. Now they are operating in an integrated market they seem to diverge in their choices for location. This observation is counterintuitive to traditional theories about the effects of globalization which predict a convergence of worldwide developments (Graham, 1998; Cairncross, 1997). Instead of convergence, the exhibition sector shows a divergent development. This seems in line with the arguments made by critics of the convergence thesis who argue that local specifics cause local outcomes (Savitch & Kantor, 2003; Morgan, 2004). Moreover, since divergence started in the exhibition sector from a rather similar starting situation in the beginning of the 1990s, this sector seems to underline the thesis that local specifics are not only producing local outcomes but are used to profile places in an international competitive battle.

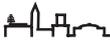
This research will propose an analytical framework to account for these differences in behavior. It will start from two central assumptions introduced above. First, it is understood that all large facilities in European metropolises are affected by the processes of globalization in the conference and exhibition sector (Rogers, 2003; Gonzalez, 2009). The second assumption is a divergence in terms of physical location in current exhibition center development in Europe.

3.2 Towards a theoretical frame

A historical perspective

The mediating effects of local context are thus deemed important in explaining why exhibition centers choose a particular development direction. Because the centers under investigation have a long history as part of the urban economy and as a function in urban space, it is expected that this urban context can only be pinpointed by looking at how history has shaped this local context. Moreover, before actual physical change comes to a facility, processes which led to such change have been present for a while. Such processes need to be taken into account in the explanation for the physical move. Thus, a historical perspective is chosen to account for local differences.

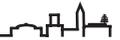
Explanations founded in history have recently gained in popularity in the social sciences. In economics, historical analyses have been popular to explain the existence of divergent and economically suboptimal outcomes on the basis of historical processes which are unfolding rather pragmatically (David, 1985). In sociology, historical institutionalism has been geared towards the explanation of the stability of institu-



tions (Hall and Taylor, 1996; Thelen, 1999; Gorges, 2001; Dormois et al., 2005), but increasingly also to the explanation of institutional change (Thelen, 2003; Capoccia and Kelemen, 2007). In political science, historical analysis provides an account of how actions taken earlier in political processes have a disproportionate effect in later phases (Pierson, 2000; Mahoney, 2001a; 2001b). In economic geography, historical analysis is generally regarded as the most promising way to account for regional differences (Boschma and Lambooy, 1999; Bathelt and Boggs, 2003; Simmie and Carpenter, 2008; Belussi and Sedita, 2009).

In all of these accounts, path dependency plays a key role in describing the processes of historical distraction in which early events had a disproportionate influence on later actions. The metaphor of a path is used to show how, once a particular trajectory is chosen, this leads into a particular direction. The more one descends along the road, the harder it becomes to turn around and choose a different trajectory. Although different fields of study emphasize different mechanisms causing historical continuities (Mahoney, 2000), they all point to the concept of increasing returns for an explanation of how a particular development that has been started in the past was able to produce sufficient externalities to be sustained over time. Positive externalities spill over into new activities that sustain and reinforce the path chosen (Pierson, 2000). This positive connotation can be juxtaposed by the concept of lock-in which describes a situation where, in retrospect, another development path appears to be more beneficial, but where mechanisms like sunk-costs and routine make it impossible to leave the less prosperous path (David, 1985; Mahoney and Snyder, 1999; Mahoney, 2000). Lock-in can be argued to be the central concept in traditional historical analyses, mainly aimed at the explanation of statism and continuity in society.

However, more recently some accounts have tried to combine path dependent analyses with changes in development patterns (Thelen, 1999; Gorges, 2001; Hogan, 2006; Capoccia and Kelemen, 2007). These scholars argue that path dependent processes are interrupted by moments of drastic change in which internal and external shocks cause rupture. Such moments are, in path dependency theory, referred to as critical junctures. These critical junctures are basically the moments when path dependent development is exchanged for a new trajectory and thus situations of lock-in are broken through: the crossroads in development. It is argued that at such crossroads, agents are capable of escaping the structural bias increasing returns put on them. Hence, apart from introducing change in an originally very static theory, the concept of critical junctures adds the dimension of agents into an originally very structural theory.



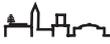
Flaws in path dependency theory

At first sight such a body of theory seems to pose opportunities for the analysis of development trajectories of large scale exhibition facilities. Starting out at the beginning of the twentieth century, their story of continued enlargement can be seen as a path dependent process. The initial choice to locate an exhibition hall at a particular place started a process of constant extension. Because of economies of scale, the addition of new halls to already existing ones was more beneficial than placing those new halls elsewhere. Moreover, this enlargement attracted larger events which in turn grew and asked for even larger facilities. On the organizational level, hosting large scale exhibitions provided the facilities with in-depth knowledge of the preferences of such events which caused a considerable competitive advantage. A jump towards a new location or realignment of functions could from this perspective be seen as a critical juncture.

However, three difficulties arise when path dependency theories are unilaterally applied to development of exhibition centers.

First, many path dependent accounts start their analysis from a situation they want to explain. They, for example, take the current economic position of a region (Simmie and Carpenter, 2008; Simmie et al., 2008), the predominance of a technology (David, 1985; Araujo and Harrison, 2002), or a dominant set of institutions (Thelen, 1999; Dormois et al., 2005), as their object of analysis. As a consequence, they focus on the events that brought about this result. Although this might lead to a valuable account of why things are as they are, it renders an incomplete picture of the developmental process at large. As Scheinberg (2007) has argued, most developments are not as unidirectional as many path dependent analyses would have us to believe. Alternative routes that have not been taken might leave their imprint on economic and institutional configurations. In later moments in time (that is, after the situation path dependent analysts tried to explain), these deviating bits and pieces might be picked up and reused again to start different trajectories. Just like the past carries the seeds for continuity, it also carries the seeds of change. Aspects that might work counter to the path dependent trajectory can be easily overlooked as they have no explanatory value for the situation that has to be explained. Therefore, processes that might have a considerable influence on future developments and that are already slumbering might be overlooked. This explains in part why many path dependent accounts are good at explaining continuity but have problems in explaining change. A focus on lock-in might have lock-in effects on the research itself.

A focus on the lock-in of exhibition center development might leave important, but not determining factors of the development process unanalyzed. Moreover, since the science of urban planning is essentially forward looking, an exclusive focus on the



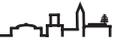
past for explaining the present might fall short in producing statements about future states.

Second, as elaborated on before, path dependency is used in many fields of social science. However, almost all of these path dependent accounts have a mono-dimensional view on development. They either look from an economic, technological, political or institutional perspective, but fail to integrate those dimensions. Partially, this is due to the fact that although they use similar concepts like path dependency, lock-in and critical junctures, the mechanisms accounting for these phenomena are different. Where lock-in in economic studies is mainly explained by reluctance towards disinvestment and a lack of developed alternatives, institutional theory refers to power explanations and routine. Where David's (1985) traditional study on increasing returns in technological dissemination focused mainly on the self-reinforcing processes leading to one technology being dominant, sequences in many political studies are based on reactive mechanisms in which one actor reacts to an earlier event (Mahoney, 2000). Although such difference in conceptual toolkits might make different path dependent accounts incompatible, the current strict separation between domains can be criticized. In the social world, events in different domains affect each other. A change in the economy of a region might affect the institutional setting as well as the political domain. Comprehensive analyses make sure linkages between different domains can be revealed.

As should have become clear from the preceding description of the European exhibition market, this market entails more than just the physical development of facilities. The development of a center is determined by a complex cocktail of the functions it fulfills in local, national and international economies and is largely dependent on accessibility and broader development in its host city. Explanations for the development of exhibition centers should therefore be looked at from different perspectives.

Third, the distinction between continuity and change is not as sharp in practice as it is presented in theory. Institutional thought has nuanced the sharp distinction between situations of lock-in and critical junctures by elaborating on more subtle mechanisms of change. For example, existing institutions can be complemented by new institutions, altering the effect they have in practice. During such institutional layering there is a situation of continuity that holds change within. Also institutional drift and conversion hold middle ground between pure statism and drastic change (for an elaborate account see Thelen, 2003). In economics, this notion of 'gradual change' has also been picked up to allow for more nuance in path dependent developments (Boas, 2007; Martin, 2010).

What we see from this debate is that what can be called a critical juncture by some can be a small incremental change for others. Moreover, when different perspectives are



taken into account for an explanation, a radical change in one area does not have to be followed by change in the other. When a facility succeeds in expanding its share of scientific conferences at the expense of business meetings, this can be a critical juncture in functional terms, while in physical terms nothing is changed. Therefore, many intermediate forms of change might exist in which the situation is in part a continuation of previous practices, but in part also changes dramatically.

A multidimensional analysis

It is felt that these omissions can be corrected by anchoring multidimensionality in path dependent accounts. First, it will be explained how this can be achieved. Second, this renewed model will be applied to the analysis of exhibition center development in Europe. This will eventually lead to a typology of such developments.

From the preceding, it might be clear that a single perspective on development trajectories might leave developments on other aspects unnoticed. It has been argued that, for example, institutional, technological and economic developments are in social reality often interrelated and that analyses in different domains can therefore be complementary. Therefore, this paper proposes to combine different domains within the analysis. The nature of these domains should be determined by the situation one wants to account for. This should be derived from an analysis of this situation such as the one made at the beginning of this paper on the European exhibition sector. For example, this analysis should have made clear that a singular focus on the physical form of such facilities leaves unidentified the changes in the functional domain.

It is thus very well possible that while one domain reflects a path dependent process, the other domain shows signs of incremental change or even finds itself at a critical juncture. Moreover, one domain can have a profound influence in the development of another. Geertz (1966) has neatly described the development of the Javanese agricultural industry. As the system is able to increase the returns of the land by adding labor force, this development looks as a perfect example of a situation of lock-in. However, by comparing this situation to the Japanese case, Geertz shows that the development of agricultural machinery has indeed put the Javanese economy as a whole to a critical juncture. Because the Japanese were able to incorporate this machinery in their daily operations, and the Javanese were not, the Japanese learned in an early phase to use machines which provided them later with the opportunity to develop into an industrial powerhouse. This case shows how the domain of agricultural operations showed path dependent development, while the technological domain changed drastically.

This chain of change throughout different dimensions is also found in economic geography. In an analysis of the functional economic development of the Silicon Valley



and Boston regions, Kenny and Von Burg (1999) found that developments in the institutional domain preceded developments in functional economic terms. Thereby, a multidimensional account is able to identify not only continuity and change within one dimension, it also accounts for factors causing continuity and change between different domains.

Second, this approach nuances this same distinction between continuity and change. It is argued that while path dependency prevails in one dimension, another dimension can find itself at a critical juncture. This critical juncture can then produce reasons for future change in other domains. As such it is possible to 'see the direction change is coming from' instead of conceptualizing critical junctures as abrupt shocks.

Although some recent accounts have broken with the structural tradition of path dependency (Mahoney, 2000; Capoccia and Kelemen, 2007), it is necessary to underline the importance of agency once more in relation to this multidimensional view on path dependent development. Underlying conceptions of lock-in and increasing returns is a very structural view which leaves little room for agency to escape the implications of their surroundings. Change is conceptualized as something rare, drastic and abrupt. In other words, the space of maneuver for actors to act within these impinging forces is limited. By incorporating, different domains in the analysis, and acknowledging the linkages between these domains it becomes possible for actors to act within one domain to change the structure of the other. Moreover, the nuanced analysis leaves room for incorporating the influence of alternative paths in the analysis, leaving those up for grabs for actors to be used strategically. Hence, the use of a more comprehensive analysis in which there is room for multiple dimensions and structures are not unidirectional, increases largely the space of maneuver for strategic actors. Moreover, the nuanced view on continuity and change opens the analysis for small and incremental changes to the development trajectory caused by individual behavior. Thereby, such an analysis leaves more room for the incorporation of agency in historical development trajectories than traditional path dependent analyses.

Now the contours for a multidimensional path dependent analysis have been sketched, a framework for the analysis of exhibition facility development will be developed. Although empirical research on development trajectories remains work for the future, the development of such a framework already leads to an interesting typology of exhibition center development trajectories. However, the main aim of this exercise is to show the advantages of a multidimensional path dependent analysis for broader urban development analysis.



Towards a typology of exhibition center development

From the preceding analysis of the exhibition sector, at least four dimensions emerge as of crucial importance for such an endeavor. These dimensions are not new to urban analysts and, for the most part, are also not novel to path dependency analyses. What is progressive is the way in which their mutual influences throughout historical processes are combined to provide us with a path dependent analysis of urban development.

First, there is of course the physical form which consists of the actual buildings as well as its interior. Since it is on this dimension that exhibition centers were found to diverge in the European situation, this is an obvious aspect to take into account. Moreover, physical form is central in many theories of the city (for example Lynch, 1960; see Jacobs, 1961, pp. 3–25; Hall, 1988 for an overview of seminal works).

Second, there are the functions this facility performs. This dimension is determined by the nature of the events that are held. It has been elaborated on before how the function of exhibition centers has gone through a period of profound internationalization. Together with other functional shifts this might have affected exhibition centers considerably. The functional dimension has been central in many traditional path dependent analyses of urban and regional economic development (see Kloosterman & Lambregts, 2007; Simmie & Carpenter, 2008; Simmie et al., 2008), but has been rather isolated as an explanatory variable.

Traditionally, the two dimensions of form and function and their mutual effects have been central in many classical analyses of urban form (for example Jacobs, 1961; Lynch, 1981). Therefore, the inclusion of those two dimensions can be deemed ‘classical’ and not very surprising. Third, however, the relations of an exhibition center with its surroundings are incorporated. ‘Spatial embeddedness’ is the term chosen to pinpoint this complex system of dependencies. This entails functional relations with the economic and touristic system of the region as well as its relation to other amenities and infrastructure. It is the relation specific events have with regional economies (Rubalcaba and Cuadrado, 1995; Cuadrado and Rubalcaba, 1998), as well as with local hotels and other tourist amenities that are expressed as crucial by many in the business. Synergy between traditionally separated aspects of the tourist sector is becoming of increasing importance (Fayos-Sola et al., 1994).

Fourth and finally, what can be done in terms of development in these three dimensions is very much determined by the organizational and institutional setting in which the facility operates. This is dependent on the objectives and resources of the board of the facility itself, but also on the objectives of different layers of government, interest

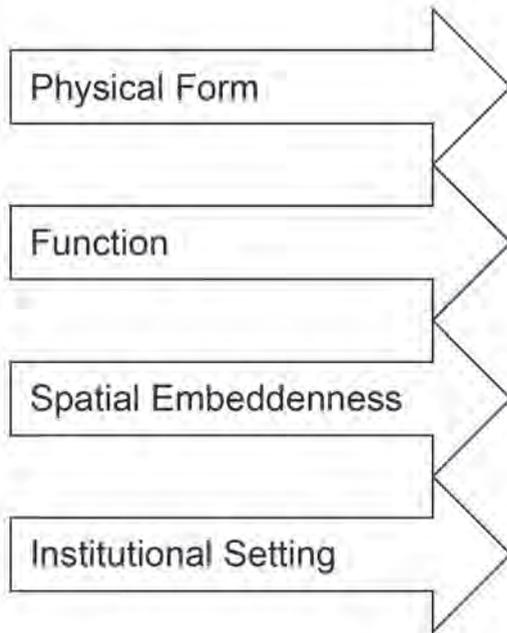
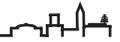


Figure 3.1: Multidimensional analytical frame for trade fair development

groups, lobby associations, developers and residents as well as formal and informal rules and modes of conduct. Although institutional analysis is central in many path dependent accounts (Thelen, 1999; Dormois et al., 2005), the effect of institutional development on other domains of analysis remains rare.

It is argued that those four dimensions can either be in line with each other or be conflicting. Path dependent development takes place when the four dimensions mutually reinforce each other. They ally in a powerful coalition, which is directing the facility as a whole to one or the other direction. This kind of development can be argued to be path dependent and harmonious (see Figure 3.1).

When those four dimensions operate for similar purposes, they reinforce and stimulate each other through mechanisms of increasing returns. Notwithstanding their direction, there is a fit between form, function, spatial embeddedness and institutional setting. Because of complementarities, such situations are likely to produce periods of growth for the facility. However, as explained before, sometimes such development might lead to a situation of lock-in in which the return of these complementarities is relatively diminishing. Therefore, based on path dependency assumptions, periods in which development is unharmonious will sometimes be needed to ensure a breakthrough out of old patterns and gains in the future. Innovation rarely comes out of harmony.



Traditional centers pretty much fitted this type of a harmonious coalition of dimensions when they were mainly focused at the hosting of large national exhibitions. The facilities consisted of large halls, were led by private or public organizations that were founded to host such events, were attached to large industrial sectors in the city and were located along nodes of national infrastructure to secure accessibility for their target groups. New developments such as the construction of new infrastructure or a new hall, or the foundation of a new exhibition were only reinforcing this development path.

In opposite ways, a diversion of one of these dimensions, away from this coalition, can be seen as a threat to this path dependent development. When all of a sudden international events are replacing national events, this could spark all sorts of new developments in other domains. Spatial links will have to be made with internationally oriented infrastructure. City government might think of the exhibition center as a way to internationally promote themselves and install an authority to attract such events, thereby changing the institutional setting. Moreover, this might ask for the incorporation of international standards in the facility (e.g. English directions, international kitchen, etc.).

In such a situation, some dimensions might turn out to have been locked-in and difficult to change. Physically, no room for extension might be present when functional developments ask for additional facilities. Institutionally, actors might be resistant to change or, conversely, advocate new developments that are not linked to trends in other dimensions. In such situations a quick return to a harmonious situation between dimensions facing an altered development path will be problematic. In this way, the theoretical model incorporates both change as well as resistance to change.

This perspective will help correct the omissions in traditional path dependent theory. It is preferable over normal path dependent analysis for its ability to identify path dependent mechanisms between different dimensions of development. In this way, a focus on future developments beyond the analyzed situation is possible. Developments in dimensions that are not directly causing path dependency can be analyzed as well and can be taken into account in forecasts and policy directions. Moreover, it will allow us to get beyond the black-and-white distinction between path dependence and critical junctures and focus more on which aspects change and why.

If this multidimensional analysis is applied to exhibition center development in Europe, five types of facilities can be distinguished.

The harmonious facility – This is the facility where all four dimensions fit to the same development pattern. They sustain and mutually strengthen each other. New develop-

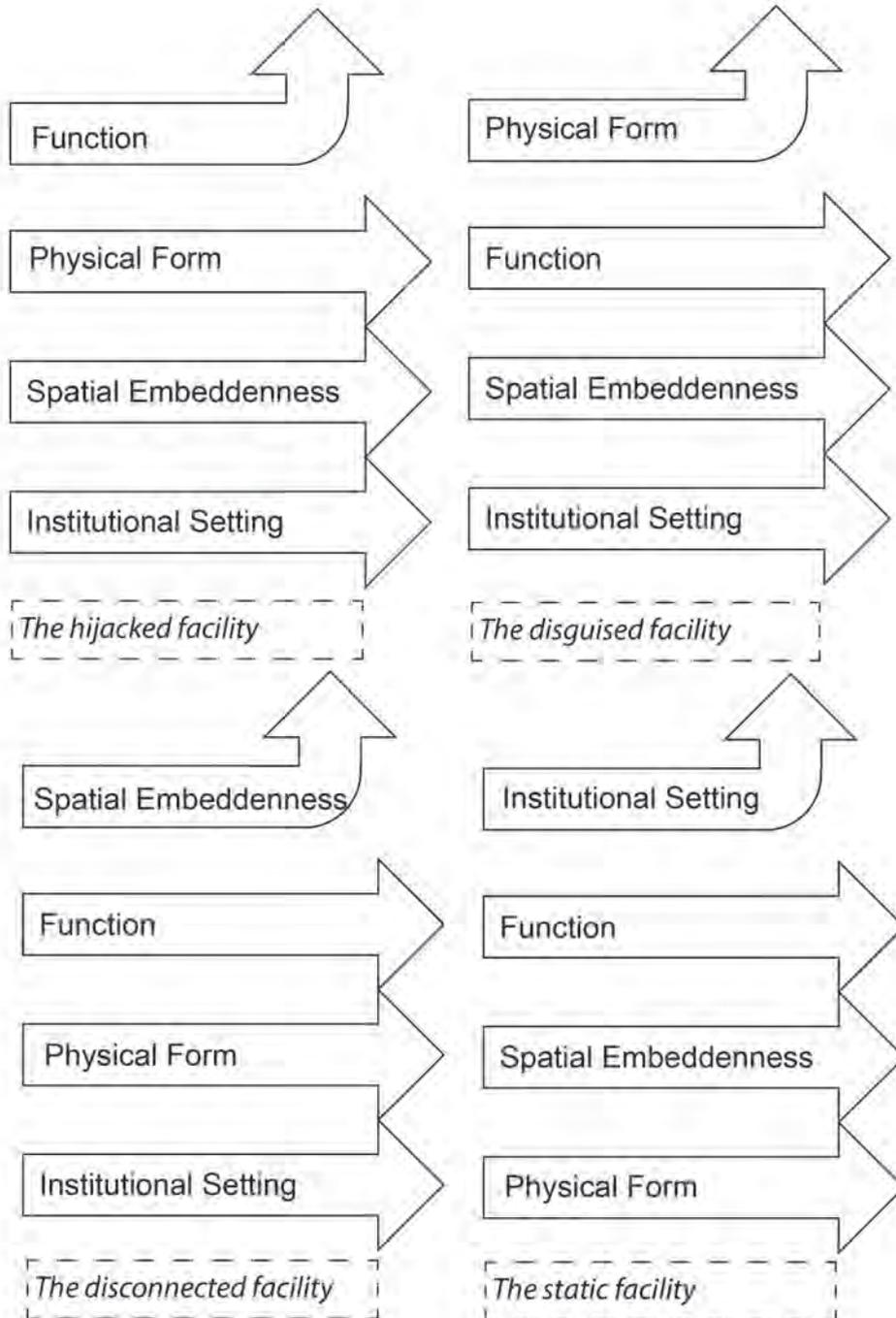
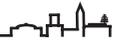


Figure 3.2: Schemes of divergent exhibition center development



ments are geared towards an even stronger enforcement of this development path.

The hijacked facility – In this facility, the function does not fit the spatial embeddedness, institutional setting and physical form of the facility. Such a situation could emerge when functional change comes unexpectedly over a facility but no arrangements are made to facilitate this. The number of international events can, for example, increase at the expense of national events even when institutions still operate nationally, connections with international hubs are not well established and the facility is still geared to host national visitors.

The disguised facility – This facility has a physical form that does not fit its spatial embeddedness, institutions and function. This is possible in old facilities that have not made the necessary investments to keep up with changes over time. Conversely, this is also possible in new facilities that have not been able to meet the objectives that have been set for them in the planning phase.

The disconnected facility – A disconnected facility is unsuccessful in terms of integration with its surroundings. Such facilities fit the critique of ‘white elephants’ or ‘cathedrals in the desert’ for which many large urban investments are blamed. Interaction with surrounding functions and the broader urban economic system is lacking. Such facilities might also suffer from bad accessibility.

The static facility – Sometimes ambitious plans are made to improve the business of exhibition centres. A powerful coalition unites itself over ambitious plans and sets out to change the course of action. However, this does not automatically mean that form, function and spatial embeddedness are changed. Other domains might be locked-in particular path dependent trajectories which are, even in an institutionally supportive environment, hard to change.

Although ideal typical, these five types of facilities can provide a typology for the nature of change in exhibition facilities as well as account for why change produced the institutional, spatial, physical and functional outcomes it did. On the other hand, it could also show which domains resisted to change. In practice, the separation between domains might be less artificial and developments can start in more than one domain at the same time. Cases in which two dimensions change and the others do not can be imagined as well. Moreover, even within one domain of analysis, some aspects might run counter to other developments. While the development of additional hotel space in a city might be supportive of an internationalization of the function of an exhibition center, the decline in the number of flights at the city’s airport might be opposing this functional direction. A sound analysis should provide for such discrepancies.

3.3 Conclusion

During the last two decades, exhibition centers in Europe have tried to adapt themselves to an internationalizing market. They have done so in different ways. This paper has proposed a way to analyze such divergent developments in a way that pays attention to local and historical influences. Although theories of path dependence offer a fruitful starting point, they confront us at the same time with some omissions. These have been corrected by advocating a multidimensional view on exhibition center development incorporating form, function, institutional setting and spatial embeddedness. This multidimensional analysis is able to not only identify the mechanisms of path dependency within one dimension but also between them. In this way, policy directions can be better identified and the sharp distinction between path dependency and critical junctures can be nuanced. This also enables for a stronger position of agency in path dependent analyses. These propositions have showed us that it is at times difficult to label a development purely as path dependent or locked-in or change as critical or drastic.

Increasing returns and lock-in are mechanisms which are both common in social reality but are not mutually exclusive. When processes are analyzed both in terms of increasing returns and lock-in mechanisms, this can be of great value. Similarly, we should not look too exclusively for either path dependent development or critical junctures. In almost every development there are aspects that remain constant and aspects that change, especially when multiple aspects of this development are looked at. Employing increasing returns and lock-in mechanisms used in different fields of the social sciences could account for these aspects of continuity and change.

Such a view could lead to a typology as presented in Figure 3.2. The following chapters will examine to which of these models exhibition center development in Europe fits best. However, it is more important to understand the dynamics between the different dimensions in such developments.