Photo: Factoria Joven de Mérida, Spain ➢ **Credit**: Iwan Baan

Youth Innovation

How local economic development in New Zealand can be encouraged through the promotion of youth innovation and an analysis of facilities and programmes used to achieve this in European and American contexts.

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Travel to parts of Europe and the United States of America - May-June 2017

Report submitted: January 2018

Acknowledgements

A number of community leaders have inspired my interest in this topic and the projects that frame this paper. You are all giants, upon whose shoulders I am eternally grateful to be able to stand. To those volunteers, elected members, passionate community workers and friends; thank you for your selfless leadership, unquenchable passion, and enduring commitment to a brighter future. Thank you.

To Sonia, Gary, Dianne, Ian, the team at Shore Junction and the Yes Disability Resource Centre Foundation, and the many people who have supported the North Shore Youth Innovation Centre Project over the past eight years, thank you for your endless enthusiasm for this project.

To Anne-Marie, Chris, Maureen, Eric, Haley, Zella and the team at Auckland Council. It's easy to find ways to say 'no'. Thank you for finding a way to 'yes'.

To Dr Rebecca Gill and the Grow North team. Thank you for reframing this conversation.

To those project and facility managers who have assisted me with understanding the important work they do, the challenges they have overcome in running their projects, and their tireless service to their respective communities, thank you.

To my family who inspired my continuing interest in this topic and have supported me, thank you for the inspiration, love, and support. My desire to see every young person provided with the chance to find and follow their inspiration over new horizons and innovate their futures comes from experiencing it first at home. Thank you.

To the Sir Winston Churchill Memorial Trust board and staff. This has changed everything!

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Introduction

Every challenge can be framed as an opportunity.

In recent years New Zealand and many other developed nations have been reassessing the adequacy of their policies and programmes targeting youth unemployment, school-to-work transitions and vocational training within the new and changing global economy. The language no longer seems to simply focus on those who are unable or unprepared for employment, as traditional youth unemployment statistics have recorded, but those who are disengaged with the workforce; the y-NEETs (youth not in Employment, Education or Training). This ever so catchy term translates to about 67,000 New Zealand youth (almost half aged between 20-24)[1] and is used to refer to those falling through the cracks in our public education system or failing to find their place in the workforce.

While New Zealand's y-NEET rate comparative to the other developed nations is above average (13.3% compared with an OECD average of 14.5%)[2] there are more concerning longitudinal trends that have been observed in relation to our youth.

Overall, New Zealand has underinvested in, and failed to adequately support, our young people for some time now. The OECD noted in 2009 that the average investment per capita by the state in our youth aged 14-17 was less than half of the average across the 30 developed nation states included in their study since 2003.[3] The report also added a new dimension to many otherwise positive statistical ratings such as the educational achievement of New Zealand

[1] (Pacheco & van der Westhuizen, 2016)
[2] Youth not in employment, education or training (NB: for the purposes of this measure 'youth' is termed as those aged 15-29) as reported in the OECD (2016), Society at a Glance, Figure 1.5.
[3] Cumulative public spending per child in New Zealand (NB: for this measure the age range assessed was those aged 0-17 and does not include changes made in recent years to the early childhood education budgets) as reported in the OEDC (2009), Doing Better for Children.

youth. The report highlighted that New Zealand youth had the fourth highest educational achievement in the OECD, but unlike the three countries ahead of New Zealand by this measure, we had a more significant gap between those achieving well and those who were falling short.

In that same report, the OCED drew attention to perhaps New Zealand's most disturbing statistic, the one which acts as the loudest call to action for our community, being our youth suicide rate. At the time of that report, New Zealand's youth suicide rate was more than double the OECD average, and at the time I undertook my fellowship travels this rate had been confirmed as the highest rate in the developed world.

The publication of the aforementioned OECD report on the need to do better for children and youth coincided with the beginning of my interest in the topic of this Fellowship report. At that time, whilst coming to the end of my secondary education, I discovered within myself a passion for youth development and a focus on finding community responses to declining youth socio-economic conditions. Then, as now, I was all too aware that while I was afforded the opportunity to thrive within the New Zealand schooling system, there were significantly more intelligent and capable youth than myself who were already disengaged with education and training for lack of adequate opportunities to innovate, create and engage with subject matter outside the traditional syllabus.

Schools were too limited in their resourcing and remit to adequately respond to the changing demands of innovation skills formation. Coordination between non-government organisations, vocational and trades academies, and tertiary education providers looking to fill the gaps within the school system was limited and their interface with the youth who were becoming disenfranchised targeted only the high-risk individuals. This left a wide risk profile and

significant cohort slipping through the cracks. While some of those who slip through are resilient enough to develop the skills necessary to thrive in the innovation economy with limited assistance, there remains an enormous opportunity to build an environment which fosters a culture of creative innovative expression and skills development to meaningfully reengage the y-NEETs.

Executive Summary

- All eight case studies in this report have elements that are worthy of attempting to replicate. No one model is perfectly translocatable to the New Zealand context.
- While the intangible elements of a centre dedicated to promoting youth innovation such as the courses, programmes and digital infrastructure are of significant importance, there remains a need for adaptable and responsive physical infrastructure to provide a base of operations.
- Achieving the right mix of uses within a centre which allows for continuous activity, an appropriate blend of formalised and unstructured usage, and passive management, working spaces and operational offices is a delicate balancing act. Near full utilisation is optimal but has not been achieved by any of the centres that were visited for this report.
- Informal and unplanned collaboration and the ability to learn, share ideas and discuss openly in a nurturing yet relaxed environment seems to be the most effective technique for engaging youth in the innovation development process.

Premise

In undertaking the travel detailed in this report I anticipated the following outcomes:

1. to discover successful examples of co-lead development and design of youth centres which might assist with the creation of an exemplar facility in New Zealand;
2. to understand the positive social and economic impacts that flow from investment in youth innovation; and
3. personally, to broaden my horizons, improve my outlook, and advance my understanding of different cultural approaches to issues faced by youth in different cities and communities.

Context

This paper and the thought journey it details covers a wide range of complex issues which hold significantly varied meanings to many potential readers. While it is never desirous to limit the scope of such a broad and important issue as youth pathways to employment and the changing role of the innovation and technology sectors into the future, there lies within the New Zealand context a unique gap which has become the key focus of this report.

At the outset, it is important to bring together the many and varied components of the broad focus of this report. The New Zealand government defines youth as those aged between 12 and 24 years of age.[4] This bracket is dominated by the millennial and post-millennial generations and is explored in greater detail in the background section below.

The term 'innovation' reflects a wide array of concepts and ideas which may also cause confusion across a wide audience. I am reminded of the quizzical expression shot in my direction by a former colleague, a Baby Boomer, at the end of a day where we were debating whether or not to repurpose an old community building as the North Shore Youth Innovation

[4] (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2002)

Centre. Seemingly appalled at the use of the word, she asked me to explain 'what on earth is innovation?' For the purposes of this report 'innovation' means 'disruptive innovation' which is the transformation of a market or sector through the introduction of systems and technologies that make them more efficient, convenient, accessible and available.[5]

Local economic development includes pure economic such as unemployment, as well as social entrepreneurial and extra-economic factors such as productivity, job satisfaction and fulfilment. Local here means sub-regionally although there is no specific land mass or population to refer to. In considering the New Zealand local context I have used the locality of Auckland's North Shore for this paper. The North Shore is a heavily urbanised area covering roughly 130km^2 and a population as at the 2013 census of roughly 240,000 people of which approximately 20% are aged between 10 and 24 years of age. The Shore hosts 122 schools, two university campuses and over 40,000 businesses.[6]

A recent strategy developed for the North Shore with a focus on growing the local economy promotes the importance of creating an 'effective innovation ecosystem' which creates greater wealth, allows for shared prosperity, and contributes in multiple ways to quality of life in the region.[7] Included in the Grow North report are a list of key advantages for the North Shore which includes the emergence of innovation campuses, the proximity to tertiary institutions and well-performing secondary schools, a generally well educated and economically stable population, and a desirable lifestyle. Chief amongst the challenges facing the establishment of what the report terms a 'Smart Innovation District' on the North Shore though is a 'skills gap between education and industry'.

[5] As explored and explained by Professor Clayton Christensen in the Harvard Business Review (Christensen & Bower, 1995)
[6] (Gill, et al., 2016) at appendix F.
[7] (Gill, et al., 2016) at page 5.

Background

The millennial generation are the first generation of 'digital natives' to experience what Marc Prensky famously dubbed the 'singularity' caused by rapid dissemination of digital technology in the last decades.[8] The disruption heralded by these technologies has fundamentally changed the way we think and process information and whilst broadening horizons and increasing the rapidity at which they can be reached, there is the risk that opportunities may be missed through lack of willingness to embrace them or capacity to respond to them.

Digital natives have witnessed and adopted a culture of disruptive innovation to the point where it is a common part of their modern vernacular. The ability to reach across geopolitical divides and engage in a globalised marketplace, to spread and share ideas in an international forum or mobilise and engage locally, and to ride the wave of exponential technological development are opportunities available for the first time to this generation.

There is a celebrated kiwi culture of disruptive innovation summarised in the severely overused analogy of 'Number-Eight-Wire-Thinking' which suggests that innovative expression has become part of our national identity. That said, the solitary concept of heading down to the shed and fixing or inventing almost anything with a piece of fencing wire is a concept worth translating into the modern technological era. To do so requires some re-imagining and probably a bigger and better equipped shed than what you might find down on the farm.

Through this tortured metaphor I am referring to a modern centre for fostering youth innovation that can be a place to test boundaries, create, design, make mistakes and learn. While New Zealand has a select few high-quality youth centres that engage with youth at different stages

[8] (Prensky, 2001).

and with particular interests, the offering of a youth focused centre of innovation has not yet been created in this corner of the South-Pacific. This is about to change.

In November 2016, the Yes Disability Resource Centre Trust, a charity with over 10 years' experience working with youth and running a highly utilised community centre on Auckland's North Shore, took on a 30-year community lease of a vacant former Returned Services Association building. Since then their goal has been to raise the capital and design and renovate the centre into a state-of-the-art centre for youth innovation called '**Shore Junction**'. The building will be collaboratively designed with a focus group of local youth and comes after eight years of significant political lobbying and numerous unsuccessful bids for various sites across the North Shore.

To help inform the design and operation of Shore Junction to the highest possible standard and to consider the various options available to the Trust I drew their attention to some overseas examples to consider.

Overseas selection criteria

When considering the best places to visit for my fellowship travels, I relied heavily on those centres that had received international acclaim for their design and creative expression. Fortunately, most of the centres contained in the case studies for this report have featured in international architecture periodicals and so have come to my attention over the past eight years. By virtue of comprehensive analyses and reports commissioned and published by both the European Union and the OECD in recent years, I was able to find a number of stand-out centres that operate from Europe which became the logical centre of my review and travels.

I looked for projects offering a wide range of facilities to enable meaningful comparisons. This included floorplan, budget, target audience, operational model and design.

There were a few limitations that were not adequately factored into this topic at the time of initial site selection and so a number of variations needed to be made, some with only minimal notification. One such limitation was communication barriers. I was fortunate in that while the centre operators I met spoke no less than five different languages, in most instances they also spoke English or we were able to arrange translation. Another limitation on my visits to many of the centres was that given the sensitivities of operating kindergartens and programmes working with younger children and heightened security around Europe at the time, I was especially limited at times to what parts of buildings I could visit and which programmes I could sit in on.

In addition to the European centres, I was presented with an opportunity later in my enquiries to visit San Francisco and see the global Twitter Headquarters and the Googleplex (Alphabet Incorporated's global headquarters, home of Google). I have included Twitter in the case studies below as it was a more comprehensive visit and presented more relevant outcomes.

Hardware

Given the focus of this research and the fellowship travels I undertook was on technology and the innovative skills it helps Millennials experience and develop, in looking at the centres that are the subject of this report I thought it would assist to use an appropriate technological metaphor. To create an effective and functional technological system there are two key components which must function well: the hardware; and the software. You can have the biggest, most expensive buildings with all the best gadgets, or 'Hardware' but they are essentially useless without the right kind of courses, programmes, facilitators and content i.e. the 'software'.

Below I provide a summary of each building and the key learnings I took from my visits to them. There really are components of each which make them incredibly inspiring places to visit. All of them have aspects worth replicating and details to avoid and learn from.

By way of general comment, I noticed one fundamental bottom line which some centre design and management teams did better than others. The use of a collaborative design process with a genuinely engaged and broad-based youth users group is essential. Failure to undertake effective engagement at the earliest possible stage and/or maintain a key stakeholder group throughout the life of the building was proving to be near fatal for some of the centres. Some of the architects commented on the difficulties associated with getting effective buy-in and clear visions from consulting designs with youth. At the same time many commented on how immensely rewarding the final product is when key design features are incorporated in and the final design receives the endorsement of the stakeholders.

Software

Many of the centres I visited had good management systems and diverse programmes. In a few instances these programmes were almost too diverse and the centres appeared to be trying to appeal to as many groups as possible. In doing so they appeared to be unable to serve their primary demographic.

Some specific key learnings are observed in respect of the centres below.

The overall theme that emerged is that while programmes need to be adaptable and accommodate a wide range of skills and interests, spreading the demographic focus too thin and allowing the programme scheduling to be dominated by any one group seemed to impact heavily on the vibrancy of the centres.

In addition to the projects that were operating out of each individual centre, I also visited the secretariat of Youth Bank International in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Youth Bank is a not-for-profit direct engagement youth funding organisation focused on youth supporting youth. Operating all around the world, funding boards consisting of youth manage local grant funds and receive applications from other youth who want to run a programme or event for the wider youth community. The model is also used for small scale sponsorship to developing nations in Africa (due to Europe's proximity).

A previous iteration of Youth Bank operated on the North Shore successfully for a number of years before their umbrella organisation, the YouthWorx Trust folded when they lost their contract grants after the amalgamation of the Auckland Super city. Despite the Shore Youth Bank folding, the Ministry of Youth Development (as it was known at the time) adopted the model and turned it into a nationwide $200,000 contestable grant fund for youth leadership, mentorship and volunteering activities. It is an effective model for promoting micro-grants, the empowerment of applicants and the funding board members and has a global network to share experience.

Youth Bank stood out to me for a number of key reasons as an essentially important component of any future youth innovation centre in New Zealand. The Youth Bank model currently demonstrates that through the granting of small sums to young people to help them make a difference in their community, a social return far greater than the financial sum used can be realised by the community whilst inspiring a sense of change in the young person leading the project.

Although I may be speculating too far, it occurred to me that if the Youth Bank model could be reintroduced in New Zealand and expanded to continue to have the granting function, as well as establishing a second arm which was a dedicated youth angel investment body, there

could be significant potential for youth entrepreneurship and expansion of existing youth business programmes such as the Young Enterprise Scheme. Other possibilities for a funding body of this nature would be limitless, but in terms of youth empowerment and game changing programmes, this was one of the best ones I saw through my fellowship travels.

Conclusion

My travels presented me with the opportunity to examine and observe eight innovative, world-leading youth centres around the world. This experience has informed my dreams for reproducing and enhancing the offerings here in New Zealand and, specifically Shore Junction. I have returned inspired and enthused and look forward to instigating these innovations in a centre which harmoniously combines the best of them all for the benefit of the youth of New Zealand.

1st Case Study | De Hood activiteitencentrum Osdorp | *The Social Condenser*

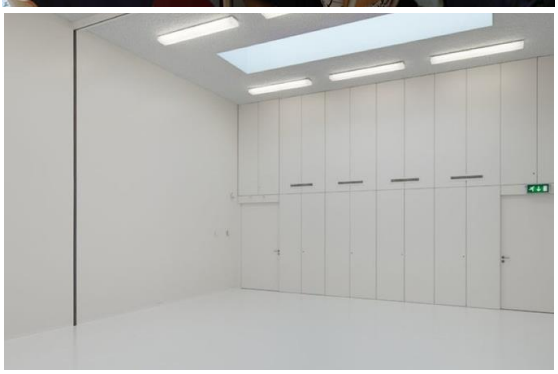


Photo Credit: Architektur-Fotografie Ulrich Schwarz via ArchDaily.com and De Hood Osdorp Facebook page.

Location	Reimerswaalstraat 101, 1069 Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Design	Creating a small 'public living room' themed youth centre nestled in amongst and opening out to the surrounding trees and public green. The modern interior design and minimalist Scandinavian construction leaves the space free to be altered as needs be.
Architects	Atelier Kempe Thill
Operators	Combiwel Jongeren
Budget	€ 550,000 (NZ$ 1,000,000*)
Year	2011
Area	285 m^2

*Conversions are approximation based on forex for the 31/12/11

Visit Summary

Fresh off the plane in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, the first visit of my fellowship travels was to the De Hood activiteitencentrum ‘De Hood’ in Osdorp, a neighbourhood in Amsterdam’s ‘New West’. As the smallest of the centres I visited and the least technological it was difficult to know what to expect. It was Summer when I visited so the centre did not open before midday during the week and kept running until either 9 or 10 pm depending on the night.

Opening out onto the surrounding paved square, with a surprising number of cars parked, De Hood acted as a staging area for the programmes running around it. Most of these programmes were traditional youth engagement activities; physical activities and team sports, neighbourhood meals, police discussions about community safety, and career counselling.

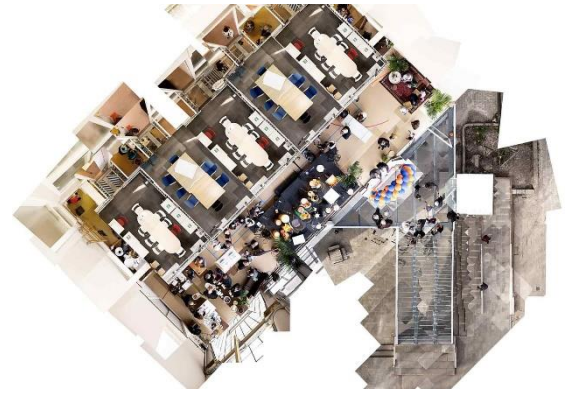
Combiwel Jongeren seem to have taken over running the programmes at De Hood since 2015. Its youth workers go out onto the streets and engage with the youth of the New West neighbourhoods, encouraging them to engage with programmes that align with their passions. Their results are individual to those youth who they have invested time and passion in but clearly through the strong network and vibrant centre they have built an important presence.

Key learnings

In the pursuit of a desire to be the most advanced or to provide the best innovative experience, many believe it is important to have the best, newest or most expensive technology. De Hood proves that adaptability is perhaps the most important characteristic of a centre that seeks to provide enduring interest to a young interest in rapidly changing times.

Economic development is often measured at a macro-level whether by neighbourhood, city, region or country, but sometimes the most accurate measure is what economic opportunities are taken up on an individual level.

2nd Case Study | Ru Paré Community Centre |
A Community of Collaboration



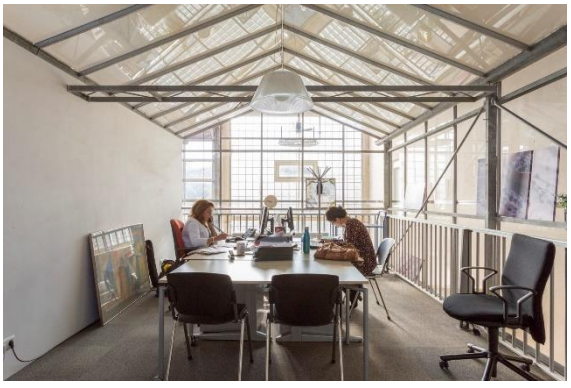


Photo Credit: Marc Faasse via ArchDaily.com.

Location	Chris Lebeaustraat 4, 1062 DC Amsterdam, Netherlands
Design	Converting a former school gymnasium and surrounding classrooms into a community space mixed with tech start-up offices. The entrance, bordered by community gardens, is through four large-openings into a loft-styled relaxed area. The open plan carries through the centre and influences the attitude of collaboration endemic in the centre.
Architects	Auguste van Oppen, Marc van Asseldonk, Marcello Soeleman, Evert Klinkenberg from BETA office and Elisabeth Boersma
Operators	Samenwonen-Samenleven
Budget	€ 600,000 (NZ$ 940,000*)
Year	2016
Area	3,000 m^2

*Conversions are approximation based on forex for the 31/12/16

Visit Summary

The Ru Paré Community Centre (‘**Ru Paré**’) was the second centre I visited during my fellowship travels and the most recently completed. Located less than an hour’s walk toward the centre of the city from De Hood, on the other side of the Sloterplas artificial lake, the Ru Paré building itself is understated, blending into the surrounding community. Having approached from the side of the building without the distinctive roller-door façade, I passed it a number of times before I realised it was there.

The expansive building hosts community programmes focused on maths, computer programming, language, reading and writing skills as well as social spaces and offices of start-ups. The project sought to turn around a school community, the ‘New West’, facing a number of social issues and reducing government fiscal austerity.

The community Foundation that led the refurbishment’s mission translates roughly to ‘helping where there is no help’. It turned Ru Paré into the neighbourhood’s living room equipped with arts and culture programmes, well-being and informal care such as counselling and budget support while also proving social economic stimulus to the neighbourhood.

Key learnings

The Re Paré has a reducing reliance on external funding as the start-up offices and cafe increasingly pay for the wider operations of the centre and inspired up-cycling ‘urban mining’ programme undertaken in partnership with the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences to source materials for the renovation from nearby demolition sites for the build.

Most remarkable is the social enterprise that was established for the build. KlusLAB work with young people to create a ‘springboard technical entrepreneurship’. KlusLAB undertook the renovations at Ru Paré and the surrounding neighbourhood providing apprenticeships for local youth; upskilling the local workforce whilst injecting much needed stimulus.

3rd Case Study | Sjakket Youth Club 'The Gang' |
An Agent for Change

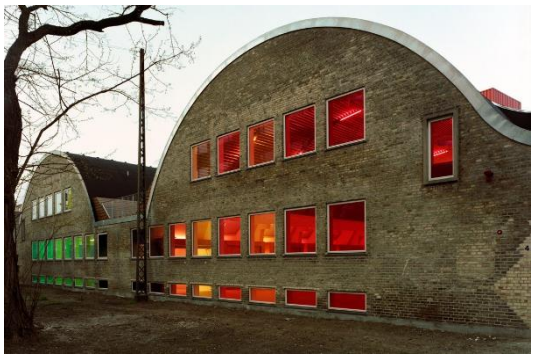


Photo Credit: Photos sourced from ArchDaily.com.

Location	Skaffervej 4, 2400 København NV, Denmark
Design	Conversion of dilapidated former warehouse buildings consisting of two large vaults with a shipping-container bridge between them with modular areas including a recording studio. The sundeck and latched on atrium provide uninterrupted natural light throughout the main buildings.
Architects	PLOT (a joint venture between Julien De Smedt Architects and Bjarke Ingels Group)
Operators	Sjakket Youth Club, Realdania
Budget	€ 3,880,000 (NZ$ 7,330,000*)
Year	2007
Area	2,000 m^2

*Conversions are approximation based on forex for the 31/12/07

Visit Summary

The concept of ‘youth clubs’ was something that for me had been lost in translation until my visit to the second stop of my travels in Copenhagen, Denmark. I had seen the term come up in reports and through plenty of online research but I struggled to grasp the construct. Not long after arriving at the centre, I realised that in many ways it had a similar atmosphere to a YMCA or Youthtown where large portions of the floor area are committed to sport and recreation.

This facility goes beyond most examples in New Zealand however by having recording studio rooms (called ‘Ghetto Noise’) for youth to access, computer suites and a second vault for performances providing for far broader utility and skills development. With each centre I visited I wandered around the surrounding neighbourhood to try and get an idea of the community and how the centres reflected them. Whilst providing a very limited insight, combined with demographic and government data it became more obvious that this outer lying neighbourhood of the city is a more deprived, largely industrial part of Copenhagen with a large immigrant population.

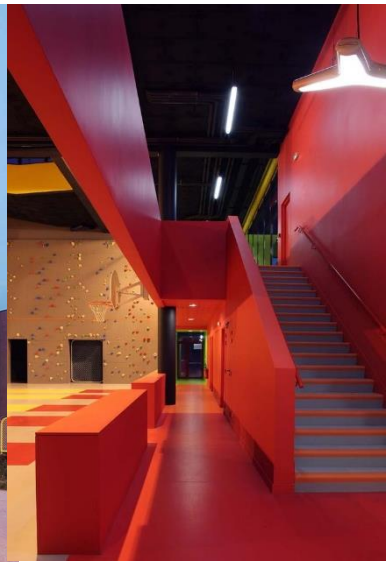
Many of the facilities in this youth club would not be readily available to the youth using them. Given the centre is a decade old it is in superb condition and still a distinctive building.

Key learnings

The creative expression spaces provided by the Ghetto Noise recording studios and computer suites of this centre are truly inspired and provide literally life-changing opportunities to a neighbourhood that would not otherwise have them.

Realdania is a fantastic operational model to replicate acting as a modern philanthropic change agent with a network of experts and professionals who act as conveners seeking to achieve collective community outcomes. The youth sector in New Zealand suffers a level of segmentation that this model provides an example to navigate through.

4th Case Study | Saint-Cloud Sport and Leisure Centre |
Activation through Recreation



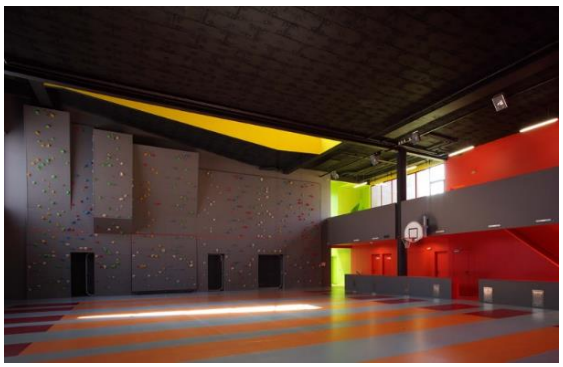


Photo Credit: Stephan Lucas via archdaily.com

Location	62 Avenue Bernard Palissy, 92210 Saint-Cloud, France
Design	A vibrant cubist building with natural light and abrupt edging the centre feels like being drawn into a post-modernist painting. The rooftop balcony adds another dimension to the centre which vibrantly stands out against the surrounding residential area.
Architects	Christophe Ouhayoun and Nicolas Ziesel from KOZ Architectes
Operators	Saint-Cloud Town Council
Budget	€ 3,800,000 (NZ$ 7,450,000*)
Year	2009
Area	1,600 m^2

*Conversions are approximation based on forex for the 31/12/09

Visit Summary

The half sport and recreation centre half kindergarten was, without fear of overstatement, the most surprising building to find in the palatial commune of Paris Saint-Cloud, France. The rainbow façade seamlessly integrates the two centres while keeping their operations entirely separate.

Play is the earliest form of learning and through providing areas in the centre that encouragechallenging play such as the rock climbing walls, initiates the skills that in later life manifest as innovation. The centre does not provide the technological tools that many of the others do but in part this may be due to the comparative affluence of the surrounding neighbourhood and likelihood that these may be available at home.

By integrating the two activities within the building but keeping them operationally separated and generally operating at different hours, the transition from early childhood through to pre-teen and early teen is accomplished effectively.

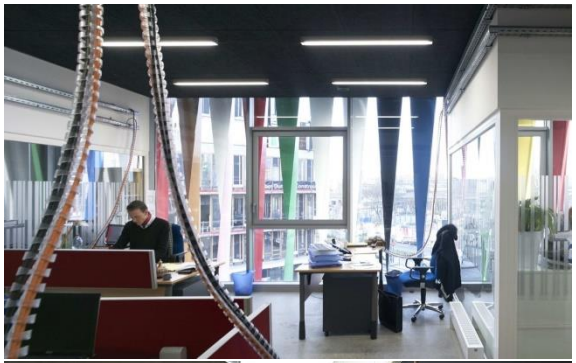
Key learnings

Use of light and vibrant colours to create a space that is inspirational.

Recreational facilities which push boundaries can encourage passive innovation skills development.

This was one of two centres I visited during my fellowship travels which contained a kindergarten. Interestingly the dynamic within these centres challenged my expectations. My previous experience in policy-level discussions relating to the provision of facilities for youth and children are confused as either slight variations of each other (i.e. a skateboard park and a more difficult skateboard park) or trying to provide a space that can adequately meet the needs of both demographic groups individually. My firm belief is that buildings that are intended to do these things, fail at both. The Saint-Cloud facility provides a workable model.

5th Case Study | Maison Stéphane Hessel Euralille Youth Centre | *The Growth Catalyst*



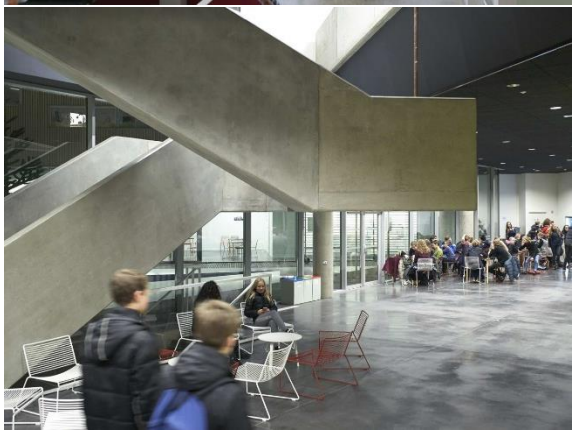


Photo Credit: Top left➢ Laurian Ghinitoiu via ArchDaily.com – all others ➢ Julien Lanoo via JDS Architects website.

Location	235 Boulevard Paul Painlevé, 59000 Lille, France
Design	Youth hostel, kindergarten and community organisation offices contained within a modern and vivid building. The unique colourful façade and triangular building accommodates three clearly demarcated activities while allowing for fluid incidental interactions for ideas to collide and synergies to form.
Architects	Julien De Smedt Architects
Operators	Auberge De Jeunesse Stéphane Hessel
Budget	€ 12,150,000 (NZ$ 18,500,000*)
Year	2016
Area	6,980 m^2

*Conversions are approximation based on forex for the 31/12/16

Visit Summary

In Lille, also in France, the Maison Stéphane Hessel Euralille Youth Centre (the '**Maison**') is on a completely different scale and level to all the other European centres. The almost 7,000 m^2 site hosts three distinctly different operations across its triangular building.

Stéphane Hessel, the late patron of the centre, was a diplomat and holocaust survivor whose quotes on the importance of promoting multiculturalism and living a life full of encouragement adorn the Maison's walls.

Lille's location lends itself to being a European cultural epicentre and so the Maison accordingly provides an important forum for a wide catchment of young people to come together. The Hostel not only generates the all-important revenue for the Maison but it also creates a vibrancy in the centre and openness of discussion that would be difficult to synthesise otherwise.

Between the kindergarten and the youth-focused community organisation offices and hostel, the Maison has facilities that span the critical growth stages of childhood, youth and young adult spanning the transition and catalysing intragenerational discussion. The broad range of activities also ensures that the Maison is perhaps the only truly 24 hour functioning centre.

Key Learnings

A recurring theme of many of the centres is the attempt to replicate the familiarity of a homely environment. While the Maison is very much a home with communal living areas, it also provides plenty of areas for entertaining the neighbourhood or visiting guests. It is the ultimate party house by night and business/education centre by day. Trying to import this relaxed environment into any centre is laudable.

Having too much of a commercial focus within a centre can detract from non-commercial social outcomes and the accessibility to those who for whom financial barriers are an issue.

6th Case Study | Factoria Joven de Mérida |

Industrial Scale Interventions

Photo Credit: Iwan Baan via ArchDaily.com.

Location	Camino Viejo de Mirandilla, s/n, 06800 Mérida, Badajoz, Spain
Design	Industrial 'factory' styled building and surrounding skatepark, amphitheatre, recreational and performance spaces. The brightly coloured irregularly shaped building contains three basic internal studios which are highly adaptable depending on what they are required for.
Architects	Jose Selgas and Lucia Cano of Selgas Cano
Operators	Junta de Extremadura
Budget	€ 1,200,000 (NZ$ 2,000,000*)
Year	2011
Area	3,090 m^2

*Conversions are approximation based on forex for the 31/12/11

Visit Summary

The Factoria Joven de Mérida ('**Factoria**') was the centre first introduced to me by the design collective Charette when I was involved with the first youth destination locational assessment on the North Shore.[9] It was the centre I was most excited to visit and the one which is to blame for my entire interest in this overseas analysis of operational centres. After flying into Madrid, Mérida is a further four hours by train to the South-West heading towards the Portuguese border; a beautiful ancient city dating to Roman times with very modern youth social issues.

Spain has the fourth largest NEET rate in the OECD[10] at 22.8% compared with New Zealand's 13.3% and an OECD average of 14.5%. Mérida disproportionately contributes to this figure with a youth unemployment rate of 50%. It was during my interviews with Señor Felipe González Martin, the Director of the Institudo de la Juventud which runs the Factoria for the regional government of Extremadura, that the depth of socio-economic issues facing their youth became more apparent to me.

The Factoria was designed as a place for the celebration of street culture with its skatepark, concert amphitheatre, urban art walls and simple internal rooms for studios and workshops. The first of its kind, the Institudo has gone on to replicate the success of the Factoria as a model for engaging with youth and there are now 40 satellite facilities as part of their network across Extremadura but each with more focus on youth skills development and academy-styled training.

[9] Location Assessment undertaken in 2012 for a possible North Shore Youth Centre.
[10] Youth not in employment, education or training (NEET) (NB: for the purposes of this measure 'youth' is termed as those aged 15-29) as reported in the OECD's Society at a Glance 2016, Figure 1.5.

Key learnings

As discussed above, this centre is where it all started for me and is enduring proof of how creative spaces promote the open expression of creativity. While the Factoria may not have had the initial primary purpose of serving as an innovation hub with a focus on entrepreneurship, through their ongoing engagement with users, the support of community partners and the regional government, the model has been scaled and adapted to respond to the changing needs of the area.

While its partnerships are important for ensuring the ongoing dynamism of the Factoria, the Institudo de la Juventud receives healthy administrative and budgetary support from the regional government. Whilst a diversity of commercial, philanthropic and government funding already has its own benefits associated with it, certainty of adequate funding means that the operations of the centres have certainty and longevity which assists with the planning and development of youth programmes.

7th Case Study | Roundwood Youth Centre |
The One in Sixty

Photo Credit: Right to Left ➢ Exterior community garden by Mace Group, following four photos by Saunders Boston, performance space by World Architecture News

Location	53 Longstone Ave, Willesden, London NW10 3UN, United Kingdom
Design	Ultra-modern terracing centre surrounded by open spaces. Housing an array of partitioned and open spaces within four linked shed-like structures. The mirrored and translucent façade makes the centre distinctive.
Architects	Saunders Boston
Operators	London Borough of Brent
Budget	£ 5,000,000 (NZ$ 9,800,000*)
Year	2012
Area	1,400 m^2

*Conversions are approximation based on forex for the 31/12/12

Vist Summary

Onto the United Kingdom where the Government has been going through its largest ever investment in centres dedicated to youth development since 2009. The Myplace Youth Centre programme being rolled out in partnership between the national Big Lottery Fund and the Department of Children Schools and Families includes around 20 round one fast-track schemes and a further 40 standard track schemes. The £240 million Myplace fund appears to be targeting the youth disenfranchisement and social issues that came to a head in 2011 with the London Riots.

The Roundwood Youth Centre is one of the projects which was delivered under the standard track and was a £5 million replacement of a former youth centre located on the same site. Targeted at the 13-19 age bracket, the centre provides many of the facilities that the abovementioned centres also boast such as café, internet suite, performing arts and recreational studios. In addition to its very modern style, the centre was constructed using a sustainable focus to keep the operational costs of the centre down.

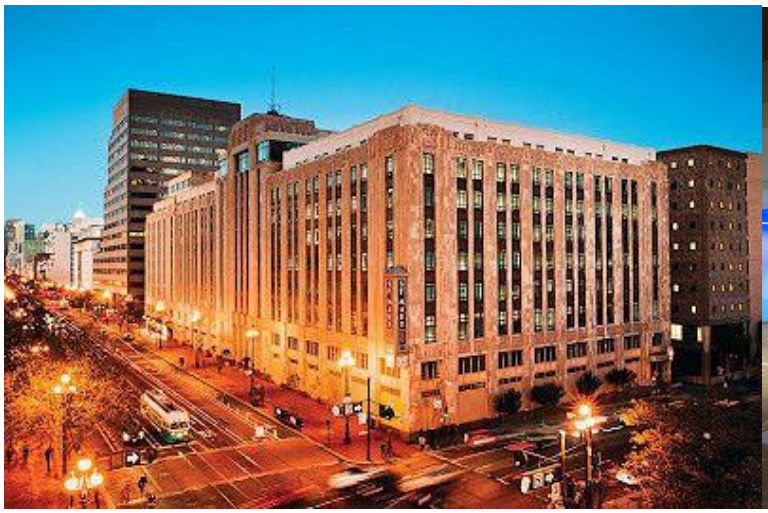
The centre borders the large Roundwood Park and a large community garden, basketball court and kindergarten which helps encourage an active surrounding environment The addition of large security fences, while no doubt necessary, significantly disrupt this flow.

Key learnings

Buy-in at a central government level expedites the development, helps build a network, and improves the connectivity between youth development focused centres. Effective delivery requires effective coordination.

Offices within centres seem to be critically important to ensuring the passive supervision, offsetting of expenses, and building a creative atmosphere but need to be congruent.

8th Case Study | Twitter Global Headquarters |
The Nest for Hatching New Ideas



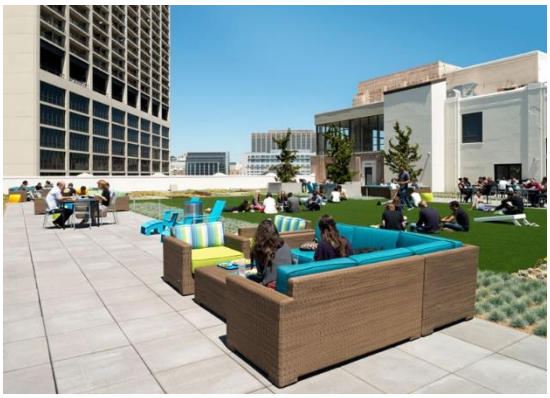


Photo Credit: Chad Ziemendorf via IA interior architects.

Location	1355 Market St, San Francisco, CA 94103, USA
Design	Like no other commercial offices. Large, open spaces with limited partitions, moveable furniture and abundant natural elements and plenty of spaces to work, relax, think and recreate. Situated in the middle of a concrete jungle, the fitout provides a hidden oasis for Twitter's employees.
Architects	IA Interior Architects + Lundberg Design
Operators	Twitter
Budget	Unknown
Year	2012
Area	32,516 m^2

Visit Summary

On the last leg of my fellowship travels I went to the world capital of the tech industry to experience a centre that was a completely different offering to the earlier seven case studies. San Francisco is the home to most, if not all, of the world's largest technology companies. Through the wider Kiwi network, I was fortunate to be able to visit a few of the buildings where these ethereal operations are run from and, most notably, I was taken on a full tour of the Twitter global headquarters.

Spread across the roof and four floors bridging two buildings, the Twitter campus is unlike any of the commercial offices we are used to seeing in New Zealand. More than just the free-flowing working spaces and generous outdoor environments, the sociable and recreational spaces create an atmosphere more akin to a university than place of business. Unlike many of the centres I visited, being in the middle of a busy centre does mean that the building is physically isolated from any lakes, parks or gardens. The use of exposed natural materials and variable lighting as well as the inevitable play on the company's avian mascot helped to counter the absence of natural surrounds.

Naturally the Market Square building has an exponentially larger floorplan than any of the European centres, and whilst details on the budget for the fitout are commercially sensitive, many of the core elements seem inexpensive and not dissimilar to the other centres.

Key learnings

If there is an ideal to work towards for a physical building that can inspire collaboration and innovation merely through its design and flow, this is it. More and more, modern working environments seem to be adopting 'tech-company' styles and at places like Twitter we see the kind of future working spaces we need to prepare our youth to thrive in.

Application of Report

For the reasons explored in this paper, the need for adequate digital and innovation academy facilities in New Zealand is indisputable. Investment in youth development and youth centric programming in New Zealand is demonstrably low and in an economic context represents a substantial underinvestment against other developed nations. Facility operators across New Zealand such as the Zeal Education Trust, the YMCA and Youthline have, in the interest of making do with the limited resources available, integrated innovation focused activities into their youth programmes with varying degrees of success.

Shore Junction is the first realised opportunity to develop a dedicated youth innovation centre, suitably located near a major public transport hub, within walking distance of four substantial high schools, in close proximity to a couple of universities and higher learning centres, and alongside a large private sector technology and innovation 'farm'. This report has necessarily focused on the theoretical application of international learnings from the selected case studies. The best way to put theory into practice and bring these centres into the New Zealand context is through the same trial and error process that is characteristic of the innovation sector.

At a mere 770 m^2, Shore Junction is at the lower end of the range in size of floor area in the centres assessed in this report yet has a budget of roughly NZ$ 4million which (in real terms) is in the mid-range of the case studies. Being a retrofit of an existing building provides the opportunity for greater depth of character and style in Shore Junction's construction (such as the Ru Paré Community) but compromises the ability to build a completely fit-for-purpose facility (such as Roundwood). The limited footprint also removes the opportunity to include some of the more space hungry uses (such as the basketball courts at Sjakket and St Cloud or

the hostel at Maison Stéphane Hessel) so a more efficient use of space and dynamic areas will be key to unlocking the site.

Based on the findings of this report, there are four keys that will be integral to the success of Shore Junction. These are:

1. **Competition of ideas** – monopolies are the antithesis of innovation and collaborative development. The best centres recognise this maxim by promoting cohabitation and collaboration between multiple users within one space. Effective facility management, programme development, and open dialogue between users and operators are crucial to the success of a dynamic and successful innovation centre.
2. **Industry led learning** – the divide between theory and application is best bridged by those who have experience. A vibrant and relevant centre must have regular training and learning opportunities which are reviewed and critically assessed regularly, but more crucially are delivered by and in partnership with relatable innovators who operate in their specified field. This 'Masterclass' model requires focused engagement with the private and tertiary sectors and makes all the difference in terms of engagement and buy-in from users.
3. **Environment influencing design** – truly innovative spaces spark inspiration. The use of bold colours, materials, and natural elements set the tone from the façade to the rear and all throughout the building. Light and motion are used by the best centres to create a space that changes with its surroundings and adds to the vibrancy of the space. In particular the inclusion of 'green' elements and features enhance the user experience and are well used across all of the case studies.
4. **Enterprise** – scarcity of funding and the desire to achieve sustainability of operations means Shore Junction must be malleable enough to respond to changing external financial pressures without reducing service levels. This will require a more of an

investment and alternative income focused model than not-for-profits generally are familiar with in New Zealand.

Author's Reflections

As stated at the outset, this report has been the culmination of eight years of passionate service to the youth sector and community development. Having researched and read about these places and the projects operating from them for some time it was exhilarating to finally visit and experience them personally.

I set off on my travels with an open mind and an eagerness to learn as much as possible from these centres without any preconceptions. It would be fair to say that after such a long time fighting an uphill battle in my campaign at home, fatigue and despondency were beginning to seep in. The people I met, the lives I witnessed being changed, and the communities I experienced served to reinvigorate my resolve to establish New Zealand's first dedicated youth innovation centre.

In the same way that culture cannot be read, only experienced, so too these centres are only truly understood when visited. It was only in visiting these centres that I gained an appreciation for just how similar the circumstances of each centre are and finally understood the true key to their successes: people, passion and persistence.

Beyond what can be recorded in the words of this report is a sense of inspiration that I have carried home from this journey.

Where to next?

Right across New Zealand community leaders and youth workers are keen to provide the next generation with the support and encouragement they need to find and fulfil their passions. The tools and best practice guidelines on how to achieve this are not readily available; in part

due to the fast pace of change and nature of disruptive innovation. The international experiences summarised in this report provide adaptable templates that show what can be achieved in this area.

Shore Junction and the Foundation behind it intend to: test, evaluate, improve, and then replicate across New Zealand successful projects that emerge from its model. To effect this requires the establishment and facilitation of a nationwide network of local champions and subject matter experts. This, I feel, we are more than capable of achieving. Using existing structures such as the Ministry of Youth Development and Local Government New Zealand's Young Elected Members network could provide an umbrella for this dialogue and ensure genuine buy-in.

Shore Junction has already been privileged to have had the input and assistance of the likes of the Zeal Education Trust and the Ministry of Awesome in the initial scoping of our work and design stages. We plan to share the learnings of this report and our best practice experiences with these groups and any other stakeholders keen to join the conversation by hosting a hui at Shore Junction once it is completed.

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