



The Political Context of Star Architecture Projects: The Case of the *Kultur- und Kongresszentrum Luzern* (KKL)

12

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Abstract

Discussions of urban transformation through flagship architectural projects frequently focus on the material and design aspects of architecture and neglect the factors that contributed to the making of this materiality. However, it is these factors which subsequently enable such projects to become transformative forces within their respective cities. This chapter identifies such key factors and elaborates on the role of the political process that has accompanied the development of the *Kultur- und Kongresszentrum Luzern* (KKL) (Culture and Congress Center Lucerne).

Keywords

Flagship architecture · Public-private partnership · Direct democracy · Urban transformation · Multiplication factors

1 Introduction

Discussions of flagship architectural projects in architecture, urban design and planning literature frequently focus on the material and design aspects as success factors (Plaza et al. 2009; Plaza and Haarich 2015). Substantial mono-disciplinary research (in architecture, urbanism, planning, media and tourism studies) has been undertaken to describe, discuss and evaluate the development and performance (Gonzales 2011) of flagship projects. Since such studies focus narrowly on a flagship architecture project as the object of analysis (Evans 2005), much of this research fails in understanding how these projects deliver intended impacts. Thus, widening the scope to include perspectives of the political and the cultural political economy assists in this discussion (Jones 2009).

In general, the literature attributes the impacts of those projects to architectural and urban design qualities and in doing so often neglects the political, institutional and organisational factors that contribute to the making and shaping of this materiality. This chapter focuses specifically

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on the latter factors that are key to delivering effective impacts. The case of the *Kultur- und Kongresszentrum Luzern KKL* (Culture and Congress Center Lucerne) is used to demonstrate what enables such projects to become transformative forces within their respective cities.

This chapter first recounts the actors and the flow of events that accompanied the process of the development of the KKL, as an unlikely project in a small and economically rather weak town in Switzerland. In order to sustain political and public acceptance, the KKL had to pass both political and market tests, through ballots and thorough business case reviews, respectively. Second, this chapter argues that four key factors shaped the KKL project. They include a historical need to preserve the International Music Festival (IMF, today known as *lucernefestival*) in Lucerne as a strong motivation for a new concert infrastructure. An innovative form of public-private partnership (PPP) ensured an intricate decision-making process where public partners, the city and the canton of Lucerne had a majority, but veto power was granted to a major private partner, namely, the Concert Hall Foundation. The multifunctional and inclusive programme ensured acceptance across a wide range of interest groups. Lastly, the “star” authors legitimised an exceptional design and highest-quality standards. The conclusion fleshes out some of the main lessons that can be learned from the KKL project.¹

2 The Realisation of an Unlikely Project

The KKL is a concert and congress venue located at the shore of Lake Lucerne in Lucerne, Switzerland (refer to Fig. 12.1). The KKL comprises a 1800-seat “world-class” concert hall², an 800–1200-seat multipurpose hall and a 300-seat auditorium, congress facilities, three restaurants as well as a 2500 square metre (27,000 square feet) Museum of Fine Arts. It was designed by French architect and 2008 Pritzker Prize laureate Jean Nouvel with the assistance of the acoustician Russel Johnson from Artec New York. Construction for the KKL started in 1994. The concert hall was inaugurated in summer 1998, with the rest of the facility, including the museum, opening to the public in 2000. The KKL replaced the former *Kunst- und Kongresshaus* (Art and Convention House) built in 1933 by Swiss architect Armin Meili (1892–1981). This centre was home to the internationally and nationally prominent events, namely, the *Internationale Musik Festwochen Luzern* (IMF) founded by Arturo Toscanini in 1938.

In the early 1980s, concerns over the poor condition and suitability of Lucerne’s old Culture and Convention Centre as well as demands for other types of cultural venues were surfacing. In response, in 1988, the City

¹For an overview of the project history, see Bühlmann (1988). A cultural and political interpretation of the KKL project can be found in the volume “Stronger Opponents Wanted!” Steiner et al. (2001).

²Reference projects included Hans Scharoun’s Philharmony in Berlin, the City of Birmingham Concert Hall and I.M. Pei’s Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center in Dallas.



Fig. 12.1 The Kultur- und Kongresszentrum Luzern (KKL) is located on the shore of Lake Lucerne, Switzerland. It is connected to the central train and bus station, to the piers for the steamboats and to a large underground parking. (Source: Adapted from Openstreet Maps by Alexander Arndt)

Council of Lucerne commissioned Hayek Engineering AG to undertake a study for the optimisation of the infrastructure for cultural activities in the city of Lucerne. The main recommendations of the Hayek study pertinent to the KKL were, first, to replace the old building with a new centre and to create a public-private partnership to finance such an ambitious project.

Two years later, in reacting to a political deadlock over project priorities, the City Council appointed the author of this paper, a past team member of the Hayek study, as an independent moderator for the overall coordination of cultural infrastructure projects in Lucerne. After extensive discussions within a new setup of conferences and sub-conferences with several dozen representatives of private and public associations and institutions, his report and a masterplan were acknowledged by the Lucerne City Parliament. To start the project, the five most important actors, that is, the city and the canton of Lucerne, the Concert Hall Foundation, a hotel and convention interest group as well as the Lucerne Association of Fine Arts, established a simple partnership (“Einfache Gesellschaft”) under Swiss law.

When the first part of the KKL opened in 1998, it was greeted by both the international and national press with awe and admiration but also with disbelief. How could a small town in an economically rather weak canton master the political will and the resources to create a world-class concert

hall with an iconic and audacious architectural gesture? Quite a few commentators took pains to portray the realisation of the KKL as the “miracle of Lucerne” or talked about the “lucky streak” which had accompanied the project (Affentranger and Schenk 2001). This “unlikely project” was realised because of a public perception of a historical need and because it passed a series of political tests³.

Building Momentum by Mastering the Hurdles of Direct Democracy

As for the prospects of realising a 200 million Swiss Franc (CHF) cultural and congress building by an internationally acclaimed architect, one must consider that in the early 1990s, Lucerne was a small provincial town of approximately 60,000 inhabitants, with tax revenue of roughly CHF 200 million. The canton of Lucerne could be considered an economically sluggish region with a GDP per capita of approximately CHF 40,000 (or about two thirds of the GDP per capita of Zurich).

In addition to these economic constraints, the Swiss political system is based not only on direct democracy but also on high fiscal autonomy of its cantons and its 2300 communes (including 140 towns). With very few exceptions, the federal government has neither the fiscal authority nor the political mandate for investments in cultural institutions. Contrary to the situation in centralist states and/or former aristocracies, there is no need and no tradition for representative architecture like former French president Francois Mitterrand’s “Grands Travaux” (Collard 2008; Ponzini and Nastasi 2011).

Decentralisation and the lack of a culture of representation limit the political appetite for big projects. In addition, decision-making via direct democracy imposes lengthy processes for passing such proposals. Normally, the expected cost-benefit ratio of a given project and its consequences for the municipal budget and future taxes make up the core arguments of the democratic process. But voters often also make judgements about the architecture and urban quality. In the case of prestigious buildings and/or prominent sites, specific design details may become hotly contested issues.

From 1989 until 2003, the KKL was the subject of five ballots in the city of Lucerne (refer to Table 12.1). The first ballot was held on 3 March 1989. Technically, the referendum asked whether the city should accept a private donation to finance an architectural competition for the new concert hall. Politically and psychologically, it was a first test as to whether the voters would generally support a major public investment in cultural infrastructure and, more specifically, whether the location near the lake was

³A comprehensive database documents, amongst others, the files of the Lucerne Culture and Congress Centre Foundation and its predecessor organisations *Projektierungsgesellschaft Kultur- und Kongresszentrum am See* – refer to the history of the KKL 1991-20000 database <http://dbeg-kkl.ch>

Table 12.1 City of Lucerne KKL Ballots 1989–2003. The share of positive votes in the 5 city of Lucerne ballots leading up and covering the construction costs of the KKL as indicative of the thorough, rigorous and democratic decision making process carried out in the development of the project.

Date	Proposal	Amount	% Positive
5 March 1989	Acceptance of donation for architectural competition	0,7 Mio. CHF	61,4
20 October 1991	“Green” proposition for un-zoning of site		65,0 ^a
5 May 1992	Budget for pre-project design	3,5 Mio. CHF	61,3
6 June 1994	Contribution to construction costs	98,0 Mio. CHF	65,7
30 November 2003	Settlement of debt (mortgage)	18,0 Mio. CHF	55,8

^aNay votes

acceptable. Neither the architecture nor specific design questions had any role in these early debates.

In the second ballot on 20 October 1991, Lucerne voters rebutted a proposition by opponents of a new concert hall. The proposition sought the creation of a public park at the site of the planned concert hall and an amendment to the city’s zoning plan which would have prohibited any construction there. The ballot became a critical test, since at this time the supporters of the project were required to express a double negation, i.e. to vote “no” twice to preserve the option for new concert hall.

The third ballot was a mandatory referendum regarding the allocation of public funds amounting to CHF three million, to finance the preliminary design study. In comparison to public projects for schools, hospitals, etc. and given the extraordinary complexity of the KKL programme, this sum was not extraordinarily high. The request for the funds was adopted by the City Parliament in January 1992 and by 60 percent of Lucerne voters on 17 May 1992.

In the fourth (and decisive) ballot of 12 June 1994, the Lucerne electorate approved, by a two-third majority, the expenditure of CHF 94 million of public funds for the construction of the KKL – the highest amount brought before voters in the history of the city. The corresponding account was based on a “refined preliminary project” by architect Jean Nouvel which had been intensively communicated.⁴ The package for the ballot referring to the KKL also included a set of usage rights for local associations and concert organisers. In addition, a conditional agreement with one of the large general contractors in Switzerland guaranteeing a fixed price for the construction had assuaged political fears of cost overruns. The 65.7 percent margin of the vote turned out to be quantitatively crucial for the architectural success of the KKL mitigating a certain Swiss tendency to “normalise”, i.e. to downsize and simplify but also to banalise original designs.

⁴A key element of the communication process was a drawing of the planned building by artist Vincent Lafont, Paris. For the symbolism and the communicative power of this rendering, see Stadelmann (1998). In a later blog, he connects the title of Jean Nouvel’s entry in the competition (*L’inclusion*) with the communication strategy of the KKL project: <http://www.stadtfragen.ch/2014/03/architektur-als-zeichensystem/>

The fifth vote was held on 30 November 2003, again as a mandatory referendum. The name of the bill referred to the “structural relief and the financial stabilisation” of the KKL. Technically, Lucerne voters approved a CHF 18 million contribution of public money to fully repay the mortgage of the KKL and an annual subsidy of CHF one million to cover unforeseen maintenance costs.

Market Acceptance and Local Economic Impact Momentum

In the first 10 years of full operation, the KKL doubled its net revenue. While crude projections foresaw revenue of approximately CHF 10–15 million, the KKL business experienced an almost uninterrupted growth to approximately CHF 30 million with an occupancy rate of well over 90 percent in all three halls (refer to Table 12.2). The revenues from culture events grew at a much higher rate than sales falling into the MICE category (meetings, incentives, conventions and events) (refer to Table 12.2). Combining all relevant sectors and economic actors, Scherer et al. (2012) conclude that the commercial activities of the KKL in 2011 induced an additional turnover of approximately CHF 110 million – or 60 percent more than in 2001 – in the Lucerne region. The increase results essentially from higher attendance and purchases by cultural productions and MICE organisers. The decision to build the KKL also spurred a wave of hotel renovations and new hotel projects. A survey by the local newspaper estimated these investments at approximately CHF 250 million (Drews 1998). In addition to these stimuli for the regional economy, the KKL has transformed the image of Lucerne. In 2011, the KKL was mentioned in Swiss print media alone on average 3 times a day. Scherer et al. (2012) ascribe an advertising value of this media presence to approximately CHF 6.6 million.

Table 12.2 KKL Selected business and economic indicators in 2011 and 2001. From the beginning, the KKL was operating nearly at capacity, but was able to almost double revenue over time by upgrading the customer base and services and by rising prices.

Indicator	2011	2001	Change
Revenue	34.5 Mio. CHF	19.2 Mio. CHF	+80%
Employees	487	350	+39%
# Days booked by culture and MICE events	542	560	–4%
# Visitors/Participants	446,000	397,000	+12%
Total local spending by culture events	75.5 Mio. CHF	45.6 Mio. CHF	+65%
Total local spending by MICE events	24.5 Mio. CHF	17.6 Mio. CHF	+39%
Total regional spending	110 Mio. CHF	67.7 Mio. CHF	+62%
Purchase power incidence	51 Mio. CHF	39 Mio. CHF	+30%

Source: Scherer, Strauf and Riser et al. (2012)

3 The Key Factors Shaping the KKL Project

Public Perception of a Historical Need

The widespread assessment of a “historical need” for new concert infrastructure was strongly motivated by the desire to preserve the International Music Festival or IMF (as today’s “Lucerne Festival” was called at the time) as a necessity for the future of the city as a major tourist destination. The festival produces a substantial share of tourism revenue and provides immeasurable international exposure for Lucerne. The visiting artists, foremost the leading maestros of the music world, increasingly judged the existing acoustics, stage or backrooms of the concert hall as insufficient in comparison with new built or retrofitted concert venues in the 1980s and 1990s.

In the public discussions leading up to the ballots, several observers pointed to the fact that the infrastructure for Lucerne’s tourism – the Grand Hotels, the steamboats on Lake Lucerne and the cog railway leading up to Mount Pilatus – was based on innovative investments in the late nineteenth century. This observation leads to a widespread interpretation of the KKL project as long-term investment for future generations of Lucerne. To appreciate the power of this perception, one must recall the stagnation period of the Swiss economy in the wake of the decision in 1992 not to join the European Economic Space. Growth rates thereafter were lagging not only behind the USA and Japan but also the European Union (EU 15) average. Thus, support for the KKL project was frequently framed in macro-economic terms with all kinds of “multiplication factors” being offered in the debate.

Although the status of the architect played a decisive role in marketing the project to donors and to the maestros later, the design of the KKL was not a central argument in the political decision-making process. Rather, the majorities in subsequent referendums demonstrated a realistic consensus that the city of Lucerne needed the recommended infrastructure if it wanted to avoid the risk of being downgraded to a minor league tourism destination.

A Special Form of Public-Private Partnership

The early plans for a collaboration between the city and private sector were based on a division of responsibility and ownership. The Lucerne Music Festival with its sponsors would essentially pay for the concert hall, while the city would provide the site and renovate the existing building (which then could be used as ancillary space).

But, by pushing this proprietary concept too hard, the concert hall promoters unintentionally set the stage for a clash between cultural interest groups and the subsequent negotiation of a multifunctional architectural programme which required a much more inclusive PPP. Thus, on 31

January 1991, a “simple partnership” under Swiss law was established as the owner of the planned building. It incorporated the city and the canton of Lucerne as the public partners, and the Concert Hall Foundation, the Tourist and Congress Association and the Association for Fine Arts as private partners and contributors. After the decisive ballot in 1994, the simple partnership as a legal entity was succeeded by a foundation (Trägerstiftung Kultur- und Kongresszentrum). Bolz (2011) suggests that the first modern discussion of PPP in Switzerland dated back to the end of the 1980s coinciding with the calls for a new concert hall. Retrospectively, the KKL may have assisted in defining the nature of PPPs in Switzerland (Lienhard 2006).

Table 12.3 shows the intended contributions of the partners at the time before the decisive vote in 1994 as well as the effective contributions by the time of the opening of the KKL and the final distributions of construction costs after the city had repaid the KKL mortgage.

Since the public contributions had been set by the bills underlying the ballots, the increase in construction costs was essentially covered by private donors. The inevitable change orders could only be approved if additional contributions were secured. This principle helped to keep the overall cost overrun down but led to temporary imbalances in the budget and also fueled a more or less permanent state of conflict between the owner and the general contractor. The final fundraising by the Concert Hall Foundation exceeded its initial commitment by more than 60 percent.

The diversity of the KKL PPP and the uneven contributions by the partners called for an intricate set of decision-making rules. The two

Table 12.3 Distribution of KKL construction costs in 1991 to 2004. The table shows the intended contributions of the partners at the time before the decisive vote in 1994 as well as the effective contributions by the time of the opening and the final distributions of costs after the City had repaid the KKL mortgage.

Source	1991		1999		2001		2004	
	Mio. CHF	%	Mio. CHF	%	Mio. CHF	%	Mio. CHF	%
City of Lucerne	94	52.2	98	47.3	111	49.1	127	56.2
Canton Lucerne	25	13.9	23	11.6	28	12.4	28	12.4
Federal contribution			3	1.4	3	1.3	3	1.3
Concert Hall Foundation	35	19.4	50	24.2	58	25.7	58	25.7
Hotel and congress ass.		5.6	7	3.4	7	3.1	7	3.1
Fine Art Society			2	1.0	3	1.3	3	1.3
Debt (mortgage)	16	8.9	17	8.2	16	7.1		
Cost overrun			6					
Total	180	100.0	207	100.0	226	100.0	226	100.0

Sources: For year 1991: Gesamtkonzept (Held 1991); for year 1999: own calculation; for year 2001: Scherer, Strauf and Behrendt (2002); for year 2004: own calculation, based on Scherer, Strauf and Behrendt (2002)

public entities, the city and canton, held 5 and two seats, respectively, guaranteeing a public majority in the 13-seat board. In addition, the city and the concert hall were given veto powers. This formula forced the partners to come up with consensus solutions and to avoid public disagreements amongst themselves. As a secondary effect of the well-balanced partnership, the KKL owner organisation was able to structure itself and to operate like a private company. This substantial operational independence from the city administration became later a prerequisite for an above-average freedom for architectural expression and aesthetic decisions by Jean Nouvel.

Thus, the successful development of the KKL depended on an utmost inclusion of the functional requirements of the relevant actors, while, at the same time, the creative process was shielded from personal tastes and conventional preferences of the very same actors. Whenever a public discussion of design elements surfaced, the Mayor of Lucerne reminded everyone that the owner organisation had not commissioned Jean Nouvel only to have some city staff discuss the shades of colours or the opaqueness of surfaces.

A Multifunctional and Inclusive Programme

The inclusiveness of the founding partnership is reflected in the exceptional complexity of the programme. While this programme of the KKL was efficiently and functionally laid out, refined and concretised (with the necessary adaptations and cost compromises), Jean Nouvel focused on the symbolic reflection of the social and political inclusiveness at the heart of the KKL project.⁵ In his presentations, the wide cantilevered roof of the KKL not only reflected the calm of Lake Lucerne and created a cinemascope frame for a fresh perspective on the history of the Grand Hotels on the right bank of town (refer to Fig. 12.2). More importantly, the big roof symbolised that the needs and interests of “tout Lucerne” had been acknowledged and incorporated into the programme. Thus, the expression “Alles unter einem Dach” (everything under one roof) became the defining slogan for the consensus process and the series of votes. By lining up the three very distinct parts of the building on par, each facing the lake and the old town the same way, the equality of the functions (music, MICE and fine arts) was further emphasised. Finally, by placing the multifunctional “Lucerne hall” in the middle of the complex with movable walls and street level access from all sides, Jean Nouvel paid respect to the public participation in the project and the process of direct democracy (Fig. 12.3).

⁵The multifunctional, inclusive approach for the KKL project dates back to an analysis by Hayek Consulting in 1988 which recommended not only a new comprehensive cultural and congress centre but also the conversions of an empty factory hall and an unused jail facility into spaces for rock music and experimental theatre groups.



Legitimation Through “Star” Authors

The references to the architectural transposition of the programme lead to the fourth factor for the KKL success, i.e. its association with a “star architect” – and a star acoustician. Although in retrospect, the mastery, charisma and communication skills of Jean Nouvel were essential to pull the KKL project off, choosing an international star architect was not part of the strategy of the KKL promoters. It could not have been, since both Switzerland’s tradition of high-quality architecture and procurement provisions and Swiss Society of Engineers and Architects (SIA) norms require broad architectural competitions even for minor public buildings like primary schools.

In fact, these competitions are so highly valued that they can become overburdened with decisions which the owner or the political process should have dealt with beforehand. This was certainly the case in 1989 when the City Council prematurely launched a competition for a new concert hall without defining whether the existing building should be replaced or not. Thus, the competition yielded an ambiguous result: The office of Jean Nouvel/Emmanuel Cattani was placed in the “first rank”, while Swiss architect Rodolphe Luscher was awarded the “first prize”. This result led to a split in public opinion and to a maze of infights between various

Fig. 12.2 The cantilevered roof of the KKL. It reflects the surface of the lake and frames the view towards the hotels on the far bank of the lake. It is also symbolic of the participatory and democratic process which balanced the interests of different stakeholders under one roof. (Source: Photograph by Philippe Ruault, Paris)

interest groups. To calm the situation, the city administration invited both “winners” as well as the second and third placed teams for a round of rework. But impatient members of the Concert Hall Foundation pushed the City Council to declare the entry by Rodolphe Luscher as the most feasible project – a decision which implied the preservation of the old building and left the museum group out in the cold.⁶

The ensuing political uproar nullified most of the previous planning. But at the same time, it provided a legitimate opportunity to restart the planning process with the goal of a common strategy, a path to financing the building and the operations and – above all – a broad consensus about the programme. During this phase of multilateral negotiations, questions of design and even urban development issues took a back seat. The new project organisation went from the working assumption that Luscher Architects had been selected by the city to design the new KKL.

The new programme resulting from the masterplan contained almost double the volume of the earlier architectural competition. It implied the substitution of the existing building and integrated the Museum of Fine Arts with the series of halls for culture and congress purposes. In addition, the new programme was linked to a set of conditions regarding the design contract, quality assurance and cost controls. But when these new rules were presented to Rodolphe Luscher, he declined to restart working on the project. Thus, despite an almost unanimous political consensus on what to build and how to proceed, the project was again thrown into turmoil.

As only Jean Nouvel could claim legitimacy from the 1989 competition, the newly formed owner organisation turned towards him for confidential negotiations. Since the vote about the public credit for the pre-project contract was already scheduled, the Bureau Jean Nouvel Emmanuel Cattani had to accept the same conditions of the masterplan that had been submitted to Rodolphe Luscher.

The start of the main fundraising drive by the Concert Hall Foundation coincided with the return of Jean Nouvel to the project (Fig. 12.4). The immediate and sustained success of this effort would not have been possible without the brand name of Jean Nouvel. Anecdotal evidence from meetings with donors shows that his status not only dispelled some still lingering doubts about the foregone planning process but also led the public to expect a unique and exceptional enhancement to Lucerne. And by not shying away from the political and communication drama leading up to the first serious democratic test for the project, Jean Nouvel also assumed a role as a public figure: a famous author – or rather old-style “master” – who would again and again explain his work and his thoughts to the voters of Lucerne (Bischof 2001).

Fig. 12.3 (next pages) Jean Nouvel speaking to craftsmen, city administrators and donors. The roofing ceremony for the concert hall on 28 February 1997 was just one of many occasions where he interacted with the public and stakeholders. (Source: Photograph by Eggermann & Eichenberger, Lucerne)

⁶How Jean Nouvel ended up as the admired author of the KKL is a complex and intricate story in itself; refer to Malfroy (1999).







Fig. 12.4 Jean Nouvel (right) in discussion with the old and new Mayors of Lucerne. Franz Kurzmeyer (center) and Urs Studer (left) were at the Opening ceremony for the complete building in Spring 2000. The two Mayors of Lucerne were crucial in steering the KKL project through all political obstacles. (Source: Photograph by author)

4 Lessons Learned

From the very beginning of master planning, all actions, measures and decisions concerning the development of the KKL were guided by two constraints. For one, the rules of direct democracy required serious cost-benefit analysis as well as very high-quality and functional standards and specifications. The requirements for high standards were guaranteed, in the eyes of the public, by the star status of the architect and, in the ears of the music community, by an almost equivalent position of the acoustic planner. The public prestige of these two “authors” enabled the owner organisation to maintain a certain distance vis-à-vis the building regulators. Second, the PPP facilitated active participation by donors and implied a market test, that is, an effective management structure where risks and gains were shared, and totally transparent tender procedures. Notwithstanding the majority ownership by the city and canton of Lucerne, the owner organisation could operate like a private company in many ways.

Hence, the following lessons can be learned from the development of the KKL and could be considered for other flagship architectural projects in Europe. First, a very well-defined programme – where interests of all partners are expressed based on local consensus and backed by a broad political majority – should precede the architectural planning process. Second, for cultural (and probably also sports) infrastructure projects like museums, concert halls, opera houses, theatres, etc., a form of PPP has become the norm in Switzerland since a precedent was set by KKL. Examples like the recently inaugurated Art Museum in Chur or the new wing for the Zurich Art Museum demonstrate that the private sector is expected to contribute at least half of the investment, while the cities and/or other public entities will come up with the operating costs. Finally, in a democratic society like Switzerland, large construction projects at sensitive

and strategic sites are public endeavours regardless of property ownership, financing or type of planning authority. This implies an intense dialogue with the public, since in today's media environment, any small group or even individual is perfectly able to halt a construction project without too much effort and practically at no risk.

The case of the KKL demonstrates that the design of the institutional and organisational aspects of projects has a great impact on their architectural quality. It is these aspects that can constrain or liberate architects and decide whether a building is appreciated by the local community and can become an agent for urban transformation.

The KKL case study also shows that excellence associated with the architectural design, acoustics, programme and its architect has enabled the KKL to have an international outreach. In 2001, the project received an International Architecture Award Francesco Borromini, city of Rome, and in 2016 was recognised by Architectural Record as one of the 125 most important works of architecture built since the magazine's founding in 1891.

To generalise, the KKL assisted in defining the nature of PPPs where active partners share risks and gains, and the organisation responsible for project management is represented and active as an independent agency. The equitable decision-making process, with the city and the Concert Hall Foundation representing public and private interests but not intervening in the design autonomy of the "authors" nor in the management role of the PPP organisation, may hold an important lesson for similar projects. The development of a strong business case not only provided the basis for the planning and the quality controlling processes, but it demonstrated the long-term relevance of the project for the city and was the key prerequisite for securing the private donations. It may be considered obvious, but successful projects are not only technically sound, but are led by persons with a status as competent expert. Such "masters" or even "stars" in their field are critical to build confidence and thus public support from the planning to the operational management phases of the project.

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