Reconnecting the mall

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Abstract

Shopping malls gained popularity since the beginning of them in the 1960s. In the Netherlands, malls were built like the American model, but have gone through several interventions in the last decades. Visitors of shopping malls have been decreasing for some years, due to several factors, including shopping online and goal-oriented shopping. As a result, some malls are showing a disconnection between the building and its users. This has to do with the nature of malls which can be a closed structure addressing mainly what's going on inside. The same disconnection can be found in the Theory of Richard Sennett. This research plan will focus on analysing existing interventions of shopping malls, by combining the Six shearing layers of Brand and the five open forms of Richard Sennett. The outcome will be an innovative way of researching intervention strategies in malls, with the intention of reconnection the mall and its users. The research could be of future use for buildings/structures that share problematic characteristics with the mall.

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Introduction

"*Shopping malls are dead, long live the shopping center!*" is a rather cruel and harsh statement made by Feniak about shopping malls. (Feniak, 2022) In this article, the way people have been using malls is being discussed as well as the future of these buildings. The article focuses on shopping malls in foreign countries and shows a trend that shopping makes space for leisure. In the Netherlands, shopping malls have been built since the 1960s after the American model of the shopping mall. Malls in the Netherlands have been adapted over the years like additions and covering the mall as a whole. This last type of intervention lead to a mall that has been named an 'introvert type' by the founder of the mall type, Gruen. (Gruen, 1973) The introvert mall type has a strong focus on what's happening inside and is more closed off to the outside. The users of the mall have been decreasing in recent years. A research done by I&O, called 'koopstromenonderzoek 2021' looked into consumerism in the Netherlands. They have concluded a couple of trends going on being the following; The share of online shopping is increasing, there are fewer expenses towards recreational shopping, fewer visitors for shops in the larger cities, and more goal-oriented shopping. (I&O, 2021) There seems to be a kind of disconnection between the users and the mall. This disconnection between the users and the buildings is the topic of the book by Richard Sennet, '*Building and Dwelling, ethics for the city*'. In this book, Sennett, an urbanist and sociologist, describes the way the city and its users have a relationship with each other. This relation is however not always in balance. The disconnection between the city, the ville, and its users, the cité, is a result of neglecting this relationship. Sennett argues the city is closed and needs to open up. For this, he introduces five open forms. The five open forms can be seen as interventions regarding different elements of the city, focussing on spaces, important buildings, additions, and barriers.

In the malls, the same kind of disconnection can be seen and this research will focus on using the five open forms as mentioned by Sennett to explore the possibilities of the malls. With a focus on reconnecting the mall and its users.
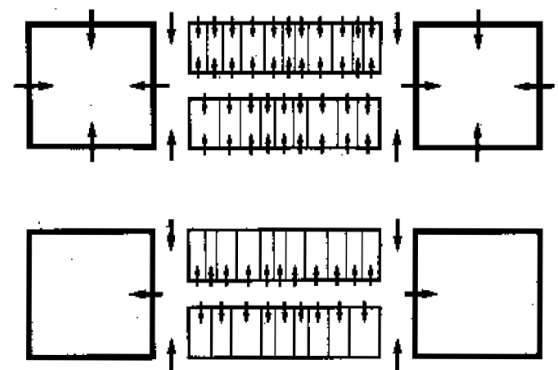
Scheme of an extrovert (above), and introvert (below) mall type as described by Gruen. (1)

Research questions

The case study of the studio of heritage is the 20th-century modern mall. (Heritage and Architecture, 2022) The American way of shopping caught the attention of European planners. The modern mall in the Netherlands differs in scale and perception. The objective of the research is to investigate an innovative way of analysing interventions that have been done over a period of time in these malls. A research question and supporting questions are presented to show interest mixed with the studio case.

Research questions
How can a 20th-century modern mall be adapted for future use, enhancing the connection between the mall and its users?

This leads to a set of sub-questions that needs to be explored.
- What is a 20th-century modern mall and what are its characteristics?
- How can a mall be adapted, and what interventions have been done?
- Who are the users of the mall?
- How do interventions enhance the connection between the mall and its users?

After introducing the questions and the interest, it's necessary to frame the boundaries of the research. What can be researched in what time frame? The sub-questions can be a way of limiting the research and leading the way through. The frame of reference will discuss the existing literature, and give a brief description of what information is helpful specifically for this research.

Frame of reference

The first part of the research is meant to identify what a mall is and how its characteristics can be found. For this, the ideas of Victor Gruen, the book by Dion Kooijman, '*machine en theater, ontwerpconcept van winkelgebouwen*' (Kooijman, 1999) and a document made for the Rijksdienst voor monumentzorg, '*Winkelcentra categoriaal onderzoek wederopbouw 1940-65*' (Galema, 2005) will be used. The first book covers the history of the phenomenon of shopping. How was shopping done from the beginning towards the late 90s? The book addresses different types of shops/malls. The passage, the department store, and after the second world war, the rise of the mall after the American model. The book breaks down the mall typology and elaborates on the different aspects like scale, relation inside and outside, users, and more. The second document covers the malls in the Netherlands in the period of 1940-65. This document was written for the Monumentenzorg, to understand the importance of the typology of the mall in Dutch history. How to assess this typology? The document is split into a part before and after the second world war. How the transition from emergency stores to modern malls was made and what elements they exist of. By looking at multiple malls they sketch main ideas and variations of the mall type, ending with guidelines on how to assess malls on different values.

The second part of the research focuses on intervention strategies and how to analyse them. The five open forms by Sennett can be seen as places for interventions. The five open forms are here mentioned briefly and are then reflected in the scale of the mall. This shows how the types of interventions, the open forms, can be identified within the malls. The illustration with text shows the essence of the individual forms. Some are easily translated to the cases of the malls, while others can be a bit more descriptive and will need further research.

1) A synchronous space or sequential space. The first is an open space where different activities are going on at the same time, and the second is a place where only the same thing is happening. Comparable to a bazar or a stadium. A strong synchronous space is inviting to people. The space must offer people something they cannot access someplace else. The danger with this type however is that it can get confusing, with too many things happening at once. Translation to the mall; malls can have open spaces, squares between buildings that act as synchronous space if the buildings around have varying functions.

2) With punctuation there are exclamation points, semicolons and quotation marks. The exclamation point emphasises a place or building. It becomes a marker of space. The semicolon breaks up the rhythm, like crossroads. Translation to the mall; the important buildings can be the anchor stores in a mall, and semicolons can be different entrances and streets between the different building blocks of a mall.re, preventing moving through it. The open form is the border. The border can selectively let stuff flow through. Translation to the mall; the boundary can be the closed façade to the outside.
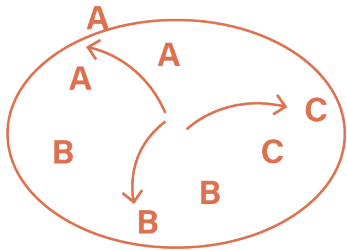
1) Synchronous spaces, multiple things happening at once. Same for malls.
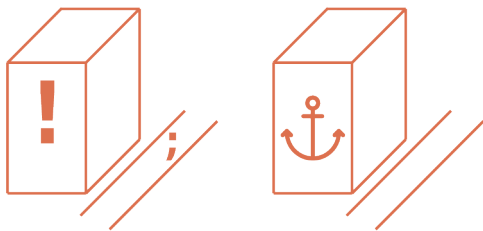
2) Puntuation, important buildings and crossroads. Malls have anchorstores and transitions between buildings.
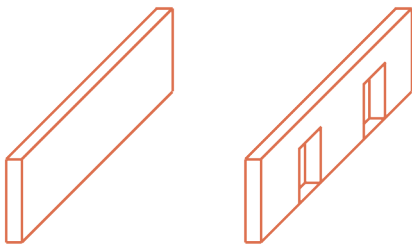
3) Membrane, a closed boundary, and an open border, malls with closed or open facades.

4) Incomplete, buildings left for completion.

A	C		B'
	B		B''
	A'	A''	C'

5) Seed planning, depending on the circumstances the outcome of an intervention will differ

3) The membrane, porous, and the closed version is the boundary. The boundary makes up a rigid separation between two parts of the city. A wall with no openings in it is a solid structure, preventing moving through it. The open form is the border. The border can selectively let stuff flow through. Translation to the mall; the boundary can be the closed façade to the outside.
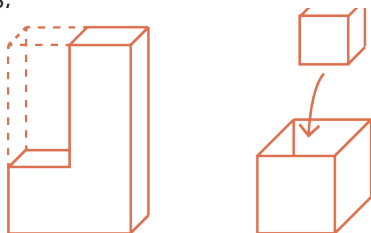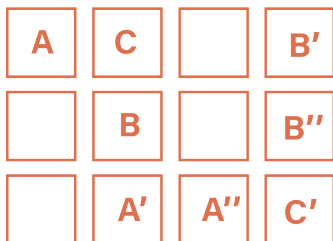
4) Incomplete form, The Shell. The shell can be seen quite literally as a structure that has yet to be filled. An example of this is the housing blocks of Quinta Monroy in Chili. (see illustration 2). Translation to the mall; a structure that provides for future addition.

5) Seed planning. The last open form can be compared to intervening, a small input which under different circumstances will grow into something distinguished. For example the 'superilles' project in Barcelona, where the same intervention is done in several places in the city, but the outcome will differ based on the context. (illustration 3) Relation to the malls; no direct relation yet, but this can be explored in the upcoming research.

This part of the research will also require some sense of scale to organize and structure the interventions for the analysis. Here, the shearing layers of Brand will be used. The six layers of Brand address the lifespan and scale of different elements of a building (Brand, 1994). It also shows the different interactions between the users and the specific scale. This research will combine the open forms with different scales as explained in the following chapter, not all the scales are going to be used. The scale of the Site, Structure, Skin, Space plan and Stuff will be used. The services scale will be left out of this research since the aim is not focussing on this particular part. The book shows architects to think about buildings as not merely a space and product but as a being that is constantly reshaped by their occupants. This fits with the research about the connection between ion the building and its users.

The existing theories are explained briefly and the parts that will be used are discussed. The research requires a methodology to come up with an innovative way of analysing interventions that have been done to malls. The next part will categorize the different methods and will show how the research on these interventions will be done and how the outcome can give input for the design process.

Quinta Monray buildings, incomplete houses can be filled in by the residents (2)

Superille, Barcelona. The grid structure allows to perform the same intervention, closing of roads, but the outcome will differ depending on the context, the users. (3)
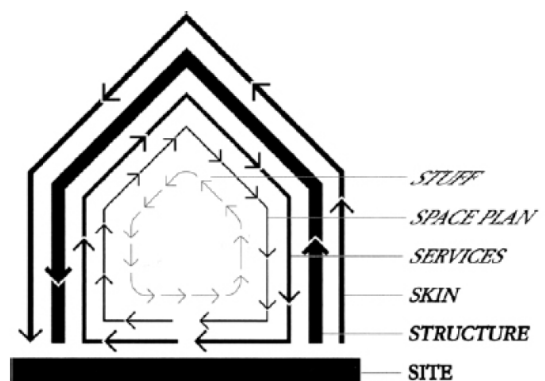
The six shearing layers of Brand. (4)

Methods and methodology

The first quarter of this research focuses on the unravelling of the mall and interventions that have been done to them. This is to understand what sorts of transformations have different effects on the outcome. Literature research on the characteristics of the mall will inform what a mall consists off and literature on the relevance in history can help mention important elements of this type. The books of Brand and Sennett will help form the research on interventions. (the literature is mentioned in the previous chapter).

Archival research into different malls can help understanding better why interventions took place. Newspapers that can be accessed via Delpher show the opinions of the public and give context in what timeframes certain interventions happened.

Case study research will help with testing the innovative way of analysing interventions. In group work, a selection of malls is made and researched on their size, their interventions, their context and so on.

A selection of malls related to the individual research topics is picked to explore the innovative way of analysing interventions in malls. The malls that are chosen up till now are The Forum, Rotterdam, Stadshart, Amstelveen and De Bogaard, Rijswijk. These case studies all have interventions that can be related to one or more interventions based on the open forms. The interventions take place on different scales and therefore the layers of Brand will be used. Organizing and structuring the different interventions in a scheme as shown below will be the result of the research into the selected cases.

Open forms \ Selected 'S's	Site	Structure	Skin	Space plan	Stuff
Synchronous spaces	Stadshart Amstelveen / De Bogaard Rijswijk				
Punctuated		Stadshart Amstelveen			
Membrane			Forum Rotterdam		
Shell/type form			Forum Rotterdam		
Seed planning					De Bogaard Rijswijk

First idea of table for the analysis of interventions

To illustrate the idea of this scheme and its use of it, one example will be given briefly. The Forum Rotterdam, in line with the Lijnbaan, has made an extension on the roof of several stores for later infill, depending on the owner. The structure put on top/an extension of the façade leaves space for growth. This can be seen as an open form of the incomplete, shell. The gym already gave this part an infill with an extension. The shell type expresses in the façade with its materials and adds a space plan on top of the building. The building is part of a block and the roofs are connected. The growth of this intervention results in a gym that is now being connected to a roof terrace which can promote outdoor training at the gym. This form of growth can be structured as the open form, seed planning. The extension could grow a connection with the adjacent rooftop because of the context of it being developed into a roof terrace. This is one example of how one intervention can take place on different scale levels. The intervention tries to connect the users of the gym, to the roof terrace. This intervention enhanced the connection between a building and its users.

Where the first part of the research focuses on unravelling the different interventions and characteristics of a mall, and the next part is bringing the theory back together. After organizing the different interventions the scheme will show where the different open forms are being used in relation to which scale. The result will be a table where the different interventions are shown in the scales they are being used. This outcome of analysis can then inform the start of the design process. Depending on the scale of the problems of the mall, the result of the analysis can inform

the designer on which type of intervention functions on the related scale. The design process will take off from this part and starts with scenario testing. Scenarios can be the need for housing, the need for mixed-use functions in a mall, or more extremes such as the complete disappearance of shops. These scenarios are meant to test the ability of design under different circumstances. The last part starts with choosing a suitable case, that has one or more problems which will be the design case for the remainder of the project. The scheme below shows the flow of the methods that are being used.

Forum Rotterdam, one part (shell) empty, the other is filled (5)

	Group research	Group products	Personal research	Personal products
Q1	Investigating the mall *How buildings learn*	Comparable information on selected malls	Investigating characteristics *Machine en Theater* *Winkelcentra categoriaal onderzoek*	
	Investigating interventions	Summarized work of selected literature on interventions	Investigating interventions *Buildings and Dwelling* *How buildings learn*	
	Case studies of malls	Essence models of a mall		
P1				Research Plan
Q2	Indepth research on selected case studies and project cases	Ongoing collection of information	Scenario testing on selected project cases	Analysis of interventions on selected case studies.
			Extend the research as started in the research plan	Innovative strategy for the analyses of interventions
P2				Graduation plan
Q3		Start of design phase		
P3				
Q4				
P4				
P5				

RESEARCH

DESIGN

The scheme shows the research that will be done throughout the graduation year. Starting with individual and groupwork, and becoming more focused on the individual project as the year progresses

Relevance and positioning

This research plan described using the methods of Richard Sennett and project them on modern malls. Modern malls have different characteristics, one of them as mentioned earlier that they can be a closed structure in the city. Malls are now the topic of discussion, but in future research, there can be looked at structures in the city that has these same characteristics. For example the VINEX-neighbourhoods in the Netherlands.

These neighbourhoods have also the characteristic of being a closed structure in, or at the edge of a larger city. The open forms can then be tested as a method for interventions that may be needed in the future. The research will focus on enhancing connections between the building and its user on different scale levels.

The malls are the main topic of this research but illustrate an example of post-war buildings that are in need of research. Malls have transformed over time due to the different needs of the users. Adaptability is a character that earns a place in the heritage debate. A building that can adapt over time while remaining relevant is a building that adds value to a city I argue. These post-war buildings or complexes of buildings will possibly form a future part of our heritage and therefore it's important to understand what these buildings are and how they can keep playing a role in the future.

Example of a VINEX-neighbourhood, Ypenburg (6)

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Other illustrations are made by the author