

Delft University of Technology
Faculty of Architecture
Chair of Heritage and Design

Reflection Paper of the graduation project (2022-2023) of the Studio Heritage &
Architecture:
'Adapting 20th Century Heritage – The Modern Mall'

Chosen specific topic:

RETHINKING OF A TYPOLOGY

How can the theories of Den Heijers' dissertation "Managing the University Campus - Information to support real estate decisions" be applied in the analysis and revitalisation process of malls to make time-efficient, informed and optimal decisions about the future of vacant shopping malls?

The following reflection focuses on the learning experience gained during the Architecture Graduation Studio of the Delft University of Technology to obtain a Masters of Science in Architecture and Heritage from September 1, 2022, to June 26, 2023. The reflection on the content of the final project is combined with an introduction to the Graduation Studio and its topic as well as the presentation of the research and part of the resulting conclusions. The topics listed in the graduation manual will be dealt with, including the most important learnings.

The connection between the current generation of architecture and architects, the Delft University of Technology and the graduation studios on offer

We find ourselves in a time of upheaval and rethinking, triggered by a multitude of challenges and problems of our generation that have an impact both locally and globally. In this context, architecture has the potential to play an important role in solving some of these major challenges facing our society. In particular, they can make a major contribution to protecting the environment and combating climate change by reducing the ecological footprint of buildings through sustainable design and the use of environmentally friendly materials. This also includes the use and revitalisation of existing structures, thus reducing the number of new construction projects and protecting the environment (Schrami, 2021).

TU Delft has recognised the explosive nature and necessity of this topic and therefore offers the graduation studio Architecture and Heritage in the MSc Architecture, Urbanism and Building Sciences Track Architecture, which deals with the (further) development of already existing buildings. These often fall into the heritage sector and therefore require a more cautious approach and assessment of the existing.

If we consider the definition of heritage according to P. Howard, author of the book *Heritage - Management, Interpretation, Identity* (2003), there is no limit to what can fall within the scope of heritage. Thus he asks: "[...] what do people wish to conserve or collect, to protect from the ravages of time? The simple answer is 'everything'." (Howard, 2003, p. 54) This is usually less about preserving the material and making it available to the public than about non-material motives, such as the preservation of faith, emotion and events. (Howard, 2003)

Almost all people come into contact with malls in their lives. It may only be a fleeting encounter or a close bond based on the experience in this building. In both cases, the preservation, revitalisation or demolition of a mall is always an emotional matter worth protecting and developing to the best of one's ability.

The topic of this year's Graduation Studio Architecture and Heritage is therefore called *Adapting 20th Century Heritage - The Modern Mall*. The vacancy rate and the mostly still very good condition of malls make them predestined for revitalisation and are prompting more and more project developers to develop new concepts.

The Graduation Studio – Why Malls?

In the early 20th Century, shopping malls were originally envisioned as community centres for shopping, cultural activities and social interaction (Gruen & Smith, 1960). Over the years, however, the image of shopping malls changed to temples of pure consumption. (Norddeutscher Rundfunk, 2020)

Retail has always been one of the fastest-changing industries (Stumpf et al., 2016), which has suffered severely in recent years. The main reason for shrinking sales in stores is the change in people's shopping behaviour, leading to vacant storefronts as well as social and urban problems (Brinker & Sinning, 2011; Hertwig, 2014; Kube, 2003; Möhlenbruch, 2012).

The absence of visitors leads to a decrease in footfall, resulting in revenue losses for neighboring businesses (Radü, 2022). The decreasing attractiveness and identity of the area and increasing crime rates create a vicious cycle that needs to be stopped at first signs (Kube, 2003).

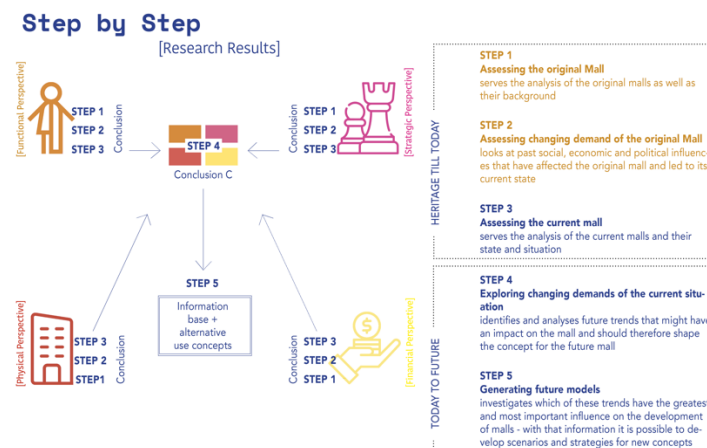
Building upon this problem, this year's graduation studio Heritage and Architecture is focusing on the revitalisation of selected Dutch shopping malls. Important questions such as:

"How could the shopping mall of mid 20th Century meet contemporary demands? What are the values of their modern design concepts? What is the importance for the residents and urban life? What is the future of the mall?" (Technology, 2023) were examined within the first semester. At the same time, each student developed an individual question to develop a design solution for a revitalisation strategy of a selected mall in the Netherlands with the help of the research carried out in the second semester.

The Research and how it influenced the Design

The graduation year of the Heritage and Architecture Studio is divided into two parts. The first semester was mainly concerned with historical research of shopping typologies, the research of intervention methods, studying new programmes and scenarios and researching the urban context of malls. The second semester focused on the development of a new concept and design for a selected shopping mall, in my case the shopping mall *In De Bogaard* in Rijswijk.

Part of the first semester was also the analysis of case studies of transformed malls. It was noticeable that a large part of the revitalisation projects had problems with smooth and on-schedule execution, which leads to a deterioration of the vacancy and the condition of the buildings. I was very interested in the cause and decided to dedicate my major topic to solving this problem. After finding out that the reason for these delays was the lack of information of the decision-makers and the difficulty of coordinating the stakeholders involved (Mok et al., 2014), I developed a tool in the form of a step-by-step plan that can be given to the decision-makers in a revitalisation project to ease these circumstances. This way it is possible to create a detailed information base on which time-efficient, informed and optimal decisions about the future concept of vacant shopping malls can be made:



Applying my step-by-step plan to the national level of Dutch shopping malls provided valuable insights into the most important success and failure factors of a mall at the time of its construction and in its current state: a mall should never be built as a replacement for a city centre, the adaption to the demand is very important, the number of social functions has a direct influence on the footfall and thus the success of the mall and the division of malls into four categories (neighbourhood, district, city and regional shopping mall) ensures more success. At the same time, I found that many malls take too long to adapt to changes in society and that there is a non-adaptability to digitalisation. The application of steps 4 and 5 also led to the following mall strategies: Need for housing; Need for care and elderly homes; Need for mixed functions; Comply with climate goals; Energy sufficient malls; Making malls energy-friendly and sustainable; Malls as social function.

This resulted in the following possible groups of developments of a mall: 1. Transformation to housing; 2. Adaptive reuse (transition to different uses); 3. Transform into sustainable buildings to preserve; 4. Preservation of mall function.

These learnings were directly incorporated into the subsequent concept development for the shopping mall *In de Bogaard* and thus form a bridge from theory-based research to practical design.

The same step-by-step plan was then applied to the project level of an individual mall. The shopping mall *In de Bogaard* was developed in 1963 according to the plans of the architect R. Zwolsman and opened by Mayor A. Bogaard as the second city centre of the city of Rijswijk. During its lifetime, the shopping centre has been hit by a total of three fires, all of which involved extensive renovation and extension work. Like most Dutch shopping malls, *In de Bogaard* was not spared from the economic crisis in 2008 and since then, 30% of the mall has been

vacant. (Rijswijk, 2019)

As a result of the vacancy, the shopping mall lost its attractiveness and the buildings and their surroundings are deteriorating. The aim of my graduation project was therefore to develop a new concept for the shopping mall In de Bogaard with the help of the step-by-step plan.

Important findings of the application of the step-by-step plan to the mall In de Bogaard were, in addition to spatial recommendations for improving the area, the realisation that spaces for social interaction are lacking, but that there is a great need for the reintroduction of culture and community space. In addition to the general housing shortage in the city of Rijswijk and the requirements for a diverse, lively community hub, this led to the development of a new use concept for the mall, which was then transformed in my design into a diverse new district of Rijswijk with a wide range of functions.

In conclusion, the developed step-by-step plan was the basis for the creation of a new concept for the mall In De Boogard, which means that research and design go hand in hand.

Possible Improvements on how to incorporate the design into the research

Due to the topic and the clear structure of the research, there was unfortunately little exchange from design to research. The division of the graduation year into two semesters plays a significant role in this. However, there are possibilities to let the research be more influenced by the design process. The design process that is carried out offers an opportunity to identify more topics that are either not given enough attention in the step-by-step plan or are not even part of it. An example would be the extension of the investigation of the users from the functional perspective. In the design process, it became clear that the development of a new concept depends heavily on how people move, stay and feel between buildings and the different functions. The examination of these points could be grouped under the heading of Routes and Behaviour and help to add detail to the step-by-step plan.

Assessment of the academic and societal value, scope and implication of my topic as well as transferability to different fields

The outcome of this project differs significantly from my goal at the beginning of the project. I started my work with the ambition to apply the step-by-step plan for the management of University Campus developed by Den Heijer comprehensively and completely to the typology of the mall and to extend it to the heritage context of the studio. I achieved this goal partly with the recommendations for action per step and the addition of two steps for the investigation of the history and the extension to the heritage context. However, it quickly became clear that applying the step-by-step plan to all CREM-Perspectives would far exceed the scope of this project. Consequently, I reduced the selection from four to two perspectives, which were the functional and physical perspectives. They are based on architectural analysis and thus provide the architectural context within the context of the graduation studio. However, due to this reduction, information on the financial and strategic perspectives was missing, although they have the same importance in a revitalisation process.

The step-by-step plan developed, to the extent described in this paper, therefore represents a tool for basic identification, and just partly for a detailed in-depth analysis of the typology of shopping malls.

Furthermore, information gathering in the application of my step-by-step plan proved to be very time-consuming and difficult. Unlike churches for example, there is no comprehensive database on the condition of the malls, the number, the stakeholders, the funds that can be mobilised for revitalisation or the current functions in the malls' premises (e.g. adaptive reuse). This is because most shopping malls were built in the 1960s and therefore only a few fall within the scope of listed buildings.

However, this absence of a database also provides opportunities, as the step-by-step plan, in its application to both the national and project level, provides the basis for the creation of such a database. This is inspired by Iris Moons' Master's thesis (Moons, 2020), which aimed to create a dedicated database for churches that can be used to help decide how to develop an underused church.

In conclusion, my step-by-step plan contributed significantly to the development and decision-making of the new concept of my project In de Boogard. It enabled me to incorporate new information about the success and

failure factors of the general typology of the mall into the concept for my design project of the shopping mall In De Boogard. Furthermore, the application at the project level not only examined typical analysis criteria, such as the sequence of streets, typologies and users but also criteria such as the influence of revitalisation concepts of the surroundings, the function of the material of the façade and small-scale future social developments. At the same time, however, it is clear from this critique that the detail and depth of the step-by-step plan can be expanded. This can take place in future research with a larger scope than this final thesis. In this way, the step-by-step plan can make an even stronger contribution to facilitating and structuring the gathering of information about the mall to be revitalised.

The extension of Den Heijer's step-by-step plan to include the analysis of the past and the detailed commercial description in each step makes it possible to apply the tool in principle to other building typologies and other fields of research. By enabling a shorter revitalisation process, my research also has an impact on the immediate social environment of a mall. At the same time, the surrounding residents and other social interest groups are included in the step-by-step plan and thus have a high level of participation in the future concept and functions of the shopping mall.

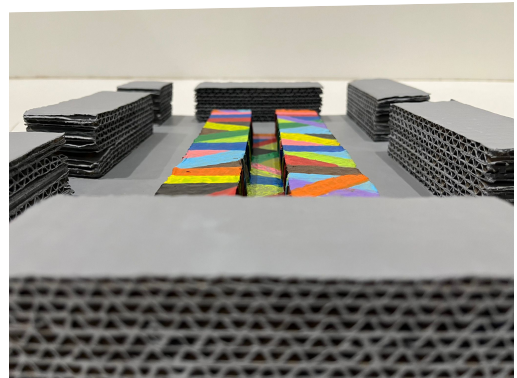
How do you assess the value of your way of working (your approach, your used methods, used methodology)

Research

I come from a Bachelor of Arts degree programme and had never written a paper in this form before, apart from the mandatory history thesis at TU Delft in MSc2. Therefore, it was not easy for me to develop a content structure at the beginning. However, with the help of my fellow students, tutors and other outside friends, I managed to achieve the desired goal. I learned a lot about writing scientific papers, found pleasure in writing and was confirmed once again that asking for help and other opinions can work wonders. An activity that is especially important in the study of architecture.

Going further, I would like to divide this section into two parts: The time before and after I set my current question.

Part of the first quarter of the graduation year was to design an essence model of a typical mall. With my group, we built a model that represented the different functions and stakeholders of a mall by using many different colours:



This model and the discussions about it sparked an interest in the different roles of stakeholders in a mall revitalisation process. At the same time, we were dealing with intervention strategies as part of the analysis of shopping malls. Therefore, I thought it would be logical to be guided by these two topics and created the following research question for P1: *To what extent do the different stakeholders of vacant retail spaces in inner cities influence the selection of certain intervention strategies and to what extent can ideal-typical utilization concepts for these vacant spaces be concluded from it?*

Unfortunately, it turned out that the interventions carried out by the stakeholders did not allow for a pattern and a specific allocation to certain stakeholders. However, I learned a lot about the goals and intentions of stakeholders and typical new-use concepts for malls, which helped me a lot in my following and final research question. Looking back, it can be said that I was too driven by the main themes of the studio. I had difficulty detaching myself from the big overarching themes and using my interests more to set a focus.

The second and final question *How can the theories of Den Heijers' dissertation "Managing the University Campus - Information to support real estate decisions" be applied in the analysis and revitalisation process of malls to make time efficient, informed and optimal decisions about the future of vacant shopping malls?* was largely accompanied by a literature review through its relation to a specific theory. The key theory was the dissertation by Den Heijer (Heijer, 2011) and the master thesis by Moons (Moons, 2020). Studying these two

papers formed the basis for further research. They also gave me inspiration for the structure of my project, which enabled me to follow a chronological sequence of my research from the beginning: 1. understanding the main theories of the DAS-Frame, CREM-Perspectives and decision theory; 2. establishing and justifying the extension of my step-by-step plan; 3. applying the step-by-step plan to the national level and my project In de Boogard.

Design

Looking at the design process that followed the initial research results, it is worth noting that I significantly underestimated the size of the project at the beginning. However, due to my urban planning background, I knew how to approach a project of this size and considered not only the already chosen structural focus area but the whole urban context and approached the focus area from the outside. This helped me a lot to structure my "block" and to incorporate the conclusions from the research step by step.

Dilemmas and ethical issues

The insights I got during my research within the area of management and economics were often very challenging, as they did not correspond to my field of expertise. Due to my lack of knowledge in this field, gathering information about revitalisation strategies, decision-making theories, and the roles and interactions of different stakeholders took longer than if I had been studying the topic of urban, private and public space improvement for example. This was because many technical terms and strategies I had never heard of before, basic knowledge of management and economics, had to be researched and understood first. Following Aristotele's theorem: "The more you know, the more you don't know."

Looking back, however, dealing with this field is by no means a dilemma. My interest grew with each piece of information, and I enjoyed applying and discussing my ever-growing knowledge in my project.

The fact that the field of construction management reawakened my interest confirmed the thoughts I had already developed in MSc 2. At that time, I took the BKLaunch course as an elective module, which had the goal of testing individual student ideas for their marketability. I have rarely learned so much new in such a short time and was therefore very pleased that the topic of my final project, unintentionally, became a combination of architecture and management.

In conclusion, although the topics of my final project were very challenging and time-consuming, I learned a lot of new things and found myself enjoying the subject matter more and more as time went on. This turning point in the learning curve was so crucial for me that it should be mentioned here. From potential dilemma to enjoyment.

One of the biggest difficulties for me was the overlapping of the different topics I was researching. These could be divided into three areas. On the one hand, there was the information gathering of the topics of the graduation studio about intervention strategies, the typology of the mall and the analysis of revitalised malls. There was my research topic about the problems in the revitalisation process, the different tasks of the stakeholders and decision theories in management. And lastly the transformation of these topics into the preliminary design for P2. Until P2, I had the feeling that all these topic areas would stand alone and rather collide with each other than work together. Researching these themes took a lot of time and I found myself in a process of compromise which put a lot of pressure on me as I always felt I didn't know enough about individual themes. It was only shortly before P2 that I felt that the conclusions of all the thematic areas were slowly leading to a common result. During the third quarter, when it was time to start documenting the results of the research, the connections became clearer and clearer.

If I could give a message to the students who take this graduation studio in the future, it would be: *Even if it seems confusing at the beginning, it is important to look at different topics separately and to understand them. Only then you can apply the knowledge you have acquired and the moment will come when the topics combine themselves and the connections become clearer. This process takes time and this time is not lost, but has its purpose!*

Closing words

I would like to conclude this reflection with my own position on Heritage in Architecture. I have already described the economic and environmental aspects in my introduction and can only agree with this position.

However, as a student of architecture, dealing with the already-built environment and cultural heritage also has other interesting angles. The intellectual origins of architecture are shaped by cultural, historical and social influences and have always been closely linked to human needs for shelter, security and cultural expression. These human needs change continuously as people evolve. Thus, buildings always reflect the spirit of their time. For instance, the structure and installations of old buildings reflect the state of the art of the time, and the layout of buildings can reveal a lot about social composition, demands and circumstances. All in all, it is possible to learn a lot about our society through the analysis of buildings and this is what makes the field of heritage in architecture so important and worth protecting. The relatively young typology of the mall reflects the zeitgeist of a society that was slowly rebuilding itself economically as well as socially after the Second World War and therefore reflects many impressions and important milestones of the people of Europe. Thus, the graduation studio 'Adapting 20th Century Heritage - The Modern Mall!' contributes to the understanding of European society and forms another important part of architecture.

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