

# Graduation Plan

Master of Science Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences



## Graduation Plan: All tracks

Submit your Graduation Plan to the Board of Examiners ([Examencommissie-BK@tudelft.nl](mailto:Examencommissie-BK@tudelft.nl)), Mentors and Delegate of the Board of Examiners one week before P2 at the latest.

The graduation plan consists of at least the following data/segments:

Personal information	
Name	Isabella Maria Mortensen
Student number	4616367

Studio		
Name / Theme	The Modern Mall, MSc 3+4 Adapting 20 <sup>th</sup> century Heritage	
Main mentor	Lidy Meijers	Design
Second mentor	Lidwine Spoormans	Research
Argumentation of choice of the studio	<p>The main motivation for choosing the studio Heritage and Architecture is because many buildings that don't seem to "fit" anymore, e.g., their functions have become obsolete, should not be overlooked, even when they haven't received a monument status (yet). By reevaluation through research, the hidden potentials of these buildings can be (re)discovered. It is the job of architects to find out what because it would be a waste to tear them down.</p> <p>I chose this studio because I was fascinated with monofunctional complexes like shopping malls, a function that is also becoming increasingly vacant. When thinking of a mall, is this only a place where people go to do their shopping for errands? Or is it more than that? Is it also where people have social gatherings, go to events, relax, and drink coffee? And how do the public spaces facilitate these activities?</p>	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	Life between stores – a redesign based on the changing use of public spaces for developing high-quality places
Goal	
Location:	Winkelcentrum Leyweg in The Hague (Redesign and research) and The Westfield Mall of the Netherlands in Leidschendam (research)
The posed problem,	[Problem Statement]
research questions and	[Research Question]
design assignment in which these result.	[Design Assignment]

Multiple societal problems impact shopping malls and consequently threaten the quality of the surrounding public spaces. These problems are subdivided into four disciplines: economic, urban, political, and social, in that order. First of all, an increase in vacancy rates can cause fewer visitors to come to the mall, resulting in a decrease in funds for the maintenance and improvement of, among others, public spaces (Van Zweeden, 2009). This could lead to the risk of empty unsafe public spaces (Jacobs, 1961/1992). Secondly, outdated modernist ideals of urban planning, which have been overlooking the human scale in design, are still present in today's cities. Wide-dimensioned streets, tall buildings without any contact with the ground floor level and large lawns without any purpose are not pleasant for pedestrians to stay in (Gehl, 2010). Since many of the malls were built during that modernist time, they also risk having these defects. Third, privatisation of the public domain has led to controlling public spaces and excluding specific behaviour of people, which could be performed in a regular outside public space (Giampino et al., 2012). The tendency of privatisation is also present in shopping malls, like the Westfield Mall of the Netherlands in Leidschendam. Whether this is a problem cannot yet be said with certainty. Fourth, the growing population can lead to rapid and uncontrolled urbanisation, leading to the risk of losing public spaces (Unesco, 2011). Also, transforming malls into housing could cause the existing public spaces to disappear and be modified into private places (NOS, 2022). All these factors can potentially cause a lower quality in public spaces of malls.

The main problem of this research is the possibility of neglect in the design and maintenance of public spaces in places where they are taking up a large portion, such as shopping malls. Like any other public space, they are important to pay attention to. Malls are places where people gather and participate. Here, people can pursue activities other than running errands, such as socialising or relaxing. Places like malls are therefore essential. Public places, when well designed, enable cities to come to life and can accommodate activities for their visitors (Gehl, 2010). Besides this, they give an identity to a place, encourage meetings, and increase safety, health, and happiness (Jacobs, 1961/1992). These advantages increase when the quality of the public spaces is high according to the quality criteria of Jan Gehl. The main question of this research is, therefore:

*How has/can the quality of Dutch post-war shopping malls be improved by urban and architectural interventions according to the urban quality criteria set by Jan Gehl?*

The sub-questions of this research are:

- 1. What are public spaces in Dutch post-war shopping malls?*
- 2. What were the reasons for urban and architectural design interventions in different public spaces over time?*
- 3. Which of Gehl's quality criteria are present in the public spaces after interventions?*
- 4. How can the public spaces in malls be improved according to their use?*

Shopping malls have undergone several interventions over the years, also in public spaces. Why were these interventions necessary? Did they want to improve the quality? How and why? In this research, the number of criteria which were or are still

present in the design/planning through urban and architectural interventions of the public spaces will be discovered and then compared with the current use of visitors to find out which criteria are still present or perhaps should be brought back because of its value. Then we can state which of Gehl's criteria are primarily present in public spaces of shopping malls and which ones could be more present when redesigning the mall.

Each criterium must meet different design indicators to fulfil it. One can determine whether one criterium is present when multiple indicators are present. All the criteria must be present to achieve high quality in a public space. When a few are missing, they could be achieved through design by applying the design indicators in future plans.

This research aims to learn from the public spaces' "mistakes" and discover the reasoning for doing the interventions. This is done to determine which criteria or themes are essential to maintain and which ones are still missing and/or need to be brought back to improve the spaces in the future. The goal is to design a public (indoor or outdoor) space where people want to be for a more extended period, resulting in lively places with various activities. During the design process, the results can be used as input and a way to reflect on the design.

## **Process**

### **Method description**

The complete research for this graduation studio consists of four parts, which also consist of the four sub-questions. The methodology is both related to the design methods and process.

For the first question, the following methods are used:

- Literature research

The different definitions of what a public space is being compared, with placing the attention on the mall, specifically.

- Case study research

The definitions from the previous method are compared with the two different mall cases to describe how definitions take shape in practice. To do so, enough information on the public spaces of the two different cases has to be gathered, meaning how they are described according to the zoning plans. Here also can be revealed how they have changed by looking into former zoning plans. The first conclusions can be drawn from this type of space by looking at the different ownerships (municipality/private) and their designated use.

For the second question, the following methods are used:

- Literature and archival research on the case studies

The data needed for discovering the interventions and how they have taken shape are old photos and drawings from the archive, old newspapers describing the reasoning for change and documents such as urban plans (masterplans), zoning plans and descriptions of the development of the neighbourhoods.

- Case study research

Also, the cases are visited and photographed to compare them with the former situation.

- Drawing analysis

Drawing methods are used to analyse the information as much as possible to create an overview of all the interventions in a similar style and format. Site plans, sections, and photo comparisons will be the result of this method. The interventions and reasoning for change will be listed and related to the urban quality criteria of Gehl.

For the third question, the following methods are used:

- Observation

The five different locations of public spaces are visited. The observation methods of the Gehl Institute and Jan Gehl are used to evaluate which criteria are present. The behaviour of the visitors is observed whether they are walking and where or performing stationary activities and how many. Also, the space itself is observed. Where are the formal/informal sitting areas? Where are standing places? Where are the views for following a direction? The information is collected on multiple days and times to gather a complete overview of the spaces. According to the behaviour and observation of the places, the criteria which are now present can be listed for each space.

- Drawing analysis

Drawing methods are used to analyse the information as much as possible to create an overview of all the criteria in a similar style and format to easily compare the similarities and differences between the different public spaces to determine when and where the criteria are most present.

- Quality criteria:

The urban quality criteria of Gehl, consisting of twelve, are merged into eight criteria or themes to make the research more organised. They are 1. Protection – traffic, 2. Protection – safety, 3. Comfort – walking, 4. Comfort – Staying, 5. Comfort – seeing, hearing, and talking, 6. Comfort – activities and interaction, 7. Enjoyment – climate and 8. Enjoyment – Aesthetic qualities. Number 8 is very subjective and, therefore, more difficult to find through observation. Consequently, it would be best to do a questionnaire for this criterium. The criteria of Gehl that are primarily present will be compared with the data of the previous step to find out which criteria are new, and which have disappeared.

The fourth part is the most important for the design because here are the conclusions. For the fourth question, the following methods are used:

- Evaluation

By comparing the public spaces over time, we can find out which criteria are mostly common in malls and are, according to users' behaviour of users still desirable. It also gives an overview of which criteria are not present and could be added to the public spaces of a mall. Besides this, the differences between an indoor and outdoor public space are mapped and based on these results a decision can be made whether some spaces are working better (or not) indoors. The results can give an overview of what is already working and what could be added to the redesign of the mall. For the redesign, a mix of functions will be done, so other criteria are probably desirable. For the mall part, the criteria could stay the same.

The research conclusions make the first design goal: improving the quality of the public spaces in the malls.

### **Literature and general practical preference**

The literature selected for the theoretical research mainly focuses on the concept of public space to understand the definition of public spaces in malls in general and how public spaces within a mall can differ by analysing the case studies. This will be explored in the first question. Furthermore, the value of public spaces is studied through the theories of Jan Gehl, which elaborate on the use of public spaces and the urban and architectural elements needed to stimulate more activity. He compiled a list of twelve urban planning criteria that public space must meet to achieve high quality. Each criterium consists of the urban and architectural features to stimulate a particular use of the space (see method description). These criteria are examined in the second and third questions of this research. The literature research consists of research into the following sources:

Djukic, A., & Cvetkovic, M. (n.d.). *Shopping mall vs Open public space in consumer culture* [Conference paper]. The University of Belgrade.

Burden, A. (2014, April 7). *How public spaces make cities work* [Video]. TED Talks. [https://www.ted.com/talks/amanda\\_burden\\_how\\_public\\_spaces\\_make\\_cities\\_work](https://www.ted.com/talks/amanda_burden_how_public_spaces_make_cities_work)

Gehl, J. (2011, January 17). *Life Between Buildings: Using Public Space* (Sixth Edition). Island Press.

Gehl, J., & Rogers, L. R. (2010, September 6). *Cities for People* (Illustrated). Island Press.

Gehl, J., & Svarre, B. (2013). *How to Study Public Life* (Illustrated). Island Press.

Gehl Institute. (n.d.-a). *Tools Archive*. Gehl People. Retrieved October 18, 2022, from <https://gehlpeople.com/tools/>

O'Donnell, P. M., Tagemouati, N. L., Stephens, R., & Hender, M. (2016). INCLUSIVE PUBLIC SPACES. In *CULTURE URBAN FUTURE, GLOBAL REPORT on CULTURE for SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT* (pp. 185–191). United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000260640>

Yang, L. (2015, September). *Reasons Why Public Space is Important*. Culture Days.

<https://culturedays.ca/en/blog/why-public-spaces-matter>

The other part of the research consists of a case study analysis of 5 public spaces in a total of two shopping malls. The selection for the first case, Winkelcentrum Leyweg (built in 1960) in The Hague, will consist of three public spaces because each has significantly different features. The selection for the Mall of the Netherlands (former "Leidsenhage" built in 1970) in Leidschendam consists of two public spaces: a square and a street. The street has a lot in common with the other streets in the mall, so the selection is limited to these two.

## Reflection

1. What is the relation between your graduation (project) topic, the studio topic (if applicable), your master track (A,U,BT,LA,MBE), and your master programme (MSc AUBS)?

The graduation topic is discovering how existing public spaces in shopping malls can be improved by learning which criteria are needed to create places with more diverse activities for people according to the standard of Jan Gehl. By considering bringing back the criteria which used to be there but aren't anymore, former values can be restored. The Leyweg is selected for the redesign but is not listed as a monument. Still, being the largest mall of the former post-war redevelopment of southwest The Hague, it has hidden potential to become listed as heritage. The modernist structures and architecture are mostly still intact and resemble their time. Besides this, the shops are becoming more and more vacant, and by improving the public spaces and attracting more people, this can be reversed and lead to new developments. The studio subject fits into heritage and architecture but also touches on urbanism because of the topic of public spaces. Therefore, this subject is multidisciplinary. By discovering the use of people, psychological logic is considered in the design and forms a basis for making design decisions.

2. What is the relevance of your graduation work in the larger social, professional and scientific framework?

Generating lively public spaces focusing on people will influence people's lives and transform wasted abandoned spaces into thriving, inviting spaces where people will come. Successful areas attract people and therefore have power (Burden, 2014). It will benefit economic growth, help build a sense of community through placemaking and create an identity (Yang, 2015). This can also be relevant for the mall by transforming it into more than a shopping place.

Public spaces can create value (Burden, 2014). Also, in the heritage debate, public spaces are recognised as important as a quality for urban living. Public spaces as places for people and nature can be an equaliser for people and benefit a more inclusive society. Abandoned structures can have new value by focusing on public spaces (O'Donnell, 2016); this could also be the case for vacant shopping malls. By highlighting the qualities of the existing public spaces in this research, they could be included in the value assessment that can impact the redesign of these structures.

The contribution to the academic field will be a comparative analysis of 5 different public spaces in malls based on their interventions and their use to determine which criteria were mainly standard before and which ones now concerning the shopping mall function. The criteria of Gehl are used concerning malls' public spaces, which was also not done before. Also, a contribution to society can be made by formulating which design elements can be added to public spaces to improve public areas. By restoring former positive design elements, the places can also be revived in their former glory.

## Bibliography

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