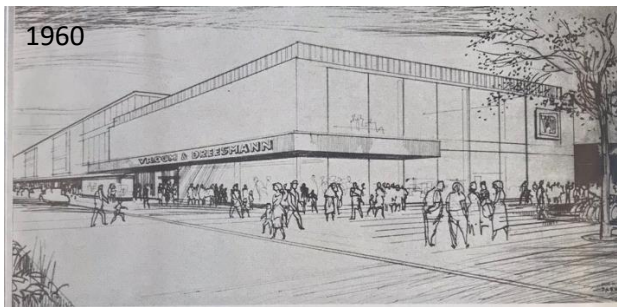


## REFLECTION

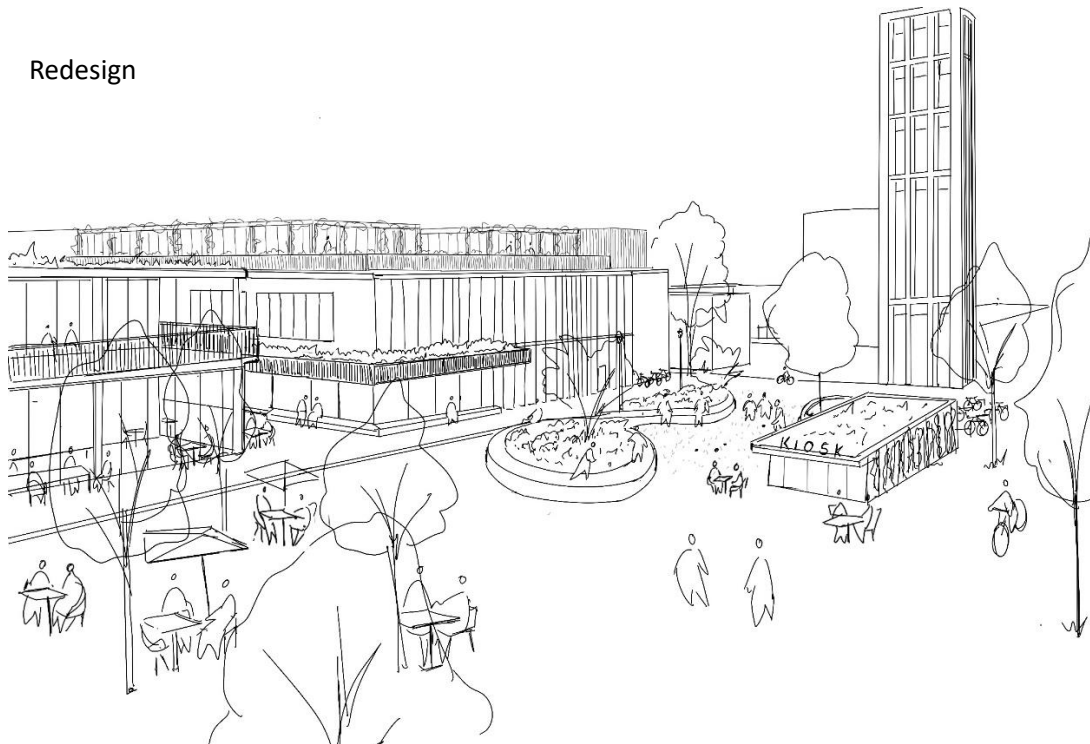
*Life between Stores – a redesign based on the current use of public spaces to reactivate the everyday life of Winkelcentrum Leyweg in The Hague and make it more a part of the city.*

Research case: Winkelcentrum Leidsenhage (now: Mall of the Netherlands), Leidschendam

Research & design case: Winkelcentrum Leyweg, Den Haag



### Redesign



*Heritage & Architecture Graduation Studio 2022-2023*

*Adapting 20th century heritage, the Modern Mall*

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15-06-2023

## RELATION TO STUDIO TOPIC, MASTER TRACK AND PROGRAM

1. *What is the relation between your graduation project topic, your master track (Ar, Ur, BT, LA, MBE), and your master programme (MSc AUBS)?*

### The origin and downfall of the modern mall

The concept of the modern mall can largely be attributed to Victor Gruen, an architect who came up with the idea to place all shops in one building or designated area for more comfortable shopping. These “pedestrian paradises” could be reached by car focused on the shopper's needs (fig. 1). The phenomenon first emerged in the United States during the 1960s and subsequently exerted its influence on Europe (Hardwick, 2003). The number of constructed malls rapidly increased after the second world war, with Winkelcentrum Leyweg in The Hague being one of them built in 1959 (Valentijn, 2002). Beginning in 2008, there was a gradual rise in vacancy rates in Leyweg which can be partly attributed to the economic downturn and, later, to the increasing popularity of e-commerce, resulting in a decline in foot traffic. Store vacancies have become a trend in recent years, resulting in a loss of economic activity, decreased investment levels, and, subsequently, even more store vacancies. This has created a vicious cycle causing significant challenges for the retail industry (Van Zweeden, 2019).

### The future of the mall

Malls are a part of the existing building stock, containing stores that risk becoming more and more vacant in The Netherlands. These monofunctional complexes are becoming vulnerable. Careful consideration of the existing program is necessary since the monofunctional are becoming increasingly vulnerable. To ensure the long-term viability of these complexes, it is imperative to develop a strategic approach that prioritises flexibility.

Renewing existing buildings and areas is gaining importance, with sustainability goals as the main driver. As a result, improving the existing stock is increasingly central to the work of architects. More and more often, architectural projects involve the redesign, adaptation, densification, or transformation of existing structures. Starting from an existing building or area with all its good and bad characteristics requires the architect to relate to what is already there.

One of the key goals of the MSc track Architecture is to draw on “the rich architectural culture of the Netherlands and “to develop creative and innovative building projects that use design to deal with the technical, social and spatial challenges encountered in the built environment” (TU Delft, n.d.). Malls, a building typology in this architectural culture, is usually positioned in the centre of neighbourhoods. They have been an integral part of the Dutch retail landscape where people, besides shopping, take a break, catch up or rest in public spaces. When more stores become vacant, the surrounding public places lose relevance, and this part of everyday life disappears.

Since these complexes, with their central location, have played an important role after the war, the question arises of their future purpose to stay relevant. This has led to a need for a new solution in the shape of a redesign by architects to discover, protect and, if necessary, restore its values. To adapt the malls, it is important to find out what values these malls have, which can be included in the repurposing and creation of a future-proof and relevant outcome. Assessing values is a key process in the identification of heritage significance. Based on this, different tactics or methods can be used to make a successful redesign. This thought process plays an important role in the section on Heritage & Architecture (Modern Mall studiotext, 2022).

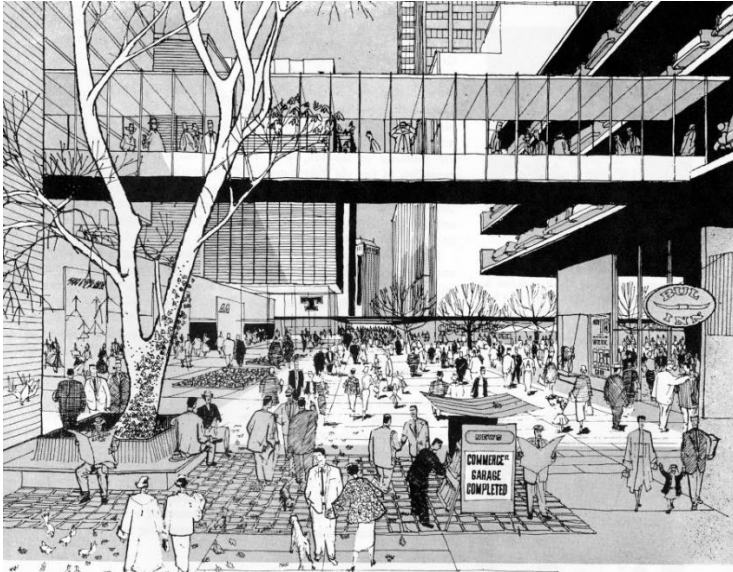


Fig. 1. Transforming Fort Worth, Texas, into a pedestrian paradise (Gruen, 1956)

## RELATION RESEARCH AND DESIGN

2. *How did your research influence your design/recommendations, and how did the design/recommendations influence your research?*

### The effect of public spaces

When choosing my graduation topic, I thought about the fact that a large part of public life disappears when malls are growing to be vacant. Public spaces occupy a large part of the mall in the form of hallways, galleries, squares, and food courts, which will not be used when the stores are closed. In that sense, they rely on each other. This research aims to develop a method to reactivate vacant malls by means of investing in the quality of public spaces through design. When this quality is reached, attractive public space can complement the stores and help create an environment that is more than just a place to buy products—offering an alternative experience to e-commerce hence remaining a relevant mall/destination. When public spaces are well-designed, clean, safe, and accessible, they can attract more visitors and create a positive image of the surrounding area. By encouraging people to linger, spend time doing activities, and socialise in the area, public spaces can increase the overall economic activity and vitality of the surrounding area. When there are conditions for sitting in combination with a good climate for leisure, people will start interacting with each other. With appropriate, high-quality public spaces, the mall can be transformed from a single-use destination just for shopping to a location where consumers can do their shopping but also relax, meet, and enjoy themselves, and ultimately a better life by making it more attractive as an alternative to e-commerce (Bates, 2013; Carmona et al., 2004).

### Quality criteria guide the recommendations for the redesign.

A part of daily life can occur in the malls, where people can also meet, relax, and enjoy themselves besides shopping. How the public spaces are used determines for a large part whether this quality has been reached. Design attributes are primarily responsible for people to use a space in a certain way. This can be the width of a street, the placement of a bench or an element that offers protection from the climate. To analyse the use of these public spaces, the 12 quality criteria of Jan Gehl concerning the pedestrian landscape have been applied as a theoretical framework (fig. 2., Gehl, 2010). Through

on-site research involving the observation of specific criteria in public spaces, it has been possible to identify the architectural or urban attributes that define a criterion by comparing two malls. With this, it has been possible to pinpoint where the challenges lie for Winkelcentrum Leyweg. When an attribute was missing, it was possible to make a recommendation for this challenge (fig. 3). Based on all these recommendations; it has been possible to formulate design principles which form the basis of the redesign for Leyweg. These principles are derived from the book *Soft City* (2019) by David Sim, who is professionally closely connected to Jan Gehl in his work. They share similar thoughts, but Sims' ideas focus on what hands-on urban and architectural principles can create more liveable, vibrant, and human-centred cities in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. One of his principles is a "sense of control and identity". When clearly defined where people must go and which zones are for whom, it will give their users more clarity and a feeling of safety and security, which is a criterion of Gehl. Besides this, people will know how to behave, for instance, where to walk or sit, which are the two other criteria of Gehl (fig. 4). This can be reached through clarity between public and private (clear entrances for dwellings), enclosure, fronts and backs and useful edge zones.

The city at eye level: 12 quality criteria

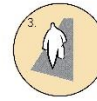
Protection	<p><b>PROTECTION AGAINST TRAFFIC AND ACCIDENTS — FEELING SAFE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protection for pedestrians</li> <li>Eliminating fear of traffic</li> </ul>	<p><b>PROTECTION AGAINST CRIME AND VIOLENCE — FEELING SECURE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lively public realm</li> <li>Eyes on the street</li> <li>Overlapping functions day and night</li> <li>Good lighting</li> </ul>	<p><b>PROTECTION AGAINST UNPLEASANT SENSORY EXPERIENCES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wind</li> <li>Rain/snow</li> <li>Cold/heat</li> <li>Pollution</li> <li>Dust, noise, glare</li> </ul>
	<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES TO WALK</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Room for walking</li> <li>No obstacles</li> <li>Good surfaces</li> <li>Accessibility for everyone</li> <li>Interesting façades</li> </ul>	<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES TO STAND/STAY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Edge effect/ attractive zones for standing/staying</li> <li>Supports for standing</li> </ul>	<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES TO SIT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Zones for sitting</li> <li>Utilizing advantages: view, sun, people</li> <li>Good places to sit</li> <li>Benches for resting</li> </ul>
	<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES TO SEE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reasonable viewing distances</li> <li>Unhindered sightlines</li> <li>Interesting views</li> <li>Lighting (when dark)</li> </ul>	<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES TO TALK AND LISTEN</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low noise levels</li> <li>Street furniture that provides "talkscapes"</li> </ul>	<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES FOR PLAY AND EXERCISE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invitations for creativity, physical activity, exercise and play</li> <li>By day and night</li> <li>In summer and winter</li> </ul>
Delight	<p><b>SCALE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Buildings and spaces designed to human scale</li> </ul>	<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES TO ENJOY THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF CLIMATE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sun/shade</li> <li>Heat/coolness</li> <li>Breeze</li> </ul>	<p><b>POSITIVE SENSORY EXPERIENCES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good design and detailing</li> <li>Good materials</li> <li>Fine views</li> <li>Trees, plants, water</li> </ul>

Source: Gehl, Gemzøe, Kirknæs, Søndergaard, "New City Life," The Danish Architectural Press, 2006. Further developed: Gehl Architects — Urban Quality Consultants, 2009.

Fig. 2. The twelve quality criteria of Gehl

# Recommendations walking -> design

The movement in pedestrian areas



<p>Winkelcentrum Leyweg</p>	<p>The Mall of the Netherlands</p>	<p>Zoning of walking and sitting areas through material</p>
<p>Winkelcentrum Leyweg, 2022</p>	<p>Winkelcentrum Leyweg, 1963</p>	<p>Avoidance of too many footway interruptions to create enough space for walking near the edges -&gt; Pergola-showcases.</p>
<p>Winkelcentrum Leyweg</p>	<p>Strøget, Copenhagen</p>	<p>Maintaining enough space for walking while reducing distance and scale of shops.</p>

Fig. 3. Recommendations for the design for the criterion - walking (own figure, 2023).

Challenges Leyweg Affecting the quality of the public spaces	Recommendations Based on interventions and the comparisons	Design principles Base for the design concept
  <p>Insufficient overlap of functions</p>	<p>Overlap between day and night functions</p>	<p>Concentrated and walkable</p>
  <p>Vacant or dark facades without interaction the streets and squares</p>	<p>"Pergola showcases", lit &amp; open shopwindows, housing upper floors</p>	<p>Layering of functions with an active public ground floor</p>
  <p>Lack of human scale: large squares without activity</p>	<p>Smaller dimensions of spaces or eyecatchers and zoning for places to walk, stop and rest</p>	<p>Human scale</p>
  <p>No clearly defined spaces for use</p> <p>walking?</p>	<p>A hierarchy of identifiable territories with clarity of public and private</p>	<p>Sense of Control and identity</p> <p>(Sim, 2019)</p>

Fig. 4. Challenges translated into recommendations and design principles (own figure, 2023).

## **ASSESSMENT OF APPROACH / METHODOLOGY**

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

### Quality over quantity

For the research, I analysed six different public spaces. By looking at the interventions that have taken place, I think it has been too extensive since they were quite similar, and this analysis could have also sufficed with one public space for each mall.

### Scaling down

Although attempting to detect the presence of all twelve criteria, I elaborated on four in more detail. This was also done because criteria such as opportunities to play and exercise or protection against traffic and accidents were already not highly applicable to these public spaces of the malls because of their focus on retail.

### What users think

Besides this, it would also have been better to ask users what they thought could be improved in the existing public spaces besides observing their behaviour alone. That way, it would be more grounded on which criteria were present and which were not. An issue in repurposing the new building has been the question of what the people in the local neighbourhood and the future users would need for the redesign. I have based my information on my observations of public spaces to discover how public space is used and how it could be used.

Therefore, it was not possible to make a redesign for the Leyweg based on this research alone. To make a well-thought-out program of requirements fitted for the neighbourhood, it was necessary to discover the goals set by the municipality and perform a site analysis. The results of the public spaces gave the first nudge for the redesign, and the additional research helped shape the rest and fill the gaps. In the end, I can conclude how much my recommendations have influenced my design.

## **RELATION BETWEEN THE GRADUATION PROJECT TO THE WIDER CONTEXT**

*4. How do you assess the academic and societal value, scope and implication of your graduation project, including ethical aspects?*

### Filling the gap

Based on current research, there is still not enough knowledge on improving public spaces in malls. The existing research of Gehl on public spaces has been quite generic, as they could be applied to various urban settings such as streets and parks. To what degree can his method be applied to specific public spaces in shopping malls? What has been the impact of the past interventions on public spaces of malls to the quality? Which urban and architectural attributes are necessary to redesign the existing public spaces? This research aims to bridge the gap between more generic studies on public spaces and their practical application to shopping malls. This is done by contributing to Gehl's existing theory

by applying his method to malls to get high-quality public spaces. This research aims to find the attributes that drive a high-quality public space, thereby increasing shopping traffic and stimulating economic activity.

### Values created from public space.

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 spaces 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. By focusing on the quality of public spaces, vacant structures can have new value (O'Donnell, 2016). 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. Even when the mall's future will not be a mall, it can still have a new purpose shaped by the (existing) public spaces. By investing in the quality of the design of public spaces, which will go in hand with the new redesign based on the design principles of Sim, it is possible to give new meaning to the daily lives of its users. Now the Leyweg is a destination for shopping and living. However, throughout the redesign, it could be a place where people live, work, pursue cultural activities, sport, socialise, and relax. The mall will have new value through its increased activities and the people occupying it. Besides, new awareness will be raised for its users by making sustainable interventions more visible in public spaces and buildings. This shows people how and why these systems work by showing and letting them care for them. The value of sustainability will be improved by incorporating it into people's daily lives.

## TRANSFERABILITY OF PROJECTS RESULTS

### *5. How do you assess the value of the transferability of your project results?*

#### A user-based design strategy for the mall

Shopping malls are becoming more and more vacant. This is an issue in a small and crowded country with high demand for space. A strategy to tackle this problem is by making a design which the people will occupy. How the spaces will be used, define whether a place will be active. Lively buildings with surrounding public spaces also contribute to a sense of safety. Therefore, this design focuses mainly on the people by introducing elements that make their daily life more comfortable and enjoyable. A simple bench with trees functioning as canopies can already do the trick. In a building, it is about giving people the freedom to use the spaces they want; places to work, drink a coffee, have a workshop, study or do whatever they want. When these buildings are occupied in various ways during the day, more people will be connected to the building, and even a small community can exist here. Through their use of the building, these people will care for the building and eventually maintain it, giving it a better future. The architect's role is to shape the spaces by introducing qualities that enhance comfort and enjoyment. This can be the increase of daylight, a comfortable climate, furniture which can easily be moved, the relation between inside and out, good acoustic levels and the opportunities to open or close spaces.

This strategy can be applied to other vacant malls in the Netherlands, reactivating them and providing a more promising and sustainable future.

## HERITAGE

In the research, I analysed which interventions were done in public spaces. By considering the accompanying motivations from different stakeholders, it was possible to identify which urban and architectural characteristics were necessary and preserved. These interventions matched some of the criteria of Gehl. Therefore, I could assess which values and attributes in the shape of the criteria have value (fig. 3). It was also essential to distinguish the difference between the values and attributes, which I have perceived as similar concepts first-hand. Nevertheless, this approach is not based on Ana Pareira Roders' methodology. Therefore, I decided to execute a value assessment based on the different scale levels on which I could base my design decisions (fig. 5).

	ATTRIBUTES	VALUES								ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS			
		tangible/intangible	SOCIAL	ECONOMIC	POLITICAL	HISTORIC	AESTHETIC	SCIENTIFIC	AGE		ECOLOGICAL	RECOGNIZABILITY?	
URBAN SCALE	green system											canals, lanes, parks, sport fields, Zuiderpark, Uithof	
	urban structure/ route of Leyweg											linear structure of the Hague extended, traffic routes parallel & perpendicular to the coast	
	commercial center											additions of blocks, change of scale, retail function, sub-city of the Hague	
	character (typology, morphology, spatial layout)											post-war "reconstruction" idea of light, air and space	
	Morgenstond												
SITE SCALE	geothermal well												
	public art												
	Emmaus Kerk											national monument, landmark, rarity of oval shape, ornamentation, meeting point, memory of former church before WW2	
	canopy											unifying element (Haagse style of new design, old?)	
	green roofs											views from existing appartments towards the shopping area	
	squares											larger public spaces, from mixed infrastructure to completely pedestrianized areas	
	entrances												
	kiosks, showcases & pergolas												typology, characteristic of Haagse style?, Lijnbaan concept
	two poles (V&D and HEMA)												
	mixed functions												
BUILDING SCALE	infrastructure (also for V&D)												
	housing blocks (southwest)											differentiation in heights for sunlight	
	building character (V&D)											typical warehouse typology after WW2, open floorplan, portico flats, brand identity	
	functions											housing, supermarket, department store, "housewife concept", variety of products, selfservice	
	structure											large spans, flexible spaces, materials?	
materiality												white glazed stone (brick) with aluminium frame for storefronts & canopies	

Fig. 5. Value assessment of Leyweg on different scale levels (Psarri & Mortensen, 2023)



## DESIGN ISSUES

The scale of the shopping mall made it more difficult to focus since everything seemed important. It took a long time to go more in detail about the building because you needed to figure out the urban level first. When going into the building, it was also still too big, so again, I had to make decisions and move on to a closer level. This constant shift of level was sometimes tricky. This large scale has also led to my fascination for this subject of public space, which is the scale between the urban scale and building scale: a scale that tends to be neglected but where a large part of everyday public life is taking place. Something Gehl talks about a lot. How does the relationship between the building and public space work? Moreover, how do public spaces in shopping malls work?

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