

RESEARCH PLAN

Recreational Place Attachment in Inner City Shopping Centers

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Figure 1. Lijnbaan, Rotterdam
Source: Weer Wat Geleerd! Daarom Heet De Lijnbaan Zo, 2022



Figure 2. Lijnbaan, Rotterdam
Source: Winkelcentrum De Lijnbaan, 2018

1. Introduction

Studio Context: 20th Century Heritage & Modern Mall Architecture

Many shopping centers are in the state of disrepair and vacancy, struggling to keep up with the fast changing retail landscape that is continuously adapting to shifts in contemporary consumer demands (Meijers & Marulo, 2023). Such changes reveal the multiplicity of the meaning attached to shopping centers by its users. It is no longer merely a retail program, but also the heart of an urban center and thus an important social public function.

This studio focuses on studying the revitalization of the mid 20th century mall. The renewal of shopping centers are increasingly gaining importance, as national sustainability goals are driving municipalities to improve the existing building stock. This requires architects to gain knowledge about the redesign of existing structures. Redesign involves the conservation of existing building characteristics, which essentially defines the heritage discipline. (Meijers & Marulo, 2023) Recognizing the shopping center as a heritage building, means assessing the existing values of the mall. The challenge in the redesign process lies in restoring the existing values while also designing for future requirements. This research will aim to assess the recreational value of inner city shopping centers in the Netherlands with respect to meeting contemporary recreational demands to create a redesign for the modern 20th century mall.

The Neighborhood Shopping Center

Shopping centers quickly became a global cultural phenomenon, originally emerging in the United States and soon found its place in the urban fabric of European cities. Since the post-war era of the 1950s, rapid technological advancement fueled the ongoing urban growth of cities. The growing influx of people pressured cities to expand beyond urban centers, where the population dispersed into lower density suburbs (Damon, 2022). These suburbs, however, lacked a variety of functions that could serve the daily needs and habits of residence. People lived further away from work, retail services and amenities that were all concentrated in city centers. More travel infrastructure was implemented for inhabitants to reach 'the heart of the city', but growing dissatisfaction of being trapped in automobiles that dominated everyday life stimulated the need for new urban centers. (van de Water, 2021, p21) Eventually, this led to the birth of the shopping center, a place that was easily accessible for residents to practice their physical and social day-to-day needs and habits.

The Dutch adopted the US concept of the shopping center as an opportunity to improve city planning, specifically following the design visions outlined by the Viennese Architect Victor Gruen. Now known as the "Father of the Mall" (Peterson & Urban, 2022, p2), Gruen was the first to introduce

the idea that a mall had the ability to function as a public space (Goss-eye, 2013, p246). He recognized the importance of creating a place where true community life could emerge in suburban areas, seeing shopping centers as the driving force for such ambitions. The Dutch translated Gruen's model of shopping centers into a concept belonging to 'the Functional city' (van de Water, 2021, p15). The Functional City was a modern planning concept developed by CIAM, who were a group of European architects that devoted their work to improving housing, town planning and regional planning with respect to the shifting trends in modern society. Essentially, the idea was to organize functions in urban sectors by functions of living, working and leisure to create an efficient building environment. Shopping was viewed as part of the living category, and so shopping centers in the Netherlands were often integrated into residential districts, forming the neighborhood shopping center. (van de Water, 2021, p36) It formed a mall typology that was accessible for both pedestrians and cars, providing a place for commerce and for the community to come together.

Shopping was no longer considered a separate function that only offered economic value to urban structures. The neighborhood shopping center demonstrated its ability to be valued from a social perspective. Additionally, after the war, a steady growth in the average income of Dutch citizens shifted the priorities of consumer demand to shopping as a recreational activity (van de Water, 2021, p36). It became a place for entertainment and pleasure, and thus adopting a recreational value by many visitors. The course of this research will focus on the recreational function of the mall.

Recreational Space: Fun shopping at Shopping Centers

Customers in contemporary societies are spending more time on recreational activities. Recreation is a broad term, but it essentially refers to activities that stimulate a satisfying experience. (Baghaee et al., 2021, p3) Common recreational spaces in architecture are dedicated to sports, leisure, entertainment and adventure (Gupta, 2016). The growing demand for recreational activities, and in addition, the shopping center being a public social space, transformed shopping into a leisure activity. This introduced a new form of shopping, i.e fun shopping, where visitors shop for pleasure and cozy entertainment rather than a desire of purchasing i.e. run shopping, when shopping is an efficient and economic activity. (Gorter et al., 2003, p222)

Fun shopping mostly took place in city centers, in which shopping centers offered a wide variety of shops and goods, including social and cultural amenities (Gorter et al., 2003, p.222). But recently, recreational shopping has become a browsing activity in both inner-city and outer-city retail settings. More leisure activities are gradually being integrated as a strategy to attract more visitors, lengthen their stay and stimulate the desire for shopping. (Baghaee et al., 2021, p.2) The first clusters of neighborhood shop-

ping centers provided local residents with a bakery, butcher and green-grocer. Later, shopping centers became community centers for the city, providing “daily household shops, clothing and shoe stores, a furniture shop and sometimes even a cinema or church.(van de Water, 2021, p.39)” Today, there is a noticeable trend in demand for restaurant and café services as a leisure activity at shopping centers. It shows that it is not just shopping that is considered as a recreational activity in shopping centers, but other functions also contribute to creating an entertaining shopping experience for visitors. Therefore, exploring the various ways shopping centers performs as a recreational space can be a valuable asset in the revitalization of the mid 20th century shopping center in the Netherlands.

2. Problem Statement

Inner city shopping centers are struggling to survive in the current competitive retail market. Increasing traffic congestion and rent levels in urban centers are driving retail businesses away, finding new opportunities in peripheral areas (Gorter et al., 2003, p221). Traditionally, out of town shopping centers focused their attention on run-shopping because it offered a place that was easily accessible for consumers and an over-crowded social atmosphere could be avoided. However, these shopping centers are also noticing the benefits of providing a recreational shopping experience to attract more visitors, threatening the survival of inner-city shopping centers. (Gorter et al., 2003, p221) Additionally, the continuous improvement of transportation networks has made consumers much more mobile than before, meaning consumers can easily access a variety of shopping centers in urban sectors. With so many substitutes available, the personal motive of the consumer becomes an important factor to consider when staying in competition within the retail sector.

Personal motives rely on the habits and norms of individuals (Gorter et al., 2003, p222). Vital elements to this are social action, interaction and experience (Baghaee et al., 2021, p3). Recreational shopping stimulates such elements, but there is little knowledge on how consumers form attachments to recreational spaces and activity, specifically in shopping centers. This leads into the concept of place and place-attachment. There are three dimensions of space according to Schulz (1979), namely absolute, relative and relational (cognitive). A sense of place essentially belongs to the cognitive space dimension, which is defined by an individual's emotional experience and perception with the urban socio-physical environment. Essentially, it creates value in a space. The phenomenological study of place attachment was first introduced by Altman & Low (1992) in their book “Place attachment or Human Behavior and Environment.” They argued that place attachment is based on place dependence and place identity. Place dependence usually is determined by the importance of the

arrangement of functions in a place to satisfy the communities needs and goals. It often serves as a backdrop for place identity, which is the emotional attachment to a place that is dependent on a sensual experience.

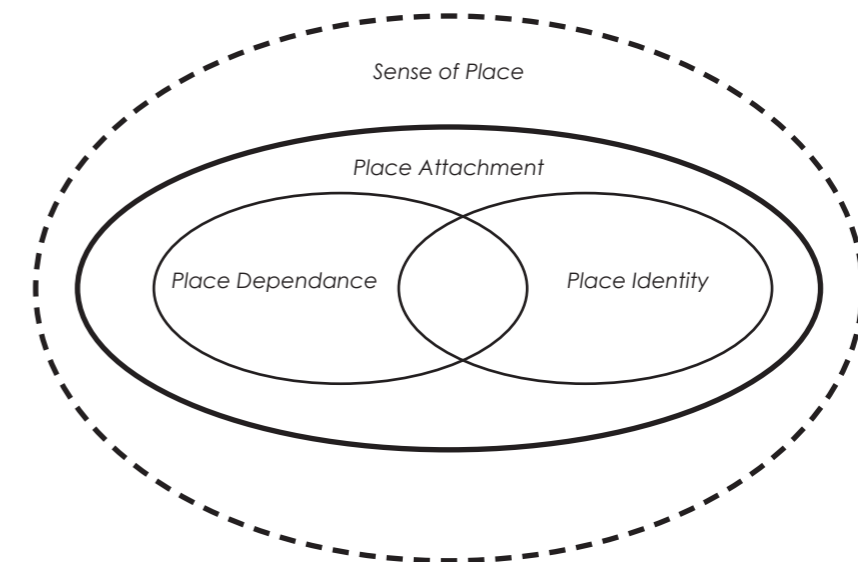


Figure 3. Scope of Place Attachment
Source: Altman & Low (1992)

Lately, academics are more vocal about the importance of creating recreational value in retail settings (Baghaee et al., 2021, p3). Thus, learning more about the methods in which inner-city shopping centers perform as recreational spaces for creating place attachment, is a key factor to the success of staying in competition in the retail market. This requires more understanding of the different types of recreational activities performed in shopping centers and how aspects of the physical store environment affect the level of engagement for such activities. Also, more knowledge is required on how recreational activities and spaces can create place attachment in shopping centers and contribute in creating recreational value and meanings sought by users. This raises the following research question and the additional sub-questions that will define the base of this research paper.

How can the Inner City Shopping Center perform as a recreation space to create place attachment?

Research Sub - Questions

1. What are the various ways in which recreational activities are performed in Shopping Centers?
2. How do physical aspects of the Shopping Center environment influence the level of engagement in recreational activities?
3. What factors influence place attachment in recreational spaces?

3. Theoretical Framework

The focus of this research relies on an in-depth investigation of recreational spaces and place attachment to understand how people can form a recreational attachment to shopping centers. Essentially, the base of the research is understanding the relationship that people have with their socio-physical environment to form a sense of place. A popular theoretical concept that explores this relationship is called the Actor - Network Theory, which will serve as the methodological lens for this research paper. The place attachment theory will help define the various actors and networks that are important to explore to understand the recreational value of shopping centers.

Actor- Network Theory (ANT)

Using the Actor - Network Theory (ANT) as a methodological lens allows the research to trace and reveal the recreational attachments between people and place in shopping centers. ANT is a concept proposed by Latour, Callon and Law, traditionally a Science and Technology Study (Dilaveroglu et al., 2021, p46). But recently, many architects are exploring the possibility of applying this method of thinking in Architecture and the Built Environment. The theory suggests that public space can be explained by its relations between various actors (human and non-human) that are involved either in the production, construction, renovation or use of architecture space (Yiannoudes, 2015, p.4). This investigation focuses on the use of architecture space, specifically the recreational use of inner city shopping centers. By applying this ANT perspective, the research views recreational space as an assembly of multiple productions arising from social and material networks.

ANT will be used to trace relations and interactions between users and the physical-material elements of shopping centers to understand how people can form an attachment to the shopping center as a recreational space. The various networks defined through this process demonstrate that all agents (social and physical) can only be defined in relation to each other, and thus are not stable properties (Yiannoudes, 2015, p3). This means that by applying an ANT perspective in the context of architecture, allows the research to study the shifting recreational meaning associated to shopping centers, how recreational activity is possibly constrained by the commercial space, the extent to which the shopping center is reshaped by the growing consumer demand for recreational activities, and the various ways in which recreational activities are performed in shopping centers. Basically, ANT can be used to study the boundaries formed between users and space as a result of their interaction to eventually redirect or facilitate the course of action for redesigning the inner city shopping center (Yiannoudes, 2015, p4).

Place Attachment Theory

Place attachment, according to a literature review by Altman & Low (1992), conceptualizes place as a subjective and emotional experience defined by the affective bonds between people and the material world. Similar definitions for place attachment, include 'sense of place', 'place identity', 'place meaning', 'place dependence' or 'place motivation'. (Hashemnezhad et al., 2013, p7) Studying the many ways in which consumers can attach to recreational activity and spaces is important for understanding the personal motive of visiting a shopping center. Prus and Dawson discovered that "the desirable or enjoyable features of shopping tend to revolve around the ways in which people involve their selves in shopping activity" (Prus & Dawson, 1991, p.149). A theoretical strategy for creating place attachment will be used to gain understanding of the factors that contribute to the pleasurable shopping experience of consumers and how these factors stimulate their choice of visiting a particular shopping center.

The research will rely on Altman and Low's three forms of interaction between humans and places, namely cognitive, behavioral and emotional. A cognitive interaction, means people are aware of the spatial elements in their surroundings and use them to navigate their way (Altman & Low, 1992). This allows for the investigation of how the form of a space stimulates recreational activity in shopping centers. A behavioral interaction relates to understanding how activities and functions contribute to creating bonds between people and place (Altman & Low, 1992). Finally, emotional interaction relies on the meaning a person attaches to a place, which defines how a place is perceived as pleasurable (Altman & Low, 1992). This is often associated with a sensory experience of a space. The three dimensions of creating place will involve the study of analyzing the form, function and meaning of shopping centers in relation to recreational activity.

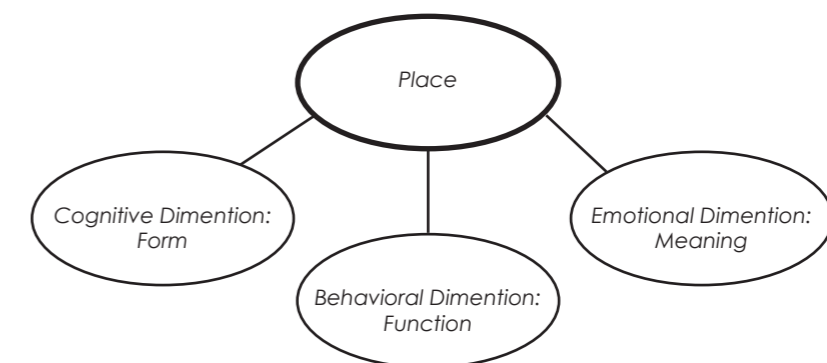


Figure 4. Dimensions of Creating PLaces
Source: Altman & Low (1992)

3. Research Methodology

The research methodology will be supported by both ANT as a methodological lens and the place-attachment theory by Altman and Low as a guideline to creating recreational place attachment in shopping centers. The three dimensions of place-attachment, i.e. cognitive, behavior and emotional, will help trace the networks between users and recreational activity in shopping centers to essentially answer the research question: How can the inner-city shopping center perform as a recreation space to create place attachment?

By using both ANT and Place-Attachment Theory, the following three relationships will be explored:

1. Cognitive: The relationship between people and form.

ANT Network: Tracing how recreational shopping is constrained by space in shopping centers and the extent to which shopping centers are reshaped by the growing consumer demand for recreational activities.

2. Behavior: The relationship between people and function.

ANT Network: Tracing the various ways in which recreational activities are performed in shopping centers.

3. Emotional: The relationship between people and meaning.

ANT Network: Tracing the shifting recreational meaning of shopping centers.

The following strategy will be used to conduct the research for the proposed investigation:

1. Literature Review: *Defining the various actors contributing to the recreational value of shopping centers.* (Time Frame: P2 & P3)

The research will first develop a general understanding of the factors that define recreational behavior, to thus be able to identify recreational activity and spaces in shopping centers. Additionally, more literature review is needed on place attachment, meaning defining the elements that make up form, function and meaning.

Literature List for Recreation

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2. Case Studies: *The Lijnbaan and Hoog Catharijne* (Time Frame: P2 & P3)

After establishing the various actors involved in defining the recreational user, the form, function and meaning of a space, the three proposed relationships (Cognitive, Behavior & Emotional) can be applied to the context of a shopping center. The research of these networks will be supported by the analysis of two case studies of inner city shopping centers in the Netherlands, namely the Lijnbaan in Rotterdam and Hoog Catharijne in Utrecht.

Case Study for Analysis (P2 & P3) and Design (P4 & P5): Lijnbaan Shopping Center

The Lijnbaan is the first modern shopping center of the Netherlands, which makes it a valuable retail setting to analyze. It was part of the first reconstruction plan for Rotterdam after it had been destroyed during the 2nd World War. Architects Van den Broek and J.B. Bakema had been assigned to redesign the selected retail area, introducing the concept of the neighborhood shopping center by the process of integrating retail in residential areas. (van de Water, 2021, p.36) Although the shopping center lacks a diverse retail program and is relatively outdated to current contemporary consumer demands, it is still a highly visited place (maybe even to some extent over-crowded). This makes it an interesting case study for the analysis of the relationship between recreation and place attachment in shopping centers, but also an interesting case study for redesign.

Case Study for Analysis (P2 & P3): Hoog Catharijne Shopping Center

Hoog Catharijne is a shopping center located strategically in the center of Utrecht between the old city and the central train station. This shopping center is an interesting case study because ever since it has been built in 1973 it has undergone several renovations to stay up to date with modern consumer demand. It is a multi-functional place for living, working and leisure, attracting nearly 30 million visitors a year (Klepierre, n.d.). It is relatively more modern shopping center than the Lijnbaan, which makes it a valuable case study for a comparative analysis of recreation and place attachment.

3. Network Analysis: Tracing place attachment by users to recreational activity in shopping centers. (Time Frame: P2 & P3)

- **People & Form:** On-site documentary analysis through photos & film
This involves a site visit of the chosen case studies. The idea is to take pictures and videos of different recreational setting to later trace back how different users interact with the physical elements that occupy the space.
- **People & Function:** A plan and mapping analysis
This also involves a site visit, with the support of architectural plans of the case studies, to later map out how their recreational activity is supported by various functions and their arrangement in the shopping center. Gephi will be an important mapping tool for this part of the analysis.
- **People and Meaning:** An analysis by conducting interview
Several interviews will be conducted with a diverse set of users to identify their emotional attachment to the shopping center. It is important to interview the people that are also documented in the photos and videos taken in the "People and Form" part of the analysis.



Figure 5. Lijnbaan, Rotterdam
Source: Altera Verkoopt Winkels in Centrum Van Rotterdam, 2020



Figure 6. Hoog Catharijne, Utrecht
Source: Hoog Catharijne, n.d.

4. Recreational Value Assessment: Creating recreational place attachment in shopping centers. (Time Frame: P4 & P5)

After conducting the research, it is important to assess the recreational value present in the chosen case study to understand what actions need to be taken for a redesign of the shopping center. This will be based on the HA Matrix, which uses both the Shearing Layers of Brand (Surroundings, Site, Skin, Structure, Space plan, Surfaces, Services, Stuff, Spirit of Place.) and the values by Riegel. (Kuipers & de Jonge, 2017) Brands model allows for the evaluation of the relationship between people and place in different layers. For the value assessment of recreational space, a different set of values will be proposed for the HA Matrix that will replace Riegels set of values. These set of values still need to be defined, but essentially recreation is such a broad term that can be determined by factors like emotional value, experiential value, entertainment value, use value etc. For now, let's apply these set of values for recreation in the HA Matrix.

BRAND +	RIEGL +	AGE value	HISTORICAL value	INTENTIONAL COMMEMORATIVE	NON INTENDED COMMEMORATIVE	USE value	NEW-NESS value	(relative) ART value	RARITY value [+]	OTHER relevant values [+]
SURROUNDINGS / SETTING [+]										
SITE										
SKIN (exterior)										
STRUCTURE										
SPACE PLAN										
SURFACES (interior) [+]										
SERVICES										
STUFF										
SPIRIT of PLACE [+]										

Figure 5. Heritage and Architecture Value Assessment Matrix
Source: Kuipers & de Jonge, 2017

4. Ethical Reflection

Reflection of ANT

By using ANT as a methodological lens, the research aims to follow an ethical approach to understanding and studying different associations in the recreational use of shopping centers. The idea is to consider all actors (human and non-human, social and physical) as equals, define by the entities of each other. Already is the research excluding the ANT approach for other moments in the design process, namely the production, construction and renovation of shopping centers. Who is to say that they do not influence in the use of architecture too? Since the research is limited to a time-frame, not all actors can be analyzed extensively or with the right amount of attention it deserves. Therefore, decisions need to be made on where to start the research within this growing network of associations. Through the support of literature review and case study analysis, the research aims to clearly demonstrate the value of studying recreational place attachment in shopping centers within the boundaries of form, function and meaning.

Reflection of Place Attachment Theory

The place attachment theory studies the subjective and emotional perceptions of people with the social-physical environment. This research relies on the works of Low and Altman and their view of what place attachment means and how it is created. There are many other scholars who have built on the works of Low and Altman, like Lefebvre, Relph, Canter, Williams and Roggenbuck, and so many others, who each apply their own definitions and descriptions of place. There is not necessarily a right or wrong when it comes to their views, but it demonstrates the ambiguity of the meaning of place and the actors involved. A biased decision is then made on which source to follow to support the chosen research topic and approach.

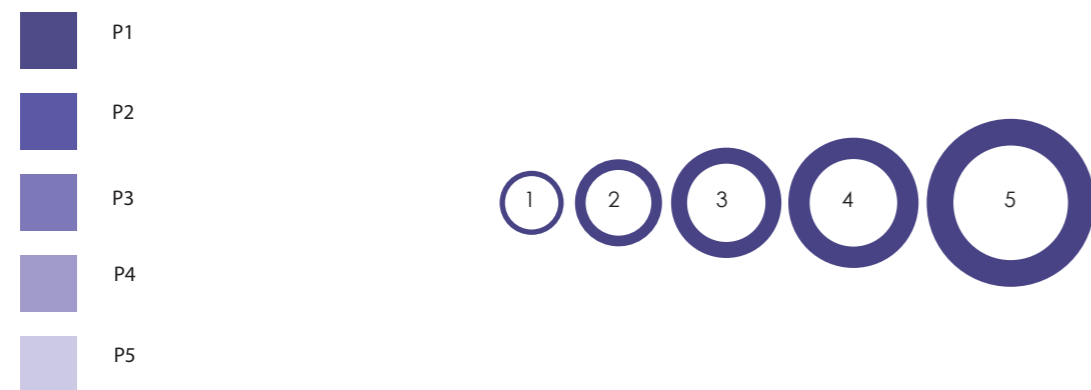
Reflection of Research Methodology

The research methodology essentially aims to create a value assessment of shopping centers and their recreational function for the revitalization of its heritage. To make sure that this is an ethical process is relatively complex. Value in itself is so subjective in nature that heritage too is a difficult concept to define. Who decides what is the value of the shopping center and how this value is created over time? It is therefore important to be very specific of the scale of the research in the methodology, while being aware that it is only a small part of a much larger conversation. This is why the research methodology clearly outlines the focus on two case studies set in an inner city area within the Netherlands. One of those studies, i.e. the Lijnbaan, was the first shopping center in the Netherlands that served as an example for most other Dutch shopping centers. This allows

the research to be applied to a broader context within the Netherlands

5. Relation Research & Design

The aim of the research is to eventually apply the knowledge for the revitalization of the modern shopping center. This studio consist of 5 stages in research and design. P1 focuses on analysing the research topic of Heritage and the Modern Mall. P2 is setting up a research and design brief. At this stage a research question and design case study has been chosen for further analysis. P3 is the architectural elaboration of the design. P4 involves the design integration of the chosen intervention strategies and P5 consist of finalizing design for the shopping center. In all these stages a reflection moment is needed in order to create ethical decisions when it comes to applying the research to the design. The follow diagram has been created to illustrate the relationship between research and design. It has been represented as a network between the different products involved, showing that at all stages research and design interact but the extent to which they interact changes throughout the research and design process. The different colors represents the 5 stages of research and design, and the size of the products reveal the intensity of the connection between research and design.



5 Stages of Research & Design

Amount of networks

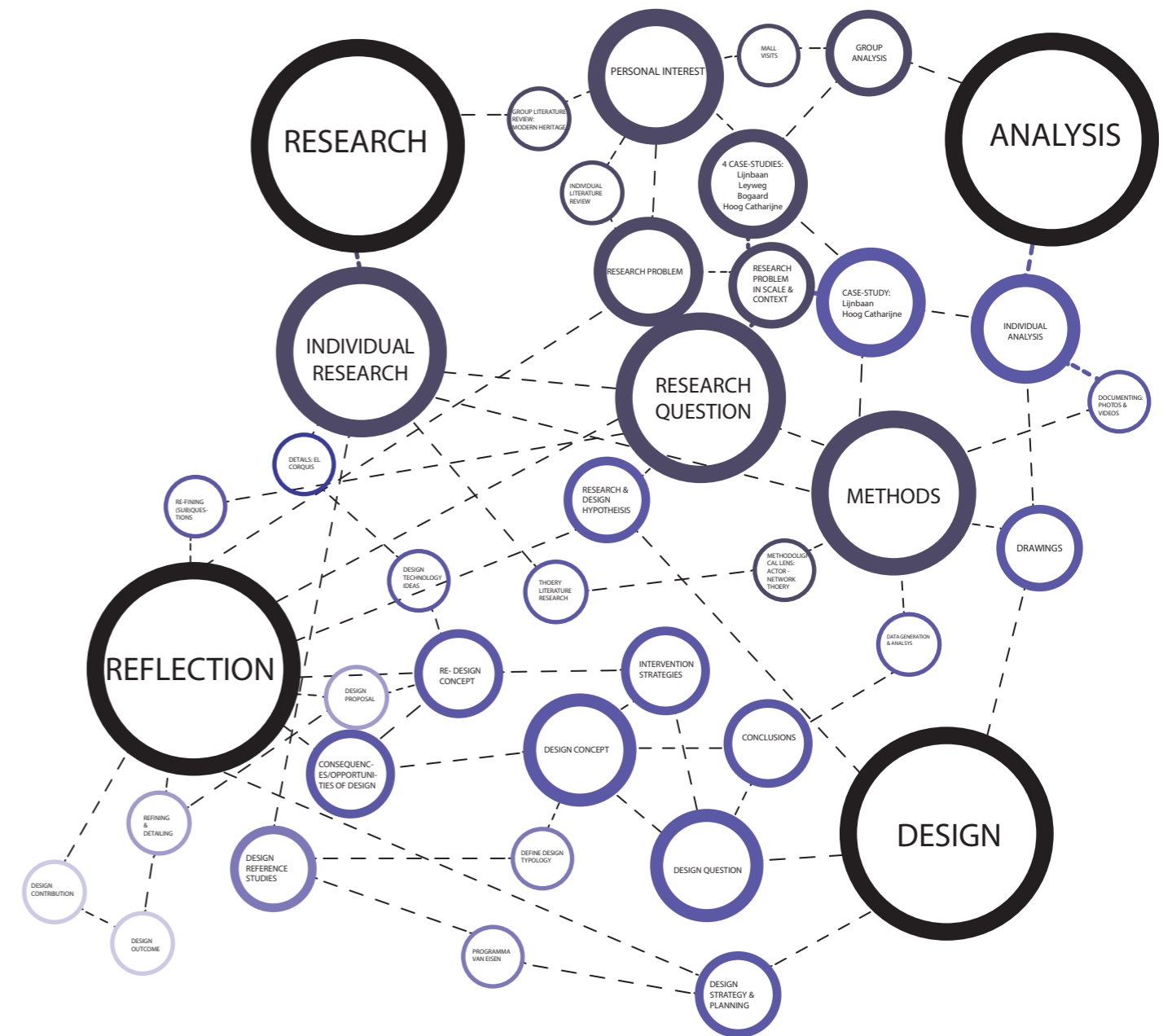


Figure 6. Research & Design Diagram

6. Relevance

Societal Context

Shopping centers make up an important part within the urban fabric of cities. It not only serves as a commercial space, but also as a place for the community to meet and play. Particularly in post-war Western Europe, shopping centers became a product of urban reconstruction and urban development plans that were funded by governmental authorities, who perceived these retail structures as a building block for constructing a more egalitarian society. A growing trend existed in the correlation between the spatial and the social. Architects and Urban Planners of the 1960s were fantasizing the reconstruction of urban environments for the restructuring of oppressive societal structures by paying more attention to creating spaces that could satisfy people's desires, and stimulate spontaneous interaction. (Gosseye, 2013, p.248) It is therefore important to investigate the relationship between people and place in shopping centers, especially during a time when the future of physical retail space in urban centers is relatively uncertain. The growing trend in recreational consumption behavior has led this research to focus on the bonds between users and recreational space in inner city shopping centers.

Academic Context

There are many studies that indicate that by integrating recreational activities in shopping centers, customer satisfaction and participation can be improved. More retail centers are using this as a strategy to create an attractive shopping experience. However, there is limited knowledge on the motivation for recreational activity and recreational space in shopping centers. Many studies are involved in the benefits of recreational activity for social sustainability and how to influence consumer behavior through recreational activities, but not so much on how recreation can create place attachment and how recreational consumer behavior has reshaped shopping centers. These questions form a gap in the field of recreation and place attachment, which is important to explore because this knowledge can be an asset for revitalization of the 20th century shopping center.

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