

Graduation Studio Adapting 20th Century Heritage

Research Plan

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Image 1: Interior of the V&D in Dordrecht. (1970) Regionaal archief Dordrecht.

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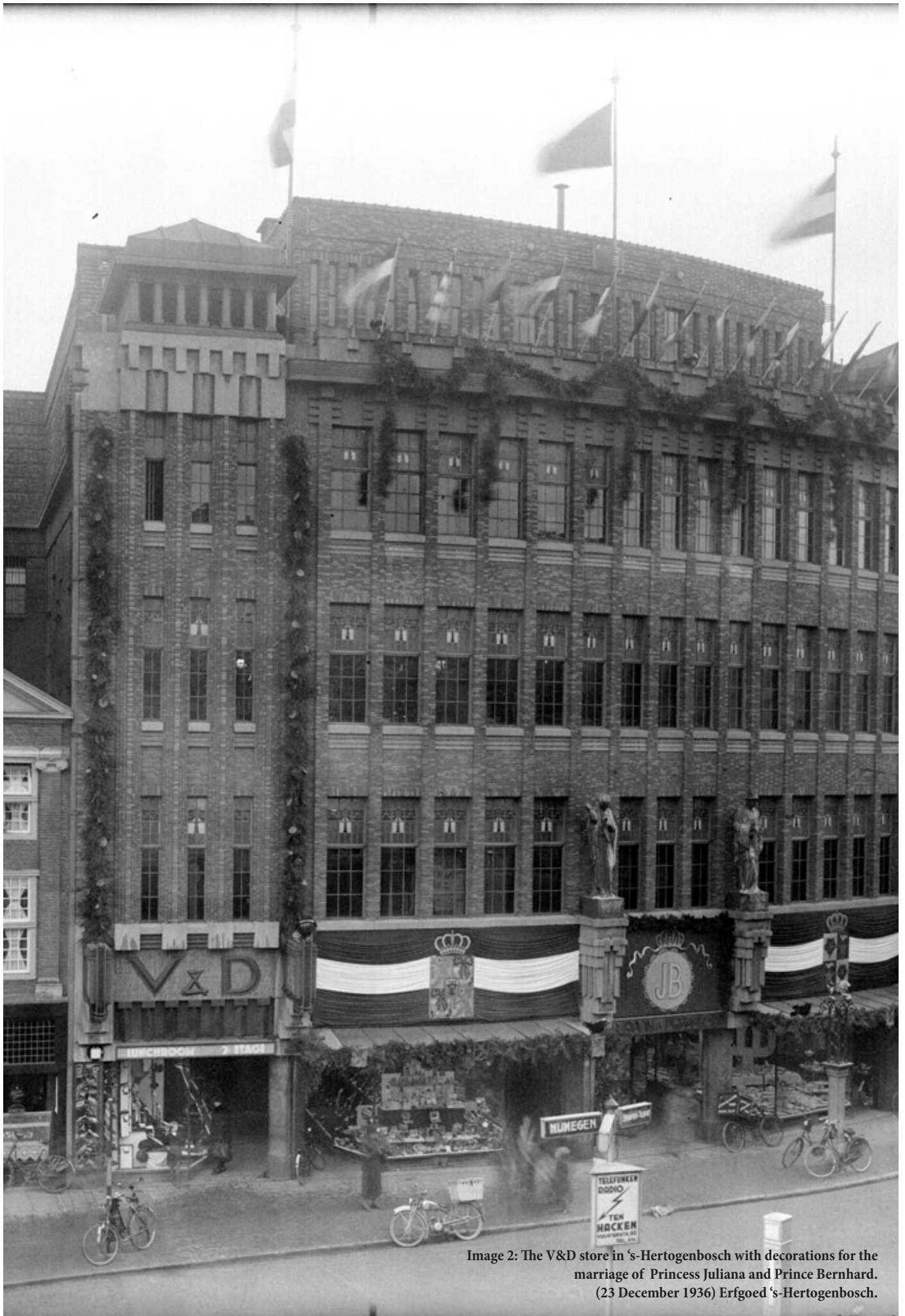


Image 2: The V&D store in 's-Hertogenbosch with decorations for the marriage of Princess Juliana and Prince Bernhard. (23 December 1936) Erfgoed 's-Hertogenbosch.

Introduction

In December 2015 one of the most well-known brands in the Netherlands went bankrupt. A large chain of department stores closed its doors leaving an empty space in many of the Dutch city centres. The department stores of Vroom & Dreesman, or V&D as known by most people, have been around for 128 years since its establishment in 1887.¹ This made the stores a cherished place for multiple generations. Speaking to a large crowd with there reasonable price but quality products. It's disappearance started a problem that is not fixed until this date; the vacancy of Dutch department stores.

The complexity of this problem became even more obvious after a foreign investor, Hudson's Bay reopened these locations, incorporating a new brand in the Dutch retail sector. After three years and 184 million euros², Hudson's Bay left the Netherlands disillusioned as the brand never took off. It was clear that the departure of the V&D from the Dutch retail sector, left a harder challenge for the city centres than most people thought at first.

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1. Beekun, R. (2018). *Architect Jan Kuijt Wzn. 1884-1944* (1ste editie). Stokerkade Cultuurhistorische Uitgeverij.
2. Wieringa Advocaten. (2019). *Openbaar verslag Ex Artikel 227 Faillissementswet in de (voorlopige) surseance van betaling en openbaar verslag Ex artikel 73 A faillissementswet in het faillissement van HBC Netherlands B.V.* https://www.rtlnieuws.nl/sites/default/files/content/documents/2020/02/10/hudsonsbay_verslag1.pdf

Research Context

The problem of the vacant department stores is the overarching topic of the research. This research is part of the graduation studio of the Heritage & Architecture MSc at the TU Delft. With a group of thirteen students, under supervision of Dr.Ir. H. Zijlstra, Ir. W.L.E.C. Meijers, Ir. F.W.A. Koopman and Prof.Ir. W. de Jonge, we look into the challenge of repurposing and redesigning the vacant department stores in the Netherlands. As a group of students we combine group research and individual research about this topic in one book. Creating a greater insight in the challenge of redesigning vacant department stores.

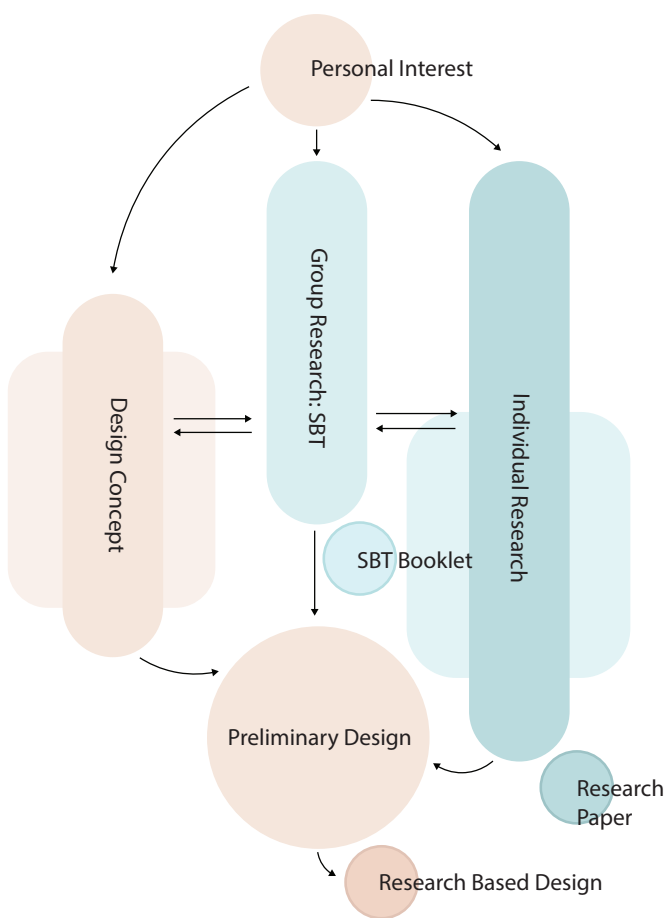


Image 3: Diagram showing the main structure of the graduation studio.

The Vacant Heritage graduation studio is based on these two forms of research and a design project where this research will be applied. The studio starts with formulating the research. During the research period the Design process will slowly get starting. When the research is done all the time is available for the design project. One of the goals in this graduation studio is actually applying the research done to the design project to obtain a research based design. This will give the opportunity to reflect on the way the research influenced our design.

Group research

The group research is done by analyzing eight different V&D department stores on their spatial aspects. In the *Spatial Building Typology* research we characterize and compare the department stores. Focussing on different scale levels: city, urban block, building and façade scale. The research question we want to answer with the group research is as follows: how and why do specific series of spatial aspects on four scale levels influence the design possibilities regarding the redesign of a specific group of buildings with the same original function?

Individual research

As addition and for deeper understanding of the research every student adds his own research to this book. While the individual research will fall under the overarching topic and research theme. The individual research will provide specific knowledge on challenges that arise when redesigning department stores.

Individual design project

Next to the research this course also includes a design project in which we use the research done in the redesign of a department store. The department store is chosen by the student, in my case the V&D building in Leiden. The design project will start during the research, therefore the design process and research will be able to adapt to each other. The design will influence the research and vice versa.

Relevance of the research

The complete book combining all the research should give a deeper understanding of a very current issue. This issue of vacant V&D department stores is an issue that plays a big role in Dutch cities today. But the underlying problem of the retail sector rapidly changing and department stores becoming vacant is a problem that rises internationally¹. This problem is already being described in literature. However the combination of vacancy with the goal of revitalizing department stores marked as heritage site is a more specific subject.

This combination of vacant department stores and the need for reuse and redesign will only occur more often in the future. Not only is COVID-19 speeding up the vacancy², also the need for more efficiency when it comes to our resources asks for more reuse as a sustainable solution³. The fact this problem will become more urgent and occur even more frequently makes this an interesting problem to study. This combined research project can serve as inspiration for future projects that will tackle this issue.

1. Koolhaas, R. (2001). *The Harvard Guide to Shopping (1ste editie)*. Taschen GmbH.

2. Maheshwari, S., & Friedman, V. (2020, 7 mei). The Death of the Department Store: 'Very Few Are Likely to Survive'. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/21/business/coronavirus-department-stores-neiman-marcus.html>

3. Roos, J. (2007). *De ontdekking van de opgave / Discovering the assignment (1ste editie)*. Vssd.

Motivation for the studio

While my personal interest in Heritage has always been there, the interest in my personal research topic can be traced back to a particular moment last summer. While visiting the city of Leiden, I passed the old building of the V&D. Immediately one can notice the importance of the location. The city centre of Leiden is not a market square as in most cities, it is the water, where the Oude- and Nieuwe Rijn meet and continue as one river.

All around the water are terraces and people walking and socializing. It is only the building of the V&D that gives an empty feeling to this place. The building is both empty and dark but also the façade gives a strict and official feeling, which contradicts the playful ambiance spread by the slanted old canal houses.

It is this experience that emphasized the importance and character of the problem this vacant store causes to the cities.

Personal interest

While doing the Spatial Building Typology research multiple old V&D department stores were analyzed. During the comparing one of the most notable aspects of the building was the façade. While a lot of aspects of the V&D department stores are really comparable, the façades have seen clear changes through time. Especially the use of glass in the façades has seen large changes. Shopping windows became the most important way to showcase products in the most advantageous way.¹ Dictated by technological improvements, requirements asking for more light on the products and changes in theory about how to offer and present products, the windows of the V&D kept changing.¹

Because the insides of the buildings are very similar, and the façades know this very particular evolution, an interest in the façades of department stores emerged.

When looking into these façades a bit more closely I did a study of the V&D in Dordrecht. The building which is located on the Scheffersplein in the middle of the old city centre is known for its large glass façade. This façade attracts the attention because of its size, and style. But on the same time it spreads an empty feeling across the cosy square.

Not only the emptiness of the building is the cause, but also the white wall behind the glass which is made to condition the interiors in the later phase of the Department store. Combined with a more official styling than the old Dutch buildings on the square, the empty department store distorts the cosy ambiance of the town square.

Problem statement

Both in Dordrecht and Leiden the same kind of problems emerge. A vacant building in the heart of the city leaving the city centre with an empty feeling. The buildings which already appear more official and strict in their façade than their surroundings obtain an even more unattractive

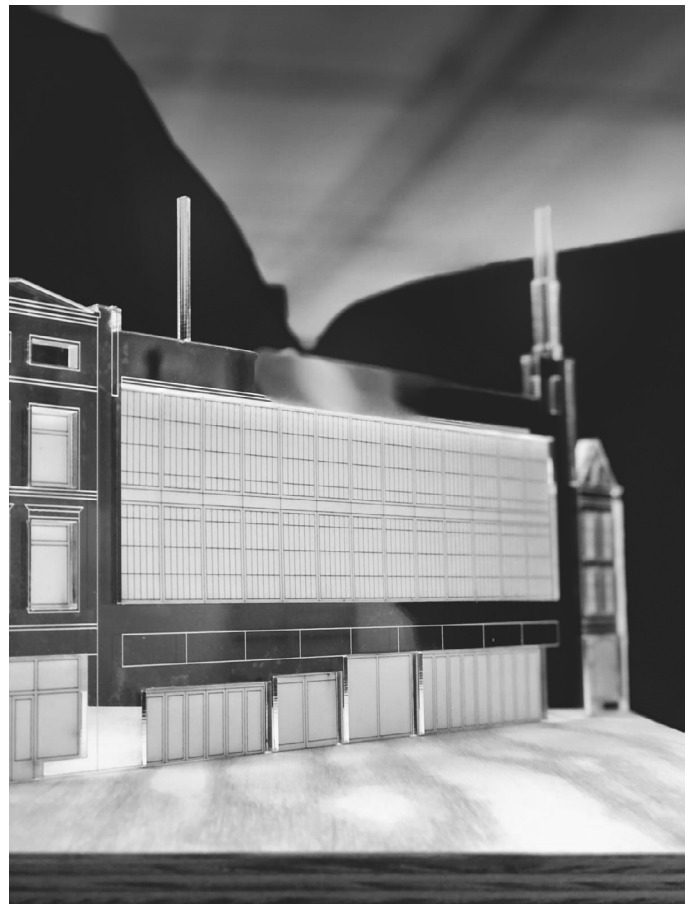


Image 4: Study model of the facade in Dordrecht, where the windows are white and the structure is transparent.

appearance because of the fact they are vacant and there is no life behind the façades.

The corona pandemic might actually strengthen this effect due to the fact there are less people in the streets. However also before the corona crisis and during the summer, when there were barely any restrictions, the empty appearance of the V&D facade was obvious.

On the same time these façades are actually the most interesting parts of the building. The façades functioned as a way to persuade the consumers in entering the building.¹ Furthermore they represented the brand image of the V&D. For these reasons the façades got a lot of attention during the design of the buildings, where the inside of the building was largely based on functionality. The façades function as the interface between the public and the building.

The façades of the department stores are important and valuable. On the same time they have an important role in the problem that rises. They also dictate a certain approach when it comes to the redesign because of their practical properties like their size and the amount of light they let through. Because the change in styling there are also certain types of façades to define which share common properties.

1. Beekun, R. (2018). *Architect Jan Kuijt Wzn. 1884-1944* (1ste editie). Stokerkade Cultuurhistorische Uitgeverij.

2. Stroux, S. (2009). *Transformatie van de hoge rug*. RMIT.

Research question

Which design interventions can be defined when transforming the different types of front facades of the vacant V&D buildings?

Chapter 1: Defining a literature and theory framework to position the research.

To answer the research question it is important to know how a research like this is best approached: What kind of research is necessary to be able to answer the main research question? The first part of this research will therefore be a literature study into this type of architectural research.

This research will look into department stores and formulate different transformations that can be applied to the façade. This way of analyzing a building or a set of buildings and recommending a certain design approach is done before. The research of S. Stroux¹ into the transformation of Strijp-S is one example. Stroux analyzes Strijp-S, which is an ensemble of multiple buildings, to come up with a general strategy for these buildings. The result is a general vision for the whole block where other architects can refer to. However the research of Stroux describes multiple buildings that form an ensemble, instead of groups of buildings that do not. The research of Stroux shows a way of formulating design considerations without the need of being specific on a building which is applicable to my research as that will be about groups of buildings instead of one.

Another example for the research will be the analysis of the Werkspoorhallen in Oostenburg by Koopman². Here is focussed on one building, which is more applicable. The conclusions of the research of Koopman are formulated by five 'idea sketches'. These are five examples for starting the redesign of the Werkspoorhallen, it already gives more of a design solution than the research done by Stroux.

Both documents have a similar approach to the start of their research. Koopman starts by analyzing the context of the building first, then analyzing the existing building itself. After the analysis he summarizes the qualities of the building in its context. With those qualities, Koopman formulates 'development opportunities'; what qualities could be used and what defects could be improved.

Stroux has a similar approach, she formulates the design assignment first, then analyzes the context and afterwards the buildings themselves. She also takes the urban masterplan of the municipality in consideration. Before formulating her results as the most valuable aspects and the corresponding redesign strategy.

While the research is far from identical, the general approach is similar:

- Analysis from urban scale to building scale
- Formulating qualities
- Defining a design approach based on these qualities and improving the flaws of the building.

My research however will focus on groups of department store facades, on very different locations. The interest of the research is focussed on the façade types and their similarities and differences. Because these facades are grouped, researching the context will not be valuable for my research, therefore the research will start by analyzing the groups on a buildings scale.

After the first analysis the research will be able to follow the approach both Stroux and Koopman used, formulating qualities of the façade groups. After formulating these qualities it will be possible to formulate design considerations for using the qualities or improving their flaws. Which should be the result of this research.

Chapter 2: Defining the buildings studied in this research

Both Stroux¹ and Koopman² start with a subject, in the case of Stroux the Strijp-S project and in case of Koopman the Werkspoorhallen. For this research it is also necessary to first define the subject. The intention of this research requires starting with grouping the facades but first a selection of buildings is needed for this.

Since this research is part of a larger course in which also a Spatial building typology research has been done, it makes sense to implement this knowledge into my research. In the Spatial Building Typology research eight department stores have been analyzed. These eight stores will be used as subject for my research.

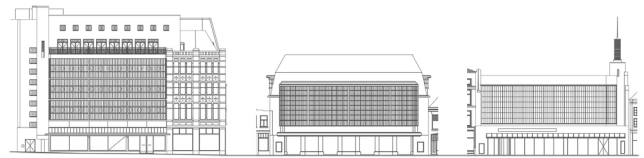


Image 5: Drawings from the SBT research showing facades with similar large shopping windows. Courtesy of: SBT facade team.

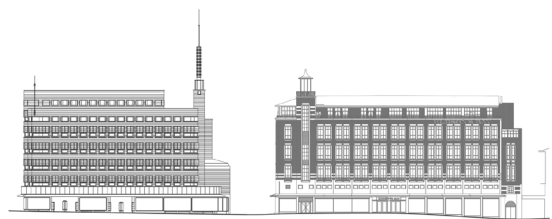


Image 6: Drawings from the SBT research showing facades with similar small windows. Courtesy of: SBT facade team.

1. Stroux, S. (2009). Transformatie van de hoge rug. RMIT.

2. Koopman, F. W. A., Michel, J., Roos, J., Stroux, S. A., & Quist, W. J. (2015, september). De Werkspoorhallen op Oostenburg. <http://resolver.tudelft.nl/uuid:cc4965ec-d946-43d9-b79a-73e6021dd2f3>

Chapter 3: Defining the façade groups based on style and layout of the main façade

During the Spatial Building Typology research, clear similarities between facades were noticed, but also a number of large differences in style. Through time their appearance changed as the image of the V&D changed¹. For grouping the façades it will make most sense to first rank them based on the construction date of the façade. This will visualize the change in style through time and make it possible to clearly formulate a line between different groups.

Chapter 4: Comparing and analyzing the façade groups

The research will now start to follow the lines of the research done by Stroux² and Koopman³. The façade groups will be compared and analyzed. This should result in qualities and values to inspire a design approach during the design assignment.

Facades will be analyzed and compared on features like:

- General Layout
- Size and pattern of windows
- Open/Closed
- Decorations, towers, logo's
- Size
- Materials and brickwork
- Construction
- Cultural value
- Essence of the façade and intention of the architect
- Most important elements that result in this essence
- What aspects make the façade group unique
- What aspects are common between the façade groups

Chapter 5: Defining the qualities of the façade groups.

As done in the research of Stroux and Koopman it is necessary to formulate which aspects bring qualities to the building. These qualities create the handles for starting a redesign. Listing qualities will make it possible to value and compare them, or weigh them in case they contradict and a choice needs to be made.

Chapter 6: What general design options can be applied?

To be able to define a list of possible design options for the façade groups, it is necessary to first define a list of possible design options for façades in general. These will be based on existing redesigns of façades. To create a list of design interventions that are both contemporary and applicable to the department stores, reference projects will be collected.

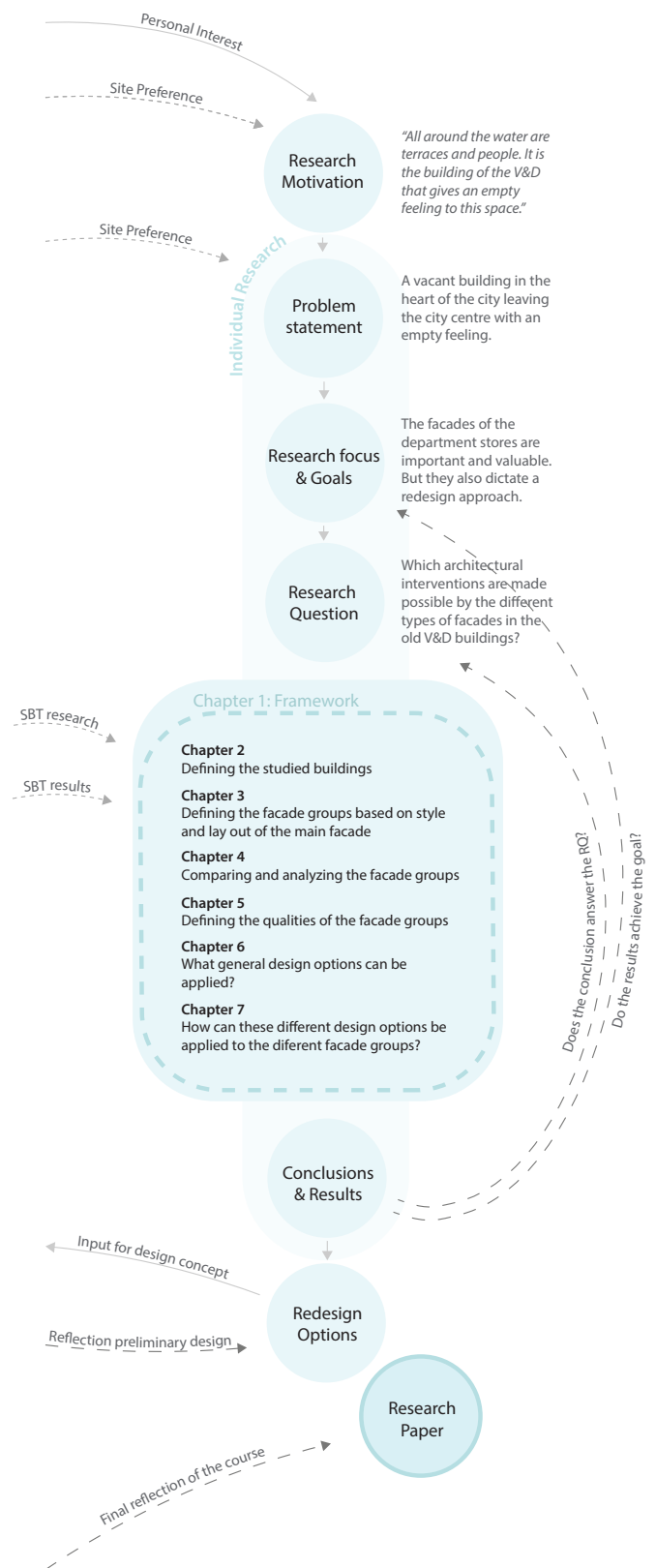


Image 7: Diagram showing the personal research structure.

1. Beekum, R. (2018). *Architect Jan Kuijt Wzn. 1884-1944* (1ste editie). Stokerkade Cultuurhistorische Uitgeverij.
2. Stroux, S. (2009). *Transformatie van de hoge rug*. RMIT.
3. Koopman, F. W. A., Michel, J., Roos, J., Stroux, S. A., & Quist, W. J. (2015, september). *De Werkspoorhallen op Oostenburg*. <http://resolver.tudelft.nl/uuid:cc4965ec-d946-43d9-b79a-73e6021dd2f3>

Chapter 7: How can these different design options be applied to the different façade groups?

This is the concluding chapter of the research. Here design interventions will be applied to one of the façades from every façade group. Meurs¹ wrote about designing with heritage in the book *Heritage-based design*. This book will serve as input for applying and judging the different design interventions. Combining literature research and Simulations research.

Another book that describes the process of analyzing and applying the analysis to designing heritage projects is *Discovering the Assignment of Roos*². Roos looks back on the design process of a number of his projects, describing not only the design itself but also the analysis that is done before the start of the project.

The general design options will be applied to the façade groups in this chapter. From every façade group an example façade will be taken and the design options will be applied. This will result in either drawing or models. This final step will show how or if the different design options can be applied to the different types of department store facades. With drawings or models it should make clear whether certain solutions are desirable or effective, and how they can be applied to the façade.

Conclusion

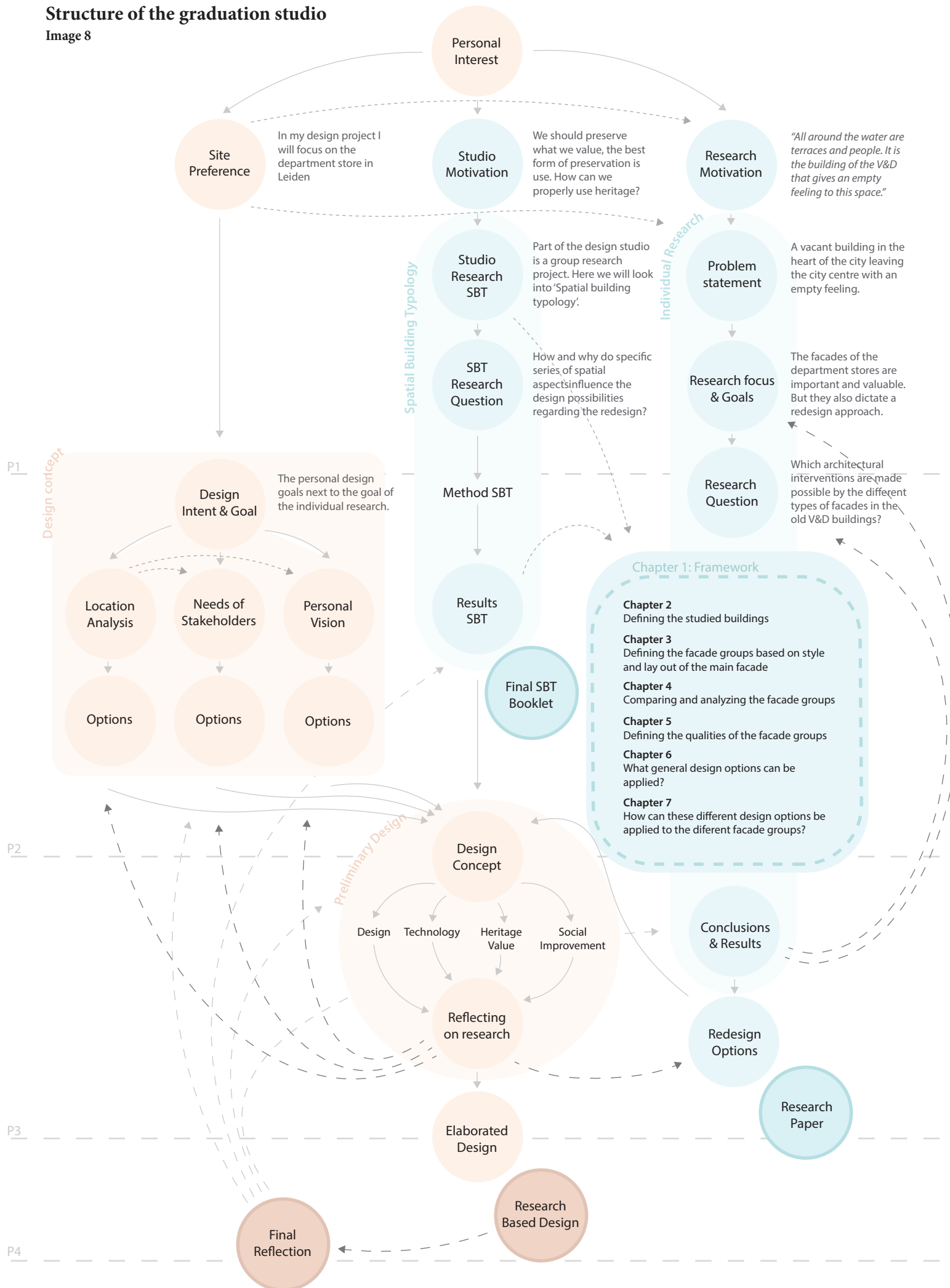
This research is just part of the graduation studio. Creating a deeper understanding of vacant department stores is therefore not the only goal of this research. This research should also serve as input for the design project, which is going on simultaneously. The design options applied to the buildings in chapter seven, should inspire or should be used in my design project. On the same time, the design project will steer the research as it requires a certain type of knowledge. Therefore the research, and the design will influence each other through the advancing of this studio.

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2. Roos, J. (2007). *De ontdekking van de opgave / Discovering the assignment* (1ste editie). Vssd.

Structure of the graduation studio

Image 8



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