



THE SHOPPING MALL AS AN URBAN CATALYST:

BALANCING THE TENSION BETWEEN PERMANENCE & CHANGE

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RESEARCH PLAN

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BALANCING THE TENSION BETWEEN PERMANENCE & CHANGE

Graduation Studio:

Adapting 20th century heritage: The modern mall.

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Abstract

Post-war shopping centers in the Netherlands, in contrast to the ones in the U.S, were interweaved and connected to the existing urban fabric forming an urban center for the community and the adjacent district. Despite the successive alterations that they underwent so as to keep up with the shifting demands of shopping, they constituted a stable yet dynamic urban structure; a quality that can be explored under the scope of continuity and change in the urban context. Continuity in the sense of the heritage values embedded in the shopping center and change in the sense of adaptability that enables future changes to occur are the main ideas around which the present research plan is developed. The identification of the spatial attributes related to the notion of adaptability in the original design of the post-war shopping centers along with the exploration of the way in which these attributes can be implemented in the re-design strategies in order to ensure both future adaptability and continuity form the main goals of this research.

Keywords: shopping center; urban center; continuity; spatial adaptability

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01 Introduction

V. Gruen, the inventor of the shopping mall, initially perceived it as an urban center where civic and educational facilities were combined and social interaction was enabled in a protected environment, constituting the unit of urban planning and therefore, the medium for the redefinition and regeneration of the city (Gruen, 1965). Exploring the historic context and the evolution of the shopping mall, one can conclude that its implementation and interpretation in the European context, especially during the post-war era of reconstruction, is based upon this idea of the urban center (Gosseye & Avermaete, 2017; Maitland, 1985).

The shopping mall emerged as an urban element, transplanted from the American suburbs to the European city centers and suburbs, in a transitional era when the architectural community was in search of the heart of the city; CIAM 8 (1959) constituted the peak of this problematization on urban tensions under the scope of an open society.

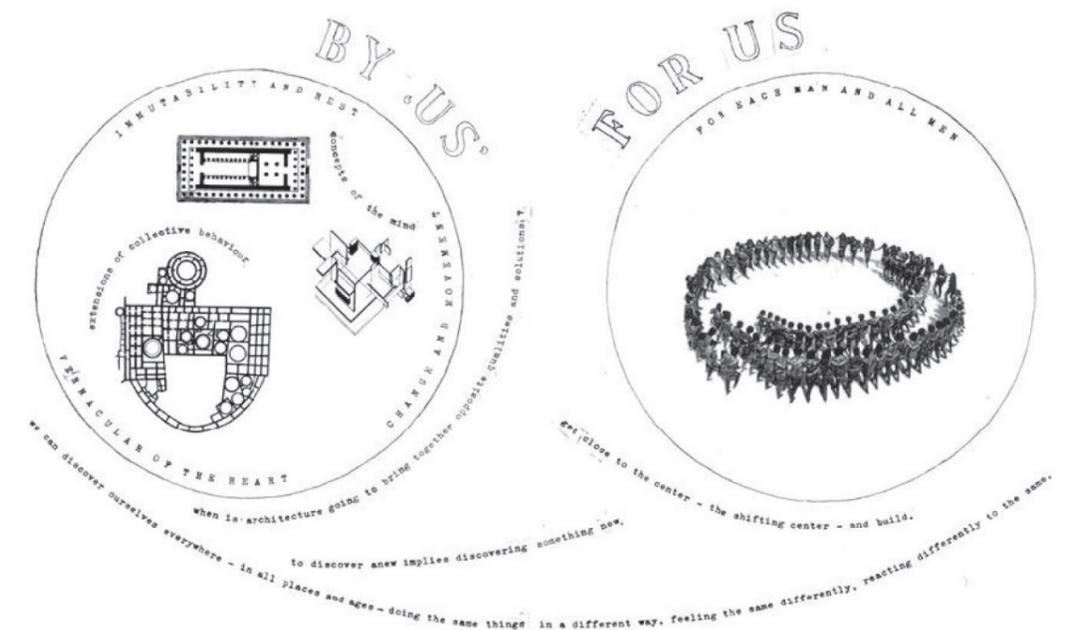


Figure 01| Van Eyck, A. (1959). *The Otterlo Circles*. CIAM Congress. A collage that expresses the necessity of relating the immutability and stability with change and movement.

Even though shopping malls in the United States and in Europe have been evolving in parallel, exchanging features according to societal and economical changes, they were never identical. The post-war shopping mall in the Netherlands, unlike in the U.S, was interweaved and connected to the existing urban environment, forming a finely meshed urban structure (Kooijman, 1999). As the spatial manifestation of a constantly transforming function—that of shopping—malls underwent successive alterations so as to keep up with the current trends and demands, embodying a remarkably consistent yet dynamic urban structure throughout the changes in the urban fabric (Maitland, 1985). This consistent and dynamic character can be related to flexibility and adaptability, which was rendered as a key demand of the Dutch post-war shopping center (Galena & van Hoogstraten, 2005). More specifically, adaptability was implemented in the design, on the building scale, in regard to the different layouts of the retail space relating to the structural system and grid, the positioning of the technical installations and the configuration of circulation, but also to future scenarios of expansion, unification, and conversion (Galena & van Hoogstraten, 2005; Kooijman, 1999).

Therefore, my interest in this graduation studio mainly lies in the exploration of the shopping mall as an urban structure that facilitates continuity and change in the urban context, since as K. Lynch (1972, p. 204) maintains, *the best environment is one in which there are both new stimuli and familiar reassurances, the chance to explore and the ability to return.*

02 Problem Statement & Research Question

“Killing the mall, paradoxically, has allowed it to become what Gruen once intended it to be—a city center. Death has allowed the mall to fulfill its original promise.”

D. Herman, 2001, p. 473

As already mentioned, shopping and the city have diachronically been directly linked. Leong (2001) states that shopping is continually being reinvented and reshaped as a response to the shifts in cultural tastes and the changes in social and urban patterns. In this context, shopping malls cannot be regarded as static urban structures but instead as dynamic systems, always interconnected with the concept of urbanity (McMorrough, 2001), in need of constant renewal, if they are to remain active.

Nowadays, another transition in the aforementioned patterns is being experienced; the growing tendency of e-commerce, rapidly developed due to the pandemic, the subsequent shift in the retail spatial requirements, and the vacancy rates demand the reinterpretation and the redefinition of the shopping mall so as to be integrated anew in the current context (CBRE, 2022). In addition, especially in the post-covid era, the transition from merely retail functions to mixed-use developments, where the goal is not only to shop but also to create a connection to the city is stressed as a necessity for the future survival of shopping centers (Finn, J.F., 2021). Therefore, a shift towards a reinterpretation of the shopping mall as an urban center can be noticed (CBRE, 2022).

At the same time, on a larger scale, the urge for urban resilience, in the sense of the capacity of the city to adapt and grow over the challenges it may face while maintaining continuity is an approach that gains more and more ground leading toward the concept of the flexible city. Hence, adaptability and continuity in the urban environment are rendered as core notions for future development and resilience (Godwin, 2021). In this context, the Dutch shopping mall regarded as a principal urban structure of the post-war era can serve both as an anchor bearing values of the era that it was built, while offering the opportunity to be reinterpreted and adapted not only to today's but also to future conditions.

Having as starting point the adaptability of the Dutch post-war shopping mall on the building scale as already explained, the scope of the present research is to enlarge the concept of adaptability on the urban scale and research the possibilities that the spatial form of the shopping mall as an urban structure offers for accommodating change, while ensuring continuity.

Therefore, the individual research will be conducted on the basis of the following question:

How can heritage values and attributes related to the adaptability of the Dutch post-war shopping mall as an urban structure be employed in potential redesign strategies so as to ensure urban resilience?

For this question to be fully explored, a set of sub-questions has been defined in order to structure and organize the steps needed for the research to be complete:

-How can adaptability be spatially defined on the urban scale?

-What are the spatial attributes of the post-war shopping mall related to adaptability and what are the heritage values embedded in them?

-How have different intervention strategies affected the ability of the Dutch post-war shopping mall to accommodate change?

03 Relevance

A shift regarding the Dutch retail network toward the redesign of existing retail floor space can be noticed since 2008 (IVBN, 2016). This shift in combination with the demand for new multi-purpose urban centers and the changes in consumerism habits and patterns, have rendered the Dutch shopping center an urban asset for redevelopment.

At the same time, the gradual acknowledgment of post-war architecture and its embedded values is a recurring reality that is expected to grow further in academic and professional circles. More specifically, shopping and its spatial manifestation during the post-war era in the Netherlands is a field that has started to be explored as proven by the Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed's publication (2005), and offers multiple directions and opportunities for research and reinterpretation.

Following this gradual shift of interest in both societal and academic terms, the Graduation studio in Heritage & Architecture focuses on the exploration of possible ways of adaptation of the Dutch post-war shopping mall in order to reinstate it as the "heart" of the city both for the present and the future.

04

Research approach & process

The research for the H&A Graduation Studio consists of two distinct parts that are conducted in parallel, and complement each other; collective extended research on redesign strategies and refurbished Dutch post-war shopping malls and individual research based on personal interests.

Group research

Regarding the group research, firstly, a literature review of existing redesign strategies and theories is done by groups of students so as to establish a solid theoretical basis. The second phase is the individual visit and group documentation of refurbished shopping malls in the Netherlands and the systematic research and presentation of these cases (research cases), so as to create a common basis of information that students can use for the purposes of their individual research.

Individual research

In parallel with the group research, each student is conducting an individual research part combining theories and strategies with the selected research cases. The individual part of the present research will focus on the notion of adaptability regarding the Dutch post-war shopping mall as an urban structure. According to Zijlstra (2009), the adaptability which allows for the regeneration of a building could lead to socially acceptable buildings, where continuity is guaranteed by mutability. Therefore, the shopping mall will be explored as a propelling element of development, defining which of its characteristics can be further employed in future scenarios, to ensure that it remains adaptable while attaining its meaning.

05

Theoretical Framework

“Our possible city must therefore have certain characteristics; adaptability coupled with a sense of past and future continuity.”

K. Lynch, 1990, p.772

Definitions

Adaptability is defined as the ability of a spatial system to generate, test and facilitate new environmental and behavioral possibilities in regard to future change while attaining its meaning.

The shopping mall (also referred to as the shopping center) is defined as an urban complex consisting of one or several buildings designed, planned, owned and managed as a unit around a pedestrian area, usually as part of an expansion plan and in some cases as part of an existing city center. (Galena & van Hoogstraten, 2005).

The theoretical framework of the present research can be linked to the following distinct factors; namely, the notion of adaptability on the urban scale, the Dutch post-war shopping malls as urban structures, their fundamental spatial attributes and the embedded in them heritage values, and finally the different redesign strategies and their impact on the adaptability of the researched cases.

According to K. Lynch's (1981) normative theory of the city form, a good human settlement should possess five dimensions of performance—vitality, sense, fit, access, and control—. For the purposes of this research, sense and fit have been chosen to be further analyzed in order to reveal the interplay of continuity and change in the shopping mall as an urban structure.

Fit is directly connected to the notion of adaptability. Even though adaptability, according to Lynch (1981), can be identified in three distinct, yet interrelated layers: spatial form, time boundaries and land control (ownership), due to time constraints, the present research will focus on its spatial aspect. Therefore, the criteria that, according to Lynch, can render an urban structure adaptable are the following:

- 01. Excess capacity
- 02. Networks of communication & transportation
- 03. Reduction of the interference between parts or of the elements likely to change from those unlikely to change.
- 04. The repetitive use of elements that are usable for diverse functions.

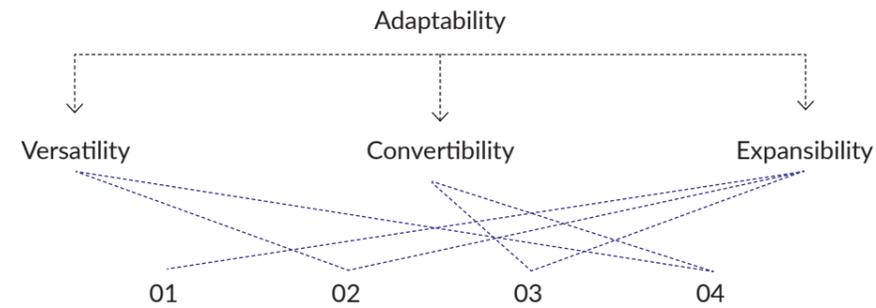


Figure 02| Adaptability as the sum of versatility, convertibility & expansibility (Anandam, 2006)
 Connection to the four criteria of adaptability on an urban scale defined by Lynch (1981).

Even though adaptability qualifies as one of the characteristics of good city form, Lynch (1981, p. 174) advocates that “a totally adaptable environment, in which each person could surround himself on the instant and without effort with the setting of his choice, would be a fairy-tale nightmare”, and he continues, “an adaptable place can be a characterless and disorienting one”. The same risk is also pointed out by Hertzberger (2014), who stresses the importance of attaining the meaning of architecture while seeking adaptability. Therefore, sense in Lynch’s glossary, or else, meaning in Hertzberger’s, which in the heritage domain is directly related to the heritage values embedded in the physical form, is essential for ensuring continuity in the urban fabric.

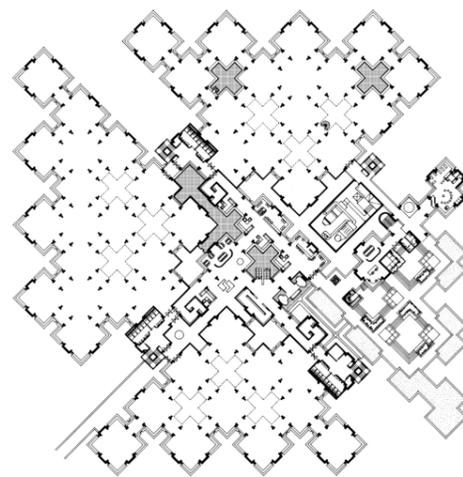


Figure 03| Hertzberger, H. (1968-72). Floorplan of Central Beheer corporate office, Apeldoorn.
 All the elements, and the way they are linked, are conceived to facilitate multiple uses, and future growth and change. In this project the idea of adaptability is directly transformed into an expandable form.

According to the ABCD Research Method (Zijlstra, 2009), the comparative typological analysis on distinct scales will allow the understanding of the factors which determine the continuity of a building throughout time. In addition, it introduces the aspect of time and time layers, revealing the potential future redevelopment possibilities; while focusing on the spatial characteristics is considered to be more useful when it comes to the regeneration of the buildings (Zijlstra, 2009). Therefore, in order to reveal the notion of sense in the shopping mall’s physical form, it is essential to analyse it to its fundamental spatial characteristics. To this end, Rao’s (2020) typological analysis and the theoretical framework regarding the typological analysis of the V&D department stores (Zijlstra et al., 2020) will be combined. As stated by Rao (2020), the shopping mall is an assemblage of the following elements: initially the shop (or else, the arrangement of shops) and the flows, and later on, the adjacent parking spaces. Those elements will be analyzed under the scope of adaptability on the following categories: configuration of the urban block (built/unbuilt, central or peripheral configuration), scale & street profiles, temporary & permanent structures, and the structural grid. Regarding the flows, they can be related to the accessibility and routes (primary & secondary) on the urban scale.

The defined attributes will, then, be categorized according to the tangible and intangible matrix as proposed in Veldpaus (2015), so as to be in accordance with the graduation studio’s framework. Finally, the historic values related to the attributes selected will be identified, as defined in the heritage values’ taxonomy by Tarrafa and Pereira Roders (2011) (see Appendix).

Consequently, the KAR (Keep, Add, Remove) classification by Pereira Roders (2007) will be employed in order to examine how different intervention strategies have affected adaptability and sense, under the scope of Lynch’s criteria. The combination of different strategies for the defined spatial attributes may result in the enhancement or deterioration of adaptability.

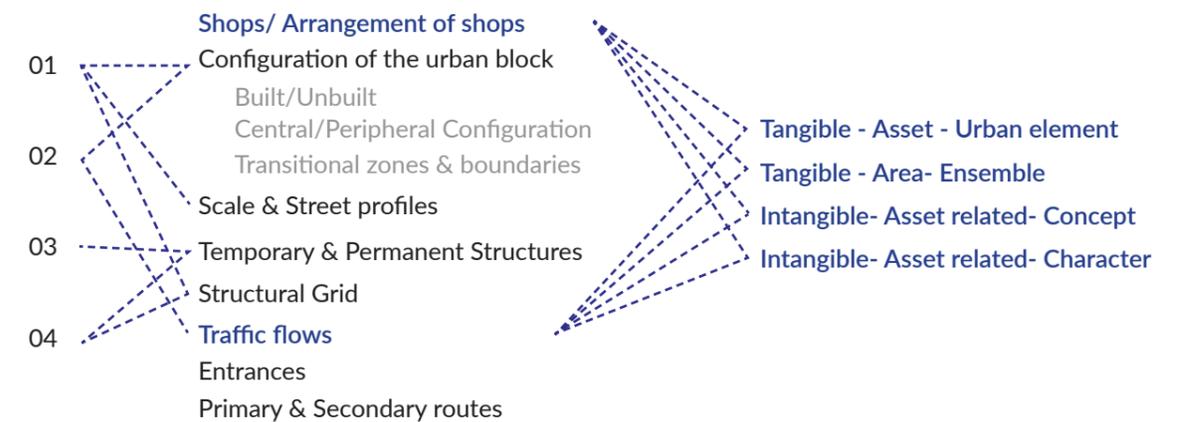


Figure 04| Connection of Lynch's (1981) criteria with the selected categories under investigation & the related attributes as defined in Veldpaus' taxonomy (2015).

06 Methodology

The conduction of the present research can be divided into three phases; each answering one of the sub-questions.

In the first phase, literature research and theory review have been conducted so as to reveal the definition of adaptability on the urban scale and its criteria, according to the theoretical framework as mentioned above. In this phase, a pre-selection of the case studies that will be analysed occurred; currently including the cases of the Winkelcentrum in Leyweg, and the Stadshart in Amstelveen, each indicating different rates of adaptability.

Regarding the second sub-question, the spatial attributes related to adaptability on the urban scale will be identified through historical and contextual analyses of the case studies based on the parameters defined in the previous stage. The data needed for these analyses, collected both in groups and individually, include old and current photos, drawings of the original and current state, maps of the adjacent urban development and can be obtained through archives, municipality documents, architects' archives, site visits, heritage status, books, journals, and papers, but also through the use of databanks such as GIS and relevant websites. All this material is expected to be reproduced by drawing, tracing, and mapping and expressed through personal writing. After collecting and classifying the data, an assessment regarding adaptability will be conducted on the basis of Lynch's (1981) criteria. Subsequently, the collected data will be interpreted through the method of value assessment, following the matrix developed for the purposes of the Heritage & Architecture Graduation Studio, so as to relate it to Lynch's "sense".

The third step of the research will be approached through the method of comparative analysis regarding the before and after re-design state of the case studies. The intervention strategies' classification will be conducted under the scope of Pereira Roder's (2007) Keep-Add-Remove so as to reveal the impact that each one of them or their combination had on the adaptability of the urban structure under research. The level of adaptability of the after-re-design state will then be evaluated according to Lynch's criteria, defined in the first phase. The comparative analysis between the two states will indicate the shifts in the levels of adaptability, as well as the spatial attributes related to this quality and the embedded values that remained consistent throughout time.

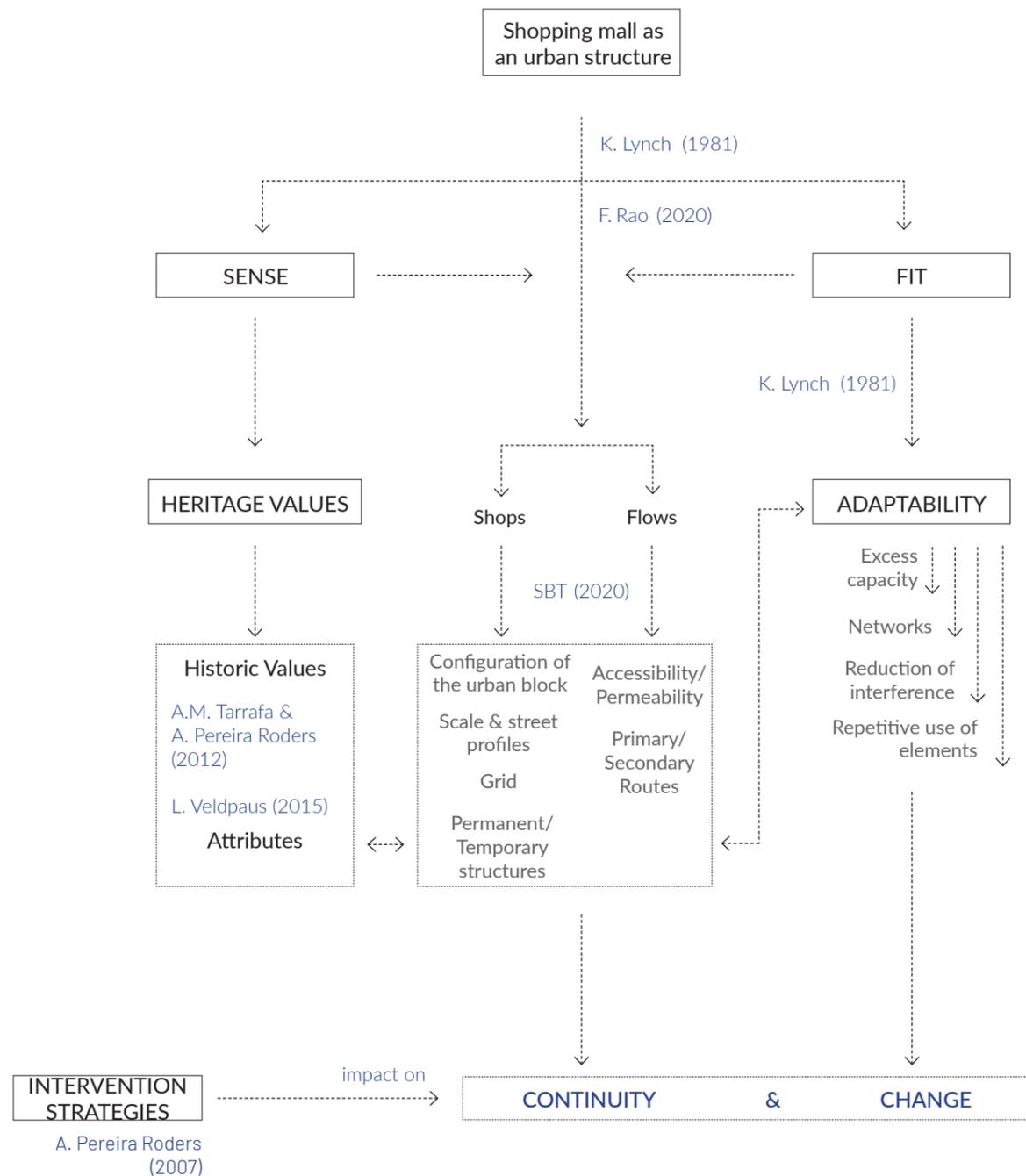


Figure 05| Theoretical Framework diagram

These three phases will lead to the formation of a matrix including the post-war shopping mall's spatial attributes and the historic values embedded in them related to adaptability and the way it is affected by different intervention strategies. This matrix can be employed as a tool for the upcoming redesign so as to ensure that the shopping center continues to attain both its character as an adaptable structure for future scenarios and its historic value.

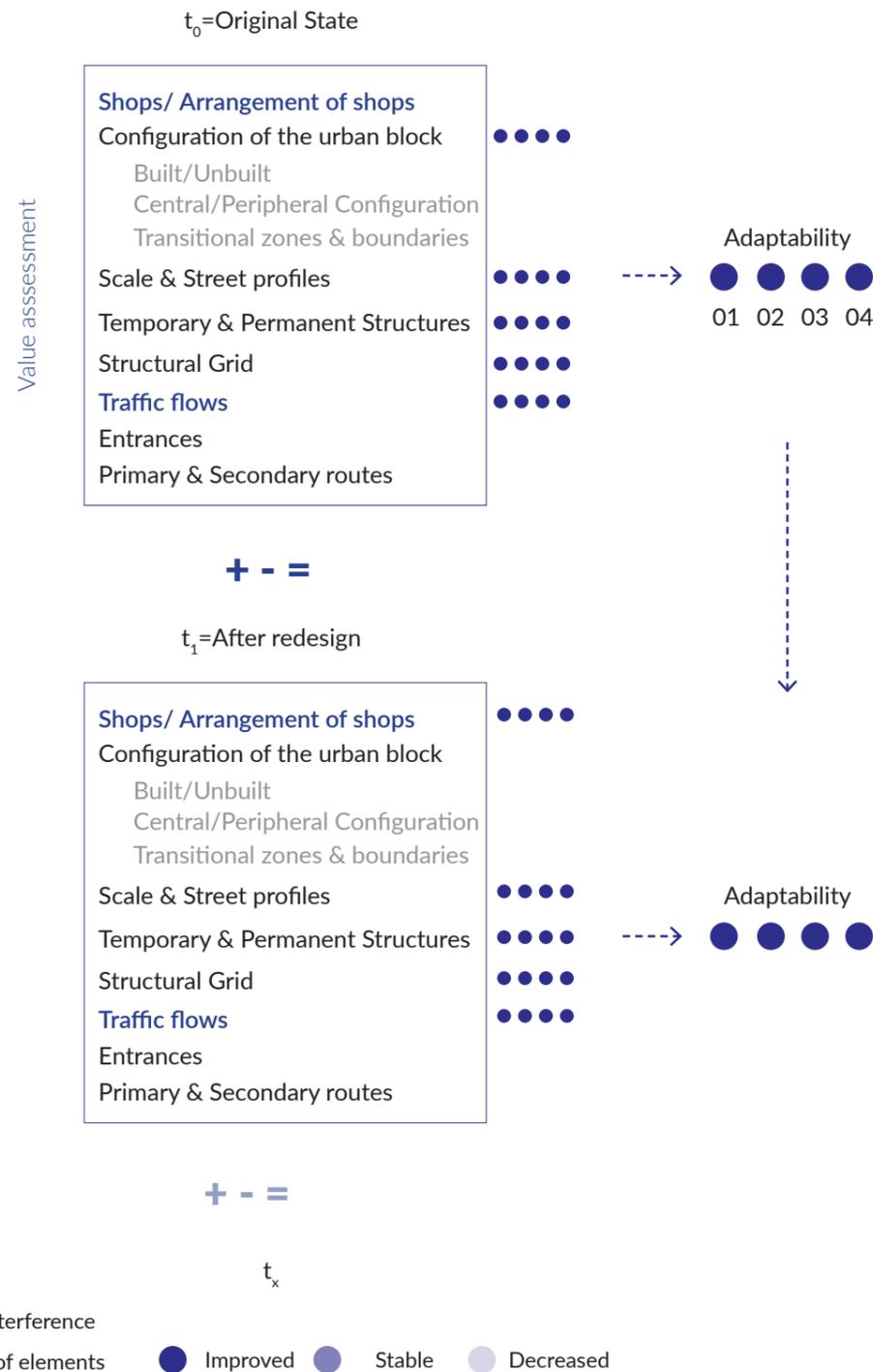


Figure 06| The matrix regarding adaptability in the Dutch post-war shopping mall.

07 From research to design

The present research plan aims at the formation of a matrix consisting of redesign strategies and their impact on the adaptability of the Dutch post-war shopping mall. Connecting redesign strategies and distinct spatial attributes in relation to adaptability can provide the starting point for a sustainable future scenario for the shopping mall.

The notion of adaptability has to be continuous throughout time in the sense that decisions in the present should not lead to dead ends in the future (Lynch, 1981). After all, as Zijlstra (2009) states the lifetime of a building depends on its ability to accommodate change, and given that Dutch post-war shopping malls were designed to accommodate the continuous change of commercial activities and have already established their position in the urban fabric and the community, they offer the unique opportunity for accomplishing continuity and change.

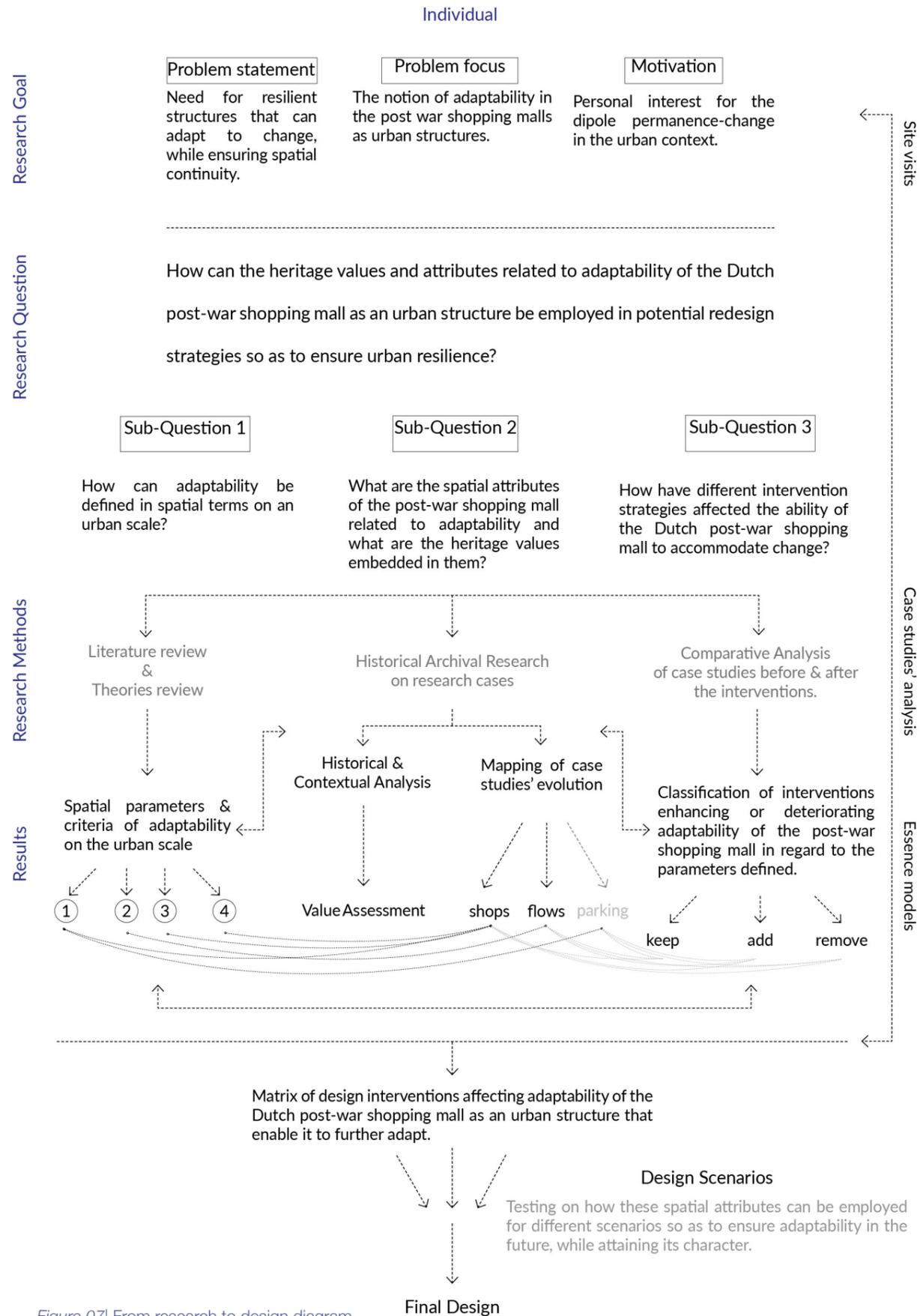


Figure 07 | From research to design diagram

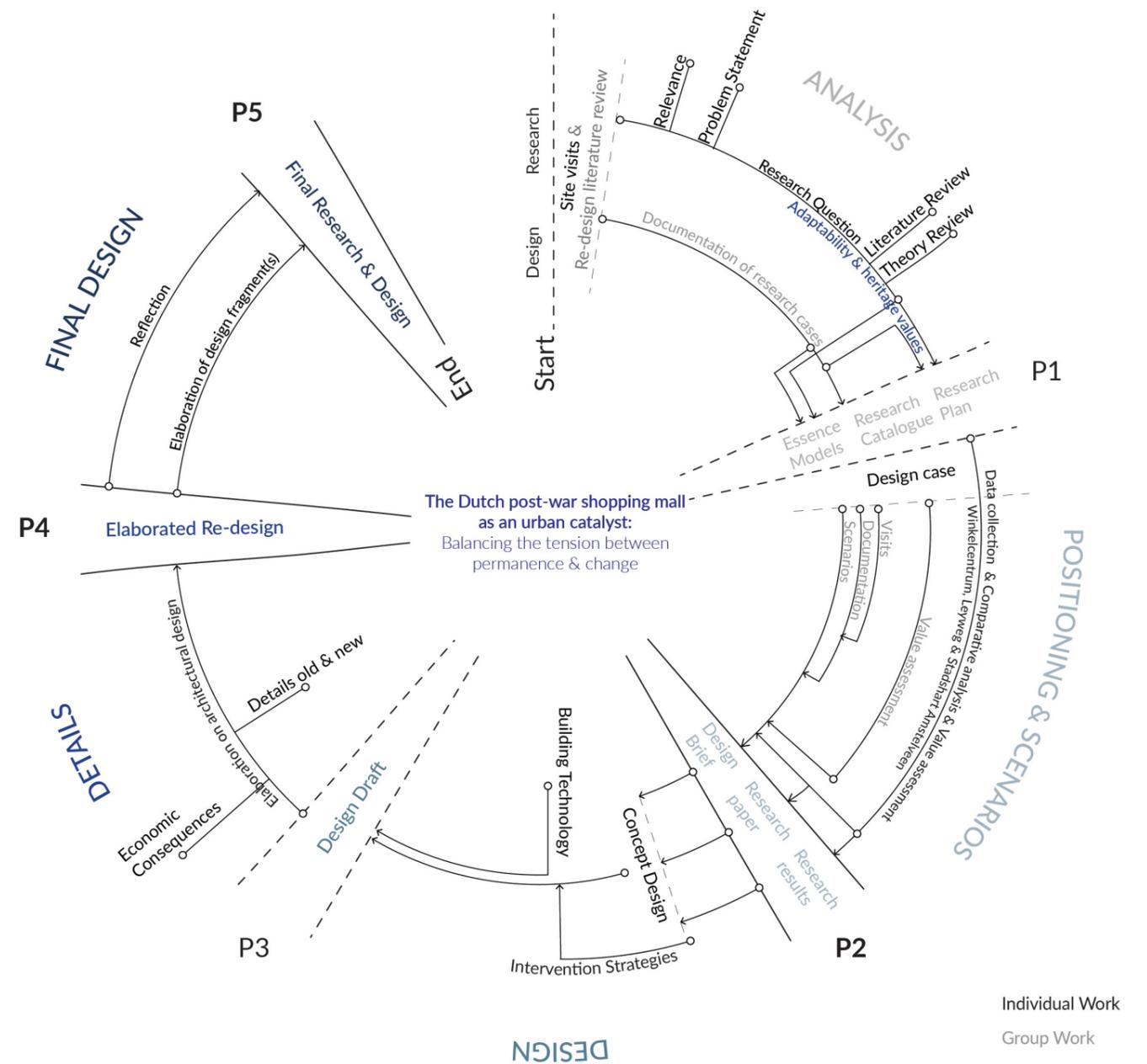


Figure 08 | Graduation Studio Planning

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Appendix

	Secondary Values	References
Social	Spiritual	beliefs, myths, religions (organized or not), legends, stories, testimonial of past generations;
	Emotional, individual	memory and personal life experiences;
	Emotional, collective	notions related with cultural identity, motivation and pride, sense of "place attachment" and communal value.
	Allegorical	objects/places representative of some social hierarchy/status;
Economic	Use	the function and utility of the asset, original or attributed;
	Non-use	the asset's expired function, which has its value on the past, and should be remained by its existence (of materials), option (to make some use of it or not) and bequest value (for future generations);
	Entertainment	the role that might be have for contemporaneous market, mainly for tourism industry;
	Allegorical	oriented to publicizing financially property;
Political	Educational	the education role that heritage assets may play, using it for political targets (e. g. birth-nations myths, glorification of political leaders, etc.);
	Management	made part of strategies and policies (past or present);
	Entertainment	it is part of strategies for dissemination of cultural awareness, explored for political targets;
	Symbolic	emblematic, power, authority and prosperous perceptions stem from the heritage asset;
Historic	Educational	heritage asset as a potential to gain knowledge about the past in the future through;
	Historic-artistic	quality of an object to be part of a few or unique testimonial of historic stylistic or artistic movements, which are now part of the history;
	Historic-conceptual	quality of an object to be part of a few or unique testimonial that retains conceptual signs (architectural, urban planning, etc.), which are now part of history;
	Symbolic	fact that the object has been part/related with an important event in the past;
Aesthetical	Archaeological	connected with Ancient civilizations;
	Artistic	original product of creativity and imagination;
	Notable	product of a creator, holding his signature;
	Conceptual	integral materialization of conceptual intentions (imply a conceptual background);
Scientific	Evidential	authentic exemplar of a decade, part of the History of Art or Architecture;
	Workmanship	original result of human labour, craftsmanship;
	Technological	skillfulness on techniques and materials, representing an outstanding quality of work;
	Conceptual	integral materialization of conceptual intentions (imply a conceptual background);
Age	Workmanship	craftsmanship value oriented towards the production period;
	Maturity	piece of memory, reflecting the passage/lives of past generations;
	Existential	marks of the time passage (patine) presents on the forms, components and materials;
	Spiritual	harmony between the building and its environment (natural and artificial);
Ecological	Essential	identification of ecological ideologies on its design and construction;
	Existential	manufactured resources which can either be reused, reprocessed or recycled;

Figure ij Tarrafa, S. & Pereira Roders. (2011) *Primary & Secondary cultural values table*. Retrieved from <https://brunodeandrade.weblog.tudelft.nl/teaching/minor-heritage-design/> Last access 02/11/2022.

Asset	Building element	Parts of buildings e.g. detail, parcel, facade, roof, material, or colours
	Building	Entire buildings
	Urban element	Man made elements in the urban landscape e.g. a square, bridge, street furniture, quay side, or public art.
	Natural element	Natural (or designed) green elements, flora or fauna, water elements, etc.
Area	Ensemble	A group of buildings or specific urban ensemble or configuration.
	Context or setting	The buildings or elements surrounding, supporting, contextualising the actual heritage.
	Area	A district in a wider (urban) landscape, a specific combination of cultural and or natural elements, e.g. a neighbourhood, urban fragment, urban structure, townscape, route or park.
Landscape	(Result of urban or natural) layering	A landscape illustrative of the evolution or development of human society and settlement over time, a diversity of manifestations of the interaction between humankind and its natural environment.
	Everything, based on level of significance	Every part of the (urban landscape) is considered to be of value, the attributes get a level of significance.
Asset related	Concept or artistic trend	The ideas behind the design or place, e.g. period, style, design ideology (often related to, or represented by, a tangible heritage asset)
	Relation context - location	The relation with another connected element, location, place, or environment (relation object – object).
	Character	The character or image, as supported by specific design, e.g. typology, morphology, layout, composition and proportion, as well as, atmosphere e.g. tranquil, lively, urban, rural.
Societal	Use, function	The specific (typical, common, special) use or function of a place or environment.
	Knowledge, traditions, customs	The (local) practices, traditions, knowledge, customs of a community or groups (often related to a location or tangible results, tools / instruments)
	Relation context - association	Human associations with a place, element, location, or environment (relation men – object),
	Community / people	A community or society itself (its members, or specific individuals / groups) and/ or their cultural identity or diversity.
Process	Management processes	The process of managing, the type of strategy or approach (instead of the result) is what is valuable.
	Development or evolution	The process of layering, development, or evolution (instead of the result).

Figure ii| Veldpaus, L. (2015, p. 73). *Taxonomy of attributes (What?). Tangible & Intangible.*

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