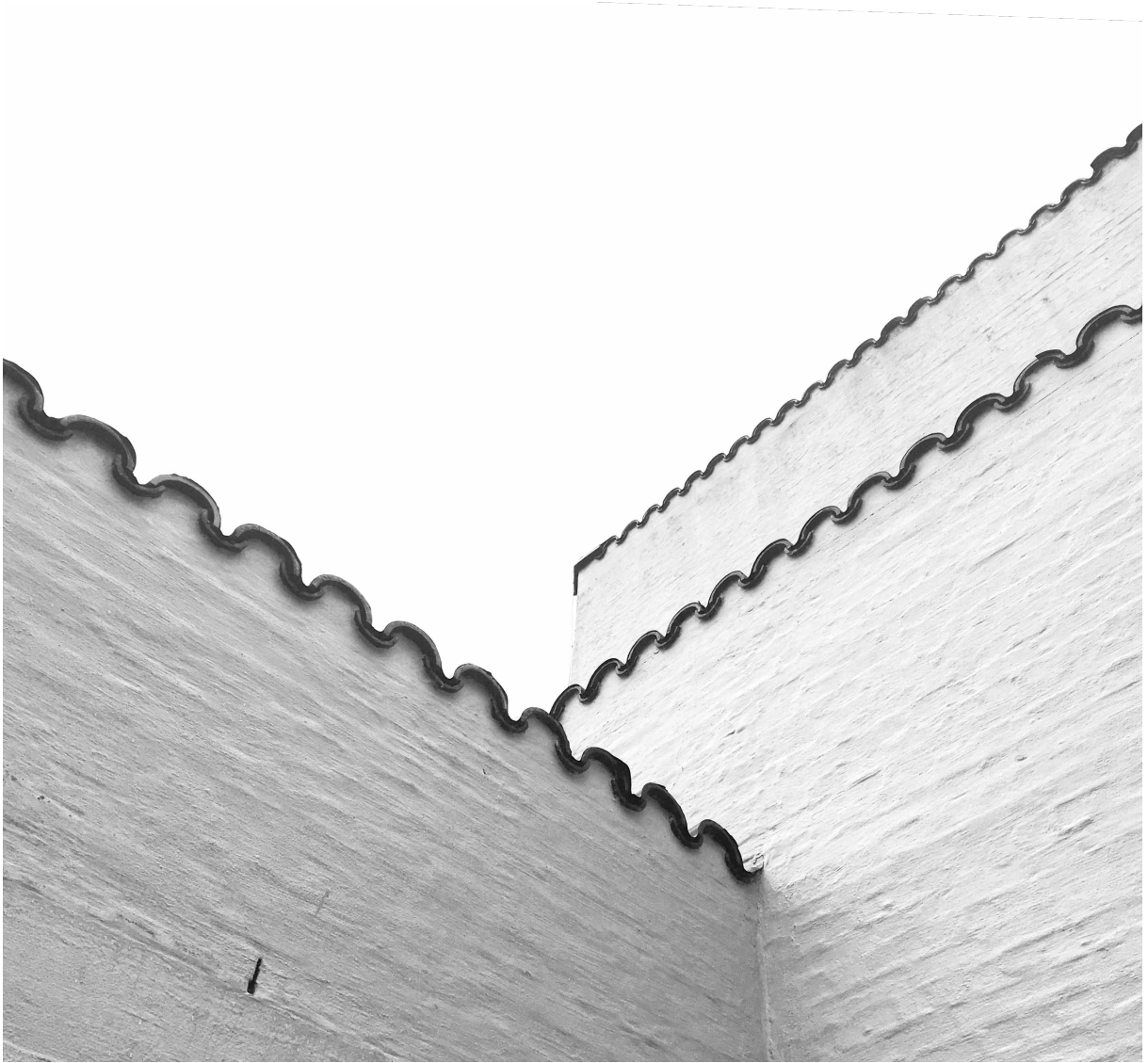


# roosenberg reconsiderations

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All images and pictures are made by me, unless stated otherwise//



on purpose//

Although the abbey breathes the sacred atmosphere of a religious place, the architecture of Van der Laan surely leaves space for other functions within Roosenberg. The modest shapes, timeless heavy brickwork of the Bossche School creates the perfect background for a university 'uithof'.

The sacred 'sanctuary mode' can, as analysed in report II, very well be suitable for a study retreat. The woods can be the decorum of a course and congress centre. A university uithof focussed on both individual study retreats as well as collective study meetings therefore is chosen as the new destination for Roosenberg.

The purpose of this paper is to gather insight in the demands of such a place in order to be able to design a substantiated building with a programme as perfectly adapted to the user as possible. This research is done in two ways; firstly, I've spend a day in the Abdij van Berne in Heeswijk-Dinther. The catholic Norbertine Abdij van Berne is the oldest abbey of the Netherlands, founded in 1134, and still functions as religious centre today. Its use has however been extended with a retreat and congress facility, making it a useable case study for the Roosenberg redevelopment.

Secondly, I've analysed the plans and programs of two case studies; St. Catherine's College by Arne Jacobsen for its urban lay out and Het Pand in Ghent, a former monastery turned university convention centre, for the programmatic demands.

This slightly fragmented research seeks to formulate an answer to a single research question: What are the spatial ingredients for a new chapter for Roosenberg as study and retreat centre?



I.  
on abbey retreats//

The Abdij van Berne combines its age-old function as a Norbertine abbey with a retreat and congress centre within its outer walls. Although Roosenberg will no longer host this combination in the future, it is useful in a programmatic perspective how these functions work within an abbey building.

Having spent 6 years of my life at the gymnasium part of the abbey, I know the Abdij van Berne very well. But I had never been in the retreat and congress facilities, so I arranged an interview and tour with one of the monks living in the abbey, pastor Fons Boom.



the abdij van berne //



the interview//

Fons Boom is a Norbertine monk and pastor who has been living in the abbey since 1989. He gives a short introduction to the history of the abbey and its buildings.

The Abdij van Berne was founded in 1134 in the nearby Gelderland village of Bern, by a knight called Fulco van Berne, who after a lifesaving miracle decided to devote his life to God and turn his castle into an abbey. The abbey grew bigger and bigger over the years and created several 'uithoven' in Brabant and Belgian Brabant, one of them in the 'Slotje van Heeswijk'. In the 'tachtigjarige oorlog' the original abbey in Bern got destroyed, making the uithoven the main centres of the segregation. After the French revolution all Belgian dependences cease to exist, leaving the abbey of Heeswijk as the new and only Abdij van Berne in 1857.

Since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century till the second world war, the Norbertines focussed mainly on education as their way to contribute to society. The seminary was initially incorporated into the main abbey building, the old Slotje. But when around 1900 more than two class rooms were needed, a large education facility was built. This building was called the Abdijhuis Seminarie and was attached to the main building.

The seminary kept on grown steadily, making a larger addition necessary. In 1930, this resulted in the construction of het Gymnasium van Berne, a separate building, just outside the canals of the abbey. This Gymnasium is still functional today, now called Gymnasium Bernrode. Since the 1990's the abbey's principal is no longer the vice-praeses of the school's council, making the school completely independent of the abbey today. Since that moment, the gymnasium does no longer relate to its catholic past in its education.

When the gymnasium left the Abdijhuis around 1930, the building was first used as living space for the monks. Since the 1980's however, the building started to get used for other functions. Firstly, it became a music course centre, where teachers of the catholic schools of Brabant would stay for a couple of day and nights to follow musical lessons. It was from this moment on, that groups of guests started to be accommodated in the abbey. Starting in 1989, the abbey has been organising different courses focussed on a wide range of often spirituality related subjects.

The courses were always given for multiple days, a weekend or a mid-week, and had retreat like character. These theme-based retreats (a theme could be 'sharing life') were religiously coloured and became very popular. Mainly the army used the abbey for this sort short stay retreats, later also



school boards and teacher groups of different catholic schools in the region, as well as religious groups. In these days, the abdijhuis became known by the name of 'Vormingscentrum'. The army even built a new retreat building within the abbey moats, meant for soldiers to completely retract from daily life.

The Vormingscentrum lost its popularity however and when the army left the abbey too in 2005, it went bankrupt. The abbey continued hosting courses however, but the new way of these 'retreats' were more interwoven with the monastic daily life. Since 2005 the Abdijhuis is rented out as a retreat and congress centre with accommodation. Today it is mainly used for training weekends of schools and nursery institutions, but also for yoga and meditation weekends. The participants of these courses stay in the main building of the abbey and are expected to participate with the monastic routines such as the meals and the morning and evening messes. One monk functions as the 'guest monk' (Fons Boom) and takes care of the guests, the other monks don't have any contact with the visitors (mainly due age, most of the 22 remaining monks are over 80 years old).

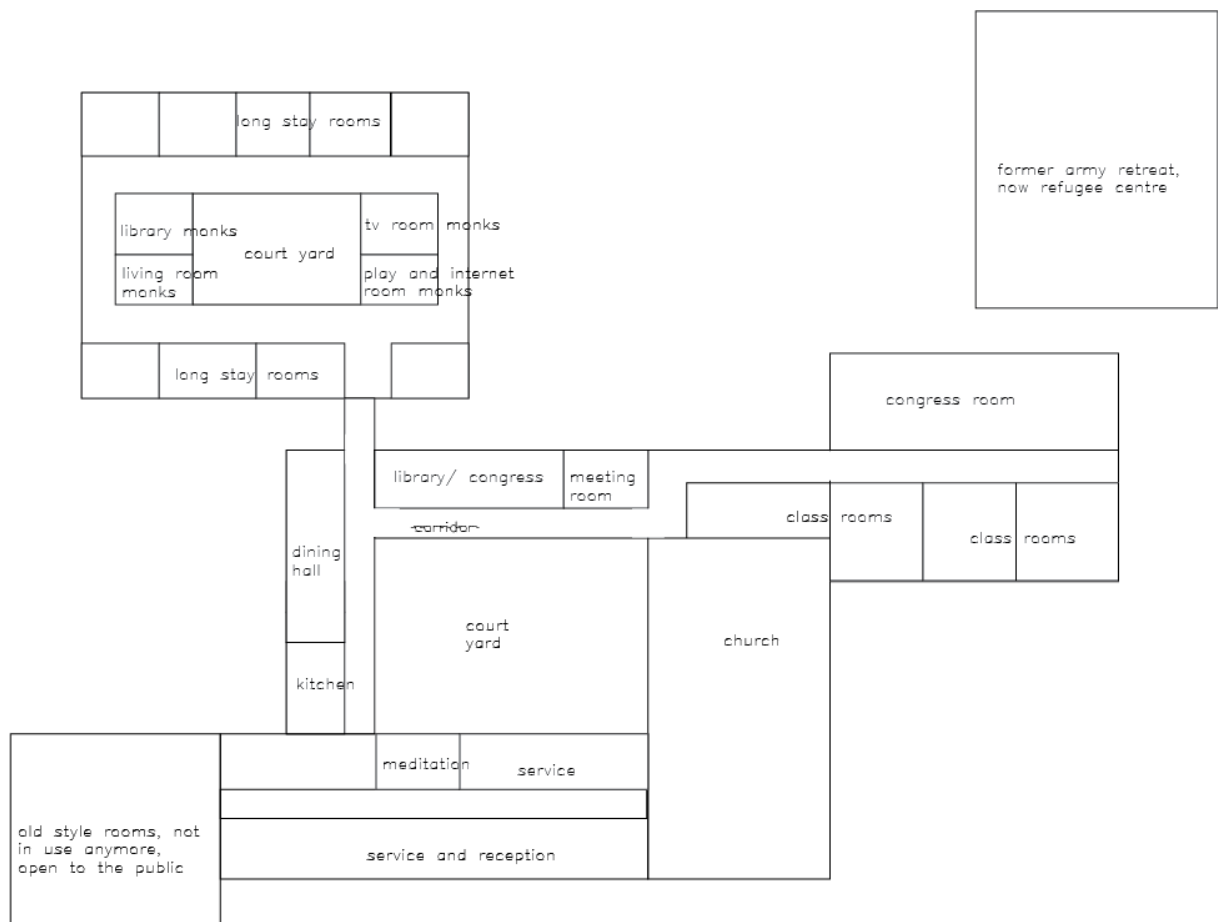
There are currently 15 short stay rooms in the main building and 23 spare monk rooms (the population declined), all these rooms can be used to host visitors. 8 of the 15 short stay rooms have two beds, the other 7 have a single bed. There are two sorts of visitors; visitors who come in groups (mainly participants of the workshops and group retreats) and individual visitors, who really just come for a moment of retreat (these are mostly retired people).



- 1 Slotje (17<sup>th</sup> AC)
- 2 Main part (19<sup>th</sup> AC)
- 3 Church (1880–1930's)
- 4 Abdijhuis Gym (1900)
- 5 Army retreat (1980)
- 6 Dwelling part (1999)
- 7 Workshop (19<sup>th</sup> AC)



Both types of visitors have an own living room of about 50 m<sup>2</sup>, and can use all the abbey's facilities (meditation room, gardens, communal living room etc). All bedrooms are rather big, up to 35 m<sup>2</sup>, and have an own seating and studying area and an own bathroom. The very humble furnished rooms motivate people to meet in the more lavish living rooms, where spontaneously new friendships start. Often, the (mostly retired) guests make music, read together and play games. It happens often that the newly befriended retirees book a retreat together the next time. In the following schemes a plan of the abbey is shown, as well as a plan of a short stay room and the functions used by the retreat and congress visitors.

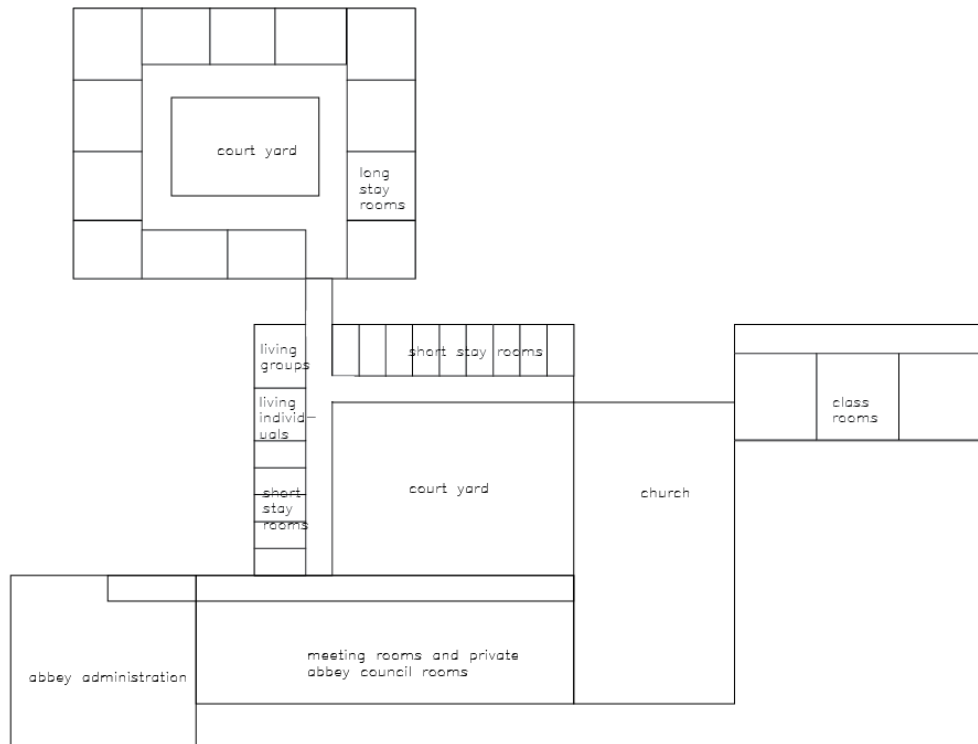


Schematic plan of the ground floor. The 1930's gymnasium, a building a bit bigger than the abbey itself 150 meters south of the abbey is not included, nor is the brewery and print shop east of the abbey//



A normal first floor short stay room for retreat guests//





Schematic first floor plan of the abbey with the retreat short stay rooms and their living rooms. //

In 1999, the abbey was almost doubled in capacity when a new dwelling extension was built. This extension, built by Oomen Architecten, follows the traditional cloister lay out (although this abbey originally didn't have a cloister around the courtyard), but combines it with a modern architecture. This extension usually cannot be entered by guests, as it's the living area of the monks. It's the only part of the abbey closed for the public. When the 15 guest rooms are however fully booked, the 23 spare rooms in between the monk rooms are also rented out.



The living room for individual retreat guests//





single short stay room//



meditation room//



dining hall//



small conference room//



church//



new dwelling extension//



Since a few years, the abbey has been giving its own retreat courses, which are workshops based on a spiritual theme, given by a monk. These workshops take 3 to 5 days, where the participants work on their personal reflection and personal development. Often there are two communal meetings, one in the morning and one in the evening. In between the participants work and reflect alone on their given tasks. In the morning, a rented hall is used for the meetings, during the day the participants spread out freely over the corridors, gardens and various rooms of the abbey. These courses are getting less popular though, so the main focus is still on the courses given by external parties like the yoga retreats. The external collective retreat midweeks and weekends have become so popular, the abbey is now fully booked for the next 1,5 year.

The abbey is always looking for new ways to stay in use as a spiritual retreat centre and hopes the unique qualities of the place will remain a place for contemplation, whether it's related to religion or not. Fons Boom was therefore highly interested in the idea of creating a retreat for students. As he knows by his own experience a short study retreat used to be common in befriended abbeys in Belgian during the 1970's and 1980's.

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The Abdij van Berne shows that the atmosphere of an abbey can perfectly be used for a study retreat and convention centre. Both functions thrive well with the traditionally existing combination of collective meetings and individual contemplation. The Abdij van Berne building offers various spaces for various sorts of contemplation. The rooms are used as individual cells during the day, the church and mediation room are used for more collective spiritual meetings. During our visit, the participants of a guest group were mostly scattered around the impressive corridors and gardens, reading and talking to each other. The gardens and corridors are obviously of major importance, as the strolling seemed to be a good catalyst for social bonding and contemplation.

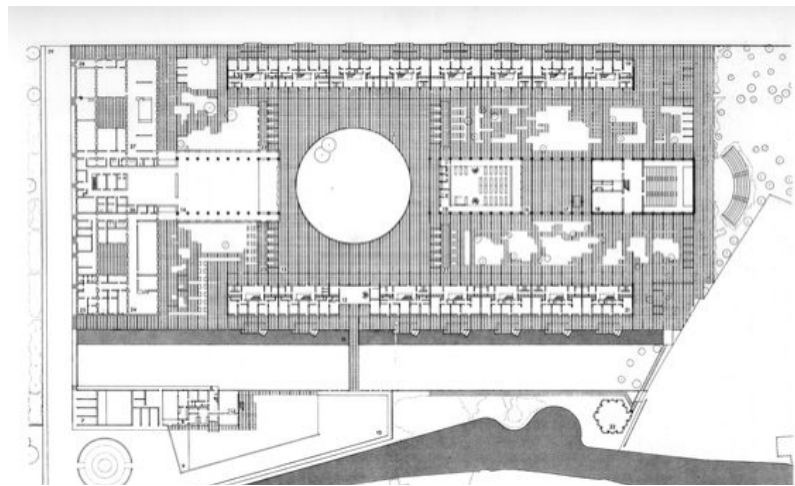
The different spaces used for the guests and retreat give an insight in what is necessary for a successfully functioning retreat centre. We also saw the importance of outdoor spaces and secondary spaces that permit to walk in rounds and form comfortable and inspiring spaces by themselves. Besides these programmatic ideas, it occurred to us that rhythm in the daily schedules, the alternation between compulsory meeting and individual free time, help to create a successful moment of reflection and personal development. These factors are, independent of which course is given by who, always part of the unique experience of the abbey.



II.  
st. catherine's oxford//

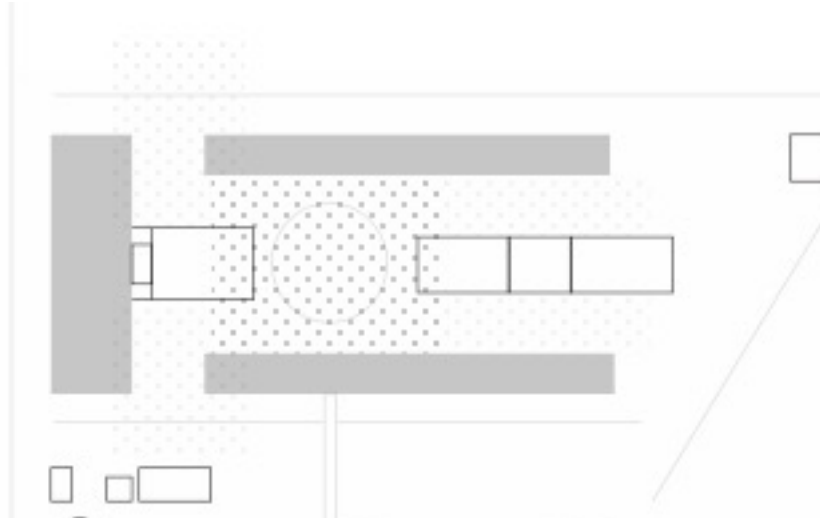
Whereas the Abdij van Berne was an interesting case study for programmatic reasons, I choose to study the Oxford St. Catherine's College by Arne Jacobsen for its urban physical layout.

Different from any other Oxford university college campus, Jacobsen designed St. Catherine's as an unique combination of the traditional college quad typology and a modernist urban approach. Where other colleges have closed off courtyards and traditionally have their different functions surrounding the quad, St. Catherine's consists of an open urban lay out with different layers of closeness. All the functions are still traditionally positioned surrounding the yard though.



campus plan//

drawing retrieved from <http://old.ictf.ox.ac.uk/conference/2006/> at 10-05-17

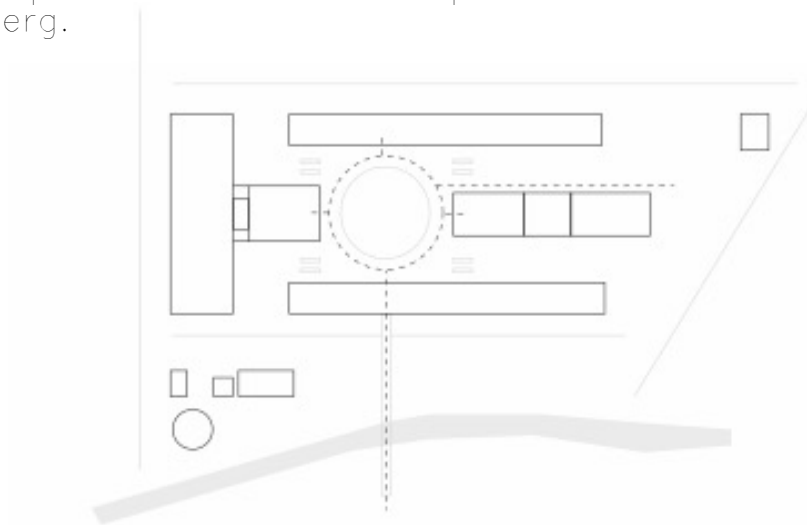


half open court yards become  
gradually more private towards the  
heart of the complex//



The main quad space turns into a sequence of gardens enclosed by freestanding masonry walls infilled with hedges of yew trees, implying a cloister. Some of the hedges suggest external rooms. The design isn't purely functional. It's an architectural landscape completely supportive of the building.

As decided during the design process and report II, the extension could have more extrovert character. I do feel, however, the need to combine this extrovert character with a court yard inspired lay out. This way the original gradual entry into the heart of the building like Van der Laan aspired, can be kept. With its semi-opened courtyards, St. Catherine's shows very well a quad doesn't need to be enclosed to fulfil its role of heart of the building, while still ensuring the gradual transition to a 'sanctuary mode'. I would like to try to accomplish this same concept in the new extension Roosenberg.



the round lawn implies a cloister from which all main functions can be reached, columns enforce this effect, the more you move from the lawn, the less formal the gardens become//



st. catherine's college oxford//  
retrieved from <http://openbuildings.com/buildings/st-catherine-s-college> at 10-05-17



III.  
het pand ghent//

As a former monastery turned into a university conference centre, Het Pand in Ghent is useful to study in order to know the variety of spaces needed for such a function.

The monastery, dating back to the 12th century, was acquired by the University of Ghent in 1956 and has ever since been the university's place for cultural and scientific conventions, university receptions and banquets and exhibitions of the related art schools.<sup>1</sup> Although its main function is to hold conferences, Het Pand has a large ceremonial function. It also houses a good restaurant, museum and faculty club for professors.

I will not analyse Het Pand using plans like the Abdij van Berne, but by using a table with the sizes from the different conference related spaces, their capacity and their possible functions. This way I will get an overview and understanding of the scale and different uses a university conference centre has.



het pand ghent//

retrieved from <http://belnuc.be/content/ghent-2017-venue-het-pand> at 10-05-17

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ugent.be/het-pand/en/convention-center> retrieved 10-05-17



		hall	surface	capacity per function				
			m2	theatre	seminar	workshop	dinner	reception
00								
	Hall 1	348	314	120				
	Hall 2	141		60	45			
	Hall 3	60			20			
Cloister south		90						135
Cloister north		82						125
Restaurant		143					80	145
01								
	Hall 1	60	50	27	31			
Cloister		168						180
Library		80						
02								
	Hall 1	198	130	60	40			
	Hall 2	43			21			
	Hall 3	60	50	27	31			
	Hall 4	49			21			
03								
	Hall 1	193	80	40	35			

scheme with halls, surfaces, uses and capacities<sup>2</sup>//

Het Pand has conference rooms from 43 to 348 square meters, with the biggest one being able to host up to 350 people. Most medium seminar rooms are around 50–60 square meters and can host around 30 people. Het Pand mainly uses its wide cloisters for receptions.

Since the Roosenberg building has a rather limited width, it is less capable of accommodating bigger conference rooms. The newly to create extension therefore will host the conference

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ugent.be/het-pand/en/convention-center/bookings> retrieved 10-05-17



facilities, ideally with a variety of spaces. A normal classroom for 20 people is usually around 60 m<sup>2</sup><sup>3</sup>, but if Roosenberg will be able to host bigger events, rooms up to 300 m<sup>2</sup> could be necessary. Facilitating functions such as the kitchen and bathrooms should be able to keep up with the capacity of the conference rooms. The sizes of the Het Pand conference rooms give an idea about scale and uses of a university conference centre.

conclusion//

The Abdij van Berne, St. Catherine's and Het Pand all have something in common with the future Roosenberg university Uithof. The Abdij van Berne showed that a variety of spaces, from the individual cella to the church, and from the corridors to the course rooms, all have their specific role in creating a rhythm and atmosphere that instigates contemplation. A successful retreat should allow for moments of individual retreat, but also facilitate social meetings.

Arne Jacobsen's St. Catherine's is the example of an open, modernistic interpretation of the traditional court yard. The quad and its functioning doesn't depend on a completely closed court. Landscaping and the illusion of a court by placing the buildings in a smart way, ensures the existence of a secure courtyard with its 'sanctuary mode', whilst still opening up towards its surroundings.

Het Pand shows the variety of spaces needed for a university conference centre and gives an idea about scale and capacity. With the results of report II in mind; the idea to create an introvert, quiet world within the existing abbey and a more extrovert world in the new extension, these three examples give a substantiated direction for the design and show what spatial qualities and varieties are needed.

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<sup>3</sup> Instrument Duurzame Scholenbouw Richtlijnen, <http://www.agion.be/richtwaarden>, retrieved 17-05-17